Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and

International Intergroup Relations

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##### **THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

##### **COMMITTEE REPORT OF THE HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION**

*Andrea Vazquez, Legislative Director*

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**COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND**

**INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS**

*Hon. Chi Ossé, Chair*

**February 15, 2023**

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| **Res. No. 421** | By Council Members Menin, Joseph and Ariola |
| **Title:** | Resolution recognizing April 6 annually as Tartan Day in the City of New York |

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| **Res. No. 474** | By Council Members Farías, Hanif, Cabán, Won, Hudson and Krishnan |
| **Title:** | Resolution recognizing February 21 as Mother Language Day in the City of New York to honor the importance of the Bengali/ Bangla language to Bangladeshis everywhere and to promote the acceptance of linguistic and cultural diversity in our communities |

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| **Res. No. 486** | By Council Members Stevens, Williams, Hudson, Joseph, Brooks-Powers, Hanks, Menin, Cabán, Hanif, Restler, Riley, Louis, Farías and Krishnan |
| **Title:** | Resolution recognizing the accomplishments of and issues faced by Black women by designating February 15 annually as Black Girl Magic Day in the City of New York |

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| **Res. No. 488** | By Council Members Williams, Brooks-Powers, Riley, Farías and Krishnan |
| **Title:** | Resolution recognizing the contributions of Delta Sigma Theta to public service by designating March 3 annually as Delta Day in the City of New York |

On Wednesday, February 15, 2023, the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations, chaired by Council Member Chi Ossé, will hold a hearing on Resolution Number (Res. No.) 421, sponsored by Council Member Julie Menin, a Resolution recognizing April 6 annually as Tartan Day in the City of New York; Res. No. 474, co-sponsored by Council Members Amanda Farías and Shahana Hanif, a Resolution recognizing February 21 as Mother Language Day in the City of New York to honor the importance of the Bengali/Bangla language to Bangladeshis everywhere and to promote the acceptance of linguistic and cultural diversity in our communities; Res. No. 486, sponsored by Council Member Althea Stevens, a Resolution recognizing the accomplishments of and issues faced by Black women by designating February 15 annually as Black Girl Magic Day in the City of New York; and Res. No. 488, co-sponsored by Council Members Nantasha Williams and Selvena Brooks-Powers, a Resolution recognizing the contributions of Delta Sigma Theta to public service by designating March 3 annually as Delta Day in the City of New York. Witnesses invited to testify include members of the public, advocacy groups, and other interested stakeholders.

At this hearing, the Committee is interested in learning about witnesses’ positions on Res. No. 421, Res. No. 474, Res. No. 486, and Res. No. 486.

