

2013-J5991

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION paying grateful tribute to the distinguished and remarkable life of Ruby Dee, legendary actress and civil rights activist

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to pay proper tribute to those cherished citizens of the State of New York whose purposeful lives exemplified the highest ideals of humanity; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is proud to inscribe upon its records this memoriam for Ruby Dee, noted actress and civil rights activist; and

WHEREAS, Ruby Dee died at her home in New Rochelle, New York, on Wednesday, June 11, 2014, at the age of 91; and

WHEREAS, Over the course of her remarkable seven-decade career on stage, television and film, and parallel career in activism, Ruby Dee devoted her prodigious talents and energies to the uplift of all people, defying racial stereotypes, championing for justice and equality, and moving audiences the world over with her powerful performances; and

WHEREAS, Born Ruby Ann Wallace in Cleveland, Ohio, Ruby Dee grew up in Harlem, and got involved in acting as a teenager; she began studying her craft at the American Negro Theatre, the renowned and historic company that nurtured the talents of many African American greats, including Sidney Poitier and Harry Belafonte; and

WHEREAS, Ruby Dee had her first career breakthrough in 1946, when she took the title role in the ANT's Broadway production of ANNA LUCASTA; she met actor and future husband Ossie Davis while co-starring in the 1946 Broadway play JEB, beginning the six-decade creative and romantic partnership that contributed to the actress's tremendous legend and legacy; and

WHEREAS, She received national recognition for her role in the 1950

film, THE JACKIE ROBINSON STORY; in 1959 she landed a starring role on Broadway in Lorraine Hansberry's play, A RAISIN IN THE SUN, earning great acclaim for her portrayal of Ruth Younger, which continues to be one of her best known roles; two years later, she reprised her role in the film version of the play; and

WHEREAS, In 1961, Ruby Dee co-starred with her husband in his southern comedic play PURLIE VICTORIOUS, one of the many creative projects the couple worked on over the years; they reprised their roles for the 1963 film adaptation; and

WHEREAS, In 1965, Ruby Dee performed in lead roles at the American Shakespeare Festival as Kate in THE TAMING OF THE SHREW and Cordelia in KING LEAR, becoming the first black actress to portray a lead role in the festival; and

WHEREAS, During this time Ruby Dee grew increasingly active in the Civil Rights Movement, participating in marches and speaking out for racial equality; in 1963, she emceed the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and she was a member of Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the NAACP, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Delta Sigma Theta sorority and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; both she and her husband were friends of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr.; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the 1970s and '80s, Ruby Dee continued to give stellar performances; she earned Drama Desk and Obie awards for the 1970 play BOESMAN AND LENA, and she wrote the book and lyrics for the musical, TAKE IT FROM THE TOP! in addition, she won a Drama Desk Award for her role in Alice Childress's WEDDING BAND, and an Ace Award for her performance in Eugene O'Neill's LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT; and

WHEREAS, On the small screen, in the 1960s Ruby Dee appeared on the popular primetime soap opera, PEYTON PLACE, and later had her own series on public television with her husband: WITH OSSIE & RUBY; she garnered an Emmy Award nomination for her role in the 1979 miniseries ROOTS: THE

NEXT GENERATION; and

WHEREAS, Ruby Dee's film credits also include UPTIGHT (1968) which she also co-wrote, BUCK AND THE PREACHER (1972), DO THE RIGHT THING (1989) and THE DELANY SISTERS: THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS (1999); she won an Emmy Award for her performance in the Hallmark Hall of Fame production, DECORATION DAY; and

WHEREAS, Her published works include the humorous, MY ONE GOOD NERVE and various recordings for young people; in 1998, she and her husband, the late Ossie Davis co-wrote the autobiographical book, WITH OSSIE AND RUBY: IN THIS LIFE TOGETHER, for which she won a Grammy, in which they take turns telling their stories as actors, activists, a married couple and as parents; and

WHEREAS, In 2000, Ruby Dee received the Screen Actors Guild's Life Achievement Award; she was also an inductee of the Theater Hall of Fame, as well as the NAACP Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, Ruby Dee suffered a tremendous loss in 2005, when her husband, Ossie Davis, died unexpectedly; continuing to work despite her grief, she delivered one of her great performances in 2007's AMERICAN GANGSTER, receiving an Academy Award nomination and winning a Screen Actors Guild Award for her portrayal of the mother of a notorious crime figure; and

WHEREAS, Ruby Dee performed throughout her life; in 2013 she was hired to narrate the Lifetime original movie BETTY AND CORETTA, which followed the lives of Coretta Scott King and Betty Shabazz, after the assassinations of their husbands; and

WHEREAS, Ruby Dee is survived by her son Guy Davis, her daughters, Nora Davis Day and Hasna Davis Muhammad, and seven grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Ruby Dee leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as an inspiration and comfort; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to

mourn the passing of legendary actress and activist Ruby Dee; and be it further

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