

2013-J3807

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to declare March 11, 2014, to April 12, 2014, as Garifuna-American Heritage Month in the State of New York

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and pay just tribute to the cultural heritage of the ethnic groups which comprise and contribute to the richness and diversity of the community of the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in keeping with its time-honored traditions, it is the intent of this Legislative Body to applaud and commemorate events which foster ethnic pride and exemplify the cultural diversity that represents and strengthens the spirit of the people and the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to declare March 11, 2014, to April 12, 2014, as Garifuna-American Heritage Month in the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Garifuna-American Heritage Month celebrates the great contributions of Garifuna-Americans to the fabric of New York, and pays tribute to the common culture and bonds of friendship that united the United States and the Garifuna countries; and

WHEREAS, Garifuna-American Heritage Month affirms the culture, identity and self-esteem of a people; it celebrates a rich heritage and illuminates Garifuna history and tradition, as well as the spirit of an indomitable people; and

WHEREAS, In 1665, two Spanish ships wrecked off the coast of Saint Vincent; and

WHEREAS, The West African slaves that escaped to the island eventually intermarried with the Venezuelan Caribs and the Arawaks; and

WHEREAS, The new race of people, known as the Garifuna, grew strong

and prosperous on the island; and

WHEREAS, In 1795, the Garifuna began the Second Carib War against the British; battles raged throughout Saint Vincent over the next year with both sides enduring heavy losses; and

WHEREAS, On June 10, 1796, the final battle commenced with the Garifuna and British, resulting in the Garifuna's surrender; and

WHEREAS, The surviving Caribs were exiled to the neighboring island of Balliceaux; and

WHEREAS, On March 11, 1797, the defeated Garifuna were loaded onto a convoy of eight vessels and transported to Roatan, Honduras, which arrived on April 12th of that year; and

WHEREAS, The Garifuna began to migrate to the United States during the 1930s; today, New York City is home to the largest Garifuna community outside of Central America; and

WHEREAS, The nurturing and promotion of Garifuna pride is at the center of the Garifuna coalition's community organizing initiative, to create awareness and appreciation of the Garifuna culture and its contribution to the culture and society of New York; and

WHEREAS, On May 18, 2001, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed the Garifuna language, dance and music as a "Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity"; and

WHEREAS, Garifuna-American Heritage Month provides an opportunity to recognize the significance of their contributions to the quality and character of life, and, through many events and activities throughout the month, for all people to gain a greater appreciation of Garifuna history and traditions, and of the role Garifuna-Americans have played, and will continue to play, in our society; and

WHEREAS, In 1823, William Henry Brown, the first American Playwright of African descent wrote "The Drama of King Shotaway," recognized as the first Black drama of the American Theatre and has as its subject the

1795 Black Caribs (Garifunas) defense of the Island of Saint Vincent against colonization by the British. Therefore, in its honor, the New York Garifuna community proudly launches the Garifuna-American Decennial 2013-2023; and

WHEREAS, Today, New Yorkers of Garifuna heritage such as Sara Logan, Rosemary Ordonez Jenkins, Mirtha Colon, Eleanor Cecelia Castillo-Bullock, James Lovell, Rosita Alvarez, Carlos Gamboa, Paula Castillo, Martin Bermudez and Jose Francisco Avila, continue to recognize and honor the cultural practices of their ancestors; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to declare March 11, 2014, to April 12, 2014, as Garifuna-American Heritage Month in the State of New York; and be it further

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