

# SENATE RESOLUTION No. 119

## STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 9, 2021

**Sponsored by:**

**Senator JOSEPH P. CRYAN**

**District 20 (Union)**

**SYNOPSIS**

Honors life of Tuskegee Airman Shade Meshack Lee.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As introduced.



1    **A SENATE RESOLUTION** honoring the life of Tuskegee Airman  
2       Shade Meshack Lee.  
3  
4    **WHEREAS**, Master Sergeant Shade Meshack Lee was a member of the  
5       famed Tuskegee Airmen during World War II and a longtime  
6       resident of Elizabeth, New Jersey; and  
7    **WHEREAS**, Prior to the United States' entry into World War II, Black  
8       people were denied the opportunity to assist in military air  
9       operations out of the belief they were not sophisticated enough to  
10      work with complex aircraft; and  
11   **WHEREAS**, In 1940, after lobbying by various civil rights groups,  
12      President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced that the Army Air  
13      Corps would begin training Black pilots at the Tuskegee Army  
14      Airfield in Tuskegee, Alabama; and  
15   **WHEREAS**, Many of the trainees were college graduates who went on  
16      to serve as pilots, navigators, bombardiers, instructors, mechanics,  
17      control tower operators, and support staff; and  
18   **WHEREAS**, The "Tuskegee Airmen" as they were called, earned more  
19      than 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 744 Air Medals, 14 Bronze  
20      Stars, eight Purple Hearts, two Soldier Medals, one Silver Star, one  
21      Legion of Merit, one Red Star of Yugoslavia, three  
22      Presidential/Distinguished Unit Citations, and more than 300  
23      Congressional Medals of Honor; and  
24   **WHEREAS**, As a result of their brave service, the Tuskegee Airmen  
25      helped pave the way for the issuance of Executive Order 9881 by  
26      President Harry S. Truman which ordered the desegregation of the  
27      Armed Forces in 1948; and  
28   **WHEREAS**, As a young man, Mr. Lee joined the Civilian Conservation  
29      Corps (CCC), a New Deal program to hire unemployed men for  
30      public conservation jobs, and became a radio telegrapher, obtained  
31      his high school equivalency diploma and taught fellow CCC  
32      workers a technique he devised to speed the flow of messages they  
33      were learning to send and receive in Morse Code; and  
34   **WHEREAS**, After the CCC and repeatedly being turned down for  
35      employment because of his race, Mr. Lee joined the military; and  
36   **WHEREAS**, In the military, Mr. Lee was a communications chief and  
37      flight line technical inspector with the all-Black 553rd Replacement  
38      Training Squadron, part of the Tuskegee Airmen, formed to train  
39      pilots to replace those returning from overseas flight missions; and  
40   **WHEREAS**, The army base where Mr. Lee was stationed strictly  
41      enforced the segregation customs of the era; and  
42   **WHEREAS**, The segregation was not only devastating to the morale of  
43      the Black soldiers, it also hindered the productivity of the black and  
44      white units and the army base overall because personnel were being  
45      assigned based on race, not on the needs of the mission or what the  
46      men were capable of doing; and