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| Res. No. 421  Resolution recognizing April 6 annually as Tartan Day in the City of New York.  By Council Members Menin, Joseph and Ariola  Whereas, The United States (U.S.) Senate passed S. Res. 155 in March, 1998, which designated April 6 annually as National Tartan Day to celebrate the many noteworthy achievements and contributions made by Scottish Americans to the U.S. since the nation’s founding; and  Whereas, S. Res. 155 was followed by H. Res. 41, a companion bill passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in March, 2005; and  Whereas, Presidential Proclamation 8233 in April, 2008, in support of national Tartan Day, cited the “enduring contributions to our Nation” by Scottish Americans’ “hard work, faith, and values” as well as the “long shared ties of family and friendship” between Scotland and the U.S.; and  Whereas, April 6 was chosen because of its important significance as the date in 1320 when the Declaration of Arbroath, the Scottish Declaration of Independence, was signed by Scottish nobility at Arbroath Abbey and because the U.S. Declaration of Independence “was modeled on that inspirational document,” according to the Senate resolution; and  Whereas, Colonists in the original 13 colonies echoed the Scots’ belief in liberty, as memorably stated in the Declaration of Arbroath, that “for so long as a hundred of us are left alive, we will yield in no least way to English dominion” and that “[w]e fight not for glory nor for wealth nor honours; but only and alone we fight for freedom, which no good man surrenders but with his life” (translated by Agnes Mure Mackenzie); and  Whereas, An April 6 holiday recognizes the remarkable legacy of the almost half of the signers of the U.S. Declaration of Independence and 9 of the governors of the first 13 states, who claimed Scottish ancestry; and  Whereas, It also recognizes the legacy of the early Scottish settlers, starting in the 1680s and increasing in the 1720s, who came to the U.S. for religious freedom (like the Presbyterian Scots) or a new beginning and fought with their fellow colonists against the British in George Washington’s Continental Army; and  Whereas, An April 6 holiday honors the accomplishments of many Scottish Americans since then, across many fields in the arts and sciences, including figures as different as environmentalist John Muir; writers Edgar Allen Poe, Washington Irving, and William Faulkner; inventor Alexander Graham Bell; businessman and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie; New York City (NYC) architect Charles McKim; musicians Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash; astronauts Alan Shepherd, John Glenn, Buzz Aldrin, and Neil Armstrong; New York businessman Samuel Wilson, popularly known as Uncle Sam since the War of 1812; New York Giants baseball great Bobby Thomson; and 34 U.S. presidents; and  Whereas, Americans today enjoy many aspects of Scottish culture, including golf, bagpipe music, shortbread, Scotch whiskey, and tartan kilts and fabric; and  Whereas, According to The New York Times, about 40,000 NYC residents in 2010 claimed Scottish roots; and  Whereas, While Tartan Day is now celebrated throughout the U.S. and Canada, the largest U.S. commemorative event is the NYC Tartan Day Parade, first held officially in 1999; and  Whereas, The NYC Tartan Day Parade, free for all participants and the culmination of a week of Scottish-themed festivities, boasts 3,000 bagpipers from all over the world, Highland dancers, and Scottish clan organizations; and  Whereas, The designation of a holiday here in NYC would honor the vital role that Scottish Americans have played and continue to play in the City as well as their positive impacts on the City’s culture and economy; now, therefore, be it  Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York recognizes April 6 annually as Tartan Day in the City of New York.  