

Legislation Text

File #: 181106, **Version:** 0

Celebrating the life of Coast Guard and civil rights pioneer Dr. Olivia Hooker, one of the first African American women to serve in the United States Coast Guard.

WHEREAS, Olivia Juliette Hooker was born on February 12, 1915, in Muskogee, Oklahoma to Samuel Hooker and Anita Hooker. Dr. Hooker survived the Tulsa race riots of 1921 at the age of six by hiding under a table with her three siblings when Ku Klux Klan members ransacked her home. Dr. Hooker received her Bachelor of Arts in 1937 from The Ohio State University before becoming an elementary teacher; and

WHEREAS, During World War II, Dr. Olivia Hooker tried to serve her nation by joining the United States Navy, but was turned down. Rather than accept her rejection, she instead turned to the United States Coast Guard, who welcomed her enrollment. In February of 1945, Dr. Hooker entered the Coast Guard and on March 9, 1945 began basic training as one of five African-American females to first enlist;

WHEREAS, Ten years after receiving her Bachelor of Arts, in 1947, Dr. Hooker received her Masters from the Teachers College of Columbia University, and in 1961 she received her Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Rochester. In 1963, she joined Fordham University as a senior clinical lecturer where she would serve as an associate professor until 1985; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hooker died on November 21, 2018, at the age 103, of natural causes in her home in White Plains, New York; and

WHEREAS, In an oral history recorded in 2015 for White Plains Public Library, Dr. Hooker called the riots a “terrible catastrophe in Tulsa.” She went on to say, “Other people call it the Tulsa riot. It really wasn’t a riot... we were the victims”; and

WHEREAS, In 2015 President Obama characterized her as “a professor and mentor to her students, a passionate advocate for Americans with disabilities, a psychologist counseling young children, a caregiver at the height of the AIDS epidemic, a tireless voice for justice and equality” ; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Hooker’s bravery, which led her to be one of the last and most outspoken survivors of the terrible catastrophe in Tulsa as well as the first black woman to serve in the Coast Guard will continue to serve as inspiration for generations of people to come, especially women of color for whom she was a champion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby celebrate the life of Coast Guard and civil rights pioneer Dr. Olivia Hooker, one of the first African American women to serve in the United States Coast Guard.