

2013-J843

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION mourning the death of Elsie E. Richardson, distinguished citizen and devoted member of her community

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, Elsie Richardson died on March 15, 2012, at the age of 90; and

WHEREAS, Elsie Richardson distinguished herself in her profession and by her sincere dedication and substantial contribution to the welfare of her community; and

WHEREAS, Elsie Eugenia Richardson was born on February 24, 1922, at 208 West 62nd Street (behind Lincoln Center); she was the fourth child of George and Albertha Maynard, who arrived in America from the Caribbean island of Nevis, British West Indies in 1911; and

WHEREAS, Elsie Richardson, a 1938 graduate of Washington Irving High School, earned a diploma in secretarial studies; since people of color were not employed as secretaries in those days, she worked in factories and as a nanny; it was President Roosevelt's National Youth Administration (NYA) and Simon N. Hillman (an African-American attorney who shared office space with A. Philip Randolph) who gave her an opportunity to use her secretarial skills; and

WHEREAS, Elsie Richardson then answered the call from Washington, D.C. for secretaries and relocated there during World War II; while in Washington, D.C., she enlisted the help of then Senators Meade and Wagner from New York, to open the door for secretaries of color; upon her return to New York, Elsie Richardson was employed to become the first African-American secretary at the New York State Labor Relations Board;

and

WHEREAS, Elsie Richardson later earned her bachelor's degree at Pratt Institute in 1972, and her master's degree at the New School for Social Research in 1979; and

WHEREAS, Elsie Richardson and her husband, Victor, were among the first families to move into Brooklyn's Albany Houses; she played a leadership role in the Tenants Association, which is credited with the existence of the St. John's Recreation Center, Crown Heights Health Center and PS 243; and

WHEREAS, A co-founder of the Central Brooklyn Coordinating Council (1952), Elsie Richardson served as its Board Secretary and Chair of its Urban Planning Committee; the commitment of that group led to the formation of the Pratt Center For Community Development, Central Brooklyn Model Cities, Medgar Evers College, the New Boys and Girls HS., among other organizations, and prevented the planned destruction of the community's brownstones; and

WHEREAS, Elsie Richardson had accompanied Senator Robert F. Kennedy on that much publicized walk through Bedford Stuyvesant (1966) and chaired the committee formed at his request, which led to the founding of the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation; she, having been one of the founders of The Weeksville Society, selected the site where artifacts revealing the existence of "Weeksville" were discovered during the demolition process for new housing; as Education/Public Relations Coordinator for the Model Cities Program, and later as Teacher-Assigned/School-Community Coordinator for District 16, she kept the community aware of employment, housing, educational and cultural opportunities; and

WHEREAS, A true asset to society, Elsie Richardson was secretary of the 1300 Prospect Place Block Association, a member of the Parks Committee of Board 8, and Vice President of the New York City Association of Retired Teachers; and

WHEREAS, Elsie Richardson's commitment to excellence, and her spirit of humanity, carried over into all fields of enterprise, including charitable and civic endeavors; and

WHEREAS, Predeceased by her husband, Victor, and sons, Raymond and George, Elsie Richardson is survived by her daughter, Sabra, granddaughters, Celeste and Lisa, great-grandsons, Xavier and Lawrence, Jr., and a host of other friends, family, and neighbors; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Elsie Richardson 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 Elsie E. Richardson, distinguished citizen and devoted member of her community; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Elsie E. Richardson.