



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

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Honoring Philadelphia native, Dr. Leon Bass, one of the liberators of Buchenwald Concentration Camp on the 70th Anniversary of its liberation.

WHEREAS, From 1933 to 1945 six million Jews were murdered in the Nazi Holocaust as part of a systematic program of genocide, and millions of other people including Gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, the physically and mentally disabled, homosexuals and political dissidents perished as victims of Nazism; and

WHEREAS, Seventy years ago, on April 12, 1945, Sergeant Leon Bass, part of the 183rd Engineer Combat Battalion, which was a segregated African American unit, was one of the first soldiers to arrive at the Buchenwald concentration camp, where he bore witness to the atrocities of the Nazi genocide; and

WHEREAS, When Leon Bass volunteered to serve his country he was treated as a second-class citizen. By the time his unit arrived in Europe he didn't really know what he was fighting for, but witnessing first-hand what the Nazis had done to the Jews gave him a new perspective. He realized that there was a lot of discrimination in the world, and sometimes it produced worse consequences than what he could ever have imagined; and

WHEREAS, When Leon Bass returned home from his army service he was determined to get an education and attended Westchester State teachers college. He then returned to Philadelphia as an elementary school teacher. Leon Bass later became the first African American principal of Benjamin Franklin High School; and

WHEREAS, On Leon Bass' first day as Principal at Benjamin Franklin High School, he entered a classroom where a Holocaust survivor was trying to tell the class of her experiences. The students were being rude and inattentive. Bass reprimanded the students and informed them that what this woman was telling them was the truth-he had seen it for himself. The students were moved by these words from their principal, and they began to listen to the survivor's story. Bass realized how important it was for him to share his story, especially with young people; and

WHEREAS, Leon Bass has continued sharing his message of tolerance and peace between all peoples, taking to heart the teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr. and embracing Quakerism. He has spoken widely of his experiences during the war, wrote a memoir entitled *Good Enough: One Man's Memoir on the Price of the Dream*, and appeared in an Academy Award winning documentary on the experience of African American soldiers in World War II; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby honors Philadelphia native, Dr. Leon Bass, one of the liberators of Buchenwald Concentration Camp on the 70th Anniversary of its liberation.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Dr. Leon Bass, as evidence of the sincere sentiments, respect and admiration of this legislative body.

