

# RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

*No. 387*

**Approved September 9, 2019**

WHEREAS, Michael Van Leesten was a long-time resident of Providence who passed away on August 23, 2019 at the age of 80; and

WHEREAS, He graduated from Hope High School, and upon graduation he served his nation as a communications specialist in the United States Airforce, upon discharge he attended Rhode Island College where he was a star basketball player; and

WHEREAS, Upon his graduation from Rhode Island College he became active in the Civil Rights Movement and participated in SCLC SCOPE Project in Choctaw County, Alabama; and

WHEREAS, He along with six other college students worked doing community organizing and voter registration in rural Alabama during the height of the Civil Rights Struggle; and

WHEREAS, He spoke of his time in the Movement as a “defining moment in my life”; and

WHEREAS, He believed that singular experience made him a better person, better husband, better father, and better community leader; and

WHEREAS, He served as the Executive Director of Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) of Rhode Island, which he helped found, for more than 15 years; and

WHEREAS, He also worked as a consultant as the owner of Van Leesten Associates; and

WHEREAS, He served as the Director of Planning and Development in Providence; and

WHEREAS, He then went on to be the Director of Public Affairs for the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe; and

WHEREAS, He resumed his role of the OIC from 2006 until his passing; and

WHEREAS, He was board member of numerous organizations including the Board of Regents, Peerless Precision, and Fleet Bank; and

WHEREAS, He was awarded honorary doctorate degrees from Roger Williams College, Rhode Island College, and the University of Rhode Island; and

WHEREAS, He is survived by his former spouses Natalie E. Brown, Andrea G. Van Leesten, and Paula Van Leesteen, and his loving children Jill, Michael, Ayyub, Andrew, Jordan, and Alexis, and his beloved grandchildren Aliza, Aaron, Az-Zubair, and Huria, and his siblings Rashad Munir, David Van Leesten, Lisa Van Leesten, and Dorothy “Dee Dee” Van Leesten; and

WHEREAS, He was predeceased by his brother Karriem Muhammad (ne Hendrik Van Leesten Jr.) and both his beloved parents.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the City Council of the City of Providence does hereby recognize and remember the life and legacy of Mr. Michael Van Leesten; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City Council of the City of Providence extends its deepest condolences to the entire Van Leesten Family and Mr. Van Leesten's extended family and friends throughout Providence and beyond.

IN CITY COUNCIL

SEP 05 2019

READ AND PASSED, *As Amended*

*Salma Mats*  
PRES.

*Shawn Bellch*  
CLERK

I HEREBY APPROVE.

*[Signature]*  
Mayor

Date:

9/9/19