

## 2023-J1125

Senate Resolution No. 1125

BY: Senator PARKER

COMMENDING the Center for Law and Social Justice  
upon the occasion of hosting its Summer Gala: A  
Celebration of Legacy, on June 28, 2023

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to publicly  
recognize those extraordinary individuals who have made contributions to  
the cultural enrichment of the State of New York, and to the success and  
progress of society during their life's work; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its  
long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to  
commend the Center for Law and Social Justice upon the occasion of  
hosting its Summer Gala: A Celebration of Legacy, on June 28, 2023; this  
year's distinguished honoree is Civil Rights Legend Esmeralda Simmons;  
and

WHEREAS, The mission of the Center for Law and Social Justice at  
Medgar Evers College, CUNY (CLSJ) is to address racial justice issues by  
providing quality legal advocacy, conducting community education  
campaigns, facilitating research, and building organizing capacity on  
behalf of New Yorkers of African descent and the disenfranchised; CLSJ  
envisioning a civically educated and engaged Black electorate that  
consistently builds political power to marshal the representation and  
resources necessary for its communities to thrive; and

WHEREAS, CLSJ sponsors advocacy projects and impact litigation in areas as diverse as voting rights and enforcing voter protections, housing and employment discrimination, education equity, police reform and racial violence, census justice, redistricting justice and United States human rights violations; because of its unique combination of research, public policy, advocacy and litigation from a community-based and culturally responsive perspective, CLSJ is a focal point for progressive activity; and

WHEREAS, In addition to fighting in the court system when necessary, CLSJ continues to advocate for police reform and ending racial violence, voting rights, voter protections, census and redistricting justice and education for New York City's communities of African descent; CLSJ publicizes the details about how civic processes work and builds the organizing capacity of Black New Yorkers of African descent to protect political power from the grassroots level; and

WHEREAS, Esmeralda Simmons, this year's esteemed honoree, and resident of Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, is a civil rights and human rights attorney of Caribbean-American heritage whose practice focuses on racial justice for people of African descent in New York; she recently retired from the Center for Law and Social Justice in Brooklyn, where she was the founding executive director and organizational leader for 34 years; and

WHEREAS, During her illustrious career, Esmeralda Simmons served as the First Deputy Commissioner for Human Rights for New York State, and as a Civil Rights Attorney for the U.S. Department of Education, a New

York State Assistant Attorney General, a New York City Assistant Corporation Counsel, and as a law clerk to a federal judge; in addition, she has served on several major public boards in New York City

government, including the NYC Board of Education, the NYC Districting Commission, and the NYC Civilian Complaint Review Board, that serves as a watchdog to the New York Police Department; and

WHEREAS, Esmeralda Simmons strongly believes in community service and has a history of activism in progressive and electoral political movements; she volunteers her skills and currently serves on the board of directors of UPROSE - a climate justice organization; the Council of Elders for African Cultural Heritage; and Little Sun People - an outstanding African-centered early childhood education center; and

WHEREAS, In the recent past, Esmeralda Simmons has served on several boards of national organizations: the Applied Research Center (now "Race Forward"); Vallecitos Mountain Retreat Center; the Child Welfare Fund; and the Poverty and Race Research Action Council (PRRAC); and

WHEREAS, With her throughout have been her beloved husband, Lesly Jean-Jacques, her two cherished sons, and seven wonderful grandchildren, all of whom feel privileged to be a part of her life and rejoice in her achievements; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that when individuals and organizations of such noble aims and accomplishments are brought to our attention, they should be celebrated and recognized by all the citizens of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend the Center for Law and Social Justice upon the occasion of hosting its Summer Gala: A Celebration of Legacy, on June 28, 2023; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be

transmitted to the Center for Law and Social Justice and Esmeralda  
Simmons.