

RESOLUTION

Honoring the African American Children’s Book Project on Occasion of the 26th Annual African American Children’s Book Fair and the February 3rd Kick Off of the National Literacy Initiative’s Preserve a Legacy, Buy a Book Program.

WHEREAS, In 1926, noted historian Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the study of negro life and history announced the second week of February to be “Negro History Week”; and

WHEREAS, The 2nd week in February was chosen because of the birthdays of President Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass; and

WHEREAS, During early American history, African Americans were not allowed to learn to read and have books; in some states the penalty for this infraction was death; and

WHEREAS, The importance of book fairs cannot be understated and for twenty-six years the African American Children’s Book Fair has enhanced multi-culturalism in our City utilizing the joy of reading as a tool; and

WHEREAS, Vanesse Lloyd Sgambati the founder/CEO of The African American Children’s Book Project created the book fair because she saw a void in the community and understood that all children should have access to books that reflect their images. She believes that books open up a world of opportunities for all children and after twenty-six years, the African American Children's Book Fair is the oldest and largest single day event for African American children's books in the country. As a literary consultant she is a much sought after expert on trends in diverse books and how to incorporate these books into homes, schools and libraries; and

WHEREAS, One of the most important reasons to encourage reading in our children is that studies show that the more our youth read the more likely they are to make positive lifestyle decisions as they grow older. Literacy also makes our youth more productive global citizens; and

WHEREAS, Strictly judging by attendance the fair is a tremendous success as well over 3,500 people attended the Fair in past years from across the nation; and

WHEREAS, Rich or poor, no one leaves empty handed as the books themselves are priced at a level where they are more affordable and posters, bookmarkers, and raffle books are distributed free of charge to attendees; and

WHEREAS, the success of the event is reflected in five elements: the attendees (parents, children, caregivers, and educators), the authors and illustrators, the sponsors and the volunteers. Three esteemed participants are Aldustus Jordan and authors Ray Anthony Shepard and Brittney Shipp; and

WHEREAS, Aldustus “A.J.” Jordan has dedicated his career and personal life to advocating for high quality literacy and educational opportunities for children and families in underserved communities. After beginning his career working for Head Start, A.J. worked as a school social worker, developed education-focused after school programs and served as the education

coordinator for Public Citizens for Children and youth, where he organized coalitions to develop advocacy platforms to strengthen public schools across the region; and

WHEREAS, Jordan currently serves as Senior Vice President for Community Relations at Wells Fargo, where he leads the company's philanthropic contributions and employee engagement initiatives for one of the largest regional corporate funders in the areas of early literacy and education. Jordan also serves on numerous non-profit boards and committees, including the Leadership Council for the Read by 4th Campaign, the Free Library of Philadelphia's Corporate Advisory Council, KIPP Philadelphia, the Salvation Army Kroc Center Advisory Board and the Philanthropy Network of Greater Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Ray Anthony Shepard is a grandson of a slave, a former teacher, and the retired editor-in-chief of a major education publishing company. He is a graduate of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where he received the Martin Luther King Jr. Fellowship from the Woodrow Wilson Foundation; and

WHEREAS, Shepard's book *Now or Never: Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Infantry's War to End Slavery* is his first work of creative nonfiction for younger readers. The book is a dual biography of George E. Stephens and James Henry Gooding, both of whom not only served in the Massachusetts 54th infantry, but also published eyewitness reports of the Civil War from the perspective of the African American soldier. Their correspondence exposed the reality of life at camp, and the shocking misery of the battlefield. These soldiers and the 54th infantry fought against many injustices, and their leadership resulted in one of America's first notable civil rights victories: the right to equal pay for African American soldiers; and

WHEREAS, Shepard has dedicated his career as an educator to fostering a better understanding of American slavery among history teachers and their students. From his personal experience growing up in Nebraska, he knows that it is difficult "to teach American slavery without making some students feel embarrassed, angry, or guilty...". With his book, he aims to expose both the pain and hope of American slaves and their liberators; and

WHEREAS, Brittney Shipp recently returned to Philadelphia's NBC10 First Alert Weather Team after spending two years as a Chief Meteorologist at KRON-TV in San Francisco. Shipp is an Emmy®-nominated journalist, and earned her bachelor's degree in International Development Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a Certificate of Broadcast Meteorology from Mississippi State University; and

WHEREAS, Shipp's children's book *The Meteorologist in Me* was published in 2016. The book tells the story of a girl named Summer, who dreams of becoming a TV Meteorologist. Summer loves sharing weather facts with her family and friends and wonders why everyone laughs at the thought of her on T.V. Despite roadblocks, Summer is determined to pursue her dream of becoming a broadcaster; and

WHEREAS, *The Meteorologist in Me* was inspired by Shipp's combined passions for meteorology and children's education, and she hopes that her book will help to bridge the gender

gap in STEM careers. Shipp is dedicated to energizing young girls to pursue understand weather and science; and

WHEREAS, The 26th Annual African American Book Fair will be held free of charge on Saturday, February 3, 2018, from one to four p.m. at the Community College of Philadelphia located at 17th & Spring Garden Streets; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA That we hereby honor the African American Children's Book Project on occasion of the 26th Annual African American Children's Book Fair and the February 3rd kick-off of the National Literacy Initiative's Preserve a Legacy, Buy a Book program.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this Resolution be presented to representatives of the African American Children's Book Project, Vanesse Lloyd-Sgambati, Ray Anthony Shepard, Brittney Shipp, and Aldustus Jordan for their hard work and efforts in the promotion of children's literacy, as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.

**Blondell Reynolds Brown
Councilwoman At-Large
January 25, 2018**