

2023-J2302

Senate Resolution No. 2302

BY: Senator PARKER

MOURNING the death of Chief Obailumi Ogunseye,
distinguished citizen and devoted member of his
community

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to
citizens of the State of New York whose lifework and civic endeavor
served to enhance the quality of life in their communities and this
great Empire State; and

WHEREAS, Chief Obailumi Ogunseye of Brooklyn, New York, died on
Sunday, November 19, 2023, at the age of 82; and

WHEREAS, Irvin "Irv" Columbus Garrett was born to Leon Adams and
Lillie Mae Garrett on December 25, 1940; he was primarily raised by his
grandmother, Dorothy Nancy Lee Jones, in North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, Irvin C. Garrett's grandmother owned and managed various
restaurants, and he dutifully helped her by setting up tables and
cleaning the floors; when he was not working at the restaurants, he
enjoyed playing baseball with friends, earning the nickname "Reggie";
and

WHEREAS, While in junior high school, Irvin C. Garrett's mother
traveled to North Carolina to retrieve her son and return to Brooklyn,
New York, where she had relocated after her son's birth; this was the

only time the young man saw his father; and

WHEREAS, Irvin C. Garrett attended Boys High School in Brooklyn; he would later tell stories about watching future NBA Hall of Fame inductee, Connie Hawkins, playing basketball in the schoolyard; and

WHEREAS, Not the best student he could be, Irvin C. Garrett dropped out of school and became involved in a gang; after he was arrested and taken to the Brooklyn Detention Center only once, he vowed he would never find himself at such a low point again; this prompted him to join the United States Marine Corps in 1956; and

WHEREAS, Irvin C. Garrett completed boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina; he was deployed to the Philippines, Japan, and ports in the Far East during the years leading to the Vietnam Conflict; and

WHEREAS, Upon his return to the United States in 1960, Irvin C. Garrett became involved with the Black Nationalist Movement and acquainted with the Yorubas, a group led by Oseijeman Adedunmi; this charismatic leader gave the new convert the name Obailumi Ogunseye; and

WHEREAS, Obailumi Ogunseye learned the religious practices, language, customs, and culture of the Yoruba people from his new leader, the father figure the young man had been missing all his life, and was now encouraged to cultivate his artistic talents, drumming and dance; eventually, he acquired his first chieftaincy title as a member of the Yoruba Temple; and

WHEREAS, In 1963, Obailumi Ogunseye was commissioned to establish a Yoruba Temple in South Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; there he met his

future wife, Laura Fernandez, who accepted the new name Omowunmi upon her conversion to the Yoruba religion; and

WHEREAS, Obailumi Ogunseye began leading religious services and teaching the Yoruba language and culture in the first of three temples he and Omowunmi would establish in Philadelphia; the couple were married in January of 1965 and were blessed with the first of eight children in July of 1966; the following year, they were initiated as Olorisa (priests); and

WHEREAS, In 1974, Obailumi Ogunseye obtained his bachelor's degree from Temple University and completed his graduate studies at Antioch College in 1977; like his wife, he became a public school teacher; he taught history at Jackson Elementary School and John P. Turner Middle School for the majority of his career; and

WHEREAS, In 1975, Obailumi Ogunseye and Omowunmi, with the assistance of others, founded the Odunde Afrikan Street Festival which occurs every June in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the decades, Obailumi Ogunseye has performed numerous weddings, funerals, baby naming ceremonies, divinations, and spiritual work for thousands of people in the United States; additionally, he has lectured at many colleges and universities; and

WHEREAS, In 1996, Obailumi Ogunseye journeyed to Nigeria, West Africa, where he was initiated as Babalawo (Father of the Secrets); upon his return to the United States, he continued to spread knowledge of the traditional African religion to Oregon and Washington on the West Coast; and

WHEREAS, Obailumi Ogunseye is survived by his eight children, 22

grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, and 18 spiritual/god children; he helped countless other people as a friend, neighbor, schoolteacher, husband, father, priest of Sango, and Babalawo; although he had no father in his life, he was a father figure to many others throughout the country and the world; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Obailumi Ogunseye leaves behind a legacy that will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all he served and befriended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Chief Obailumi Ogunseye and to express its deepest condolences to his family; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Chief Obailumi Ogunseye.