

BY: Senator COMRIE

MEMORIALIZING Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim
June 2023, 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 community 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 memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim June 2023, as Caribbean American Heritage Month in the State of New York, in conjunction with the observance of National Caribbean-American Heritage Month; and

WHEREAS, Caribbean-American Heritage Month commemoration was adopted by the United States House of Representatives in 2005, to recognize the significance of Caribbean people and their descendants in the history and culture of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The resolution passed the Senate in February of 2006, and President George H.W. Bush issued the proclamation in June of the same year; and

WHEREAS, The commemoration of Caribbean American Heritage Month aims to remind Americans that our greatness lies in our diversity; Caribbean immigrants from founding father, Alexander Hamilton, to journalist, Malcolm Gladwell, have helped to shape the American dream; and

WHEREAS, The fabric of our Nation has been woven together and enriched by the variety of our people; our legacy as a Nation of immigrants is part of what makes America strong, and during National Caribbean-American Heritage Month, we celebrate the rich history and vibrant culture Caribbean Americans have brought to our shores; and

WHEREAS, Immigrants from Caribbean countries have come to America 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 immigrants from the mainland continents of North and South America and also including Guyana, Belize, Honduras, Suriname, Costa Rica and Panama, which due to their close cultural connection, have been accepted as part of the family of Caribbean countries; and

WHEREAS, Immigrants from Caribbean countries came to America through the bondage of slavery, while others willfully left behind the world they knew in search of a better life; regardless of the circumstances of their arrival, they had faith their descendants would have a chance to realize their greatest potential; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim June 2023, as Caribbean American Heritage Month in the State of New York, in conjunction with the observance of National Caribbean-American Heritage Month; and

WHEREAS, With the United States Senate approval on February 14, 2006, and a presidential proclamation on June 5, 2006, June has become National Caribbean-American Heritage Month; with this, the "colonization" of the Caribbean by the United States has been recorded in American History; this particular legislation, first introduced in the House in 2004 by Congresswoman Barbara Lee, celebrates the contributions of the Caribbean Americans to American life and culture; and

WHEREAS, People of Caribbean ancestry who have become part of New York State's lasting heritage by fighting against stereotypes, racism, and insurmountable obstacles 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 theater 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, who was a Congressman, founder of the Bank of New York, first Secretary of the Treasury, 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, New York State has been, and continues to be, the home to many distinguished people of Caribbean ancestry who have made their mark in history as pertinent figures in their field, and who have succeeded; these figures include: Shirley A. Chisholm, first African-American woman elected to Congress who was also the cofounder 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, who now teaches at Columbia University in New York in the French and Romance Philology Department; and Maurice Ashley, the first African-American to win the chess Grandmaster title; and

WHEREAS, Each year, New York State proudly celebrates Caribbean heritage with the West Indian-American Day Carnival, which is a weekend of cultural activities, culminating with the Labor Day Parade down Eastern Parkway in Crown Heights, Brooklyn; this annual parade attracts between one and three 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 prospered in every sector of our society and enhanced 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, we also recognize the important friendship between the United States and the countries of the Caribbean as we expand our partnership to promote economic development, democratic governance, citizen security, and improved health and education in the region; 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; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim June 2023, 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 Kathy Hochul, Governor of the State of New York.