



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **THE COALITION FOR THE WOOLWORTH BUILDING TO LEAD THE STATE IN COMMEMORATING THE 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL SIT-IN MOVEMENT'S FIRST PEACEFUL AND VOLUNTARY LUNCH COUNTER DESEGREGATION WITH ACTIVITIES ON TUESDAY, MARCH 10, AND MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2020**

**The Coalition for the Woolworth Building calls for public support to save the endangered Woolworth Building, a visible link to the Civil Rights history that occurred on Alamo Plaza**

San Antonio, Texas (March 6, 2020) The Coalition for the Woolworth Building will lead Texans in commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first peaceful and voluntary lunch counter integration to take place in the South as part of the 1960s sit-in movement.

The Woolworth Building on Alamo Plaza is the most prominent of seven downtown San Antonio stores that participated in this remarkable achievement on March 16, 1960. San Antonio set a national example at a time when African American students in other Southern cities faced arrests and violence for defying racial segregation and demanding equal service through sit-in protests.

Members of the Coalition for the Woolworth Building will begin the commemoration on Tuesday, March 10, when they receive a ceremonial proclamation from Bexar County Commissioners Court recognizing the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary and supporting the preservation of the Woolworth Building. The presentation will take place at 10:00 a.m. in the Double Height Courtroom located at the north end of the historic Bexar County Courthouse. Upon entering the building, all visitors will need to go through security.

During the 1960s, Woolworth stores formed one of the largest retailers in the country. Student-led lunch counter sit-ins, which started at a Woolworth's in Greensboro, North Carolina, helped bring about the passage of the [1964 Civil Rights Act](#). No sit-in demonstrations took place at the San Antonio store, thanks to the cooperation of religious leaders and store managers, who orchestrated the policy change behind the scenes just before the NAACP's protest deadline.

On Monday, March 16, 2020, members of The Coalition for the Woolworth Building will gather on Alamo Plaza at noon to honor the memory of the women and men who courageously led the lunch counter desegregation effort. Honorees include local NAACP Youth Council President Mary Lillian Andrews, NAACP State Youth Director Harry V. Burns, Reverend C. Don Baugh, Reverend Prenza L. Woods, Rabbi David Jacobson, Archbishop Robert E. Lucey, and others. The public is invited to participate. The starting point will be Moses Rose's Hideout at 516 E. Houston Street, next to the Woolworth Building.

"The Woolworth Building represents a unique site in the Civil Rights movement," said Patti Zaiontz, president of The Conservation Society of San Antonio. "The Woolworth is a symbol of freedoms won beyond the battlefield. The desegregation brought positive change for all races and paved the way for additional civil rights progress for Hispanics. Saving the building, along with the (Alamo) shrine, adds greatly to the story of the long struggle for freedom and justice."

Mary Lillian Andrews, a member of San Antonio's prominent Sutton family, played a key role in the San Antonio lunch counter integration while still a 17-year-old freshman at Our Lady of the Lake University. Acting as president of the local NAACP Youth Council, she wrote to managers of stores in downtown San Antonio asking that they end discrimination against Black patrons, who could not sit down to eat at the store lunch counters. Backed by an ultimatum from the NAACP, her words brought community leaders and store managers together to resolve the situation.

*Jet* magazine published a photo of Andrews and a friend eating at what has been identified as the Woolworth lunch counter, and baseball great Jackie Robinson told the *New York Times* that what San Antonio had done "should be told around the world."

The Coalition for the Woolworth Building, a grass-roots advocacy group, is leading efforts to save the building. Members include The Conservation Society of San Antonio; San Antonio Branch, NAACP; San Antonio African American Community Archive and Museum; Esperanza Peace and Justice Center; Westside Preservation Alliance; San Antonio Growth on the East Side; and National Institute of Mexican American History of Civil Rights. They are concerned that the Alamo Master Plan for the Alamo battlefield will lead to the destruction of the Woolworth Building. This state-owned landmark does not appear in any of the 2018 conceptual drawings for the new Alamo Museum. The City of San Antonio has no control of what the State of Texas does with the building.

"Together the Alamo and the Woolworth Building reinforce a richer, more inclusive historical narrative that extends from the battle in 1836 to the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s," said Zaiontz.

The Woolworth Building drew international attention when the [World Monuments Fund](#) included it in their [2020 World Monuments Watch](#), a biennial selection of at-risk cultural heritage sites that combine great historical significance with contemporary social relevance. It was one of only three U.S. sites and one of 25 worldwide.

Public support is needed to save the Woolworth Building. The Coalition encourages the public to contact:

Greg Abbott, Governor of Texas, 512-463-2000

George P. Bush, Commissioner, Texas General Land Office, 1-800-998-4GLO

State Senator Jose Menendez, District 26, 512-463-0126 (Capitol) or 210-733-6604 (District Office)  
State Representative Diego Bernal, District 123, 512-463-0532 (Capitol) or 210-308-9700 (District Office)  
Ron Nirenberg, Mayor, City of San Antonio, 210-207-7107  
Roberto C. Trevino, San Antonio City Council, District 1, 210-207-7279

The hashtags for social media communication are #SaveTheWoolworth and #WMF for the World Monuments Fund.

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**About The Conservation Society of San Antonio.** The Conservation Society of San Antonio was founded in 1924 to promote the preservation of the buildings, landscapes, and culture of San Antonio. Through the years, we have fought to protect the unique history of our region.