Res. No. 290

Resolution declaring March 22 annually as A Tribe Called Quest Day in the City of New York and honoring their innovative mix of hip hop and jazz that impacted generations of musicians and audiences

By Council Members Williams, Ossé, Riley, Stevens, Hudson, Louis, Hanif and Cabán

Whereas, A Tribe Called Quest (ATCQ) was formed in 1985 in St Albans, Queens, by rapper/producer Q-Tip (Kamaal Ibn John Fareed, commonly known as Tip), rapper Phife Dawg (Malik Izaak Taylor), and rapper Jarobi White, who met as children at church in Queens, and DJ/producer Ali Shaheed Muhammad, who met Tip at Murry Bergtraum High School in Manhattan; and

Whereas, ATCQ was a pivotal part of the Native Tongues collective, a mainly New York-based group of musicians, including De La Soul, Jungle Brothers, Newark-based Queen Latifah, and London-based Monie Love, whose mix of hip hop and jazz produced a new genre of hip hop; and

Whereas, In explaining this new genre of hip hop, GRAMMY Recording Academy writer Morgan Enos noted that hip hop and jazz are two branches of Black American music with a lot in common-"from their rhythmic complexity to [their] improvisational component to [their] emphasis on the performer's personality"; and

Whereas, In 1989, ATCQ was signed to a contract at Jive Records by record executive legend Barry Weiss, who said that ATCQ "single-handedly put hip-hop on their backs and brought it to another level"; and

Whereas, Weiss described the different styles of Phife and Tip," noting that Tip was "the arty but nasal-voiced, abstract rapper," while Phife was "every B-Boy," whose "wordplay, analogies, and sports references… would become part of popular culture"; and

Whereas, ATCQ's critically important engineer Bob Power explained that Tip and Ali could "hear a

bunch of different records, get an idea of different samples to use from those records, and not just hear them in their original context but also hear in their mind's ear what they will sound like when combined"; and

Whereas, In 1990, ATCQ dropped its debut album, *People's Instinctive Travels and the Paths of Rhythm* , which included landmark hits like "Bonita Applebum," "I Left My Wallet in El Segundo," and "Can I Kick It?" and which was described by one music critic as "65 of the most important minutes in the history of rap"; and

Whereas, Questlove described "Bonita Applebum" as the "song that truly birthed the idea of neo-soul" and as the "coolest love song hip-hop every offered us"; and

Whereas, According to *Rolling Stone* magazine, "Can I Kick It?" made ATCQ famous in the United States and in the United Kingdom, with a "call-and-response chorus…so instantly indelible that it would end up being chanted everywhere," including on Jay-Z's debut album *Reasonable Doubt*; and

Whereas, In 1991, ATCQ released *The Low End Theory*, its second album, which featured GRAMMY winner Ron Carter, the most recorded jazz bassist in history, and then-newcomer Busta Rhymes as guest artists; and

Whereas, Although Phife had been diagnosed with diabetes a year earlier, he brought new energy to *The Low End Theory*, and especially to "Check the Rhime," in which Tip and Phife recall their teenage years "spitting in ciphers on Linden Boulevard" in Jamaica, Queens, with Phife's "spitting verses as if he were lounging in the afternoon sun, swatting away rivals like flies," according to *Rolling Stone* magazine; and

Whereas, *The Low End Theory*, which produced many other hits like "Buggin' Out" and "Scenario," was ranked at number 9 by *Rolling Stone* magazine on its list of the 200 greatest hip hop albums, pointing out that "Tip's husky, helium toned couplets were a perfect match for Phife's raspy everyman bravado"; and

Whereas, Both *People's Instinctive Travels and the Paths of Rhythm* and *The Low End Theory* earned rare perfect five-mic reviews from *The Source*, one of the world's longest-running magazines about hip hop culture and politics, and

Whereas, In 1993, ATCQ released *Midnight Marauders*, its third album, which *The Source* editor-in-chief Selwyn Seyfu Hinds described as "their finest moment…a work of elegance: the use of jazz samples as breezy sonic textures; the eschewing of sampled drum loops for skillfully programmed percussion"; and

Whereas, Even as the four ATCQ members were beginning to drift apart, *Beats, Rhymes and Life*, their fourth album released in 1996, produced a GRAMMY nomination for best rap album and a second nomination for "1nce Again" for best rap performance by a duo or group, a track which showcased the beatmaking of J Dilla (then known as Jay Dee); and

Whereas, In 1998, *The Love Movement*, ATCQ's fifth album, earned another GRAMMY nomination for best rap album; and

Whereas, Just before Phife died from diabetes complications on March 22, 2016, Tip and Phife had come back together to record again, with Jarobi returning and Busta Rhymes joining the group for a sixth album, *We Got It From Here…Thank You 4 Your Service*; and

Whereas, "We the People," the lead single from that final album, became a celebrated protest song that helped define the 2010s and was described by Epic Chairman Sylvia Rhone as the "soundtrack of the resistance," according to *Billboard*; and

Whereas, "We the People" carries one of the final verses ever recorded by Phife, who died during the making of the album, in which Phife raps, "Dreaming of a world that's equal for women with no division"; and

Whereas, As *Billboard* notes, "We the People" "calls out the toxic, misogynist and racist worldview" that hurts and disparages so many people when Tip raps, "All you Black folks, you must go/All you Mexicans, you must go/And all you poor folks, you must go/Muslims and gays, boy, we hate your ways/So all you bad folks, you must go"; and

Whereas, The surviving members of ATCQ performed "We the People," with Phife's recorded lyrics and a gigantic photograph of him on stage, on *Saturday Night Live* just four days after the 2016 presidential election; and

Whereas, ATCQ was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2024; and

Whereas, It is appropriate to dedicate a day to commemorate ATCQ's innovation of a hip hop-jazz genre in New York City and the group's influence on generations of musicians who followed, including D'Angelo, Erykah Badu, Lauryn Hill, André 3000, Kanye West, Solange, Robert Glasper, Esperanza Spaulding, and more; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York declares March 22 annually as A Tribe Called Quest Day in the City of New York and honors their innovative mix of hip hop and jazz that impacted generations of musicians and audiences.

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