

# RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

*No. 228*

**Approved July 9, 2020**

WHEREAS, Michael S. 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 Air Force, upon discharge he attended Rhode Island College where he was a star basketball player; and

WHEREAS, Upon his graduation from Rhode Island College in 1965, he became active in the Civil Rights Movement and participated in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Summer Conference on Community Organizing and Political Education Project (SCLC SCOPE) 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 15years; 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 from 1994 to 2006; and

WHEREAS, He resumed his role at 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 Leesten, 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 Lesten; and

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

WHEREAS, He was and will continue to be a beloved and admired member of the community, and his energy and smile will be missed dearly by his family and all who knew him.

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 S. Van Leesten by naming the Providence River pedestrian bridge the "Michael S. Van Leesten Bridge".

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That upon passage, copies of this resolution be sent to the family of Michael S. Van Leesten.

IN CITY COUNCIL

JUL 02 2020

READ AND PASSED

*Sarina Mato*  
PRES.

*Shawn Selbach*  
CLERK

I HEREBY APPROVE.

*[Signature]*  
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Mayor

Date: *[Signature]* 7/9/20  
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