

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 8003 of the Second Extraordinary Session

By Hardaway

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Reverend Dr. Cordy Tindell "C.T." Vivian.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Reverend Dr. Cordy Tindell "C.T." Vivian; and

WHEREAS, Dr. C.T. Vivian was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, known as the "Quiet Warrior," Dr. Vivian was an icon of the American Civil Rights Movement, who helped organize the Nashville Sit-Ins, Freedom Riders movements, and the March on Washington; whether at a lunch counter, on a Freedom Ride, or behind the bars of a prison cell, Dr. Vivian was a disciplined advocate of nonviolence, and he was unafraid to take bold action in the face of fierce resistance; and

WHEREAS, a beloved former pastor of Historic First Community Church, Dr. Vivian was born to Robert Cordie and Euzetta Tindell Vivian on July 30, 1924, in Howard County, Missouri. When he was a young boy, he moved with his mother and grandmother to Macomb, Illinois, and he graduated from Macomb High School in 1942; and

WHEREAS, for a short time, he attended Western Illinois University in Macomb, where he worked as the sports editor of the school's newspaper, before moving to Peoria, Illinois, to work as assistant boys' director at the Carver Community Center; he met and married the love of his life, Octavia, who was also employed at the center; and

WHEREAS, in 1947, Dr. Vivian participated in his first nonviolent action to end segregation at lunch counters in Peoria. Believing that racism was a moral issue, he saw no

separation between civil rights, faith, and ministry, and with a strong foundation built upon his religious upbringing, he answered the call to ministry; and

WHEREAS, with the help of his church, C.T. Vivian enrolled in American Baptist College in Nashville in 1955. He met Reverend James Lawson, who was teaching Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent direct action strategy to the Student Central Committee; and

WHEREAS, along with Diane Nash, Bernard Lafayette, James Bevel, James Forman, John Lewis, and other students from American Baptist College, Fisk University, and Tennessee State University, Dr. Vivian executed a systematic nonviolent campaign for justice. On April 19, 1960, four thousand demonstrators marched on City Hall in Nashville, and C.T. Vivian and Diane Nash challenged Mayor Ben West; as a result, Mayor West publicly agreed that racial discrimination was morally wrong; and

WHEREAS, determined to make a difference, Dr. Vivian helped establish the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference, an affiliate of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); the group organized and trained students to embark upon a movement to end segregation in Nashville and organized the city's first sit-ins in 1960 and the first march of the Civil Rights Movement in 1961; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Vivian joined the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and other ministers on the first "Freedom Bus" into Jackson, Mississippi, in 1961; the SNCC group was arrested, and Dr. Vivian was badly beaten at Parchman Prison; and

WHEREAS, in 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., asked Dr. Vivian to work on the executive staff of the SCLC as National Director of Affiliates; he worked alongside Dr. King in Birmingham and Selma, Alabama; Chicago, Illinois; Danville, Virginia; St. Augustine, Florida; and Nashville; and he was instrumental in the planning of the March on Washington; and

WHEREAS, as National Director of Affiliates and strategist for every Southern Christian Leadership Conference organization, Dr. C.T. Vivian helped change the nation with his unwavering persistence, including his work in Birmingham, Alabama, which helped to enact the Civil Rights Bill; and

WHEREAS, in 1965, Dr. Vivian confronted Sheriff Jim Clark on the steps of the Dallas County Courthouse in Selma, Alabama, during a voter registration drive. After Dr. Vivian

delivered an impassioned speech, Sheriff Clark punched him in the mouth and made national news, allowing the world to witness racism in action and setting the stage for the march across Pettus Bridge in Selma, which led to passage of the Voting Rights Acts; and

WHEREAS, during the summer following the Selma Voting Rights Movement, Dr. Vivian conceived and directed an educational program, "Vision," and assisted 702 Alabama students in attending college with scholarships; the program later became "Upward Bound"; and

WHEREAS, after leaving Dr. King's executive staff, Dr. C.T. Vivian trained ministers and developed the urban curriculum for seminaries throughout the nation at the Urban Training Center in Chicago; he returned to the realm of seminary education as the Dean of Divinity at Shaw University Seminary, where he acquired funding for an unprecedented national-level program, the basis of his doctoral thesis, *Seminary Without Walls*; and

WHEREAS, by pushing change through nonviolent demonstration and advocacy, he established and led numerous organizations to support underserved individuals and communities, including the Center for Democratic Renewal, initially known as the National Anti-Klan Network, and the C.T. Vivian Leadership Institute, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, among his many leadership roles, Dr. Vivian served on the boards of the Center for Democratic Renewal, the National Voting Rights Museum, Every Church a Peace Church, and Capitol City Bank and Trust Co., a black-owned Atlanta bank that he helped establish; in addition, he was the founder and board chair of BASIC Diversity, Inc., the nation's oldest diversity consulting firm, and dean of the Urban Institute at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia; and

WHEREAS, highly respected for his wisdom and integrity, Dr. Vivian provided civil rights counsel to Presidents Johnson, Carter, Reagan, Clinton, and Obama, and he continued to lecture on racial justice and democracy throughout the world. He advised foreign heads of state, addressed the World Baptist Alliance and United Nations (UN), served on an independent UN committee on Human Rights Education, and organized street gangs in Chicago and developed a program to assist in their pursuit of employment; and

WHEREAS, a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Dr. C.T. Vivian was National Deputy Director of Clergy for Jesse Jackson's 1984 presidential bid, and he served as interim president of the SCLC; and

WHEREAS, an accomplished author, Dr. C.T. Vivian wrote *Black Power and the American Myth*, a book about the failings of the Civil Rights Movement, which was published in 1970; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades, Dr. Vivian received the Trumpet Award in 2006; the National Jewish Labor Award; the Martin L. King, Jr. Humanitarian Award; an honorary doctorate from Morehouse College in 2010; and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, in 2013. He was featured throughout PBS's acclaimed documentary *Eyes on the Prize* (1987 and 2006), *The Healing Ministry of the Rev. Dr. C.T. Vivian*, *The People's Century*, and in the Tom Brokaw documentary *King*; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Vivian was deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, preceded in death by his parents, and his son, Cordy, Jr., Dr. Vivian enjoyed the loving companionship of his beloved wife, Octavia Vivian, for fifty-eight years before her passing in 2011; his children, Jo Anna Walker, Denise Vivian Morse, Kira E. Vivian, Mark Evans Vivian, Anita Cherisse Thornton, and Albert Lewis Vivian; and fourteen grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Dr. C.T. Vivian leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we should remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Reverend Dr. Cordy Tindell "C.T." Vivian, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Dr. Vivian.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.