

Assembly Resolution No. 781

BY: M. of A. Cook

HONORING Judge Karen Gopee upon the occasion of her designation as recipient of a Lincoln-King Visionary Award for her commitment and service to her community

WHEREAS, Individuals who give of their time and energies and serve the best interests of their communities are an asset beyond remuneration and cannot be sufficiently extolled; and

WHEREAS, Judge Karen Gopee has given not only of her time and energies but also of her competence, intelligence and leadership and consequently has been designated for special honor; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to honor Judge Karen Gopee upon the occasion of her designation as recipient of a Lincoln-King Visionary Award for her commitment and service to her community, to be celebrated at the Lincoln-King Visionary Awards Gala, "From Dream to Greatness," on Saturday, February 10, 2024, at the Sand Castle in Franklin Square, New York; and

WHEREAS, This auspicious community gala is held annually to unite the international community and to celebrate unity in diversity while recognizing community leaders for their services; and

WHEREAS, Judge Karen Gopee has been called upon to contribute her time and talents to countless civic and charitable endeavors and has always given of herself unstintingly; and

WHEREAS, Born in Trinidad, Karen Gopee immigrated to the United States when she was just one year old; she grew up in East New York, Brooklyn, and attended local public schools including Franklin K. Lane High School; she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from Binghamton University where she majored in Political Science, Sociology and Women's Studies, before receiving her Juris Doctor degree from St. John's Law School; and

WHEREAS, Karen Gopee began her illustrious legal career at the Kings County District Attorney's Office; for eight years she prosecuted misdemeanor and felony matters, from arrest to trial, supervised junior assistants, and specialized in cases involving domestic violence and child abuse, speaking up for those without a voice; and

WHEREAS, In 2005, Karen Gopee accepted the Principal Court Attorney position with Judge Calabrese at the Red Hook Community Justice Center, a multi-jurisdictional community court acclaimed for innovative problem-solving techniques, where she worked with the Office of Court Administration, the Center for Court Innovation, and community organizations to implement programs which diverted youth from criminal and/or family court and helped individuals access mental health and substance abuse programs in lieu of incarceration; she also worked

closely with NYCHA residents to facilitate repairs, address rent arrears and prevent eviction; and

WHEREAS, In December of 2015, Karen Gopee was appointed by Mayor Bill de Blasio as a Criminal Court Judge, and in November of 2021, she was elected to the New York State Supreme Court, making her the first Judge of Indo-Caribbean descent appointed and elected in New York State; and

WHEREAS, Throughout her esteemed career, Judge Karen Gopee has handled misdemeanor and felony matters in Queens, presided over pretrial hearings, bench and jury trials, and published a dozen decisions; she worked with the Queens District Attorney's office to implement the Queens Treatment Intervention Program to offer screening and treatment to low level offenders suffering from opioid addiction; since its 2018 launch there have been hundreds of successful participants; and

WHEREAS, Judge Karen Gopee has served as the Chair to the American Bar Association Criminal Justice ADR and Restorative Justice Committee, and is the current President and founding member of South Asian Indo-Caribbean Bar Association of Queens which was established in 2017; she also currently serves as the Treasurer of the Asian American Judges Association of New York, and as the CLE Chair of the Caribbean American Lawyers Association; and

WHEREAS, Judge Karen Gopee has been the proud recipient of numerous awards and accolades, some of which include the Meritorious Award by the ABA, the Community Impact Award by the Indo-Caribbean Alliance, the Pioneering Indo-Caribbean Woman Award by the East Indian Diaspora Heritage Committee of New York, and the Power Woman Award from Schnep's Media; and

WHEREAS, This extraordinary woman works tirelessly with community organizations on issues related to domestic violence, human trafficking, teen consent, and improving the criminal justice system; she mentors students, young attorneys and junior judges, and has co-created programs to address gangs, guns and bullying; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, she has partnered with organizations to provide safe spaces for at-risk youth on Friday and Saturday nights, as well as programs which provide inner city youth with tickets to Broadway shows, concerts, sporting events, museums, and restaurants; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the entire period of her community service, a period of constructive involvement, Judge Karen Gopee has stood constant in dignity, good grace, and humor; and

WHEREAS, Rare indeed is the impressive dedication shown by an individual for the benefit of others which Judge Karen Gopee has displayed throughout her life; and

WHEREAS, It has always been the objective of this Legislative Body to honor and support those individuals who have displayed their commitment to the betterment of their communities, and it is the intent of this Legislative Body to inscribe upon its records, this tribute to

Judge Karen Gopee, that future generations may know and appreciate her admirable character, her many benevolent deeds, and the respect and esteem in which she is held by her peers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor Judge Karen Gopee upon the occasion of her designation as recipient of a Lincoln-King Visionary Award for her commitment and service to her community; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Judge Karen Gopee.