

Legislation Text

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Also naming the 5400 block of Vine Street as “Crystal Bird Fauset Way” in honor of former State Representative Crystal Bird Fauset, the first African American woman to be elected as a state legislator in 1939 to the 18th District of Philadelphia County.

WHEREAS, Crystal Bird Fauset was born on June 11, 1893 in Princess Anne, MD and was the second youngest of nine children of Portia E. (Lovett) and Benjamin Oliver Bird, founders of the Princess Anne Academy, which later became University of Maryland Eastern Shore; and

WHEREAS, Fauset relocated to Boston, Massachusetts in 1899 after the death of her mother to live with her aunt. She attended integrated schools in Boston and graduated from Boston Normal School in 1914 and in 1931 she received a Bachelors of Science degree from the Teachers College, Columbia University and later her Master’s in Education from Columbia University; and

WHEREAS, Fauset taught for three years in Boston and New York City after which she served as the field secretary for the National Board of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) from 1918 to 1926. In 1927 she joined the Interracial Section of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and conceived the Race Relations Institute at Swathmore College in 1933; and

WHEREAS, In 1931, Fauset married educator and civil rights activist Arthur Huff Fauset. They resided at 5403 Vine Street in West Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Fauset was elected as a Democrat to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives - 18th District (Philadelphia) for the 1939 term. She resigned from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives on January 8, 1940 to take the position of Assistant State Director of the Education and Recreation Programs of the Works Progress Administration (WPA); and

WHEREAS, Fauset served as a member of many federal and local committees and organizations, including serving as a board member of the Federal Housing Committee, President of the Philadelphia Negro Women’s Democratic League, National Director of Colored Women’s Activities for the National Democratic Committee, Co-chair of the National Citizens for Eisenhower, the Committee for Negro Affairs for the Republican National Committee, Founding Member and Officer of the World Affairs Council, Advisor of the Philadelphia Housing Authority, Director of the Small Business Opportunities Corp under Mayor James Tate and member of President Franklin D Roosevelt's “Black Cabinet”; and

WHEREAS, Fauset was twice the recipient of Pennsylvania's highest civilian honor, The Meritorious Service Medal, in 1939 and 1955; and

WHEREAS, Fauset chaired a committee to establish “Africa House” at 55th and Vine St and championed increased interaction with and knowledge of the newly independent African nations; and

WHEREAS, Fauset traveled and lectured in Europe, Africa and the Middle East and she was commissioned to

deliver a letter to Prime Minister Nehru on India's Independence Day by Mayor Bernard Samuel; and

WHEREAS, Fauset is quoted saying at the 1940 Woman's Centennial Congress, "We should not want to think of America as a 'melting pot,' but as a great interracial-laboratory where Americans can really begin to build the thing which the rest of the world feels that they stand for today, and that is real democracy"; and

WHEREAS, Fauset dedicated her life to the advancement of race relations locally, nationally and internationally, ensuring that all citizen rights are valued; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the dedicated service and legacy of Crystal Bird Fauset is honored and the 5400 block of Vine Street shall henceforth also be known as "Crystal Bird Fauset Way".

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the Crystal Bird Fauset Institute for Civic Engagement as evidence of the sincere respect and appreciation of this legislative body.