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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

3

PUBLIC HEARING

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COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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Room 696, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Thursday, May 8, 2003
9:30 a.m.

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BILL 030078 - An Ordinance naming and designating
the West Philadelphia Regional Branch of the Free
Library of Philadelphia located at 125 South 52nd
Street as the "Lucien E. Blackwell Regional Branch
of the Free Library of Philadelphia."

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PRESENT:

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COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA

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COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL

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COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN

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COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN TASCO

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COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER

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COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR

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COUNCILMAN ANGEL ORTIZ

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COUNCILMAN FRANK DICICCO

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COUNCILMAN MICHAEL NUTTER

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BILL 030078

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ELLIOT SHELKROT, Free Library 3

JEAN FOSTER 5

THOMAS W. BLACKWELL, IV 8

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1 05/08/03 - WHOLE - BILL 030078

2 COUNCILWOMAN VERNA: Good morning,
3 everyone. This is the public hearing Committee of
4 the Whole regarding Bill No. 030078.

5 I would ask Mr. McPherson to please read
6 the title of the bill.

7 MR. MCPHERSON: Bill No. 030078, naming
8 and designating the West Philadelphia Regional
9 Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia located
10 at 125 South 52nd Street as the "Lucien E. Blackwell
11 Regional Branch of the Free Library of
12 Philadelphia."

13 COUNCILWOMAN VERNA: Our first witness.

14 MR. MCPHERSON: Elliot Shelkrot.

15 COUNCILWOMAN VERNA: Good morning.
16 Please identify yourself for the record and proceed
17 with your testimony.

18 MR. SHELKROT: Good morning. I'm
19 Elliott Shelkrot. I'm the President and Director of
20 the Free Library of Philadelphia, and my testimony
21 will be very brief.

22 I just want you to know that the Free
23 Library, and especially the Free Library's Board of
24 Trustees, is honored to rename, at your request, the
25 West Philadelphia Regional Library in honor of

1 05/08/03 - WHOLE - BILL 030078

2 Lucien Blackwell. He was indeed a distinguished
3 leader in West Philadelphia, in Philadelphia, in the
4 state, and across the country. And we are honored
5 to respond if this resolution is passed. Thank you.

6 COUNCILWOMAN VERNA: Thank you very
7 much.

8 At this time the Chair recognizes
9 Councilwoman Blackwell.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,
11 Madam President. We would like to thank my
12 colleague Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown for
13 this absolute honor. Obviously, I won't have
14 anything to say, being a member of this Body, but
15 we're absolutely honored. Thank you, Blondell.
16 We'll always love you for this.

17 I would like to introduce members of the
18 Blackwell family who are here and ask them to stand
19 when I do so that you will know who they are. Jean
20 and John Foster. This is Lu's sister, this is older
21 sister Jean and John Foster. Her daughter, Pat
22 Harris is in the back, my niece. To the right of
23 them, Patricia Ray, this is Lu's daughter and clone,
24 as you can see. Her son Bobby is right next to her,
25 our grandson. Next to her is another look-alike,

1 05/08/03 - WHOLE - BILL 030078

2 he's just a little browner, Tommy Blackwell, IV.

3 And to his right Trina, my daughter-in-law, Trina
4 Blackwell.

5 Thank you, Madam President.

6 We thank you all for coming out this
7 morning.

8 (Applause.)

9 COUNCILWOMAN Verna: Thank you.

10 MR. MCPHERSON: The next witnesses are
11 Thomas W. Blackwell, IV, and Jean Foster.

12 MS. FOSTER: My name is Jean Foster. As
13 Jannie just introduced me, I'm a former Blackwell.
14 I've been a Foster for 52 years.

15 I had a wonderful brother. We loved him
16 so very much and he loved us. There's not a day
17 goes by that I don't think about him. Congressman
18 Blackwell was a very special person.

19 I'm going to call him Lu now. Lu and I,
20 we grew up in a large family. We grew up in a
21 wonderful family, Blackwell family from West
22 Philadelphia. We had wonderful parents, my mom and
23 dad.

24 My mom and dad had a grocery store. And
25 we learned a long time ago how to treat people by

1 05/08/03 - WHOLE - BILL 030078

2 working in the grocery store. My mom and dad taught
3 us that. And they also taught us to always look out
4 for the unfortunate. And there's not a Blackwell
5 that won't do that. My mom and dad fed anyone who
6 came into that store and said they were hungry, and
7 we saw that all through our lives. And it was
8 pitted into Lucien.

9 And then when Lucien decided that he
10 wanted to run for State Rep, the entire family was
11 behind him all the way, every step of the way. We
12 were right there. I was with the Philadelphia
13 School System for 25 years. And after school, right
14 there with Lucien. And as Lucien would speak to
15 people and if I would say afterwards, I would say,
16 "You know, everything that my brother is telling you
17 is the truth, the things that he would talk about,
18 because I know because he's been my brother all
19 these years." My little brother. I always called
20 him my little brother.

21 Lucien and I, we served on many
22 committees together. As a matter of fact, we were on
23 the advisory committee when they built this new
24 library. We were very happy for that. We were on
25 the advisory committee when they built the Y there

1 05/08/03 - WHOLE - BILL 030078

2 in West Philadelphia. My brother saw to it that
3 they had a skating rink there at 63rd and Cobbs
4 Creek. I was with him then. Lu wanted everything
5 for West Philadelphia, and Philadelphia, that could
6 be had. And he loved children. He felt our
7 children needed to experience some of the things the
8 children live outside of the City would have. Lu
9 always talked about, we need more grass and trees
10 for our children to look at. And education, he was
11 very interested in. Lu also was part of that
12 revitalization for 52nd Street. So all these things
13 we worked together, and I was proud to be a part of
14 it.

