

HR16 INTRODUCED



1 HR16
2 NRCH7J8-1
3 By Representatives Ensler, Lawrence, McClammy, Gray, Hollis,
4 McC Campbell, Travis, Clarke, Forte, Lands, Hendrix, Datcher,
5 Morris, Givan, Jackson, Hall
6 RFD:
7 First Read: 14-Jan-26



1
2
3
4 HR_____ CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF CLAUDETTE COLVIN.
5

6 WHEREAS, with an overwhelming sense of loss, we mourn
7 the death, yet celebrate the life, of Claudette Colvin of
8 Birmingham, Alabama, whose passing has left a void in the
9 lives of her family and friends; and

10 WHEREAS, Claudette Colvin was born in Birmingham,
11 Alabama, on September 5, 1939, to C.P. Austin and Mary Jane
12 Austin (Gadson); she is the oldest of eight sisters; during
13 her early childhood, her adopted parents, Q.P. and Mary Ann
14 Colvin, lived in the rural community of Pine Level, Alabama;
15 Ms. Colvin attended the Springhill Baptist Elementary
16 School, then located on Ramer Route 1; later, Ms. Colvin
17 moved to the King Hill community of the state capital,
18 Montgomery; and

19 WHEREAS, Ms. Colvin was arrested for a felony at the
20 age of fifteen, after refusing to give up her seat to a
21 young, white passenger on March 2, 1955, in Montgomery, nine
22 months before the arrest of Rosa Parks; and

23 WHEREAS, her arrest sparked a successful lawsuit led
24 by famed Civil Rights Attorney, Fred D. Gray; Ms. Colvin,
25 along with Aurelia Browder, Susie McDonald, and Mary Louise
26 Smith, were plaintiffs in what would become the Supreme
27 Court case, Browder v. Gayle; at the age of 16, she gave
28 pivotal testimony that led the United States District Court



HR16 INTRODUCED

for the Middle District of Alabama to issue a ruling declaring the state's laws mandating bus segregation as unconstitutional; the United States Supreme Court upheld this ruling and on December 20, 1956, ordered the State of Alabama and the City of Montgomery to end bus segregation permanently; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Colvin did not finish her senior year of high school, partially due to her dedication to the social justice movement; she worked hard to earn her General Education Diploma and attended the Alabama State Teachers College in Montgomery; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Colvin's legacy simmered quietly until, as early as 1979, her name began surfacing during Negro History Month; Frank Sikora of the Birmingham News wrote a feature story on her in 1980; in 1990, New York Governor, Mario M. Cuomo, awarded her with the MLK, Jr. Medal of Freedom, New York State's highest honor of recognition for outstanding accomplishments in civil and human rights; the Selma Times-Journal featured her in 1991; the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute added a picture display dedicated to Ms. Colvin in 1994; Lifetime Television featured her story in 1995; she was featured in the cover stories of USA Today, the Montgomery Advertiser, and the Washington Post; she has been mentioned in several books, including "Freedom's Children" by Ellen Levine, "Parting the Waters" by Taylor Branch, and "Bus Ride to Justice" by Attorney Fred D. Gray; Phillip Hoose's 2009 biography, Claudette Colvin, Twice Toward Justice" received the



HR16 INTRODUCED

57 Newberry Honor Book Award; and most recently, she
58 co-authored the children's book, "Claudette Colvin: I Want
59 Freedom Now!" with Phillip Hoose and illustrated by Bea
60 Jackson; and

61 WHEREAS, despite many considering Ms. Colvin's 1955
62 act of civil disobedience to be the greatest achievement in
63 her life, Ms. Colvin always kept her eye on the future,
64 "paying it forward" to the next generation; by sharing her
65 story, she has empowered parents, community leaders, and
66 public officials to become agents of change; she created the
67 Claudette Colvin Foundation with the mission to inspire and
68 recognize youth and young adults for their service in
69 significantly improving life in communities across America;
70 her giving spirit is also shown by the success of her
71 descendants; she is the mother of two boys, the eldest of
72 whom sadly passed at her home in 1993; her youngest son
73 earned his Doctorate in Business Administration from
74 Kennesaw State University and is now an Assistant Professor
75 at Texas A&M University - Kingsville; she has several
76 grandchildren and great-grandchildren and often says she
77 "reaps the fruits of her labors" through her growing family
78 and those others whom she inspired; and

79 WHEREAS, because of her arrest, Ms. Colvin lost her
80 civil rights and liberties, including the right to vote; in
81 2021, she petitioned the juvenile court in Montgomery to
82 expunge her record; 66 years after her arrest, her record
83 was expunged by Judge Calvin Williams who lauded her actions
84 as courageous; now therefore,



HR16 INTRODUCED

85 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
86 LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, That the death of Claudette Colvin
87 is recorded with deep sadness, and even as we mourn her
88 death, we also celebrate her life; this resolution is
89 offered in highest tribute, along with heartfelt sympathy to
90 her family, whose grief is shared by many.