

2015-J1271

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION mourning the death of Yosef Alfredo Antonio Ben-Jochannan, distinguished historian, Egyptologist, teacher, author, Afro-centric scholar, activist, public intellectual 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 the great State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Yosef "Dr. Ben" Ben-Jochannan of Harlem, New York, died on Thursday, March 19, 2015, at the age of 96; and

WHEREAS, Yosef Ben-Jochannan was born on December 31, 1918; he was educated in Puerto Rico, Brazil, Cuba, and Spain, earning degrees in both engineering and anthropology; and

WHEREAS, Yosef Ben-Jochannan was a student of Arthur Schomburg in Puerto Rico as a teenager, studied with Edward Wilmot Blyden in St. Croix and took part in Puerto Rico's fight for independence in the 1950's alongside Pedro Albizu Campos, all of whom shaped his life, core beliefs and future endeavors; and

WHEREAS, In 1938, Yosef Ben-Jochannan earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering at the University of Puerto Rico; one year later, he earned a Master's degree in Architectural Engineering from the University of Havana, Cuba; he went on to receive Doctoral degrees in Cultural Anthropology and Moorish History from the University of Havana and the University of Barcelona, respectively; and

WHEREAS, Yosef Ben-Jochannan immigrated to the United States in the early 1940s; he was employed as a draftsman and continued his studies; and

WHEREAS, In 1945, Yosef Ben-Jochannan was appointed Chairman of the

African Studies Committee at the headquarters of the newly founded United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a title he held until 1970; and

WHEREAS, In 1950, Yosef Ben-Jochannan began teaching Egyptology at Malcolm King College in Harlem, New York, and then at City College in New York City; from 1976-1987, he held the position of Adjunct Professor at Cornell University, in Ithaca, New York; and

WHEREAS, Yosef Ben-Jochannan was the prolific author of 49 books, primarily on ancient Nile Valley civilizations and their impact on Western cultures, including AFRICAN ORIGINS OF MAJOR WESTERN RELIGIONS, BLACK MAN OF THE NILE AND HIS FAMILY and AFRICA: MOTHER OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION; and

WHEREAS, Yosef Ben-Jochannan conducted annual educational, empowering pilgrimages to Egypt for over four decades, opening the eyes and minds of multiple generations to the deep roots of African history originating centuries ago in Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan; and

WHEREAS, Yosef Ben-Jochannan was a public intellectual who, in later life, gave many formal lectures at home and abroad; whether he spoke to hundreds or a small group his message was empowering people of color to discover and define history from their own perspective; in addition, he also made a number of appearances on Gil Noble's WABC-TV weekly public affairs series LIKE IT IS; and

WHEREAS, In 2002, Yosef Ben-Jochannan donated his personal library of more than 35,000 volumes, manuscripts and ancient scrolls to the Nation of Islam; and

WHEREAS, It is with feelings of deepest regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Yosef Ben-Jochannan of Harlem, New York, a preeminent citizen and educator whose distinguished service and caring

commitment will long serve as a standard to which others might aspire; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of

compassion and thirst for the truth, Yosef Ben-Jochannan leaves behind a legacy which 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 Yosef Alfredo Antonio Ben-Jochannan, distinguished historian, Egyptologist, teacher, author, Afrocentric scholar, activist, public intellectual and devoted member of his community; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Yosef Ben-Jochannan.