

Senate Resolution No. 1909

BY: Senator COMRIE

COMMEMORATING the 100th Anniversary of the Harlem
Globetrotters

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to honor and pay tribute to those organizations and institutions whose commitment and talents have contributed to the entertainment and cultural enrichment of their community and the entire State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Harlem Globetrotters; and

WHEREAS, In 1926, a basketball team of Black American players known as the Savoy Big Five, formed at the Giles American Legion Post 87, on the South Side of Chicago, Illinois; and

WHEREAS, Starting in January 1928, the Savoy Big Five played exhibitions before dances to prop up the Savoy Ballroom's cratering attendance numbers; and

WHEREAS, Several players left the Savoy Big Five in a dispute and that autumn, those players, along with new coach, manager and promoter Abe Saperstein, formed a team called the "Globe Trotters" and toured southern Illinois that spring; and

WHEREAS, By 1929, Abe Saperstein was touring Illinois and Iowa with his basketball team called the "New York Harlem Globe Trotters"; Saperstein selected the name "Harlem" because it was then considered the center of Black American culture; and

WHEREAS, The Harlem Globetrotters were perennial participants in the World Professional Basketball Tournament and won their first World Basketball Championship in 1940, defeating the Chicago Bruins; and

WHEREAS, In 1948 and 1949, the Harlem Globetrotters stunned the world by twice defeating the World Champion Minneapolis Lakers of the National Basketball Association (NBA); and

WHEREAS, In 1950, Harlem Globetrotter Chuck Cooper became the first black player to be drafted in the NBA by Boston, and his teammate Nat "Sweetwater" Clifton became the first black player to sign an NBA contract when the New York Knicks purchased his contract from the Globetrotters; and

WHEREAS, The Harlem Globetrotters eventually became known more for entertainment than sports, incorporating comedic routines and acts that often feature incredible coordination and skillful handling of one or more basketballs, such as passing or juggling balls between players, balancing or spinning balls on their fingertips, and making unusually difficult shots; and

WHEREAS, In 1959, The Harlem Globetrotters received an invitation from Vasily Grigoryevich, the director of Lenin Central Stadium, and they played nine games in Moscow, Russia; the team, which included future NBA Hall of Famer Wilt Chamberlain, was welcomed enthusiastically by spectators and authorities, and they met Premier Nikita Khrushchev; and

WHEREAS, In 1985, Olympic Gold Medalist Lynette Woodard joined the Harlem Globetrotters, becoming the first female to ever play on a men's pro basketball team; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, the team has changed ownership multiple times; in 1976, the New York City-based company, Metromedia, announced that it would acquire the Harlem Globetrotters from Globetrotter Communications, then in 1986, the team was sold to the Minneapolis-based International Broadcasting Corporation, which in turn sold the Harlem Globetrotters to former Globetrotters player Mannie Jackson in 1993; and

WHEREAS, In 2005, Shamrock Holdings purchased an 80% stake in the Harlem Globetrotters, then in 2013, Herschend Family Entertainment acquired the team and remains its owner today; and

WHEREAS, In June 2021, the Harlem Globetrotters filed a petition to join the National Basketball Association (NBA) as an expansion franchise; and

WHEREAS, Over its 100-year history, close to 750 men and women have played for the Harlem Globetrotters and the team continues to bring its entertainment to millions of fans around the world with 400+ games a year in 25+ countries; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Harlem Globetrotters, recognizing the significance of the role they continue to play in the life of the community of the State of New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Harlem Globetrotters.