

2017-K974

Assembly Resolution No. 974

BY: M. of A. Blake

COMMEMORATING the 50th Anniversary of the assassination of The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and paying tribute to his life and accomplishments

WHEREAS, From time to time, we take note of certain individuals whom we wish to recognize for their valued contributions and to publicly acknowledge their endeavors which have enhanced the basic humanity among us all; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, it is the intent of this Legislative Body to acknowledge that 50 years ago on April 4, 1968, The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated, fighting for Memphis Sanitation workers who were on strike to have higher wages, and to pay tribute to his life and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther King, Jr. was born January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia, as Michael King, Jr., to Alberta and Martin Luther King, Sr., whose maternal grandfather founded the Ebenezer Baptist Church, which the young Dr. King would be associated with for most of his life; and

WHEREAS, Following his graduation from high school at the age of 15,

Martin Luther King, Jr. earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Morehouse College in 1948, a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Crozer Theological Seminary in 1951, and a doctorate from Boston University in 1955, where he became a Brother of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, In 1953, Martin Luther King, Jr. married Coretta Scott who was an accomplished individual in her own right as a talented singer and a graduate of the prestigious New England Conservatory of Music; from this union came four children: Yolanda, Martin III, Dexter, and Bernice; and

WHEREAS, One year later, Martin and Coretta King arrived in Montgomery, Alabama, where he assumed leadership of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s leadership skills would be tested in early December of 1955, when Rosa Parks' refusal to remove herself from her seat in the Whites-Only section of the city bus triggered the 382-day Montgomery Bus Boycott, one of the great Negro nonviolent demonstrations of contemporary times in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The bus boycott, which ended on December 21, 1956, when the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the laws requiring segregation on buses in the South, propelled Martin Luther King, Jr. into the national spotlight; and

WHEREAS, In 1957, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was elected President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an organization formed to provide new leadership for the burgeoning civil

rights movement, drawing their ideals from Christianity and the strategy of nonviolent protest from Mahatma Gandhi; and

WHEREAS, At great danger to themselves, Martin Luther King, Jr. and his allies in the Civil Rights Movement used nonviolence to call attention to the racial inequities that were pervasive throughout the South, as well as to call for full voting rights for African-Americans; and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s commitment to racial equality was laid out in dramatic fashion on August 28, 1963, before 200,000 Americans of all races and from all corners of the country in his well-known "I Have A Dream" speech, where he spoke of a Nation that would "rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal," and where his four little children would "one day live in a Nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character" ... "and when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring,"... we "will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! free at last! thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"; and

WHEREAS, Because of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dedication and commitment to racial equality, today, in the 21st Century, his dream became a reality with the monumental election of Barack Obama as America's first African-American President; and

WHEREAS, The Nobel Committee recognized both Martin Luther King, Jr.'s work as a civil rights leader and his moral stance against racism with the 1964 Nobel Prize for Peace at the age of 35, making him the youngest recipient of this prestigious honor; and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther King, Jr. also saw beyond race to address important issues that affected all Americans, regardless of the color of their skin, including the Vietnam War, economic injustice, and labor

issues; and

WHEREAS, By 1967, Martin Luther King, Jr. initiated a "Poor People's Campaign" to bring much-needed attention to the issue of poverty; he broke away from his work on the Campaign in Atlanta to travel to Tennessee to help energize the black Memphis Sanitation Department workers who were on strike with the famous "I Am A Man" signs; and

WHEREAS, On April 3, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. preached to them his famous, "I have been to the mountaintop" speech; he proclaimed "Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life - longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over, and I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. So I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything, I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord"; this would be his last speech; and

WHEREAS, It was the next day, the unforgettable date, April 4, 1968, that Martin Luther King, Jr. was in Memphis, Tennessee, to support the black sanitation workers, that he was assassinated; and

WHEREAS, Just as Gandhi had inspired Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., so did his words inspire Nelson Mandela as well as hundreds of thousands of black South Africans to fight against the system of apartheid until it too was destroyed; and

WHEREAS, Today, five decades after his death, Dr. King's commitment to racial equality and his tireless efforts to make this country "one

Nation, ... indivisible, with liberty and justice for all" is still remembered, not just by young and old Americans alike, but by men, women and children around the world who study his work and his words, and are moved to action by his declaration that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere"; and

WHEREAS, A moving example of the high regard in which Dr. King is held globally is at London's Westminster Abbey, where his statue, along with those of nine other 20th Century martyrs, adorns the west front end of this venerable cathedral; and

WHEREAS, Martin Luther King, Jr. visited New York on several occasions, including to the Canaan Baptist Church of Christ in Harlem, New York, where his Chief of Staff, the late Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, was Pastor Emeritus; and

WHEREAS, Organizations from across New York State will be commemorating, recognizing and remembering the 50th Anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with reflective events such as musicals, dance programs, and concerts, as well as a Silent March and Vigil, to name a few; and

WHEREAS, Upon the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the death of The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., this Legislative Body wishes to commemorate the lifelong leadership of the man who gave his life for racial equality; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the assassination of The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and to pay tribute to his life and accomplishments; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.