

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 232

By Jones

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Dr. Bernard Lafayette, Jr.

WHEREAS, it is our privilege to honor an iconic civil rights leader and champion of nonviolence, whose name is synonymous with the long history of the Civil Rights Movement in Nashville and across the South; and

WHEREAS, such an esteemed gentleman is Dr. Bernard Lafayette, Jr., a minister, educator, lecturer, and authority on the strategy of nonviolent social change, who first came to Nashville in 1958 to attend American Baptist Theological Seminary; and

WHEREAS, in Nashville, Dr. Bernard Lafayette worked alongside civil rights student leaders John Lewis, James Bevel, and Diane Nash and became a co-founder of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Lafayette and John Lewis were roommates and worked together to organize the lunch counter sit-ins to protest segregation in Nashville; the two remained lifelong friends until Congressman Lewis's passing in 2020; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Bernard Lafayette helped lead the Freedom Riders, who protested segregation by making bus trips around the South; he survived an attack by Ku Klux Klan members during a trip to Montgomery, Alabama, and he was badly beaten in Selma, Alabama; and

WHEREAS, in 1967, Dr. Bernard Lafayette was hired by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to serve as the program director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King had advocated for Dr. Lafayette and the Freedom Riders after the attack in Montgomery, and the two gentlemen became close friends, working together to advance civil rights, mobilize voters, and teach nonviolence; and

WHEREAS, the day after Dr. King's death, the two men had been slated to meet in Washington, D.C., to discuss Dr. Lafayette's new role as coordinator for Dr. King's Poor People's Campaign, a national push to end poverty; and

WHEREAS, picking up the torch of freedom, Dr. Bernard Lafayette has been a champion in the effort to carry on Dr. King's legacy of nonviolence; and

WHEREAS, he has served as director of Peace and Justice in Latin America; chairperson of the Consortium on Peace Research, Education, and Development; director of the PUSH Excel Institute; and minister of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Tuskegee, Alabama; and

WHEREAS, an ordained minister, Dr. Lafayette earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from American Baptist Theological Seminary and his Master of Education and Doctor of Education degrees from Harvard University; and

WHEREAS, he has served on the faculties of Columbia Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia, and Alabama State University in Montgomery, Alabama, where he also served as Dean of the Graduate School, and as principal of Tuskegee Institute High School in Tuskegee, Alabama, and a teaching fellow at Harvard University; and

WHEREAS, he is a former president of the American Baptist College of American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville; Scholar in Residence at the Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta, Georgia; and Pastor Emeritus of the Progressive Baptist Church in Nashville; and

WHEREAS, a former Distinguished Scholar in Residence and Director of the Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies at the University of Rhode Island, Dr. Lafayette is the chair of the International Nonviolence Executive Planning Board, chair of the Rhode Island Select Commission on Race and Police-Community Relations, and the Senior Scholar in Resident at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia; and

WHEREAS, he is the founder and national president of God-Parents Club, Inc.; a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity; and a founder of the Association for Kingian Nonviolence Education and Training Works; and

WHEREAS, a loving husband and father, Dr. Lafayette enjoys the love and support of his wife, Kate Bulls Lafayette, and his two sons, James Lafayette and Bernard Lafayette III; and

WHEREAS, it is most appropriate that we pay respectful tribute to this legendary icon of the Civil Rights Movement in Tennessee and our nation; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and commend Dr. Bernard Lafayette, Jr., an outstanding and inspirational leader for social justice and human rights, for his unwavering commitment to nonviolence and his lifelong service to our State and our country.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.