



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0842-2003, **Version:** *

Preconsidered Res. No. 842

Resolution honoring the life and legend of Nina Simone.

By Council Members Reed, Baez, Barron, Espada, Sanders, Serrano and Weprin

Whereas, Nina Simone, one of the preeminent vocalists and civil rights leaders of the twentieth century, passed away on April 20, 2003, at the age of 70; and
Whereas, Ms. Simone was born Eunice Kathleen Waymon on February 21, 1933 in Tryon, North Carolina and sang in her church choir throughout her childhood; and
Whereas, In 1950, Ms. Simone was awarded a scholarship to the Julliard School of Music, supporting herself as an accompanist, piano teacher and performer in Atlantic City while a student; and
Whereas, Ms. Simone was signed by Bethlehem Records in 1958 and scored a Top 20 hit in 1959 with her first single, "I Loves You, Porgy," going on to record for Colpix, Philips and RCA Victor during her extensive career; and
Whereas, Though known as the "High Priestess of Soul," Ms. Simone's musical career defied conventional classification: she was at once a jazz artist, a folk singer and a classical pianist whose songs have been covered by modern musicians like Elvis Costello, David Bowie and George Michael; and
Whereas, Ms. Simone was uniquely skilled at interpreting other musicians' songs and famously performed pieces by artists as diverse as Bob Dylan, Duke Ellington, the Beatles, Billie Holiday and Frank Sinatra; and
Whereas, Ms. Simone was inspired to battle racism from an early age, describing a piano recital she gave in the local library at the age of 12 at which her parents were required to stand in the back because they were black, as the formative event of her life; and
Whereas, Ms. Simone was equally influential as a performer and as a civil rights activist, and several of her songs, including "Mississippi Goddam" and "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black," became calls against racial inequality and discrimination; and
Whereas, Ms. Simone went on to become a mainstay of the American civil rights movement, working with both Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and singing "We Shall Overcome" at Dr. King's side during many of the great civil rights marches of the 1960s; and
Whereas, Ms. Simone left the United States at the end of the 1960s, saying she no longer could tolerate the racism of American society, going on to live in Barbados, Liberia, Egypt, Turkey, Holland and Switzerland before settling near Aix-en-Provence in 1994; and
Whereas, throughout her life, Ms. Simone was considered colorful and brilliant, possessing "gifts...too diverse and too overpowering to make her at ease with the demands of the music business," according to Clive Davis, writing for the London Times in her April 22, 2003 obituary; and
Whereas, Ms. Simone continued to work throughout her 60s and was planning a United States tour at the time of her death; now, therefore, be it
Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York honor the life and legend of Nina Simone.

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