

By Senator Thurston

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Senate Resolution

A resolution honoring George H. Starke, Jr., for the important role he played in the desegregation of institutions of higher education in this state.

WHEREAS, George H. Starke, Jr., was born on September 8, 1931, in Orlando, to Dr. George H. Starke, Sr., a physician in Sanford who was the first African American to gain membership in the Florida Medical Association, and Mattie L. Murrell Starke, a former librarian at Jones High School, and

WHEREAS, George H. Starke, Jr., attended Holden Street Elementary School and Jones High School in Orlando before being enrolled at the Alice Freeman Palmer Memorial Institute boarding school in Sedalia, North Carolina, and

WHEREAS, after his graduation from the Alice Freeman Palmer Memorial Institute in 1949, George H. Starke, Jr., began his studies at Morehouse College in Atlanta, and

WHEREAS, because of the Korean War, George H. Starke, Jr., left Morehouse College to join the United States Air Force, becoming adjutant to the depot commander, and

WHEREAS, during his service, George H. Starke, Jr., helped lead a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new building on the Kisarazu Air Field in Japan, an honor bestowed on Mr. Starke because of his many accomplishments and his volunteer work in making base operations more efficient, and

WHEREAS, after the war, George H. Starke, Jr., returned to Morehouse College, where he joined Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, and

WHEREAS, in 1957, when George H. Starke, Jr., graduated

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30 from Morehouse College with a bachelor's degree in business
31 administration, it was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a Morehouse
32 alumnus, who delivered the commencement address, and

33 WHEREAS, George H. Starke, Jr., then applied to the
34 University of Florida law school and, in 1958, became the first
35 African-American student to enroll at the university in its 105-
36 year history, and

37 WHEREAS, on September 15, 1958, as dozens of reporters and
38 photographers gathered to observe, report on, and photograph the
39 event, George H. Starke, Jr., entered an auditorium on the
40 university's campus and was separated from his classmates by an
41 empty row, and

42 WHEREAS, throughout the first semester, George H. Starke,
43 Jr., was escorted to classes by members of the Florida Highway
44 Patrol, who had hidden their identity and registered as
45 students, enrolling in the same classes as Mr. Starke to ensure
46 his safety, a precaution that would later prove warranted when
47 James Meredith, the first African-American student admitted to
48 the University of Mississippi, was shot by a sniper, and

49 WHEREAS, in spite of the fact that George H. Starke, Jr.,
50 experienced negative incidents while attending the University of
51 Florida, such as learning that his name had been mentioned at a
52 Ku Klux Klan meeting, being warned by school administrators to
53 avoid driving through the Ocala National Forest due to Klan
54 activity, and finding a mentor only with great difficulty, Mr.
55 Starke's classmates largely left him alone, and

56 WHEREAS, one classmate in particular, Fredric G. Levin, for
57 whom the law school is now named, befriended George H. Starke,
58 Jr., and the two remained lifelong friends until Levin's death

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59 in January 2021, and

60 WHEREAS, because of continuing challenges during his
61 enrollment at the University of Florida, George H. Starke, Jr.,
62 withdrew from the institution and saw his departure documented
63 in the campus newspaper, and

64 WHEREAS, George H. Starke, Jr., moved to New York and began
65 a career in investment banking, which involved top positions
66 with Wall Street firms, and

67 WHEREAS, after a career in investment banking and oil
68 distributorship, George H. Starke, Jr., launched his own
69 consulting firm, and

70 WHEREAS, in 2015, George H. Starke, Jr., returned to the
71 Orlando area after living on the East Coast for most of his
72 life, and

73 WHEREAS, despite not having the opportunity to obtain his
74 Juris Doctor degree, George H. Starke, Jr., enjoys a warm and
75 congenial relationship with the University of Florida, having
76 served on the Alumni Association Board of Directors and with the
77 University of Florida Foundation, and

78 WHEREAS, George H. Starke, Jr., has participated in several
79 ceremonies for the university's Fredric G. Levin College of Law
80 and in activities that have marked desegregation at the law
81 school, including his recognition by its Center for the Study of
82 Race and Race Relations in 1998 and 2018, and

83 WHEREAS, the University of Florida planted a tree on the
84 grounds of the Levin College of Law in honor of George H.
85 Starke, Jr., and it bears a plaque with his name, and Mr. Starke
86 was selected by the university for membership in Florida Blue
87 Key, an honorary leadership society, and

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88 WHEREAS, in 2009, George H. Starke, Jr., was awarded the
89 University of Florida's Distinguished Alumnus Award, and, in
90 2019, 61 years after he had first entered the law school, Mr.
91 Starke received the most notable recognition, the honorary
92 Doctorate of Laws, from the Levin College of Law, and

93 WHEREAS, today, at nearly 90 years old, George H. Starke,
94 Jr., still consults on large energy projects and shares a full
95 and productive life with his wife, Barbara M. Starke, and close
96 family ties with his son, Andrew Starke; his daughter-in-law,
97 Angela Starke; and his grandchildren, Sydney and Spencer Starke,
98 NOW, THEREFORE,

99

100 Be It Resolved by the Senate of the State of Florida:

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102 That George H. Starke, Jr., is honored for the important
103 role he played in the desegregation of institutions of higher
104 education in Florida.

105 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be
106 presented to George H. Starke, Jr., as a tangible token of the
107 sentiments expressed herein.