

MOTION

In 1912, Ted Watkins was born into poverty and segregation in Meridian, Mississippi. Mr. Watkins left Mississippi as a young man to avoid a lynching and set his sights on Los Angeles. In Los Angeles he became a civil rights and union activist, and administered an anti-poverty agency, the Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WLCAC).

After arriving in Los Angeles, Mr. Watkins began working for the Ford Motor Company and joined the local United Auto Workers (UAW) chapter. He advanced through the union ranks and in the 1950s became an international representative for UAW.

In 1965, the UAW helped establish the WLCAC, a War on Poverty community action agency. Mr. Watkins, with his union and civil rights activism and experience, was the logical choice to head the new organization. Mr. Watkins and his wife, Mrs. Bernice Watkins, also became active in the United Civil Rights Committee, a Los Angeles civil rights organization, and the Watts Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Mr. Watkins's presence at the forefront of the WLCAC provided an important link between civil rights, labor organizing and community activism. Mr. Watkins led WLCAC for almost 30-years and developed a variety of anti-poverty programs. For example, the WLCAC used teenagers to convert vacant lots into playgrounds and provided educational classes where students learned about black heritage and culture.

In the 1970s, WLCAC became a Community Development Corporation (CDC) with the goal to economically revitalize the community. As a result, many of the WLCAC programs emphasized community control of its economic resources. Mr. Watkins also spearheaded community efforts to establish a hospital in South Los Angeles. Since the Martin Luther King, Jr. Medical Center opened in 1971, it has provided both health care and jobs for residents of South Los Angeles.

Mr. Watkins died in November 1993. His legacy, the WLCAC, continues to fight poverty in Watts.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council name the intersection of Central Avenue between 109th Street and Lanzit Avenue as the "Ted Watkins Square," and that the Department of Transportation be directed to fabricate and install appropriate ceremonial signs to this effect at this location.

PRESENTED BY: Joe Buscaino
JOE BUSCAINO
Councilmember, 15th District

SECONDED BY: [Signature]

dhp

ORIGINAL

[Signature]
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