



City of Columbus

Office of City Clerk
90 West Broad Street
Columbus OH 43215-9015
columbuscitycouncil.org

Legislation Text

File #: 0126X-2010, Version: 1

To honor, recognize and celebrate the life of Jefferson Allison Thomas and to extend our sincerest condolences to his family and friends on the occasion of his passing on Sunday, September 5, 2010.

WHEREAS, Jefferson Allison Thomas, the youngest of seven children, was born September 19, 1942, in Little Rock, Arkansas; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Thomas volunteered to test the US Supreme Court order that segregation in American public schools was illegal. He wanted to attend Central High School for a better education than the one available at the local all-black school, which had second-rate facilities and handed-down equipment; and

WHEREAS, in September 1957, Mr. Thomas was one of the Little Rock Nine, testing the federal government's resolve to enforce desegregation at the gates of the all-white Central High; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Thomas and the other eight students were subjected to daily violence, and Governor Faubus closed all the high schools in Little Rock the following school year to prevent blacks and whites from attending school together. Mr. Thomas continued his education by taking correspondence courses and attending classes at a local community college until Central reopened and he was able to resume his studies there; and

WHEREAS, in 1964, Mr. Thomas narrated *Nine from Little Rock*, an Academy Award-winning documentary short directed by Charles Guggenheim that explored the incident through Mr. Thomas's eyes; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Thomas earned a degree in business administration from what became California State University at Los Angeles prior to serving in the army during the Vietnam War, then spent his professional life as a civil servant, retiring in 2004 from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service in Columbus, Ohio; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Thomas resided in Columbus with his wife, Mary, where he served as a volunteer mentor in the Village to Child Program with Ohio Dominican University, which awarded him an honorary degree, "Doctor of Humane Letters," on May 13, 2001, for his life-long efforts in the advancement of human rights and equality; and

WHEREAS, in his later years, Mr. Thomas served on the board of directors for the City of Refuge Learning Academy at the First Church of God; and

WHEREAS, we celebrate the life of Jefferson Allison Thomas, a trailblazer whose courage and tenacity have earned him a place in American history alongside the many heroes and heroines of the Civil Rights Movement, and who devoted his life to the pursuit of equality, opportunity, and justice for all; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

That this Council does hereby honor, recognize and celebrate the life of Jefferson Allison Thomas and extend our sincerest condolences to his family and friends on the occasion of his passing