

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 846

Celebrating the life of Reuben V. Burrell.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 20, 2015
 Agreed to by the Senate, February 25, 2015

WHEREAS, Reuben V. Burrell, the official photographer of Hampton University for more than 65 years, whose memorable images portrayed college life and the evolution of a vibrant African American community, and who photographed civil rights figures as well as famous entertainers, died on February 3, 2015; and

WHEREAS, a native of Washington, D.C., Reuben Burrell's fascination with photography began while he was a student at Armstrong Technical High School; he then attended Hampton Institute, graduating in 1947 from what is now Hampton University; and

WHEREAS, after earning a master's degree from New York University, Reuben Burrell returned to Hampton Institute to teach, and later became a part-time photographer for the school; he supplemented his income by becoming a free-lance photographer in Hampton and Newport News; and

WHEREAS, Reuben Burrell was largely self-taught, reading, experimenting, and practicing different photographic techniques; if he couldn't find the right camera for an assignment, he would make one, and he was known as "One Shot Burrell" for his skill at capturing history in one photograph; and

WHEREAS, Reuben Burrell became Hampton University's full-time photographer and chronicler of campus and community life in the 1960s; the modest and humble man quickly became a beloved figure at the school, capturing the spirit of the college community from behind his camera; and

WHEREAS, preferring black-and-white film, Reuben Burrell's photographs often remain embedded in viewers' memories—such as an image of high-stepping band members on parade; an aspiring furniture maker in the school's wood shop; the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., surrounded by students seeking his autograph; or civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks; and

WHEREAS, Reuben Burrell's work has been on display over the years; in 2010, some of his photographs were featured in an exhibit as part of the City of Hampton's 400th anniversary celebrations; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, Hampton University, in partnership with the University of Virginia Press, published *One Shot: A Selection of Photographs of Reuben V. Burrell*, and the Hampton University Museum currently is in the process of restoring and documenting about 20,000 photographs taken by Reuben Burrell; and

WHEREAS, Reuben Burrell will be greatly missed and fondly remembered by his family; and also by his extended Hampton University family, who deeply mourn the passing of a man they fondly called the university's griot, a West African term that encompasses both a historian and poet; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of Reuben V. Burrell, who for more than six decades was the official photographer of Hampton University, vividly capturing a college and a community during a period of great change; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Reuben V. Burrell as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

ENROLLED

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