

2017-K1156

Assembly Resolution No. 1156

BY: M. of A. Peoples-Stokes

CELEBRATING the life and accomplishments of Frank B. Messiah, longtime civil rights leader and former NAACP president

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, Frank B. Messiah of Buffalo, New York, died on April 27, 2018, at the age of 89; and

WHEREAS, Born on July 18, 1928, Frank B. Messiah grew up on the West Side of Buffalo and attended School 77; he went on to graduate from Grover Cleveland High School in 1946, where he was a star football player; and

WHEREAS, Frank B. Messiah was a laborer at Bethlehem Steel in Lackawanna, as well as a janitor and machine operator in the Chevrolet engine plant in Tonawanda, before valiantly serving his country as a member of the United States Army, attaining the rank of Sergeant First Class; and

WHEREAS, Upon the completion of his military service, Frank B.

Mesiah served as a Buffalo Police Patrolman from 1954 to 1967; he was only the 13th African-American to serve with the Buffalo Police Department; and

WHEREAS, During his tenure, while working undercover on a police assignment, Frank B. Messiah attended a talk by Malcolm X; listening to that speech encouraged him to step to the forefront of fighting racial discrimination in Buffalo; and

WHEREAS, Frank B. Messiah attended Buffalo State Teachers College, graduating in 1961 with a bachelor's degree in elementary education and in 1969 with a master's degree in administration and supervision; and

WHEREAS, While working as a teacher, Frank B. Messiah joined with other black and white residents to protest the de facto segregation of Buffalo's Public Schools; his dedication helped lay the groundwork for the lawsuit that led to Judge John T. Curtain's 1976 ruling to integrate Buffalo schools; and

WHEREAS, Throughout his illustrious career in education, Frank B. Messiah served as the Media Coordinator and Assistant Director of School Integration for Buffalo schools; he was also a part time instructor at both Canisius College and Cornell University Buffalo Labor Studies Program, where he taught courses on managing diversity, sexual harassment prevention, and other subjects; and

WHEREAS, This extraordinary man went on to become an educational planner with Erie 1 BOCES before taking a position handling

discrimination cases with the State Department of Labor, a role he served for 20 years; and

WHEREAS, Frank B. Mesiah also advocated for the concerns of the black community from many platforms, most prominently as President of the Black Educators Association and President of the Buffalo Branch NAACP from 1996 to 2016; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, he was instrumental in opening Buffalo police and firefighter positions to minorities, including African-Americans, women and other groups; and

WHEREAS, A true asset to society, Frank B. Mesiah served on then Governor Mario Cuomo's Advisory Committee on Black Affairs, and the Buffalo Fiscal Stability Authority; and

WHEREAS, In addition, he was a member of the Board of Directors of the Greater Buffalo Development Foundation, Vice Chairman of the Western New York Public Broadcasting Corporation, Vice President of BUILD, Secretary of the Black Leadership Forum, Secretary of the Afro American Historical Association of the Niagara Frontier, Vice President of Everywomen's Opportunity Center, and Project Director of the Black American Museum & Cultural Center in Niagara Falls; and

WHEREAS, Frank B. Mesiah was the proud recipient of numerous awards and accolades, including the NAACP Medgar Evers Award, Evans-Young Urban League Award, SUNY Buffalo State's Outstanding Alumni Award, Erie County Bar Association's Justice Award, YMCA Greater Buffalo Award, New York State Employees Brotherhood Award, and a Buffalo News 1986 Citizen of the Year; and

WHEREAS, Frank B. Mesiah is survived by his three daughters, Leza, Nicolette and Francesca; and a brother, Clarence; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of

compassion, Frank B. Mesiah 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 celebrate the life and accomplishments of Frank B. Mesiah, longtime civil rights leader and former NAACP president; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Frank B. Mesiah.