LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim May 11, 2015, as Haitian Unity Day in the State of New York

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body, in keeping with its time-honored traditions, to recognize and pay tribute to those organizations which foster ethnic pride and enhance the profile of cultural diversity which strengthens the fabric of the communities of New York State; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim May 11, 2015, as Haitian Unity Day in the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Haiti, located less than 700 miles from the United States of America, is the second nation in the Western Hemisphere, after the United States, to earn its independence, and has, since 1803, stood as a beacon of freedom as the first black-governed republic in the world; and

WHEREAS, Haiti is one of the original members of the United Nations and several of its specialized and related agencies, as well as a member of the Organization of American States (OAS); and

WHEREAS, On August 22, 1791, Haiti was the island nation where hundreds of thousands of enslaved persons initiated the most successful slave rebellion in history; under the military leadership of Francois Toussaint L'Ouverture, the grandson of an African chief, making the Haitian revolution a major turning point in the history of the world with repercussions extending far beyond the Caribbean nation; and

WHEREAS, The contributions of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, a former slave, led to Haiti's declaration of independence in 1804; Jean-Jacques Dessalines became the first ruler over an independent Haiti; Jean-Jacques Dessalines' actions left a legacy of Haitian nationalism; The Haitian National anthem, La Dessalinienne, is named after him to honor his fervent efforts to protect the independence of Haiti; and

WHEREAS, Haiti's victory against France redefined Napoleon's goals in the Western Hemisphere and so set the stage for the Louisiana Purchase, a single acquisition doubling the United States' size, giving the United States its heartland, control of the Mississippi River and the important port city of New Orleans on the Gulf of Mexico; the Louisiana territory drew immigrants from all over Europe, transforming and strengthening the United States and the American people; and

WHEREAS, For many years preceding the American Civil War, the Haitian Revolution had a substantial influence over many of the policies and laws in the United States that related to slavery such as, in 1794 and 1800, the federal government passage of anti-slave trade laws to prevent the possible spread of the Haitian slave revolt to the United States: prohibiting citizens from equipping ships engaged in slave trade commerce, barring Americans from serving aboard such ships, or from having any interest in their voyages; and

WHEREAS, In 1792, a number of measures taken to prevent a slave rebellion in the United States were so brutal and inhumane that these acts drove and strengthened the crusade of the abolitionists in the United States, therefore having a profound influence on the movement that led to the Civil War; and

WHEREAS, The Haitian Revolution ignited a ground-breaking change in the history of the modern world by enabling hundreds of thousands of African slaves worldwide and tens of thousands of free persons of color to find the wherewithal to unite in the quest for individual and collective liberty; and

WHEREAS, Haitian people have migrated to the United States since the 1700s, resulting in approximately 200,000 Haitians residing in the State

of New York; and

WHEREAS, Our state enjoys a great legacy from the successors of freed Haitian slaves who came to the United States, notably Pierre Toussaint, the first layman now being proposed by the Catholic Church to become a saint, who arrived in New York in 1787, where he turned his home into a shelter for orphans, a credit bureau, an employment agency, and a safe haven for priests; Toussaint was a benefactor of the first New York City Catholic school for Black children at St. Vincent de Paul on Canal Street; Toussaint also provided money to build a new Roman Catholic church in New York, which became old Saint Patrick's Cathedral on Mulberry Street; and

WHEREAS, In October of 1995, Pope John Paul II, from the throne in the sanctuary of New York's Saint Patrick's Cathedral, publicly bestowed Pierre Toussaint with the suffix Venerable, which is the second step towards becoming a saint in the Catholic Church because Pierre Toussaint transcends race through his miracle and charitable acts as evidence that he is not a man limited in range and that his love for his neighbor is not restricted to race or tribe; and

WHEREAS, Many other notable Haitians have made rich contributions to the nation, such as the Tuskegee trained Raymond Cassagnol who helped form the Haitian Air Force in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable was born in Saint-Marc Haiti; Du Sable became the first permanent resident of Chicago and is known as the Father of Chicago; Du Sable was honored with the creation of the DuSable Museum of African American History in Washington Park and also honored with the issue of a Black Heritage Series, 22 cent post stamp on February 20th, 1987; and

WHEREAS, W.E.B. Du Bois was a civil rights activist who helped advocate for equality amongst African Americans, he also encouraged social mobility by introducing African Americans to higher education, W.E.B. Du Bois is the founder of the NAACP and he was also the first African American to earn a doctorate degree, thus setting a precedent for the development of the Black race in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Jean-Michel Basquiat, born in Brooklyn, New York, became famous for his profound, thought provoking artwork which employed social commentary to discuss social inequalities and promote social mobility and equality; Basquiat's artwork has been influential to many contemporary artists and poets; Basquiat's legacy is universally recognized as a catalyst for social change; and

WHEREAS, John James Audubon, born in Haiti, inspired one of the founders of the Audubon Society in the late 1800s, to name the society after John James Audubon because of his reputation and deep appreciation and concern for the natural world; to this day, the name Audubon remains synonymous with avian life, wildlife protection, and environmental conservation the world over; and

WHEREAS, Haitian culture and contributions have had a definite mark on not only the progression of equality and independence but also upon the development of eclectic expressions of arts and literature, moreover the long lasting influence that Haitian Americans have on the United States can be seen through the movements of a productive society, such developments have been collectively centered to push the populace forward; and

WHEREAS, It is the practice of this Legislative Body to recognize those important days which remind us of the rich and diverse heritage of our great State and Nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim May 11, 2015, as

Haitian Unity Day in the State of New York, in honor of Haiti's legacy of liberty and justice throughout the world and in honor of the signif-

icant and countless contributions of New Yorkers of Haitian descent who have enriched our Nation and our State; 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.