

BY: Senator HAMILTON

COMMENDING the West Indian American Day Carnival Association upon the occasion of hosting the 50th Anniversary of its Annual West Indian Labor Day Carnival and Parade on September 4, 2017

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, This Legislative Body is justly proud to commend the West Indian American Day Carnival Association upon the occasion of hosting the 50th Anniversary of its Annual West Indian Labor Day Carnival and Parade; this year's theme is "From a Dream to a Legacy"; and

WHEREAS, This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the West Indian American Day Carnival and Parade; the centerpiece of the Carnival is the extraordinary colorful Parade consisting of many vibrant floats, exquisite costumes, a cacophony of music, Caribbean entertainment stars, and various food vendors selling West Indian delicacies; and

WHEREAS, Remaining true to its mission, the West Indian American Day Carnival Association (WIADCA) promotes, develops and celebrates the West Indian/Caribbean culture, arts history and tradition; and

WHEREAS, The History of Carnival is as colorful as the present day festival; its roots lie in the festivities of the original civilization in Ancient Kemet (Egypt); the many tribes that gathered around the Nile Delta practiced similar ceremonies to praise their deities; these tribes were nomads and settled near and far; many Yoruba, Ibo and Hausa tribes settled in the western region of Africa, and some of them ended up in the Caribbean in the 1700s and 1800s because of slavery; and

WHEREAS, During this early period, the French, Spanish and British aristocracy held grand and lavish costume balls, feasts and small street parades; slaves were not permitted to participate; after the abolishment of slavery, thousands of freed slaves celebrated by mimicking the dress and behavior of the European people; the character of Carnival changed, becoming more colorful and spectacular with magnificent and elaborately designed costumes; and

WHEREAS, The people of the Caribbean have exported their carnival traditions to Canada, England, and several United States cities; however, the New York version of this celebration far exceeds any similar celebration in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Jessie Waddle and some of her West Indian friends started the Carnival in Harlem in the 1920s by staging costume parties in large enclosed places such as the Savoy, Renaissance and Audubon

Ballrooms, due to the cold wintry weather of February; this is the usual time for the pre-Lenten celebrations held in most countries around the world; however, because of the very nature of Carnival and the need to parade in costume to music, indoor confinement did not work; and

WHEREAS, The earliest known Carnival street activity was held during the 1940s when Ms. Jessie Waddle secured the first street permit for a parade type event on the streets of Harlem; during the 1960s, another Trinidadian, Rufus Goring, brought Carnival to Brooklyn; in 1967, Mr. Goring passed the reins over to Carlos Lezama, who later became president of WIADCA and who nurtured the organization and carnival celebrations until 2001, when, due to his ill-health, retired and his daughter, Yolanda Lezama-Clark was elected president; and

WHEREAS, The "Labor Day Carnival Parade" has grown over the years from thousands of participants and tourists to over 3.5 million people in attendance since the mid-1990s; the influx of tourists from all over the world has benefited New York on an economic level, most recognizably with large corporations, small businesses and the tourist/service industry; and

WHEREAS, It is the intent of this Legislative Body to recognize and commend cultural events which symbolize the historical, social and cultural development of this great State and embody the spirit of the principles upon which this Nation was founded; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend the West Indian American Day Carnival Association upon the occasion of hosting the 50th Anniversary of its Annual West Indian Labor Day Carnival and Parade on September 4, 2017; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the West Indian American Day Carnival Association.