

2015-J2725

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION honoring the lifetime achievements of Askia M. Toure to be celebrated at the Harlem Fair on July 17-18, 2015

WHEREAS, It is the practice of this Legislative Body to honor and recognize those individuals whose commitment and creative talents contribute to the cultural enrichment of their communities and of the entire State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to honor the lifetime achievements of Askia M. Toure to be celebrated at the Harlem Fair on July 17-18, 2015; and

WHEREAS, Askia M. Toure, renowned poet and an honored son of Harlem, is one of the founding patriarchs of the Black Arts Movement; he gave vital energy and support to the Civil Rights Movement and the Human Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s; and

WHEREAS, This Black Arts Movement created a geyser of poets, novelists, playwrights, musicians, visual artists, and institutions almost fifty years after the Harlem Renaissance (1924-1929); the poetry, plays, music and art of this era was at the forefront of the Dr. Martin Luther King-led desegregation activism, and Malcolm X's call for liberation and self-determination; and

WHEREAS, Askia M. Toure, a United States Air Force veteran, is the model poet-activist; he follows the paradigm set by his mentor, Langston Hughes, and his soul-stirring recitations of his poems at community events in Harlem and other communities in metropolitan New York invoked a popular demand for justice and liberation; and

WHEREAS, Born in Raleigh, North Carolina and raised in Dayton, Ohio, Askia M. Toure moved to Harlem in 1959; he studied at the Art Student League and joined the Umbra Poets, a collective of young black writers

based in Manhattan's Lower East Side; and

WHEREAS, Askia M. Toure became one of the luminaries of the Black Arts Movement known for his uncompromising commitment to the liberation of Africans at home and abroad; his aim was to first liberate himself, to discover and assert his own identity, and to heal from the psycho-spiritual, soul-deep wounds of self-hate; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, his poetry, essays, workshops, and speeches reflected to the masses the reparative wholeness of culture and the vital necessity of its political totality in the African American community; and

WHEREAS, In 1962, Askia M. Toure was appointed the illustrator of UMBRA MAGAZINE, served on the staff of LIBERATOR MAGAZINE, and wrote articles for FREEDOMWAYS, which was the leading African American theoretical, political and cultural journal of the 1960s to 1980s; and

WHEREAS, A steadfast advocate to defeat injustice, Askia M. Toure soldiered in the Civil Rights and Human Rights Movements; he was a member of the Atlanta, Georgia Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) in Mississippi in 1964, serving on its flagship, Black America; and

WHEREAS, In 1965, Askia M. Toure helped co-author SNCC's Black Power position paper, a document steeped in the theme of self-determination, which advocated for organizing community-controlled political groups throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, When he returned to Harlem in 1965, this esteemed man founded the AFRO WORLD NEWSPAPER with another luminary of the Black Arts Movement, poet-activist Larry Neal; the first issue of the newspaper was published a week after the assassination of Malcolm X, whose teachings had a profound influence on both writers; and

WHEREAS, In addition, Askia M. Toure also organized the Harlem-based Uptown Youth Conference, a "No Justice No Peace" rally that covered several blocks; he was among the many artist-activists who educated the

youth with conscious-raising music, poetry, plays, speeches, and dance;
and

WHEREAS, Askia M. Toure became the associate editor of BLACK DIALOG,
and afterwards, editor-in-chief of the JOURNAL OF BLACK POETRY which
emerged from BLACK DIALOG; he also authored eight books and co-created
the Harlem-based Black Arts Repertory Theatre School which presented
plays in underdeveloped urban communities across America; and

WHEREAS, With an expansive career as an educator, Askia M. Toure has
given of his time and energies to the Community College of New York, the
John Oliver Killens Writers Workshop at Columbia University, the Commu-
nity College of Philadelphia, San Francisco State University, and
Artist-in-Residence at Ogunamaile Gallery in Boston, the city where he
now resides; and

WHEREAS, It is the intent of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to
those individuals who add strength, vigor and inspiration to the
cultural diversity and quality of life in the communities of the State
of New York; and

WHEREAS, It is most fitting that we take time to celebrate the arts of
our Nation, to honor our artists, and to express our appreciation to
everyone who patronizes the arts; and as we celebrate the arts, we cele-
brate and give thanks to our American freedom, the only atmosphere in
which artists can truly create and in which art is truly the expression
of the soul; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to
honor the lifetime achievements of Askia M. Toure to be celebrated at
the Harlem Fair on July 17-18, 2015; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be tran-
smitted to Askia M. Toure.