

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 102

Celebrating the life of Paul Morton Gaston.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 20, 2020
 Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 24, 2020

WHEREAS, Paul Morton Gaston, esteemed professor of history at the University of Virginia and lifelong champion of social justice and equality, died on June 14, 2019; and

WHEREAS, Paul Gaston was born in 1928 in Fairhope, Alabama, a planned community founded by his grandfather with the aim of ending economic inequality; the values of fairness and equality that inspired Fairhope would guide him throughout his life; and

WHEREAS, after earning a bachelor's degree from Swarthmore College and master's and doctorate degrees from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Paul Gaston took a position in the University of Virginia's Corcoran Department of History in 1957, where he would teach for the next 40 years; and

WHEREAS, in Charlottesville, Paul Gaston became an outspoken supporter of the civil rights movement and an activist in local demonstrations combating segregation and racial discrimination; he participated in the sit-ins at Buddy's Restaurant in May 1963, considered today a pivotal moment in the fight to desegregate the city, and endured the jail time and physical abuse that resulted from these actions; and

WHEREAS, on the Grounds at the University of Virginia, Paul Gaston was instrumental in promoting social justice causes; he served as faculty adviser to the university's Human Relations Council, which brought the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to speak at Old Cabell Hall in 1963; he advocated for the founding of the Carter G. Woodson Institute of African-American and African Studies; and he ensured civil rights issues were part of the university's discourse, both through his own courses and through his role hiring faculty, such as civil rights hero Julian Bond; and

WHEREAS, for these efforts, Paul Gaston received several distinctions, including the Bridge Builders Award from the City of Charlottesville in 2005, the Legendary Civil Rights Activist Award from the Charlottesville-Albemarle branch of the NAACP in 2008, the Brown v. Board of Education Recognition Award from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities in 2004, and the Outstanding Faculty Award from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia in 1994; and

WHEREAS, Paul Gaston will be remembered for enlightening countless students through his honest interpretations of the South and for compelling his community toward fairness and justice through his actions; and

WHEREAS, preceded in death by his wife, Mary, Paul Gaston will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his children, Blaise, Chinta, and Gareth; and numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of Paul Morton Gaston, revered professor of history at the University of Virginia and steadfast activist for civil rights; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Paul Morton Gaston as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

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