[Urging the Full Pardon of Charles Joseph]

Resolution urging the Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor of California, to grant
Charles Joseph a full pardon to allow him to remain in the United States with his family
and to continue contributing to his community.

WHEREAS, The history of the City and County of San Francisco includes welcoming
individuals of diverse racial, ethnic, religious, and national backgrounds. Immigrants are an
integral part of our city and have made enormous positive contributions to San Francisco,
where all families are valued; and

WHEREAS, Charles Joseph, an immigrant from Fiji who has lived in California lawfully
for more than 20 years; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Joseph entered the United States lawfully with his family in May 2000
at the age of fourteen; his father was a leader in Fiji’s Labor Party, and was the target of
racialized attacks due to his Indo-Fijian ancestry; Mr. Joseph experienced violence inside and
outside the home in Fiji; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Joseph thrived in the United States; he was a strong student, and
participated in music, sports and other extra-curricular activities; but at the age of fifteen, his
father was arrested on a domestic violence offense, and deported; and

WHEREAS, Without his father, Mr. Joseph’s life began to spiral out of control; he was
arrested several times, and used alcohol to escape his problems; and

WHEREAS, At the age of twenty-two years old, and without his father to help guide
him, he robbed a convenience store where he worked; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Joseph was arrested, prosecuted, and convicted by jury for that crime;
he was sentenced to 13 years state prison; and
WHEREAS, Despite the challenging circumstances, Mr. Joseph began to heal, and engage in self-inquiry that led to a process of true rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Joseph developed his voice, both as a leader and as an artist. He explored his indigenous roots, joined with other indigenous prisoners, and used his learnings and practices to heal; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Joseph would become a leader in many rehabilitative programs in custody. He took an alternative to violence class, which he described as “awakening;” and

WHEREAS, He participated in a group therapy class called Personal Transformation in which he unpacked childhood traumas; and

WHEREAS, He became a leader in a Restorative Justice class, in which he learned to hold himself accountable for harm; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Joseph also evolved as a musician and dancer. He wrote and performed music about love, anger, loss, and deep pain, under the tutelage of Lacy J. Dalton, a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame. Ms. Dalton describes Mr. Joseph’s music as passionate, exquisite, unifying, and life-changing; he also taught music classes at the prison, and regularly performed the traditional islander haka dance. He contributed to the transformation of many people within prison; and

WHEREAS, While incarcerated, Mr. Joseph worked with Special Olympians for two years, helping to raise funds for the group and organizing a performance of the haka dance for a Special Olympics event; he loved this work, took on a leadership role, and formed connections with Olympians, who constantly inspired him; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Joseph served his sentence and was released from prison, but on May 19, 2019, instead of being reunited with his family, Mr. Joseph was transferred to ICE custody and was detained at Mesa Verde ICE Processing Center for 11 months; and
WHEREAS, While in detention and incarceration, Mr. Joseph was a leader in advocating for the rights, health, and safety of incarcerated people, working tirelessly to get them the proper protection and care in light of public health concerns such as Valley Fever and COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Joseph was reunited with his family on April 14, 2020, after a federal judge ordered his release from ICE custody because he was at a higher risk of developing serious symptoms if he were to contract the coronavirus; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Joseph has been fighting his immigration case for over a year, and it is now on appeal before the 9th Circuit; he has applied for deferred action under the Convention Against Torture ("CAT") because he fears he will be tortured if deported to Fiji; and

WHEREAS, Since his release, Mr. Joseph has continued to share his experience with law students, graduate students, elected officials and community organizations; Mr. Joseph has also been providing spiritual and biblical reflections to faith communities; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Joseph is a model father and husband, and his family is central in his life. He has been with his wife, Shelly, since 2005, and they have two daughters, Hope and Carly, and they reside in Sacramento, California; and

WHEREAS, News outlets such as KQED, the Sacramento Bee, NBC Bay Area, KALW, and the San Francisco Chronicle have all featured Mr. Joseph and his experiences with the immigration and criminal systems; and

WHEREAS, If Mr. Joseph is granted a pardon by Governor Newsom, he will no longer be deportable and will be able to remain with his wife and daughters and contribute his skills and gifts to his Sacramento community; and

WHEREAS, The Chair of the Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus and former San Francisco Supervisor David Chiu, supports Mr. Joseph’s pardon application; and
WHEREAS, The Assistant Majority Leader of the California Legislature, Rob Bonta, Assemblymember for the 18th District, supports Mr. Joseph’s pardon application; and

WHEREAS, California State Senator Richard Pan of the 6th Senate District supports Mr. Joseph’s pardon application; and

WHEREAS, Faith communities and organizations throughout the Bay Area and the state support Mr. Joseph’s pardon application, including the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity and the Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry of California; and

WHEREAS, San Francisco houses one of the country’s largest immigration courts for detained immigrants facing deportation; and

WHEREAS, The San Francisco Public Defender’s Office houses a deportation defense unit and currently represents Charles in his removal case; and

WHEREAS, Following a contested hearing, the San Francisco Immigration Court ordered Charles Joseph deported; and

WHEREAS, Governor Newsom is originally from San Francisco, was Mayor of San Francisco for seven years, and continues to have deep ties to San Francisco; and

WHEREAS, Charles Joseph has been deeply involved in local immigrant rights efforts in San Francisco to fight for state-wide immigration reform, particularly around the issue of transfers from prison to ICE, and the treatment of detainees in ICE detention centers; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Joseph has conducted extensive trainings for the San Francisco Public Defender’s Office on these issues, presented to a masters-level class on migration studies at the University of San Francisco, and has worked closely with the Asian Law Caucus-Advancing Justice on immigrant rights policy and advocacy campaigns; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco opposes the removal of Charles Joseph from the United States; and, be it
FURTHER RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors urges Governor Newsom to grant Mr. Joseph a full pardon in order for him to remain lawfully in the United States with his wife, his family, and his community; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That Copies of this Resolution shall be sent to Governor Newsom, other Federal and State Representatives in San Francisco, the San Francisco Immigration Court and Mr. Joseph’s counsel for appropriate distribution.
Resolution urging the Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor of California, to grant Charles Joseph a full pardon to allow him to remain in the United States with his family and to continue contributing to his community.

September 22, 2020 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED
Ayes: 11 - Fewer, Haney, Mandelman, Mar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani, Walton and Yee

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED on 9/22/2020 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution, not being signed by the Mayor within the time limit as set forth in Section 3.103 of the Charter, or time waived pursuant to Board Rule 2.14.2, became effective without her approval in accordance with the provision of said Section 3.103 of the Charter or Board Rule 2.14.2.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

City and County of San Francisco

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