

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 878

Honoring the life, legacy, and contributions of James Earl Jones.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 25, 2024

Mr. WICKER (for himself, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Ms. STABENOW, and Mr. PETERS) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to

RESOLUTION

Honoring the life, legacy, and contributions of James Earl Jones.

Whereas James Earl Jones was born on January 17, 1931, to Robert Earl Jones and Ruth Connolly Jones in Arkabutla, Mississippi;

Whereas, at the age of 5, Mr. Jones moved to Dublin, Michigan, with his maternal grandparents, John Henry Connolly and Maggie Connolly, who raised him;

Whereas, as a young boy, Mr. Jones spoke few words, suffering from a debilitating stutter;

Whereas, in high school, an English teacher discovered Mr. Jones's gift for writing and convinced him to read his poetry aloud, leading Mr. Jones to overcome his stutter;

Whereas, in 1949, Mr. Jones enrolled at the University of Michigan, where he joined the Reserve Officers' Training Corps and initially prepared to study medicine before switching to drama;

Whereas, in 1953, Mr. Jones commissioned in the United States Army, training at Fort Benning in Georgia, before being assigned to Camp Hale near Leadville, Colorado, and later being discharged as a first lieutenant;

Whereas, in 1955, Mr. Jones moved to New York, New York, to study at the American Theatre Wing, paying his way by working as a janitor;

Whereas, in 1958, Mr. Jones performed in his first Broadway production, *Sunrise at Campobello*, which launched his stage career;

Whereas, over the course of his 60-year career, Mr. Jones gave life to nearly 90 television network dramas and episodic series, over 110 movies, and countless plays, including a 30-month span in which he appeared in 18 different stage productions;

Whereas, in 1960, Mr. Jones joined Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival, paving the way for his performances in "Henry V," "Romeo and Juliet," "Richard III," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and "Othello";

Whereas, in 1964, Mr. Jones debuted in the Cold War satire "Dr. Strangelove," which established him in Hollywood, both on screen and behind the microphone, his voice exuding a timeless depth and intensity which drew listeners in and left a lasting impression;

Whereas, in 1969, Mr. Jones was the first celebrity guest on "Sesame Street," appearing in the second-ever episode of the children's series and slowly reciting the alphabet;

Whereas Mr. Jones spent his career as a pioneer for Black actors of his generation, as exemplified in his becoming one of the first Black actors to have a continuing role on a daytime soap opera in “As the World Turns” and in becoming the first Black actor to win a 1969 Tony Award in the play category for his performance in “The Great White Hope”;

Whereas, in 1977, Mr. Jones gave voice to Darth Vader in George Lucas’s “Star Wars,” even humbly requesting that his name not appear in the credits out of deference to a co-star;

Whereas it was not until the third film in the original Star Wars trilogy, “Return of the Jedi,” that Mr. Jones would be credited as the voice of Darth Vader;

Whereas, in 1982, Mr. Jones wed the late Cecilia Hart, who had played Desdemona to his Othello, and together they had a son, Flynn Earl Jones;

Whereas, in 1994, Mr. Jones embodied the voice of Mufasa in Disney’s “The Lion King” and was the only cast member to reprise his role in the 2019 remake of the film;

Whereas, in 2015, at the age of 84, Mr. Jones returned to Broadway to appear in the revival of the 1976 play “The Gin Game”;

Whereas, in 2022, a Broadway theater, formerly known as the “Cort,” was renamed the James Earl Jones Theatre in his honor, the same house in which Mr. Jones began his career in 1958;

Whereas Mr. Jones earned a remarkable number of awards and accolades throughout his career in theater and film, including—

(1) a National Medal of the Arts from President George Bush in 1992;

(2) the Kennedy Center Honor in 2002;

(3) the Honorary Award for Lifetime Achievement at the 2011 Academy Awards;

(4) the Lifetime Achievement in the Theatre at the 2017 Tony Awards;

(5) two Primetime Emmy Awards, 2 Tony Awards, a Golden Globe Award, and a Grammy Award for individual performances; and

(6) a rare EGOT tally, achieving the “grand slam” of American show business by winning Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and Tony awards; and

Whereas, on September 9, 2024, Mr. Jones passed away at 93 years old—Mississippi losing a beloved son, and the world losing an extraordinary talent: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) honors the life and legacy of James Earl
3 Jones for his contribution to theater, film, his State,
4 and his country;

5 (2) recognizes that the voice and heart of Mr.
6 Jones will be remembered for generations to come;

7 (3) extends its heartfelt condolences to the fam-
8 ily and friends of Mr. Jones; and

9 (4) requests that a copy of this resolution be
10 transmitted to the family of Mr. Jones as a token

1 of the Senate's respect and admiration for his life's
2 work.

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