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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON STREETS AND SERVICES

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Monday, October 28, 2024
10:45 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA - VICE CHAIR
COUNCILMAN JIMMY HARRITY
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN NINA AHMAD
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS

BILL: 240931

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P R O C E E D I N G S

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COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Good

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morning, everyone. Welcome to

5

Philadelphia City Council Committee on

6

Streets and Services. I now note the

7

hour's come. Mr. Pullin, would you

8

please call the role.

9

THE CLERK: Councilwoman Ahmad?

10

COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Yes.

11

THE CLERK: Councilwoman Bass?

12

COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Yes.

13

THE CLERK: Councilwoman

14

Brooks?

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COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Present.

16

THE CLERK: Councilman Squilla?

17

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Present.

18

So we have a committee. Thank

19

you, Mr. Pullin.

20

We now have a quorum to

21

start the hearing. Joining us also

22

today are people to testify on this

23

legislation.

24

I'll note for the record

1

2 that we have a quorum and the hearing
3 is called to order. This is a public
4 hearing on the Committee on Streets
5 and Services to consider testimony on
6 Bill No. 240931.

7 Before we begin, do any of
8 our colleagues have any opening
9 remarks? Seeing none. Mr. Pullin,
10 would you please read the title of the
11 bill?

12 THE CLERK: Bill No. 240931
13 titled, authorizing and directing the
14 changing of the name of Taney Street
15 to the LeCount Street, from West
16 Toronto Street to West Somerset
17 Street, from Ridge Avenue to Cecil B.
18 Moore Avenue, from Master Street to
19 Aspen Street, from Pine Street to
20 Bainbridge Street, from Catherine
21 Street to Christian Street, from
22 Dickinson Street to Morris Street.

23 And authorizing and
24 directing the changing of the name of

1

2 Taney Terrace from Point Breeze Avenue
3 to Jackson Street to LeCount Terrace,
4 all under certain terms and
5 conditions.

6 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank
7 you, Mr. Pullin.

8 Can you please call the
9 first witness to testify on Bill No.
10 240931?

11 THE CLERK: The first
12 witness to testify is Kristen Del
13 Rossi, commissioner of the Department
14 of Streets.

15 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Good
16 morning. Just state your name, for
17 the record, and proceed with your
18 testimony.

19 MS. DEL-ROSSI: Good
20 morning. Kristen Del Rossi.

21 Good morning, Chairperson
22 Young and members of the Streets and
23 Services Committee. My name is
24 Kristen Del-Rossi and I am the

1

2 Commissioner of the Department of
3 Streets. I am here to testify in
4 support of Bill No. 240931 introduced
5 by Council President Johnson,
6 Councilmember Jones and Chairperson
7 Young.

8 The bill authorizes and
9 directs the changing of the name of
10 Taney Street to LeCount Street, from
11 West Toronto Street to West Somerset
12 Street, from Ridge Avenue to Cecil B.
13 Moore Avenue.

14 From Master Street to Aspen
15 Street, from Pine Street to Bainbridge
16 Street, from Catherine Street to
17 Christian Street, from Dickinson
18 Street to Morris Street. And
19 authorizing and directing the changing
20 of the name of Taney Terrace from
21 Point Breeze Avenue to Jackson Street
22 to LeCount Terrace.

23 The Department of Streets
24 supports this proposed name change.

1

2 Furthermore, Mayor Parker and her
3 administration recognized the
4 historical significance of this
5 legislation and they are proud to
6 support City Council with this
7 legislative effort.

8 Currently, there are
9 approximately 600 addresses that would
10 be affected by the street name change.
11 The Board of Surveyors will take the
12 necessary steps associated with the
13 name change, including changing the
14 street signs at 32 intersections,
15 which will take approximately six
16 months. The Board of Surveyors will
17 also notify the local postmaster of
18 the street name change.

19 Residents will be
20 responsible for changing their
21 government issued documents with the
22 appropriate government agencies. The
23 administration is prepared to work
24 with city council on any necessary

1

2 outreach to residents.

3

 The Office of Property

4 Assessment will change the street name

5 on residence's tax account. Street

6 GIS will change the name attached to

7 the street center line segments, which

8 should iterate to all cities' mapping

9 applications. When effective

10 properties are sold or conveyed in the

11 future, the new street name change

12 would be included in the new deed.

13

 This concludes my

14 testimony. I am pleased to answer any

15 questions you may have. Thank you.

16

 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank

17 you for your testimony. Rich, are you

18 testifying? Here for questions? Are

19 there any questions from the

20 colleagues? Seeing none. Thank you

21 so much.

22

 MS. DEL-ROSSI: Thank you.

23

 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:

24

 Mr. Pullin, could you

1

2 please read the next panel to testify?

3

THE CLERK: The next

4

witnesses to testify are Samaya Brown

5

and Joshua Isserman of the Rename

6

Taney Coalition.

7

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank

8

you. And whoever wants to start

9

first, state your name for your

10

testimony and then proceed.

11

MR. ISSERMAN: My name is

12

Joshua Isserman and thank you for

13

having us this morning.

14

I'm honored to speak on

15

behalf of the rename Taney Coalition.

16

The world in our city are not as they

17

-- as they ought to be or as they

18

should be, we face many challenges.

19

But I'm not here to review all of

20

those challenges. Today, we are

21

taking a hopeful step forward.

22

The name Taney or Taney

23

carries a legacy of injustice tied to

24

the denial of basic rights to Black

1

2 Americans. This street at the heart
3 of our city should no longer bear that
4 name.

5 Today, with City Council
6 Streets Committee hearing reviewing
7 this bill, we begin righting that
8 wrong and honoring Caroline LeCount
9 who stood for inclusion and equality.

10 When this idea first
11 crystallized amongst Taney Street
12 residents to change the name in the
13 spring in summer of 2020, it felt
14 quite daunting. Taney Street
15 stretches over four miles crossing
16 multiple neighborhoods and three
17 council districts. But we believed in
18 the goal and we learned by doing. Our
19 coalition of everyday Philadelphia
20 residents grew door by door, event by
21 event and op-ed by op-ed.

22 Early supporters like
23 Tyrique Glasgow saw the vision, and
24 voices like Samaya Brown added

1

2 clarity.

3

4 We built the coalition by
5 collaborating with neighbors and
6 partners and having one-on-one
7 conversations across the four plus
8 miles of Taney Street. Each step
9 reinforced the lesson that real social
10 change begins by simply taking the
11 next step.

12 Social change also starts
13 with recognizing that we each have a
14 role in repairing our world. It's not
15 enough to acknowledge what's wrong.
16 We must act. No one can do
17 everything, but everyone can do
18 something. Analyzing the problem,
19 speaking out, and sure, but most
20 importantly, take real steps towards
21 change.

22 Feeling overwhelmed? We
23 certainly did during this project, but
24 no one has to solve it all. Just
25 choose your calling and get started.

1
2 The belief in change is
3 inseparable from hope. And hope keeps
4 us moving even when progress feels
5 distant. And yes, it's hard work and
6 it feels -- it can feel uncomfortable,
7 but we succeed by engaging in open
8 dialogue, finding common ground, and
9 building bridges between neighbors and
10 communities. This is how we solve our
11 shared challenges through collective
12 action that repairs our world.

13 Renaming Taney Street
14 reflects this shared responsibility.
15 It's not just symbolic, ensures that
16 our government and democracy work for
17 everyone. And for our institutions to
18 truly serve all of us, they must
19 reflect fairness, justice and
20 inclusion.

21 This legislation shows that
22 when residents, neighbors and City
23 Council leaders come together,
24 meaningful change is possible.

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I want to thank the
incredible partners on this journey.
I've mentioned Tyrique Glasgow of
Young Chances Foundation, Samaya
Brown, and many partners and
volunteers over the years of this
project that have comment on their
small part or their large part.

I also want to acknowledge
Joy Taney, a descendant of Roger B.
Taney, speaking on behalf of Taney
family, who's joined this effort and
she's going to make some comments
later in support of the bill as well.

Just wanted to say a couple
more things about, you know, social
change that asks us to move beyond
ourselves and recognize the power of
our actions to repair our world. You
might feel small, but you are mighty.
So let's take action so one day our
city and our world will be as they
ought to be. Thank you.

1

2

MS. BROWN: Hi. My name is

3

Samaya Brown and I'm here to speak

4

about why this issue is small, but

5

also very mighty.

6

As a resident of

7

Philadelphia, I purchased a home in an

8

upcoming neighborhood in Brewerytown

9

on 27th in Girard in 2018. And I went

10

outside for the first time to take a

11

walk around my new neighborhood,

12

turned a corner and looked up and saw

13

the name Taney.

14

Anybody who knows anything

15

about history knows who Roger B.

16

Taney is and what he is famous for.

17

And he is famous for saying that Black

18

people do not deserve to be citizens

19

of the United States of America

20

because they are inferior to white

21

people and because they're inhuman.

22

As a Native American whose

23

land this is and as a black person

24

whose people built everything this

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2 land -- that stands on this land, it
3 was both deteriorating, hurtful and
4 incredibly dehumanizing to look up and
5 see that somebody had named the street
6 after Roger B. Taney and after he had
7 made that infamous decision.

8 At that point I realized
9 that America is not going to change
10 for the better unless we come together
11 as a community and change it together.

12 We worked with Josh
13 Isserman and Ben Keys, Tyrique
14 Glasgow, Leo Vaccaro, and a lot of
15 community associates and community
16 members who also recognized that this
17 is something that needs to happen
18 because racism is not just a what --
19 it's not unimportant. It is
20 structural. It is systematic. And in
21 order for us to actually overcome
22 racism, we will have to dismantle all
23 of the systems that uphold it.

24 We are very thankful for

1

2 the NAACP and President Hicks as well
3 as Philadelphia Community College
4 President Dr. Generals, and several
5 other members over the community who
6 also recognize how important it is not
7 only to remove the name Roger B.
8 Taney, but to instill the name
9 Caroline LeCount.

