



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 21-5718, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

HONORING THE LIFE OF MILDRED “MILLIE” JOYCE CLEMON CRUZAT

WHEREAS, on February 17th, 1927, Mildred “Millie” Joyce Clemon Cruzat was Born into humble beginnings to Sevar Clemon and Florence Richardson Clemon. Millie was the third of four daughters; and

WHEREAS, Millie credits her older sister MaryAnn with teaching her the fundamentals of ballet as well as inspiring her to pursue a career as a dancer. Millie’s sister Bella, known affectionately as “little mother,” and the second oldest, introduced Millie to her husband, Teddy. Sevara, the youngest sister, shared a dancing career with Millie in New York. They were a close-knit family and were known to friends as “those Clemon Sisters; and

WHEREAS, Millie embarked to New York City to pursue a career as a professional dancer after completing two years at Highland Park Junior College in Detroit, Michigan. Millie supported herself working as a sales associate at Bloomingdale’s by day and attending dance classes at night at the American School of Ballet at Carnegie Hall; and

WHEREAS, Millie eventually landed a role in several productions including; Larry Steele’s “Shuffle Along”, “Smart Affairs”, and “Spider Burkes’ Television Show. Millie performed with the likes of Brock Peters, Lena Horn, and Harry Belafonte. Millie actively practiced and perfected the attributes of wisdom, discernment, and frugality, which allowed her to become a self-sufficient woman; and

WHEREAS, on September 11, 1954, Millie married Edward “Teddy” Cruzat, in Detroit, Michigan. The couple subsequently moved to Chicago where Millie became a lifelong resident. Millie and Teddy welcomed Sevara Pia in 1956 and Edward Pedro II, or “Tuffy” in 1958, and Liza in 1963 to complete their family; and

WHEREAS, in 1975, at the age of 50, the Joseph Holmes Dance Theater asked Millie to join their troupe where she was once again the “lone sheep”. Tepid but determined, Millie inserted herself into this young, up and coming successfully and vitally gifted troop of dancers. Millie was an ardent admirer of the director Joseph Holmes and determined to push herself relentlessly and tirelessly through the classes and rehearsals. This experience not only catapulted her career, but inspired her to rise to all that she was meant to be; and

WHEREAS, upon leaving the Joseph Holmes Dance Company, Millie expanded her dance and athletic repertoire, including:

- 1981 - Served as Ballet and Fitness instructor with Tony Wilson Dance Co. and Bell School of Performing Arts;
- 1983 - Joined the Chicago Urban League working in the Young Parents Center teaching fitness and dance to young mothers;
 - 1983 - Opened the Millie Cruzat Total Fitness Center;
- 1985 - Instructed the dancers at the COPE program at the U of Chicago who were teenagers with children;
- 1987 - 1995 - Began her stint as an instructor of ballet at the Beethoven Elementary School forming the Beethoven Ballerinas;
 - 1992-1995 - Hired by Lake Meadows as a fitness instructor;
 - 2002 - Joined the Stewart Modeling Agency;

2013 - Served as a ballet instructor with the Chicago Contemporary Dance Theater until her death;
2016 - Honored with a part in the Bronzeville Musical Theater; and

WHEREAS, Millie remained forever concerned and committed to supporting, uplifting, and encouraging the lives of black children, women, and men, she took every opportunity to impart teachable moments. Millie had a knack for being a steady source of encouragement; and

WHEREAS, Millie remained an athlete and mover and shaker her entire life. She began her days stretching followed by a brisk 3-mile jog along the lakefront. This soon turned into 5 miles and then 8 then running the Chicago Marathon. Millie's granddaughter, Alyia, continues to honor Millie's legacy by collaborating with Millie to create and continue the existence of "@agelessly_beautiful", an Instagram page focused on the importance of stretching and longevity; and

WHEREAS, on July 28th, 2021, at the age of 94, Mildred "Millie" Joyce Clemon Cruzat - History Maker, dancer, model, artist mother, and wife - made her transition. Millie was a woman of her time and ahead of her time, an outspoken woman who kept her own counsel. Millie remained committed to the enrichment and empowerment of all people and her people, Millie was a champion of and friend to anyone disadvantaged or challenged with the adversities of everyday life; and

WHEREAS, Millie passes on an amazing legacy, rich with wisdom and common sense to her children; Sevara, Liza Edward, and daughter-in-law Tasha; and her three granddaughters, Shanna Cruzat, Aliya, and Carley Brooks, of whom Millie was immensely proud. All three of Millie's grandchildren have put their exquisite marks on the world of dance in their own unique ways. Millie also leaves her remaining sister-in-law Stella Cruzat Redmond, a myriad nieces and nephews, and a plethora of life-long friends with whom she created and shared in many loving memories, including her respected God-daughter Toni Cook Bush, her cherished friend Bea Welters, and extended family at CCDT; and

WHEREAS, Millie peacefully transitioned, enveloped in the love of her children and surrounded by those who cherished her. Millie was resolute in the life paths she chose to explore, determined to be her "authentic self" since age eleven. Throughout her life, Millie made bold choices with a voice that embodied female empowerment and social activism. Millie's altruism and unfettering bravery in her pursuit of uplifting the Black community served as an inspiration to many; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BILL LOWRY, COOK COUNTY COMMISSIONER of the 3rd DISTRICT, do hereby stand, and salute the phenomenal life of Mildred "Millie" Joyce Clemon Cruzat; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, a suitable copy of this Resolution will be presented to the family of Mildred "Millie" Joyce Clemon Cruzat;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED: a copy of this Resolution will be filed within the **Office of Cook County Commissioner Bill Lowry 3rd District**.