



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 22-3965, Version: 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

HONORING RAE LEWIS-THORNTON, AUTHOR

WHEREAS, Rae Lewis-Thornton is an ordained Minister, Emmy Award winning AIDS activist and renowned Social Justice Advocate, Author, Award Winning Blogger, Social Media Expert, Jewelry Designer and Tea Connoisseur. RLT has been living with HIV for 38 years and AIDS for 30; and

WHEREAS, Rae received national acclaim for her story of living with HIV/AIDS in a cover story Facing AIDS, for *Essence* magazine December 1994 issue. With this cover story, Rae is credited with changing the face of HIV/AIDS for Black women in America. Rae received the National Association of Black Journalists Award Second place in print for Facing AIDS. The *Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture* has requested to catalogue her groundbreaking *Essence* magazine cover; and

WHEREAS, Rae has published three books: *Unprotected: A Memoir*, *The Politics of Respectability* and *Amazing Grace Letters Along My Journey* and has been featured in countless magazines and National news, radio and talk shows, such as, CNN, Nightline, The Oprah Winfrey Show, HLN, BET, NPR, WGN, Glamour, O-The Oprah Magazine, Woman's Day, Essence, Jet, Ebony, Emerge, Black Excellence, Heart and Soul, Poz and The Crisis, as well as many newspaper outlets, including The Washington Post, The Chicago Tribune and the Chicago Sun-times, to name a few; and

WHEREAS, RLT has become a pioneer in social media as a way to educate and challenge stigma around HIV/AIDS and to promote issues of health and wellness. Her integrated use of social media has gained her national acclaim. She was featured on BET News, and in a cover story for the Chicago Tribune, which was picked up by the Associated Press on her savvy use of social media. RLT's award winning blog Diva Living with AIDS has had unprecedented success. She has received the following Social Media awards, CBS Most Valuable Blogger in Health and Wellness, The British Academy of Tweet Award in Public Service, Weblog Award in Health and Wellness, and named Top Ten Social Makers in HIV/AIDS by ShareCare; and

WHEREAS, Rae Lewis-Thornton has traveled worldwide in an unending crusade in the fight against HIV/AIDS and has lectured extensively throughout the United States as a feature speaker for college, universities, non-for-profit, churches, and cooperate organizations. The following list is a brief overview of Rae's speaking experience. She has spoken at universities such as, Stanford University, Yale University, Spelman College, Howard University, Duke University, Florida A&M University, the University of Chicago, the University of Illinois and the University of Mississippi and the list goes on. She has also spoken for countless national organizations, such as the Inks, Inc., Jack and Jill, Inc., The National Association of Black Journalists, the NAACP, SCLC and all of the African American Black Sororities and Fraternities nation-wide. She has been featured in countless cities for HIV/AIDS service and prevention organizations across the country. She has conducted HIV/AIDS staff trainings at Humana Health Care, AT & T, Commonwealth Edison, Near North Health Clinics, and Walgreens; and

WHEREAS, Rae Lewis-Thornton graduated Cum Laude from Northeastern Illinois University. She began her master's in political science at the University of Illinois-Chicago, two classes from graduating; she developed full-blown AIDS and quit school because of her health. Ten years later, alive and moving forward in spite of AIDS, Rae attended McCormick Theological Seminary on a Merit Scholarship and earned a Master of Divinity Degree. Rae received the Arthur Hayes Fellowship in Church History from McCormick upon graduating. Rae worked on her PhD in Church History at the Lutheran School of Theology-Chicago; and

WHEREAS, Rae revived an Emmy Award-for Outstanding Feature Series in Hard News -Living with AIDS WBBM-CBS Chicago series, the Cardinal Bernardin Communication Award-Outstanding Feature Series in Hard News-Living with AIDS WBBM-CBS Chicago, and the Illinois Associated Press Broadcasters Association Award: Second place for Best Continuing Series, *Living With AIDS*. She also received, the Distinguished Alumnae Award from her alma mater Northeastern Illinois University in 2011, Scroll of Merit Award-National Medical Association, Achievement Award-The Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, Community Service Award- National Association of Black Journalist, Community Service Award -National Association of Black Social Workers, as well as, countless other awards for her work around HIV/AIDS. She continues to use her life and story to enrich the lives of others; and

WHEREAS, prior to Rae's motivational speaking career, she was on her way to a promising political organizing career, having served as Senator Carol Mosley Braun's 1992 Senatorial Campaign Advance Coordinator, Illinois State Youth Coordinator for the 1988 Dukakis Presidential Campaign and National Youth Director for Jesse Jackson's 1984 and 1988 Presidential Campaigns; however, Rae retired in 1993 due to her health;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the President and Members of the Cook County Board of Commissioners does hereby honor and congratulate Rae Lewis-Thornton on her life-long success and highlight that Rae Lewis-Thornton is the first African American female to tell her story of living with AIDS in a national publication at the height of the AIDS pandemic in the United States and changed the dialogue around who became infected with HIV; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, this text be spread upon the official proceedings of this Honorable Body and a suitable copy be presented to Rae Lewis-Thornton as a symbol of our respect and esteem.