

RESOLUTION OF THE HOUSTON AREA LAW LIBRARIANS (HALL)
IN SUPPORT OF REDEDICATING THE HARRIS COUNTY LAW LIBRARY
IN HONOR OF ROBERT W. HAINSWORTH

WHEREAS, Robert Wendell Hainsworth was a champion for civil rights who pressed for equality in Harris County throughout a legal career that spanned more than 30 years; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hainsworth graduated from Booker T. Washington High School in Houston, Texas. Upon graduation, he enrolled at Howard University, where he earned a bachelor's degree, and joined the U.S. Army as a commissioned Lieutenant. After achieving the rank of Colonel, he returned to Howard University as a law student, where he excelled in his studies and distinguished himself as chair of the Programs Committee. Upon graduation in 1949, he returned to Houston to practice law; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hainsworth faced a segregated courthouse. Like many young lawyers, he visited the Harris County Law Library to conduct legal research, but he encountered hurdles that white attorneys and litigants did not: He was required to sit at a specific table designated by a sign that read "Colored"; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hainsworth took a stand. He challenged the practice as unconstitutional and sued for open and equal access for all. He filed his case, styled *Hainsworth v. Harris County Commissioners Court*, as a self-represented litigant and appealed all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court when Texas courts denied his prayer for relief. However, just months after declaring "separate but equal" to be "inherently unequal," the nation's highest Court rejected his appeal; and

WHEREAS, undaunted, Mr. Hainsworth continued to press for equality. In 1955, he joined fellow attorneys to establish the Houston Lawyers Association, a bar association for African-American attorneys who were excluded from the Houston Bar Association. He also brought lawsuits as a self-represented litigant and pursued appeals to the U.S. Supreme Court to press for equality in the election process in Texas; and

WHEREAS, access to the Law Library today is now open and equal to all thanks, in large part, to the work of Mr. Hainsworth and his contemporaries, who fought to desegregate the Harris County courthouse; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hainsworth deserves recognition for his work and for the victory of his vision; and

WHEREAS, as a self-represented litigant, Mr. Hainsworth used Law Library resources in support of exercising his right to petition his government to better his life and the lives of others in his community, and as small firm attorney, he used his skill and Law Library resources to serve individuals with legal issues in Harris County. Rededication of the Law Library in honor of Mr. Hainsworth will serve as inspiration for the thousands of Law Library patrons who are represented symbolically by his story; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Houston Area Law Librarians (HALL) endorses and supports the proposal to rededicate the Harris County Law Library as the

Harris County Robert W. Hainsworth Law Library

SIGNED this 5th day of January, 2021, in Houston, Harris County, Texas.


Michael McHenry, HALL President, 2020-2021