

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

24-50

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

May 4, 2021

To recognize, honor, and celebrate Rayceen Pendarvis for groundbreaking activism on behalf of the LGBTQIA+ community and exemplary service and contributions to the District of Columbia and its residents, on the occasion of the final season of *The Ask Rayceen Show*.

WHEREAS, Rayceen Pendarvis was born in the District of Columbia on January 11th;

WHEREAS, Rayceen is a community advocate, event host, interviewer, moderator, commentator, panelist, inspirational speaker, social media personality, freelance columnist, former Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner, parent, self-described gender-blender, and lifelong Washingtonian;

WHEREAS, Rayceen is affectionately known as the High Priestess of Love, the Queen of the Shameless Plug, the Goddess of DC, and the Empress of Pride;

WHEREAS, Rayceen is one of the founding members of the District of Columbia chapter of the Legendary House of Pendarvis, and has made an indelible mark on the ballroom community and culture as a commentator, moderator, emcee, and host;

WHEREAS, Rayceen became an activist at an early age after recognizing the call to fight against social injustice;

WHEREAS, in 1985, after witnessing an astonishing number of friends and family battle the HIV/AIDS virus, Rayceen shifted focus and began collaborating with organizations such as ICAN, Whitman-Walker, Us Helping Us, Transgender Health Empowerment, and the Wanda Alston Foundation to raise awareness and funds for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment;

WHEREAS, Rayceen was involved with organizing what would later be known as the DC Black Pride festival, and was selected to host the inaugural DC Black Pride festival in 1991 at Banneker Field;

WHEREAS, in 2014, Rayceen appeared on the cover of *Metro Weekly*, hosted the DC Black Pride festival, was nominated for Most Committed Activist and Local Hero in the

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Washington Blade Best of Gay DC, and received the Angel Award at the Latex Ball in New York City;

WHEREAS, in 2015, Rayceen was profiled by *Tagg Magazine* and the *Washington Blade*, and was honored by The DC Center for the LGBT Community and the Community Church of Washington, DC;

WHEREAS, in 2015, Rayceen participated in several events, including moderating a panel discussion at the Smithsonian Institution's screening of *Paris is Burning*, co-hosting the 25th Annual DC Black Pride Cultural Arts and Wellness Festival, and hosting the annual DC Queer Theatre Festival;

WHEREAS, in 2016, Rayceen was honored by Casa Ruby and the Empowerment Liberation Cathedral Church, Capital Pride Alliance selected Rayceen as recipient of the Heroes Award, and Rayceen was voted Best Clergy in the *Washington Blade* Best of Gay DC Readers' Poll;

WHEREAS, in 2017, Rayceen hosted several events, including a series of programs for the District of Columbia Office on Aging and Community Living at the city's senior wellness centers, and was a finalist for Excellence in the Humanities for the 32nd Annual Mayor's Arts Awards;

WHEREAS, in 2018, Rayceen received an award from Mary's House for Older Adults and was voted Best Clergy for the second time in the *Washington Blade* Best of Gay DC Readers' Poll;

WHEREAS, in 2019, Rayceen hosted a plethora of events, including the Mayor's Senior Symposium, the fifth annual "Politics & Art" program at the John A. Wilson Building, several events in conjunction with the District of Columbia Public Library, and "A Speak Easy Evening" at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture;

WHEREAS, in 2019, after hosting and co-hosting several events in conjunction with DC Youth Pride, Capital Trans Pride, DC Black Pride, Silver Pride, DC Latinx Pride, Capital Pride, and making a special appearance at the second annual District of Pride, Rayceen adopted the moniker "Empress of Pride";

WHEREAS, Rayceen has worked tirelessly to support the community, in particular the Black LGBTQIA+ community, who often face multiple intersecting structural adversities linked to their sexual orientations, gender identities, and ethnicities;

WHEREAS, Rayceen is deeply respected and highly revered in the LGBTQIA+ community and District-wide;

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WHEREAS, after a life full of activism, advocacy, and service, Rayceen has received a number of awards, including the Triumph Award, the Spirit of Light Award, the Us Helping Us Lifetime Achievement Award, the Wilmore Cooke Award, the Gillard-Alston Award, and the Red-Era Ballroom Legendary Award for outstanding community service;

WHEREAS, Rayceen uses social media and other public platforms to disseminate opportunities for education, training, employment, grants, scholarships, volunteering, and to promote fundraisers, festivals, performances, and art exhibits;

WHEREAS, Rayceen has hosted poetry slams and regularly interviews local poets and authors online for an international audience;

WHEREAS, in 2020, Rayceen interviewed entertainers, community advocates, and political candidates to create content on the Team Rayceen YouTube channel during the pandemic, remaining visible and accessible while encouraging District residents to adhere to safety protocols;

WHEREAS, for 10 years, Rayceen has been the host of *The Ask Rayceen Show*, a live monthly variety program in Washington, DC that began in May 2012;

WHEREAS, Rayceen has made *The Ask Rayceen Show* and other events by Team Rayceen Productions a safe space for the LGBTQIA+ community and all marginalized people to gather, while welcoming allies and people of various backgrounds;

WHEREAS, Rayceen has prioritized inclusivity at *The Ask Rayceen Show* and other events by Team Rayceen Productions, fostering diverse audiences and creating opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and multigenerational interactions;

WHEREAS, Rayceen has promoted artistic expression, entrepreneurship, community outreach, and civic engagement at *The Ask Rayceen Show* and other events by Team Rayceen Productions, showcasing artists, promoting small businesses, announcing volunteer opportunities, encouraging charitable giving, and partnering with HeadCount and the League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia to provide voting information and voter registration accessibility;

WHEREAS, although Rayceen will remain active in the community, Rayceen will complete the final season of *The Ask Rayceen Show* in November 2021.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the “The Rayceen Pendarvis Recognition Resolution of 2021”.

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Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia recognizes, honors, and celebrates Rayceen Pendarvis, emcee, entertainer, social media personality, and activist, for exemplary service and contributions to the District of Columbia and its residents, and the LGBTQIA+ community, on the occasion of the final season of *The Ask Rayceen Show*.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately.