

1 [Commemorating the 140th Anniversary of Yick Wo vs. Hopkins and Supporting Placemaking]

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3 **Resolution commemorating the 140th anniversary of the landmark Yick Wo vs. Hopkins**  
4 **civil rights case and expressing support for placemaking that recognizes the Chinese**  
5 **American community’s contributions to American civil rights.**

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7 WHEREAS, Lee Yick, the owner of Yick Wo laundry, played a major role in U.S. Civil  
8 Rights history when he challenged the discriminatory application of a racist San Francisco  
9 ordinance; and

10 WHEREAS, The City of San Francisco denied necessary permits to all but one of more  
11 than 200 Chinese laundries, including Yick’s, while granting permits to all but one white-  
12 owned laundries; and

13 WHEREAS, The Yick Wo laundry was located at the northeast corner of Third Street  
14 and Harrison Street at approximately 349 Third Street in San Francisco; and

15 WHEREAS, The City declined the renewal of Yick’s permit despite his operating for  
16 over two decades with a clean safety record; and

17 WHEREAS, Yick was fined and then imprisoned for refusing to pay, which led to him  
18 filing suit in 1885 along with Wo Lee, another San Francisco laundry operator; and

19 WHEREAS, The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, also known as the  
20 Chinese Six Companies, helped raise \$20,000, over \$600,000 in today’s dollars, to hire one of  
21 the best lawyers of the day, Hall McAllister, to defend them; and

22 WHEREAS, The defendants appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States in  
23 *Yick Wo vs. Hopkins* and in a unanimous ruling on May 10, 1886, the Court held that a law  
24 applied in a racially discriminatory way violated the constitutional guarantee of equal  
25 protection to “all persons”—citizen or not; and

1           WHEREAS, The decision remains foundational to American civil rights law and has  
2           been cited in hundreds of cases; and

3           WHEREAS, *Yick Wo vs. Hopkins* belongs to a remarkable and still largely  
4           underrecognized tradition of legal action by Chinese American immigrants who fought  
5           discriminatory laws in American courts at a time when they were barred from citizenship and  
6           stripped of political power; and

7           WHEREAS, While overlooked cases like *Yick Wo vs. Hopkins* originated from the  
8           Chinese American community, the results built the constitutional architecture that would later  
9           protect all who reside in this country; and

10          WHEREAS, San Francisco Heritage and the Chinese Historical Society of America  
11          have joined a host of community organizations and officials to campaign for this recognition in  
12          May 2026, the 140th anniversary of *Yick Wo vs. Hopkins*; and

13          WHEREAS, The site of Yick Wo laundry near Third Street and Harrison Street is  
14          entitled for housing development; and

15          WHEREAS, This site is worthy of a tribute to the Chinese American community's  
16          contributions to American civil rights; now, therefore, be it

17          RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors commemorates the 140th anniversary of  
18          the *Yick Wo vs. Hopkins* case and expresses its support for placemaking that recognizes the  
19          Chinese American community's contributions to American civil rights; and be it

20          FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors recognizes that placemaking  
21          will create a powerful physical reminder that San Franciscans excluded from power shaped  
22          the rights that all people share today, and will help make the Chinese American community's  
23          contributions to American civil rights permanently visible.

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