

2015-J198

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION celebrating the life and accomplishments of Nelson Mandela, civil rights leader and prominent freedom fighter, and commemorating the 25th Anniversary of his visit to New York City and the speech he presented to the people of Harlem

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body, in keeping with its time-honored traditions, to recognize and pay tribute to those extraordinary individuals who foster ethnic pride and enhance the profile of cultural diversity which strengthens the fabric of the communities of New York State; Nelson Mandela was one such individual; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to celebrate the life and accomplishments of Nelson Mandela, civil rights leader and prominent freedom fighter, and to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of his visit to New York City and the speech he presented to the people of Harlem; and

WHEREAS, On June 22, 1990, Nelson Mandela and his wife, Winnie, made a worldly homecoming to New York City--as a crucial component of the unstinting quest to end apartheid--as part of his visit, Mr. Mandela was greeted by over 150,000 people as his motorcade moved from Queens through Brooklyn; he spoke to a crowd of over 100,000 people in Harlem; he addressed a crowd at the world-renowned Riverside Church--where he would later be memorialized--guided by former Manhattan Borough President and then-Mayor of New York City, David Dinkins; he addressed the United Nations Special Committee on Apartheid; was feted with a ticker-tape parade in Manhattan down the Canyon of Heroes culminating in a speech to over 200,000 at New York City Hall and made remarks to a packed house at Yankee Stadium to conclude this day of inspiration; and WHEREAS, On this day, Nelson Mandela was welcomed with open arms by

over 100,000 people in Harlem who identified in him, as daughters and sons of Africa, a commonality of struggle, singularity of hope and unity of cause in fighting racism and oppression the world over; and WHEREAS, In his speech to the people of Harlem, which took place at the intersection of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Boulevards in the middle of African Square, Nelson Mandela highlighted the common bond and mutual inspiration shared amongst all those gathered, saying "Whilst my comrades and I were in prison, we followed closely your own struggle against the injustices of racist discrimination and economic inequality. We were and are aware of the resistance of the people of Harlem and continue to be inspired by your indomitable fighting spirit. I am able to speak to you because of the mass resistance of our people and the unceasing solidarity of millions throughout the world. It is you, the working people of Harlem, that helped make it happen"; and

WHEREAS, Nelson Mandela's homecoming in Harlem occurred on the same day he delivered his famous speech to the United Nations Special Committee on Apartheid; as such, it was a befitting and appropriate bookend that ended with many of the same universal words of truth and power, including "The light at the end of the tunnel is beckoning"..."But we are not yet there; Let us act in unity. Let us double and redouble our efforts"; and

WHEREAS, Nelson Mandela's presence in Harlem was an event of unparalleled inspiration to a local and global community that saw in him, everything about themselves and the pillars of struggle and hope that unite us all; the evening ended with a resounding and redoubling chorus of the chant: "And We Will Not Give Up The Fight!"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to celebrate the life and accomplishments of Nelson Mandela, civil rights leader and prominent freedom fighter, and to commemorate the 25th Anni-

versary of his visit to New York City and the speech he presented to the people of Harlem; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Nelson Mandela.