Senate Resolution No. 1491

BY: Senator SEPULVEDA

MEMORIALIZING Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim March 11, 2026, to April 12, 2026, as Garifuna-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 applaud and commemorate events which foster ethnic pride and exemplify the cultural diversity that represents and strengthens the spirit of the people and the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim March 11, 2026, to April 12, 2026, as Garifuna-American Heritage Month in the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Garifuna-American Heritage Month celebrates the history, culture, achievements, and contributions of the Garifuna People to the societies of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the United States of America; it raises awareness and promotes greater appreciation of Garifuna history and traditions; and

WHEREAS, Garifuna-American Heritage Month affirms the history, culture, identity, and self-esteem of a resilient people; it celebrates a rich heritage and illuminates Garifuna history and tradition, as well as the spirit of an indomitable people; and

WHEREAS, In 1665, two Spanish ships wrecked off the coast of St. Vincent; and

WHEREAS, The West African slaves that escaped to the island eventually intermarried with the Caribs and the Arawaks indigenous native people; and

WHEREAS, The new race of people, known as the Garifuna, grew strong and prosperous on the island; and

WHEREAS, In 1795, the Garifuna began the Second Carib War against the British; battles raged throughout St. Vincent over the next year with both sides enduring heavy losses; and

WHEREAS, On June 10, 1796, the final battle commenced with the Garifuna and British, resulting in the Garifuna's surrender; and

WHEREAS, The surviving Black Caribs were forcibly deported to the neighboring island of Balliceaux; and

WHEREAS, On March 11, 1797, the defeated Garifuna were loaded onto a convoy of eight vessels and transported to Roatan, Honduras, where they arrived on April 12th of that year; this resulted in permanent Garifuna Family Separation; and

WHEREAS, This year we commemorate the 229th Anniversary of the Forcible Deportation of the Garifuna People by the British from St. Vincent and the Grenadines and their settlement in Central America; and

WHEREAS, The Garifuna began to migrate to the United States during the 1930s; today, New York City is home to the largest Garifuna community outside of Central America; and

WHEREAS, Garifuna-American Heritage Month provides an opportunity to celebrate the Garifuna family reunification and recognize the significance of Garifuna's contributions to the quality and character of life of New York State, through many events and activities throughout the month, for all people to gain a greater appreciation of Garifuna history and traditions, and of the role Garifuna-Americans have played, and will continue to play, in New York's society; and

WHEREAS, Today, New Yorkers of Garifuna heritage such as, Jemma Lewis, Sara Nunez Mejia, Rosemary Ordonez-Jenkins, Sulma Arzu-Brown, Mirtha Colon, Rosita Alvarez, Paula Castillo, Carlos Gamboa, Evelyn Arauz Chamorro, Mirtha C. Sabio, Lizeth Cacho, Ivan Moreira, Eudy Perez, Johny Batiz, Luz Soliz, Cristian Guity, Lou Ramos, and Jose Francisco Avila continue to recognize and honor the legacy of their ancestors; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim March 11, 2026, to April 12, 2026, as Garifuna-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.