



MEDIA RELEASE

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“Lighting the Fuse to Civil Rights: The Port Chicago Trial at Treasure Island”: Treasure Island Museum Honors Black History Month

San Francisco, CA - A deadly explosion near Concord, California and a mutiny trial at Naval Station Treasure Island became an early turning point at the dawn of the civil rights movement, 75 years ago, and will be honored February 9, 2019 at the Treasure Island Museum.

The Port Chicago explosion that occurred near Concord, California on July 17, 1944 is considered the worst U.S. domestic disaster of World War II. This massive explosion killed 320 people, 202 of whom were young black sailors ordered to load and unload explosives with no training and inadequate equipment. The explosion and its subsequent mutiny trial not only helped lead the way to desegregation of U.S. armed forces but was also an early step for Thurgood Marshall, then chief counsel for the NAACP, toward becoming one of the most respected Supreme Court Justices in U.S. history.

In recognition of Black History Month, the Treasure Island Museum (TIM) will also commemorate the 75th Anniversary year of the disaster and trial on February 9th, by presenting a special program called “Lighting the Fuse to Civil Rights: The Port Chicago Trial at Treasure Island”. During this program, a panel of experts will discuss how the Port Chicago explosion and its ensuing mutiny trial contributed to the birth of the civil rights movement as well as pivotal racial and equity issues that our society continues to struggle with today.

Today, anyone with a smartphone can participate in social justice as a way to advocate for civil rights. Or, for example, many recall how the professional athlete Colin Kaepernick chose to use his fame as a way to advocate in the words of Nike’s 2018 campaign, “[b]elieve in something, even if it means sacrificing everything,” just as the 50 young sailors did 75 years ago when they refused to work in a hazardous work environment.

To most people, Treasure Island’s history is the 1939-40 Golden Gate International Exposition and the pioneering Pan Am Clipper airplanes. This event aims to build awareness that Naval Station Treasure Island, in the City of San Francisco, was also the site of an early turning point in the civil rights movement. Few people still do not know that the Naval Station Treasure Island is where 50 black men were convicted of mutiny during the Port Chicago Trial for refusing to return to work in unsafe conditions.

Treasure Island was built upon people and institutions coming together to do great things - not just building great structures and/or the home of world’s fair. Soon, Treasure Island will also be

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one of the newest sustainable residential neighborhoods in San Francisco. TIM is dedicated to ensuring that Treasure Island and Bay Area residents are part of this transformation. Sharing these stories and experiences with visitors from near and far, are part of TIM's ongoing efforts to launch an \$8 million Capital Campaign to build a permanent museum in space provided by the City of SF in Treasure Island's historic Building One.

This special program is presented by TIM in partnership with the Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Historic Site, the San Francisco Public Library, the Friends of Port Chicago and the University of San Francisco, with support from the Treasure Island Development Authority and the Historic Preservation Fund of the Office of Economic and Workforce Development, City of San Francisco.

The February 9th event is free and open to the general public. Reservations are suggested. For more information and to make reservations please visit <https://www.treasureislandmuseum.org/portchicago>.

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