

Senate Resolution No. 1969

BY: Senator MAY

CELEBRATING the life and legacy of Donna Marie DuBose Reese, a Syracuse community leader, powerhouse, and civil rights icon

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to acknowledge those outstanding individuals who have gone before us, and who have distinguished themselves in their professional and personal lives through their unwavering passion, work ethic, enthusiasm and substantial contributions to their communities and this great Empire State; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to celebrate the life and legacy of Donna Marie DuBose Reese who died on January 31, 2020, in Syracuse, New York; and

WHEREAS, Donna Marie DuBose was born on July 21, 1961, as the youngest of seven children, was raised on Syracuse's Southside by parents James and Betty DuBose; she was married to native Syracusan Duane Reese Sr. for over 30 years, and together they raised three children, Duane L. Reese II, Tequila Pease, and Tamara Reese; seven grandchildren, Brianna, Janae, Javon, Jahmil, Camron, Diamond, and Joshuaun, as well as eight great grandchildren, Jaquan II, Jamaiya, Jamarrie, Jayden, Journee, Trinity, Jalaiya and Dior; and

WHEREAS, Donna Marie DuBose Reese's activism began as a teen parent to two children born in the late 1970's; she overcame the struggles of teen motherhood to proudly graduate on time at age 18 and receive her GED in 1979, and became a homeowner with her husband in 1990 at age 28; and

WHEREAS, Her world was turned upside down with the disappearance of her nephew, William "Tony" Porch, who was found murdered in South Carolina in 1994, which spurred Donna Marie DuBose Reese, who had served as a lifelong volunteer for the Syracuse/Onondaga County Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), to run for and serve as President of the Syracuse/Onondaga County Chapter from 1998-2002, and she was the first woman in Onondaga County to hold this position; and

WHEREAS, During her terms as President, she became Co-Founder of the Pan-African Village at the Great New York State Fair, which opened in 1997 and served to showcase African-American crafts, music, foods, and entertainment, all at one location within the New York State Fairgrounds; and

WHEREAS, As a result of Donna Marie DuBose Reese's advocacy, the Pan-African Village expanded in 1999 by adding an additional sound stage for performances and more space for business opportunities and educational displays; to this day, the Pan-African Village remains a highlight of the Fair and is visited annually by many dignitaries from

all across New York State and beyond; and

WHEREAS, Donna Marie DuBose Reese worked with the mentally disabled at Hutchings Psychiatric Center in Syracuse for 20 years until glaucoma forced her early retirement in 2008; she spent her later years as a mentor and advocate for Aurora of Central New York for over ten years where she helped people in various states of their vision or hearing loss acclimate to the lifestyle changes that come with sensory impairments and the disabilities associated with sensory loss; and

WHEREAS, She later served as a committee member for the annual Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Celebration, and the annual ADA award is named in Donna's honor; and

WHEREAS, Donna Marie DuBose Reese served as a Board Member at CENTRO from 2014-2020, and at the time of her appointment, Donna was the only person on the board with a disability, and the first African-American woman to hold the post; she has been honored by CENTRO for her hard work and service to the community with tributes posted in its main office; and

WHEREAS, Donna Marie DuBose Reese has received over one hundred awards, such as the Benjamin Banneker Democratic Club's James Dupree Service Award, the Central New York ACLU Community Service Award, the New York State Fair Director's Achievement Award, the Syracuse NAACP President's Award for Public Service, and the National Council of Negro Women Community Service Award; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor and remember the life and legacy of Donna Marie DuBose Reese; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Donna Marie DuBose Reese.