

2017-J961

Senate Resolution No. 961

BY: Senator STAVISKY

MOURNING the death of Helen M. Marshall, first Black Borough President of Queens, champion of public libraries, and devoted wife, mother and grandmother

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to mourn publicly the death of cherished citizens of the State of New York who distinguished themselves in their profession and in service to their community; and

WHEREAS, With feelings of deepest regret, this Legislative Body records the passing of Helen M. Marshall, who died on Saturday, March 4, 2017, at the age of 87, noting the loss of a citizen whose purposeful life and endeavors contributed so much to the quality of life in her community; and

WHEREAS, Helen M. Marshall was born in Harlem, New York, on September 30, 1929, to Guyanese immigrants; after earning her bachelor's degree in education, she served as an early childhood teacher for eight years; and

WHEREAS, A larger-than-life figure in the civic life of Queens, Helen M. Marshall fought to improve schools, addressed numerous quality-of-life issues and was instrumental in securing a fair share of

New York City resources for the borough of Queens; and

WHEREAS, Helen M. Marshall began her distinguished public service career as an advocate for her East Elmhurst neighborhood where she diligently worked to provide job training programs and stimulate the local economy; and

WHEREAS, In 1982, Helen M. Marshall won the first of five terms to the New York State Assembly; in this capacity, she served as a tireless advocate for the needs of children, families and the elderly in her district; and

WHEREAS, Well-liked and respected by many, Helen M. Marshall was then elected to the City Council, a position she held for 10 years; and

WHEREAS, In 2001, Helen M. Marshall was the first African-American, and the second woman, to be elected to the esteemed position of Queens Borough President, a title she would hold for three consecutive terms until her retirement in 2013; and

WHEREAS, Known as a big-hearted fighter, Helen M. Marshall entered office with a detailed list of priorities, which staff members affectionately called the Marshall Plan for Queens; and

WHEREAS, Helen M. Marshall championed Queens tourism and new development across the borough, supporting the expansion of the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center at Flushing Meadows Corona Park and the plan to redevelop the Willets Point industrial area; and

WHEREAS, A passionate supporter of Queens culture, Helen M. Marshall thoroughly enjoyed the local art scene, praised famous residents and their accomplishments, honored war heroes, and cheered for the Mets; in

2016, a cultural center built at Queens Borough Hall was dedicated in Helen's name; and

WHEREAS, Helen M. Marshall created the Queens General Assembly which promoted cross-cultural exchanges among ethnic groups; she truly believed that people should visit Queens and see the world; and

WHEREAS, Known for her firm trust in the power of knowledge, Helen M. Marshall promoted reading as the catalyst for our students' future academic success, their preparation for America's jobs of the future, and their ability to compete in a global economy by procuring significant funds for numerous library projects in Queens; in her role as the first Director of the Langston Hughes Library, she was the recipient of the 2005 Daniel W. Casey Library Advocacy Award; and

WHEREAS, Always available to lend a helping hand, Helen M. Marshall relished talking to her constituents, and appreciated their feedback; during the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy in October of 2012, she helped people evacuate to safety; and

WHEREAS, When she was not working or helping others, Helen M. Marshall enjoyed spending summers with her family in Sag Harbor, New York; after her much deserved retirement, she moved to California; and

WHEREAS, Helen M. Marshall is survived by her son, Donald Marshall, Jr.; daughter, Agnes Marie Marshall; two grandchildren, Chandler and Chose; and a sister, Joan Suger; and

WHEREAS, A woman of great compassion and sensitivity, Helen M. Marshall's legacy extends far beyond her accomplishments as a successful public servant; her sincere concern for others, her integrity, unconditional friendship and selfless motivation to give of herself will

long stand as a beacon for those who would aspire to serve in their community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to pay tribute to the memory of Helen M. Marshall, to celebrate her life, and honor her accomplishments; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Helen M. Marshall.