

**BY:** Senator PARKER

**COMMENDING** the Center for Black Literature upon the occasion of hosting its 2025 National Black Writers Biennial Symposium and paying tribute to this year's honoree, Rita Williams-Garcia

**WHEREAS,** It is the intent of this Legislative Body, in keeping with its time-honored traditions, to recognize and pay tribute to those organizations which foster ethnic pride and enhance the profile of cultural diversity which strengthens the fabric of the communities of New York State; and

**WHEREAS,** Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commend the Center for Black Literature upon the occasion of hosting its 2025 National Black Writers Biennial Symposium to be held at Medgar Evers College, City University of New York, in Brooklyn, New York, on Saturday, March 29, 2025; and

**WHEREAS,** Founded in 2002, the Center for Black Literature (CBL) at Medgar Evers College of the City University of New York (CUNY) has served the interests of the people of the Empire State by expanding, broadening, and enriching the public's knowledge and appreciation of Black literature by people of the African Diaspora and of the African continent for 23 years; and

**WHEREAS,** Rita Williams-Garcia is the author of more than a dozen books for young adults and middle-grade readers, celebrated for her excellence and contributions to Black literature; and

**WHEREAS,** Born in Queens, New York, Rita Williams-Garcia entered kindergarten with a love of storytelling and writing; she received her Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts from Hofstra University and a Master of Arts in Creative Writing from Queens College, CUNY; and

**WHEREAS,** After working in the private sector for 25 years, Rita Williams-Garcia served on the faculty at Vermont College of Fine Arts MFA Writing for Children and Young Adults program from 2005-2015; she is currently working on a book of speculative fiction for "tween" readers; and

**WHEREAS,** Rita Williams-Garcia's short stories and essays appear in numerous anthologies; she is both a three-time Coretta Scott King Book Award recipient and three-time National Book Award finalist; and

**WHEREAS,** "Clayton Byrd Goes Underground," a novel by Rita Williams-Garcia, won the 2018 NAACP Image Award for Literature for Young People and was a finalist for the 2017 National Book Award; she is best known for her multiple-award-winning Gaither Sisters trilogy which received the Newbery Medal, the Coretta Scott King Book Award, and the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction; and

**WHEREAS,** Other honors bestowed upon Rita Williams-Garcia include the 2022 Los Angeles Times Book Prize for Young Adults, 2021 Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, and 2022 Audie Award Finalist; "A Sitting in St. James" has also been listed among People Magazine's 2021 top ten books for children and teens; and

**WHEREAS,** Respected among her peers in the industry, Rita Williams-Garcia was named the 2024 ALSC Children's Literature Lecture Award winner and honored with the NYLA Empire State Award and the University of Southern Mississippi Literary Medallion; and

**WHEREAS,** Most notably through the Center for Black Literature, Rita Williams-Garcia has consistently pursued her passion of expanding, broadening, and enriching the public's knowledge and appreciation of the value of the literature produced by Black writers; and

**WHEREAS,** The Members of the New York State Senate recognize the incredible accomplishments and authorship of this inspiring leader and show appreciation for the excellent work Rita Williams-Garcia will continue to contribute to the community; and

**WHEREAS,** In so effectively carrying out its mission, the Center for Black Literature has demonstrated the value of uplifting the voices of Black writers from all walks of life, providing a space for growth and education, while providing platforms for success; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED,** That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend the Center for Black Literature upon the occasion of hosting its 2025 National Black Writers Biennial Symposium and paying tribute to this year's honoree, Rita Williams-Garcia; and be it further

**RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Rita Williams-Garcia.