10 If you don't know who
11 Caroline LeCount is, there is a reason
12 for that. She was a wonderful
13 advocate and activist in the
14 Philadelphia community and
15 Philadelphia's Rosa Parks 100 years
16 before Rosa Parks did what she did for
17 the community.

18 She has put her life on the
19 line and dedicated her life to making
20 this community a better place for not
21 just black people, but for everybody.
22 And as a black and native American
23 person who doesn't have a lot of
24 historical figures that I can look up

1

2 to, it is important that we highlight
3 what she did for us. That we tell her
4 story, that we do not let her story be
5 lost to history because it should not
6 be.

7 And it is appalling that
8 somebody would have a street named
9 after them because of a terrible thing
10 that they did. And Caroline LeCount,
11 who spent her entire life serving the
12 Philadelphia community, did not even
13 have a headstone in the Eden Cemetery
14 until we raised money to get her one.

15 So I hope that you can look
16 at this not just as removing the name
17 Taney because of the terrible
18 anecdotes that come with it, but
19 because Caroline LeCount deserves to
20 have her story told, and she deserves
21 to be learned about by all of the
22 children in Philadelphia, and she
23 deserves to be somebody who history
24 recognizes and remembers. Thank you.

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COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank

you so much for your testimony. Any

questions?

COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS?

COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: I was

wondering, either one of you or

someone from the administration if

they're still here. Is this going to

be an ongoing coalition for other

streets that have names that don't

represent where we are now as a

country or could be offensive to other

people? Or is this like a one-time

coalition, which I celebrate. This is

an amazing thing. I'm just wondering

if this is going to be --

MS. BROWN: I can only --

COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: --

it's an opportunity for this.

MS. BROWN: Sure. I can

only speak for myself, but I am a

community activist and it is something

that I do understand is a really

1

2 prominent issue in America having
3 honorifics and streets and building
4 named after people who don't deserve
5 to have them. And I do think that it
6 is an important thing that we do.

7 And after we finish this,
8 this has taken about four years. I am
9 definitely happy and ready and willing
10 and will be looking for other
11 opportunities to fix things of this
12 nature.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

14 Okay. Thank you both.
15 Like, all -- just the coalition for
16 this work, when I read up on it this
17 morning and kind of warmed my soul as
18 an activist and organizer to see, you
19 know, black women receiving their
20 honors for hard work that sometimes
21 not recognized and they didn't do it
22 to be recognized, they did it because
23 they had to.

24 MS. BROWN: Right.

1

2

COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: So

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thank you for, you know, making sure

4

that the city remembers her and for

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the work you guys have done to switch

6

this over. I appreciate that.

7

MS. BROWN: Thank you.

8

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank

9

you. COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD?

10

COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Yes.

11

Thank you.

12

Thank you to all of you for

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the hard work you've done to rectify a

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stain, right? And it'll take a lot

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more for us to not only remove the

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stain in this way, but remove it in

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systematic ways that continue to

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plague us.

19

But I wanted to ask you,

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you said it took four years from when

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you started talking about it. Can you

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share with us what were the

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impediments or was just a process so

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to my colleague's point, if we were to

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2 do other spaces, what are the lessons
3 learned as a best practice? And just
4 curious to know what took so long?

5 MS. BROWN: Yeah. Why
6 don't you answer that?

7 MR. ISSERMAN: Okay. So I
8 want to first thank Council President
9 Johnson and his wonderful staff. And,
10 in fact, many staff have come and
11 moved to other positions within city
12 government to serve our city. And
13 we've kind of outlasted even a
14 generation of a staff.

15 So you know, we kind of
16 look at what we did as sustaining a
17 campaign, you know, not an electoral
18 campaign, but sustaining a campaign of
19 over many years, which is very
20 challenging.

21 And I think for other
22 groups of people thinking about
23 impacting their neighborhoods and
24 their communities in a positive way,

1

2 the best thing that institutions like
3 City Council can do is to be clear
4 about the process and to be clear
5 about what is achievable from everyday
6 residents.

7

So we as a city for --
8 often for good, but sometimes not
9 perfectly rely too much on
10 overwhelming consensus. And there's
11 theories as to why, you know, this
12 tradition has occurred. But, you
13 know, we -- this particular street was
14 challenging because it went across
15 three city council districts.

16

And Council President
17 Johnson was supportive from the
18 beginning. Curtis Jones,
19 Councilmember Jones was also
20 supportive from the beginning. And
21 now we have a new Councilmember in the
22 5th District who is supportive. So
23 that's the -- that was the highest
24 hurdle.

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COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: I'm

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new.

4

MR. ISSERMAN: Okay. And

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so we're getting three council staffs

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to coordinate tightly. We're

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explaining a nuanced issue that hasn't

8

been seen before. Now there's a model

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for it in some way and it hopefully

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can be iterated on to make it better

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for the city and better for the

12

residents doing this work. I don't

13

know if it wasn't us, if other people

14

honestly would've had the frustration

15

tolerance to overcome the barriers.

16

COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Stay

17

the course. Yes.

18

MR. ISSERMAN: Yeah.

19

COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Well,

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thank you so much. Because what we

21

are sending is a message to our

22

children that when their mistakes

23

made, how do we account for them,

24

rectify them, and move forward

1

2 regardless of what the issue is,
3 right? But in this particular issue,
4 this is the original sin of this
5 country. We're still grappling with
6 that.

7 And so I commend everybody
8 who's here to testify about how to
9 take and grapple with something -- one
10 facet of it. You know, it's -- it
11 might look ceremonial to some folks,
12 but it's the beginning of saying that
13 we are accounting for what happened
14 and doing -- and rectifying that. So
15 I'm very grateful to all of you. And
16 best practices, we should probably
17 look internally to see what is a tool
18 kit that comes out of something like
19 that.

20 MR. ISSERMAN: Sure.

21 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

22 Right. Yeah. Because we
23 have a lot of issues we have to deal
24 with and to streamline this would be

1

2 probably very --

3 MR. ISSERMAN: Yeah. And

4 this one is one that can be -- it

5 could not be re-contextualized, like

6 the street, you know, it's -- I think

7 it's 32 blocks that it -- there's no

8 way to do anything about that. You

9 couldn't place a plaque next to it.

10 And so there -- but there are other

11 elements in this city that could be

12 potentially recontextualized. There

13 are other tools available. And so it

14 would be helpful for city leaders to

15 think about how to do this in a way

16 that moves all of us forward without,

17 you know, overwhelming everyday

18 residents.

19 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

20 Well, thank you so much.

21 Thank you, Chair.

22 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank

23 you, council members. Any other

24 questions? Seeing none. Thank you so

1

2 much for your testimony.

3 MS. BROWN: Thank you.

4 MR. ISSERMAN: Thank you.

5 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:

6 Mr. Pullin, can you please read the
7 next panel to testify?

8 THE CLERK: The next
9 witness testify is Tyrique Glasgow,
10 founder of The Young Chances
11 Foundation.

12 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Good
13 morning and thank you both for being
14 here to be a part of this hearing. I
15 just want you to state your names for
16 the record and then proceed with your
17 testimony.

18 MR. GLASGOW: Good morning.
19 My name is Tyrique Glasgow.
20 T-Y-R-I-Q-U-E. Glasgow,
21 G-L-A-S-G-O-W.

22 Tell them how your name and
23 spell it.

24 CHILD SMITH: My name is

1

2 Amaj Smith.

3

MR. GLASGOW: What's your
4 name and spelled?

5

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Say it
6 again. Say it again.

7

MR. SMITH: My name is Amaj
8 Smith. And --

9

MR. GLASGOW: Spell it. It
10 has to go on record. He has his
11 speech together. We didn't go over
12 this part of the introduction.

13

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: No
14 problem. Thank you. And welcome.
15 We'll start with you Tyrique, then
16 proceed with your testimony and we'll
17 go to the little one.

18

MR. GLASGOW: All right.

19

First of all, I'm going to
20 just say God is good all the time, and
21 all the time, God is good. And I'm
22 going to give a direct shout out to my
23 grandmom who cannot be here, but is
24 the reason why I'm here today.

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As mentioned, my name is
Tyrique Glasgow. I'm the executive
director of Young Chances Foundation,
which is a community organization in
South Philadelphia, primarily in the
Grays Ferry area. We focus on public
health, public safety and youth
engagement, trying to provide all the
resources and information to our
community without the red tape.

I came to this project as
just a member in the community doing
worked during the COVID Pandemic. And
for me, you know, as a black man in
Grays Ferry, it always wasn't
welcoming. I'm going to get straight
to the point about doing some of the
things that we do in our community.
And during that time, during COVID, it
was -- it was a challenge. It was a
challenge just to get resources, just
to get information, just to see a
smile on people faces, you know, and

1

2 everyone went through that.

3

4 So when I seen two
5 literally white men walking down the
6 street in Grays Ferry talking about
7 wanting to change, wanting to provide,
8 wanting to do all those things, I
9 thought of it again as a poverty pimp.
10 So these are people who are coming to
11 the community trying to take advantage
12 of us, trying to do things that is not
13 going to benefit me or the community,
14 the residents that I serve.

15 One of the things that I
16 first asked Ben and Joshua is, why?
17 What is it for? What are you all
18 doing? But before they could even get
19 it out, I looked down and I seen that
20 they had their kids with them. And it
21 was something that, it wasn't like
22 they were out here campaigning. That
23 they are out here doing something, you
24 know, for themselves.

Clearly, they were trying

1

2 to change the generational, you know,
3 educational things that they had
4 learned and provide that to our
5 community.

6 I will at sidebar say that
7 they don't even live in our community.
8 Those -- these two people don't
9 reside, doesn't have resources, teams,
10 so there's no interest for them to be
11 there. So, again, my antennas went up
12 like, here we go again.

13 But when they talked about
14 did I know Taney? You know, as
15 someone who lived in that community,
16 who has been shot 11 times, went to
17 jail for five years and thought Taney
18 Street was mine, it was ownership.
19 You know, a lot of people in the
20 community, regardless if you're on
21 Taney Street or if you're in a housing
22 projects, that's Taney.

