

Senate Resolution No. 1778

BY: Senator STEWART-COUSINS

MOURNING the death of Andre Leon Talley,
pioneering fashion journalist, champion of diversity
and American culture icon

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to honor and pay tribute to those artistic geniuses whose commitment and creative talents have contributed to the entertainment and cultural enrichment of their community and the entire State of New York; and

WHEREAS, It is with profound sorrow and deep regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Andre Leon Talley, noting the significance of his purposeful life and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Andre Leon Talley, the larger-than-life fashion editor who shattered his industry's glass ceiling when he went from the Jim Crow South to the front rows of Paris couture, parlaying his encyclopedic knowledge of fashion history and his quick wit into roles as author, public speaker, television personality and curator, died on Tuesday, January 25, 2022, in White Plains, New York, at the age of 73; and

WHEREAS, Andre Leon Talley was born on October 16, 1948, in Washington to Alma and William Carroll Talley; from the time he was two months old, he was raised by his grandmother, Bennie Frances Davis, in Durham, North Carolina, where she served as a domestic worker at the men's campus of Duke University; and

WHEREAS, He grew up schooled in the Southern church and good manners, idolizing the Kennedys and obsessed with France and the escape it seemed to offer from a town where he was oftentimes not accepted; and

WHEREAS, Overcoming much adversity, Andre Leon Talley majored in French studies at North Carolina Central University and received a master's degree from Brown University, where he wrote his thesis on the influence of Black women in the writing of Baudelaire and Flaubert and the paintings of Delacroix; and

WHEREAS, A truly creative genius, Andre Leon Talley began his illustrious career in the fashion industry with an unpaid apprenticeship to Diana Vreeland at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute; and

WHEREAS, From there, Andre Leon Talley worked as the receptionist at Andy Warhol's **Interview** magazine, the Paris bureau chief of **Women's Wear Daily** and the **New York Times**, before taking the fashion news director job at **Vogue** in 1983; he went on to become the premiere fashion magazine's first African-American creative director in 1988, and was later named its editor-at-large in 1995; and

WHEREAS, After leaving **Vogue** in 2013, Andre Leon Talley hosted a satellite radio show and joined the Board of Trustees at Savannah

College of Art and Design; he also had a brief stint as editor-at-large with **Numero Russia** before leaving in 2014 after learning about Russia's numerous anti-LGBT laws; and

WHEREAS, In 2018, he released "The Gospel According to Andre," a documentary film based on his life story; he also co-authored **Megastar** with Richard Bernstein before publishing three books including, **A.L.T.: A Memoir**, **A.L.T. 365+** and New York Times Best Seller, **The Chiffon Trenches: A Memoir**; and

WHEREAS, Adding to his many accolades, the French Republic awarded Andre Leon Talley the Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres honor for arts and letters in 2020; the following year, he received the North Carolina Governor's Award for his role in literature; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, he helped dress Michelle Obama while she served as the first lady, was an adviser and friend to the designer Oscar de la Renta, and became a mentor to supermodel Naomi Campbell; and

WHEREAS, Andre Leon Talley was later a judge on the television reality show "America's Next Top Model", artistic director of the online retailer Zappos, and an adviser to the musician will.i.am's tech start-up; and

WHEREAS, A singular force in an industry he had to fight to be recognized in, Andre Leon Talley opened doors to make the American dream possible for others who have historically been shut out of the fashion and entertainment world, and he was an outspoken advocate for diversity; and

WHEREAS, Andre Leon Talley, who stood six feet six inches tall, was an unmistakable figure everywhere he went; he was a man of grand pronouncements, extravagant capes, and friends in design studios from New York to Paris, including Marc Jacobs, Tom Ford, Diane von Furstenberg, Karl Lagerfeld, and many more; and

WHEREAS, Renowned as the pharaoh of fabulosity, Andre Leon Talley was also the industry's biggest champion and booster, the first editor backstage, quick with encouraging advice or a course correction; his enthusiasm was prodigious; and

WHEREAS, A man of indomitable faith and dedication, Andre Leon Talley was a fixture at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, where he gave generously and often arrived with celebrities like Mariah Carey and Tamron Hall; and

WHEREAS, This extraordinary man lived an immensely beautiful and genuine life built on love, inclusion, kindness, and respect for all humanity; he will be remembered for his profound impact and expansive influence on the fashion and journalism industries, and his insight and strength will forever serve as a beacon of love and hope to the countless lives he touched; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to

mourn the death of Andre Leon Talley, and to express its heartfelt condolences to his family; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Andre Leon Talley.