



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## Executive Department

### TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME --- GREETING:

**WHEREAS** at hearings held in and for the Circuit Court for the City of Martinsville, Francis DeSales Grayson, Frank Hairston, Jr., Howard Lee Hairston, James Luther Hairston, Joe Henry Hampton, Booker T. Millner, and John C. Taylor were sentenced to death after being convicted of rape; and

**WHEREAS**, Ruby Stroud Floyd identified Francis DeSales Grayson and Joe Henry Hampton as her rapists, though Frank Hairston, Jr. and Booker T. Millner were the first arrested. Following their arrests, Francis DeSales Grayson, Howard Lee Hairston, James Luther Taylor, James (Joe) Henry Hampton, and John C. Taylor were arrested ultimately forming the group that would become known as the Martinsville Seven; and

**WHEREAS**, race played an undeniable role during the identification, investigation, conviction, and the sentencing of Francis DeSales Grayson and the six other men; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States Constitution states in Amendment VI, "In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed;" and

**WHEREAS**, Francis DeSales Grayson was found guilty by an all-white male jury and therefore denied judgement by an *impartial* jury of his peers; and

**WHEREAS**, following the executions of the Martinsville Seven, there have been a number of cases heard before the United States Supreme Court, including *Furman v. Georgia (1972)*, *Coker v. Georgia (1977)*, and *Kennedy v. Louisiana (2008)*, that bring into question the sentence of capital punishment for crimes such as that of rape; and

**WHEREAS**, after unsuccessful attempts by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Civil Rights Congress (CRC), Francis DeSales Grayson, Frank Hairston, Jr., Howard Lee Hairston, James Luther Hairston, Joe Henry Hampton, Booker T. Millner, and John C. Taylor were executed by electric chair between February 2-5, 1951 in what has been recorded as the largest group execution for a single-victim crime in Virginia history and arguably the United States of America, and can no longer share their truth; and

**WHEREAS** it appears that Francis DeSales Grayson, is a fit subject for clemency having been prejudicially and egregiously sentenced to death for the crime of rape; and

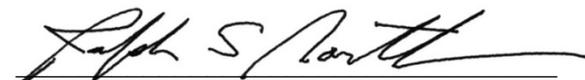
**WHEREAS**, the Commonwealth of Virginia played an irrefutable role in the political, economic, and social disenfranchisement of Black Americans, and helped shape, actively enforce, and uphold the racially discriminatory Jim Crow laws which were formed to further systematically oppress Black Americans and maintain the status quo of the time;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, Ralph S. Northam, Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, by virtue of the authority vested in me, posthumously grant Francis DeSales Grayson a Simple Pardon.

This action represents official acknowledgement and recognition of the unjust outcome of the trial of Francis DeSales Grayson.



Given under my hand and under the Lesser Seal of the Commonwealth at Richmond, this 31<sup>st</sup> day of August in the year of Two Thousand and Twenty One, the 246<sup>th</sup> year of the Commonwealth.

  
Governor of Virginia

  
Secretary of the Commonwealth