



City of Pittsburgh

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Text File

Introduced: 7/2/2013

Bill No: 2013-1678, **Version:** 1

Committee: City Council

Status: Adopted

WHEREAS, Dr. Charles McColleston was born on June 24, 1943 in Brooklyn, New York, attended Boston College to study political science and history, and eventually made his way to the University of Louvain in Belgium, where he continued his studies at l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, successfully defending his doctoral thesis, *Emmanuel Levinas and Modern Jewish Thought*, magna cum laude, in December of 1968; and

WHEREAS, though **Charles** excelled in academic pursuits, he embraced a fierce sense of adventure imbued with a solidarity for the working class, taking jobs in manufacturing, retail, and trucking that helped finance his education and extensive travel throughout western and eastern Europe, the Middle East, and north and west Africa; and

WHEREAS, in the late 1960s **Charles** did scholarly research at the Hebrew University Library in Israel, which he supplemented with picking lemons and grapefruits on Kibbutz Yasur in Galilee; he traveled extensively throughout Israel and Palestine, from Kantara on the Suez Canal to Quneitra in the Golan Heights, and once walked the "dangerous path" from Jerusalem to Jericho, famous for the story of the Good Samaritan, and spent a night in the fields outside Bethlehem on Christmas 1967; and

WHEREAS, Charles worked as head branch librarian for two and a half years in Gary, Indiana; he took an active role in the Civil Rights Movement, including the March on Washington in 1963 and Freedom Rides on the Eastern Shore of Maryland; he taught philosophy at St. Joseph's Calumet College in East Chicago; he hitchhiked to Oaxaca, Mexico and lived in Scotland, London, and Sardinia before crossing the Sahara and embarking on a journey from Nigeria, through Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, into Dakar in Senegal, the Gambia, and Timbuktu in Mali; and in 1972, with Linda Gryzbek, he traveled through central Africa toward Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where he and Linda married; and

WHEREAS, Charles has been active in the labor movement for more than 35 years: as a steward of Local 57 of the Hotel and Restaurant Union and chief steward of United Electrical Workers of America 610 at Union Switch and Signal; as organizer of the Tri-State Conference on Steel and then officer of the Steel Valley Authority during the Mon Valley Insurgency in which workers united to try to stop plant closures and rebuild the regional economy; as president of the Pennsylvania Labor History Society from 1998 until 2006 and then in 2004 as director of the Pennsylvania Labor Education Center of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education; and from 1986 to 2009 as associate and then director of the Pennsylvania Center for the Study of Labor Relations at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, while developing an undergraduate course on the history and culture of Pittsburgh; and

WHEREAS, with IUP, **Professor McColleston** has traveled to Poznań as part of a Summer in Poland Program at Adam Mickiewicz University, to Prague, the Ruhr region of Germany, Sweden, Haiti, Nicaragua, and China; and

WHEREAS, in 2006 **Charles** was elected president of the Battle of Homestead Foundation, which preserves the history of the labor battle at Homestead in 1892, and in 2008, the Foundation published his book *The Point of Pittsburgh: Production and Struggle at the Forks of the Ohio*, a people's history of Pittsburgh that gives voice to the workers, immigrants, people of color, women, and all those whose stories and contributions are often uncelebrated; and

WHEREAS, **Charles** has also authored more than 20 Pennsylvania historical markers which can be found throughout the region, including the signs for Market Square in Pittsburgh, for Crystal Eastman, a pioneering feminist and mine-safety expert, and for the Kennedy-Nixon Taft-Hartley Debate of 1947 in McKeesport; and

WHEREAS, Saturday, July 6, 2013 has been chosen as the day to celebrate **Charles McCollester's** life and work with a spirited celebration and roast at the Carnegie Library of Homestead starting at 1:30 p.m.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Pittsburgh does hereby celebrate the life and life's work of historian, author, journalist, labor leader, professor, advocate for social justice, husband, father, grandfather, and Pittsburgher **Charles McCollester**; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh does hereby declare July 6, 2013 to be **Charles McCollester Day** in the City of Pittsburgh.