

2019-J3328

Senate Resolution No. 3328

BY: Senator PARKER

MOURNING the death of The Reverend C.T. Vivian,
civil rights organizer and loyal field general for
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to
citizens whose lifework and civic endeavor served to enhance the quality
of life in their communities; and

WHEREAS, With feelings of deepest regret, this Legislative Body
records the passing of The Reverend C.T. Vivian who died on Friday, July
17, 2020, at the age of 95; and

WHEREAS, C.T. Vivian was a Baptist minister and a member of Dr.
King's inner circle of advisers, alongside The Reverend Fred L.
Shuttlesworth, The Reverend Wyatt Tee Walker, The Reverend Ralph
Abernathy and other civil rights luminaries; he was the national
director of 85 local affiliate chapters of the Southern Christian
Leadership Conferences from 1963 to 1966, directing protest activities
and training in nonviolence as well as coordinating voter registration
and community development projects; and

WHEREAS, Cordy Tindell Vivian was born in Boonville, Missouri, on
July 30, 1924, the only child of Robert and Euzetta Tindell Vivian; and

WHEREAS, His family moved to Macomb, Illinois, when he was six years-old, and he later graduated from Macomb High School in 1942; he went on to study history at Western Illinois University in Macomb, but dropped out and became a recreation worker in Peoria, Illinois, where he joined his first protest in 1947, helping to desegregate a cafeteria; and

WHEREAS, In 1945, C.T. Vivian married Jane Teague, and together they had one daughter, Jo Anna; the couple separated amicably and in 1952, C.T. married Octavia Geans; and

WHEREAS, While studying for the ministry at the American Baptist College in Nashville in 1957, C.T. Vivian joined services at a packed local church and for the first time heard Dr. King speak on nonviolence; and

WHEREAS, In 1959, C.T. Vivian met The Reverend James Lawson, who was teaching nonviolent strategies to members of the Nashville Student Movement; his students included Diane Nash, Bernard Lafayette, James Bevel and John Lewis, all of whom became prominent civil rights organizers; and

WHEREAS, Those students became the nucleus of a successful three-month sit-in campaign at lunch counters in Nashville in 1960; as 4,000 protesters marched on City Hall, C.T. Vivian and Diane Nash confronted Mayor Ben West, who acknowledged that racial discrimination was morally wrong; in less than three weeks, the lunch counters were desegregated; and

WHEREAS, A year after the Nashville campaign, C.T. Vivian replaced an injured member of the Congress of Racial Equality on the Freedom Ride to Mississippi and submitted to his first beating; he would be arrested,

jailed and beaten many times during his historic struggle for racial justice; and

WHEREAS, After a year as a pastor in Chattanooga, C.T. Vivian helped organize Tennessee's contingent for the 1963 March on Washington and was invited to join Dr. King's staff; his civil rights work continued for a half century; he became director of the Urban Training Center for Christian Mission in Chicago in 1966 and Dean of the Shaw University Divinity School in Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1972; and

WHEREAS, He later founded the Black Action Strategies and Information Center in Atlanta to foster workplace race relations and was a founder of the National Anti-Klan Network, which monitored hate groups; it was later renamed the Center for Democratic Renewal to reflect broader educational goals; and

WHEREAS, C.T. Vivian was the Deputy Director for clergy in the 1984 presidential campaign of The Reverend Jesse Jackson; appeared on "Eyes on the Prize" (1987), a 14-part PBS documentary on the civil rights era; and was later the focus of a PBS special, "The Healing Ministry of Dr. C.T. Vivian"; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, C.T. Vivian received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, from President Barack Obama in 2013; and

WHEREAS, Predeceased by his wife of almost 60 years, Octavia Vivian, and his son, Cordy Jr., C.T. Vivian is survived by four daughters, Kira Vivian, Denise Morse, Jo Anna Walker and Anita Charisse Thornton; and two sons, Mark Evans Vivian and Albert Louis Vivian; as well as nine grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren, 28 great-great-grandchildren, and two great-great-great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, In appreciation of his life of commitment, dedication and substantial contribution, it is the intent of this Legislative Body to inscribe upon its records this tribute to the memory of C.T. Vivian that future generations may know and appreciate his admirable character, his many benevolent deeds, and the respect and esteem in which he was held; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of The Reverend C.T. Vivian, and to express its deepest condolences to his family; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of C.T. Vivian.