



Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, TN

Legislation Text

File #: BL2021-1016, **Version:** 1

An Ordinance naming the landing and steps in front of the Historic Metropolitan Courthouse in honor of Diane Nash.

WHEREAS, Diane J. Nash was born on May 15, 1938, in Chicago, Illinois, eventually making her way to Nashville, Tennessee when she transferred to Fisk University during her college career; and

WHEREAS, her experiences of the Jim Crow system in the South led her to become a notable civil rights activist, as well as a leader and strategist of the student-led wing of the Civil Rights Movement; and

WHEREAS, Nash strongly supported the direct nonviolent-protest philosophy and was elected chair of the Student Central Committee, and was part of the small group of students who “tested” racial discrimination at Nashville’s lunch counters before the full-scale coordinated sit-ins; and

WHEREAS, Nash was one of the founding members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), later becoming the director of their direct-action wing, and was one of the Freedom Riders who helped desegregate interstate transportation facilities; and

WHEREAS, on April 19, 1960, Diane Nash led a group of protesters to the steps of City Hall after the bombing of attorney and civil rights activist Z. Alexander Looby’s home in Nashville; and

WHEREAS, on the steps of the courthouse, Diane Nash asked Mayor Ben West if he felt it was wrong to discriminate against people solely based on race or color, to which he replied “yes”, leading Nashville to become the first southern city to integrate lunch counters a mere three weeks later on May 10, 1960; and

WHEREAS, Nash was also an instrumental figure in the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom through her work with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), as well as the Voting Rights Act of 1965 through her work with the Alabama Project and the Selma Voting Rights Movement; and

WHEREAS, Section 13.26.010 of the Metropolitan Code provides that no building or structure of the Metropolitan Government may be named except pursuant to an ordinance duly adopted by the Metropolitan Council; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper for the landing and steps in front of the Historic Metropolitan Courthouse where Diane Nash had her historic confrontation with Mayor Ben West be named in honor of this significant woman.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. That the landing along the entire front of the Historic Metropolitan Courthouse, including the large fountains and the steps to the landing (the “Plaza”) is hereby named “Diane Nash Plaza”.

Section 2. That the Department of General Services is directed to erect the proper signage designating the Plaza in front of the Historic Metropolitan Courthouse as “Diane Nash Plaza”.

Section 3. This Ordinance shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.

Analysis

This ordinance would name the landing and steps in front of the Historic Metropolitan Courthouse in honor of Diane Nash. Diane Nash came to Nashville when she began studying at Fisk University. She became a notable civil rights activist and a leader and strategist of the student-led wing of the Civil Rights Movement. She was a founding member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and was a member of the Freedom Riders.

On April 19, 1960, Diane Nash led a group of protesters to the steps of Historic Metropolitan Courthouse after the bombing of attorney and civil rights activist Z. Alexander Looby's home in Nashville. On the steps of the Courthouse, Nash asked Mayor Ben West if he felt it was wrong to discriminate against people solely based on race or color, to which he replied "yes", leading Nashville to become the first southern city to integrate lunch counters a mere three weeks later on May 10, 1960.

Section 13.26.010 of the Metropolitan Code provides that no building or structure of the Metropolitan Government may be named except pursuant to an ordinance duly adopted by the Metropolitan Council. This ordinance would rename the landing along the entire front of the Historic Metropolitan Courthouse, including the large fountains and the steps to the landing, as "Diane Nash Plaza".

The Department of General Services would be directed to erect proper signage reflecting this designation.