

# DENVER CITY COUNCIL



## **Proclamation No. 24-0201 Honoring the History of Black Denver Police Officers from 1880 to Present**

**WHEREAS**, In 1880, a group of Denver Black civic leaders attended the Denver City Council meeting and demanded the Denver Police Department and the Denver Fire Department begin hiring Black officers and firefighters; and

**WHEREAS**, On April 15, 1880, then Denver Mayor Richard Sopris swore Isaac Brown in as Denver's first Black police officer. Officer Brown served on the department for ten years; and

**WHEREAS**, In 1881, Officer Brown was joined on the department by John C. Bell, followed by I.G. Gilmore, T.T. Bruce, J.M. Williams, and Thomas Riley; and

**WHEREAS**, In 1896, Ulysses Brown and his brother Carl were hired as patrolmen. Both proved to be outstanding officers. Ulysses was the founder of the Denver Auto Theft Department and served as the department's first Black detective in 1918; and

**WHEREAS**, On February 18, 1921, Denver Police Officer Willie O. Steam became the first Black Denver Police officer to die in the line of duty having served the department for over two decades; and

**WHEREAS**, With the rise of the Klu Klux Klan in Denver and Colorado politics during the late 1920s and 1930s the number of Black Denver officers declined until the end of World War II; and

**WHEREAS**, With the end of World War II and the end of racial segregation in the United States military, the civil rights movement began to take shape, the City of Denver began to hire Black officers again; and

**WHEREAS**, In the 1950s the department hired many future Black officers who would have trail blazing careers including: Marion H. Qualls, who would become the first black Denver police detective in the modern era, Casey Simpson, who would later become the first Black division chief; and

**WHEREAS**, In the 1970s the Black Police Officer's Organization (BPO) was formed to ensure that Black officers could form coalitions to ensure that their concerns were being heard by departmental leadership. The group also sponsored tutoring sessions for all Denver Police officers to provide them study sessions designed to assist them with passing the necessary tests needed to advance rank within the department; and

**WHEREAS**, Carole Hogue, Laura Tinnin and Rae Beth McCall would become the first Black women officers after they successfully sued the City of Denver, and the Denver Civil Service Commission for racial discrimination in hiring. This would later be referred to as the Hogue Decree; and

**WHEREAS**, In the 1990s, Armedia Gordon became the first Black female to serve as a Denver Police division chief; and

**WHEREAS**, On December 13, 2011, Robert C. White was appointed as the first Black chief of the Denver Police Department by Denver Mayor Michael Hancock; and

**WHEREAS**, On June 24, 2012, Denver Police Officer Celena C. Hollis became the first Black woman Denver Police officer killed in the line of duty; and

**WHEREAS**, In 2022, Ron Thomas was appointed by Denver Mayor Michael Hancock and Denver Mayor Michael Johnson as the second Black chief of the Denver Police Department.

### **NOW THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER:**

**Section 1.** That the Council of the City and County of Denver wishes to acknowledge and thank Denver's Black officers for their many years of protecting and serving the citizens of our community.

**Section 2.** That the Clerk of the City and County of Denver shall affix the seal of the City and County of Denver to this proclamation and copies be transmitted to Denver's Black Officers Organization, The Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library and the Denver Police Museum.

PASSED BY THE COUNCIL February 20, 2024

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRESIDENT

