

Ceremony Honoring Ethel Rosenberg on her Centenary

Press materials • September 28, 2015 • City Hall, New York City

Gale A. Brewer's statement:

We are proud to acknowledge those individuals and organizations that have remained committed to improving our city and vibrantly enriching the community; and

WHEREAS, Ethel Rosenberg, née Ethel Greenglass, was born in 1915, grew up on Manhattan's Lower East Side, and excelled at Seward Park High School, wishing to go to college but taking a clerical training course instead because she could not afford college; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Rosenberg found work as a clerk at the National New York Packing and Shipping Company and, showing great bravery, helped lead a strike for union recognition and a pay raise, for which she was fired; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Rosenberg filed a claim for wrongful termination with the newly formed National Labor Relations Board, which found in her favor, and remained active in union organizing, using her singing talents to raise funds at benefit performances—and it was here she met Julius Rosenberg, whom she later married; and

WHEREAS, during World War II, Ms. Rosenberg became the only full-time volunteer at the East Side Defense Council—the first such organization in the nation and a model for others—organizing blood drives and giving speeches on the importance of the war effort; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Rosenberg's first son, Michael, was born during the war, and her second son, Robert, was born after it ended; and

WHEREAS, in August 1950, Ms. Rosenberg was charged with Conspiracy to Commit Espionage, but FBI documents reveal that chief prosecution witnesses—David and Ruth Greenglass—provided no evidence against Ms. Rosenberg in their initial confessions, and Grand Jury testimony of the Greenglasses recently released excludes mention of Ms. Rosenberg's involvement; and

WHEREAS, FBI documents show that the prosecution determined that Ms. Rosenberg should be convicted and given a "stiff sentence" so she could be used as a "lever" to induce her husband to cooperate, and that after this strategy was devised, first Ruth and then David Greenglass provided oral testimony against Ms. Rosenberg—testimony on which the judge relied to sentence Ms. Rosenberg to death; and

WHEREAS, shortly before the Rosenbergs were executed in 1953, an FBI document listed questions to ask Julius Rosenberg if he cooperated—one of which was "Was your wife cognizant of your activities?"—but there was no such list created for Ms. Rosenberg; and

WHEREAS, in 2001, David Greenglass admitted that his testimony was false, and National Security Agency files indicate that the Soviet Union never gave Ms. Rosenberg a codename—meaning that she was not an active espionage agent;

Now therefore, I, Gale A. Brewer, do hereby recognize the injustice suffered by Ethel Rosenberg and her family, and on the occasion of her 100th birthday on Monday, September 28th, 2015, proclaim "Ethel Rosenberg Day of Justice in the Borough of Manhattan."