

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION mourning the death of Harlem, New York, native William Miles, noted historian and legendary filmmaker

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, William "Bill" Miles of Harlem, New York died on Sunday, May 12, 2013, at the age of 82; and

WHEREAS, William Miles was born in Harlem, New York, in 1931 and became a documentary filmmaker whose work focused on the cultural experience and achievements of African-Americans; the subjects of his films ranged from the unique history of Harlem to the underreported contributions of African-Americans in the military, space programs, sports, and their historical role in migrating out to the Western part of the United States; and

WHEREAS, As a young boy, William Miles lived across the street from the historic Apollo Theater and was fully aware of the vibrant African-American culture and was equally aware of how the media of the dominant culture constantly ignored contributions by African-Americans; and

WHEREAS, This led William Miles on a life-long pursuit to bring the stories of African-Americans to the screen; materials from the Film and Media Archive at Washington University collections acquired in 2005 include interviews, stock footage, manuscripts, correspondence and a large collection of photographs; and

WHEREAS, William Miles worked for 25 years restoring archival films and early feature classics for Killiam Shows, Inc. and the Walter Reade Organization in New York City, and this experience led to his work as an independent director and producer of documentary films; based at Thirteen/WNET in New York City, he wanted to document the rich history of Harlem, and to highlight a plethora of hidden stories of African-American achievements; and

WHEREAS, William Miles's first major production was "Men of Bronze" (1977), the little-known story of the African-American soldiers of the 369th combat regiment from Harlem, who fought alongside the French army in World War I; denied the right to fight in the American forces, the 369th regiment was granted the right to fight alongside the French, and at the end of the war were awarded high military honors from the French government; and

WHEREAS, "I Remember Harlem" (1981), was a four-part series on the history of Harlem, from its beginnings in the 17th century to the early 1980s; with segments on the Harlem Renaissance, the Great Depression in Harlem, the civil rights movement including Malcolm X's time in Harlem, and the challenges and problems of the 1970s, "I Remember Harlem", is a comprehensive look at the rich and unique history of this particular borough; and

WHEREAS, Other major films by William Miles are: "The Different Drummer: Blacks in the Military" (1983), "Black Champions" (1986), "Black Stars in Orbit" (1990), "Liberators: Fighting on Two Fronts in World War II" (1992), and "The Black West"; he also co-produced "James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket" (1989) an episode of PBS's American Masters series about the American writer; and

WHEREAS, William Miles won an Emmy Award, was nominated for an Academy Award, and was inducted into the Black Filmmaker's Hall of Fame; he also received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF) for his outstanding contributions to the history of African-Americans in the medium of film; and

WHEREAS, William Miles distinguished himself in his profession and by

his sincere dedication and substantial contribution to the welfare of his community; and

WHEREAS, William Miles's commitment to excellence, and his spirit of humanity, carried over into all fields of enterprise, including charitable and civic endeavors; and

WHEREAS, William Miles is survived by his wife, Gloria; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, William Miles 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 Harlem, New York, native William Miles, noted historian and legendary filmmaker; and be it further

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