

RESOLUTION NUMBER 55
HONORING JONATHAN C. SMITH, PH.D.

WHEREAS, this Honorable Board of Aldermen of the City of St. Louis has been apprised that Jonathan C. Smith, Ph.D., beloved member of the Saint Louis University Billiken family, devoted spouse to Rochelle, father to Lauren, Rachel, and Mariah, and father-in-law to Brooke and Shannon, and champion for racial justice in the St. Louis community, died suddenly on June 19, 2021; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Smith, 61, served as Saint Louis University's inaugural Vice President of Diversity and Community Engagement, an important leadership position that emerged as part of the Clock Tower Accords in 2014, and a role that spearheaded efforts to make the University more inclusive and welcoming to diverse populations, as well as to increase outreach to the St. Louis community and improve educational access for young people from the region's most underserved areas; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Smith's life clearly demonstrated his ongoing commitment to education and scholarly endeavors, beginning with his own early academic success. After graduating in the top 10% of his class at Thornton Township High School in Illinois, he attended Princeton University, earning a bachelor's degree in philosophy. He received a Chancellor's Fellowship from Washington University in St. Louis where he completed an M.F.A. in creative writing and a Ph.D. in English and American literature; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Smith joined Saint Louis University's faculty in 2002 as an assistant professor in the Department of American Studies, and eventually transitioned to the African American Studies Program in 2011. During his tenure at the University, he established himself as an accomplished professor and an award-winning author and poet, before becoming part of the University's senior leadership in 2015; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Smith's reach across the University and local community was vast and included responsibilities of leading the implementation and advancement of the Clock Tower Accords, co-chairing the President's Diversity Council and the Bias Incident Response Team, overseeing the Cross Cultural Center, Center for Global Citizenship, Atlas Week Program and annual Tribute for the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., developing and leading training sessions, workshops and speaker series to promote equitable treatment of students, staff, faculty, patients, neighbors and stakeholders, working on community engagement efforts with the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis, Saint Louis Public Schools, the Saint Louis Metropolitan Police Department and other partners, and representing the University on city and regional boards and committees, including the Cortex Innovation Community and the Great Rivers Greenway project; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Smith's commitment to racial justice and community activism extended well beyond the scope of his formal title at the University, with roots that ran deep in his family. His parents, Rev. J.C. Smith and Willie Mae Smith, were part of the 1956 bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, where his father was arrested alongside the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Smith understood the profound implications of slavery on the social fabric of community life, not just as a shameful footnote in the history of the United States of America but as an enduring reality that continues to negatively impact the wellbeing of all members of society. Accordingly, Dr. Smith helped to launch, and co-direct, the University and Jesuit Province's *Slavery, History, Memory and Reconciliation Project*, shining a light on the life stories of enslaved people, humanizing their tragic history, and seeking reparations and restored dignity to their families; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Smith was a deeply spiritual individual. He was known for his generous spirit, good humor, and enormous heart. He enjoyed musical genres such as jazz, hip hop, rhythm and blues and gospel. He shared his musical talents playing the piano and keyboard for his faith community Blessed Hope Missionary Baptist Church. His love of poetry was often used to describe and champion moments of adverse conditions. James Baldwin and Audre Lorde were two of his favorite poets; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Smith loved Black Studies. He loved Baldwin and W. E. B. Dubois. He loved music. His mind was an orchestra that poetically imagines Black future on a jazz note. He imagined justice and performed it on a Hammond B3; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Smith displayed his prophetic imagination in the last of his creative works, *Do I Move You?*, which debuted the week of his death at the St. Louis Black Repertory Theater.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Aldermen of the City of St. Louis that we pause in our deliberations to recognize the numerous contributions and achievements of Dr. Jonathan C. Smith and by adoption of this resolution wish to join in with those celebrating his life. We further direct the Clerk of this Board to spread a copy of this Resolution across the minutes of these proceedings and to prepare a commemorative copy to the end that it may be presented at a time and place and to those deemed appropriate by the Sponsor.

Introduced this 1st day of July, 2021 by:

The Honorable Tina Pihl, Alderwoman 17th Ward

The Honorable Lewis E. Reed, President, Board of Aldermen

The Honorable Sharon Tyus, Alderwoman 1st Ward

The Honorable Lisa Middlebrook, Alderwoman 2nd Ward

The Honorable Brandon Bosley, Alderman 3rd Ward

The Honorable Dwindlerlin Evans, Alderwoman 4th Ward

The Honorable James Page, Alderwoman 5th Ward

The Honorable Christine Ingrassia, Alderwoman 6th Ward

The Honorable John Coatar, Alderman 7th Ward

The Honorable Annie Rice, Alderwoman 8th Ward

The Honorable Dan Guenther, Alderman 9th Ward

The Honorable Joseph Vollmer, Alderman 10th Ward

The Honorable Sarah Martin, Alderwoman 11th Ward

The Honorable Bill Stephens, Alderwoman 12th Ward

The Honorable Anne Schweitzer, Alderwoman 13th Ward

The Honorable Carol Howard, Alderwoman 14th Ward

The Honorable Megan E. Green, Alderwoman 15th Ward

The Honorable Thomas Oldenburg, Alderman 16th Ward

The Honorable Jesse Todd, Alderman 18th Ward

The Honorable Marlene Davis, Alderwoman 19th Ward

The Honorable Cara Spencer, Alderwoman 20th Ward

The Honorable John Muhammad, Alderman 21st Ward

The Honorable Jeffrey Boyd, Alderman 22nd Ward

The Honorable Joseph Vaccaro, Alderman 23rd Ward

The Honorable Bret Narayan, Alderman 24th Ward

The Honorable Shane Cohn, Alderman 25th Ward

The Honorable Shameem Clark Hubbard, Alderwoman 26th Ward

The Honorable Pamela Boyd, Alderwoman 27th Ward

The Honorable Heather Navarro, Alderwoman 28th Ward

Adopted this 1st day of July, 2021 as attested by:

Terry Kennedy
Clerk, Board of Aldermen

Lewis E. Reed
President, Board of Aldermen