



RESOLUTION

CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS - A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

By: Jenkins, Payne, Wonsley, Rainville, Vetaw, Ellison, Osman,
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HONORING DRAG PERFORMANCE AND DRAG CULTURE AS A FORM OF FREE SPEECH

- Whereas: Drag performance is an artform built on self-expression and artistic performance. It can be a profession, an entertainment offering, a beacon of creativity, a symbol of community pride and queer excellence. It has been a place that all gender expressions and all races have actively contributed to throughout time. More recently, it has been used as a form of political protest in response to instances of discrimination, homophobia, and the targeting of the LGBTQ+ community through policing, community harassment, and brutality; and
- Whereas: The history and origins of drag performance and culture can vary depending on where you are in the world. Most notably in the United States, drag performance and culture can be traced back to the late 1880's when William Dorsey Swann, an African American man born into slavery, LGBTQ+ activist, and the self-proclaimed "Queen of Drag", hosted a series of secret drag balls in Washington, DC. Simultaneously, vaudeville shows and iconic artists featured specialty acts of burlesque, comedy, song and dance from elegant and refined female impersonators and became increasingly popular in touring circuits across America. Drag culture influenced all forms of popular culture, film and media and it was considered family entertainment in the early part of the 20th century, and in most cases, it is still considered family-friendly entertainment; and
- Whereas: In the early 1900's throughout the Midwest and Minneapolis, establishments like the Pantages, the Orpheum, and the Metropolitan were known entertainment venues revered for their traveling variety shows on par with vaudeville shows. The Persian Palms, previously located on Washington Avenue, is known to have hosted one of the Twin Cities' first drag revues and establishments like the Dugout Bar and Herb's were considered social refuges for members of the local LGBTQ+ community. Local drag artists were also known to perform in homes, private clubs, piano bars and lounges, college campuses and small social gatherings which has influenced the on-going popularity of the arts in Minneapolis; and
- Whereas: Drag as an artform has been impacted by laws restricting cross-dressing and gender expression that didn't match the gender shown on a person's identification card and dates back nearly 150 years. In 1863, San Francisco was the first place to enact legislation to ban cross-dressing in public. This action led to the proliferation of similar laws across the country, including here in Minneapolis where we enacted a similar ordinance in 1877 and new laws restricting gender expressions are being proposed and passed to this day; and
- Whereas: These discriminatory laws were used for several decades to erase, harm, harass and silence LGBTQ+ people. Additionally, common-place arrests subsequently led individual's names being published in local newspapers causing many individuals to be outed, beaten, ostracized and employment opportunities jeopardized; and
- Whereas: The success of the many fearless artists and activists and the Gay liberation movement in the 1960's-1980's ultimately led to this formerly discrete entertainment subculture to be accepted and celebrated as a part of mainstream LGBTQ+ culture with the first Twin Cities Pride March in 1972 on Nicollet Mall and has become an important part of the cultural and aesthetic fabric of our city and vibrant part of our nighttime economy; and
- Whereas: Looking forward to today, we are proud to have many historic venues and producers that curate, showcase and promote drag culture here in Minneapolis. Establishments like the Gay 90's, Roxy's Cabaret, Lush, the Saloon, Flip Phone, First Avenue, Crave, Union, Ladies of the Lakes- Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, Walker Art Center, University of Minnesota, Patrick's Cabaret, Bryant Lake Bowl, Twin Cities Pride, and Out Twin Cities Film Festival as well as many other performance art events produced by local artists in Minneapolis are making our city a safe haven for progressive creative expression and a celebration of diversity, equity, and inclusion; and
- Whereas: The City of Minneapolis uplifts efforts that protect and promote drag culture and transgender lives, such as the creation of West Hollywood's drag laureate program and the repeal of New York's "loitering for the purpose of prostitution" law; and we celebrate the important legacy of all drag artists who have offered their creativity and generosity for generations to support community-building and healing to not only the LGBTQ+ community but the broader community as well; and
- Whereas: We condemn the rise of anti-drag and anti-transgender legislation where bans and restrictions have passed or are being advanced, such as Tennessee, which this past Spring, became the first state to criminalize drag shows on public property or in places where children may be present; and

- Whereas: Nearly 500 anti-transgender legislative bills have been introduced across the country this year alone, with over 30 bills that specifically aim to restrict and limit drag performance. This number is expected to grow; and
- Whereas: The normalization of anti-transgender and anti-drag legislation will continue to greatly impact the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ youth and the broader LGBTQ+ community nationwide; and
- Whereas: Minneapolis will continue to take actions to remain a safe and welcoming city in steadfast support of drag artists and performance, drag history, culture, and complete freedom of gender expression, and we recognize, honor, and celebrate the contributions of our renowned drag community;

—NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED—

That the Mayor and City Council do hereby express our City's values and support for the rights of all individuals to express themselves freely and openly and stand in support of drag artists and performers everywhere.

Passed this the Twenty-eighth Day of June 2023

Andrea Jenkins, President of the Council

Approved:

Jacob Frey, Mayor

Attest:

Casey Joe Carl, City Clerk