



CITY OF NEW YORK MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10

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Hon. Marquis A. Harrison
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FRANKLIN H. WILLIAMS STREET CO-NAMING

Resolution, In support of West 136th Street and 5th Avenue Co-Named Franklin H. Williams Street or Way; and

Whereas, Williams was born on October 22, 1917 in Flushing, Queens. He graduated from Pennsylvania's Lincoln University in 1941, where he was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, Nu chapter. In 1945, he earned a law degree from the Fordham University School of Law; and

Whereas, The Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission is named in honor of the distinguished attorney and civil rights leader, Franklin H. Williams. In 1988, Chief Judge Sol Wachtler appointed Mr. Williams as Chair of the New York State Judicial Commission on Minorities responsible for conducting extensive research on the perception and treatment of minorities in the court system; and

Whereas, As a Native New Yorker, Mr. Williams graduated from Lincoln University in 1941. Thereafter, he received his law degree from Fordham University in 1945. He served as an assistant counsel to Thurgood Marshall, Chief Counsel to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P). From 1950 to 1959, Mr. Williams was the Director of the west coast N.A.A.C.P and was credited with major inroads in the civil rights movement involving cases on school desegregation and restrictive covenants. Indeed, Mr. Williams played a significant role in battling a once common practice of systematically excluding African Americans from juries. Forty years before the Supreme Court formally ended that practice in *Batson v. Kentucky*, Mr. Williams was effectively arguing the same issue ¹; and

Whereas, Mr. Williams was also instrumental in the development of the Peace Corps and eventually became the Peace Corps Regional Director for Africa. The Peace Corps currently honors his memory with the Franklin H. Williams Awards given thus far to over 90 outstanding returned Peace Corps Volunteers; and

Whereas, Franklin H. Williams went on to serve as the United States Ambassador to Ghana. His contributions as Ambassador were recognized by the State Department, which presented him with Distinguished Service Award, and he was honored by numerous Ghanaian tribes and communities; and

Whereas, Williams assumed the Directorship of the new Urban Center at Columbia University in 1968. The following two years were marked by innovative changes in personnel utilization and curriculum, and the publication of a major study, "The Uses of the University;" and

Whereas, From 1987 to 1990, Williams chaired the New York State Judicial Commission on Minorities, which studied the treatment of minority group members in state courts. The study resulted in 1991 report which revealed a severe lack of diversity on the bench and in management positions and a widespread perception of racial bias in the courts. To address the issues raised in the 1991 report,

this Commission was established as permanent entity in the courts and named in honor of attorney-statesman, Franklin H. Williams; and

Whereas, In 1959, Williams became Assistant Attorney General of California and in 1961, the Kennedy administration appointed him to assist Sargent Shriver in organizing the Peace Corps. As a delegate to UNESCO, he championed establishment of an international counterpart to the Corps. Franklin Williams with other diplomats in 1967; and

Whereas, Under President Johnson, Williams became the first black representative to the United Nations Economic and Social Council and later was appointed ambassador to Ghana in 1965; During his three-year tenure at this post, he was credited with improving the formerly strained relations between the United States and the African nation; and

Whereas, For 20 years, Williams was president of the Phelps Stokes Fund, established to facilitate the education of African and Native American students. During this time he served on several boards, among them: Lincoln University, the Council on Foreign Relations, the New York Board of Higher Education, the American Symphony Orchestra, the Barnes Foundation, Consolidated Edison and Borden, Inc.; and

Whereas, In 1989, he chaired the New York State Judicial Commission on Minorities. The commission has since continued as the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission; and

Whereas, From 1970 until his death, he served as the president of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, a nonprofit organization established in 1911 to improve education for African Americans, American Indians, and Africans; and

Whereas, Franklin H. Williams was a resident of the Riverton Houses located in Central Harlem; and

Whereas, Franklin H. Williams passed away in Manhattan on May 20, 1990 at the age of 72; and

Whereas, The Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission presented before the Transportation, Landmarks and Historic Preservation Committee on June 11, 2024; On June 26, 2024, Manhattan Community Board 10's Executive Committee acted on behalf of the Full Board to unanimously support of the street co-naming resolution; and

Now Therefore Be It Resolved, Manhattan Community Board 10 wishes to honor Franklin H. Williams' legacy by Co-Naming West 136th and 5th Co-Named Franklin H. Williams Way.