

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, Charles Mitchell was born a slave in Maryland in 1847 and forcibly relocated to Washington Territory in 1855 by his master James Tilton; and

WHEREAS, the entrenched practice of buying, selling, and owning humans was introduced to Washington Territory by some white settlers; and

WHEREAS, Charles Mitchell was identified as a slave in Olympia, known to the general populace here, and resided in the Tilton home, now 1009 Columbia St SW; and

WHEREAS, the US Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision (1857), did render slavery legal in territories like Washington, while slavery was illegal in the British Empire, including the colony of Victoria; and

WHEREAS, African-Canadians from Victoria did reach out to the 13-year-old boy, Charles Mitchell, and encourage his escape from slavery in Olympia to freedom in Victoria, Vancouver Island; and

WHEREAS, Charles Mitchell, seeking life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, did on 24 September 1860 stow away on an international mail steamer headed for Victoria, aided by African-Canadians James Allen and William Davis; and

WHEREAS, Charles Mitchell's successful escape to freedom affirms the promises at the core of the American Dream; and

WHEREAS, this local story, only recently rediscovered, is an occasion to reconsider the enduring experience of American slaves and the many ways their difficulties, their contributions, and their brave persistence continue to echo in our society;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Olympia City Council does hereby proclaim September 24, 2019 as

CHARLES MITCHELL DAY

and encourages citizen awareness of this man's life and history in our community, so that we can walk the path together toward a more equitable future.

SIGNED IN THE CITY OF OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON, THIS 24TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2019.

OLYMPIA CITY COUNCIL

**Cheryl Selby
Mayor**