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Res. No. 39

IN MEMORIAM - CORETTA SCOTT KING

By the Entire Council

Whereas, The New York City Council has learned with deep sorrow of the passing of Coretta Scott King, on January 31, 2006, at the age of 78, in her sleep at Santa Monica Hospital in Rosarito Beach, Mexico; and

Whereas, Coretta Scott King made innumerable contributions to the causes of civil rights and human dignity; and

Whereas, Coretta Scott King was born on April 27, 1927, in Perry County, Alabama; and

Whereas, According to the Academy of Achievement in Washington, D.C., Coretta Scott King was exposed to hardships at an early age, including having to walk five miles a day to attend a one-room school in Marion, Alabama, while white students rode buses to an all-white school closer to her home; and

Whereas, Coretta Scott King received degrees from Antioch College, where she was active in local chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Young Progressives, and from the New England Conservatory of Music; and

Whereas, Coretta Scott King married Martin Luther King, Jr., on June 18, 1953; and

Whereas, Despite raising four children and remaining out of the public spotlight during much of her husband's career, Coretta Scott King played a central role in the major civil rights campaigns of the 1950's and 1960's; and

Whereas, According to The King Center, Coretta Scott King spoke before church, civic, college, fraternal and peace groups from the earliest days of the Civil Rights Movement; and

Whereas, During the years of the Civil Rights Movement, Coretta Scott King also conceived and performed a series of favorably reviewed Freedom Concerts, which combined prose and poetry narration with musical selections to raise funds for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; and

Whereas, According to the Martin Luther King, Jr., Papers Project, Coretta Scott King accompanied her husband during the 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, served as a Women's Strike for Peace delegate to the seventeen nation Disarmament Conference, and accompanied her husband on well-publicized trips to mark the independence of Ghana in 1957 and to study the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi in India in 1959; and

Whereas, Following Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination on April 4, 1968, Coretta Scott King continued her work as a leading advocate of civil rights and human dignity; and

Whereas, Coretta Scott King was the founding Chair of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, a living memorial to her husband's life and legacy that is housed on a 23 acre national historic park, receives over one million visitors each year, contains the largest archives of documents from the Civil Rights Movement, and provides a variety of programs that has trained tens of thousands of people in issues relating to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s philosophy and methods; and

Whereas, Coretta Scott King spearheaded the educational and legal campaign to establish Dr. King's birthday as a national holiday, which culminated in the signing of legislation on November 3, 1983, establishing the third Monday of every January as a Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday; and

Whereas, Coretta Scott King was also active in a variety of other important efforts, including serving as the Co-Chair of the Full Employment Action Council in 1975, assisting in bringing more than a half-million demonstrators to Washington D.C. in 1983, in order to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his

famous "I Have A Dream" speech, and serving as head of the U.S. delegation of Women for a Meaningful Summit in preparation for the Reagan-Gorbachev talks in 1988; and

Whereas, Throughout the 1970's and 1980's, Coretta Scott King wrote nationally syndicated columns and spoke out publicly on a broad range of issues, including racial and economic justice, women's and children's rights, gay and lesbian dignity, religious freedom, the needs of the poor and homeless, full-employment, health care, educational opportunities, **nuclear** disarmament and ecological balance; and

Whereas, In the 1980's, Coretta Scott King was also active in the struggles against apartheid, participating in a series of sit-in protests in Washington, D.C. that prompted nationwide demonstrations against South African racial policies, personally urging President Ronald Reagan to approve sanctions against South Africa, and submitting herself to arrest in protest against the apartheid system; and

Whereas, On the day of her passing, poet Maya Angelou stated that "[I]t's a bleak morning for me and for many people and yet it's a great morning because we have a chance to look at her and see what she did and who she was;" and

Whereas, Through her words, work and example, Coretta Scott King was a woman of wisdom, compassion and vision; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York celebrates the life and mourns the passing of Coretta Scott King, extends its deepest sympathies to her family and friends and adjourns today in her honor.