23 You know, people took pride
24 in knowing that you were from Taney or

1

2 this was your representation, so to
3 say. But the reality was it's not
4 ours. You know, he -- they broke it
5 down to me that this was someone who
6 basically said the reason why a lot of
7 the things that are going on, not only
8 in our city, but in our country is
9 because of this decision.

10 And as a person who thinks
11 we get it and we know that, it really
12 was a slap in the face because I'm
13 like the same block that I was on, the
14 same things that I was doing trying to
15 provide those everyday resources and
16 talk about mental health and bridge
17 the divide through finances.

18 Here's someone who
19 basically said, you're not even equal
20 to the people that you're serving.
21 Who are you? You don't -- you
22 shouldn't have a chance to vote. You
23 shouldn't have an opportunity to read,
24 write, and provide for your family.

1

2 This is not true.

3

4 So that decision basically
5 was the reason why a lot of our, you
6 know, elected officials and agencies
7 have to provide those essential
8 resources to my community.

9

10 So I challenge the Rename
11 Taney Coalition to not only fix
12 yesterday, but how can we focus on
13 tomorrow. Because a lot of the things
14 in our community has already been
15 embedded. You know, a lot of people
16 think that, you know, living in
17 poverty or gun violence or living in
18 communities is normal. These are the
19 things that you are supposed to live
20 like. You're supposed to have, you
21 know, violence or people lose their
22 lives everyday in your community.

23

24 But the challenge for me
25 was to get a different plate for the
26 young people in my community, for them
27 to understand that they don't have to

1

2 point the finger at the issues. They
3 can look in the mirror and come up
4 with some different solutions for
5 themselves.

6 And council did ask about
7 what were some of the strategies.

8 Mine was to get the young people at
9 the table for them to see, like what
10 it is for you to have a fresh start.
11 For someone was to think that you were
12 equal, that you could have those
13 opportunities.

14 So when we went into not
15 only the meetings, but into schools
16 and the daycares and the libraries,
17 and was talking to other community
18 organizers about the -- not only the
19 decision, but Caroline LeCount, who is
20 a black woman, who was a teacher, who
21 was a Philadelphia Rosa Parks. But
22 also gave them the opportunity to talk
23 about literacy, to talk about the
24 transportation and the acts that you

1
2 wouldn't talk about when it's not
3 Black History Month. You know, when
4 it's not just a talking point, it's
5 the things that we need to instill in
6 our community everyday. And it got
7 away from just becoming about Caroline
8 LeCount, but about the generational
9 issues that we can change within our
10 community.

11 I want to first say that it
12 was different for me because I'm
13 really selfish and protective of my
14 community. But when they talked about
15 the three different council matter
16 districts that it spanned across, the
17 same issues that was in South Philly
18 is in North Philly, is in all those
19 districts. And every community member
20 understood, you know, this is
21 something that we should get over.

22 So I did invite Mr. Amaj to
23 come and give a small testimony
24 because we do speak about today, but

1

2 for my organization it's about
3 providing a tomorrow.

4 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Amaj?

5 Yes, just --

6 CHILD SMITH: Good morning.

7 My name is Amaj Smith and I attend
8 school here in Philadelphia and is a
9 part of Young Chances Foundation. I'm
10 here to support the name of -- the
11 name change of LeCount Street because
12 it is very important to the community.
13 And I would be -- I think it would be
14 fun for me to learn about -- more
15 about it. Thank you. And I hope the
16 name change happens for my generation.

17 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Amaj,
18 thank you so much for your testimony.
19 Both of your testimony, but it's
20 really important to understand that --
21 the courage it takes to come here and
22 testify in front of City Council. And
23 we appreciate what you have done today
24 because it shows that the voices of

1

2 the young do need to be heard and
3 that, you know, people on council will
4 listen to that. So thank you for
5 doing that and being part of today's
6 hearing process. Great job.

7 CHILD SMITH: You're
8 welcome.

9 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Any
10 questions?

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Not a
12 question.

13 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:
14 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS?

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: I
16 noticed that he was inquisitive about
17 things that are happening over here,
18 so hopefully you guys get to stick
19 around a little bit so he can come
20 behind there and kind of see what's
21 back here. It will be a full day
22 experience of what we do here in
23 council.

24 MR. GLASGOW: We'll do

1

2 that. And I want to close by saying
3 that this is our opportunity to start,
4 but also give appreciation to the
5 council president and, you know,
6 Councilmember Jones and Young, but
7 also to the other members who are
8 listening to this and are going to
9 vote.

10 It takes me back to Alfred
11 Nobel who, you know, created dynamite.
12 And I also talk about this legacy
13 change that we're doing in the city
14 where it's not just about, you know, a
15 color, it's really about changing our
16 legacy.

17 And when Alfred Nobel
18 passed away, they put an obituary
19 about his work and his life and his
20 legacy. And they talked about how he
21 was an architect at death, about how
22 the war started and how it killed
23 communities and children and things
24 like that. But what they didn't know

1

2 was Alfred had a twin brother, and
3 that was actually Alfred's twin
4 brother who passed away.

5 And what Alfred did was he
6 felt some type of way about how they
7 talked about his legacy and his life
8 because that's not who he truly was.
9 So Alfred ran around the country and
10 he talked to all his legislators and
11 his friends and politics and
12 government and who was doing social
13 work and he said, I need you to go out
14 there and find good people who are
15 doing good work and that's providing a
16 different opportunity for our
17 community.

18 Now that award is called
19 the Nobel Peace Prize and it allows
20 people to see the positive in our
21 country. So I appreciate not only
22 council changing the legacy in the
23 city of Philadelphia, but giving our
24 generation a new start.

1

2

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank

3

you so much. Thank you for your

4

testimony.

5

MR. GLASGOW: You're

6

welcome.

7

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:

8

Mr. Pullin, can you please

9

read the next panel to testify?

10

THE CLERK: The next

11

witness to testify is Joy Taney.

12

COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

13

Tyrique, Tyrique, before

14

you go, can you turn around and the

15

young man.

16

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: You

17

can go in front of desk, if you like.

18

COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

19

That's good. Okay. Thank

20

you. Wait, wait, wait. Thank you.

21

COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Wait,

22

wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait,

23

wait.

24

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: She's

1

2 slow.

3

THE CLERK: She is going to
4 send it around.

5

COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Yeah,
6 I'll send it to everybody.

7

THE CLERK: She'll send it
8 to the committee.

9

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank
10 you. Joy, just state your name for
11 the records, then you can proceed with
12 your testimony.

13

MS. TANEY: My name is Joy
14 Taney. Yes, if we could play the
15 videos of two Taney family members.
16 We also have written testimony from
17 two additional Taney family members.

18

(Video is played.)

19

MR. PETER TANEY: (Video
20 recording) My name is Peter Taney.
21 Roger Brooke Taney was my great-great-
22 great-great uncle and I completely
23 support the renaming of Taney Street
24 as I suppose it's called in that

1

2 neighborhood. It was named that as a
3 racist move by local government when
4 that happened. And I don't think this
5 dude's name should be on anything
6 anywhere. He is a stain on the family
7 history, so good luck with it.

8 MS. MADELINE TANEY: (Video
9 recording) My name is Madeline Flori
10 Taney. I'm a great -- one of the
11 great, great, grandnieces Roger Brooke
12 Taney, and I support the renaming of
13 Taney Street to LeCount Street. There
14 should be nothing named after Roger B.
15 Taney. Thank you.

16 (Video recording ended.)

17 MS. TANEY: And you should
18 also have additional written testimony
19 from two more Taney family members,
20 Ariel and Ashley Halburn, my cousin
21 and her daughter.

22 My name is Joy Taney and
23 I'm a member of the Taney family whose
24 ancestors include Chief Justice Roger

1

2 Taney after whom Taney Street is
3 named.

4 The Taney family has
5 debated how to reckon with our
6 family's legacy and infamous ancestor
7 for longer than I've been alive. The
8 conversation has gone on longer than
9 my father and his siblings who lived
10 in Philadelphia since the 70s have
11 been alive.

12 When my Taney uncle worked
13 with the Scott family to create an
14 official apology from the Taney family
15 to the Scott family, on the 160th
16 anniversary of the ruling he said,
17 apologizing to the Scotts for the Dred
18 Scott decision is like bringing a
19 Band-Aid to an amputation. It's right
20 and necessary to apologize, but what's
21 important now is what actions we can
22 all take.

23 The actions we can take in
24 Philadelphia by changing the name of

1

2 Taney Street to LeCount Street can
3 turn the tides on the psychological
4 and social impact that this street
5 name has caused in Philadelphians of
6 all races for 166 years.

7 Taney Street was named just
8 one year after the Dred Scott decision
9 was issued. Roger Taney has no
10 significant history here. He didn't
11 live here. And my Taney cousin's
12 research revealed zero significant
13 connections or moments in his life,
14 which happened in Philadelphia.

15 Many Philly street names
16 connect to Philadelphian history and
17 meaning, from our local trees to
18 Shackamaxon's Lenape translation of a
19 place where chiefs meet. But Roger
20 Taney is associated with this one act.

21 It is the only way we hear
22 the Taney name mentioned at all in
23 school or in conversation when
24 learning about significant Supreme

1

2 Court rulings and the long ongoing
3 road towards civil rights justice.

4 Can you imagine that day
5 for a Philadelphian student discussing
6 the horrific cultural impact of
7 Taney's ruling against the citizenship
8 and personhood of black Americans, and
9 seeing that name on your own street?

10 I can't even begin to imagine how
11 Taney Street must make our black
12 Philadelphians feel.

13 As a Taney family member, I
14 feel shame when seeing the street and
15 a deep distrust toward a mayor who
16 wanted to honor Taney's part in the
17 Dred Scott decision this way. What
18 must naming Taney Street and leaving
19 it standing for 166 years say to
20 Philadelphians about a city government
21 which honors one of the great American
22 dehumanizers.

