
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 734 Session of
2020

INTRODUCED BY DAVIDSON, KINSEY, KORTZ, BURNS, FREEMAN, KIM,
ROTHMAN, HILL-EVANS, DONATUCCI, MILLARD, HOWARD, GALLOWAY,
GAINNEY, NEILSON, YOUNGBLOOD AND ROEBUCK, FEBRUARY 18, 2020

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, FEBRUARY 18, 2020

A RESOLUTION

1 Honoring the life of Robert Mendelsohn, a photojournalist of the
2 urban community.

3 WHEREAS, Robert Mendelsohn was a renowned photographer known
4 for his depiction of Philadelphia's black political, cultural
5 and social society; and

6 WHEREAS, Mr. Mendelsohn was born in 1957 in the Feltonville
7 section of Philadelphia; and

8 WHEREAS, Mr. Mendelsohn's family was one of the few Jewish
9 families in the entire community; and

10 WHEREAS, After graduating from Olney High School in 1975, Mr.
11 Mendelsohn spent years working as a warehouse stock clerk and
12 telemarketer; and

13 WHEREAS, In 1995, Mr. Mendelsohn caught his professional
14 break after taking a photograph of Johnnie Cochran, the defense
15 attorney for O.J. Simpson, at the National Association of Black
16 Journalists conference; and

17 WHEREAS, For 19 years, Mr. Mendelsohn chronicled the work of

1 elected officials, activists and entrepreneurs in Philadelphia
2 and the surrounding area; and

3 WHEREAS, Mr. Mendelsohn truly knew the Philadelphia community
4 and the Philadelphia community knew him; and

5 WHEREAS, Blondell Reynolds Brown, a member of the
6 Philadelphia City Council, stated that Mr. Mendelsohn
7 "epitomized the skill, affection and ability to look at the
8 beauty of life he captured"; and

9 WHEREAS, Mr. Mendelsohn occasionally posed in pictures and
10 could even be seen in photographs with famous icons, including
11 Johnny Carson, Ethel Merman and former President Ronald Reagan;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, Mr. Mendelsohn was known as "the people's
14 photographer" and was well-respected for caring about others;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, At public events, Mr. Mendelsohn was known for going
17 out of his way to entertain children; and

18 WHEREAS, Regarding Mr. Mendelsohn's life, the Philadelphia
19 Association of Black Journalists (PABJ) wrote that "his images
20 captured the celebrations, triumphs, and tragedies of black
21 life"; and

22 WHEREAS, For more than 20 years, Mr. Mendelsohn attended
23 nearly every prominent event in the black community; and

24 WHEREAS, Throughout his career, Mr. Mendelsohn worked for
25 black-owned publications, including the Philadelphia Sunday Sun,
26 the Philadelphia Tribune and the Philadelphia New Observer; and

27 WHEREAS, Hugh E. Dillon, a fellow photographer to whom Mr.
28 Mendelson served as an early mentor, stated that Mr. Mendelsohn
29 "knew everyone's name. He knew their family members. He
30 remembered every conversation he had with you"; and

1 WHEREAS, Mr. Mendelsohn was a longtime supporter of PABJ and
2 believed in advocating for diversity in newsrooms and fair
3 hiring practices of minority workers; and

4 WHEREAS, PABJ President Manuel McDonnell Smith commented that
5 Mr. Mendelsohn "transcended the lens with an always friendly
6 smile"; and

7 WHEREAS, Reflecting on his own life, Mr. Mendelsohn stated
8 that he wanted to be remembered as "a nice guy who did the right
9 thing and never hurt anybody and took a pretty good picture that
10 most people seemed to like"; and

11 WHEREAS, At the time of his death in July 2019, Mr.
12 Mendelsohn was 61 years old; and

13 WHEREAS, Mr. Mendelsohn deserves to be celebrated for the way
14 he used his talents to bring a voice to Philadelphia's black
15 community; and

16 WHEREAS, Mr. Mendelsohn's kindness and sense of humility
17 deserves to be recognized, as he made a lasting impression upon
18 countless individuals; therefore be it

19 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives honor the life of
20 Robert Mendelsohn, a photojournalist of the urban community.