

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia
Office of the Chief Clerk
Room 402, City Hall
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 240753)

RESOLUTION

Honoring and celebrating Sonia Sanchez, poet, activist, and scholar, on the occasion of her 90th birthday.

WHEREAS, Sonia Sanchez, born on September 9, 1934, in Birmingham, Alabama, is an internationally celebrated poet, educator, and activist whose life and work have been dedicated to advancing Black culture, literature, and civil rights; and

WHEREAS, Sanchez grew up and began her academic career in Harlem, New York, earning a bachelor's degree from Hunter College at the age of 16 and a master's degree from New York University at 19, where she became deeply involved in the civil rights movement; and

WHEREAS, In the 1960s, Sanchez, alongside fellow poet Amiri Baraka, helped develop the first Black Studies program in the United States at San Francisco State University, a pioneering achievement in education that laid the foundation for the study of Black history and culture at institutions across the country; and

WHEREAS, Sanchez has had a profound impact on the arts, introducing conversational Black English into modern poetry, a precursor to the spoken word movement, and co-founding the Broadside Quartet with poets such as Nikki Giovanni and June Jordan, all of whom revolutionized contemporary poetry; and

WHEREAS, Sanchez's work as a writer and professor spans more than six decades, with over 20 books of poetry, children's stories, essays, and plays, including her most recent work, *Collected Poems* (2021), which stands as a testament to her creative genius and dedication to Black empowerment; and

WHEREAS, Sanchez's role as an educator extends beyond her writing, as she taught English at Temple University for 23 years, having previously taught at the University of Pennsylvania alongside renowned African author Chinua Achebe; and

City of Philadelphia

RESOLUTION NO. 240753 continued

WHEREAS, In 2012, Sanchez was named Philadelphia's first Poet Laureate, a position that highlighted her influence on the City's artistic and cultural scene, while garnering recognition from literary giants such as Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, and Rita Dove; and

WHEREAS, Sanchez's activism has been a cornerstone of her career, as she has stood in solidarity with revolutionary causes such as the MOVE organization and has continuously fought for civil rights, social justice, and gender equality; and

WHEREAS, Sanchez has not only been a voice of the Black Arts Movement but also a mentor to younger generations of writers and activists, inspiring movements such as spoken word, Def Poetry Jam, and artists such as The Roots; and

WHEREAS, As Sanchez celebrates her 90th birthday, her legacy as a teacher, poet, activist, and cultural force remains vibrant, as she continues to write, engage with younger generations, and contribute to the fight for social justice in all forms; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADLPHIA, That we hereby honor and celebrate Sonia Sanchez on the occasion of her 90th birthday, recognizing her lifelong contributions to literature, education, and civil rights.

FURTHER RESOLVED That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Sonia Sanchez as a symbol of the profound respect and admiration felt by this legislative body and the citizens of Philadelphia for her extraordinary life and work.

City of Philadelphia

RESOLUTION NO. 240753 continued

CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the twelfth day of September, 2024.

Kenyatta Johnson
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Elizabeth McCollum
INTERIM CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember Gauthier for Council President Johnson

Sponsored by: Councilmember Gauthier, Council President Johnson,
Councilmembers Ahmad, Bass, Brooks, Driscoll, Gilmore
Richardson, Harrity, Jones, Landau, Lozada, O'Neill, O'Rourke,
Phillips, Squilla, Thomas and Young

City of Philadelphia

RESOLUTION NO. 240753 continued