

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

22-69

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

April 4, 2017

To honor the myriad accomplishments and distinguished service of Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole on the occasion of her retirement from serving as the Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art.

WHEREAS, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole spent one year in an early entrance program at Fisk University and completed her undergraduate studies at Oberlin College;

WHEREAS, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole earned a master's degree and a Ph.D. in anthropology from Northwestern University with a focus on African Studies;

WHEREAS, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole became the first African American woman to serve as president of Spelman College in 1987, and during her presidency, Spelman was named the No. 1 liberal arts college of the South;

WHEREAS, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole served as president of Bennett College for Women, and during her presidency, an art gallery was opened and programs were initiated in women's studies and global studies;

WHEREAS, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole is Professor Emerita of Emory University from which she retired as Presidential Distinguished Professor of Anthropology, Women's Studies, and African American Studies;

WHEREAS, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole has conducted research in Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States, and she has authored and edited several books and scores of scholarly articles;

WHEREAS, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole has served as President of the board of the Association of Art Museum Directors and is a fellow of the American Anthropological Association and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences;

WHEREAS, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole serves on the board of Gregory University, in Uturu, Nigeria, and is also a member of the Toni Morrison Society;

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WHEREAS, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole was the Chair of the Board of United Way of America from 2004 to 2006, becoming the first African American to serve in that position;

WHEREAS, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole has served on the corporate boards of Home Depot, Merck, and Nation's Bank South, and was the first woman to serve on the board of Coca-Cola Enterprises;

WHEREAS, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole serves on the Advisory Committee of America's Promise and Points of Light Foundation and is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., The Links, Inc., and the National Council of Negro Women;

WHEREAS, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole was listed among the 100 most influential African Americans by Ebony Magazine in 2010, Washingtonian Magazine listed her in 2011 among Washington, D.C.'s most powerful women, and in 2015 BET (Black Entertainment Television) awarded her the BET Honors award for education;

WHEREAS, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole has been awarded 68 honorary degrees and is the recipient of numerous awards, including the TransAfrica Forum Global Public Service Awards; the Radcliffe Medal; the Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Medal; the Alexis de Tocqueville Award for Community Service from United Way of America; the Joseph Prize for Human Rights presented by the Anti-Defamation League; the Uncommon Height Award from the National Council of Negro Women; the Straight for Equality award from Parents, Families and Friends of Gays and Lesbians (PFLAG); the John W. Gardner leadership Award from Independent Sector; the Lenore and George W. Romney Citizen Volunteer Award from the Points of Light Foundation; the George Washington Carver award; the Benjamin Franklin Creativity Laureate Award; and the Alston-Jones International Civil and Human Rights Award;

WHEREAS, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole, through her work as a college president and university professor and through her published works, speeches, community service, and consultations with corporations and nonprofit organizations, has consistently addressed racial, gender, and all other forms of inequality;

WHEREAS, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole was conferred an Igbo Chieftaincy title of ADAOHA (Daughter of All) on December 8, 2012, in Uturu, Nigeria by His Royal Highness Eze Cyril Ibe, EzeOgbonnaya Uwadiogwu and Eze Chimezie;

WHEREAS, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole is the wife of James D. Staton, Jr., mother of 3 sons and one stepson, grandmother to 3 grandchildren, and a mentor to many young women and men;

**ENROLLED ORIGINAL**

WHEREAS, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole has worked with a number of Smithsonian programs since the mid-1980's and currently serves on the Scholarly Advisory Board for the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole is retiring from serving since her March, 2009 appointment as the Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, a museum founded in 1964 that became a part of the Smithsonian Institution, moved to its current location on the National Mall, and hosts a collection of over 12,000 objects that represents nearly every area of the continent of Africa and contains a variety of media and art forms.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the "Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole Recognition Resolution of 2017".

Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia celebrates the long and distinguished career of Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole as an educator and humanitarian, and congratulates her on the completion of her successful tenure as the Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon the first date of publication in the District of Columbia Register.