

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, during the Civil War, the City of Alexandria became a haven for thousands of enslaved African-Americans seeking their freedom and these people were called at the time "Contrabands" and eventually they became known as "Freedmen"; and

WHEREAS, life as a Freedman in Alexandria was marked with deprivations and many children and adults succumbed to disease and malnourishment and as these Freedmen required the daily needs of life, the Union Army built barracks and hospitals for them and attended to their burials; and

WHEREAS, the Alexandria Contraband and Freedmen's Cemetery was established on South Washington Street across from the Catholic Cemetery known as St. Mary's and it is the oldest known African-American cemetery in Alexandria; and

WHEREAS, records dating from the 1860's reveal there were 1,879 burials in the Contraband and Freedman's Cemetery; and

WHEREAS, the land was the site of a gas station, office building, parking lots and a street, and there is no visible sign of the Contraband and Freedman's Cemetery existence on the property nor indication of the exact boundaries; and

WHEREAS, Alexandria recognizes that cemeteries are an important part of American history and a priceless cultural legacy for future generations, and the City purchased this burial ground to protect and preserve it from further development of the land; and

WHEREAS, the City of Alexandria re-dedicated the Contraband and Freedmen's Cemetery as a burial site on May 12, 2007 as proof of its commitment to treat this place as hallowed ground; and

WHEREAS, the City of Alexandria is embarking upon a process to create the Alexandria Contraband and Freedmen's Cemetery Memorial Park to perpetuate the memory of these people who found freedom in Alexandria; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting for the City of Alexandria to do a proclamation each May in memory of the African-Americans and their descendants, who sought haven in our City, and those who seek freedom from injustice throughout the world;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM D. EUILLE, Mayor of the City of Alexandria, and on behalf of the Alexandria City Council, do hereby proclaim May 25 through May 31, 2008 as:

**"WEEK OF REMEMBRANCE OF
THE CONTRABAND AND FREEDMEN'S CEMETERY"**

in the City of Alexandria.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Alexandria to be affixed this 27th day of May 2008.

WILLIAM D. EUILLE **MAYOR**
On behalf of the City Council
of Alexandria, Virginia

ATTEST:

Jacqueline M. Henderson, CMC City Clerk