



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** Res 0956-2005, **Version:** \*

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### Res. No. 956

Resolution commemorating the life and achievements of Dr. Kenneth B. Clark.

By Council Members Perkins, Quinn, Baez, Barron, Boyland, Brewer, Clarke, Comrie, Fidler, Foster, Jackson, James, Liu, McMahon, Nelson, Sanders Jr., Seabrook and Weprin

Whereas, Dr. Kenneth B. Clark, the renowned psychologist and educator who authored a 1950 report detailing the destructive effects of school segregation which influenced the United States Supreme Court to decide that school segregation is unconstitutional, died on May 1, 2005, at the age of 90; and

Whereas, Dr. Clark was born in the Panama Canal Zone on July 14, 1914, to Arthur Bancroft Clark and Miriam Hanson Clark; and

Whereas, At the age of five, Dr. Clark moved with his mother and younger sister, Beulah, to New York City, where he was initially enrolled in Public School 5 in Harlem and later switched to Public School 139; and

Whereas, Dr. Clark graduated from George Washington High School in Upper Manhattan and was admitted to Howard University, where he studied political science and earned a bachelor's degree in 1935 and a master's degree in psychology later on; and

Whereas, After earning his master's degree and teaching at Howard University for a few years, Dr. Clark returned to New York City to pursue doctoral studies in experimental psychology at Columbia University, and in 1940 became the first black person to earn a doctorate from that institution; and

Whereas, In 1938, Dr. Clark married Mamie Phipps Clark, who also went on to earn a doctorate in psychology from Columbia University and with whom he founded the Northside Center for Child Development in 1946, a center that treated children with personality disorders; and

Whereas, From 1939 to 1941, Dr. Clark participated in the classic study of the American Negro that was

organized by the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal, a study which documented the inequalities among American whites and blacks and which would become required reading in colleges and universities for years; and

Whereas, In 1942, Dr. Clark served in the Office of War Information, a position that allowed him to travel across the United States in order to assess the morale among black Americans; and

Whereas, Upon returning to New York City after serving in the Office of War Information, Dr. Clark joined the faculty of City College of the City University of New York, where he became the first black full tenured professor in the City University system in 1960, a position he held until his retirement in 1975; and

Whereas, In the early 1950's, Dr. Clark administered a test to 16 black children between the ages of 6 and 9 in the Clarendon County School District to study the effects that legally entrenched segregation had on black children; and

Whereas, As part of the test, Dr. Clark showed the 16 black children a black doll and a white doll and then asked them what they thought of each, a question that prompted eleven of the children to answer that the black doll looked "bad," nine of them answered that the white doll looked "nice" and seven of the 16 said that they actually saw themselves as being closest to the white doll in appearance; and

Whereas, The results of Dr. Clark's test revealed that a majority of the black children "saw themselves as inferior, and [that] they accepted the inferiority as part of reality," a conclusion that was successfully used by Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund in their challenge to the constitutionality of the separate-but-equal doctrine before the United States Supreme Court; and

Whereas, In 1961, Dr. Clark won the Spingarn Medal of the NAACP for his contributions to promoting better race relations; and

Whereas, In 1962, Dr. Clarke organized the Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, an effort focusing on recruiting educational experts to reorganize Harlem schools, providing pre-school programs and after-school remedial education and reducing unemployment among blacks who had dropped out of school; and

Whereas, In 1964, the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson earmarked \$110 million to finance the program efforts of the Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited; and

Whereas, During the 1950's and 1960's, Dr. Clark was an early champion of school decentralization and giving greater control to local community school boards, an effort that led to a major reorganization of New York City public schools; and

Whereas, While Dr. Clark's work as an educator, researcher and civil rights leader had an impact on our nation, his effect was particularly profound in New York State and New York City, where he resided; and

Whereas, In 1966, Dr. Clark was the first black person elected to serve on the New York State Board of Regents, a position he held until 1986; and

Whereas, Dr. Clark also authored and published four books, including "Dark Ghetto," "A Relevant War Against Poverty," "A Possible Reality" and "Pathos of Power;" now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York commemorates the life and achievements of Dr. Kenneth B. Clark.

LS#2918

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5/5/2005

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