

BY: M. of A. Bronson

COMMEMORATING the 90th Anniversary of the Nazi
book burning campaign on May 10, 2023

WHEREAS, The people of the State of New York must never forget the terrible crimes committed against humanity during the Nazi book burnings of 1933; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to commemorate the 90th Anniversary of the Nazi book burning campaign on May 10, 2023; and

WHEREAS, The Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County is committed to documenting, archiving and preserving the history of the LGBTQ+ community through the Shoulders to Stand On History and Archives Project and is marking this anniversary by preserving historical archives involving the silencing of LGBTQ+ speech; and

WHEREAS, The Nazi book burnings were a campaign conducted by the German Student Union to ceremonially burn books in Nazi Germany and Austria in the 1930s; the books targeted for burning were those viewed as being subversive or as representing ideologies opposed to Nazism, including those written by Jewish, half-Jewish, communist, socialist, anarchist, liberal, pacifist, and sexologist authors, among others; and

WHEREAS, The initial books burned were those of Karl Marx and Karl Kautsky, but came to include many authors, including Albert Einstein, Helen Keller, writers in French and English, and effectively any book incompatible with Nazi ideology; in a campaign of cultural genocide, books were also burned in masse by the Nazis in occupied territories, such as in Poland; and

WHEREAS, On April 8, 1933, the Main Office for Press and Propaganda of the German Student Union proclaimed a nationwide "Action against the Un-German Spirit," which was to climax in a literary purge or cleansing by fire; and

WHEREAS, The first large burning came on May 6, 1933, when the German Student Union made an organized attack on Magnus Hirschfeld's "Institut fur Sexualwissenschaft"; its library and archives of around 20,000 books and journals were publicly hauled out and burned in the street; the collection included unique works on intersexuality, homosexuality, and transgender topics; it is also assumed that Dora Richter, the first transgender woman known to have undergone sex reassignment surgery by doctors at the institute, was killed during the attack; and

WHEREAS, On May 10, 1933, the students burned upwards of 25,000 volumes of "un-German" books in the square at the State Opera, Berlin, thereby presaging an era of uncompromising state censorship; in many other university towns, nationalist students marched in torch lit parades against the "un-German" spirit; and

WHEREAS, The scripted rituals of this night called for high Nazi officials, professors, rectors, and student leaders to address the participants and spectators; at the meeting places, students threw the pillaged, banned books into the bonfires with a ceremony that included live music, singing, "fire oaths," and incantations; and

WHEREAS, The people of New York must educate future generations to promote understanding of the dangers of intolerance or suppression of free speech in order to prevent similar injustices from happening again; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 90th Anniversary of the Nazi book burnings on May 10, 2023; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Shoulders to Stand On history and Archives Project, Central Library of Rochester and Monroe.