

Legislation Text

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Recognizing and celebrating the life and extraordinary contributions of peace activist Dr. Kim Phuc Phan Thi.

WHEREAS, The Council of the City of Philadelphia is pleased to honor the life and contributions of Dr. Kim Phuc Phan Thi. After witnessing the horrors of the Vietnam War first hand and having the most tragic and distressing moment of her life documented and circulated across the globe, she rose from the ashes and managed to not only survive under these circumstances, but also thrive and forgive those most responsible for her suffering; and

WHEREAS, Kim Phuc was born in 1963 in the Vietnamese village of Trang Bang located adjacent to the strategic Route 1, a supply road used heavily during the Vietnam War to transport goods and supplies from Saigon to Phnom Penh. On June 8, 1972, South Vietnamese forces, with assistance from American coordinators, dropped a napalm bomb on her village, forcing Kim Phuc, her family, and many others like them to flee in horror; and

WHEREAS, In this devastating moment, photographer Nick Ut captured the image of a young Kim Phuc doused in napalm, screaming in pain, and running for survival. Soon after this photo was taken, Ut rushed her to a South Vietnamese hospital where she spent the next 14 months recovering. In the years that followed, through countless surgeries and intensive therapy, Kim Phuc made an astonishing recovery and later returned to her village with her family, hoping to rebuild her life and leave the misery of war behind; and

WHEREAS, The image that surfaced from this heart-wrenching moment, commonly known as the ‘napalm girl,’ was one that revealed the atrocities of the Vietnam War faced all too often by innocent civilians. Kim Phuc ultimately became the ‘national symbol for war’ as the world cried for the girl in the image and frequently used her tragedy as a motivator for peace; and

WHEREAS, After the image, Kim Phuc struggled to build her own identity apart from her tragic past. She was ultimately forced to quit school and be supervised daily in her home providence while being bombarded by requests for interviews. In 1986, she was sent to Cuba for her studies where she met the man who she would later call her husband. In the years to come, she had the opportunity to connect with the man responsible for coordinating the air strike on her village. To the surprise of everyone involved, she forgave him for everything and was ready to move on; and

WHEREAS, Despite facing many struggles in her life, Kim Phuc never lost hope. She took all of the strife that life handed her and used the well-known image and platform to promote peace and give back in any way she could. The Kim Foundation International was created in her name to help fund programs responsible for assisting children in war torn regions of the world; and

WHEREAS, To honor Kim Phuc’s life and contributions, programming in Philadelphia will be presented by The National Constitution Center, The Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral and the Painted Bride Art Center; and

WHEREAS, On December 6 at 12pm, The National Constitution Center will give Dr. Kim Phuc Phan Thi the opportunity to discuss her firsthand experiences of the Vietnam War during their program, “The Girl in the

Picture: Remembering Vietnam.” Prior to this dialogue, there will be a performance by classical composer and jazz trumpeter Hannibal Lokumbe; and

WHEREAS, On December 7 from 6:30pm to 8:00pm, Hannibal Lokumbe’s “Children of The Fire”, a ceremony in honor of Dr. Kim Phuc Phan Thi will be performed at The Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral. Lokumbe wrote this piece after witnessing the televised news segment of Kim Phuc’s image and story. He was dismayed by what he saw and immediately felt the need to express his unfeigned sentiments through his music; and

WHEREAS, These Philadelphia-based organizations and the City Council itself strive to honor Dr. Kim Phuc Phan Thi for her contributions, selflessness, and hope after experiencing the heartbreaking horrors of war. Her image and legacy will continue to echo through history as a warning of the damages of war and conflict on civilian populations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby recognize and celebrate the life and extraordinary contributions of peace activist Dr. Kim Phuc Phan Thi.