1   **WHEREAS**, Mr. Lee consulted with a Major from the Air Force about  
2       the situation, and this lead to the racial integration of the flight line,  
3       Black and white soldiers working side by side for the benefit of the  
4       mission; and  
5   **WHEREAS**, Through numerous correspondence, military, and college-  
6       level courses, Mr. Lee became proficient in fields that included  
7       ultrasonics, electronics, advanced mathematics, radar microwave  
8       and engineering; and  
9   **WHEREAS**, One of Mr. Lee’s major contributions to the military was  
10      developing an ultrasonic device used to simulate booming missions  
11      for men training to become fighter pilots; and  
12   **WHEREAS**, Mr. Lee spent 20-plus years in military service and after  
13      retiring, he held a variety of technological positions including radar  
14      technician at Newark International Airport, resident engineer of the  
15      data processing center for Saks Fifth Avenue, marine service  
16      engineer, computer engineer, and microwave engineer for NBC  
17      Studios, New York; and  
18   **WHEREAS**, Mr. Lee consulted on the role of the Tuskegee Airmen in  
19      the movie “Red Tails” released in 2012, and, along with other  
20      Tuskegee Airmen, was featured in People magazine; and  
21   **WHEREAS**, Mr. Lee and his six brothers received recognition from the  
22      United States government for being one of two families to have  
23      seven active duty sons contributing to the World War II effort; and  
24   **WHEREAS**, In March 2007, Mr. Lee, and fellow Tuskegee Airmen,  
25      was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal by President George  
26      W. Bush; and  
27   **WHEREAS**, Mr. Lee had a passion for books and learning, and penned  
28      his memoirs and shared his life experiences through public  
29      speaking and presentations to students and church members to  
30      preserve the history of the Tuskegee Airmen for younger  
31      generations; and  
32   **WHEREAS**, Sadly, Master Sergeant Lee passed away on October 17,  
33      2016 at the age of 95; and  
34   **WHEREAS**, As we lose more members of the Greatest Generation each  
35      day, it is important to recognize the accomplishments of men like  
36      Master Sergeant Lee who selflessly served our nation while  
37      overcoming racial segregation and prejudice; now, therefore,  
38  
39        **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate of the State of New Jersey:*  
40  
41        1.   This House proudly honors Master Seargent Shade Meshack  
42       Lee for his lifetime service to our nation and his role in helping to  
43       bring about desegregation of the United States Armed Forces as a  
44       member of the Tuskegee Airmen.  
45  
46        2.   Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,  
47       shall be transmitted by the Secretary of the Senate to the President

1 of the United States, the United States Secretary of Defense, the  
2 Governor, the Adjutant General of the New Jersey Department of  
3 Military and Veterans Affairs, each member of Congress elected  
4 from this State, the Director of the National Museum of African  
5 American History and Culture, the President of the Tuskegee  
6 Airmen National Historical Museum, and to the family of Master  
7 Sergeant Shade Meshack Lee.

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9  
10 STATEMENT  
11

12 This Assembly resolution honors the life of Master Sergeant  
13 Shade Meshack Lee. Mr. Lee, a resident of Elizabeth, New Jersey,  
14 proudly served this nation while bringing about real, long-lasting  
15 racial change. As a member of the Tuskegee Airmen, Mr. Lee was  
16 part of an elite group of Black men who played a critical role in the  
17 Allied victory during World War II and paved the way for  
18 desegregation of the United States Armed Forces.

19 As a young man, Mr. Lee joined the Civilian Conservation  
20 Corps (CCC) and became a radio telegrapher, obtained his high  
21 school equivalency diploma and taught fellow CCC workers a  
22 technique he devised to speed the flow of messages they were  
23 learning to send and receive in Morse Code.

24 After the CCC, Mr. Lee joined the military. In the military, he  
25 became a communications chief and flight line technical inspector  
26 with the all-Black 553rd Replacement Training Squadron, formed to  
27 train pilots to replace those returning from overseas flight missions.

28 Through numerous correspondence, military, and college-level  
29 courses, Mr. Lee became proficient in fields that included  
30 ultrasonics, electronics, advanced mathematics, radar microwave  
31 and engineering. One of his major contributions to the military was  
32 developing an ultrasonic device used to simulate booming missions  
33 for men training to become fighter pilots.

34 Mr. Lee spent 20-plus years in military service and after retiring  
35 from the military, he held a variety of technological positions in the  
36 field of engineering. He consulted on the role of the Tuskegee  
37 Airmen in the movie "Red Tails" released in 2012, was featured in  
38 People magazine, and in 2007 was awarded the Congressional Gold  
39 Medal. In addition, Mr. Lee and his six brothers received  
40 recognition from the United States government for being one of two  
41 families to have seven active duty sons contributing to the World  
42 War II effort.

43 Mr. Lee had a passion for books and learning, and penned his  
44 memoirs and shared his life experiences through public speaking  
45 and presentations to students and church members to preserve the  
46 history of the Tuskegee Airmen for younger generations.

**SR119 CRYAN**

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1        Master Sergeant Lee passed away on October 17, 2016 at the age  
2 of 95. As we lose more members of the Greatest Generation each  
3 day, it is important to recognize the accomplishments of men like  
4 Master Sergeant Lee who selflessly served our nation while  
5 overcoming racial segregation and prejudice. His legacy will  
6 inspire people for decades to come.