23 Renaming Taney Street won't
24 solve the vast and terrible legacy of

1

2 my ancestors ruling that black people
3 who were slaves or had ancestors that
4 were slaves did not have rights as
5 American citizens, but renaming it to
6 LeCount Street can be a transformative
7 act.

8 Caroline LeCount wasn't
9 just a black Philadelphian activist
10 who was ahead of her time in
11 desegregating transportation 90 years
12 before Rosa Parks, her public speaking
13 accomplishments and becoming the
14 second black woman school principal in
15 Philly history. She's still an
16 example and inspiration for modern
17 activists to follow in making our city
18 better.

19 Learning LeCount's name in
20 school or in conversation and
21 connecting it to your nearby street or
22 your home street is aspirational. By
23 sticking to and fighting for what she
24 believed in, Caroline LeCount made

1

2 history. The city government honoring
3 LeCount Street shows that you believe
4 in what she believed in rather than
5 Taney Street, reminding Philadelphians
6 how black Philadelphians were property
7 not so long ago, and the government
8 supported that, too, through Taney.

9 In truth, the Taney family
10 doesn't want to erase Roger Taney's
11 name from history. We want to keep
12 the conversation about him alive and
13 continue working with Dred Scott's
14 descendants, so that Taney's
15 legislative violence against black
16 Americans is never repeated.

17 Continuing to honor Taney
18 with a street name is not the way to
19 learn from the past. Continuing to
20 honor him with a street name is to
21 celebrate the Dred Scott ruling and to
22 co-sign it with your own support.

23 Philadelphia is the city of
24 non-profits, of cutting edge activism,

1

2 of utopian experiments. Renaming
3 Taney Street after our own
4 Philadelphian citizen Caroline LeCount
5 aligns with all the best parts and
6 potentials of our city.

7 The Taney family, myself
8 included, believes that street names
9 should be aspirational and or
10 historic, both of which qualify
11 Caroline LeCount far above Roger
12 Taney. Taney Street's name is a
13 constant reminder of how our own mayor
14 celebrated the loss of rights and
15 personhood in the Dred Scott decision,
16 which was a ruling made by a
17 non-Philadelphian who had no personal
18 history in Philadelphia.

19 The Taney family, myself
20 city now, and the Taney family, myself
21 lived here since the 70s believe in
22 LeCount Street. We believe in what
23 LeCount Street says about the virtues
24 our Philadelphia government stands

1

2 for. The Taney family stands with
3 rename Taney Street, the message it
4 sends and the impact it has. I ask
5 you to stand with us and rename Taney
6 Street to LeCount Street. Thank you.

7 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank

8 you so much for your testimony. Any
9 questions? Seeing none. Can --

10 Mr. Pullin, can we please have the
11 next -- COUNCILWOMAN BASS?

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: You
13 know, I just really wanted to commend
14 you for being here today because I
15 can't begin to tell you how many
16 wrongful, you know, statues or namings
17 of, you know, confederate, you know,
18 generals or luminaries, you know, of
19 that time, who have relatives who
20 still feel that there are in -- they
21 are entitled to a position on a street
22 renaming or on a statue or whatever, a
23 building. It doesn't matter.

24 And so I just really wanted

1
2 to commend you for being here and for
3 speaking truth to power and for really
4 just, you know, spreading the word
5 that what happened was unacceptable
6 then, it's unacceptable now to
7 continue on and that we have your full
8 blessings from the family. So it's --
9 I think that's worth noting and I just
10 wanted to acknowledge that.

11 MS. TANEY: Thank you for
12 hearing me and hearing everyone here.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

14 Absolutely. Thank you.

15 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank
16 you again for your testimony. Much
17 appreciated. Mr. Pullin?

18 THE CLERK: The next
19 witnesses to testify are Megan
20 McNally, Michelle Hiett, and Brian
21 Lang, residents of Taney Street.

22 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Whoever
23 wants to start first, just State your
24 name for the record and proceed with

1

2 your testimony.

3 MR. LANG: Hi, there. This
4 is Brian Lang.

5 Thank you, committee for
6 hosting this special session. As I
7 said, my name is Brian Lang and I live
8 on the 800 block of North Taney Street
9 in Fairmount.

10 I've lived in Philadelphia
11 for 20 years. And a little over three
12 years ago, my wife and I finally saved
13 up enough to buy our first house. We
14 were so happy and so proud to finally
15 be able to have a home of our own.
16 But it wasn't long after that our
17 pride gave way to really embarrassment
18 when we learned the history of our
19 street name Taney.

20 Because when you think
21 about Philadelphia, it's synonymous
22 with words like independence and
23 freedom and love. But those words
24 don't ring as true after learning that

1

2 a street was once named in honor of a
3 man presiding over one of the most
4 racist and discriminatory Supreme
5 Court rulings in our nation's history.
6 It feels like a direct contradiction
7 to what our city stands for. And I
8 remember thinking, I don't want to
9 live on that street.

10 I work in human resources
11 and like at many companies, where I
12 work, we have a strong commitment to
13 diversity, equity and inclusion. And
14 in our efforts, I've come to
15 appreciate the difference between
16 diversity and inclusion. Diversity
17 means you have people from different
18 backgrounds represented, but inclusion
19 means those people are free to
20 participate because they actually feel
21 included.

22 It's an important
23 distinction because you can have
24 diversity without inclusion. So you

1

2 can probably imagine that if someone
3 living on Taney street or nearby Taney
4 learned the history behind the street
5 name, then they might not feel very
6 included in that community even if
7 they lived there for 40 years.

8 Well, I don't have to
9 imagine that. I don't have to imagine
10 how they might feel because I've
11 spoken with them myself and I know how
12 they feel and so does the rest of the
13 Rename Taney Coalition.

14 Together, we knocked on
15 every single door along the North
16 Taney block and I personally spoke to
17 dozens and dozens of my neighbors up
18 and down the block. I can count on
19 one hand the amount of people who
20 weren't into the idea, and it was
21 mostly because they were apathetic or
22 worried that their mail wouldn't get
23 to them, which we all know is not
24 going to be a problem.

1
2 Instead, let me share with
3 you the two types of responses I heard
4 when speaking to residents of Taney
5 Street. The first group was aware of
6 the street name's history and they
7 were sad or frustrated about it, but
8 they didn't know that something could
9 be done about it. However, as soon as
10 we shared about the Rename Taney
11 effort, they immediately became
12 hopeful that a change would come. The
13 other group of people weren't aware of
14 the history at all, but upon hearing
15 it, instantly, threw their support
16 behind changing it.

17 One moment in particular
18 sticks to me to this day. We were
19 knocking on doors along Taney through
20 Fairmount and Brewerytown, and I had
21 to pass through the athletics Rec
22 Center, and I walked by a pickup
23 basketball game that was going on.
24 One of the players saw me with flyers

1

2 and he stopped the game to ask, Hey,
3 what are you doing? So I showed him
4 and I told him about the history of
5 Taney Street and that we were trying
6 to get it changed.

7 His smile immediately
8 disappeared. He looked right at me,
9 he said, give me those flyers. And he
10 proceeded to walk all around the court
11 and the park to pass them on as well.
12 That was the moment I knew this wasn't
13 just a good idea. This was something
14 that people on and around Taney Street
15 wanted.

16 And since then that feeling
17 has only been validated more and more.
18 My wife had a Rename Taney sign up
19 outside her house for about a year
20 now. And while I'm sitting by the
21 window, I see so many people walk by
22 and take pictures of it. And on
23 numerous occasions I've even had FedEx
24 and Amazon delivery drivers tell me

1

2 when delivering a package, Hey, I love
3 your sign. I hope that happens.

4

Now I know that
5 Philadelphia has many challenges, big
6 and small. And at a previous town
7 hall hosted by Councilmember Jeffrey
8 Young, I heard someone wonder why
9 given all the needs of the people in
10 our city, why change the signs? It
11 felt to me like they thought we needed
12 to decide between having safe streets
13 or renaming Taney, or decide between
14 ensuring there's proper funding for
15 education or rename Taney. Except
16 I've never thought of this as an
17 either or proposition. This is about
18 taking an and, not an or approach.

19

These issues are not
20 mutually exclusive. We can do both.
21 We're not saying those other issues
22 aren't important and shouldn't be
23 acted upon. They are and they should.
24 But what we're here for today is to

1

2 take definitive action on something
3 very, very tangible that will make
4 this a more inclusive and united city.

5 In my life I hope to be
6 known for what I stand for and I think
7 all you want that, too. I want to
8 live in a place that makes it very
9 clear what they stand for and are very
10 proud of it. But right now, as long
11 as that sign bears Roger Taney's name,
12 someone whose beliefs contradict the
13 city's values and ideals, it sends a
14 very conflicting message of what we
15 stand for and it is certainly not
16 something to be proud of.

17 But, and here's the good
18 news, you change that sign to LeCount,
19 and instantly it becomes a sign of
20 what we stand for. Equality, equity,
21 inclusivity, education, which Caroline
22 LeCount devoted her life to. Speaking
23 up when you witness injustice, as
24 Caroline LeCount did over 150 years

1

2 ago, supporting others and helping
3 them advance, which Caroline LeCount
4 embodied.

5 That is a street that makes

6 you both happy and proud to live on.

7 So I hope you will take action today

8 and make this a reality. And I

9 appreciate all the big and the small

10 things you do to make this great city

11 of Philadelphia better each day.

12 Because as the old Tanzanian proverb

13 goes, little by little, a little

14 becomes a lot. Thank you.

15 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank

16 you. Thank you for your testimony.

17 Please state your name, for the

18 record, and proceed with your

19 testimony.

20 MR. WHITEHORN: Matthew

21 Whitehorn. I'm a resident of 502

22 South Taney or Taney, whatever

23 pronunciation we're using. I live

24 right next to Meghan.

1

2

So I've lived at 502 South

3

Taney for 18 years. As a college

4

history major, for me anything

5

associated with the word Taney or

6

Taney, regardless of the source of the

7

name of any particular street,

8

immediately raises an association with

9

the dreadful, no pun intended, Dred

10

Scott, U.S. Supreme Court majority

11

opinion written by Chief Justice Roger

12

Taney or Taney, very close to the

13

beginning of the Civil War.

