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Honoring the life and accomplishments of Damu Amiri Imara Smith.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 19, 2006

Ms. NORTON (for herself, Ms. LEE, Mr. RANGEL, and Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Government Reform

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RESOLUTION

Honoring the life and accomplishments of Damu Amiri Imara Smith.

Whereas Damu Smith is in the annals of American and world history for his enduring work as a peace, civil rights, and environmental activist who has left his signature on the major issues of his time;

Whereas in 1952, Damu Amiri Imara Smith was born LeRoy Wesley Smith in St. Louis, Missouri to Sylvester and Vernice Smith;

Whereas Damu Smith took a field trip to Cairo, Illinois at the age of 17 to a Black Solidarity Day rally which helped to ignite his life of community service and activism;

Whereas at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota, where Damu Smith studied political science, he served as President of the Organization of Afro-American Students, led a protest and takeover of the school's administrative offices to demand a Black studies program, and changed his name to Damu Amiri Imara Smith;

Whereas in 1973, Damu Smith moved to Washington, D.C. to attend the Antioch College Center for the Study of Basic Human Problems;

Whereas Damu Smith ardently and effectively lent his voice of advocacy to the successful campaign for the Martin Luther King Jr. Federal holiday;

Whereas Damu Smith fought against apartheid in South Africa, especially as Executive Director of the Washington Office on Africa and co-founder of Artists for a Free South Africa;

Whereas Damu Smith toiled against social ills such as gun violence, police brutality, and government injustice through his work with organizations such as the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, the National Wilmington 10 Defense Committee, and the National Black Independent Political Party;

Whereas in his capacity as Associate Director of the Washington Office of the American Friends Service Committee, Damu Smith stood against the proliferation of nuclear weapons and for the cause of peace;

Whereas Damu Smith's leadership on the environment included his tenure as National Associate Director and national toxics campaigner for Greenpeace USA;

Whereas Damu Smith was a founder of the idea of environmental justice and played a central role in awakening African Americans and other people of color and lower income Americans to the special importance of environmental issues, which often affect those groups disproportionately;

Whereas Damu Smith founded and served as the executive director of the National Black Environmental Justice Network, recognized as the first ever national network of Black environmental justice activists, to fight against contaminated water and toxic waste dumps in Black communities;

Whereas in 1991, Damu Smith coordinated the first National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, which for the first time brought together the civil rights and environmental movements;

Whereas Damu Smith, as the first coordinator for environmental justice for the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice, focused attention on the impact on the health and lives of poor and African American communities in the area in Louisiana called ''Cancer Alley'' because of its toxicity from chemical dumping and other environmentally detrimental corporate practices;

Whereas in 1999, Damu Smith coordinated the historic National Emergency Gathering of Black Community Advocates for Environmental and Economic Justice, lauded as the largest environmental justice conference ever held;

Whereas in 1999, Damu Smith co-founded Black Voices for Peace to mobilize the Black community with people of all races and nationalities to protest United States military action in Iraq and elsewhere, and to campaign in favor

of redirecting billions in Federal funding to universal healthcare and access, education, jobs, housing, environmental protection, equal justice, and other fundamental issues;

Whereas Damu Smith co-hosted ''Spirit In Action'', a show dedicated to education and activism, on WPFW 89.3 FM with Milagros A. Phillips; and

Whereas Damu Smith lived a life as full of meaning as his name: Damu, meaning blood—''The blood that I am willing to shed for the liberation of my people;'' Amiri, meaning leadership—''The leadership I must provide in the service of my people;'' and Imara, meaning strength—''The strength and stamina I have to maintain in the struggle;'': Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives honors and celebrates the life of Damu Amiri Imara Smith and his accomplishments and expresses condolences at his passing.

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