

BY: M. of A. Heastie

COMMEMORATING the observance of the 41st Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in the State of New York, on January 19, 2026

WHEREAS, From time to time, we take note of certain individuals whom we wish to recognize for their valued contributions and to publicly acknowledge their endeavors which have enhanced the basic humanity among us all; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, it is the custom of this Legislative Body to join the people of this great Empire State in proudly observing the 41st Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in the State of New York, on January 19, 2026, taking note of his many accomplishments and contributions to mankind; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King was a visionary leader, minister, and champion of justice whose unwavering commitment to equality, dignity, and nonviolence transformed the course of American history; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King was born the grandson of a slave into a segregated society in Atlanta, Georgia, on January 15, 1929; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King was deeply shaped by his academic and theological training, having graduated from Morehouse College, attended Crozer Theological Seminary, and earned a doctorate in Systematic Theology from Boston University, grounding his leadership in rigorous scholarship, moral philosophy, and faith; and

WHEREAS, After returning from Crozer, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his first sermon at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta and became the church's co-pastor with his father; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King emerged as one of the most influential leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, dedicating his life to the pursuit of racial justice and the dismantling of systemic discrimination against Black Americans through peaceful protest and moral courage; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King came to national prominence as a leader during the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-1956, where his leadership helped bring an end to segregation against Black Americans on public transportation and demonstrated the power of organized, nonviolent protest; and

WHEREAS, As a founding member and president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Dr. King coordinated grassroots campaigns and frequently partnered with organizations such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) throughout the South to challenge segregationist laws against Black Americans and discriminatory practices affecting education, employment, housing, and voting rights; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King played a pivotal role in the Birmingham Campaign of 1963, confronting segregation through mass demonstrations that exposed the brutality of racial oppression and galvanized national support for civil rights; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King helped organize and lead the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, where he delivered his historic "I Have a Dream" speech, articulating a vision of racial equality, economic justice, and unity that continues to inspire generations; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King led the Selma to Montgomery voting-rights marches, courageously confronting voter suppression and state violence, and

WHEREAS, Dr. King's leadership helped galvanize a national movement that challenged segregation, voter suppression, and racial violence, leading to landmark achievements such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and

WHEREAS, In recognition of his extraordinary leadership and unwavering commitment to nonviolence in the pursuit of justice and peace, Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, becoming the youngest recipient at the time; and

WHEREAS, Through his powerful oratory, writings, and advocacy, Dr. King articulated a vision of America rooted in fairness, opportunity, and mutual respect, reminding the nation that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere"; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King expanded the movement's focus to include economic justice, labor rights, and the eradication of poverty through initiatives such as the Poor People's Campaign, recognizing that civil rights and economic dignity are inseparable; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King's finest legacy of greater social justice for all Americans was truly reflected in his devotion to serve and respect others, and in his steadfast love for all humanity and taught us that through non-violence, courage displaces fear, love transforms hate, acceptance dissipates prejudice, and mutual regard cancels enmity; and

WHEREAS, Even in the face of threats, violence, and ultimately his assassination on April 4, 1968, Dr. King remained steadfast in his belief that love, truth, and nonviolence could overcome hatred, injustice, and fear; and

WHEREAS, Despite this immense loss, the legacy of Dr. King continues to endure decades later, inspiring ongoing movements for fairness and equality; his legacy and his dream continue to be a guiding light for generations; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that the common and shared responsibility of governance demands an irrevocable commitment to the preservation and enhancement of human dignity as exemplified by Dr. King; and

WHEREAS, By honoring the life and sacrifice of Dr. King, we reaffirm a commitment to upholding democratic values and civic engagement, recognizing that we must continue his work to preserve a society that reflects the fundamental principles of equality and justice for all as expressed in this Nation's founding documents; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize and pay tribute to the legendary life and achievements of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., upon the occasion of the 97th anniversary of his birth and the celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in the State of New York and throughout the Nation; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus.