



Office of the City Clerk

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Legislation Text

File #: R2020-812, **Version:** 1

Resolution

WHEREAS, We, the members of the Chicago City Council, wish to honor the life of Rev. Dr. Leon Dorsey Finney Jr. A devoted resident of the City of Chicago and a leader in the African-American community; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Leon Dorsey Finney, Jr. was born in the town of Louise, Mississippi, on July 7, 1938. While he spent the early years of his childhood in the South, his family relocated to Chicago when he was young, and he split time between Chicago and Nashville, Tennessee where he lived with his grandparents; and

WHEREAS, At the age of 12, after attending elementary school in Nashville, he returned to Chicago and attended Hyde Park Academy High School; where he participated on the track team. Upon graduating in 1957, he faithfully served his country in the United States Marine Corps, during which he held positions as a policeman and criminal investigator; and

WHEREAS, After returning home from the service he worked as a commercial paper trader for the First National Bank of Chicago. Later in life, Rev. Finney earned post-baccalaureate degrees in economics, urban community development, theological studies and public administration from Goddard College, McCormick Theological Seminary and Nova University; and

WHEREAS, While Reverend Finney was known to be a man of greatness in many areas, his greatest passion was serving his community. In 1964, he became involved with The Woodlawn Organization (TWO); initially as an organizer, then in 1967 due to his hard work he became the executive director, and in 1969 became the president. During the 1960s, TWO helped cite property owners who were deemed slumlords in the Woodlawn area. Under this leadership the organization also stood in opposition of the expansion of the University of Chicago into the Woodlawn community. Thereby preserving the area for residents who otherwise would have been displaced. He worked tirelessly to revitalize the area throughout his life through TWO and its development arm the, Woodlawn Community Development Corp; and

WHEREAS, In 1979, he was appointed as a member of the Chicago Planning Commission by then-Mayor Jane Byrne. In 1988, he retired from his position as head of TWO, and in that very same year, served as state campaign manager for Jesse Jackson during his bid for the Democratic presidential nomination. Rev. Finney would continue to be sought after and serve as counsel to influential local and national leaders including Carol Mosley Braun and Barack Obama; and

WHEREAS, He also served as Vice Chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), sat on the Board of Trustees for Chicago State University, and was also a member of the Chicago Planning Commission. Rev. Finney also founded Christ Apostolic Church and served as its pastor until the church merged with Metropolitan Apostolic Community Church in Bronzeville, where he served as senior pastor. The church became a city landmark in 2007; and

WHEREAS, His involvement in the community extended beyond leadership roles, to laying foundations for generations yet to come. This was evidenced through this creation of various programs around the city including the African American Leadership program a McCormick

Theological Seminary; where he taught African American Leadership Studies, and was responsible for training countless African American pastors receiving their Master degrees. He also taught at the University of Chicago, Lutheran School of Theology, the University of Illinois, Northwestern University, Presbyterian College of Korea and the Theological College of the Bahamas. His leadership and knowledge is further documented through his authorship of several publications on economic and social development; and

WHEREAS, He may have been known to Chicago as an activist, businessman, and man of the cloth, but to his family he was known as a dutiful son, father, grandfather, brother, and husband. He actively worked to preserve the legacy of his late father Leon Finney Sr. through his renowned restaurant, Leon's BBQ, which originally opened in 1940. Though the family sauce recipe remained secret, Rev. Finney's love for the community was well known. He consistently hired and trained those who lived in the neighborhood and needed job opportunities, and actively supported military and veteran organizations. Rev. Finney was a loving and committed husband to the late Sharon McGaughey Finney for 15 years with whom he had two children Tre' and Kristin. He played active role in both of his children's lives and was a hands-on grandfather to Jaiden, Ava, and Gerald (Liam); and

WHEREAS, On September 4, 2020 after dedicating his entire life to others, Rev. Dr. Leon Finney, Jr. was called home. He leaves to continue his legacy daughter Kristin Finney-Cooke, son-in-law Gerald Lynzie Cooke; three grandchildren Jaiden, Ava, and Gerald (Liam);

WHEREAS, On behalf of the entire 3rd Ward & 4th Ward, Alderman Pat Dowell & Alderman Sophia King would like to extend Rev. Dr. Leon Dorsey Finney Jr. this honor for his longtime commitment to his family and the entire City of Chicago; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, assembled this seventh day of October 2020, do hereby extend our heartfelt gratitude to Rev. Dr. Leon Dorsey Finney Finney, Jr. and sincere sympathy to his family; and

Pat Dowell Alderman, 3rd Ward

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution are presented to the Finney family as a sign of our honor, gratitude, and celebration of Rev. Dr. Leon Finney, Jr.'s legacy. /