

RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR A STATE HISTORICAL MARKER IN CHAPEL HILL HONORING THE 1947 JOURNEY OF RECONCILIATION, THE "FIRST FREEDOM RIDE"

To the Chapel Hill Town Council
January 28, 2008

The Chapel Hill-Carrboro NAACP and the Community Church of Chapel Hill Unitarian Universalist have joined together to petition the State of North Carolina and the North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Advisory Committee to erect a marker honoring the Journey of Reconciliation and the Freedom Riders who arrived in Chapel Hill on April 12, 1947. We request that the Council endorse our petition tonight, so that the endorsement can be included with the application to the State (which is due February 14, 2008).

Resolution of Support

The Chapel Hill Town Council enthusiastically supports the application of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro NAACP and the Community Church of Chapel Hill Unitarian Universalist for a state historical marker honoring the Journey of Reconciliation, the "First Freedom Ride." This First Freedom Ride was one of the most important civil rights protests in North Carolina prior to 1960.

When the Freedom Riders tried to leave Chapel Hill on a Trailways bus on April 13, they were beaten by white cab drivers, arrested, their lives threatened, and they were forced to flee in the night to Greensboro. Black and white residents of Chapel Hill, particularly UNC students and Rev. Charles Jones, a Presbyterian minister long active in civil rights and a founder of the interracial Community Church of Chapel Hill in 1953, came to the aid of the Freedom Riders. Chapel Hill was the only stop on the Journey of Reconciliation where the Freedom Riders received such significant white support. This demonstration of white anti-racism was a proud moment for racial justice in Chapel Hill and a sign of things to come.

The publicity resulting from the beatings and arrests encountered by the Freedom Riders in Chapel Hill elevated the Journey of Reconciliation and the little known Gandhian tactic of non-violence to state and national media prominence and public debate. The First Freedom Ride encouraged justice-loving African Americans and white allies particularly in Chapel Hill, to increase their efforts to challenge segregation. In this way, the events in Chapel Hill and the Journey of Reconciliation as a whole, helped pave the way for the civil rights movement of the 1960s that ended Jim Crow segregation.

The Town of Chapel Hill is dedicated to achieving civil rights, justice, and racial reconciliation. An important part of that commitment involves preserving local black history. Demonstrating the Town's commitment to racial justice through historical markers and monuments is an essential part of reaching these goals. We therefore urge the North Carolina Historical Marker Advisory Committee to recommend acceptance of the Freedom Rider historical marker at its next meeting.