

2013-J5750

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION mourning the death of Sam Greenlee, distinguished writer, civil rights activist, 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, Sam Greenlee died on Monday, May 19, 2014, at the age of 83; and

WHEREAS, Sam Greenlee was born on July 13, 1930, in Chicago, Illinois; he received a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1952, and studied international relations at the University of Chicago; and

WHEREAS, This esteemed man served his country as a member of the United States Army, achieving the rank of lieutenant; and

WHEREAS, After completing his military service, Sam Greenlee became one of the first African Americans to join the U.S. foreign service, working from 1957-1965 for the United States Information Agency (USIA) in Iraq, Pakistan, Indonesia and Greece; he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal for bravery during the Baghdad revolution; and

WHEREAS, In 1965, this esteemed man left USIA to focus on his writing career, soon after publishing his most famous and influential work, THE SPOOK WHO SAT BY THE DOOR; and

WHEREAS, THE SPOOK WHO SAT BY THE DOOR is the story of Dan Freeman, a black CIA officer who, confronted with a racist and oppressive regime, courageously decides to leave the spy agency and returns to his native Chicago, where he puts his CIA training to use by organizing a revolutionary movement born of political and social consciousness that spreads nationwide; and

WHEREAS, In 1973, Sam Greenlee and another writer completed a screen play for the book which was made into a film directed by Ivan Dixon with an accompanying soundtrack by Herbie Hancock; the movie is considered one of the most memorable and impassioned films of its genre and its reputation has grown in stature over the intervening decades; in 2012 it was added to the National Film Registry; and

WHEREAS, Sam Greenlee published his second novel, BAGHDAD BLUES, in 1976, drawn from his experiences in Iraq; in addition, he taught screen-writing at Chicago's Columbia College, was the host of a radio talk show, wrote poetry and completed an autobiography; and

WHEREAS, Sam Greenlee distinguished himself in his profession and by his sincere dedication and substantial contribution to the welfare of his community; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of social justice, this remarkable man 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 Sam Greenlee, distinguished writer, civil rights activist and devoted member of his community; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Sam Greenlee.