

RESOLUTION

Honoring Henry Aaron for a lifetime of pioneering achievements as a professional athlete and civil rights champion

WHEREAS, Henry “Hank” Aaron was born in Mobile, Atlanta, where he grew up in a segregated neighborhood. Aaron was a hard worker at a young age. His parents had very little money and took on various jobs to support the family; and

WHEREAS, In his junior year of high school, Aaron transferred to Allen Institute in Mobile, which happened to have an organized baseball program. After graduating from Allen Institute in Mobile, he played with local amateur and semi-pro teams such as the Pritchett Athletics and the Mobile Black Bears. In 1951, Aaron was recruited by the owner of the Indianapolis Clowns, where he was signed as a Clowns shortstop in 1952. Due to his outstanding batting skills, a Boston Braves scout purchased his contract with the Indianapolis Clowns for the following season. He spent 21 of his 23 baseball seasons with the Braves organization; and

WHEREAS, Aaron’s career was one of the greatest in baseball history. Most notably, he broke all-time records for home runs and RBIs held by Babe Ruth, and previously considered unbreakable. He also received the National League Most Valuable Player in 1957, and the Lou Gehrig Memorial award for integrity in 1970. In 1975, he received the People’s Choice award for Favorite Sports figure. In 2002, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by George W. Bush; and

WHEREAS, Aaron experienced countless acts of racism, but used his platform to help bring attention to civil rights. He became an activist who continued to lobby in hopes of encouraging young Black athletes to stay in baseball. With the support of the NAACP, Aaron became the first Black man to obtain a senior management position as a front office executive with the Atlanta Braves; and

WHEREAS, In 1994, Aaron and his wife, Billye, founded the Chasing the Dream Foundation which provided financial support and mentoring to underprivileged youth. The goal of this foundation was to make sure that other children had the same opportunity to chase their dreams that Aaron did. Hank Aaron hit a then-record 755 homeruns during his baseball career and wanted to offer 755 children this opportunity. They ultimately surpassed this number, helping hundreds more children; and

WHEREAS, With Aaron’s advocacy, Major League Baseball committed 2 million dollars for various scholarships through Chasing the Dream to Boys and Girls Club members. Through his selflessness, more than 350 children across the country have been awarded the Boys and Girls Club Chasing the Dream program scholarship; and

WHEREAS, Aaron’s legacy is one of trailblazing professional accomplishment, grace in the face of intense racism, and steadfast commitment to creating better opportunities for underprivileged youth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby honors Henry Aaron for a lifetime of pioneering achievements as a professional athlete and civil rights champion.

Introduced by
Kenyatta Johnson
2nd District Councilmember
January 28, 2021