14

That case represents the

15

low point in the history of the

16

Supreme Court in terms of racial

17

justice in this country by denying the

18

rights of citizenship to African

19

Americans and condoning the practice

20

of slavery.

21

For that reason, renaming

22

the street in honor of a Philadelphia

23

Civil rights hero, Caroline LeCount,

24

makes absolute sense. Thank you.

1

2

MS. MCNALLY: Good morning.

3

My name is Meghan McNally. I live on

4

the 500 block of South Taney Street

5

and I'm here today to support the

6

legislation to rename Taney Street to

7

LeCount Street.

8

Every time I write down my

9

address, every time I see a street

10

sign or give friends directions to my

11

house, I have to say the name Taney.

12

Justice Taney wrote the Dred Scott

13

decision that stripped black Americans

14

of their citizenship. These are daily

15

reminders of racism that simply are

16

not necessary. This name is something

17

that my neighbors and I are not

18

willing to tolerate any longer.

19

I visited Arlington,

20

Virginia several years ago. They

21

renamed Lee Highway, Langston

22

Boulevard after their first black

23

congressman, and a school known as

24

Washington Lee High School is now

1

2 Washington Liberty High School.

3 Neighbors and residents who

4 didn't identify with White

5 supremacists, Robert E. Lee, were

6 thrilled to see the change and they

7 quickly moved on with their lives. If

8 Virginians can do it, we can do it

9 too.

10 The name Taney doesn't

11 reflect my values of inclusion and

12 opportunity for everyone in our

13 community. Thanks to the renamed

14 Taney Coalition for building support

15 for this change. And thanks to City

16 Council and especially Council

17 President Johnson, Councilman Jones

18 and Young for introducing this bill to

19 remove a racist symbol from our city.

20 Thank you.

21 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank

22 you so much for your testimony. Thank

23 you. Any questions? Seeing none.

24 Appreciated.

1

2

Mr. Pullin, can you please

3

read the next panel to testify?

4

THE CLERK: Can Jaime

5

Fontaine or Jamie Fontaine, however

6

it's pronounced. Do we have Jaime?

7

Okay.

8

The next witness is -- the

9

next witness to testify is Catherine

10

Hicks, president of the Philadelphia

11

branch of the NAACP.

12

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Good

13

morning, Ms. Hicks.

14

MS. HICKS: Good morning.

15

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: State

16

you name --

17

MS. HICKS: Good morning,

18

council members. I'm Catherine Hicks,

19

Philadelphia branch president of the

20

NAACP. Thank you for allowing me to

21

be here today.

22

I'm here in support and to

23

give testimony of the Department of

24

Streets Bill No. 240931 introduced by

1

2 Council President Johnson, Council
3 Members Jones and Young. I'm really
4 excited that this is finally coming
5 somewhat to fruition.

6 I'm thankful first to
7 applaud the efforts and the resilience
8 of the Taney Street Coalition, Samaya
9 Brown, and all who participated over
10 the last five years to bring this to
11 fruition.

12 Samaya Brown brought this
13 to the Philadelphia branch NAACP, and
14 I want to thank those members from the
15 NAACP that are here today in support
16 as well. The Philadelphia NAACP
17 stands resolutely in support of the
18 initiative to rename Taney Street to
19 LeCount Street. A change that
20 reflects our commitment to justice,
21 equality and the recognition of those
22 who have fought tirelessly for civil
23 rights.

24 Roger B. Taney, the man

1

2 whom the street is currently named, is
3 notorious for his role in the Dred
4 Scott decision. A ruling that denied
5 citizenship and basic human rights to
6 black Americans. His legacy is one of
7 oppression and injustice, a stark
8 reminder of a painful history that has
9 inflicted deep scars on our society.

10 We believe that honoring
11 such a figure is incompatible with the
12 values we strive to uphold today.

13 In contrast, Caroline
14 LeCount embodies the spirit of
15 resilience and advocacy that our
16 communities need to celebrate. Known
17 as the Rosa Parks of Philadelphia, she
18 was a pioneer and educator and civil
19 rights activists who courageously
20 challenged the status quo long before
21 the Montgomery Bus boycott. Her
22 relentless efforts to desegregate
23 public street cars in the 19th century
24 not only paved the way for greater

1

2 civil rights, but also inspired
3 countless others to join the fight for
4 justice.

5 Caroline LeCount, who was
6 also the fiance of Octavius Catto, who
7 we have a statue right here on the
8 city hall grounds and perhaps one day
9 we'll have one for her standing next
10 to him was instrumental in the court
11 case in 1867, which successfully led
12 to the banning of segregation on
13 public transportation. She represents
14 a significant victory in the struggle
15 for equality.

16 By renaming Taney Street to
17 LeCount Street, we honor a true
18 champion of civil rights and ensure
19 that the legacy of those who fought
20 for justice is remembered and
21 celebrated.

22 This renaming is more than
23 just a change of a sign. It is a
24 powerful statement about who we are as

1

2 a community and what we aspire to be.

3 It is a step toward healing,

4 reconciliation and the ongoing pursuit

5 of justice for all.

6 We urge all stakeholders to

7 support this important initiative and

8 to join us in recognizing the

9 contributions of Caroline LeCount, a

10 beacon of hope and progress in our

11 shared history. Together, let us turn

12 the page on a legacy of division and

13 embrace a future that celebrates the

14 courageous individuals who have fought

15 for equality and justice.

16 And I, again, just want to

17 thank the Taney Street Coalition for

18 bringing this to our attention. And

19 this also just, again, shows how much

20 we need education. But I won't say

21 civil -- not only civil rights

22 education, but history and black

23 history in our schools. Because,

24 again, they gave us this information

1

2 and I hope all of you will have this.

3 We're sharing it with our members, our

4 families, our children, because before

5 this I had -- I wasn't even aware of

6 Caroline LeCount.

7 So, you know, I find that

8 really disheartening, but also

9 important that we recognize the

10 history that this city has and we make

11 sure that we take -- we take - we hold

12 that accountable, but also make this

13 change so that we can be proud of the

14 Taney Street name when it is no longer

15 the sign, but the LeCount sign. Thank

16 you.

17 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank

18 you so much for your testimony. Any

19 questions? Seeing none. Much

20 appreciated.

21 Mr. Pullin, could you

22 please read the next person to

23 testify?

24 THE CLERK: The next

1

2 witness has testified is Dr. Guy
3 Generals, president of the Community
4 College of Philadelphia.

5 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Good
6 morning, Dr. Generals.

7 MR. GENERALS: Good
8 morning. Good morning, everyone.

9 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: State
10 your name, for the record, and
11 proceed.

12 MR. GENERALS: My name is
13 Guy Generals. I would like to voice
14 my support to remove the name of Taney
15 and replace it with a name that
16 adequately reflects the rich history
17 of Philadelphia as the birthplace of
18 American democracy. And that name
19 should be Caroline LeCount.

20 The name of Roger Taney
21 invokes the darkest memory in the
22 history of African Americans in
23 particular and in America in general.

24 In short, his ruling in the

1

2 Dred Scott case as the chief justice
3 of the Supreme Court set the stage for
4 the Civil War. And more importantly,
5 it laid the foundation or I should say
6 equally important, it laid the
7 foundation for the belief in white
8 supremacy, which for far too many
9 Americans continues to exist.

10 The core of his infamous
11 ruling. And I quote, A black man has
12 no right that a white man is required
13 to honor, infused white supremacy
14 into the laws of the land. To him and
15 as proclaimed by the Dred Scott ruling
16 in 1857, African Americans were
17 property, unworthy of the dignities of
18 humanity.

19 The removal of his name is
20 especially important at Community
21 College of Philadelphia. The Octavius
22 Catto Scholarship is given to
23 thousands of students each year. The
24 scholarship is the hallmark of the

1

2 college and the city of Philadelphia's
3 commitment to racial and social
4 justice, to economic and educational
5 access.

6 Octavius Catto was a young
7 scholar attending the Institute for
8 Colored Youth, now Taney University
9 during the time of the Dred Scott
10 decision. He was an activist who
11 worked towards social justice. He
12 supported the fight to end slavery and
13 the Civil War. And he fought in favor
14 of the Civil War to end slavery, and
15 he died engaging blacks in their right
16 to vote. On election day 1871, he was
17 assassinated.

18 Octavius Catto and Caroline
19 LeCount were engaged, but they never
20 made it down the aisle. An assassin's
21 bullet took Octavius life just after
22 the activist cast his ballot at a
23 polling place in 1871. He was
24 32-years-old. Ms. LeCount, an

1

2 educator, carried the mission forward,
3 fighting for freedom and equity.

4 I believe we dishonor their
5 legacies by allowing that name to
6 stand. I have students and faculty
7 who live on those blocks and are
8 embarrassed that the name has not been
9 removed.

10 So on behalf of our
11 students and the importance of knowing
12 and understanding our history, because
13 this is an educational moment, I am
14 asking that the name of Taney be
15 removed and changed to Caroline
16 Rebecca LeCount. Thank you.

17 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank
18 you. Thank you, Dr. Generals. Any
19 questions? Seeing none.

20 Mr. Pullin, can you please
21 read the next person to testify?

22 THE CLERK: The next
23 witnesses to testify are Fasaha
24 Traylor, Leo Vaccaro and Keisha Usher-

1

2 Martin.

3

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:

4

Whoever wants to start, we

5

could just start by stating your name,

6

for the record, and then you can

7

proceed with your testimony and we'll

8

go through the pattern.

9

MS. TRAYLOR: Good morning.

10

My name is Fasaha Traylor, co-author

11

of the book, "They Carried Us: The

12

Social Impact of Philadelphia's Black

13

Women Leaders," published in 2020.

14

Caroline LeCount was one of

15

the 95 black women we profiled in our

16

book. And I congratulate council for

17

moving forward with changing the name

18

of Taney Street to LeCount Street.

