

2017-J299

Senate Resolution No. 299

BY: Senator RITCHIE

MOURNING the death of Ruth Gruber, distinguished citizen, humanitarian, and pioneering photojournalist and author

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, It is with great sorrow that this Legislative Body records the passing of Ruth Gruber, distinguished citizen, humanitarian, and pioneering photojournalist and author; she died on November 17, 2016, at the age of 105; and

WHEREAS, Ruth Gruber was born on September 30, 1911, in Brooklyn, New York, one of five children of David and Gussie Gruber, Eastern European Jewish immigrants; and

WHEREAS, A brilliant student, she graduated from high school when she was 15 years-old and from New York University at the age of 18; and

WHEREAS, She continued her education, earning a master's degree in German at the University of Wisconsin at age 19 and a doctorate in German literature at the University of Cologne, Germany, at the age of

20, one of the youngest students to receive a doctorate; and

WHEREAS, In 1932, Ruth Gruber traveled across Germany, witnessing the anti-Semitism and Nazi rallies prevalent at the time; and

WHEREAS, In 1935, she joined the Herald Tribune and traveled to Soviet Russia, including Siberian labor camps for a feature series on women under Fascism and Communism; she was the first foreign correspondent to fly through Siberia into the Soviet Arctic; and

WHEREAS, During World War II, Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes, appointed Ruth Gruber as his Special Assistant; in this role, she carried out a study on the prospects of Alaska for homesteading post war G.I.'s; and

WHEREAS, In 1944, Ruth Gruber accompanied 1,000 Jewish refugees from Europe during their perilous trip across the Atlantic on a ship bound for Fort Ontario in Oswego, New York, the largest group of Jewish refugees to arrive in the United States during World War II; and

WHEREAS, She chronicled her experiences and interviews with these Jewish refugees in one of her 19 books, Haven: The Dramatic Story of 1,000 World War II Refugees and How They Came to America, which later became a television mini-series; and

WHEREAS, The Safe Haven Holocaust Refugee Shelter Museum in Oswego, New York is dedicated to the refugees' stories; and

WHEREAS, Ruth Gruber also witnessed, photographed and later published a book about the Jewish refugees from the Exodus 1947 ship entering Port of Haifa after it was attacked by the Royal Navy while making an attempt to deliver 4,500 Jewish refugees and about the

horrific conditions the refugees endured on ships and in camps; and

WHEREAS, She was married to Philip Michaels from 1951 until his death in 1968; she was also the wife of Henry Rosner from 1974 until his death in 1982; and

WHEREAS, In addition to her husbands, Ruth Gruber was predeceased by her step-daughter, Barbara Seaman; she is survived by her two children, David and Celia Michaels, and two step-daughters, Jeri Drucker and Elaine Rosner-Jeria, as well as nine grandchildren and six great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, In addition to her many books, Ruth Gruber wrote a popular column for Hadassah Magazine, *Diary of an American Housewife* and in 1978, she spent a year in Israel writing *Raquela: A Woman of Israel*, about an Israeli nurse who worked in a British detention camp and in a hospital in Beersheba; this book won the National Jewish Book Award in 1979 for Best Book on Israel; and

WHEREAS, At the age of 74, Ruth Gruber visited isolated Jewish villages in Ethiopia, continuing to write about her experiences well into the later years of her life, and publishing her last book in 2007; and

WHEREAS, Ruth Gruber received many awards and accolades for her writing and humanitarian acts, including the Na'amat Golda Meir Human Rights Award and awards from the Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance; in addition, she was honored in 2008 for her work defending free expression by the National Coalition Against Censorship; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit, imbued with a sense of compassion, and having contributed to the growth and excellence of this

great Empire State, Ruth Gruber leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all she served and befriended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Ruth Gruber, distinguished citizen, humanitarian, and pioneering female photojournalist and author; and be it further

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