



AGENDA REPORT

City Council

DATE:	February 25, 2025
TO:	Mayor Martinez and Members of the City Council
FROM:	Councilmember Soheila Bana Councilmember Doria Robinson Councilmember Jamelia Brown
Subject:	Presentation and Proclamation Honoring the Establishment of the Guardians of Justice and Celebrating the Black Nine
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	None
PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:	None
STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:	<p>The Black Nine were nine courageous Black officers of the Richmond Police Department who, in 1968, filed the first internal lawsuit in a police department in the United States to challenge racial discrimination. Their legal victory in 1972 not only led to improved treatment of Black officers in Richmond but also inspired the creation of advocacy groups for Black officers across the country. Following their victory, they founded the Guardians of Justice, which remains active today in fighting injustice and supporting underprivileged communities.</p> <p>This presentation and proclamation honors and celebrates the contributions to racial justice and equity made by these officers and the officers who followed in their footsteps in the City of Richmond.</p>

RECOMMENDED ACTION:	RECEIVE a presentation from The Guardians of Justice on the history and contributions of the officers from the Black Nine towards advancing civil rights and police accountability, and PROCLAMATIONS recognizing the members of the Black Nine - Arthur Johnson, Douglas Ellison, Harold Redic, Marvin Smith, Michael Nichols, Ollie Glover, Otis Timmons, Rudolph Johnson, and Tecumseh "Danny" Nelson - Councilmembers Soheila Bana (510-672-3490), Doria Robinson (510-620-6568), and Jamelia Brown (510-412-2050).
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DISCUSSION:

In 1968, the Black Nine filed a lawsuit against the Richmond Police Department (RPD) to challenge racial discrimination in hiring, assignments, and promotions. Despite the risks of retaliation, the Black Nine persisted in their fight for justice. Their courage was fueled by the 1968 Richmond uprisings following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., where they witnessed widespread racial profiling, unlawful detention, and police misconduct, particularly in Black neighborhoods like Parchester Village.

The Black Nine include:

- Arthur Johnson
- Douglas Ellison
- Harold Redic
- Marvin Smith
- Michael Nichols
- Ollie Glover
- Otis Timmons
- Rudolph Johnson
- Tecumseh "Danny" Nelson

Following their legal victory in 1972, the Black Nine founded the Guardians of Justice (Black Police Officers' Association), an organization dedicated to fighting injustice and supporting underprivileged communities. The Guardians of Justice continue to be a voice for equity in law enforcement and serve as a bridge between the Richmond Police Department and the community.

The legacy of change remains especially today, with the Richmond Police Department Chief of Police, Bisa French. Chief French, a member of the Guardians of Justice, exemplifies the progress made within the RPD, and her leadership is reflective of the systemic change that the Black Nine inspired.

This proclamation celebrates the contribution to racial justice made by those officers and the officers who follow in their footsteps in the City of Richmond.

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

Attachment 1 – Presentation from the Guardians of Justice

Attachment 2 – Proclamations for the Black Nine (Arthur Johnson, Douglas Ellison, Harold Redic, Marvin Smith, Michael Nichols, Ollie Glover, Otis Timmons, Rudolph Johnson and Tecumseh "Danny" Nelson)

Attachment 3 – Black Nine/Guardians of Justice History [Excerpts from the autobiography of former Alameda County Judge Henry Ramsey Jr., *The Life Story of Henry Ramsey Jr: An Autobiography* (Self-published, 2008)]