

Testimonial Resolution

35th Anniversary of the

Wayne State University Study-In

The Honorable Coleman A. Young II, Detroit City Councilman At-Large #1 Honors the 35th Anniversary of the 1989 Wayne State University Student Study-In Excellence in the Academic Representation in Africana Studies

WHEREAS: The 1989 Wayne State University Study-In was a historic protest that took place on Wayne State University's Detroit campus. The purpose was of this imperative protest was to demand institutional change regarding proposed budget cuts and threats to academic programs, this event was a true testament to unwavering commitment to defending the integrity of higher education. There were 17 demands being sought with establishing a Department of Africana Studies at the forefront; and

WHEREAS: The 1989 Wayne State University Study-In began three and a half decades ago on April 12th and lasted a grueling 11 days. The protest was in response to the University's dismantling of the Center for Black Studies. The students believed that this was a direct threat to racial equality and diversity, so they organized and for community action. Among the protesting students was: Dr. Errol Henderson, Associate Professor of Political Science at Pennsylvania State University, and a born and raised Eastside Detroiter. Dr. Henderson set minimum standards at an academic department with a half million-dollar budget, five tenured professor lines, and degree-granting power as imperative for Wayne State's students. Cherine Shaaban was the Study-In spokesperson. As the first speaker at their Rally, she demanded that Wayne State University fund the Africana Studies Department with \$1,000,000 of the \$160,000,000 funding from the State of Michigan. Kwame Kenyetta, was among the protestors and pressed the point that parents sent their children to Wayne State University to get an education, not a plantation education; and

WHEREAS: The 1989 Wayne State University Study-In students numbering almost 200 occupied select buildings throughout Wayne State's Campus. Their strategy was to confuse the administration and campus police. Their strategic plan led to the eventual convening at the Helen Newberry Joy Building. The students gained the attention of not only campus authorities and administration, but garnered a story on the 11:00pm ABC-TV-7 (WXYZ, Detroit) which gained national media attention. President Adamany met with them and they stood firm; and

WHEREAS: The 1989 Wayne State University Study-In was as an example of studious African American students that truly held a "Study-In" as they "studied-in" the building in which they occupied even though they faced expulsion for doing so. The students simply sat and studied for 24 hours consistently without leaving the building for 11 consecutive days. This became robustly intense as the students fully leaned into their commitment to the protest. As the students continued to occupy the Helen Newberry Joy Building, everyday necessities became scarce. There was little food and no hot water. The air conditioning was left on daily, over which the students had no control. This meant that the cold temperatures outside made it colder inside the building, due to the lack of heat. Further, the protesting students were faced with adversity from campus police who were intentionally attempting to intimidate them. Gene Cunningham, a well known Detroit Community Activist compared the campus police to sheriffs in old time western movies as they often walked around holding their belt buckles and toying with their guns to antagonize the students; and

WHEREAS: The 1989 Wayne State University Study-In received support from outside sources to assist them with their activism. Citizens, city agencies, local businesses, civil rights groups, religious groups, grassroots organizations, and others came to the aid of the the protesting students by providing them with food, water, and warm clothing. Community supporters would hold vigils in front of the building that the students occupied and went as far as providing them with not only psychological support, but physical support to ensure that they were not arrested or forcefully removed from the building in which they occupied; and

WHEREAS: The 1989 Wayne State University Study-In Students were also joined by the greatest Mayor to ever live, My Father, Detroit's own legendary Mayor Coleman A. Young Sr. Mayor Young ordered the Detroit Police Department to stand down from trying to remove the students from the Study-In. The Honorable Congressman John Conyers also, sent protection to the Study-In students until the students demands were met; and

WHEREAS: The 1989 Wayne State University Study-In ended in success with the majority of their demands met. The University agreed to establish a Department of Africana Studies with a budget of \$452,500 in the 1989-90 school year as well as increasing the number of black faculty members. They also agreed to offer more scholarships to black students. The Study-In students were not arrested, nor were they reprimanded or disciplined on their academic records by the Wayne State University. NOW THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED: The Honorable Coleman A. Young II, Council Member At-Large along with the Honorable Detroit City Council Members honors the 35th Anniversary of The 1989 Wayne State University Study-In. The impact of this great protest opened doors in academic and psychological freedom, These courageous students prepared the way for African American studies across the State of Michigan and America. We are forever grateful for the stand for righteousness and direct academic representation. You are indeed World Heroes who prepared the Way for All of Us to follow! Thank You for your Strength! Thank you for your Courage! Thank you for your Detroit Love!

Mary Sheffield
COUNCIL PRESIDENT

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COUNCIL PRESIDENT PRO TEM

Coleman A. Young II
COUNCIL MEMBER

Mary Waters
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