

BY: Senator HAMILTON

COMMEMORATING the 45th Anniversary of the
Independence of the Bahamas

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and pay just tribute to the cultural heritage of the ethnic groups which comprise and contribute to the richness and diversity of the community of the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in keeping with its time-honored traditions, it is the intent of this Legislative Body to commemorate the 45th Anniversary of the Independence of the Bahamas; and

WHEREAS, The people of this great State and nation and the Bahamas enjoy a deep and abiding relationship rooted in kinship and culture; and

WHEREAS, Like many areas in the Caribbean, the hundreds of islands and cays that make up the Bahamas were "discovered" and claimed by European explorers in the late 1400s; the history of the Bahamas between the time that the islands were settled and the centuries that passed before independence explains why the culture and people of the Bahamas are rich with native Caribbean, European and African influences; and

WHEREAS, The first settlers on many of the islands, thought to be predominantly the Arawak speaking Lucayan or Taino people, but also included the Ciboney and the Carib people, arrived from South America sometime in the 9th Century; and

WHEREAS, For hundreds of years the indigenous culture thrived and spread from island to island; Christopher Columbus arrived at San Salvador and claimed the Caribbean islands for the Spanish on his first journey to the Americas in 1492; the word Bahamas is thought to come from the Arawak name for the islands, but some historians believe it comes from the Spanish, "Baja Mar," which means "shallow sea"; and

WHEREAS, During the time Spain controlled the islands, African slaves were brought to work in the plantation fields or in the homes of the plantation owners, government officials and other wealthy Spaniards; most of the original population was destroyed through fighting and diseases brought to the islands by the new African and Spanish inhabitants; and

WHEREAS, The Dutch gained control of the islands of the Bahamas for a short time, but lost them to the English; the islands were claimed by the English in 1670, and the Bahamas remained mainly under British rule for the next 300 years; and

WHEREAS, Then, a brief one year return to Spanish rule came in 1782 and ended with the Bahamas once again as British colonies; and

WHEREAS, Slavery was officially abolished in the Bahamas in 1838;

many former slaves remained on the land and eventually became land owners themselves and although all residents of the Bahamas were free, the islands remained a colony of the United Kingdom; and

WHEREAS, The House of Assembly was established in 1729 and meant that much of the government of the country was actually based in the Bahamas; this historical creation was a major factor which led to a peaceful negotiation for Bahamian Independence; and

WHEREAS, In 1964, after decades of debate and legal maneuvering, Great Britain granted The Islands Of The Bahamas limited self-government; the Bahamas became a British Commonwealth in 1969 ending the colonial rule, but not the British effect of the islands; and

WHEREAS, The islands became a nation on July 10, 1973, which is the official date celebrated as Bahamian Independence Day; and

WHEREAS, The 45th Anniversary of the Bahamas Independence provides an opportunity to recognize the significance of their contributions to the quality and character of life, and, through events and activities, for all people to gain a greater appreciation of Bahamian history and traditions, and of the role Bahamians have played, and will continue to play, in our society; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is pleased to have this opportunity to recognize such events of significance which foster ethnic pride and exemplify the cultural diversity that represents and strengthens the fabric of the people and the State of New York; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 45th Anniversary of the Independence of the Bahamas.