

117TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# S. RES. 647

Designating the last weekend of June 2022 to commemorate the first weekend of the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival and the first full weekend of May to commemorate the final weekend of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival of 1970.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 24, 2022

Mr. SCHUMER (for himself and Mr. CASSIDY) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to

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## RESOLUTION

Designating the last weekend of June 2022 to commemorate the first weekend of the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival and the first full weekend of May to commemorate the final weekend of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival of 1970.

Whereas, in the summer of 1969, singer Tony Lawrence, television and video director Hal Tulchin, New York Mayor John Lindsay, and New York City Parks Commissioner August Heckscher organized the Harlem Cultural Festival, where some of the most famous artists of color of the 1960s performed for free in Mount Morris Park (now Marcus Garvey Park) in Harlem, New York;

Whereas the Harlem Cultural Festival was the culmination of a movement, in which Black artists, performers, and ac-

tivists shared their art with hundreds of thousands of fellow Americans, entertained the throngs who attended, and gave voice to the political grievances of the late 1960s;

Whereas, during the weekends of June 29, July 13, July 20, July 27, August 17, and August 24 in 1969, performers and activists like Nina Simone, Mahalia Jackson, B.B. King, Luther Vandross, Roebuck “Pops” Staples, Edwin Hawkins, Herbie Mann, Abbey Lincoln, Max Roach, Babatunde Olatunji, Ray Baretto and His Orchestra, Sonny Sharrock, Cal Tjader, Mongo Santamaria, George Kirby, Don Alias, Weldon Irvine, Larry Willis, Maurice King and the Soul Music Festival Band, Professor Herman Stevens and the Voices of Faith, Henry Franklin, Steve Berrios, Sonny Fortune, Rodgers Grant, Hadley Caliman, William Allen, Chuck Carter, Jackie “Moms” Mabley, Dewey “Pigmeat” Markham, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and Marcus Garvey Jr. celebrated Black music and culture in the United States and uplifted the voices of civil rights and local New York and Louisiana activists;

Whereas the Harlem Cultural Festival served as a stage to express both anger and hope for change, in the face of racial tensions that had bubbled over during the months and years prior to the event, and included notable moments such as—

- (1) Tony Lawrence inviting protestors, angered by the building of a government office in Harlem when the neighborhood sorely needed a new high school, onto the main stage to highlight their cause;

- (2) speakers like Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and Marcus Garvey Jr. calling for racial justice and progress;

(3) Nina Simone performing her song “To Be Young, Gifted and Black” and calling for equity; and

(4) Mahalia Jackson singing “Take My Hand, Precious Lord”, the song Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King’s family asked her to sing at his funeral;

Whereas Mahalia Jackson’s performance became a defining moment for the festival, with attendees laughing, dancing, and crying along, mourning and celebrating the legacy of Dr. King as they acknowledged the end of an era and the beginning of a new phase in the Civil Rights Movement;

Whereas the Harlem Cultural Festival represented a shift in Black culture, consciousness, and expression, and the performances of the artists represented a movement away from performances designed to be palatable for white audiences and toward freer expression and celebration of Black art;

Whereas 1969 was a turning point, defined by—

(1) a new generation of Black activists and artists who wanted more than survival and respect and wanted to flourish;

(2) Harlem, which had long been considered the center of Black culture, seeing a new cultural explosion; and

(3) the Black Power movement inspiring new styles of fashion, art, and music that elevated and celebrated African and Black beauty, political purpose, and pride;

Whereas the Harlem Cultural Festival of 1969 captured the spirit of the Black Power movement, as this festival—

(1) marked the first time many of these artists had performed for such a large, predominately Black crowd; and

(2) was multi-generational, as the older generation of gospel and blues artists invited the younger generation of soul, jazz, funk, rock, and pop artists to join in their performances;

Whereas the Harlem Cultural Festival showcased Black art and music from around the United States, including Mahalia Jackson, who sang her unique style of gospel rooted in the Deep South (especially Mississippi and Texas) and influenced by the blues and jazz that surrounded her in New Orleans, Louisiana, and B.B. King, who sang the Blues, a genre rooted in New Orleans that spread throughout the South, whose performances mingled with the jazz, pop, soul, and psychedelic funk sets of the younger artists;

Whereas the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival may have inspired similar movements, such as the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, which was first organized in 1970 to preserve and promote the music, culture, and heritage of the people of Louisiana;

Whereas the 1970 New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival featured renowned Black artists such as Mahalia Jackson, Duke Ellington, Peter Fountain, and Al Hirt;

Whereas the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival continues to showcase the rich musical heritage of Louisiana as it has continued to grow in popularity;

Whereas the Harlem Cultural Festival was a way to show that Harlem was more than the riots that rocked it in the prior years and was a coming together of unlikely allies, with Black Panthers providing security for the event and a Republican New York City Mayor enthusiastically supporting the festival as a peaceful moment after the vi-

olence that followed the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King;

Whereas the memory of the Harlem Cultural Festival was rescued and resuscitated by the internationally acclaimed 2021 documentary “Summer of Soul (. . . Or When the Revolution Could Not Be Televised)”, which compiled over 40 hours of concert video of the festival recorded by director Hal Tulchin;

Whereas “Summer of Soul (. . . Or When the Revolution Could Not Be Televised)” highlights the cultural and political impacts of this festival by juxtaposing footage from the 1969 festival with modern-day interviews and voiceovers about the political environment at the time of the festival;

Whereas “Summer of Soul (. . . Or When the Revolution Could Not Be Televised)” won an Oscar for “Best Original Documentary” at the 94th Academy Awards on March 26, 2022, and a Grammy award for “Best Music Film” at the 64th Annual Grammy Awards Ceremony on April 3, 2022, which brought further attention and acclaim to the performances at the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival; and

Whereas the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival and the 1970 New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival represent historic moments in Black cultural history: Now, therefore be it

1        *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2                (1) designates the last weekend of June 2022

3                to commemorate the first weekend of the Harlem

4                Cultural Festival of 1969 and the first full weekend

1 of May to commemorate the final weekend of the  
2 New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival of 1970;

3 (2) recognizes the contributions of the Harlem  
4 Cultural Festival of 1969 and the New Orleans Jazz  
5 and Heritage Festival of 1970 to Black art and cul-  
6 ture;

7 (3) encourages Senators to plan appropriate ac-  
8 tivities that support the objectives of the Harlem  
9 Cultural Festival of 1969 and the New Orleans Jazz  
10 and Heritage Festival of 1970; and

11 (4) encourages local governments in the United  
12 States to build partnerships with local Black artists,  
13 performers, and activists to further uplift Black cul-  
14 ture and art and promote equal treatment of all peo-  
15 ple.

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