19

That is certainly important. But I

20

also want to encourage you not to

21

think of this as a routine end point,

22

just a street sign or the end of

23

council's involvement.

24

As our country prepares to

1
2 celebrate the 250th anniversary of the
3 signing of the Declaration of
4 Independence, and Philadelphia250
5 shines a spotlight on the meaning of
6 the Declaration to Philadelphia,
7 council should consider showcasing how
8 the renaming of Taney Street fits into
9 our country's long, hard, yet still
10 unfinished journey from white
11 supremacy to equality.

12 This act by council is
13 something we should all be proud of
14 and something we should all claim as a
15 meaningful part of our civil legacy.
16 Council could help us integrate the
17 thinking embodied in the name change
18 as part of the inheritance of
19 equality.

20 Council could issue a
21 proclamation written by a leading
22 Philadelphia historian entitled Why
23 Taney Street Disappeared. This
24 document could be distributed to all

1

2 Philadelphia high schools and focus on
3 how Justice Roger B. Taney's belief in
4 segregation and white supremacy set
5 our country back and put us on the
6 path to the Civil War.

7 Council could issue a call
8 for students to develop essays or
9 visual arts pieces about the life of
10 Caroline LeCount. Essays and visual
11 art could focus on her staunch belief
12 in human equality and her actions to
13 bring that belief into being.

14 Philadelphians should know
15 about her decades long commitment to
16 educating black students in
17 Philadelphia's segregated schools and
18 advocating for the black teachers who
19 bore the burden of teaching them
20 within a segregated system.

21 Council could organize a
22 hearing, possibly televised by WHYY,
23 linking Caroline LeCount's community
24 activism to segregate street -- to

1

2 desegregate street cars in

3 Philadelphia with the community

4 activism led by renamed Taney.

5 Joining hands across many

6 decades of the city's history, both

7 Caroline LeCount and Rename Taney's

8 activism are examples of how community

9 activism can move our country forward.

10 Far be it from me to

11 suggest how these efforts might be

12 accomplished, but here are a few

13 ideas. Maybe Education Committee and

14 Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs

15 could collaborate on a plan to bring

16 ideas like these to life. These or

17 other committees could seek to

18 collaborate with Philadelphia²⁵⁰ to

19 highlight where the street name change

20 fits in the long march to the equality

21 articulated in the Declaration.

22 Council members from the

23 three districts whose ascent was

24 required could, along with folks from

1

2 the Rename Taney Coalition form a kind
3 of speakers bureau to inform all
4 Philadelphians about the importance of
5 taking this action and how relevant it
6 is to Philadelphia250.

7 That's just the beginning
8 of a list that I hope you will add to.
9 So thank you for taking this action.
10 I will resist the temptation to add
11 finally. And congratulations once
12 again.

13 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank
14 you. Whoever wants to go, just state
15 your name and then proceed.

16 MS. USHER-MARTIN: Yes.
17 Good morning. I am Keisha Usher-
18 Martin, a 17-year resident on
19 Bainbridge Street, and prior vice
20 chair of SOSNA, which is a South of
21 South Neighborhood Association, who --
22 and I have advocated and supported
23 renaming the street to honor
24 Philadelphians heroine Caroline

1

2 LeCount.

3

When I first met Ben Keys,
I already knew of Justice Taney and
the horrific and personally painful
Dred Scott decision. It is one of the
first cases taught to first year law
students in constitutional law.

9

When I moved to Bainbridge
Street, I was appalled that my
neighborhood street, park and youth
softball league were all named to
honor Roger Taney. However, like
others, I was unaware that it could be
changed. And here I was some 20 years
later as a lawyer and a mother
presented with a unique opportunity to
make a change. One that I was able to
experience with my children.

20

Neighbors in Devil's Pocket
joined the Rename Taney Street
Coalition, petitioning for support in
this rename. While they -- while the
Rename Coalition has generated public

1

2 interest, we still need City Council's
3 approval. Your voice carries
4 significant weight in this effort, and
5 we welcome any support you can offer.

6 This renaming would honor
7 Ms. LeCount who played a pivotal role
8 in desegregating Philadelphia's
9 trolley lines. And it would send a
10 powerful message to the children
11 growing up in our community. It
12 reinforces the values of diversity and
13 inclusion specifically, inspiring the
14 next generation to stand against
15 injustice.

16 I have taken my children
17 and my niece with me during these
18 public outreaches. The children of
19 our community are well aware and
20 knowledgeable of their ability to use
21 their voices to enact change. And in
22 this instance, I ask you to use yours.
23 Our neighborhood from young to old are
24 doing the right -- doing the work to

1

2 right these historical wrongs.

3 Years later, my 5th grade

4 -- my then 5th grade niece was a part

5 of the student led name change of

6 Chester Arthur School. She, because

7 of her experiences with me, nominated

8 and gained school support for her

9 nomination of Caroline LeCount as a

10 potential name for the school.

11 Then in 2023, thanks to

12 this student-led petition to the

13 school board, the name was then

14 officially changed from Chester Arthur

15 School to Marian Anderson Neighborhood

16 Academy in July 2023.

17 So although Caroline

18 LeCount didn't get that honor, she

19 still has the opportunity to have an

20 honor within our community. One that

21 our children have been made aware of

22 and wholly support.

23 Our neighborhood has been

24 making many changes in the last

1
2 several years. 2023, we had the
3 renaming of Chester Arthur, and we
4 also had the renaming of Christian
5 Street from 15 to 20th as Black
6 Doctors Row. And the honorary
7 renaming recently of the 900 block of
8 17th Street to honor the school guard
9 at Stanton, Ms. Geraldine Graves on
10 just October 19th.

11 This reflects our
12 community's commitment and youth
13 awareness to recognizing and
14 celebrating our black and American
15 history.

16 Changing Taney Street or
17 Taney Street to honor Ms. Caroline
18 LeCount exemplifies our dedication to
19 progress and fostering pride and unity
20 in a way that will benefit future
21 generations. Ms. Caroline LeCount is
22 often compared to Rosa Parks in
23 Ms. Parks fight to integrate the
24 Montgomery bus system. However, I

1

2 would counter that Ms. LeCount being
3 95 years prior to Ms. Parks in 1955,
4 stands on her own and has no
5 comparison.

6 Your vote will be a
7 catalyst to continual change in a way
8 that will bring pride to
9 Philadelphians and especially to the
10 children of Philadelphia.

11 Your vote can affect the
12 loss of emotional safety felt by the
13 black community in our heavily
14 gentrified Graduate Hospital
15 neighborhood. Also, your vote will
16 bring awareness to the white community
17 who is in the progress of gentrifying,
18 but also bring awareness to the white
19 children who could be future
20 gentrifiers and will learn the
21 respectable way of being included in a
22 new a community that has already been
23 built by black people.

24 And that is my conclusion.

1

2 Thank you for your support.

3 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank
4 you. Thank you so much for your
5 testimony.

6 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Oh, we
7 don't want her to go.

8 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Oh,
9 hold on. Please state your name, for
10 the record, and proceed.

11 MR VACCARO: Thank you.
12 Hello, I'm Leo Vaccaro. I'm a member
13 of Rename Taney and I'm a high school
14 history teacher. And I over-prepared
15 like a typical teacher. So I am going
16 to skip my preamble and get into echo
17 some of the statements. I'm also very
18 fortunate that we were able to
19 convince a bunch of historians like
20 Dr. Generals who spoke earlier,
21 Fasaha, to my right, and also Dan
22 Biddle, who wrote the book about
23 Octavius Catto, is going to talk in a
24 minute. And I believe Dan is actually

1

2 one of the few people, who met someone
3 who met Caroline LeCount. So he's our
4 closest connection that I know of to
5 Caroline LeCount.

6 As a history teacher, and I
7 appreciate you having this meeting and
8 listening to our testimony. It means
9 a lot to us to have this opportunity
10 to talk about Philadelphia history.

11 As a teacher, I believe,
12 that the Civil Rights Movement of the
13 Civil War era is tremendously
14 important. Knowing how Americans of
15 that generation freed themselves from
16 enslavement with the 13th Amendment,
17 demanded their right to vote with the
18 15th Amendment, and most significantly
19 fought for the equal protection of the
20 law with the 14th Amendment, is the
21 most profound story in American
22 history, even more authentically so
23 than was the case here in 1776.

24 And that's why I'm so

1

2 excited to be part of this effort to
3 rename Taney Street for one of
4 Philadelphia's own freedom fighters,
5 Caroline LeCount.

6 Please allow me to talk a
7 little bit of history about who
8 LeCount was and who she was in the
9 Philadelphia community. Carrie, as
10 she was often known, was born in
11 Philadelphia February 26th, 1846 to
12 parents, James and Sarah. It has been
13 claimed that her father James, a
14 cabinet maker, helped people escape
15 enslavement on the Underground
16 Railroad. I assume that this had a
17 great effect on Carrie.

18 At a time when most African
19 Americans were prohibited from
20 receiving an education, LeCount
21 mastered geometry, trigonometry, Greek
22 and Latin at the Institute of Colored
23 Youth, now known as Cheney University,
24 the first HBCU. During these -- where

1

2 she actually was the valedictorian in
3 1863.

4

During the Civil War and
5 Reconstruction, LeCount helped run the
6 Ladies Union Association, an
7 association of African American women
8 in Philadelphia that sent supplies to
9 the troops in the Civil War, and also
10 up at Camp William Penn in what's now
11 Cheltenham.

12

Shortly after her graduation,
13 she became a teacher and eventually a
14 principal. Determination, passion and
15 academic strength, LeCount was a force
16 to be reckoned with in the classroom
17 as well as in society.

18

In March, 1867, when she
19 was just 21-years-old, LeCount became
20 Philadelphia's Rosa Parks when she
21 personally confronted a streetcar
22 operator and enforced the integration
23 of public transportation.

