

BY: M. of A. Perry

MEMORIALIZING Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 2021, as Caribbean American Heritage Month in the State of New York

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 communities 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 applaud and commemorate months which foster ethnic pride and exemplify the cultural diversity that represents and strengthens the spirit of the people and the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 2021, as Caribbean American Heritage Month in the State of New York, in conjunction with the observance of National Caribbean American Heritage Month; and

WHEREAS, Either through the bondage of slavery or emigrating in search of a better life for themselves, their families, and their loved ones, leaving behind the world they knew and in some cases, the languages they spoke, immigrants from Caribbean countries have come to the United States for centuries, including from Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Caribbean Netherlands, also known as the Kingdom of the Netherlands which includes Aruba, Curacao, and Saint Maarten, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Anguilla (UK), Cayman Islands (UK), Guadeloupe (France), Martinique (France), Montserrat (UK), Puerto Rico (US), Saint Barthelemy (France), Saint Martins (France), Turks and Caicos Islands (UK), United States Virgin Islands (Saint Croix, Saint John, Saint Thomas) (US), and due to their strong cultural connection, immigrants from the mainland continents of North and South America including Guyana, Belize, Honduras, Suriname, Costa Rica and Panama, have joined the family of Caribbean countries; regardless of the conditions that led to their arrival, their courage is meritorious and the hope they had that their children and descendants would be able to fulfill their greatest potential is admirable; and

WHEREAS, In February 2005, the United States House of Representatives unanimously adopted H. Con. Res. 71, recognizing the significance of Caribbean people and their descendants in the history and culture of the United States; on February 14, 2006, the resolution similarly passed the Senate, culminating a two-year, bipartisan and bicameral effort; and

WHEREAS, Since the passage of the resolution in 2005, the White House has issued an annual proclamation officially recognizing June as

Caribbean American Heritage Month; this proclamation marks the official recognition that since the 16th Century the destinies of the peoples of the Caribbean and the American continent have been inextricably linked; and

WHEREAS, The People of Caribbean ancestry who dedicated themselves to fighting against racism, stereotypes, and overwhelming obstacles have become part of New York State's lasting heritage; these revered individuals include, but are not limited to: Arthur Alfonso Shomburg, Curator of the New York Public Library's Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints, and dedicated historian, writer and collector; Malcolm X, a prominent figure in the black social movement of the 1960s; Sidney Poitier, who altered the perception of race through theatre and screen as an actor, producer and director; Colin Powell, a four-star United States Army General who eventually became Secretary of State; Alexander Hamilton, the nation's first Secretary of the Treasury, founder of the Bank of New York, Congressperson, and one of the first supporters of the Constitution; and Jean Michel Basquiat, who revolutionized the world of painting and drawing through the social introduction of the urban black culture that marginally existed in the 1980s; and

WHEREAS, Caribbean Americans enrich our national character and strengthen the fabric of our culture, and we are proud they are part of the American family; and

WHEREAS, Many esteemed figures of Caribbean ancestry have made their home in New York State and made their mark in history as persons who are the epitome in their field, and who have succeeded; these individuals include: Shirley A. Chisholm, first African-American woman elected to Congress who was also the co-founder of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and a genuine activist, lecturer, and political mentor; Marcus Moziah Garvey, who established, among other things, the United Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.); Susan Taylor, editor-in-chief of Essence magazine; Harry Belafonte, who used his fame as an entertainer in the cause for human rights; Hazel Scott, who achieved acclaimed status for her classical and Jazz technique as a pianist, and who became the first black woman to have her own television show; Edwidge Danticat, who invigorated the voices of Haitians and Haitian-Americans who experienced poverty through her writing; Maryse Conde, acclaimed international author and Professor Emerita at Columbia University; and Maurice Ashley, the first African-American to win the chess Grandmaster title; and

WHEREAS, This great Empire State proudly celebrates Caribbean customs every year with the West Indian-American Day Carnival; this auspicious event is a weekend of cultural activities, culminating with the Labor Day Parade down Eastern Parkway in Crown Heights, Brooklyn; this parade attracts upwards of one million participants and spectators along the parade route; and

WHEREAS, The Labor Day Parade is New York City's largest parade, and is a great contributor to the economy, as it generates over \$300 million in revenue to both State and local government and is among New York's

biggest tourist attractions; and

WHEREAS, Caribbean Americans have made significant contributions to both our Nation and the State of New York, prospering in every sector of our society and enhancing our national character while maintaining the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural traditions of their homelands; they are doctors and lawyers, public servants and scientists, and athletes and service members; their successes inspire individuals in the United States and abroad, and we take pride in the contributions Caribbean Americans continue to make to the narrative of our Nation's progress; their achievements are born of hard work and ambition; and

WHEREAS, During Caribbean American Heritage Month, it is also important that we acknowledge the indispensable relationship between the United States and the countries of the Caribbean as we build on that long-standing friendship, improve the health and education in the region, and promote economic development, democratic governance, and citizen security; and

WHEREAS, Additionally, as Haiti continues to recover from 2010's devastating earthquake, we remain committed to standing beside the people of Haiti as they rebuild their proud nation, and to working with others in the region to bring lasting prosperity and stability to the country; and

WHEREAS, As we celebrate this year's Caribbean-American Heritage Month, we focus our attentions and thoughts and prayers towards the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, who are struggling to maintain their island home and survive the devastation of the recent volcanic eruptions; although, the volcanic eruptions have resulted in widespread damage, and had an immeasurable impact on the lives of so many Vincentians, we are certain that their incredible and resilient Caribbean spirit will lead them through to a successful rebuild; and

WHEREAS, Caribbean American Heritage Month is a time to celebrate the aspirations and values that have been shared with Caribbean Americans for generations and represents a significant milestone for the Caribbean American community in New York State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 2021, as Caribbean American Heritage Month in the State of New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of the State of New York.