

Legislation Text

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Also naming the 1100 block of S. 53rd Street as “Mama Nia Bey Al-Rasul Way” to honor the life and cultural contributions of Mama Nia Bey Al-Rasul to the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, Mama Nia Bey Al-Rasul was a pillar of her community and the city for more than 50 years. Raised in North and South Philly and educated in the School District of Philadelphia, she began her life of service in the 1960s, organizing for welfare rights along with the late Senator Roxanne Jones; and

WHEREAS, Mama Nia was a trailblazer. Beginning in the early 1970s, she helped found and made significant contributions to a number of pivotal Philadelphia cultural institutions, firmly establishing herself as an integral member of our city’s African cultural community. In 1974, Mama Nia became a member of the African Cultural Art Forum (ACAF) and Gele’s Universal, and dedicated her time and energy to helping these organizations grow; and

WHEREAS, An avid lover of music, Mama Nia was a founding member of the renowned female acapella singing group NANIKHA, which won the 1989 Philadelphia Music Award. She sang for President Nelson Mandela during his visit to Philadelphia in the early 1990s. Mama Nia was also a member of The New Afrikan Griots, and the Women’s Shekere Ensemble. As a student of percussion, she studied under Master of Shekere Omomola Iyabunmi and Master Drummer Baba Ibikunle Bey (Robert Crowder); and

WHEREAS, In addition to her contributions in the cultural arena, Mama Nia was an educator who brought her firm, yet gentle manner into the classroom and impacted the lives of three generations of students. She supported and helped to build independent African-centered schools throughout Philadelphia, taught 1st and 2nd graders at Academy of The Way Pan Afrikan Shule for more than 10 years, and also served as a private tutor; and

WHEREAS, After retirement, Mama Nia did not slow down. She continued to pursue her passion for music and for education, teaching classes at Temple University’s Pan African Studies Community Education Program (PASCEP) and at Philadelphia’s annual Locks Conference. Mama Nia also continued working with independent African educational institutions as a consultant; and

WHEREAS, Mama Nia was a matriarch who raised seven children and 26 grandchildren. She was a pioneer who poured herself into her family and community. Mama Nia Bey Al-Rasul led an extraordinary life and will continue to serve as an inspiration to all who knew her; and now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the 1100 block of S. 53rd Street as “Mama Nia Bey Al-Rasul Way” to honor the life and cultural contributions of Mama Nia Bey Al-Rasul to the City of Philadelphia.