

## Legislation Text

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Celebrating the Selection of Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* for the 2019 "One Book, One Philadelphia" Program.

WHEREAS, Since its founding in 1891, the Free Library of Philadelphia has worked to build an enlightened community devoted to lifelong learning; and

WHEREAS, Now in its seventeenth year, the Free Library of Philadelphia's One Book, One Philadelphia has brought residents of the region together, encouraging civic conversations, the sharing of ideas, and the joy of reading; and

WHEREAS, This year's One Book, One Philadelphia selection is *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, a novel by renowned novelist Jesmyn Ward; and

WHEREAS, Jesmyn Ward is a writer and professor of English at Tulane University who received her MFA from the University of Michigan and has been awarded the MacArthur Genius Grant, a Stegner Fellowship, a John and Renee Grisham Writers Residency, and the Strauss Living Prize; and

WHEREAS, Ward's second novel, *Salvage the Bones*, received the National Book Award in 2011. This year's One Book, One Philadelphia selection, *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, received the same award in 2017, making Ward the first woman and African American author to receive this illustrious honor twice; and

WHEREAS, *Sing, Unburied, Sing* tells the story of Jojo, a thirteen year old boy in the rural South trying to understand what it means to be a man - and more specifically, a black man - in contemporary America. The book follows Jojo and his family as they embark on a road trip that also serves as a journey through their painful past; and

WHEREAS, The novel was a finalist for the Kirkus Prize, the Andrew Carnegie Medal, and the Aspen Words Literary Prize, and has received resoundingly positive reviews from critics, including from Mike Fischer at the *Chicago Tribune*, who wrote, "Always clear-eyed, Ward knows history is a nightmare. But she insists all the same that we might yet awaken and sing"; and

WHEREAS, On January 16, Jesmyn Ward joined the Free Library of Philadelphia for the One Book, One Philadelphia kickoff celebration, where she read passages from *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, and engaged in a conversation with WURD President and CEO Sara Lomax-Reese; and

WHEREAS, Between January 16 and March 13 of this year, One Book, One Philadelphia will feature over 100 events inspired by Ward's writing, including discussions, concerts, film screenings and more at neighborhood libraries and other locations across the City; and

WHEREAS, One Book, One Philadelphia will make copies of *Sing, Unburied, Sing* available to borrow at each Free Library location and will distribute thousands of copies of the novel to middle and high school students

throughout the Philadelphia public school system, along with curriculum materials for instructors to use in the classroom; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby celebrate the selection of Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* for the 2019 "One Book, One Philadelphia" program.