

RESOLUTION No. 2021-

**RELATIVE TO HONORING
DENISE YVONNE BREWER EASTERLING**

BY:

Council Chairman Kenny Tompkins
Council Member Christopher Voccio
Mayor Robert M. Restaino

WHEREAS, Denise Yvonne Brewer Easterling was born on April 27, 1952 to the late Ollie and Susie Brewer in Niagara Falls, NY; and

WHEREAS, Denise was educated in Niagara Falls' public schools and is a proud alumna of Center Avenue Elementary, North Junior and Niagara Falls High School. She returned to complete her education in 2000 at Niagara University where she earned her Bachelor of Science Degree in Travel/Tourism Administration in 2004 and her Master's Degree in Education Leadership, *cum laude*, in 2007. Denise was also a member of the Eta Sigma Delta Honor Society; and

WHEREAS, Denise Easterling was a 12 year breast cancer survivor and the recipient of several community, educational, and professional awards, including: induction into the Niagara Falls Housing Authority "*Wall of Fame*"; Sisterhood Incorporated's "*Rosa Parks Achievement Award*"; a Senator Antoine M. Thompson 2010 "Annual Women's History Month" honoree, and; *Niagara Gazette*'s "*Women of Distinction*" honoree in 2011; and

Kennedy _____ **Soda** _____ **Spanbauer** _____ **Voccio** _____ **Tompkins** _____

WHEREAS, in 1993, Denise founded of *Underground Railroad Tours by Denise* (“UGRR TBD”), providing consultation, research, guided tours, lectures, and presentations about the Underground Railroad historical activity in Niagara County specifically, and African American history surrounding the Underground Railroad generally. As part of her work at UGRRTBD, Denise created the fictional character, “Mrs. Queenie Rivers”; and

WHEREAS, during the mid-1980’s, Denise worked at WJJL Radio 1440 where she also produced the 30 minute public service program “*Soul Vibrations*”; during this same period, she also wrote a column for the *Niagara Gazette* and served as Production Manager at the Edwin Mellon Press in Lewiston, NY. In the 1990’s, Denise joined the *Buffalo Challenger* as the Managing and Assistant Editor. During the early 2000’s, she was performing Underground Railroad research and conducting tours for the Murphy Orchards Farm, a National Freedom Trail site. Denise also worked as an Underground Railroad consultant with the Castellani Museum “*Freedom Crossings*” installation and with Marble Orchards, the Lewiston Arts Council Troupe.

WHEREAS, as part of her long record of volunteerism, Denise was active on numerous boards and committees. To mention but a few, Denise was a board member of the Highland Avenue Neighborhood Preservation Corp., the award winning Niagara Falls Faith-Based Collaborative and 1990’s Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Committee, where she coordinated a 19-day tour retracing of Underground Railroad trails and locations on the east coast from Atlanta to New York City, to Harriet Tubman’s hometown of Auburn, NY, to Niagara Falls, NY, Niagara Falls, Ontario and Niagara-on-the Lake. For several years Denise acted as MC, coordinator, and tour guide of the Freedom Trail Festival sponsored by Niagara University. Denise proudly served as President of the New Niagara Community Center, Vice Chair and Treasurer of Niagara Falls

Underground Railroad Heritage Interpretive Center Museum and as a director with the Niagara Falls Preservation Commission and the Niagara Falls Tourism Advisory Board; and

WHEREAS, prior to her short illness with pancreatic cancer, Denise was Administrative Assistant at St. John's AME Church, where she was also an active Sunday School student and always read in the adult class. She also participated on the Lay Board and with the Trailblazing Seniors. She loved to dance, share Black History, laugh, and spend time with her friends and family; and

WHEREAS, on January 31, 2021, surrounded by her loved ones, Denise left us to dance around the Throne of Glory. Her legacy of love and life will be carried on through the many who have crossed her path, but none more honored than her daughter Rozonia Easterling, daughter and son-in-love Marchia and Stacy Robinson; sisters Darlene, Desiree and Danielle; grandchildren Joi, Desmond, Sharmain & Blair Robinson; Grammy's great grand's Dez'Janae, Xymire, Dakkhari, Eric George, Jr., Jbyi and Lathan Portis; nephews Chaunce & Devon Brewer; dear friend Vester Brown, and many family and friends. She was predeceased by husbands Robert Easterling and Simba Mlee and her brother, Orlando Derrick.

WHEREAS, Denise, known to her loved ones as Nesie, Grammy, Gram, Mom, Sister and Aunt, has continued her devotion and dedication to education and community through the gift of her earthly body to science.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Niagara Falls City Council and Mayor Robert M. Restaino wish to honor the memory of Denise Yvonne Brewer Easterling and recognize her life, service, dedication and commitment to our City, our children, our history and the community at large by designating April 28, 2021 as "Denise Easterling Day" in the City of Niagara Falls.

Kennedy **Soda** **Spanbauer** **Voccio** **Tompkins**