

108TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. CON. RES. 54

Commending Medgar Wiley Evers and his widow, Myrlie Evers-Williams for their lives and accomplishments, designating a Medgar Evers National Week of Remembrance, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 11, 2003

Mr. COCHRAN (for himself and Mr. LOTT) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was considered and agreed to

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Commending Medgar Wiley Evers and his widow, Myrlie Evers-Williams for their lives and accomplishments, designating a Medgar Evers National Week of Remembrance, and for other purposes.

Whereas a pioneer in the fight for racial justice, Medgar Wiley Evers, was born July 2, 1925, in Decatur, Mississippi, to James and Jessie Evers;

Whereas, to faithfully serve his country, Medgar Evers left high school to join the Army when World War II began and, after coming home to Mississippi, he completed high school, enrolled in Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College, presently known as Alcorn State University, and majored in business administration;

Whereas, as a student at Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College, Evers was a member of the debate team, the college choir, and the football and track teams, was the editor of the campus newspaper and the yearbook, and held several student offices, which gained him recognition in Who's Who in American Colleges;

Whereas, while a junior at Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College, Evers met a freshman named Myrlie Beasley, whom he married on December 24, 1951, and with whom he spent the remainder of his life;

Whereas, after Medgar Evers received a bachelor of arts degree, he moved to historic Mound Bayou, Mississippi, became employed by Magnolia Mutual Life Insurance Company, and soon began establishing local chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (referred to in this resolution as the "NAACP") throughout the Delta region;

Whereas, moved by the plight of African-Americans in Mississippi and a desire to change the conditions facing them, in 1954, after the United States Supreme Court ruled school segregation unconstitutional, Medgar Evers became the first known African-American person to apply for admission to the University of Mississippi Law School, but was denied that admission;

Whereas, as a result of that denial, Medgar Evers contacted the NAACP to take legal action;

Whereas in 1954, Medgar Evers was offered a position as the Mississippi Field Secretary for the NAACP, and he accepted the position, making Myrlie Evers his secretary;

Whereas, with his wife by his side, Medgar Evers began a movement to register people to vote in Mississippi and,

as a result of his activities, Medgar Evers received numerous threats;

Whereas, in spite of the threats, Medgar Evers persisted, with dedication and courage, to organize rallies, build the NAACP's membership, and travel around the country with Myrlie Evers to educate the public;

Whereas Medgar Evers' passion for quality education for all children led him to file suit against the Jackson, Mississippi public schools, which gained him national media coverage;

Whereas Medgar Evers organized students from Tougaloo and Campbell Colleges, coordinated and led protest marches, organized boycotts of Jackson businesses and sit-ins, and challenged segregated bus seating, and for these heroic efforts, he was arrested, beaten, and jailed;

Whereas the violence against Medgar Evers came to a climax on June 12, 1963, when he was shot and killed in front of his home;

Whereas, after the fingerprints of an outspoken segregationist were recovered from the scene of the shooting, and 2 juries deadlocked without a conviction in the shooting case, Myrlie Evers and her 3 children moved to Claremont, California, where she enrolled in Pomona College and earned her bachelor's degree in sociology in 1968;

Whereas, after Medgar Evers' death, Myrlie Evers began to create her own legacy and emerged as a national catalyst for justice and equality by becoming active in politics, becoming a founder of the National Women's Political Caucus, running for Congress in California's 24th congressional district, serving as Commissioner of Public Works for Los Angeles, using her writing skills to serve as a

correspondent for Ladies Home Journal and to cover the Paris Peace Talks, and rising to prominence as Director of Consumer Affairs for the Atlantic Richfield Company;

Whereas Myrlie Evers became Myrlie Evers-Williams when she married Walter Williams in 1976;

Whereas, in the 1990's, Evers-Williams convinced Mississippi prosecutors to reopen Medgar Evers' murder case, and the reopening of the case led to the conviction and life imprisonment of Medgar Evers' killer;

Whereas Evers-Williams became the first female to chair the 64-member Board of Directors of the NAACP, to provide guidance to an organization that was dear to Medgar Evers' heart;

Whereas Evers-Williams has published her memoirs, entitled "Watch Me Fly: What I Learned on the Way to Becoming the Woman I Was Meant to Be", to enlighten the world about the struggles that plagued her life as the wife of an activist and empowered her to become a community leader;

Whereas Evers-Williams is widely known as a motivational lecturer and continues to speak out against discrimination and injustice;

Whereas her latest endeavor has brought her home to Mississippi to make two remarkable contributions, through the establishment of the Evers Collection and the Medgar Evers Institute, which advance the knowledge and cause of social injustice and which encompass the many lessons in the life's work of Medgar Evers and Myrlie Evers-Williams;

Whereas Evers-Williams has presented the extraordinary papers in that Collection and Institute to the Mississippi

Department of Archives and History, where the papers are being preserved and catalogued; and

Whereas it is the policy of Congress to recognize and pay tribute to the lives and accomplishments of extraordinary Mississippians such as Medgar Evers and Myrlie Evers-Williams, whose life sacrifices have contributed to the betterment of the lives of the citizens of Mississippi as well as the United States: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives*
2 *concurring), That—*

3 (1) Congress commends Medgar Wiley Evers
4 and his widow, Myrlie Evers-Williams, and expresses
5 the greatest respect and gratitude of Congress, for
6 their lives and accomplishments;

7 (2) the Senate—

8 (A) designates the period beginning on
9 June 9, 2003, and ending on June 16, 2003, as
10 the “Medgar Evers National Week of Remem-
11 brance”; and

12 (B) requests that the President issue a
13 proclamation calling on the people of the United
14 States to observe the week with appropriate
15 ceremonies and activities; and

16 (3) copies of this resolution shall be furnished
17 to the family of Medgar Wiley Evers and Myrlie
18 Evers-Williams.

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