

By: Dukes

H.C.R. No. 47

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, James Leonard Farmer, Jr., a native Texan, played a
2 fundamental role in shaping and leading the modern civil rights
3 movement in the United States; and

4 WHEREAS, Born in Marshall on January 12, 1920, Mr. Farmer
5 lived in Austin from 1925 to 1930 while his father was serving as a
6 professor and as registrar at Samuel Huston College; after
7 graduating from Wiley College at the age of 18, he initially
8 followed in the footsteps of his theologian father, earning a
9 bachelor of divinity degree from Howard University in 1941; while
10 studying at Howard, he developed a great appreciation for the work
11 of Mahatma Gandhi; and

12 WHEREAS, James Farmer moved to Chicago in 1941 to join the
13 Fellowship of Reconciliation as a secretary of race relations; the
14 following year, he became the principal founder of a new civil
15 rights organization, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE); during
16 his involvement with CORE, Mr. Farmer helped to pioneer the civil
17 rights protest tactics that gained national attention in the 1950s
18 and 1960s--nonviolent direct action, civil disobedience, and
19 noncooperation with segregation; and

20 WHEREAS, After serving as program director for the NAACP from
21 1959 to 1961, Mr. Farmer returned to CORE to become its national
22 director; shortly thereafter he organized the first Freedom Ride, a
23 protest action that ultimately led to the outlawing of segregated
24 seating in interstate travel; and

1 WHEREAS, While overseeing the formation of more than 150 new
2 CORE chapters, Mr. Farmer also played a key role in organizing the
3 1963 March on Washington; at the same time, he led CORE in
4 courageous efforts to register African American voters in southern
5 states, a campaign that climaxed in Mississippi with the Freedom
6 Summer project of 1964; and

7 WHEREAS, One of the preeminent leaders of the civil rights
8 movement, James Farmer saw his labor and sacrifices, together with
9 the efforts of thousands of other brave men and women, bear fruit in
10 the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965;
11 moreover, he used his access to Vice President and then President
12 Lyndon Johnson to successfully promote the concept of affirmative
13 action; and

14 WHEREAS, Mr. Farmer left CORE in 1966; from 1969 to 1970, he
15 served in the administration of President Richard Nixon as an
16 assistant secretary in the Department of Health, Education and
17 Welfare; during his tenure at HEW he advocated the use of federal
18 funds to strengthen historically black colleges and universities;
19 and

20 WHEREAS, In his continuing quest to heal racial divisions
21 within the country, Mr. Farmer cofounded in 1975 the Fund for an
22 Open Society, an organization to promote interracial housing; the
23 author of two books, including an autobiography, he served as a
24 Distinguished Professor of History and American Studies at Mary
25 Washington College, now the University of Mary Washington, from
26 1985 to 1998; among the numerous awards conferred on him during his
27 lifetime were 26 honorary degrees and, in 1998, the Presidential

1 Medal of Freedom; and

2 WHEREAS, James Farmer died on July 9, 1999; in recognition of
3 his towering role in the civil rights movement, Governor Rick
4 Perry, Austin Mayor Will Wynn, and San Antonio Mayor Edward D. Garza
5 declared January 12, 2005, as a special day to honor James Farmer;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, Throughout his life, this notable American remained
8 committed to the principle of nonviolence and to the ideal of a
9 fully inclusive, integrated society, and in his unwavering devotion
10 to that shining vision, he was instrumental in advancing the cause
11 of social and economic justice for all the citizens of this land;
12 now, therefore, be it

13 RESOLVED, That the 79th Legislature of the State of Texas
14 hereby pay tribute to the life of James Leonard Farmer, Jr., for his
15 immeasurable contributions to the continuing expansion of human
16 freedom.