

# IN HONOR OF BENJAMIN ISRAEL

JUNE 15, 2022

- WHEREAS,** OVER THE COURSE OF IT'S HISTORY, THE CITY OF HOLLYWOOD HAS BEEN FORTUNATE TO BE THE HOME OF EXTRAORDINARY RESIDENTS WHO HAVE MADE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS THE BETTERMENT OF OUR CITY, ONE SUCH EXTRAORDINARY RESIDENT IS BENJAMIN ISRAEL, OF BLESSED MEMORY; AND
- WHEREAS,** BENJAMIN ISRAEL HAD GROWN UP IN HARLEM DURING THE TERRIBLE YEARS OF NEW YORK'S DRUG EPIDEMIC. HIS FATHER, WHO WAS JEWISH, HAD FLED RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN ETHIOPIA, EVENTUALLY MAKING IT TO NEW YORK ON A MERCHANT SHIP AND MEETING BENJAMIN'S MOTHER, WHO WORKED AS A MAID. AFTER SCHOOL, ISRAEL HAD TO CLEAN UP AFTER THE ADDICTS WHO USED THE FOYER OF HIS BUILDING AS A TOILET. STILL, HE ATTENDED BROOKLYN COLLEGE AND STUDIED ACCOUNTING AND WORKED AS A TAX EXAMINER FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE, WHICH WAS LOCATED IN THE WORLD TRADE CENTER, AND LATER AS A KOSHER INSPECTOR. HE LOVED MANHATTAN, BUT WHEN HIS BRONCHITIS GOT WORSE, HIS UNCLE TOOK HIM TO FLORIDA FOR A WEEK'S VACATION. HE COULD BREATHE AND HE NEVER LEFT; AND
- WHEREAS,** LATER IN HIS WORK LIFE, BENJAMIN OPENED A SMALL CARPENTRY SHOP CALLED "WONDER IN WOODS" LOCATED ON HARRISON STREET. HE WAS A HIGHLY TALENTED WOOD WORKER WHO MADE CUSTOM BEDS, CABINETS, AND TABLES, AND ALSO BIMAH'S AND ARONOT KODESH, THE HOLY ARKS WHERE THE TORAH SCROLLS WERE KEPT, AND MORE. BENJAMIN WORKED WITH VARIOUS SYNAGOGUES IN SOUTH FLORIDA INCLUDING YOUNG ISRAEL OF HOLLYWOOD, AS A LONGTIME MEMBER OF THE CONGREGATION; AND
- WHEREAS,** IN HIS COMMUNITY LIFE, BENJAMIN WAS VERY INVOLVED IN CONTRIBUTING TO HOLLYWOOD'S AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND JEWISH COMMUNITIES. HE WAS AN ADVOCATE FOR JEWISH PEOPLE AND A MAN PASSIONATE ABOUT HIS RELIGION. HIS HOME WAS ALWAYS OPEN TO ANYONE WHO NEEDED A MEAL OR A PLACE TO SPEND SOME TIME. HE WAS ALSO CALLED THE "ERUV MEISTER" WHERE EVERY FRIDAY OR BEFORE HOLIDAYS HE WAS IN CHARGE TO CHECK THE ERUV, A BOUNDARY CREATED FOR THE JEWISH ORTHODOX TO ENABLE CARRYING ON SHABBAT OR OTHER HOLY DAYS; AND
- WHEREAS,** BENJAMIN, FROM A VERY YOUNG AGE, ALSO BECAME AN ADVOCATE FOR THE BLACK COMMUNITY. HAVING BEEN RAISED IN THE SOUTH IN THE 1940s. HE WAS ALWAYS PAINFULLY AWARE OF THE REALITIES OF BEING BLACK IN AMERICA AND WHAT THE COMMUNITY NEEDS, AND SO IN ADDITION TO MARCHING DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND STAYING CONTINUOUSLY ACTIVE AS AN ADVOCATE, HE ALSO FORMED MANY CLUBS, GROUPS, THINK TANKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE YOUTH AND ADULTS OF THE BLACK COMMUNITIES IN HOLLYWOOD, DANIA, AND HALLANDALE; AND
- WHEREAS,** FOR MORE THAN TEN YEARS OF HIS LIFE, BENJAMIN COMMITTED HIMSELF TO URGING THE CITY TO CHANGE THE NAMES OF THREEE CITY STREETS WHICH WERE NAMED AFTER CONFEDERATE GENERALS WHO FOUGHT TO KEEP AFRICAN AMERICANS ENSLAVED, ULTIMATELY FINDING THE SUPPORT OF A CITY COMMISSION THAT UNDERSTOOD THE JUST MEANING OF HIS CALL. TODAY THOSE STREETS ARE NAMED HOPE, LIBERTY, AND FREEDOM STREETS; AND
- WHEREAS,** BENJAMIN ISRAEL LIVED IN HOLLYWOOD FOR OVER 40 YEARS BEFORE PASSING AWAY TO CANCER AT 81. HE LEFT BEHIND A LEGACY NOT ONLY AS A SOCIAL ACTIVIST FOR THE BLACK AND JEWISH COMMUNITY, OR AS AN INCREDIBLY WELL READ AND STUDIED INDIVIDUAL WHO LIVED IN HIS OWN PERSONAL LIBRARY OR AS A CHARISMATIC INDIVIDUAL WHO COULD BEFRIEND AND WELCOME ANYONE, BUT AS A HUSBAND, FATHER, BROTHER, GRANDFATHER, MENTOR AND SO MUCH MORE; NOW
- THEREFORE,** JOSH LEVY, MAYOR OF THE CITY OF HOLLYWOOD, FLORIDA, AND THE HOLLYWOOD CITY COMMISSION, HEREBY RECOGNIZE AND PROCLAIM JUNE 15, 2022, AS:

## BENJAMIN ISRAEL DAY

SIGNED THIS 15<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF  
JUNE 2022, AT  
HOLLYWOOD, FLORIDA

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MAYOR JOSH LEVY  
VICE MAYOR CARYL S. SHUHAM

COMMISSIONER LINDA HILL ANDERSON  
COMMISSIONER TRACI L. CALLARI  
COMMISSIONER ADAM GRUBER  
COMMISSIONER KEVIN D. BIEDERMAN  
COMMISSIONER LINDA SHERWOOD