LS #10952  11/30/22  RHP  Res. No. 474  Resolution recognizing February 21 as Mother Language Day in the City of New York to honor the importance of the Bengali/Bangla language to Bangladeshis everywhere and to promote the acceptance of linguistic and cultural diversity in our communities.  By Council Members Farías, Hanif, Cabán, Won, Hudson and Krishnan  Whereas, A mother language is the first language someone speaks and is a vital and lasting part of someone’s cultural identity; and  Whereas, Since one of the world’s 6,000 languages becomes extinct every two weeks, preserving languages is a critical part of preserving the history of all peoples and their cultures; and  Whereas, Preserving the status of the Bengali/Bangla language became imperative after the India-Pakistan partition in 1947 that created Urdu-speaking West Pakistan with a population of 25 million people and Bangla-speaking East Bengal/East Pakistan with a population of 44 million people; and  Whereas, Urdu was then established by the Pakistani government (dominated by West Pakistanis) as the only language to be taught in schools; and  Whereas, The disrespect for Bengali/Bangla led to the rise of the Bengali Language Movement, as students, community groups, and politicians protested this linguistic and cultural discrimination; and  Whereas, The 1952 declaration by the Pakistani government that Urdu would be the only official language of Pakistan instigated a call for student protests in East Bengal on February 21; and  Whereas, Protests by University of Dhaka and Dhaka Medical College students, held in spite of a government order that prohibited gatherings of more than three people, led to the arrests of several students; and  Whereas, Several student protesters were then killed by police as they tried to storm the East Bengal Legislative Assembly, leading to larger protests with broader participation and additional deaths, beatings, and arrests; and  Whereas, Further Bengali Language Movement protests supported the movements that eventually led to independence for Bangladesh on December 16, 1971; and  Whereas, The deaths of the Bengali Language Movement protesters were honored by the building of the Shaheed Minar memorial in Dhaka and continue to be honored there every year on February 21 in observance of Shaheed Dibas (Martyrs’ Day); and  Whereas February 21 (Ekushey February) is observed as Language Movement Day, a national holiday in Bangladesh; and  Whereas, Bangladeshis are one of the fastest-growing immigrant groups in New York City (NYC), totaling more than 65,000 Bangladeshis and Bangladeshi Americans-more than in any other city in the U.S.-according to data from the Asian American Federation; and  Whereas, Bangladeshi communities in NYC-like those in Parkchester in the Bronx, Kensington in Brooklyn, and Jamaica and Jackson Heights in Queens-celebrate religious and cultural festivals and are home to Bangladeshi restaurants, stores, mosques, and cultural centers; and  Whereas, The Bangladeshi culture brought to NYC by immigrants for over a century has enriched the multicultural fabric of NYC and continues to do so; and  Whereas, In 1999, the General Conference of the United Nations (UN) Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed February 21 as International Mother Language Day; and  Whereas, In 2002, the UN General Assembly supported the UNESCO proclamation by calling on UN member states “to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world”; and  Whereas, Establishing February 21 as Mother Language Day in NYC allows New Yorkers time to reflect on the value of every New Yorker’s mother language as well as to express support for NYC’s continually arriving immigrants, who speak many languages in NYC schools and communities; now, therefore, be it  Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York recognizes February 21 as Mother Language Day in the City of New York to honor the importance of the Bengali/Bangla language to Bangladeshis everywhere and to promote the acceptance of linguistic and cultural diversity in our communities.  LS #11991 and #12181  1/30/23  RHP |

