Legislation Text

File #: 241150, **Version:** 0

Celebrating and honoring the life and legacy of legendary poet, professor, activist and revolutionary Nikki Giovanni on the occasion of her passing.

WHEREAS, Yolande Cornelia "Nikki" Giovanni Jr. was born in Knoxville, Tennessee on June 7, 1943. She was a celebrated poet, whose words were as revolutionary as her activism. Nikki changed the face of poetry in America and relentlessly pushed us on a path toward equity; and

WHEREAS, Nikki started taking courses at Fisk College while still attending high school. As a student at Fisk, she re-established the college's chapter of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and published several essays focused on the role of gender in the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements; and

WHEREAS, Nikki spent a semester living in West Philadelphia and studying social work at the University of Pennsylvania. During this time she began writing her first poetry collection "Black Feeling, Black Talk," which went on to sell thousands of copies making her popular figure in the Black Arts Movement; and

WHEREAS, Our City and Nikki have an intertwined history, so much so that she titled one of her remarkable pieces of work "In Philadelphia," published in 1997. The album includes many remarkable poems that fit the spirit of our City, notably including but not limited to the famous piece "Ego Tripping," but fittingly concludes with "And Yeah… This Is A Love Poem;" and

WHEREAS, Few poets have left as indelible, magnitudinous a mark as Nikki. She has inspired generations of artists and poets to imagine new worlds, and insisted at each stage of her career that the best thing she could do for others was be the best version of herself. She used her platform to uplift and pay tribute to the Black women who pushed the Black Power Movement forward, including contemporary luminaries and changemaking legends like Nina Simone, Audre Lorde, Sonia Sanchez and Angela Davis. Giovanni co-founded the publishing company, NikTom, supporting writers like Gwendolyn Brooks and Margaret Walker; and

WHEREAS, Giovanni accepted a position at Virginia Tech teaching creative writing and literature. She became a University Distinguished Professor, and received seven NAACP Image Awards alongside 20 honorary doctorates; and

WHEREAS, Nikki Giovanni was a living testament to the example she wanted to set: "I am so perfect so divine / so ethereal so surreal / I cannot be comprehended / except by my permission / I mean … I … can fly / Like a bird in the sky …;" now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Celebrates and honors the life and legacy of legendary poet, professor, activist and revolutionary Nikki Giovanni on the occasion of her passing.