

RESOLUTION NO.: R-2019-034

Approving the Honorary naming of the 2000 block of Marion Street between Elmwood Avenue and Calhoun Street "Modjeska Simkins Way"

WHEREAS, Modjeska Monteith Simkins was born in 1899 and raised in Columbia, South Carolina; graduated from Benedict College in 1921 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree and taught at Booker T. Washington High School until her marriage to Andrew Whitfield Simkins in 1929, with whom she helped found and run Victory Savings Bank. She was also an employee and later owner of the Motel Simbeth which provided lodging for black travelers and became a landmark business for local civil rights movements; and,

WHEREAS, in 1931 Mrs. Simkins entered the public health field as Direct of Negro Work for the South Carolina Tuberculosis Association, becoming the state's only full time state-wide African-American public health worker; and,

WHEREAS, Mrs. Simkins created alliances with influential African-American and white groups which aided her to become a leader in African-American public health reform, social reform and the Civil Rights Movement; and,

WHEREAS, Mrs. Simkins served on the executive board of the local Columbia National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), became one of the founders for the state conference, was elected to the first executive board and the first chair of the state programs committee. In 1941 she was elected Secretary of the state conference, being the only woman to serve as an officer. She worked diligently to move the state towards racial equality and received support from teachers for teacher equalization lawsuits, the most notably being *Briggs v. Elliott*, and assisted in writing the declaration for the lawsuit that asked for equalization of Clarendon County black and white schools, which became one of the cases to challenge separate but equal doctrine in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*; and,

WHEREAS, though her activism was considered controversial, Mrs. Simkins fought for over half a century for equality and civil liberties for all people through her work with the interracial civil rights organization Southern Conference Educational Fund and serving in leadership positions traditionally unavailable to women in the Civil Rights Movement; and,

WHEREAS, in 1981, an endowment was established in her name to provide income for activists working for the causes of the underprivileged; in 1990 she was awarded the Order of the Palmetto in recognition of her devotion to social justice and racial equality; in 2016 the Modjeska Simkins Award for Civil Rights & Social Justice was established in her honor and is given to individuals who dedicate their lives to the fight for Civil Rights and social justice; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED this 7th day of May, 2019, that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Columbia hereby approve the honorary naming of the 2000 block of Marion Street between Elmwood Avenue and Calhoun Street "Modjeska Simkins Way". The design and color of the honorary toppers shall be subject to the approval of the Director of Public Works.

Requested by:

Councilmember Devine

  
Mayor

Approved by:

  
City Manager

Approved as to form:

  
City Attorney

ATTEST:

  
City Clerk

Introduced: 5/7/2019  
Final Reading: 5/7/2019

ORIGINAL  
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