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KHALIF J. RAINEY
ALDERMAN, 7TH DISTRICT



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African-American music helps us rise to the occasion

Statement from Alderman Khalif J. Rainey June 29, 2020

As we approach the end of African-American Music Appreciation Month, which began in 1979 thanks to President Jimmy Carter and was renamed in 2009 by President Obama, it is important to recognize and celebrate the artists whose music has helped shape our nation and reflect its rich heritage.

African-American music has always risen to the occasion to help inspire and unite during tough times, while also serving as a way to speak out against injustice. This can be seen as far back as the work songs that enslaved Africans would sing which served as a way to express sorrow and envision a brighter future. Then Jazz music acted as a form of creative expression and freedom that worked as a uniting force for many after the Civil War, while also painting a picture of societal issues for people of color. During the civil right movement those marching would join in song to band together and combat hate, but that time also bore rhythms of funk that spoke to issues of police harassment. Today, hip-hop blends a combination of historical influence and new innovation that makes it one of the most popular genres around and is rich with social commentary.

This cultural impact can be felt and heard locally as well. Musicians such as Al Jarreau, Eric Benét, The Esquires, Harvey Scales, Rico Love, Jacob Latimore, Phebe Hines and others have helped us rise to the moment and overcome through the power of music.

Throughout history, Black musicians have painted a truly honest picture of their community's struggles, perseverance and triumph in the face of systemic adversity. I have no doubt just as past generations have chronicled their history through song, that those marching in the streets in support of Black Lives Matter will have their legacy solidified by this generation of artists.

In the same way African-American music has helped get us through tough times in the past, it will help us through this moment as well.

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