

RESOLUTION NUMBER 20
Mr. Billy “Hassan” Ingram

WHEREAS, it has come to the attention of this honorable Board of Aldermen of the many contributions to the cultural life and artistic fabric of the City of St. Louis and the nation of renowned African percussionist Mr. Billy “Hassan” Ingram and the upcoming recognition of his efforts by the St. Louis Community at the 24th Annual African Arts Festival at the World’s Fair Pavilion in Forest Park Saturday, May 23, 2015 at 3:30pm; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ingram was born in 1938 in the Millcreek “Black Valley” area of the City of St. Louis and as a child was known to tap out rhythms wherever and whenever he could; and

WHEREAS, when he was six his first drum teacher was his babysitter Ms. Walker who lived in Millcreek without electricity and where she would light her coal lamp at night for light and begin to teach the young “Billy” a series of basic rhythms in recognition of his budding talents, extreme interest and persistence to drum; and

WHEREAS, Ingram’s formal drum teacher was his friend Charles Gilbert of St. Louis who studied with the then unknown but soon to be the famous Cuban percussionist Armando Peraza whom Gilbert played with in California while he was in the military after Peraza had migrated to the USA in the 1940’s; and

WHEREAS, Over the years Hassan used his honed African drumming skills to play with St. Louis’ finest jazz artists and others including the Quartet Tres Bein with drummer Percy James, Oliver Nelson, Oliver Lake, Lester Bowie, Floyd LeFlore and many, many others; and

WHEREAS, in 1966 while playing at the Club Riviera in St. Louis, which was then owned by Jordan Chambers known as the father of Black Politics in St. Louis, Hassan had the opportunity to see the Katherine Dunham dancers who greatly inspired him and whom he later joined in 1968 and became their lead drummer where he also met and played with Renee Calvin of Haiti and Mor Thiam of the national dance company of Senegal whom Madam Katherine Dunham had brought to St. Louis to work with her company and youth in the community; and

WHEREAS, in 1968 Hassan became a member of the St. Louis based Black Artists Group (BAG) where he and Luisah Teish, author of Jambalaya, as part of BAG formed the Omowale African Dance Group which is in the Yoruba language of Nigeria and translate into English as “The Children Have Returned Home” and from this platform traveled playing and expanding people’s knowledge and appreciation of African culture through dance and drum; and

WHEREAS, wishing to spread the knowledge he had learned, Hassan, without thinking of compensation, began to provide free drum classes to youth in the area helping hundreds to hone their music skill and expand their horizons with several of his students continuing the ancient African drum tradition by teaching others and propagating the culture and holistic values that go with African drumming; and

WHEREAS, it would be impossible to capture all of Hassan’s accomplishments and sacrifices he has made in one writing but it is exceedingly clear that because of his work, vision, sacrifice and achievement Billy Hassan Ingram is now the progenitor of the present St. Louis African Drum tradition that has influenced and inspired other areas of the country to emulate.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Aldermen of the City of St. Louis that we pause in our deliberations to recognize and praise the many achievements and contributions that Mr. Billy Hassan Ingram has made to the cultural and artistic life the City of St. Louis and by adoption of this resolution wish to thank him for being an excellent example of community concern, care, talent and commitment and we further direct the Clerk of this Board to spread a copy of this Resolution across the permanent rolls of this Board and to prepare a commemorative copy to the end that it may be presented to our honoree at a time and place deemed appropriate by the Sponsor.

Introduced on the 21stth day of May, 2015:

Honorable Terry Kennedy, Alderman 18th Ward

Adopted this the 21stth day of May 2015 as attested by:

David W. Sweeney
Clerk, Board of Aldermen

Lewis E. Reed
President, Board of Aldermen