

Memorial Resolution

THE HONORABLE JUDGE RICHARD H. DINKINS

JUNE 12, 2024

“Read this book my boy and learn what our people have suffered, have done, are suffering and are doing and resolve by the grace of God to make your mark in the world by helping to free them from civil and political oppression.” – Charles Spencer Dinkins, Sr. 1893

These words were penned in the front cover of a book kept in the personal library of the Honorable Judge Richard H. Dinkins. They were penned by his grandfather, Charles Spencer Dinkins, Sr., to his father Charles L. Dinkins on May 10, 1893. Judge Dinkins kept the book and words of his grandfather close as a constant reminder of his charge.

Today, we honor the life of an extraordinary individual. Judge Richard H. Dinkins was a father, brilliant jurist, mentor, cherished friend, and colleague whose impact on our lives and society is immeasurable. As we play this final stanza in the melody of a sweet life, we pay homage to someone who illuminated our paths with wisdom, kindness, grace, love and boundless generosity. It is with heavy hearts that we remember a champion of justice, a beacon of hope, and a tireless advocate for civil rights, equality, and human dignity. Judge Dinkins leaves behind a profound legacy, having touched countless lives with his unwavering commitment to excellence, justice, love, family, and faith.

First appointed to the Chancery Court, Part IV bench in 2003, where he remained until his appointment to the Tennessee Court of Appeals by Governor Phil Bredesen, the Honorable Judge Richard H. Dinkins was a trailblazer, embodying

the words of his grandfather with every stroke of his pen and eloquent argument. As the first African American to serve on our Tennessee Court of Appeals, Judge Dinkins truly inspired all who met him and blazed a trail for those coming after him.

Born in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 30, 1952, to Ann Tyler Dinkins and Rev. Charles L. Dinkins, Sr., Judge Dinkins departed this earthly dimension on October 1, 2023. His love for his family, jazz music, and the law will be cherished in our hearts.

Richard's love for the law and civil rights was fortified at a tender age. His father Reverend Charles L. Dinkins, Sr., served as pastor of First Baptist Church in East Nashville and as president of the Nashville branch of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The youngest of three sons, Richard was an insatiable reader spending hours in his room reading. From a young age, he was destined to be an agent of change, inspired by his both his grandfather and father. Meeting Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at ten years old sealed young Richard's fate to dedicate his life to civil rights and equal treatment for all.

Judge Dinkins earned his undergraduate degree from Denison University in Granville, Ohio in 1974. He returned to Nashville to attend Vanderbilt University Law School graduating in 1977. During his third year of law school, he clerked for civil rights legend State Senator Avon N. Williams. This clerkship led to a long-lasting partnership and friendship, forming the legal practice of Williams & Dinkins, which championed significant civil rights cases, including the desegregation of Nashville public schools.

His unwavering commitment to service and civil rights was further exemplified through his roles as cooperating attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund and the Minority Business Enterprise Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

Dinkins' legal acumen and passion for civil rights was recognized across the State. He was the recipient of numerous awards: Outstanding Young Man of America (1986), received the Distinguished Service Award of the Tennessee Black Caucus

of State Legislators (1989); Civil Rights Leadership Award of the Nashville NAACP (1991); Liberty Bell Award from the Nashville Bar Association (1991); the Liberty Bell Award from the Nashville Bar Association (2001); the William M. Leech Jr. Public Service Award from the Tennessee Bar Association (2004); Dr. Charles Kimbrough Medal of Honor from the Nashville NAACP (2017) and the Francis S. Guess Bridge to Equality Award from the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee (2018). He was also received the Nelson C. Andrews Distinguished Service Award from the Nashville Public Education Foundation for his "fierce advocacy for civil rights in public education," his "exemplary commitment to service," and as "a pillar of civic leadership in Nashville," (2018) and the Freedom Fighter Medal from the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (2019).

As a mentor, Judge Dinkins had a rare gift for inspiring and nurturing others. He planted seeds of excellence in all who were willing to learn, ensuring each person reached their fullest potential. His wisdom, patience, and dedication to helping others grow were unparalleled.

He sowed seeds of excellence in everyone willing to learn from him. Not only did he plant these seeds, but he also nurtured them, ensuring each one reached its fullest potential. He saw strengths in you that you didn't know you had, and with patience and care, he helped us all blossom into our best selves. Like King Solomon, his wisdom was a wellspring of knowledge, ever-flowing freely and always available to those eager to learn. He demanded excellence with grace and would accept nothing less.

Richard cherished his family above all. His adoring children—LaChanta, Zuri, and Ian—were his pride and joy. He balanced his career with family life, coaching his son's baseball leagues and setting his daughters up for success. As a grandfather to Kennedy and Lariah, his heart grew even more. He led weekly Bible devotions, encouraging his family to grow in faith. As an active member of First Baptist Church Capitol Hill, he was ordained as a Deacon in 2013 and served faithfully until his passing.

The impact that Judge Dinkins had on our state and those in this room cannot be overstated. His contributions touched countless lives, leaving an indelible mark on

our communities. In times of uncertainty, he was a steady hand, a voice of reason, and a source of hope. He believed in the potential of humanity to overcome any challenge, and his optimism was infectious.

He embodied his great-grandfather's charge, carrying the knowledge of our community's struggles and accomplishments, and resolved to make his mark in the world to free us from civil and political oppression. As we bid farewell, let us honor his memory by continuing the work he started and living our lives with the same grace, compassion, love, excellence, and dedication he exemplified daily.

Personally, Judge Dinkins meant the world to me. He was my father in this profession. I affectionately called him my "Law Dad." He took me in as one of his daughters and guided me to the place I now sit. His belief in me and graceful support allowed me to climb higher and see further, carrying his dream onward. On behalf of the collective judiciary, we express our deepest gratitude to LaChanta, Zuri, and Ian for sharing your wonderful father with us as he pursued his God-given mission.

As we bid farewell let us remember the legacy the Honorable Judge Richard H. Dinkins leaves behind. Let us honor his memory by carrying forward the lessons he taught us, by continuing the work he started, and by living our lives with the same grace, compassion, love, excellence and dedication that he daily exemplified.

As the collective judiciary we send much gratitude to LaChanta, Zuri and Ian for sharing your wonderful father with us as he pursued his God given mission.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the 71st Annual Tennessee Judicial Conference on this the 12th day of June 2024, that we, the members of the

Tennessee Trial Courts, Courts of Appeals, and Supreme Court honor the extraordinary life of our colleague the Honorable Judge Richard H. Dinkins, with this memorial resolution in an attempt to express our deep sorrow upon the death of our distinguished Judge. We further express our sincerest condolences to the family of the Honorable Judge Richard H. Dinkins. His life and contributions have left an indelible mark on our legal system and our community;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution filed in the archives of the Tennessee Judicial Conference and be further enrolled in the records of the Tennessee Court of Appeals, Middle Section and the Chancery Court of the 21st Judicial District.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be presented to the family of the Honorable Judge Richard H. Dinkins as a testament to our respect and admiration for a life dedicated to the pursuit of justice.

Respectfully submitted to the members of the Tennessee Judicial Conference, assembled at their annual meeting, on this the 12th day of June 2024 in the City of Memphis.



Chancellor I'Ashea L. Myles,
Chancery Court, Part III