



City of Cambridge

13.

IN CITY COUNCIL

May 12, 1997

COUNCILLOR GALLUCCIO
VICE MAYOR BORN
COUNCILLOR DAVIS
COUNCILLOR DUEHAY
COUNCILLOR REEVES
MAYOR RUSSELL
COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN
COUNCILLOR TOOMEY
COUNCILLOR TRIANTAFILLOU

WHEREAS: Last week hundreds gathered in the Great Hall of the Old Suffolk Courthouse in Boston to celebrate the unveiling of the portrait of the late **Edward O. Gourdin**, first African-American justice of the Massachusetts Superior Court; and

WHEREAS: The late Edward Gourdin was a graduate of Cambridge Latin High School, and after graduation from law school, a resident of Cambridge; and

WHEREAS: Edward Gourdin was a scholar, athlete, soldier and judge; he graduated from Harvard College and Harvard Law School; he was a world record holder in the running broad jump and a silver medalist in the 1924 Olympics in Paris; as a member of the Massachusetts National Guard, he commanded a Black infantry regiment during World War II and earned the rank of brigadier general; and

WHEREAS: Edward Gourdin served on the Massachusetts Superior Court from 1958 until his death in 1966, and was one of the outstanding jurists of his time; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the Cambridge City Council go on record commemorating the late **Edward O. Gourdin**, graduate of Cambridge Latin High School and first African-American Supreme Court justice, on the occasion of the unveiling of his portrait in the Great Hall of the Old Suffolk Courthouse; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the City Council go on record expressing its appreciation to the Massachusetts Superior Court, and especially to Chief Justice Robert A. Mulligan and Judge Julian T. Houston for their leadership and vision in the realization of this memorial portrait; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to **Chief Justice Mulligan and Judge Houston** on behalf of the entire City Council.

In City Council May 12, 1997

Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "D. Margaret Drury".

ATTEST:-

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

AG

13. A.P.

Whereas: Last week hundreds gathered in the Great Hall of the Old Suffolk Courthouse in Boston to celebrate the unveiling of the portrait of the late Edward O. Goudin, first African-American justice of the Massachusetts Superior Court; and

Whereas: ^{The late} ~~Edward O.~~ Edward O. Goudin was a

graduate of Cambridge Latin High School, ~~upon the way to graduate from~~ ~~Harvard and Harvard Law School; and~~ and after graduation from that school, a resident of Cambridge; and

Whereas: Edward Goudin was a scholar, athlete, soldier and judge; he ~~too~~ graduated from Harvard College and Harvard Law School; he was a world record holder in the running broad jump and a silver medalist in the 1924 Olympics in Paris; as a member of the Massachusetts National Guard, he commanded a black infantry regiment during World War II and earned the rank of brigadier general; and

Whereas: Edward Gordin ~~was not to be one of the~~
~~outstanding jurists of his time~~; he served
on the Massachusetts Superior Court from
1958 until his death in 1966, and was
one of the outstanding jurists of his time; now
therefore be it

Resolved: That the Cambridge City Council go on
record commemorating the late Edward
O. Gordin, graduate of Cambridge Latin
High School and first African American
Supreme Court justice, on the occasion
of the unveiling of his portrait in the
Great Hall of the Old Suffolk Courthouse;
and be it further

Resolved: That the C-C go on record expressing
its appreciation to the Massachusetts
Superior Court, and especially to
Chief Justice Robert A. Mulligan and
Judge Julian T. Houston for their
leadership and vision in the ~~commemorating~~
~~and ~~commemorating~~~~ realization of
this memorial portrait; and be it further

Resolved: ~~SEG~~ to Chief Justice Mulligan and
Judge Houston in behalf of the entire C-C

Finally, Massachusetts honors an African-American who blazed a trail

JAMES CARROLL

What became of that 1960s-era legion of denim-clad, mostly black civil rights workers who saved our nation's soul? Their sit-ins and voter registration drives transformed our society, opening doors to minorities of all kinds. That America is still far from realizing the dream of full racial equality does not undercut the achievement of the Freedom Riders, who risked their lives to force courts and presidents to embrace the dream too.

Those young civil rights workers have grown into middle-aged men and women, and last week some of them gathered with hundreds of others in the Great Hall of the Old Suffolk County Courthouse in Boston.

