

Governor Quinn Proclaims “Game of Change Day” in Illinois

Written by Ryan C. Woods

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CHICAGO – December 15, 2012. Governor Pat Quinn today proclaimed “Game of Change Day” in Illinois in honor of the historic 1963 basketball game between Loyola University of Chicago and Mississippi State University that broke racial boundaries.

WHEREAS, on March 15, 1963, basketball teams from Mississippi State University and Loyola University of Chicago met in what became known as the “Game of Change”; and,

WHEREAS, Mississippi State basketball teams had won Southeastern Conference titles in 1959, 1961 and 1962, but were barred from the NCAA tournament due to an unwritten law preventing Mississippi schools from competing against teams with black players; and,

WHEREAS, following a 21-5 season in 1962-63, the dream of Mississippi State players to compete in the NCAA tournament was quietly supported by University President Dean Colvard

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and basketball Coach James “Babe” McCarthy; and,

WHEREAS, *despite threats of school funding cuts, Klan violence and a court injunction to prevent them from leaving the state, twelve daring Mississippi State players and their coaches fled under dark of night in order to play Loyola; and,*

WHEREAS, *Loyola University Coach George Ireland - whose 100th birthday we’ll observe next year - built a team comprised of four black starting players which led the nation in scoring with 91.8 points per game en route to a 24-2 record; and,*

WHEREAS, *on game day, as the Mississippi State players took the floor - with none of their fans in attendance - they heard their fight song being performed by the Loyola band in a gesture of sportsmanship; and,*

WHEREAS, *the pre-game handshake between Loyola captain Jerry Harkness and Mississippi State captain Joe Dan Gold became a poignant symbol of the end of segregation in college sports; and,*

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WHEREAS, *the civil rights movement grew because brave individuals put themselves at risk for the greater good, such as those who participated in the Montgomery bus boycott, the Freedom Rides, Selma’s “Bloody Sunday”, the integration of Little Rock High School and the 1963 “Game of Change”; and,*

WHEREAS, *the “Game of Change” showed how sports is a positive force for social change and how one person – or two basketball teams – can truly make a difference; and,*

THEREFORE, *I, Pat Quinn, Governor of the State of Illinois, do hereby proclaim December 15, 2012 as* **GAME OF CHANGE DAY** *in Illinois in recognition of the courage of participants in what was much more than a game 50 years ago.*

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