
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 69 Session of
2021

INTRODUCED BY HUGHES, KEARNEY, FONTANA, BROWNE, KANE, YUDICHAK,
COMITTA, BREWSTER AND HUTCHINSON, APRIL 13, 2021

REFERRED TO RULES AND EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS, APRIL 13, 2021

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing the month of April 2021 as "Jazz Appreciation Month"
2 in Pennsylvania and paying tribute to the late Nina Simone
3 for her contributions to the world of jazz.

4 WHEREAS, "Jazz Appreciation Month," known as JAM, was created
5 in 2002 at the Smithsonian Museum to herald and celebrate the
6 extraordinary heritage of jazz each April; and

7 WHEREAS, JAM is intended to stimulate and encourage people of
8 all ages to participate in jazz by studying music, attending
9 concerts, listening to recordings and reading books about jazz;
10 and

11 WHEREAS, This year, JAM continues its efforts to celebrate
12 and recognize women's contributions to jazz from the genre's
13 earliest development to present successes and challenges; and

14 WHEREAS, Expanding on its 2020 "Women in Jazz" theme, JAM
15 pays homage to the dynamic impact and often overlooked
16 contributions women have made to the rich historical legacy of
17 America's original art form; and

18 WHEREAS, This year's featured artist is the incomparable

1 pianist, singer, songwriter, storyteller and civil rights
2 activist Nina Simone, who used her remarkable talent to create a
3 legacy of liberation, empowerment, passion and love through her
4 musical anthology spanning over four decades and more than 40
5 original albums; and

6 WHEREAS, Ms. Simone was born Eunice Kathleen Waymon on
7 February 21, 1933, in Tryon, North Carolina; and

8 WHEREAS, Ms. Simone's mother was a Methodist minister and her
9 father was a reverend and handyman; and

10 WHEREAS, It was evident early on that Ms. Simone had an
11 exceptional talent when she began playing piano at age 3; and

12 WHEREAS, Ms. Simone was a virtuoso, being able to play
13 virtually anything by ear; and

14 WHEREAS, In addition to her gospel repertoire, Ms. Simone
15 began studying classical music and developed a lifelong love of
16 Bach, Chopin, Brahms, Beethoven and Schubert that informed her
17 work as a classical pianist; and

18 WHEREAS, Hometown supporters raised money for Ms. Simone to
19 study at The Julliard School in New York City after she
20 graduated from high school graduation as valedictorian; and

21 WHEREAS, Wanting to study at the Curtis Institute of Music in
22 Philadelphia, Ms. Simone moved to this Commonwealth with her
23 family; and

24 WHEREAS, Despite an excellent audition, Ms. Simone was denied
25 admission to the Curtis Institute of Music, which denial she
26 attributed to racial prejudice; and

27 WHEREAS, Ms. Simone encountered racism in the past at her
28 first classical piano recital, at age 10, when her parents were
29 forced to move to the back of the hall to make room for white
30 audience members; and

1 WHEREAS, Ms. Simone, who declined to perform until her
2 parents returned to the front, cited this incident as a
3 precursor to her involvement in the civil rights movement; and

4 WHEREAS, Discouraged but undeterred, Ms. Simone began taking
5 private lessons while also teaching music to local students to
6 support herself; and

7 WHEREAS, In 1954, to supplement her income, Ms. Simone
8 auditioned at the Midtown Bar and Grill in Atlantic City, New
9 Jersey, a defining moment in her career; and

10 WHEREAS, Knowing that her mother would not approve of
11 singing in bars, Ms. Simone adopted the stage name "Nina Simone"
12 at that time; and

13 WHEREAS, In 1957, at age 24, Ms. Simone signed with Bethlehem
14 Records, where she would record her debut album "Little Girl
15 Blue," featuring her iconic version of George Gershwin's "I
16 Loves You, Porgy" and her rendition of "My Baby Just Cares For
17 Me," a standard in her live performances; and

18 WHEREAS, Ms. Simone's next album, "The Amazing Nina Simone,"
19 recorded with Colpix records, brought critical acclaim and an
20 opportunity to perform at her first major New York City venue,
21 Town Hall in Midtown Manhattan, where her momentous September
22 12, 1959, show was recorded for a subsequent album, "Nina Simone
23 at Town Hall"; and

24 WHEREAS, Ms. Simone emerged as a captivating and dynamic live
25 performer, showcasing her improvisational genius with a wide-
26 reaching repertoire that incorporated classical, jazz, blues,
27 folk, pop, show tunes and gospel genres and an equally nuanced
28 and emotive vocal presence; and

29 WHEREAS, The 1960s through early 1970s proved to be Ms.
30 Simone's most prolific period, yielding such iconic renditions

1 as "I Put a Spell on You," "Feeling Good," "Don't Let Me Be
2 Misunderstood," "See-Line Woman," "Sinnerman," "Here Comes the
3 Sun" and "Baltimore"; and

4 WHEREAS, Transformed by the killing of Medgar Evers, the
5 Birmingham church bombing and friendships with Langston Hughes,
6 Lorraine Hansberry and James Baldwin, Ms. Simone also released
7 politically provocative originals such as "Mississippi Goddam,"
8 "Four Women," "Backlash Blues" and "To Be Young, Gifted and
9 Black" during that period; and

10 WHEREAS, Often called "the High Priestess of Soul" and "the
11 civil rights diva," Ms. Simone is regarded as one of the most
12 influential artists of the 20th century, capable of weaving a
13 classical and jazz repertoire while simultaneously elevating
14 issues of race and gender; and

15 WHEREAS, Ms. Simone received the Grammy Hall of Fame Award in
16 2000; and

17 WHEREAS, Ms. Simone, who died on April 21, 2003, was inducted
18 posthumously into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2018; and

19 WHEREAS, The Library of Congress selected Ms. Simone's 1964
20 performance of "Mississippi Goddam" as culturally and
21 historically significant, adding it to the National Recording
22 Registry in 2018; and

23 WHEREAS, Ms. Simone was a pioneer who broke from industry
24 conventions to produce a musical legacy that is as socially
25 reverberant as it is brilliant; and

26 WHEREAS, Jazz is a vital part of our American culture and
27 part of the rich and diverse musical background of this
28 Commonwealth; therefore be it

29 RESOLVED, That the Senate recognize the month of April 2021
30 as "Jazz Appreciation Month" in Pennsylvania and pay tribute to

1 the late Nina Simone for her contributions to the world of jazz.