

City of Philadelphia



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

(Resolution No. 120027)

RESOLUTION

Recognizing and Honoring Author Sonia Sanchez as the First Poet Laureate of the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, Sonia Sanchez was born Wilsonia Benita Driver on September 9, 1934 in Birmingham, Alabama and upon the passing of her mother, a year after her birth, she lived with her paternal grandmother and other relatives for several years and, in 1943, she and her sister moved to Harlem to live with her father and stepmother; and

WHEREAS, In 1955, Ms. Sanchez earned a B.A. in political science from Hunter College and, later, she completed postgraduate work at New York University and studied poetry with Louise Bogan, the fourth Poet Laureate to the Library of Congress. During this period, Ms. Sanchez formed a writers' workshop in Greenwich Village, attended by Amiri Baraka, Haki R. Madhubuti, and Larry Neal, and long with Mr. Madhubuti, Nikki Giovanni, and Etheridge Knight, she formed the "Broadside Quartet" of young poets; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Sanchez continued to use her former husband's surname in writing and began teaching in the San Francisco area in 1965 and was a pioneer in developing black studies courses at San Francisco State University, where she served as an instructor; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Sanchez has three children and three grandchildren and, in the 1970s, she published various children's books including *It's a New Day: Poems for Young Brothas and Sistuhs*, *The Adventures of Fat Head, Small Head, and Square Head*, and *A Sound Investment and Other Stories*; and

WHEREAS, In 1977, Ms. Sanchez joined the faculty of Temple University and was its first Presidential Fellow and held the Laura Carnall Chair in English until her retirement in 1999 and she has lectured at more than five hundred universities and colleges in the United States and has read her poetry in Africa, Cuba, England, Australia, Nicaragua, Norway, Canada, the Caribbean, and the People's Republic of China; and

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WHEREAS, In addition to her world renowned poetry, Ms. Sanchez is a contributing editor to *Black Scholar* and *the Journal of African Studies* and edited an anthology, *We Be Word Sorcerers: 25 Stories by Black Americans* and she has published various plays including *Sister Son/ji*, *The Bronx is Next*, *Dirty Heads '72*, *Uh Huh: But How Do It Free Us?*, *Malcolm Man/Don't Live Here No Mo'*, *I'm Black When I'm Singing*, *I'm Blue When I Ain't*, and *Black Cats Back and Uneasy Landings*; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Sanchez is the author of over 18 books including *Homecoming*, *We a BaddDDD People*, *Love Poems*, *I've Been a Woman*, *Homegirls and Handgrenades*, *Under a Soprano Sky*, *Wounded in the House of a Friend*, *Does Your House Have Lions?*, *Like the Singing Coming Off the Drums*, *Shake Loose My Skin*, and *Morning Haiku*; and

WHEREAS, *BMA: The Sonia Sanchez Literary Review* is the first African American Journal that discusses the work of Sonia Sanchez and the Black Arts Movement and Ms. Sanchez has received numerous honors including a National Endowment for the Arts, Pew Fellowship in the Arts (1992-1993), Robert Frost Medalist from the Poetry Society of America (2001), National Book Critics Circle Award finalist for *Does Your House Have Lions?*, American Book Award for *Homegirls and Handgrenades* (1985), Langston Hughes Poetry Award (1999), Harper Lee Award (2004), Peace and Freedom Award from the Women International League for Peace and Freedom (1989), National Visionary Leadership Award (2006), Ford Freedom Scholar Award form the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, Community Service Award from the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, Alabama Distinguished Writer Award, Governor's Award for Excellence in the Humanities (1988), Outstanding Arts Award form the Pennsylvania Coalition of 100 Black Women, and Lucretia Mott Award (1984); and

WHEREAS, On December 29, 2011, Mayor Nutter, in consideration of her numerous honors and achievements in the field of poetry, named Ms. Sonia Sanchez as the City's First Poet Laureate; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby recognize and honor Ms. Sonia Sanchez as the First Poet Laureate of the City of Philadelphia.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Ms. Sanchez as an expression of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the twenty-sixth of January, 2012.

Darrell L. Clarke
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Michael A. Decker
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmembers Tasco and Reynolds Brown

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Tasco, Reynolds Brown, Bass, Greenlee, Johnson, Goode, Jones, Oh, Kenney, Quiñones Sánchez and Green