

Milwaukee Ald. Coggs: On the passing of Milwaukee trailblazer Vel Phillips

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Statement of Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs

Just yesterday my colleagues and I passed the Vel R. Phillips Trailblazer Award and Selection Committee as a tribute to the special woman who has given so much to the City Of Milwaukee and its residents. I pushed to create the Trailblazer Award now because I believe in giving people their flowers (although Ms. Phillips preferred plants) while they are living. It was cruel irony to get the notice last evening of her passing but I am glad we had the chance to honor this trailblazing woman and hopefully the award will become just one of many small ways of keeping her legacy alive.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Ms. Phillips my entire life and she has always been an inspiring role model. I will forever reflect on the stories of challenge and triumph that she shared, and in fact there is no better time than now to stand with the same fearlessness and zeal like she did through the years to change society. Her tireless and groundbreaking efforts in fair housing will continue to be a beacon of light as we navigate through the (too often dark) political landscape of today.

Out of the many conversations we had, there is one that I regret we never finished...it was about her desire to have a street permanently named in her honor. I am committing myself to working diligently with my colleagues to make her request a reality. Another small tribute to a woman on whose shoulders many of us now stand.

I will eternally miss her welcoming face at community meetings, her quick retort to

smart or snarky comments, her strategic mind and the stories of past struggles laced with the chronology of our people and this community. I am proud to now call her an ancestor and to have had the honor and pleasure of knowing her. Vel Phillips truly was one of the most impactful people I have ever known and she will be sorely missed.

My deep condolences to the family.