Senate Resolution No. 2215

BY: Senator PARKER

COMMENDING the New York Urban League upon the occasion of hosting its 60th Annual Frederick Douglass Awards Dinner and recognizing the distinguished recipients of the 2026 Frederick Douglass Medallion

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and pay tribute to those institutions of high purpose and worthy accomplishment whose enduring commitment to civil rights, economic equity, and the full inclusion of African Americans and underserved communities in every dimension of American life has enriched the civic life of the 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 commend the New York Urban League upon the occasion of hosting its 60th Annual Frederick Douglass Awards Dinner on Thursday, June 4, 2026; and

WHEREAS, For more than 100 years, the New York Urban League has led the way in the education, employment, and empowerment of underserved African Americans across the five boroughs of New York City, inspiring, influencing, and igniting more than one million Black people to achieve their highest aspirations; and

WHEREAS, Under the leadership of President and CEO Arva Rice, the New York Urban League continues to fulfill its mission of enabling African Americans and other underserved communities to secure a first-class education, economic self-reliance, and equal respect of their civil rights through programs, services, and advocacy; and

WHEREAS, In 1966, the first Frederick Douglass Awards Dinner was organized by New York Urban League Secretary Ann Sunstein Kheel to commemorate the work of both the New York Urban League and those like-minded individuals whose work embodied Frederick Douglass' legacy; and

WHEREAS, As Executive Chairman of these dinners for 25 years, Ann S. Kheel was a pillar of support for the New York Urban League and, by conceiving and organizing this annual dinner in Frederick Douglass's name, she advanced his hope, and that of countless others, that anyone, however disadvantaged, could rise to greatness through determination, education, and the unyielding pursuit of justice; and

WHEREAS, Frederick Douglass, born into bondage, self-educated, and risen by the sheer force of his extraordinary mind and indomitable spirit to become the foremost abolitionist, orator, statesman, and moral authority of his age, embodied a vision of American possibility that this Nation is still striving to realize; his words, engraved upon the award that bears his name, "I know of no rights of race superior to those of humanity," remain as urgent, radical, and necessary today as

when he first spoke them; and

WHEREAS, The 2026 Frederick Douglass Medallion is awarded to Whoopi Goldberg, one of only 14 performers in history to achieve the EGOT (Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and Tony), whose extraordinary career has been matched every step of the way by an equally extraordinary commitment to advocacy; and

WHEREAS, Born Caryn Elaine Johnson in New York City, Whoopi Goldberg has used her celebrity to champion human rights, AIDS awareness, and the fight against homelessness and has served as a United Nations Ambassador, working on behalf of women's rights, children's rights, and HIV/AIDS; and

WHEREAS, Whoopi Goldberg's 1990 Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for the movie, "Ghost," made her only the second African-American woman to win an Oscar for acting (the first was awarded to Hattie McDaniel more than fifty years prior), and her lifelong insistence on using her platform to speak truth to power places her squarely in the tradition of the man whose name this award carries; and

WHEREAS, The 2026 Frederick Douglass Medallion is also awarded to Priscilla Sims Brown, President and CEO of Amalgamated Bank, the largest union-owned bank in the United States; a full-service bank, lender, and investment manager with a century-long commitment to advancing positive social change, Amalgamated Financial Corp. is the first publicly traded financial institution to be a public benefit corporation; and

WHEREAS, With more than 30 years of financial services experience, Priscilla Brown has led Amalgamated with a clear-eyed conviction that banking can and must be a force for social good, most notably in her leadership of the campaign to create a merchant category code for gun stores, a groundbreaking initiative aimed at identifying illegal gun purchases and reducing gun violence; and

WHEREAS, The 2026 Frederick Douglass Medallion is further awarded to Chip Wade, Chief Executive Officer of Union Square Hospitality Group (USHG), one of just a handful of Black CEOs in the restaurant industry; he was recently named the Gold Plate Award Winner by IFMA, the Food Away from Home Association, recognized by his mentor and former Darden Restaurants CEO, Clarence Otis, as "a culture man first" whose people-first leadership has driven Union Square Hospitality Group's excellence and growth; and

WHEREAS, Chip Wade, a Pennsylvania native who earned his culinary degree from Johnson & Wales University, Bachelor of Science from Widener University, and Master of Business Administration from the University of Texas at Dallas, joined the USHG executive team as President in 2019, following a 30-year career in the hospitality industry, and was named CEO in 2022, succeeding USHG founder Danny Meyer; and

WHEREAS, The 2026 Frederick Douglass Medallion is also awarded to The Honorable Anne Williams-Isom who served as Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services for the City of New York from January 2022 to March 2025; Deputy Mayor Williams-Isom brought more than 25 years of

leadership experience, serving children, families, and underserved communities, to a role that placed her at the center of the City's most pressing health and human services challenges; and

WHEREAS, A native of Queens, graduate of Fordham College at Lincoln Center, and Juris Doctor recipient from Columbia Law School, Anne Williams-Isom served as CEO of the Harlem Children's Zone after spending 13 years at the NYC Administration for Children's Services where she built a career of uncommon breadth and purpose dedicated to the proposition that every child and every family in this City deserves to be seen, supported, and given the chance to thrive; and

WHEREAS, Each of the 2026 honorees, in their respective fields, embodies the spirit of Frederick Douglass as the New York Urban League has always understood it: that the work of justice is not a single act but a lifelong practice; that the measure of a person's greatness is found in their willingness to use their gifts in service of those who have been left behind; and that the promise of this Nation is only as real as our collective commitment to making it so for everyone; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is proudly moved to honor the New York Urban League, its President and CEO, Arva Rice, its board and staff, and the four extraordinary New Yorkers, who will receive the Frederick Douglass Medallion at this Diamond Anniversary celebration, whose lives and legacies reflect the finest ideals of service, leadership, and the pursuit of justice; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend the New York Urban League, upon the occasion of hosting its 60th Annual Frederick Douglass Awards Dinner on June 4, 2026, and to extend heartfelt congratulations to honorees Whoopi Goldberg, Priscilla Sims Brown, Chip Wade, and The Honorable Anne Williams-Isom upon their receipt of the Frederick Douglass Medallion; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the New York Urban League and its President and CEO, Arva Rice, in recognition of 60 years of commitment to education, equity, and the unfinished work of Frederick Douglass.