

**MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL
AND HILDA L. SOLIS**

September 12, 2023

Proclaiming September 22, 2023, as “Rev. James Lawson, Jr. Day” in Los Angeles County

The Los Angeles County (County) Board of Supervisors (Board) has committed to being an anti-racist County that delivers equitable and inclusive services to our constituents. To that end, on July 21, 2020, in the wake of the civil unrest exacerbated by the murder of George Floyd, the Board adopted a sweeping initiative – the Anti-Racism Diversity and Inclusion Initiative – that boldly articulates an anti-racist agenda that will guide, govern, and increase the County’s ongoing commitment to fighting racism in all its dimensions, especially racism that systematically affects Black residents. Moreover, the County, through its American Rescue Plan investments, is shifting the paradigm for how to serve our constituents with equity – ensuring that those who have traditionally had the least are able to benefit first from the County’s new programs and resources.

In line with that commitment to anti-racist service delivery, Rev. James Lawson, Jr. has committed his life to fighting for justice and dignity for all. Rev. Lawson is known as the architect of the Civil Rights Movement and according to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he is “the leading theorist and strategist of nonviolence in the world.” Rev. Lawson helped lead the historic 1960 Nashville sit-in campaign at Woolworth’s lunch counter, the

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MOTION

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Freedom Rides in 1961, and throughout the decade, continued to organize nearly every major student sit-in, march, and protest, in efforts to end racial discrimination in businesses and public places. Rev. Lawson's leadership was instrumental in the desegregation of the South and his teachings on nonviolence and civil disobedience continue to inspire generations of civil rights leaders across the country. In 1968, he led the Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike which resulted in the successful organization of sanitation workers.

In 1974, Rev. Lawson moved to Los Angeles where he served as the pastor of the Holman United Methodist Church for twenty-five years. He has worked with janitorial, hotel, and restaurant workers to develop nonviolent tactics and has supported the organizing of low-wage workers across the County. Over the years, he has spoken out against racism and violence, as well as in support of immigration rights, equal rights for the LGBTQIA+ community, and community diversity and solidarity.

In the spirit of honoring Rev. Lawson's work, the County continues to push for fair wages and just compensation for workers through the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs' Office of Labor Equity (OLE). The OLE, together with trusted community-based organizations, centralizes the County's workplace and worker safety, protection, and empowerment efforts. Central to the OLE's mission is their ongoing work to raise awareness about worker protections for low-wage and vulnerable workers. When workers are made aware of their rights and responsibilities, through direct outreach and awareness campaigns, it helps to stem the tide of wage theft that harms workers, their families, and our great County Community.

Rev. Lawson's life's work, in his own words, has been dedicated to "encourage people in their own journey to take hold of the gift of life," and to "help the United States become a nation where its own historical documents come true." He was a close friend and colleague of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Congressman John Lewis, and countless other civil rights, labor, community, and religious leaders. He remains the only one of his peers alive today and will be turning 95 years old on September 22, 2023.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Proclaim September 22, 2023, as "Rev. James Lawson, Jr. Day" in Los Angeles County (County) to acknowledge Rev. Lawson's 95th birthday, and to celebrate his remarkable achievements to advance the philosophy of nonviolence, end racial discrimination, strengthen workers rights, and promote human dignity.

WE FURTHER MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Direct the Director of the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs in partnership with the Executive Director of the Anti-Racism Diversity and Inclusion Initiative and the directors of other relevant County departments to launch a "know your rights" campaign for the month of October 2023 in Rev. Lawson's honor. This campaign should inform unincorporated County residents about their rights and protections in the workplace, and include:
 - a. Strategies to utilize hyper ethnic local media to target historically marginalized communities and vulnerable populations as they continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic; and
 - b. Plans to leverage partnerships with community-based organizations to assist in on-the-ground outreach.

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