

2013-J5748

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION mourning the death of Dr. Vincent Harding, distinguished citizen and devoted civil rights advocate

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, Dr. Vincent Harding of Harlem, New York, died on Monday, May 19, 2014, at the age of 82; and

WHEREAS, Vincent Harding was born on July 25, 1931, in New York City, where he attended public school, graduating from Morris High School in the Bronx in 1948; and

WHEREAS, This esteemed man received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in History from City College of New York, in 1952, and the following year, graduated from Columbia University, where he earned his Master's Degree in Journalism; and

WHEREAS, After serving his country honorably as a member of the United States Army, Dr. Vincent Harding received his Master's Degree in History, followed by his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago; and

WHEREAS, In Chicago, Dr. Vincent Harding served as a lay pastor in the Mennonite Church and as a church representative; he also traveled to the South to observe race relations, meeting Dr. Martin Luther King and becoming deeply influenced by him; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Harding married the former Rosemarie Freeney and moved to Atlanta in 1960, where they established Mennonite House, an integrated community center; and

WHEREAS, While in Atlanta, Dr. Vincent Harding became a friend, adviser and speechwriter for Dr. Martin Luther King; he also joined the department of history and sociology at Spelman College, becoming the

department chairman; and

WHEREAS, As a speechwriter for Dr. Martin Luther King, Dr. Vincent Harding contributed one of the most inspiring, visionary and harrowing speeches ever given by the legendary civil rights leader; the address, known variously as "Beyond Vietnam" and "A Time to Break Silence," helped Dr. King express his ardent opposition to the Vietnam War and establishment of a "creative psalm of peace" and "beautiful symphony of brotherhood"; and

WHEREAS, After Dr. King's death, Dr. Vincent Harding admirably carried on his work, serving as director of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Center until 1970; he later directed the Institute of the Black World, an organization which promotes black studies and black intellectual life; and

WHEREAS, This remarkable man taught at Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania before joining the Iliff faculty in 1981; furthermore, he and his wife established Veterans of Hope Project, which documents stories of social justice leaders from around the world; and

WHEREAS, An important historian, Dr. Vincent Harding was author of such notable works on the history of the civil rights movement as, THERE IS A RIVER: THE BLACK STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM IN AMERICA, THE OTHER AMERICAN REVOLUTION, HOPE AND HISTORY and MARTIN LUTHER KING: THE INCONVENIENT HERO; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Vincent Harding was known as a tireless promoter of black studies as an academic discipline at colleges and universities throughout the country; in addition, he served as a consultant to television programs about the African-American experience, including the critically acclaimed documentary series EYES ON THE PRIZE; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Vincent Harding distinguished himself in his profession and by his sincere dedication and substantial contribution to the fight against injustice; and

WHEREAS, Predeceased by his first wife, Rosemarie Freeney Harding, Dr.

Vincent Harding is survived by his second wife, Aljosie Aldrich Harding; one daughter, Rachel Harding; and a son, Jonathan; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a strong desire for social change, Dr. Vincent Harding 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 Dr. Vincent Harding, distinguished citizen and devoted civil rights advocate; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Dr. Vincent Harding.