The occasion was an unveiling of the portrait of the late Edward O. Gourdin, the first African-American to serve as a justice of the Massachusetts Superior Court.

"Scholar, athlete, soldier, judge," were words one speaker used to describe this extraordinary man. He was a graduate of Cambridge Latin, Harvard, and Harvard Law School. He was a world record holder in the running broad jump and a national champion in other track events. He was a silver medalist at the Olympics in Paris in 1924.

As a member of the Massachusetts National Guard, he commanded a black infantry regiment during World War II, and eventually earned the rank of brigadier general. All of this — and he went on to be one of the outstanding jurists of his time, serving the Superior Court from 1958 until his death in 1966.

Yet who has heard of him? Like the stories of so many distinguished blacks, Edward Gourdin's was told for many years only in the small circle of his family and friends. This extraordinary public man had been all but forgotten by the very commonwealth to which he had once brought such credit.

For example, in courtrooms all over Massachusetts, portraits of deceased judges

hang in silent tribute to honorable careers, but there has been no portrait of Judge Gourdin.

Under the leadership of its chief justice, Robert A. Mulligan, the Superior Court has now remedied that. The noted artist Robert Freeman, himself an African-American, was selected by a jury and commissioned. In unveiling his painting last week, Freeman described the challenge "to capture the physical strength of an Olympian, the emotional strength of a brigadier general, the warmth and compassion of a family man, and the wisdom of a judge." Then the red cloth hiding the portrait fell. The applause that greeted the unveiling suggests that Freeman succeeded.

Chief Justice Mulligan paid particular tribute to "my colleague Judge Julian T. Houston for his persistence and vision in bringing this event about." It was Houston who uncovered Gourdin's story, inspired the fund-raising, oversaw the painting, and presided over the unveiling. He was determined that the man who had blazed the trail for

him and the other black justices of the Superior Court should be properly remembered.

Members of the bench and the bar, black and white both, found it natural to respond to the gracious Houston in part, perhaps, because of his own history, for Judge Houston had been one of those denim-clad civil rights workers. He was a legendary leader at Boston University, where he was student body president and where I got to know him. Before that, in 1963, he was a key organizer of the first massive civil rights demonstration in Boston, bringing a throng to Boston Common, and he helped organize a boycott in Roxbury against Wonder Bread for its discriminatory hiring practices.

In 1984, by then a judge himself, Julian Houston founded an organization of minority criminal justice professionals, the Justice George L. Ruffin Society, named for the first black judge in Massachusetts. The forming of such organizations, the painting of such portraits, and the reclaiming of such lost legacies as accomplished by Julian Houston and his colleagues — all of this is more than an

exercise in nostalgia. America's single most pressing question is whether the still unhealed wound of race will yet swallow the ideal of justice for all.

Now when African-Americans find themselves in courtrooms in whatever capacity, they will see at least one portrait of a man with skin the color of his robes, an emblem of that ideal. In the civil rights era, many bright young people embraced that ideal, then embraced careers in the law as the most potent way of bringing it about. To see those now distinguished lawyers, prosecutors, legislators, and judges gathered last week in solemn assembly, in judicial robes, or silk scarves, or pin stripes, was deeply moving. They are the Honorable Edward O. Gourdin's sons and daughters in the law.

They have made certain that his fierce and compassionate eyes will watch from the wall of a Massachusetts courtroom now — one more witness for the still living dream.

James Carroll's column appears regularly in the Globe.



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AG Resolution in favor of the late
Edward Gouda
grand of C-5 ~~Ag~~ + Lari

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13.

IN CITY COUNCIL

May 12, 1997

COUNCILLOR GALLUCCIO

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WHEREAS: The late Edward Gourdin was a graduate of Cambridge Latin High School, and after graduation from law school, a resident of Cambridge; and

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Entire
memb.
Consent ORder #13

R-705

Councillor Galluccio re: Commemoration
of the late Edward O. Gourdin, Graduate
of CRLS and first African American
Supreme Court justice, on the occasion
of the unveiling of his portrait in the
Great Hall of the Old Suffolk Courthouse.

In City Council May 12, 1997

ORDER ADOPTED