

BY ALDS. HAMILTON, COGGS, BOHL, WITKOWSKI, PEREZ, STAMPER, LEWIS, KOVAC, RAINEY, JOHNSON, BORKOWSKI

*Resolution recognizing the contributions of Vel Phillips and the NAACP Youth Council and Commandos on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city's Fair Housing Law.*

**WHEREAS,**

**VEL PHILLIPS AND THE NAACP YOUTH COUNCIL & COMMANDOS**

*played key roles in City of Milwaukee history by applying pressure and marching in protest to the injustices and discrimination perpetrated against people of color, and their toughness and determination helped lead to the Common Council's unanimous passage of the Fair Housing Law on April 30, 1968; and*

**WHEREAS,** *Vel Phillips, the first African-American and the first woman elected to the Milwaukee Common Council (1956), was a strong advocate for fair housing and civil rights, and stood firm in reintroducing the Fair Housing Ordinance every 90 days for seven years starting in 1962; and*

**WHEREAS,** *The Commandos were a self-defense group formed in 1966 after a Klan bomb blast destroyed the Milwaukee NAACP office and thousands of angry whites threatened violence in suburban Wauwatosa during a peaceful protest outside the home of Judge Robert Cannon, and the Commandos practiced what they called "not violence," walking without weapons along the outside of march lines and only fighting back if provoked or attacked by white onlookers or racist police officers, thus offering a tactical alternative to pure non-violence as well as other Black Power groups, like the Black Panthers, who carried weapons, or advocated revolutionary violence as a tool for liberation; and*

**WHEREAS,** *In the mid-1960s Father James Groppi became the advisor to the Milwaukee chapter of the NAACP Youth Council and began protesting segregation in Milwaukee public schools, and he teamed up with the Commandos, and with the NAACP Youth Council mounted a lengthy, continuous demonstration against the City of Milwaukee on behalf of fair and inclusive housing, and with Alderwoman Vel Phillips and Father Groppi, the Youth Council and the Commandos stood at the vanguard of Milwaukee's struggle for racial justice from 1965 through 1969; and*

**WHEREAS,** *Because of constant and determined efforts by Vel Phillips on the Council and marches in the community and on City Hall by the NAACP Youth Council and Commandos in defiance of (at the time) an unsympathetic Mayor Henry Maier, the Common Council passed the Fair Housing Law on April 30, 1968, a milestone that contributed to the passing of the federal 1968 Fair Housing Act; now, therefore, be it*

**RESOLVED,** *That the Common Council of the City of Milwaukee herewith recognizes the valuable and historic contributions of Vel Phillips and the NAACP Youth Council and Commandos on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city's Fair Housing Law, and thanks them on behalf of the citizens and the community; and, be it*

**FURTHER RESOLVED,** *That a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the Milwaukee Chapter of the NAACP.*

**Introduced by Common Council members Ashanti Hamilton, Milele A. Coggs, Jim Bohl, Russell W. Stamper, II, Mark A. Borkowski, Terry L. Witkowski, José G. Pérez, Nik Kovac, Chantia Lewis, Khalif J. Rainey, and Cavalier Johnson and approved by all members of the Milwaukee Common Council on May 30, 2018.**