

2013-J4928

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION mourning the death of Paul Robeson Jr., distinguished author and devoted member of his 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, Paul Robeson Jr. died on Saturday, April 26, 2014, at the age of 86; and

WHEREAS, Born November 2, 1927, in Brooklyn, New York, to Paul and Eslanda Robeson, Paul Robeson Jr. spent years in Europe before settling with his parents in Connecticut; he was a member of the football and track teams at Cornell University, where he received a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering in 1949; and

WHEREAS, During Paul Robeson Jr.'s childhood in the 1930s and 1940s, his father was one of the country's first major African American stars; a onetime all-American football player who briefly practiced law, the senior Robeson appeared in movies, concerts and leading roles on Broadway; he was also an outspoken advocate for social and racial equality and, in the 1930s, began to visit the Soviet Union; and

WHEREAS, Subsequently, between the ages of 9 and 11, Paul Robeson Jr. lived in Moscow, where he became fluent in Russian; he later worked as a translator of Russian-language scientific journals and began to emulate his father's activism, devoting much of his life to protecting and preserving his father's legacy and keeping his voice, both as a singer and as an activist, alive; and

WHEREAS, In 1977, Paul Robeson Jr. led a high-profile campaign denouncing a new biographical play about his father by African American playwright Phillip Hayes Dean; more than 50 prominent black intellectu-

als, civil rights leaders and political figures, including Maya Angelou, Coretta Scott King and Representative Charles Rangel signed an open letter which ran as part of a two-page advertisement in VARIETY magazine; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, in 1993, he published PAUL ROBESON JR. SPEAKS TO AMERICA, a book in which he argued that the country's racial politics should be viewed as a mosaic of distinct ethnic identities instead of as a melting pot of many groups into one; and

WHEREAS, Paul Robeson Jr. released archival recordings of his father and wrote THE UNDISCOVERED PAUL ROBESON, a two-volume biography; he was a consultant on documentaries about his father's life, including an "American Masters" film that premiered on PBS in 1999; and

WHEREAS, In addition, he directed a foundation which helped organize archives and other artifacts related to his father, some of which are housed at Howard University; and

WHEREAS, In an effort to tell what he felt was a fuller story of his father's life, Robeson published THE UNDISCOVERED PAUL ROBESON, AN ARTIST'S JOURNEY, 1898-1939, in 2001, and followed with THE UNDISCOVERED PAUL ROBESON: QUEST FOR FREEDOM, in 2010; and

WHEREAS, Predeceased by his son, David Paul Robeson, Paul Robeson Jr. is survived by his wife of 64 years, Marilyn Greenberg Robeson, his daughter, Susan Robeson, and a grandson; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit, imbued with a sense of compassion, and comforted by a loving family, Paul Robeson Jr. leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all he served and befriended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Paul Robeson Jr., distinguished author and devoted member of his community; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be tran-

mitted to the family of Paul Robeson Jr.