

By: McClendon

H.R. No. 905

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The people of San Antonio lost a dedicated champion
2 of civil rights and an inspiring religious and community leader
3 with the death of the Reverend Claude William Black, Jr., on March
4 13, 2009, at the age of 92; and

5 WHEREAS, Born in San Antonio on November 28, 1916, Claude
6 Black, Jr., was the oldest child of Cora and Claude Black, Sr.; he
7 graduated from Morehouse College and subsequently earned a master
8 of divinity degree from Andover Newton Theological School; exposed
9 to political organizing through his father, who served as vice
10 president of the local Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, he
11 became active in the community in the early 1940s; he founded the
12 San Antonio Mother's Service Organization to encourage positive
13 youth development, and it became the first African American group
14 of Christian women to get a state charter for a local club; and

15 WHEREAS, Reverend Black continued his activism as the civil
16 rights movement got underway, leading and organizing marches around
17 the state; in March 1960, he urged city officials to integrate local
18 lunch counters, and San Antonio became the first major city in the
19 South to break this barrier without demonstrations; he was an
20 associate of Martin Luther King, Jr., Thurgood Marshall, A. Philip
21 Randolph, and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and he was invited by
22 President Lyndon B. Johnson to attend the White House Conference on
23 Civil Rights in 1966; and

24 WHEREAS, Even as many of the movement's goals were realized,

1 this esteemed Texan remained a vital advocate for San Antonio's
2 African American population; he was elected to the city council in
3 the early 1970s and went on to become the city's first African
4 American mayor pro tem; a decade later, he founded a corporation to
5 help east side residents obtain suitable housing, and in 1995, he
6 was appointed a delegate to the White House Council on Aging by
7 President Bill Clinton; and

8 WHEREAS, Reverend Black further distinguished himself as the
9 pastor of San Antonio's historic Mount Zion First Baptist Church
10 and, under his guidance, the church became known for its numerous
11 public outreach efforts; his legacy includes the development of two
12 neighborhood day care centers, an apartment complex for seniors,
13 and the city's only financial institution owned by an African
14 American church; moreover, when the Mount Zion sanctuary was
15 destroyed by arson in 1974, Reverend Black led members through the
16 rebuilding process, and a new sanctuary was completed the next
17 year; by the time of his retirement in 1998, he had served the
18 church for nearly half a century; and

19 WHEREAS, In all of his endeavors, Reverend Black enjoyed the
20 love and support of his beloved wife, ZerNona, with whom he shared
21 59 years before her death in 2005; the couple raised two children,
22 Stewart and Joyce, and welcomed six grandchildren and four
23 great-grandchildren into their family; and

24 WHEREAS, Reverend Black was recognized for his commitment to
25 civil rights with the 1991 MLK Distinguished Achievement Award from
26 the City of San Antonio, and the city also named an east side
27 community center in his honor; before his death, he was notified of

1 his selection for the prestigious Testament of Hope Award, given in
2 tribute to an outstanding community leader; his grandson, Taj
3 Matthews, and other family members, accepted the award on his
4 behalf at the second annual Realizing the Dream Award Celebration,
5 hosted by Martin Luther King III; and

6 WHEREAS, With his lifelong devotion to justice and equality,
7 Claude Black made a profound difference in the city of San Antonio
8 and beyond, and he leaves behind a record of achievement that will
9 continue to resonate for many years to come; now, therefore, be it

10 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 81st Texas
11 Legislature hereby honor the memory of the Reverend Claude William
12 Black, Jr., and extend sincere sympathy to his family: to his
13 grandchildren, Taj Matthews, Chantey Matthews, and Claude
14 Williams, and their families; to his sister, Mary Etta Black Deas;
15 and to his many admirers across the Lone Star State; and, be it
16 further

17 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
18 prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of
19 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Reverend
20 Black.