

BY: Senator CLEARE

COMMEMORATING the 196th Anniversary of the
Abolition of Slavery in the State of New York on
July 5, 2023

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to commemorate significant events which represent turning points in our unique history and which are indelibly etched in the saga of our great Nation; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 196th Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery in the State of New York to be observed on Wednesday, July 5, 2023; and

WHEREAS, In 1799, an Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery was enacted in the State of New York, specifying that children born to a slave mother after July 4, 1799, were declared legally free, but not until male children had turned 28, and females 25; slaves born before that date remained in servitude, although they were redefined as indentured servants; and

WHEREAS, On March 31, 1817, the New York State Legislature ended two centuries of slavery within its borders, setting July 4, 1827, as the date of final emancipation and making New York the first state to pass a law for the total abolition of legal slavery; and

WHEREAS, In 1821, the New York Constitutional Convention was called to extend universal suffrage across the State, and it did abolish property qualifications for white men, but at the same time the convention delegates disenfranchised the states' African American citizens, including those to be freed in 1827, by limiting the right to vote by free black men to those who owned substantial property; and

WHEREAS, On July 4, 1827, Governor Daniel Tompkins finally signed legislation abolishing slavery in the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, This historic law freed approximately 4,600 or 11% of the black population living in New York; the black community and its supporters celebrated Emancipation Day and the following day, approximately 3,000 people gathered at St. John's Park in New York City to herald the new law; and

WHEREAS, Due to the threat of racist violence, African American New Yorkers later chose to celebrate the emancipation day on July 5th for many years; after 1834, the tradition largely merged into local commemorations of the August 1 Emancipation Day in the British Empire, first observed in New York in 1838 as part of a growing national embrace among African Americans; and

WHEREAS, In 2020, through the support of the New York branch of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH),

the holiday was revived and recognized by the State as an Abolition Commemoration Day observed on the second Monday in July; and

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to commemorate events of significance in the history and progress of society; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 196th Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery in the State of New York on July 5, 2023; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the New York branch of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH).