

Senate Resolution No. 1989

BY: Senator PARKER

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION mourning the untimely death of Michael K. Williams, acclaimed actor, distinguished choreographer and LGBTQ rights advocate

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this legislative body to honor and pay just tribute to the memory of those prominent individuals whose reputable careers in the arts and creative talents have contributed to the greater representation of minority groups in entertainment, and the cultural enrichment of not just their community but the entire State of New York; and

WHEREAS, It is with deep sympathy and great sadness that this Legislative Body records the passing of Michael K. Williams, who died on September 6, 2021, recognizing his significant contributions to the portrayal of diverse characters in media and other vast accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Michael K. Williams is survived by his mother, Paula Williams; one brother, Paul Carey; and one nephew, Dominic Dupont; and

WHEREAS, Born Michael Kenneth Williams on November 22, 1966, to Paula and Booker T. Williams, he was raised in Brooklyn by his mother growing up at the Vanderveer Estates located in East Flatbush; he eventually went on to attend George Westinghouse Career and Technical Education High School in Downtown Brooklyn; and

WHEREAS, After spending a brief time as a pharmaceutical temp, Michael K. Williams left to pursue a highly esteemed career in dance; and

WHEREAS, While appearing as a background dancer for house music musician Kym Sims, Michael K. Williams gained further recognition, leading to him choreographing concert tours for the likes of Madonna and George Michael as well as the music video for Crystal Water's 1994 hit single "100% Pure Love"; and

WHEREAS, In 1991, Michael K. Williams was slashed with a razor during a bar fight on his 25th Birthday, giving him his famous face length facial scar, the physical attribute that would make him instantly recognizable later on in his career; even though the scar made him more desirable for "thug" roles in music videos, unfortunately, it brought his dance career to a halt; and

WHEREAS, Making his pivot towards acting, Michael K. Williams held roles in movies like "Bullet" in 1996, alongside Tupac Shakur and minor roles in television shows such as "The Sopranos"; and

WHEREAS, In 2002, Michael K. Williams gained his breakout roll as Omar Little on "The Wire," gaining him great critical acclaim; his role

as the openly gay black drug dealer living in West Baltimore was highly lauded and served as a foundation for addressing prevalent issues of homophobia within the black community; and

WHEREAS, Michael K. Williams' commitment to showing the vulnerability of Omar's character in direct contrast to the harshness of his surroundings as well as his authentic portrayal of realities of that life was unprecedented in mainstream media and provoked a strong discourse on what it meant to be black and gay in America; and

WHEREAS, With the success of "The Wire" in his repertoire, Michael K. Williams continued to demonstrate his acting prowess in more highly acclaimed roles like that of racketeer Chalky White in "Boardwalk Empire", Bobby McCray's father in "When They See Us" and Montrose Freeman, another representation of a gay black character in "Lovecraft Country"; and

WHEREAS, Michael K. Williams created a distinguished career for himself, executing his roles with versatility, empathy and tenderness that was unheard of particularly for the characters he portrayed; his carefully crafted portrayals added layers of nuance and strength that made his characters highly relatable; and

WHEREAS, For these reasons and so many more he will be deeply missed and his contributions to media as a powerhouse actor will continue on as a comfort to those who knew and were inspired by him; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the untimely death of Michael K. Williams, critically acclaimed actor and distinguished choreographer, and to express its deepest sympathies to his family; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Michael K. Williams.