

3  
4  
5 **A RESOLUTION**

6  
7 Commemorating the life of Reverend C.T. Vivian, an influential civil rights activist, and  
8 declaring July 30, C.T. Vivian Day in Milwaukee County  
9

10  
11 WHEREAS, Cordy Tindell Vivian “C.T.” Vivian entered this world on July 30,  
12 1924 in Boonville, Missouri; and  
13

14 WHEREAS, in Peoria, Illinois in 1947, Vivian joined his first sit-in to protest  
15 segregation at a cafeteria and later organized other demonstrators; and  
16

17 WHEREAS, Vivian later moved to Nashville in the 1950s and worked across  
18 Southern cities as an organizer for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference  
19 (SCLC), leading numerous civil rights campaigns including as one of the “Freedom  
20 Riders” protesting segregated interstate busing; and  
21

22 WHEREAS, Vivian was the national director of the SCLC from 1963 to 1966  
23 leading approximately 85 local chapters, reporting to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther  
24 King Jr.; and  
25

26 WHEREAS, the *New York Times* reported in a July 27, 2020 article titled, “C.T.  
27 Vivian, Martin Luther King’s Field General, Dies at 95”, Vivian once told a group of  
28 activists, “Nonviolence is the only honorable way of dealing with social change, because  
29 if we are wrong, nobody gets hurt but us. And if we are right, more people will  
30 participate in determining their own destinies than ever before.”; and  
31

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

41 Vivian to the ground with news cameras recording and ordered his deputies to arrest  
42 Vivian for “criminal provocation”; and

43

44 WHEREAS, in 1966 Vivian created and implemented the VISION program, an  
45 effort which provided scholarship assistance for more than 700 Alabama students to  
46 attend college; that program has since evolved into the United States Department of  
47 Education’s Upward Bound program, which in 2019 according to Department data,  
48 provided more than \$343 million to almost 71,000 students nationwide, and more than  
49 \$6 million to more than 1,200 students at Wisconsin institutions; and

50

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

55

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

58

59 WHEREAS, Vivian counseled Presidents Lyndon Johnson, Jimmy Carter,  
60 Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton; and throughout his life continued to work for and  
61 lecture on Christian theology, civil rights, and racial justice until his passing on July 17,  
62 2020; and

63

64 WHEREAS, the Committee on Economic and Community Development, at its  
65 special meeting of February 24, 2021, recommended adoption of File No. 21-240  
66 (vote 5-0); now, therefore,

67

68 BE IT RESOLVED, Milwaukee County *in memoriam*, celebrates the life and  
69 accomplishments of the Reverend Cordy Tindell “C.T.” Vivian and hereby declares July  
70 30 as C.T. Vivian Day in Milwaukee County.

71

72

73

02/24/21

74

s:\committees\2021\feb\ecd special meeting 022421\resolutions\21-240 c.t. vivian day.docx