15 Lucien never let -- like I said before,
16 never let anyone go hungry or let anyone for need.
17 But let me say this about my brother also. Even
18 though his district was in West Philadelphia, Lucien
19 loved people all over Philadelphia. And people knew
20 that. And people came to him. We would be out in
21 the street; everybody knew Lucien Blackwell. And
22 they would come to Lucien. Lucien loved, not only
23 West Philadelphia, his district, he loved
24 Philadelphia. So any honor that this Council sees
25 fit to give to my brother will be deserving. And

1 05/08/03 - WHOLE - BILL 030078

2 I'm not saying that because he's my brother and I
3 loved so dearly, but because he earned it. Thank
4 you very much.

5 COUNCILWOMAN Verna: Thank you.

6 Mr. Blackwell.

7 MR. BLACKWELL: Good morning. First let
8 me start off by saying that we consider it a great
9 honor that you would even consider doing something
10 like this -- I should say for my father but,
11 actually, I would say for my family. It's greatly
12 appreciated.

13 I watched my father grow in politics.
14 The same as I watch him grow in stature from a
15 little boy. Some people call it a self-made man.
16 Some people will define my father as that. But my
17 father was spiritually led in everything that he
18 did.

19 I used to watch my father shave in the
20 morning when I was a little kid. And a lot of
21 times, a father and a son have conversations that
22 mothers and sons don't have. And every aspect of my
23 life just about, I'm told, has been almost a repeat
24 of his life.

25 Since his passing, I've reflected on a

05/08/03 - WHOLE - BILL 030078

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2 lot of things that I was taught by him. I used to
3 work on the waterfront. I left there as president
4 of Local 1332 before they merged the locals. When I
5 first went on the waterfront, they used to call me
6 "Lu," even though my father was there and I had a
7 brother named Lu. And I used to answer to Lu
8 because, you know, I was proud of who he was. I was
9 proud of what he represented and what my family
10 represented. But my father would always refer to
11 his father, because that's where it all started. My
12 father was the epitome of his father.

13 I once recall my father referring to his
14 father as a general. And I had cousin that asked
15 me, he said, "I didn't know Pop was a general." I
16 said, he didn't mean it that way. He meant a
17 general in life. And what general at that point
18 meant, "general" meant the top.

19 I used to watch my father go up to
20 complete strangers and offer to them help. And this
21 is before the saying "quality of life" became a
22 popular phrase. I remember being 5 and 6 years old
23 and walking past -- at that time they would call
24 them derelicts. It became popular to call them
25 homeless now. I remember as a youngster walking by

1 05/08/03 - WHOLE - BILL 030078

2 your community and you have leadership -- I'm
3 talking about from the family -- that encourages
4 kids to go libraries. And then when you have
5 libraries or any institutions that are named after
6 people that you have actually walked with and were
7 able to touch, it means something. It means that
8 they connect. To have libraries named after people
9 that actually earned things that people know, that
10 they can relate, they can tell their kids about,
11 that makes them feel like they're a part of
12 something special.

13 My aunt mentioned the YMCA. My son
14 plays basketball. He's actually a third ranked
15 point guard in the nation. He's 15 years old. And
16 I remember the old Y that I used to be a part of,
17 that I used to go to. When you know that you're a
18 part of something that has grown to be what it is
19 today, you want to see that continue to grow.

20 So as I said, we're honored that you
21 would even consider it. And of course, we're in
22 favor of it. So we thank you on behalf of my
23 family. I feel kind of awkward because when I was
24 first asked to say something, I said to Sandy in
25 Jannie's office, "You think that's appropriate for

1 05/08/03 - WHOLE - BILL 030078

2 us to speak on that?" But my father believed in
3 right. As my grandfather always said, you do right
4 first. And we believe this is the right thing to
5 do. But not only for him, but for others who have
6 done things. But in particular, because this is my
7 father, of course, I'm going to say, please do it.
8 Thank you very much.

9 COUNCILWOMAN Verna: Thank you both very
10 much.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna: Is there
13 anyone else that would like to say a few words?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN Verna: Seeing none, this
16 will conclude our public hearing.

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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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PUBLIC MEETING

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COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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Thursday, May 8, 2003

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Public Meeting conducted by the
Committee of the Whole, held in Room 696, City Hall,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on the above date, to
consider action on the following:

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BILL 030078.

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PRESENT:

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COUNCIL PRESIDENT Verna

COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL

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COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN

COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN TASCO

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COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER

COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR

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COUNCILMAN ANGEL ORTIZ

COUNCILMAN FRANK DICICCO

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COUNCILMAN MICHAEL NUTTER

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1 05/08/03 - WHOLE - PUBLIC MEETING

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: We will now go
3 into our public meeting.

4 The Chair recognizes Councilwoman
5 Brown.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you, Madam
7 President. I move that Bill No. 030078 be moved out
8 of this Committee with a favorable representation,
9 with a further recommendation that Rules of Council
10 be suspended to allow for first reading at the next
11 Council Session.

12 (Duly seconded.)

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: It has been
14 moved and properly seconded that the Bill No. 030078
15 be reported out of Committee with a recommendation,
16 also a recommendation that the Rules of Council be
17 suspended so as to permit first reading at our next
18 Council Session.

19 All in favor will indicate by saying
20 aye.

21 (Aye.)

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: Those opposed?

23 (No response.)

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT VERNA: The ayes have
25 it, and the motion carries.

1 05/08/03 - WHOLE - PUBLIC MEETING
2 Thank you.
3 (Council adjourned at 9:45 a.m.)
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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing
proceedings of the Council of the City of
Philadelphia of May 8, 2003, were reported fully and
accurately by me, and that this is a correct
transcript of the same.

RE: COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Lisa C. Bradley, RPR
and Notary Public