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| Res. No. 486  Resolution recognizing the accomplishments of and issues faced by Black women by designating February 15 annually as Black Girl Magic Day in the City of New York.  By Council Members Stevens, Williams, Hudson, Joseph, Brooks-Powers, Hanks, Menin, Cabán, Hanif, Restler, Riley, Louis, Farías and Krishnan  Whereas, Third-generation Washingtonian educator and author CaShawn Thompson in 2013 celebrated the achievements, beauty, and strength of Black women-like her mother, aunts, and grandmother-with the digital hashtag #BlackGirlsAreMagic, which eventually became #BlackGirlMagic; and  Whereas, Thompson has explained that her use of #BlackGirlMagic was a reaction to too many negative stories in the media tearing down the success of Black women; and  Whereas, Thompson has pointed to civil rights activist Gloria Richardson, who organized and led the Cambridge (Maryland) Nonviolent Action Committee in early civil rights protests in 1962, as one inspiration for the Black Girl Magic movement-especially the historic photograph of Richardson as she disdainfully pushed away the bayonet of a threatening white police officer at a civil rights protest; and  Whereas, Thompson has explained that Black Girl Magic was always about honoring “everyday Black girl magic”-the way she saw herself-and not just “extraordinary Black women doing these amazing things that we all are collectively proud of”; and  Whereas, Assistant professor Asia Leeds of Spelman College, long recognized for educating women of African descent, noted that Black Girl Magic “identifies the ways that Black women make space for themselves, celebrate themselves, and connect to each other”; and  Whereas, Spelman College professor Michelle Hite noted that the popular Black Girl Magic hashtags became a way for Black women to say to each other that “I see you excelling and being successful in a context that is hostile to your very presence there, which makes it all the more glorious”; and  Whereas, At the “Black Girls Rock!” awards in 2015, Michelle Obama said that young Black girls too often heard “voices that tell you that you’re not good enough, that you have to look a certain way, act a certain way; that if you speak up, you’re too loud; if you step up to lead, you’re being bossy”; and  Whereas, February 15 is designated as National Black Girl Magic Day in the United States (U.S.); and  Whereas, Black women in New York City (NYC) have long excelled in all walks of life and in all sectors of the workforce, including in government service as New York City Council members; and  Whereas, Black women in NYC today are involved in public discussions of local, state, and national issues important to Black girls and women, especially those that address discrimination and inequality of opportunity; and  Whereas, The designation of a day is fitting to honor Black girls and women who bring so much to the social, cultural, economic, and political fabric of NYC; now, therefore, be it                       Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York recognizes the accomplishments of and issues faced by Black women by designating February 15 annually as Black Girl Magic Day in the City of New York.  LS #12047  1/27/23  RHP |
| Res. No. 488  Resolution recognizing the contributions of Delta Sigma Theta to public service by designating March 3 annually as Delta Day in the City of New York.  By Council Members Williams, Brooks-Powers, Riley, Farías and Krishnan  Whereas, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated (Delta), is a private, not-for-profit Black Greek-Letter Organization (BGLO) of college-educated women committed to sisterhood, scholarship, service, and social action; and  Whereas, Delta Sigma Theta’s programs address the economic development, educational development, international awareness and involvement, physical and mental health, and political awareness and involvement of Black women and Black communities; and  Whereas, Delta Sigma Theta currently has more than 300,000 members in over 1,000 collegiate and alumnae chapters in the United States (U.S.) and other countries around the world; and  Whereas, New York City (NYC) is the home of the first Graduate Chapter (New York alumnae) of Delta Sigma Theta, and there are currently 12 alumnae chapters and 10 collegiate chapters under the New York Metropolitan Coordinating Council; and  Whereas, Delta Sigma Theta was founded on January 13, 1913, by 22 young women who were students at Howard University, one of the nation’s most distinguished Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); and  Whereas, On March 3, 1913, founding Delta member Osceola Adams led fellow Deltas down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., in a march for women’s voting rights-the sorority’s first public act in a century-long history of civil rights activism; and  Whereas, Eventually, Osceola Adams brought her talents and leadership to New York City and became one of the first Black actresses on Broadway and the Director of the Harlem School of the Arts; and  Whereas, As Delta Barbara Jordan, the first Black American to serve in the U.S. Congress from the South since Reconstruction, said at the sorority’s 31st biennial National Convention in 1971, “[t]he uninvolved, disengaged citizen has no place in America”; and  Whereas, Deltas in government service in New York have included legendary Brooklynite Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman elected to the U.S. Congress (1969-1983), and now include New York City Council members; and  Whereas, Deltas today continue a legacy of being involved and engaged citizens through a variety of social action activities, such as annual Delta Days planned by the Washington, D.C. Alumnae Chapter to host Deltas and policymakers in forums, briefings, and advocacy skills workshops focused on local and national issues important to Black women and Black communities; and  Whereas, Delta Sigma Theta was recognized by the United Nations as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) and, as a result, is able to offer expert analysis on issues relevant to the status of women and children worldwide ; and  Whereas, Since 1995, U.S. presidents have annually proclaimed March as Women’s History Month to celebrate the achievements of women in the U.S. in many fields, including social activism; and  Whereas, U.S. President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. issued a proclamation on February 28, 2022, for Women’s History Month, which included his statement that “Black women fought to end slavery, advocate for civil rights, and pass the Voting Rights Act” and that “[s]uffragists helped pass the 19the Amendment to the Constitution so that no American could be denied a vote on the basis of sex”; and  Whereas, President Biden continued that “despite the progress being made, women and girls-especially women and girls of color-still face systemic barriers to full participation and wider gaps in opportunity and equality”; and  Whereas, The designation of a day is fitting to commemorate the early days of Delta Sigma Theta advocacy and the continued impact that Delta advocacy can have on NYC communities, especially Black communities; now, therefore, be it                       Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York recognizes the contributions of Delta Sigma Theta to public service by designating March 3 annually as Delta Day in the City of New York.  LS #11730 and #12127  1/24/23  RHP |