

RESOLUTION NUMBER 76
Katherine Dunham Centennial Celebration

WHEREAS, we have been apprised that on June 27, 2009 the Katherine Dunham Centennial Celebration will be held in the Joseph Schulte Theatre at St. Louis University High School; and

WHEREAS, the event will feature breathtaking performances by local groups including: Slaughter Project, Afriky LoLo, Dances of India, Detroit Legacy Project, Innervision Dance Theatre, Lincoln University Dance Troupe, SIU East St. Louis Performing Company, Katherine Dunham Children's Workshop and Cordao de Ouro Capoeira- St. Louis; and

WHEREAS, Katherine Dunham was perhaps best known for bringing African and Caribbean influences to the European-dominated dance world. In the late 1930's, she established the nation's first self-supporting all-black modern dance group; and

WHEREAS, during her career, Dunham choreographed 'Aida' for the Metropolitan Opera and musicals such as 'Cabin in the Sky' for Broadway. She also appeared in several films, including 'Stormy Weather' and 'Carnival of Rhythm.' Her dance company toured internationally from the 1940s to the '60s, visiting 57 nations on six continents. Her success was won in the face of widespread discrimination, a struggle Dunham championed by refusing to perform at segregated theaters; and

WHEREAS, for her endeavors, Dunham received 10 honorary doctorates, the Presidential Medal of the Arts, the Albert Schweitzer Prize at the Kennedy Center Honors, and membership in the French Legion of Honor, as well as major honors from Brazil and Haiti; and

WHEREAS, after 1967, Dunham lived most of each year in East St. Louis, Illinois, where she struggled to bring the arts to the area. She set up an eclectic compound of artists from around the globe, including Harry Belafonte. Among the free classes offered were dance, African hair-braiding and woodcarving, conversational Creole, Spanish, French and Swahili and more traditional subjects such as aesthetics and social science; and

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 Katherine Dunham Centennial Celebration which will recognize the many achievements and contributions of Katherine Dunham to the City of St. Louis and 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 to our honoree at a time and place deemed appropriate by the Sponsor.

Introduced on the 26th day of June, 2009 by:

Honorable Marlene Davis, Alderman 19th Ward
Honorable Lewis E. Reed, President of the Board of Aldermen

Adopted this the 26th day of June, 2009 as attested by:

David W. Sweeney
Clerk, Board of Aldermen

Lewis E. Reed
President, Board of Aldermen