24

Similar to Rosa Parks,

1
2 LeCount was acting as part of a larger
3 organization as a political agent in
4 cooperation with allies in the vibrant
5 Philadelphia black community, which in
6 those days was centered in the Seventh
7 Ward. When her beloved fiance
8 Octavius Catto was gunned down while
9 voting in 1871, LeCount wept bitterly
10 over his loss and never married.

11 And it gives me great honor
12 to be able to quote LeCount's words
13 directly from an 1873 interview, which
14 stood in direct opposition to the Dred
15 Scott decision of 1857, where she
16 said, "to be intelligent is to
17 understand the laws of the land. And
18 the great feature of our laws is that
19 they make no distinction by means of
20 color."

21 Her statement stood in
22 opposition to the Dred Scott decision,
23 which helped bring this country into
24 civil war as we talked about. Also,

1
2 through this process I spent some time
3 in Philadelphia city archives at the
4 free library with a lot of support
5 looking through why that change
6 actually took place. And it's an
7 unfortunate thing that I'm very
8 grateful that we're looking to finally
9 change it. There were 971 or so
10 streets that were changed after the
11 consolidation of the city. And it
12 appears as though our city leaders
13 just chose a whole lot of political
14 names and continuation of other street
15 names, and it's unfortunate that they
16 chose Roger Taney.

17 Personally, collaborating
18 with archivists, historians, community
19 members, led me to work with an artist
20 to create that coloring book that you
21 have in your hands now. And we, as
22 Fasaha was talking about, we are eager
23 to continue these efforts to get that
24 education into our schools to make

1

2 sure that people understand the
3 history and to get people excited
4 about the fact that we are now -- we
5 now have this opportunity to honor
6 Caroline LeCount.

7 So thank you for listening
8 to my lesson plan and thank you for
9 allowing me to speak on this.

10 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank
11 you all for your testimony.

12 Councilmember Harrity?

13 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

14 Thank you, Councilman. I
15 just want to say thank you for
16 testifying. You know, I consider
17 myself a little bit of a student of
18 history. And it's kind of funny, I
19 grew up in the Devil's Pocket, that's
20 where my mother's from. I spent a lot
21 of time as a young man living at my
22 grandmother's house, played at Taney
23 Park and terrorized that neighborhood
24 as a child. So I'm always glad and

1

2 makes me smile when I hear references
3 to it, especially nowadays where you
4 don't hear it too often.

5 But I thank you for your
6 testimony and, you know, this is --
7 the fact that this was allowed to go
8 on for so long is just a travesty in
9 itself. And, you know, as the teacher
10 has said that maybe we take this as a
11 learning experience and take this as a
12 chance to try to get some of this
13 information into our schools and to
14 our children.

15 I remember learning about
16 the Dred Scott decision when I was in
17 school, but, you know, the whole
18 chapter on civil rights and the
19 struggles was about it one chapter,
20 you know what I mean? That doesn't
21 give you much information. So I'm
22 glad that we're taking these steps
23 now. I'm glad that council president
24 and my colleagues put this bill in.

1
2 It's just amazing, I mean,
3 I literally grew up running around on
4 Taney Street and never knew that it
5 was named after the guy that made the
6 Dred Scott decision. So you learn
7 something new everyday and I'm going
8 to take this as a learning experience
9 and hopefully me and my colleagues can
10 build on it. Thank you.

11 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:

12 Councilwoman Ahmad?

13 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Yes.

14 Thank you so much for your testimony.
15 For everybody, I've been learning
16 these nuggets of information, I did
17 not know that she was the fiance of
18 Octavius Catto. And that just makes
19 it even more poignant, you know,
20 knowing they both were in the
21 struggle.

22 I just wanted to commend
23 Ms. Traylor for laying out a
24 communications plan. So we find -- I

1
2 find, being on city council and
3 engaging with constituents, how little
4 people know of all the things that are
5 happening. It's very hard to keep
6 track of everything. But I think
7 sending a message from our city, from
8 city council, from all of us to the
9 world, I think is an excellent plan.
10 And I would love to follow up with you
11 to kind of see some elements of what
12 we can or cannot do. But I think
13 connecting this to the 250 -- 250th
14 anniversary is an excellent point of
15 how we still are moving to for a more
16 perfect union, right? We are still
17 continuing that path.

18 So thank you. I just
19 wanted to say publicly to all of you,
20 thank you for all this information,
21 and most importantly. Thank the
22 thought behind all of this.
23 Appreciate it. Thank you, chair.

24 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank

1

2 you. Any other questions? Seeing
3 none. Thank you so much for your
4 testimony. Do we have anybody else to
5 testify?

6 THE CLERK: We have one
7 more panel and then -- the next
8 witness to testify are Stan Horowitz,
9 Dan Biddle and Anyabwile Love.

10 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank
11 you so much for being here to testify.
12 Just state your name, for the record,
13 and then you can proceed.

14 MR. HOROWITZ: Okay. Hi.
15 Good morning. My name is Stan
16 Horowitz, and I am here with the
17 Rename Taney Street Coalition to
18 support passage of Bill 240931 to
19 rename Taney Street to LeCount Street.

20 I live in Fairmount in 2601
21 Parkway Building. It's the art deco
22 building across from the art museum.
23 If that building wasn't there, Taney
24 Street would have a 500 block of North

1

2 Taney Street. So thanks to my
3 building being there, Taney Street
4 gets cut off north of the Parkway
5 before it resumes south of the Parkway
6 around Pine Street.

7 So my interest in renaming
8 -- in this renaming effort comes from
9 quite a few years more than I should
10 have of cutting class when I was in
11 northeast Philly and coming down to
12 the Central Library and studying
13 America's interesting history and how
14 it revolved around Philadelphia.

15 And I learned of
16 Philadelphia's rich history --
17 Philadelphia has a rich history in the
18 civil rights movement that even goes
19 back before the Declaration of
20 Independence was signed. So we're not
21 new to being abolitionist at all.

22 When Harriet Tubman helped
23 conduct the Underground Railroad, it
24 was here in Philadelphia where it

1

2 ended up and where a lot of slaves
3 achieved their freedom. So the
4 directly -- the deeply racist history
5 surrounding Chief Justice Roger Taney
6 should preclude him from ever being
7 honored with a street or any other
8 public structure named after him.

9 Renaming Taney Street after
10 South Philly educator and civil rights
11 advocate, Caroline LeCount, who was
12 ahead of her time will allow a monster
13 in our country's troubling racist past
14 to be relegated to history books while
15 honoring a Philadelphian who is well-
16 deserving of this recognition for her
17 civil rights advocacy. And it is
18 aligned with Philadelphia's history in
19 the movement to abolish slavery.

20 And it's not on --
21 unprecedented, I'm thinking of Fannie
22 Jackson Coppin School, which was
23 renamed a few years ago, that's in
24 South Philly from being Andrew Jackson

1

2 School. So I'm asking that City
3 Council rename every segment of Taney
4 Street as per bill 240931. And thank
5 you and thanks for your time.

6 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank
7 you. Thank you for your testimony.
8 Please state your name and then
9 proceed.

10 MR. BIDDLE: My name is Dan
11 Biddle. I am the co-author with
12 Murray Dubin, who's here today of
13 "Tasting Freedom: Octavius Catto in
14 the Battle for Equality in Civil War
15 America."

16 To research this book,
17 Murray and I needed to learn not only
18 about Octavius Catto's remarkable and
19 short life, but the lives of the men
20 and women around him in a civil rights
21 struggle, which as other witnesses
22 have said so well echoed of what we
23 know about the modern civil rights
24 struggle. And you've already heard

1

2 several great witnesses liken Caroline
3 LeCount to the Great Rosa Parks.

4 Since so much has already
5 been said today, and so well, I just
6 want to see if I can add a few facts
7 about who she was and who was around
8 her.

9 It's been mentioned that
10 she was from an Underground Railroad
11 family and that her father, James
12 LeCount, was an undertaker and a
13 carpenter.

14 We learned, Murray and I,
15 that in the 1840s and 50s in black
16 Philadelphia, which was already a
17 thriving community at that time, hard
18 to believe that it took us as a city,
19 another 150 years or so to honor even
20 one black Philadelphian with a statue
21 on public property.

22 But Caroline's family was
23 one of the backbones of black
24 Philadelphia back then. And as was

1

2 mentioned James, her father and the
3 whole family were activists in the
4 Underground Railroad. Easy to say
5 now, back then it was putting their
6 lives on the line.

7 A story that got handed
8 down through generations of Caroline
9 LeCount's family was that in the
10 1850s, kids in the LeCount house,
11 which was on what is now Bainbridge
12 Street, about 9th and Bainbridge, were
13 playing a game of hide and seek. And
14 some of the kids sneaked into the room
15 that James LeCount used for the
16 freshly sawed and nailed coffins that
17 he made for his trade as a carpenter
18 and undertaker, and climbed into one
19 of the newly made coffins and
20 discovered that there was a man in
21 there, a live man.

22 The LeCount family calls
23 all the kids together for a special
24 meeting and tells them they must never

1

2 tell anyone this story, and explained
3 to the kids that the man in there was
4 a fugitive from slavery. Lucky for us
5 the kids grew up and told that story.

6 Another thing that's been
7 mentioned is how she was such a fiery
8 educator. We learned and we kept --
9 we kept learning things. We thought
10 why didn't we learn this in high
11 school or college? By the time
12 Caroline became only the second black
13 school principal in the city's history
14 in the mid-1860s, there had already
15 been a line of black school leaders
16 who were very serious educators by
17 day. And if you'll pardon the
18 expression, badass civil rights
19 activists by night.

20 Charles Reason, Ebenezer
21 Bassett, Octavius Catto's best friend,
22 Jacob White, Fanny Coppin, who's
23 already been mentioned today, every
24 one of them, tough educators and

1

2 fearless equal rights activists. The
3 episode that we've talked about on a
4 March day in 1867 was at about
5 lunchtime on a cold clear day.

6 Ms. LeCount by then the principal of a
7 black school called the Ohio Street
8 School, and her assistant principal,
9 Alice Gordon, also a woman of color,
10 neither of them out of their early
11 twenties. This was mentioned.

