

2023-K637

Assembly Resolution No. 637

BY: M. of A. Cunningham

MEMORIALIZING Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim
May 27, 2023, as Pinkster Day in the State of New
York

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to call attention
to those days set aside to enhance the cultural enrichment of the State
of New York and to preserve the heritage of African Americans; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its
long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to
memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim May 27, 2023, as Pinkster
Day in the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Originally a Dutch festival derived from the Christian
feast of Pentecost, Pinkster is a celebration of the coming of spring
and a time of rest to be enjoyed among friends and family; the holiday
has evolved into primarily an African American holiday infused with the
African Bantu culture of Congo and Angola; and

WHEREAS, Pinkster was the only time each year when Africans enslaved
in New York were legally allowed to gather with their families, play
music and dance in public, and trade goods; in doing so, they preserved
their cultures and built new rituals to transform Pinkster into a
festival of African culture; and

WHEREAS, By the 1700s, celebrations in New York City would sell goods varying from oysters and beverages to herbs and sassafras bark amidst the merriment of games, drinking, dancing, and music; in Albany, the celebration took place at the top of "Pinkster Hill," the current site of the New York State Capital; and

WHEREAS, The celebration would last three to four days and presiding over the days of activity was a temporarily honored "King" elected from within the enslaved members of the community who exercised symbolic jurisdiction over the whole of the festivities; and

WHEREAS, In 1811, New York began outlawing this centuries-old holiday, forcing African Americans to preserve their traditions in private; by the 1970's, the Pinkster festival was revived; and

WHEREAS, Efforts were made to revive the Pinkster Festival at the Phillipsburg Manor House in Sleepy Hollow, New York, where an annual recreation is observed; and

WHEREAS, Leading the Pinkster celebrations for decades, Chief Baba Neil Clarke is a master drummer and performer who researches and teaches the history of percussion, especially the role of the African drum in the Americas; and

WHEREAS, Today, Pinkster is recognized as the oldest African American holiday of the original thirteen colonies that became the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body, in its official recognition of the African Festival of Pinkster, renews its connection to the rich cultural traditions of its ancient past; and

WHEREAS, Events such as The African Festival of Pinkster, which celebrates diversity and peace, contribute to fulfilling our Nation's great legacy of equality and opportunity for all, and profoundly enhance our shared commitment to freedom and justice; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim May 27, 2023, as Pinkster Day in the State of New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor of the State of New York.