



MICHIGAN CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

RESOLUTION

HONORING THE LIFE OF

WAYNE COUNTY SHERIFF BENNY NAPOLEON

WHEREAS, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission joins the family, friends, and colleagues of Wayne County Sheriff Benny Napoleon in honoring his committed life to law enforcement and public service. His beloved daughter, Tiffani, summarized her father's essence with three words: generosity, integrity, and faithfulness; and

WHEREAS, a lifelong Detroiter, Napoleon was born on September 10, 1955, as one of seven children to Betty and Rev. Harry Napoleon. Known in his youth as "skinny Benny," Napoleon was a star basketball player at Cass Technical High School and graduated in 1973; and

WHEREAS, while working as a salesman at Sibley's Shoes in downtown Detroit, Napoleon was inspired to apply when he saw a Detroit Police recruiting van. Napoleon rose through the ranks of the Detroit Police Department and was promoted to sergeant in 1983, lieutenant in 1985, inspector in 1987, and commander in 1993. He was promoted to Deputy Chief in 1994 and to Executive Deputy Chief in 1995, the only member ever to hold that title. Napoleon was appointed Chief of Police by the Honorable Mayor Dennis W. Archer in 1998. He retired from the Detroit Police Department in 2001 after 26 years of service. Under Napoleon's leadership, Detroit's crime rate was reduced by 30%; and

WHEREAS, Napoleon graduated from the FBI National Academy; the United States Secret Service Dignitary Protection School; the Northwestern University School of Police Staff and Command; the Aresty Institute of Executive Development at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania; and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. With these accomplishments, Napoleon ranks amongst Michigan's top law enforcement officials; and

WHEREAS, while working as a full-time Detroit Police officer, Napoleon put himself through night school earning an Associate Degree in Law Enforcement, Cum Laude, from Mercy College of Detroit in 1980; a B.A. in Criminal Justice, Cum Laude, from Mercy College of Detroit in 1982; and a Juris Doctor Degree from what was then the Detroit College of Law in 1986.

Additionally, Napoleon was appointed to the Michigan Civil Rights Commission in 1984, at the age of 29. He served on the Commission until 1991 and during his tenure was elected chair of the Commission for three consecutive terms; and

WHEREAS, in 2004, Napoleon was named Assistant Wayne County Executive, appointed to fill a vacancy as Wayne County Sheriff in June 2009, and then won his first election in a landslide victory. He was re-elected to four-year terms in subsequent years, and earned 74% of the vote for his last term. Just before the beginning of his 2021, Napoleon lost his courageous battle with COVID-19 on December 17, 2020. Upon his passing, numerous elected officials and others bestowed well-deserved platitudes upon his memory; and

WHEREAS, Governor Gretchen Whitmer cited Napoleon's ". . . quick laugh, eager partnership, and candid counsel" while describing how "Sheriff Napoleon's love for the people he served was returned many times over." Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist II, remembers Napoleon as ". . . a pillar in the community—a model public servant who led by example through conscientious words and selfless service;" and

WHEREAS, Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan said that he ". . . cannot think of a leader in this town who has been more loved and admired than Benny. He was born in the city, served our community courageously his entire adult life, and loved Detroit as much as anyone I've ever known." Reverend Wendell Anthony, President of the Detroit Branch of the NAACP, reminded us that "Napoleon . . . was not just a sheriff, he was a watchman who loved and protected this community . . . He was a selfless warrior for peace through justice;" and

WHEREAS, James E. White, Executive Director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights and who previously served as Assistant Chief of the Detroit Police Department, described Napoleon as ". . . the kind of leader who paved the way for others to follow," calling Napoleon a personal mentor ". . . who was always about his people – his people on the force and his people in the community;" and

WHEREAS, current Michigan Civil Rights Commission Chair Stacie Clayton, who also had the personal privilege of working with Napoleon in the Archer Administration, called him "a favorite son of Detroit who dedicated his adult life to unwavering service to its people," explaining that "Benny Napoleon's public service went beyond law enforcement. His legacy of fairness and civility continues with the Commission today;" and

THEREFORE, be it resolved, that the Michigan Civil Rights Commission commemorates Sheriff Benny Napoleon and recognizes him as a champion of the community, a devoted public servant, role model, mentor, family man, and friend. We join Benny Napoleon's loving daughter, grandson, mother, siblings, other relatives, colleagues, and constituents in honoring the legacy of a life well-lived; and

Be it further resolved, that on this 25th day of January 2021, the Commission recognizes and honors Sheriff Benny Napoleon's legacy of service and commitment to the American Justice System and the cause of Civil Rights.



Passed unanimously on the 25th day of January 2021, by the
MICHIGAN CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

Stacie Clayton, Chair

Zenna Faraj Elhasan, Vice Chair

Ira Combs, Secretary

Richard Corriveau

Regina Gasco-Bentley

Gloria E. Lara

Anupama Kosaraju

Portia L. Roberson