

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The Members of this Chamber were deeply saddened to learn of the death on September 4, 2020, at age 82, of the Reverend Doctor Leon D. Finney, Jr., a community organizer and the founder and pastor of Metropolitan Apostolic Community Church in Chicago; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Finney was born on July 7, 1938, in Louise, Mississippi, to Barbara and Leon Finney, Sr., founder of famed South Side eatery Leon's BBQ. The eldest of six children, Dr. Finney and his family relocated to Chicago when he was a child; and

WHEREAS, In the early 1960s, Dr. Finney enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, where he served our Country with distinction as a criminal investigator and counterintelligence officer. Dr. Finney received an honorable discharge in 1966; and

WHEREAS, Following his return to Chicago, Dr. Finney became involved with The Woodlawn Organization, where he worked to bring new houses, businesses, and development projects to the Woodlawn community area, as well as to protect the rights of residents to determine the direction of their neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, As president of the Woodlawn Community Development Corporation, Finney organized the investment of millions of dollars for residential and commercial development in Woodlawn, and managed thousands of residential properties; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Finney earned a Master of Theological Studies degree and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Chicago's McCormick Theological Seminary, where he later served as a professor and as Executive Director of the seminary's African American Leadership Program; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Finney sat on the Chicago Plan Commission for more than 30 years, first appointed in 1979 by Mayor Jane Byrne and stepping down in 2010. Here, he played an important role in advising the City Council on matters relating to community development and public land use; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Finney served in many leadership roles, including as an organizer with Saul Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation, chairman of the Monitoring Commission for Desegregation Implementation for Chicago Public Schools, chairman of the Chicago State University board of trustees from 2009 to 2011, and a board member of the Chicago Housing Authority. Dr. Finney also devoted his time and energy to the presidential campaigns for Jesse Jackson and Barack Obama, and the mayoral campaign for Harold Washington; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Finney's hard work and exemplary leadership earned him many accolades. He received a Ford Foundation fellowship to study urban community development and the inaugural Community Organizer of the Year Award from the Chicago Urban League, among many other distinctions from local leaders and organizations; and

WHEREAS, With a focus on giving a platform to marginalized voices, Dr. Finney published the Woodlawn Observer, a local newspaper, and founded Bronzeville's Urban Broadcast Media Center, a media technology training center and multi-media production studio; and

WHEREAS, An iconic community organizer, civil rights activist, and faith leader, Dr. Finney will be remembered as an instrument for change and for his indelible impact on the City of Chicago; and

WHEREAS, Predeceased by his son Leon Finney III, Dr. Finney is survived by his daughter, Kristen Finney-Cooke, three grandchildren, countless friends and mentees throughout the City of Chicago and beyond, and the ministry of the Metropolitan Apostolic Community Church; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, assembled this seventh day of October, 2020, do hereby honor the life and memory of the Reverend Doctor Leon D. Finney, Jr.; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be presented to the family of the Reverend Doctor Leon D. Finney, Jr., as a token of our esteem and respect.