12 Caroline was all of 21, walked to the
13 corner of 11th and Lombard and flagged
14 down a yellow streetcar.

15 And happened over and over
16 and over in that era, the conductor
17 not only refused them entrance, but
18 shouted the n-word at them.

19 LeCount at age 21 already
20 knew that in Harrisburg, Octavius
21 Catto and Jake White and other early
22 lobbyists in that battle to integrate
23 the street cars had persuaded just
24 enough Republican legislators, that's

1
2 when the Republican Party stood for
3 something completely different from
4 today. Persuaded just enough to pass
5 a law that forever outlawed
6 discrimination on public
7 transportation in the city of
8 Philadelphia. But the word hadn't
9 made it to the courts and the judges
10 of Philadelphia.

11 So when LeCount at age 21,
12 takes her case to court and tries to
13 persuade a judge to penalize and
14 impose a fine upon the driver and his
15 company, and that was at a time when
16 the streetcar companies were powerful
17 political forces, the judge turns her
18 away and says that he knows of no such
19 change in the law.

20 Murray and I for our work,
21 tried to imagine what that must have
22 been like. To go back to when the
23 city's courts were run entirely by
24 men, white men. And to have two young

1

2 women of color stand up in that
3 courtroom and try to tell a white male
4 judge that he was wrong. I think it's
5 hard for us looking back to imagine
6 how much courage that took.

7 And LeCount didn't stop
8 when the judge turned her away. She
9 already knew what to do. She made her
10 way to a state office and obtained a
11 certified copy of the brand new law.
12 You know, today, we might do that on a
13 cell phone. We might use a Xerox
14 machine, it might take a few minutes.
15 I used to be a reporter here for the
16 Inquirer, and I remember when in this
17 building, getting a Xerox copy took a
18 few hours. But LeCount gets that copy
19 quickly enough to bring it back before
20 the magistrate who hems and haws, and
21 finally agrees that she's right and
22 orders against the streetcar company
23 and forces the company and the driver
24 to pay a fine and makes history.

1
2 That moment in that little
3 courtroom is instantly celebrated all
4 through the civil rights movement of
5 those days. And it's been mentioned
6 how an awful moment in Caroline
7 LeCount's life that we -- that we know
8 something about was the day in 1871 in
9 this city, when her fiance Octavius
10 Catto was assassinated in the midst of
11 trying to protect black voters in one
12 of their very first opportunities to
13 exercise true political power.
14 It's easy to imagine if you
15 had been in her shoes, that to be all
16 but standing next to that act of
17 violence, you might decide to give up
18 your civil rights activism. Caroline
19 LeCount, like the other men and women
20 of that movement, and the -- and the
21 men and women of the modern civil
22 rights movement that we know better,
23 the great John Lewis, Rosa Parks, the
24 great Dr. King, like those people,

1

2 LeCount went right back at it.

3 She goes on not only to be

4 the principal of a black school for

5 the next 40 years or so, she continues

6 to make an argument that her fiancé

7 had made, that public schools need to

8 hire black teachers to teach black

9 students. Because as Catto said, and

10 as she echoed in a speech in 1902,

11 black teachers bring to black students

12 an experience from outside the

13 classroom that even the best white

14 teacher cannot.

15 That wasn't all she did.

16 As another speaker mentioned, she

17 helped lead a little organization of

18 black women in support of the Union

19 Army here in Philadelphia, and that

20 wasn't all they did. As soon as

21 northern soldiers began liberating

22 portion to the south from the

23 Confederacy and from the system of

24 enslavement, there was a huge need to

1

2 supply those parts of the country with
3 basic tools of education for the
4 millions of Americans who had just
5 come out of enslavement and who had
6 been denied any form of education for
7 generations.

8

Among the records that
9 Murray and I looked at for our book
10 was the list that Caroline and her
11 allies put together from donations in
12 about 1865, school supplies to send
13 into the south. One of the items that
14 got donated, then she helped get sent
15 down there, 1,200 slates, 1,200 little
16 blackboards for children and adults in
17 the south to learn with.

18 She also, when we had the
19 Centennial here in town, she was part
20 of a committee of black women who
21 tried to contribute to that event and
22 help organize it. And a committee of
23 upper-class white women that had a big
24 role in creating the Centennial turned

1
2 them away. And lucky for us, thanks
3 to newspaper accounts at the time,
4 we've got the words that Caroline gave
5 to a reporter back when the leader of
6 that white women's committee suggested
7 to these outspoken black women, that
8 if they didn't like the way things
9 were run here, maybe they could remand
10 to Africa.

11 LeCount said, in reaction
12 to that, "the word remand is fraught
13 with the most painful associations and
14 it is only those who have suffered as
15 we have that can fully understand it.
16 It was a term used when the dealers in
17 bodies and souls of men and women
18 succeeded in kidnapping their prey and
19 consigning them to interminable
20 bondage."

21 I know we've already gone
22 long. I'll just mention one other
23 thing. As Leo, bless his heart,
24 mentioned, you know, you don't expect

1

2 that two authors trying to pull a book
3 together in the 2000s would be able to
4 interview anyone from that era.

5 Anyone who knew the heroes of that
6 civil rights struggle. But Murray and
7 I got to do that.

8 We learned that there was a
9 woman living at about 20th and
10 Fitzwater named Lily Dickerson, rest
11 in peace, who by the time we went to
12 see her was 101-years-old. And we had
13 been told by others that Lily knew
14 people who had been involved in that
15 struggle, knew people who had known
16 Octavius Catto when he was still
17 living. And we had the high honor of
18 sitting with her and going over a list
19 of names with her.

20 And at one point, Murray
21 asked her if she knew the name,
22 Caroline LeCount. Lily Dickerson,
23 101, her eyes lit up and she smiled
24 and she said to us, Linnie. She had

1

2 known Caroline LeCount when Caroline
3 was 60 and 70 and 80-years-old by a
4 different nickname from the name that
5 turned up in 19th Century records
6 Linnie LeCount.

7 By the time Lily was a
8 young woman growing up in
9 Philadelphia, Caroline was a
10 distinguished leader in black
11 Philadelphia and still an agitator for
12 equal rights. I found a record of a
13 conference on black education that was
14 held here in our city in 1912, where
15 the lineup code for that conference
16 included the great Alain Locke, leader
17 of the Harlem Renaissance, the great
18 W.E.B. Du Bois and Caroline Rebecca
19 LeCount.

20 I just say one more thing.
21 Every time Murray and I get to read
22 from our book for an audience, we
23 lament that all this history has not
24 previously been learned and taught.

1
2 And we like to talk about how the
3 LeCounts and the Catts and the Whites
4 and the Fanny Coppins and all the
5 other heroes of that early civil
6 rights movement, quite often came back
7 from their marches or their meetings
8 with their heads bloodied, like John
9 Lewis was in 1965, or their bones
10 broken, like Frederick Douglass in
11 1857, but they went back for more.

12 And the fact that most
13 Americans don't know their stories is
14 a crime. But the fact that you can
15 change the name now and take down the
16 name of the odious Roger Taney and put
17 up the name of Caroline LeCount is an
18 opportunity to help change that.

19 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank
20 you. Thank you so much for your
21 testimony. And I saw Murray was also
22 here. It's amazing when you look at
23 the history and you even see the
24 relationship with Catto -- Octavius

1

2 Catto and what that meant to the city
3 of Philadelphia, especially these
4 times right now when you talk about
5 voting and people participating in
6 voting and how important that is and
7 to somebody who gave their life for
8 willingness and the right to vote.

9 And yet, we still have a lot of people
10 out there that do not participate in
11 that right.

12 And so it's a -- it's a
13 fascinating part and I really
14 appreciate the history that you have
15 done and the information that you have
16 provided as part of this testimony.
17 So thank you.

18 MR. BIDDLE: Thanks very
19 much. It's an honor, Chair.

20 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Any
21 questions? Seeing none. Is there
22 anyone else here to testify,
23 Mr. Pullin?

24 THE CLERK: No. No one on

1

2 public comment.

3

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Is

4

there anyone who was not called that

5

would like to testify on Bill No.

6

240931? Seeing none. We confirmed

7

that there's none.

8

THE CLERK: Bottom of page

9

13. Bottom of 13.

10

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:

11

Thirteen?

12

THE CLERK: Yeah, bottom of

13

13.

14

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Yeah.

15

I would like to thank all

16

the witnesses for joining us today and

17

we'll now end the public hearing and

18

go into a public meeting.

19

I'll now note for the

20

record that a quorum of committee is

21

present. Councilmember Harrity to my

22

left and COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS,

23

COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD and COUNCILWOMAN

24

BASS, the quorum is now present chair

1

2 recognized.

3

4 Councilmember Harrity for a
5 motion on Bill No. 240931.

6

COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

7

8 Thank you, Chair. And I
9 move that the Bill No. 240931 be

10

11 reported from this committee with a

12

13 highly favorable recommendation and

14

15 further move that the rules of council

16

17 be suspended to permit first reading

18

19 of this bill at the next session of

20

21 counsel.

22

23 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Second.

24

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Noted

1

2 for the record. Councilwoman Bass

3

4 second. It has been moved and

5

6 properly seconded that the Bill No.

7

8 240931 be reported from this committee

9

10 with a favorable recommendation and

11

12 further move that the rules of council

13

14 be suspended to admit the first

15

16 reading of this bill at the next

17

18 session of council.

1

2

3

All those in favor of the
motion will signify by saying aye.

4

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Aye.

5

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Aye.

6

Those opposed? Ayes have it. And the
motion carries.

8

Favorable recommendation
with the request that the rules of
councils be suspended to permit the
first reading at the next session of
council. This will conclude the
business before the Committee on
Streets and Service today.

15

16

Thank you very much for
your attendance and participation.

17

Great job.

18

(Proceedings concluded at 12:30 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I hereby certify that the proceedings and evidence are contained fully and accurately in the notes taken by me of the above case, and this copy is a correct transcript of the same.

Samanda J. Rios

Samanda J. Rios
Court Reporter
Notary Public of PA & DE

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