Preconsidered Res. No. 1133

Resolution declaring the first Monday of November as Black Solidarity Day in the City of New York

By The Speaker (Council Member Adams) and Council Member Louis

Whereas, Carlos Enrique Coordington Russell was born on August 6, 1934, in Panamá City, Panamá, and spent his early years living with his family in the Canal Zone, then controlled by the United States (U.S.); and

Whereas, Russell's Caribbean roots came from his maternal grandparents, who were born in Barbados and Jamaica and who had come to Panamá like many other migrants from Caribbean French and British colonies; and

Whereas, According to Kaysha Corinealdi's article in *Black Perspectives* in September 2021, Russell grew up in the mostly Black town of La Boca, "surrounded by a rich Afro-Caribbean history that imbued day-to-day life, language, art, food, and commerce"; and

Whereas, In 1955, Russell came to the U.S. to study at De Paul University in Chicago, where he encountered segregation and discrimination; and

Whereas, In 1961, after graduation and having been employed at a settlement house in Chicago, Russell moved to Brooklyn, where he worked in the Albany Community Center with gang members and then at the Fort Greene Community Progress Center; and

Whereas, In Brooklyn, Russell became a leading activist and intellectual figure, speaking out against discrimination, working in anti-poverty programs, and finding his place in the arts community, including forming a Brooklyn branch of the Harlem Writers Guild and writing for the Black-owned *Independent*

newspaper; and

Whereas, According to Russell's obituary in *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, while serving as Panamá's Ambassador to the United Nations and "inspired by Douglas Turner Ward's fictional play *Day of Absence* in which a small town in the South is suddenly devoid of its Black population and is crippled by their absence," Russell created Black Solidarity Day; and

Whereas, Russell explained on the first Black Solidarity Day, which was November 3, 1969, that he and his Black Solidarity Day Committee of activists aimed to make the Day "a Black Monday, a demonstration of Black solidarity, a general protest against the intensifying repression that threatens the very existence of Black people in America"; and

Whereas, On that first Black Solidarity Day, Russell and the Black Solidarity Day Committee decried welfare cuts that disproportionately hurt Black families, the discrimination that Black people suffered when applying for union jobs, and the mounting death toll of young Black men in the military sent to fight in Vietnam; and

Whereas, The first Black Solidarity Day drew thousands of New Yorkers to protests and planned activities, which included boycotting work, school, and white-owned stores; and

Whereas, Speaking a year later at the second Black Solidarity Day, Russell said that a "city closed by Black folks would be an indication of the determination of Black people to use any means necessary to acquire liberation"; and

Whereas, Having earned a Ph.D. from what was then known as the Union for Experimenting Colleges, Russell worked as a professor at the State University of New York at Old Westbury and at The City University of New York's Brooklyn College, where he later became the Dean of Contemporary Studies; and

Whereas, Russell was also well known as a poet, playwright, community theater producer, and radio talk show host; and

Whereas, Upon Russell's death in Brooklyn on July 10, 2018, his family said in a statement that it was

"his fervent desire for us, the community, to continue the fight for social justice and equality for all"; and

Whereas, In that spirit, it is fitting that Black Solidarity Day continue to be observed and honored in Russell's adopted hometown; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York declares the first Monday of November as Black Solidarity Day in the City of New York.

LS #20725
10/31/2025
RHP