

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

24-28

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

April 6, 2021

To recognize and honor Mr. Vernon E. Jordan Jr., a pioneer civil rights activist, lawyer, and businessman, for his contributions to the Black community and the District of Columbia, on the occasion of his death at 85 years of age.

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan was born August 15, 1935 in Atlanta, Georgia, to parents Mary Belle and Vernon E. Jordan Sr.;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan was raised in the University Homes housing projects in Atlanta and was an honors graduate of David T. Howard High School;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan worked as a head dishwasher, head waiter, and bartender at his mother's catering company at a young age to support his family before leaving Atlanta to pursue a bachelor's degree in Political Science from DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan was the only Black student of 400 students in the 1957 graduating class at DePauw University;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan continued his education and went on to earn his Juris Doctorate (1960) from Howard University School of Law, where he received instruction from Thurgood Marshall and other historic Black leaders;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan was a member of Omega Psi Phi and Sigma Pi Phi fraternities;

WHEREAS, after completing law school, Mr. Jordan returned to Atlanta and joined the law offices of civil rights activist Donald L. Hollowell;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan was a part of the legal team that desegregated the University of Georgia and obtained admittance for the University's first 2 Black students. The legal team successfully sued the University of Georgia for racial discrimination in their admissions policies;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan left his private law practice to work at civil rights organizations and became the Georgia Field Director for the NAACP in 1961;

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WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan served as Director of the Voter's Education Project at the Southern Regional Council where he worked for 4 years;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan was the Executive Director of the United Negro College Fund in New York City;

WHEREAS, under his leadership, the United Negro College Fund raised \$10 million through innovative campaigns, the most ever raised by a director at the time, to benefit African American serving institutions;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan was the National Urban League Director from 1971 to 1981, where he successfully lobbied for public policy changes that advanced the civil rights movement; he also started the famed *State of Black America* report that is released yearly;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan survived an assassination attempt brought on because of his prominent role in the civil rights movement;

WHEREAS, after leaving the Urban League, Mr. Jordan joined the Washington D.C. offices of Dallas-based law firm Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld as a senior partner. He would work in the D.C. office for the next 40 years;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan was a senior managing director at Lazard, an international consulting and asset management firm, from 1999 until his passing;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan broke barriers as the only Black corporate board member at several Fortune 500 companies such as American Express and Dow Jones;

WHEREAS, in his role as a corporate board member, Mr. Jordan advocated for the advancement of persons of color in leadership positions which opened doors for Black CEOs;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan served as trusted counsel to foreign governments and Fortune 100 CEOs and boards;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan had served as an informal advisor to every president from Lyndon B. Johnson to Barack Obama. He was a close friend and advisor to former President Bill Clinton and served in an official capacity on President Clinton's transition team from 1992-1993. Mr. Jordan also worked for John Kerry's presidential campaign in 2004;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan was a lifetime member of the Council on Foreign Relations;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan was an emeritus trustee at Howard University;

ENROLLED ORIGINAL

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan collected over 80 honorary degrees from colleges and universities across the United States;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan was awarded the Spingarn Medal by the NAACP in 2001, which is the highest honor bestowed by the organization;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan was the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Anti-Defamation League;

WHEREAS, the Public Broadcasting System debuted a documentary of Mr. Jordan's life in 2020, entitled *Make It Plain*, detailing his journey from segregated Atlanta to one of the most distinguished Black leaders of his time;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan stayed faithful throughout his career to his role as an advocate for civil rights and economic advancement for Black people;

WHEREAS, Mr. Jordan is survived by his wife Ann Jordan, a daughter, three step-children, and nine grandchildren;

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the "Vernon E. Jordan Jr. Posthumous Memorial Recognition Resolution of 2021".

Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia celebrates the remarkable life and legacy of Mr. Vernon Jordan Jr. for his contributions to the civil rights movement, the legal profession, and the Black community on the occasion of his death at 85 years of age.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately.