

Legislation Text

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Recognizing and honoring the legacy of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, the “Mother of the Nation” of South Africa, for her lifelong activism in fighting for the equal treatment of her people.

WHEREAS, Nomzamo Winifred Zanyiwe Madikizela was born in the village of Mbongweni, Bizana on the 26th of September 1936. Her father, Columbus, was a local history teacher and her mother, Gertrude, was a science teacher; and

WHEREAS, Living in South Africa during the height of Apartheid, Winnie encountered racism at an early age. Her experiences growing up deeply affected her, and as she grew, she became increasingly sensitized to the inequality of the world around her; and

WHEREAS, Fortunately, Winnie entered primary school before the Apartheid policy of requiring separate education for blacks and whites was implemented. Therefore, Winnie benefited from an education that was on par with that of her white counterparts. Winnie was admitted to the Jan Hofmeyr School of Social Work in Johannesburg, and upon completing her studies, she became the first black social worker at the Baragwanath Hospital in Johannesburg; and

WHEREAS, Winnie was always politically active and began to make a name for herself while she was a social worker. She was particularly passionate about the research she carried out to establish the rate of infantile mortality in Alexandra Township, which at the time, was 10 in every 1,000 births; and

WHEREAS, When Winnie was 22 years old she met Nelson Mandela, who was already a famous anti-apartheid figure and one of the key defendants in the Treason Trial. They were married on June 14, 1958; and

WHEREAS, The Mandelas endured a turbulent married life. Their home was often subject to police raids due to their activism against the South African government, which eventually led to Nelson being arrested on August 5, 1961; and

WHEREAS, During the 27 years Nelson remained in prison, Winnie continued campaigning against Apartheid. She had the reputation as an uncompromising opponent to the oppressive system of government, and became known as the “Mother of the Nation”; and

WHEREAS, In 1993, Winnie was elected as the president of the African National Congress Women’s League. A year later, she joined parliament as a deputy minister of arts and culture under Nelson Mandela’s presidency; and

WHEREAS, While Winnie and Nelson eventually ended their marriage, Nelson still praised her stating, “She endured the persecutions heaped upon her by the government with exemplary fortitude and never wavered from her commitment to the struggle for freedom”; and

WHEREAS, On April 2, 2018, Winnie passed away at the Netcare Milpark Hospital in Johannesburg, South

Africa after a long illness. At the time of her death she was a member of the South African Parliament. Upon learning of her death, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said of Winnie, “In the midst of repression, she was the voice of defiance and resistance. In the face of exploitation, she was a champion of justice and equality”; and

WHEREAS, To many people in South Africa, she was the pride and joy of the nation. She made a legacy that is all her own, apart from the fact that she was married to Nelson Mandela. She will be remembered for her fight against an unjust institution and for her unyielding spirit and passion she gave to affect meaningful change; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby recognizes and honors the legacy of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, the “Mother of the Nation” of South Africa, for her lifelong activism in fighting for the equal treatment of her people.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the family of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela as a sincere expression of the Council of the City of Philadelphia’s gratitude, admiration, and recognition.