

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 2013 as Caribbean American Heritage Month in the State of New York

WHEREAS, The fabric of our Nation has been woven together and enriched by the diversity of our people; our legacy as a Nation of immigrants is part of what makes America strong, and during National Caribbean-American Heritage Month, we celebrate the rich history and vibrant culture Caribbean Americans have brought to our shores; and

WHEREAS, Immigrants from Caribbean countries have come to America for centuries; some came through the bondage of slavery, while others willfully left behind the world they knew in search of a better life; regardless of the circumstances of their arrival, they had faith their descendants would have a chance to realize their greatest potential; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 2013 as Caribbean American Heritage Month in the State of New York, to be observed in conjunction with National Caribbean-American Heritage Month; and

WHEREAS, With the United States Senate approval on February 14, 2006, and a presidential proclamation on June 5, 2006, June has become National Caribbean-American Heritage Month; with this, the "colonization" of the Caribbean by the United States has been recorded in American History; this particular legislation, first introduced in the House in 2004 by Congresswoman Barbara Lee, celebrates the contributions of the Caribbean-Americans to American life and culture; and

WHEREAS, People of Caribbean ancestry who have become part of New York State's lasting heritage by fighting against stereotypes, racism, and insurmountable obstacles include, but are not limited to: Arthur Alfonso Shomburg, Curator of the New York Public Library's Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints, and dedicated historian, writer and collector; Malcolm X, a prominent figure in the black social movement of the 1960s; Sidney Poitier, who altered the perception of race through theatre and screen as an actor, producer and director; Colin Powell, a four-star United States Army General and who eventually, became Secretary of State; Alexander Hamilton, who became Congressman, founder of the Bank of New York, first Secretary of the Treasury, and one of the first supporters of the Constitution; and Jean Michel Basquiat, who revolutionized the world of painting and drawing through the social introduction of the urban black culture that marginally existed in the 1980s; and

WHEREAS, New York State has been, and continues to be, the home to many distinguished people of Caribbean ancestry who have made their mark in history as pertinent figures in their field, and who have succeeded; these figures include: Shirley A. Chisholm, first African-American woman elected to Congress, and who was also the cofounder of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and a genuine activist, lecturer, and political mentor; Marcus Moziah Garvey, who established, among other things, the United Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.); Susan Taylor, editor-in-chief of Essence magazine; Harry Belafonte, who used his fame as an entertainer in the cause for human rights; Hazel Scott, who achieved acclaimed status for her classical and Jazz technique as a pianist, and who became the first black woman to have her own television show; Edwidge Danticat, who invigorated the voices of Haitians and Haitian-Americans who experienced poverty through her writing; Maryse Conde, acclaimed international author, who now teaches at Columbia University in New York in the French and Romance Philology Department;

and Maurice Ashley, the first African-American to win the chess Grandmaster title; and

WHEREAS, Each year, New York State proudly celebrates Caribbean heritage with the West Indian-American Day Carnival (or Labor Day Parade), an annual celebration held on American Labor Day, in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, New York; and

WHEREAS, The main event of the parade is the West Indian-American Day Parade, which attracts between one and three million participants; the spectators and participators watch and follow the parade on its route along Eastern Parkway; and

WHEREAS, Caribbean Americans have prospered in every sector of our society and enhanced our national character while maintaining the multi-ethnic and multicultural traditions of their homelands; they are doctors and lawyers, public servants and scientists, and athletes and service members; their successes inspire individuals in the United States and abroad, and we take pride in the contributions Caribbean Americans continue to make to the narrative of our Nation's progress; their achievements are borne of hard work and ambition; and

WHEREAS, During Caribbean American Heritage Month, we also recognize the important friendship between the United States and the countries of the Caribbean as we expand our partnership to promote economic development, democratic governance, citizen security, and improved health and education in the region; and

WHEREAS, Additionally, as Haiti continues to recover from 2010's devastating earthquake, we remain committed to standing beside the people of Haiti as they rebuild their proud nation, and to working with others in the region to bring lasting prosperity and stability to the country; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 2013 as Caribbean American Heritage Month in the State of New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of the State of New York.