

RDH  
*[Handwritten signature]*

RESOLUTION NO. 79 - 2013

201301211

**RECOGNIZING AND CELEBRATING** the historic contributions of Mrs. Louise Shropshire, granddaughter of a slave from Coffee County, Alabama, hymn writer, choir director and native of Cincinnati, Ohio, who penned the lyrics to "*If My Jesus Wills a.k.a. I'll Overcome*," between 1932 and 1942, which became the inspirational anthem of the American Civil Rights Movement, "*We Shall Overcome*."

WHEREAS, during the late 1950s and the 1960s, the United States of America and the entire world witnessed an unprecedented campaign of civil resistance from a diverse group of people on behalf of African Americans; and

WHEREAS, this campaign was led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and a multitude of civil rights activists including Reverend Ralph Abernathy, Reverend Joseph Lowry, Andrew Young, Rosa Parks, Medgar Evers, Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Barker, John Lewis, James Farmer, Thurgood Marshall, Roy Wilkins, A. Phillip Randolph, Daisy Bates, Dorothy I. Height, Bayard Rustin, Floyd McKissick, Whitney M. Young, Jr., Reverend Jesse Jackson, Stokely Carmichael, and a host of historic legends including Cincinnati's Fred Shuttlesworth; and

WHEREAS, African Americans were economically, socially and physically disenfranchised, and racial segregation and state-sanctioned racial discrimination was the law of the land at that time; and

WHEREAS, the goal of 1950s and 1960s Civil Rights Movement was to end racial segregation and discrimination against African Americans in this country and enforce constitutional voting rights; and

WHEREAS, the Civil Rights Movement encompassed major campaigns of civil resistance with the goal of enforcing constitutional voting rights and was characterized by major campaigns of civil resistance which included boycotts, sit-ins, and marches throughout the South; and

WHEREAS, many extraordinary African Americans including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Emmet Till; the Four Little Girls at the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama; Malcolm X; and James Chaney; Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner; along with persons from all racial, social and ethnic groups and backgrounds, laid down their lives for equality and justice for all citizens of the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, the Civil Rights Movement is punctuated by extraordinary events such as the March on Selma, the Montgomery Bus Boycotts, the March on Washington, the *Plessy vs Ferguson* decision, the Little Rock Nine, the *Brown vs. the Board of Education* decision, and the *Dred Scott* decision; and

WHEREAS, the rallying cry for the Civil Rights Movement was “Freedom NOW” which was heard against the backdrop of the movement’s iconic anthem, “We Shall Overcome”; and

WHEREAS, for more than 50 years, the author of the song, “We Shall Overcome”, which became the anthem of Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and transcended race to become the anthem of oppressed people across the globe, was thought to be “unknown”; and

WHEREAS, the original author was Mrs. Louise Shropshire, granddaughter of a slave from Coffee County, Alabama, hymn writer, choir director and native of Cincinnati, Ohio, who penned the lyrics to *If My Jesus Wills a.k.a. I’ll Overcome*, between 1932 and 1942, performed the song in African-American churches throughout the South and copyrighted it in 1954; and

WHEREAS, the lyrics to, *If My Jesus Wills* are: “I’ll Overcome, I’ll Overcome, I’ll overcome Someday; *If My Jesus Wills, I Do Believe, I’ll Overcome Someday*”; and

WHEREAS, in 1960, and again in 1963, a group of folk singers registered “*We Shall Overcome*” as a derivative work without attribution to Mrs. Shropshire as the original author; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Library of Congress has called “*We Shall Overcome*,” “the Most Powerful Song of the Twenty First Century”; and

WHEREAS, preeminent copyright and musicological experts have overwhelmingly affirmed this historical discovery regarding Mrs. Shropshire’s authorship of the song, “*We Shall Overcome*,” and have called it, “the most important musical find of the twentieth century”; and

WHEREAS, Grammy Award winning music producer and author, Isaias Gamboa, conducted four years of extensive research and wrote the book “*We Shall Overcome-Sacred Song of the Devil’s Tongue*” detailing the life, music and accomplishments of Cincinnati native Mrs. Louise Shropshire; and

WHEREAS, on Friday, September 27, 2013, at the Inspirational Baptist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, long overdue honor and recognition will be given through music, song, dance and tributes in “An Evening of Hope – The Life and Legacy of Mrs. Louise Shropshire” which offers insight into this critical period of American history, featuring special guests, Simone Sheffield (producer) and Lee Daniels (director) of the movie “The Butler”, Otis Williams (original member of the renown singing group ‘The Temptations’) and many other national figures; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Cincinnati, State of Ohio:

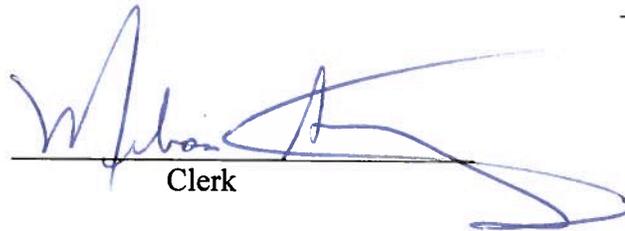
Section 1. That the Mayor and City Council recognize and celebrate the historic contributions of Mrs. Louise Shropshire, granddaughter of a slave from Coffee County, Alabama, hymn writer, choir director and native of Cincinnati, Ohio, who penned the lyrics to *If*

*My Jesus Wills a.k.a. I'll Overcome*, between 1932 and 1942, which song became the inspirational anthem of the American Civil Rights Movement, "*We Shall Overcome.*"

Section 2. That a copy of this resolution be spread upon the minutes of Council.

Passed: September 11, 2013

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

Attest:   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk

Submitted by Councilmembers Charlie Winburn and Pamula Thomas.