

2013-K1068

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 45th Anniversary of the Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center of the Queens Library

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize that the quality and character of life in the communities across the great State of New York is reflective of certain exemplary institutions whose purpose is dedicated to serving the community and the needs of its citizenry; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 45th Anniversary of the Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center of the Queens Library, to be celebrated on Saturday, April 26, 2014, in Corona, Queens, New York; and

WHEREAS, The Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center was, from the very beginning, a unique working partnership between a community-based non-profit organization and a large metropolitan public library system; it set a new standard for providing library services to urban communities; and

WHEREAS, Named after renowned poet laureate, Langston Hughes, the Queens Library's Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center first opened its doors on April 7, 1969; it was conceived by local residents and the Library Action Committee (LAC) of Corona-East Elmhurst, Inc., which was a part of the local Community Corporation, an anti-poverty program in New York City; and

WHEREAS, The LAC conducted a survey which pointed to a need for a library in Corona-East Elmhurst that would provide a black heritage collection not solely for local residents but for all of Queens County; Elinor DesVerney Sinnette, an active parent and New York Library employee outlined the concept of "a community library with lots of books about

the history and culture of Black people... that showed films and had educational and cultural programs on subjects of interest to the community"; and

WHEREAS, The LAC submitted a proposal to create the Langston Hughes Community Library to Queens Library Director Harold W. Tucker, who successfully sought funding for this creative idea through the new Library Services and Construction Act; although most projects of its kind were typically funded for three to five years, this "experiment in community control" was approved for funding from April 1969 through October 1987; and

WHEREAS, During this time, the LAC was responsible for day to day library operations and budget management under the auspices of its Board of Directors and with Queens Library oversight; it also hired local residents to work in the library as an opportunity for job training and experience; and

WHEREAS, In 1985, as a result of a shift in federal funding, a new relationship was established between the LAC and the Queens Library system; Queens Library would be responsible for regular library operations, budgeting and staffing, while the LAC would be responsible for the operations of the after school Homework Assistance Program and the Cultural Arts Program; in 1987, full library status within the Queens Library was granted; and

WHEREAS, In 1999, the Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center moved to a beautiful, new two-story facility that featured state-of-the-art technology, a 150-seat multi-purpose auditorium, an art gallery and homework center, among numerous other improvements; it now hosts numerous concerts, exhibitions, and celebrations, including an annual tribute to Langston Hughes; and

WHEREAS, Today, this esteemed cornerstone of the community is also home to the Black Heritage Reference Center of Queens County, the largest circulating collection of material on African American history in

New York City and the largest non-academic collection in New York State;
and

WHEREAS, Many of the experimental ideas designed to attract new readers during the library's formative years can be found today in libraries throughout the country; they were one of the first libraries to circulate graphic novels, and also one of the first to use face-out presentation of books; and

WHEREAS, The Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center was also one of the first libraries to formalize an after school homework assistance program for school age children, under the direction of a licensed teacher, while employing paid high school and college students as tutors; this practice can now be found in many libraries nation-wide;
and

WHEREAS, In February 2013, Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center was added to United for Libraries LITERARY LANDMARKS REGISTER, recognized as the first public institution in America named for Langston Hughes; it is also the recipient of a New York State Governor's Arts Award and myriad other accolades; and

WHEREAS, The success enjoyed by this remarkable institution is in direct correlation to the efforts of the many individuals who have supported the development of the library over the years; and

WHEREAS, Equally commendable are the Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center's superbly-skilled staff, whose involvement is and has always been characterized by an impressive commitment, an unbridled enthusiasm, and an uncompromising standard of excellence in all of their efforts on behalf of the library and the population it serves; and

WHEREAS, Steeped in a proud and distinguished history, the Langston Hughes Community Library may take just pride in its purposeful growth, as it looks forward to continuing to serve the educational, cultural and intellectual needs of the community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 45th Anniversary of the Langston Hughes Community

Library and Cultural Center of the Queens Library; and be it further
RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center of the Queens Library.