



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
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Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

File #: 080324, Version: 0

Recognizing the week of April 20 through April 27, 2008 as *RICHARD WRIGHT WEEK IN PHILADELPHIA*. WHEREAS, Richard Nathaniel Wright, the grandson of a slave, was born on September 4, 1908, the son of Nathan and Ella Wilson Wright on Rucker Plantation in Roxie, Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, His family moved to Memphis, Tennessee, in 1913, and soon after moving, his father, a former sharecropper, abandoned the family, leaving his mother to support them alone; and

WHEREAS, His family moved to Jackson, Mississippi to live with relatives, and he graduated as valedictorian of his 9th grade class in May 1925, but left school a few weeks after entering High School; and

WHEREAS, At the age of 15, Wright wrote his first story "*The Voodoo of Hell's Half-Acre*", and it was published in the *Southern Register*, a local black newspaper; and

WHEREAS, He married Ellen Poplar in 1941, and they had two daughters, Julia and Rachel; and

WHEREAS He later moved to Chicago and became the leader of the John Reed Club which was dominated by the Communist Party; and

WHEREAS, During this time, he edited *Left Front* and contributed to *New Masses Magazine*; and

WHEREAS, In 1937, he moved to New York and began work on a *Writers Project* guide book to the city entitled *New York Panorama*, and subsequently became the Harlem editor of the *Daily Worker*; and

WHEREAS, He gained national attention for his four short stories *Uncle Tom's Children*, which earned him a Guggenheim Fellowship Award; and

WHEREAS, This award allowed him to complete his first novel *Native Son* in 1940 and was subsequently the first book of the *Book of the Month Club* selection by an African American author; and

WHEREAS, He is renowned for his novel, *Black Boy* and *American Hunger*, which was intended as the second book of *Black Boy*; and

WHEREAS, After moving to Paris in 1946, he wrote *The Outsider*, *Savage Holiday* and *Black Power*; and

WHEREAS, In 1949 he contributed to the anti-communist anthology *The God That Failed*, and his essay was published in the *Atlantic Monthly* three years earlier; and

WHEREAS, In 1955, he visited Indonesia for the Bandung Conference, and his recorded observations were published in his book "*The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference*"; and

WHEREAS, His other works include *White Man, Listen!*, *The Long Dream*, and *Eight Men*; and a host of other

publications; and

WHEREAS, He contracted amoebic dysentery on a visit to Africa, and over the next three years, his health deteriorated; and

WHEREAS He died in Paris in November, 1960, and left an unfinished book *A Father's Law* which was published by his daughter, in January 2008; and

WHEREAS, Richard Wright's most significant contribution was his desire to accurately portray blacks to white readers and he has been proclaimed to be one of the most influential African-American writers in the 20th Century; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE PHILADELPHIA CITY COUNCIL, Hereby recognizes April 20 through April 27, as *RICHARD WRIGHT WEEK IN PHILADELPHIA*.