By Supervisor Martin File No. 21-240

**A RESOLUTION**

Commemorating the life of Reverend C.T. Vivian, an influential civil rights activist, and declaring July 30, C.T. Vivian Day in Milwaukee County

WHEREAS, Cordy Tindell Vivian “C.T.” Vivian entered this world on July 30, 1924 in Boonville, Missouri; and

WHEREAS, in Peoria, Illinois in 1947, Vivian joined his first sit-in to protest segregation at a cafeteria and later organized other demonstrators; and

WHEREAS, Vivian later moved to Nashville in the 1950s and worked across Southern cities as an organizer for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), leading numerous civil rights campaigns including as one of the “Freedom Riders” protesting segregated interstate busing; and

WHEREAS, Vivian was the national director of the SCLC from 1963 to 1966 leading approximately 85 local chapters, reporting to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; and

WHEREAS, the *New York Times* reported in a July 27, 2020 article titled, “C.T. Vivian, Martin Luther King’s Field General, Dies at 95”, Vivian once told a group of activists, “Nonviolence is the only honorable way of dealing with social change, because if we are wrong, nobody gets hurt but us. And if we are right, more people will participate in determining their own destinies than ever before.”; and

WHEREAS, during a voter registration drive in 1965, Vivian led a group of around 100 Black voters to a Selma, Alabama courthouse where Sheriff Jim Clark and his deputies blocked the doorway as it rained and the sheriff turned his back on Vivian as he spoke, which caused Vivian to proclaim, “You can turn your back on me, but you cannot turn your back on the idea of justice. You can turn your back now and you can keep the club in your hand, but you cannot beat down justice. And we will register to vote, because as citizens of these United States we have the right to do it.”; upon refusing to admit the crowd and as sheriff’s deputies began to move the crowd back, Vivian called the sheriff a “brute,” a “fascist,” and “Hitler,” to which the sheriff struck Vivian to the ground with news cameras recording and ordered his deputies to arrest Vivian for “criminal provocation”; and

WHEREAS, in 1966 Vivian created and implemented the VISION program, an effort which provided scholarship assistance for more than 700 Alabama students to attend college; that program has since evolved into the United States Department of Education’s Upward Bound program, which in 2019 according to Department data, provided more than $343 million to almost 71,000 students nationwide, and more than $6 million to more than 1,200 students at Wisconsin institutions; and

WHEREAS, after moving on from the SCLC in 1966, Vivian moved to Chicago to train clergy as director at the Urban Training Center for Christian Missions and served as coordinator for the Coalition for United Community Action, campaigning against trade union racism and mediating between Chicago’s gangs; and

WHEREAS, in 1969 Vivian wrote one of the earliest histories of the Civil Rights Movement titled *Black Power and the American Myth*; and

WHEREAS, Vivian counseled Presidents Lyndon Johnson, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton; and throughout his life continued to work for and lecture on Christian theology, civil rights, and racial justice until his passing on July 17, 2020; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, Milwaukee County *in memoriam*, celebrates the life and accomplishments of the Reverend Cordy Tindell “C.T.” Vivian and hereby declares July 30 as C.T. Vivian Day in Milwaukee County.