

Assembly Resolution No. 160

BY: M. of A. Wright

MOURNING the death of Hazel N. Dukes, longtime civil rights stalwart and distinguished member of her community

WHEREAS, There are certain outstanding members of our community who, through their selfless commitment and dedication, have served to better the quality of life in our community and have had a measurable positive impact on the lives of its residents; Hazel N. Dukes was one such individual; and

WHEREAS, It is with profound sorrow and deep regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Hazel N. Dukes, noting the significance of her purposeful life and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Hazel N. Dukes, an early and unwavering crusader for civil rights who survived personal, professional and political setbacks to serve for nearly a half-century as the perennial president of New York State's NAACP, died on Saturday, March 1, 2025, at her home in Harlem; she was 92; and

WHEREAS, A fixture on the front lines of the civil rights movement - and eventually an elder stateswoman - Hazel N. Dukes was seen by associates as courageous, implacable and ardently loyal; she was president of the national NAACP in the early 1990s and headed the organization's New York State Conference from 1977 until her death; and

WHEREAS, Hazel N. Dukes has been a fearless advocate for equal educational opportunity and has participated in the development of some of the nation's most important advancements for early childhood education; she was also the founder and president of Hazel N. Dukes & Associates, a consulting firm that focused on strategic planning; and

WHEREAS, In 1990, Hazel N. Dukes was appointed president of the city's Off-Track Betting Corporation (OTB), a coveted job she held until 1994; furthermore, at the age of 91, she was named by the Mayor of New York City to his Charter Revision Commission, a temporary panel appointed to recommend changes in the structure of city government; and

WHEREAS, Hazel Nell Dukes was born on March 17, 1932, in Montgomery, Alabama, the only child of Edward and Alice Dukes; her father was a Pullman porter and union organizer, and her mother was a domestic worker; one of the family's neighbors was Rosa Parks, who would become known as the heroine of the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott; and

WHEREAS, After moving to New York with her family in 1955, Hazel N. Dukes worked at Macy's and, while she lived in Roslyn, on Long Island, for the federal Head Start program, as well as the Nassau County attorney's office, where she was a trailblazer as one of the first Black hires, and the county's Economic Opportunity Commission; and

WHEREAS, In 1978, after studying business administration at Nassau County Community College, Hazel N. Dukes earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from Adelphi University in Garden City, New York; she did postgraduate work at Queens College of the City University of New York and was the proud recipient of several honorary doctorates; and

WHEREAS, As the first Black vice chairwoman of the Nassau County Democratic Committee, she was a pioneer in pressing for integrated housing in the county and for lowering class sizes statewide; she was later president of her own public policy consulting firm and served on the Democratic National Committee from 1976 to 1982; and

WHEREAS, In 2023, the Town of North Hempstead, New York, renamed a street for Hazel N. Dukes in Roslyn Heights, where she lived for decades before moving to Manhattan in her later years; that same year she was presented with the Spingarn Medal, the highest honor given by the NAACP to recognize outstanding achievements by African Americans; and

WHEREAS, Hazel N. Dukes' legacy as a trailblazer in civil rights activism and her unwavering dedication to social justice has made a profound impact on both the African American community and society as a whole; through her leadership, advocacy, and tireless commitment to empowering others, she has left an indelible mark on the civil rights movement; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Hazel N. Dukes leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all who were privileged to have known and loved such an amazing woman; her insight and strength will forever serve as a beacon of love, light and hope to the countless lives she touched; she will be deeply missed and truly merits the grateful tribute of this Legislative Body; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Hazel N. Dukes, and to express its deepest condolences to her family; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Hazel N. Dukes.