

Resolution to Name a School in Honor of Ferdinand Day

WHEREAS, when you review history, there are leaders whose legacies inspire and guide us who we remember because they gave long-lasting gifts to humanity; the City of Alexandria has a long and proud history and has been blessed that Ferdinand Day was a inspiring member of our community and this unique history; and the stories of others who have inspired progressive moments during key chapters of our history need to be told;

WHEREAS, Ferdinand Day attended Parker Gray Elementary School, but had to continue his education at Armstrong Technical High School in Washington DC because there was no high school for African Americans; and after receiving his teaching degree at Miners Teachers College he was unable to work as a teacher in Alexandria because of the color of his skin;

WHEREAS, Ferdinand Day served as a substitute teacher for one day in a Negro School but was dismissed when he noticed that the school was using textbooks discarded by the white schools and told the children they would have to work harder to compete with white students who were given more advantages; and moved to Charlotte, North Carolina to continue teaching;

WHEREAS, after moving back to Alexandria, Ferdinand Day rose to work in the U.S. Department of State, became a Foreign Service Officer, and worked for the Peace Corps and the U.S. Information Agency, showing that his experiences in the Alexandria School system would not hold him back;

WHEREAS, he was a member of the "Secret Seven" that pressured the City of Alexandria to change and, together with former City Manager Vola Lawson, helped ensure confederate flags were taken down at city hall; and with Vola Lawson, he co-chaired the campaign for Ira Robinson, the first African American member of the Alexandria City Council;

WHEREAS, Ferdinand Day became the first African American man to be appointed to the Alexandria City School Board in 1965 and was elected chair in 1971, making him the first African American to hold the position in the Commonwealth of Virginia; and through turbulent times Ferdinand Day led some of the most difficult decisions in the history of Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) and was a leader who, with grace, intellect, and sophistication, fought not only for changes in educational policy, but for action across the City of Alexandria;

WHEREAS, even when Ferdinand Day was 91 he continued to fight for justice in Alexandria, giving an affidavit in a lawsuit against the City of Alexandria opposing the demolition of the Carver Nursery School/William Thomas Post of the American Legion at Queen and Fayette Street in the Uptown/Parker Gray National Historic Register District;

WHEREAS, Ferdinand Day passed away at the age of 96, on January 2, 2015;

WHEREAS, Ferdinand Day was one of the great leaders who gave to the City of Alexandria's African American community a voice during a time when it was a risk to do so, was a pioneer for equal opportunities, a mentor to many generations, and a genuine friend to those at ACPS to and other schools who were lucky enough to have known him.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Alexandria Democratic Committee ("ADC") on _____, 2015, that:

We recognize that Ferdinand Day gave back to his hometown, made Alexandria a better and more just place, and believed the best way to do this starts with education, and urge city leaders and our local elected officials, including the School Board and City Council, to consider naming a school in his honor.

The ADC will work within the existing School Board process for naming schools and participate in any committee in support of this effort.

PASSED and APPROVED on the _____ of March, 2015