
ENGROSSED RESOLUTION

Relating to: commending the life and public service of Father James Edmund Groppi.

Whereas, Father James Edmund Groppi was born on November 16, 1930, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and

Whereas, in 1959 he was ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood after studying at St. Francis Seminary; and

Whereas, in 1963 Father Groppi, when transferred to St. Boniface parish which had a predominantly African American congregation in Milwaukee, became actively involved in the Civil Rights Movement and participated in the March on Washington during said year; and

Whereas, in 1965 Father Groppi also participated in marches from Selma to Montgomery on behalf of the Voting Rights Act; and

Whereas, upon his return to Milwaukee later in 1965, Father Groppi began organizing protests against the segregation of Milwaukee public schools, and he led marches across the 16th Street Viaduct, which was later renamed in his honor, spanning the Menomonee River, which was a half-mile wide valley and considered to be a symbolic divide for the city; and

Whereas, in 1967, when Father Groppi discovered that several judges in the Milwaukee area held memberships with an organization that did not admit non-whites, he questioned their ability to rule impartially in cases involving African Americans and reacted by organizing pickets at the homes of the judges; and

Whereas, Father Groppi continued such pickets off and on for two years; and

Whereas, Father Groppi along with Vel Phillips, the first African-American Milwaukee alderperson, worked for the passage of legislation which outlawed discrimination in the buying and renting of homes, and in 1968 such a law was passed on the federal level, known as the Fair Housing Act; and

Whereas, in 1979 he became a bus driver for the Milwaukee Transit System and remained in that capacity until his death in 1985; and

Whereas, the adoption of this senate resolution is supported not only by the senate, but also by members of the assembly, including specifically Representatives Sheridan, Schneider, Young, Grigsby, Sinicki, Mason, Fields, Benedict, Turner, and Hintz; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the senate, That the senate of the state of Wisconsin honors the remarkable life and achievements of Father James Edmund Groppi as an ecclesiastical leader during the Civil Rights Movement, as well as an advocate for equality in the areas of housing, education, and justice for citizens in Milwaukee and across the nation.

State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin

Senator Fred A. Risser
President of the Senate

Date

Robert J. Marchant
Senate Chief Clerk