

BY ALDS STAMPER, COGGS, BORKOWSKI, RAINEY, CHAMBERS, BROSTOFF, BAUMAN, ZAMARRIPA, PEREZ, SPIKER, DIMITRIJEVIC

*Resolution expressing condolences to the family and friends of Robert J. Thomas.*

**WHEREAS,**

## **ROBERT J. THOMAS**

*passed from this life at the age of 86, and a memorial service was held in his honor at the Wisconsin Black Historical Society/Museum, 2620 W. Center St., on April 22, 2023; and*

**WHEREAS,** *Robert J. Thomas was a successful entrepreneur and Milwaukee Community Journal co-founder and Associate Publisher; and*

**WHEREAS,** *Robert J. Thomas was born in Dyersburg, Tennessee and came to Milwaukee as a pre-schooler as part of the 'Great Migration,' and was raised as a member of Calvary Baptist Church, and attended Milwaukee Public Schools, graduating from North Division High School; and*

**WHEREAS,** *At North Division, Robert became a track star under the guidance of the school's track coach Calvin Beckett, received a track scholarship to Marquette University and trained to be an Olympic hurdler; and*

**WHEREAS,** *Robert was best known for the businesses he created (some started with his father, J.C. Thomas): Robby's, the first franchised fast food hamburger establishment in Milwaukee's central city; Rich Man Poor Man; Ebony Cue Billiards; 'The Fox Trap,' the first member-owned Black nightclub; the first video game center (at Fond du Lac and Capitol Drive - a location that broke traditional Black business norms; was one of the first Black vendors at Summerfest with 'Robby's Corn Roast,'; the first Black-owned bowling center located in a former A&P food store on N. Teutonia Ave.; and 'Robby's Catering,' a very successful business that served Milwaukee Public Schools and at various senior care facilities; and*

**WHEREAS,** *Robert J. Thomas, who also served as the youth director at the North Central YMCA under the late Robert Starms, was the proud father of two sons: Dr. Terence Nolan Thomas, who preceded him in death, and Todd 'Speech' Thomas, a Grammy Award winning Hip Hop artist and creative griot of the African American experience; and*

**WHEREAS,** *Robert J. Thomas leaves to cherish his memory his son Todd and his devoted wife Yolanda, grandchildren Jahi Terence and Zoe Renee, and a host of other loving relatives and friends; now, therefore, be it*

**RESOLVED,** *That the Common Council of the City of Milwaukee herewith offers its sincere condolences to the family and friends of Robert J. Thomas who will be remembered fondly for his business acumen, and his love of Milwaukee; and, be it*

**FURTHER RESOLVED,** *That a suitably engrossed copy of the resolution be presented to the family of Robert J. Thomas, a remarkable man and an outstanding person.*

**Introduced by Common Council members Russell W. Stamper, II, Milele A. Coggs, Mark A. Borkowski, Khalif J. Rainey, José G. Pérez, Mark Chambers, Jr., Jonathan Brostoff, Robert J. Bauman, JoCasta Zamarripa, Scott Spiker, and Marina Dimitrijevic and approved by all members of the Milwaukee Common Council on May 9, 2023.**