



Proclamation Celebrating the Life and Accomplishments of Marshal “Major” Taylor [1878 – 1932]

WHEREAS, Major Taylor was the first African American athlete in the United States to be a member of an integrated professional sports team, and was the first African American athlete to compete in regularly integrated championships; and

WHEREAS, Marshal “Major” Taylor became a world champion competitive cyclist in 1899 and 1900, and was the second African American ever to become a world champion; and

WHEREAS, Major Taylor was the first African American to establish recognized world records in any sport, as well as he was the first to have a commercial sponsor; and

WHEREAS, he successfully toured Europe, entering competitions and prestigious races, winning the hearts, acclaim and respect of its citizens and most influential people; and

WHEREAS, the life and accomplishments of Marshal “Major” Taylor are demonstrations of what is possible when one is determined to overcome the odds; and

WHEREAS, Major Taylor’s motivation and hard won victories provide an inspiration to all, but in particular to our youth looking for successful role models; and

WHEREAS, most significantly Major Taylor accomplished the above and more in a blatantly hostile, cruel, racist American society that openly discriminated against African American people; and

WHEREAS, in spite of adverse conditions and challenges, Major Taylor rode to great heights with incalculable passion, discipline, and emotional intensity; and

WHEREAS, these efforts matured from and were supported by a foundation of spirituality, fierce family loyalty, as well as strong community advocates who recognized the exceptional qualities in Major Taylor, and helped nurture them; and

WHEREAS, The Major Taylor Association created by Lynne Toleman has highlighted his achievements and elevated his extraordinary contributions and status, as one of the pre-eminent African American sports pioneers in the world; and

WHEREAS, all of the above was eloquently captured in two poignant biographies - Andrew Ritchie’s, Major Taylor *The Fastest Bicycle Rider In The World*, and Todd Balf’s *Major* published in 2000; and

WHEREAS, on May 13th and 14th 2011, several regional programs that promote the health and well being of youth and family, are sponsoring two days of healthy events and activities inspired by the legacy of Major Taylor; and

WHEREAS, we are pleased to have two of these events here in the City of Richmond, where bicycling and many other forms of movement are promoted as part of a larger vision of a healthier Richmond.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: that I, Mayor Gayle McLaughlin, on behalf of the Richmond City Council, recognize the contributions and the accomplishments achieved by Marshal “Major” Taylor.

AND BE IT, FURTHER RESOLVED: that I, encourage all residents to participate in any of the community events, especially the Richmond events: On May 13th at the Nevin Community Center, there is a free public event in the form of a slide show and book signing by author Andrew Ritchie. The following day, May 14th there will be a Bike Rodeo promoting bike safety, health and wellness at Lincoln Elementary School.

Gayle McLaughlin, Mayor
City of Richmond
April 26, 2011

Jovanka Beckels, Council Member
City of Richmond
April 26, 2011