

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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B E F O R E: Mathieu Eugene  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Daniel Dromm  
Ben Kallos  
Brad Lander  
Bill Perkins  
Ydanis Rodriguez  
Helen K. Rosenthal  
Chaim Deutsch

## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Ruth Lichtenstein

Samuel Bykov

Tatyana Seigel

Evan Bernstein  
Anti-Defamation League

Anat Barber  
UJA Federation

Rita Iosefson  
Deputy Chief of Staff at Museum of Jewish  
Heritage

Genia Kovelman [sic]  
Russian American Jewish Experience

Sandy Meyers  
Selfhelp Community Services

Gabriella Major  
Holocaust Survivor



2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Good afternoon. My

3 name is Mathieu Eugene, and I'm the Chair of the

4 Civil and Human Rights Committee. Today our

5 committee will be hearing testimony and then voting

6 on my colleague's, Council Member Deutsch's,

7 resolutions, Proposed Resolution Number 673B

8 recognizing January 27, 2019 as Holocaust Remembrance

9 Day and the week beginning on January 27, 2019 as the

10 citywide week of Holocaust education in New York

11 City. On November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005 the United Nation

12 General Assembly adopted a resolution to designate

13 January 27<sup>th</sup> as International Day of Commemoration in

14 Memory of the Victims of Holocaust. This [inaudible]

15 the day that Auschwitz [inaudible] one of the largest

16 of the 40 concentration camps that comprised of which

17 [sic] complex was finally liberated. By assigning an

18 international day of remembrance, the United Nation

19 aims to reaffirm the Holocaust which result in the

20 murder of one-third of the Jewish people along with

21 countless members of other minorities will forever be

22 a warning to all people of the dangers of hatred,

23 bigotry, racism, and prejudice. The genocide of six

24 million Jews at the hands of Nazi soldiers as well as

25 the Nazi killing crusade that resulted in the death

1 of thousand homosexual and Jehovah Witness [sic] of  
2 hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities,  
3 gypsy heritage and [inaudible] and millions of non-  
4 Jewish Polish and Soviet citizens and prisoners of  
5 war remain one of the most inhumane period of the  
6 modern history. [inaudible] there were millions of  
7 victims of Nazis who were not Jewish. Antisemitism-  
8 formed bias of Nazi ideology that connects with the  
9 Holocaust. This brutal killing spree was referred to  
10 as the final solution of the Jewish Christian in  
11 Europe and his objective was total Jewish ethnic  
12 cleansing. In spite of clear evidence of Nazi forced  
13 labor camp, prison and death camps of which there  
14 were nearly 40,000 across Germany and its occupied  
15 territories, there are still people who are ignorant  
16 and willfully deny the fact of the Holocaust. For  
17 example, a recent survey conducted by the Conference  
18 on Jewish [inaudible] in Germany found that 41  
19 percent of surveyed Americans were unaware of the  
20 Auschwitz death camp. The survey also found that 41  
21 percent of millionaires believe that the holocaust  
22 resulted in the death of less than two million Jews  
23 when the figure is more than six million, and 22  
24 percent of millionaires surveyed reported that they  
25

1 had not even heard about the Holocaust. These  
2 findings are shocking considering the enormous  
3 devastation caused by the Holocaust. However,  
4 [inaudible] are those that choose to deny or downplay  
5 the genocide. According to the Southern Poverty Law  
6 Center, Holocaust deniers who sometimes refer to  
7 themselves as historical revisionists deny the effect  
8 of the Holocaust in a number of ways. Some deny the  
9 existence of death camp and gas chambers while others  
10 say that the casualties were caused by disease,  
11 poverty, or general war rather than targeted anti-  
12 Semitic Nazi assault. This group rely on anti-  
13 Semitic stereotypes and hatred which mirror the  
14 attitudes that led to the groundwork for the  
15 Holocaust. In today's climate it is more important  
16 than ever to put these views to rest. Since the 2016  
17 federal election, we have witnessed an increase in  
18 anti-Semitic rhetoric and hate crime against Jewish  
19 populations. Even in New York have also been going  
20 up. Sixty years later, the Holocaust remains one of  
21 the worst example of where hate-driven ideology can  
22 lead. However, as the statistics [inaudible] mention  
23 in the state [sic] education to provide people with  
24 facts about the Holocaust are still clearly needed.  
25

2 The Holocaust serves as a warning of what can happen  
3 when we let hate-fueled ideas flourish [inaudible].  
4 So the timing of this resolution could not be more  
5 relevant, and I want to commend my colleague, Council  
6 Member Deutsch, for introducing this very important  
7 resolution, and I strongly encourage the members of  
8 the committee to vote yes on passing resolution 673B.

9 [applause]

10 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,  
11 and I'll [inaudible] for Council Member Deutsch. And  
12 before we begin I would like to acknowledge the  
13 members of this committee who have joined us. we  
14 have Council Member, of course, Deutsch, the sponsor  
15 of this resolution, Council Member Dromm, a member of  
16 the committee, Council Member Kallos, a member of the  
17 committee, Council Member Rosenthal, a member of the  
18 committee, and Council Member Grodenchik also,  
19 Council Member Koslowitz, and Council Member  
20 Rodriguez, who is also a member of the committee.  
21 With that, I want to turn it over to Council Member  
22 Deutsch.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you so  
24 much, Chair. Today is a very meaningful day to me  
25 personally with so many advocates who are in this

1 room, Holocaust survivors, because we need to make  
2 sure that we educate our young adults that our future  
3 generations remember what atrocities the millions  
4 that were murdered during the Holocaust went through,  
5 and if you ask people about World War I, many don't  
6 remember or don't know anything that transpired  
7 during that time, and we don't want to see something  
8 like this happen to a really-- time when there was  
9 genocide and really not too long ago. And firstly, I  
10 want to thank our chairman, and I want to thank  
11 everyone who is here today, particularly the  
12 Holocaust survivors who took the time out of their  
13 day to attend this important hearing and to speak  
14 about why this bill is important to them and why this  
15 bill is important for our future generations. I also  
16 want to thank my colleagues who are cosponsors of  
17 this resolution: Council Members Fernando Cabrera,  
18 Costa Constantinides, Council Member Barry  
19 Grodenchik, Council Member Rafael Espinal, Council  
20 Member Ben Kallos, Council Member Karen Koslowitz,  
21 Council Member Helen Rosenthal, Council Member  
22 Vanessa Gibson, and of course, our Chair Council  
23 Member Mathieu Eugene. Growing up as the son of  
24 Holocaust survivors, it was engrained in my identity  
25



1 that my parents have lived through unimaginable  
2 horrors. Although like many survivors, they didn't  
3 often talk about specifics. Their experiences during  
4 the war impacted my brothers and my childhood.

5 Knowledge of what my parents and millions of others  
6 went through just a generation ago is ever-present on  
7 my mind each and every day. It is extremely a  
8 personal endeavor of mine to ensure that our

9 children, our grandchildren and the future

10 generations never forget what happened during the

11 Holocaust. We all know the saying, "Those who do not

12 learn history are doomed to repeat it." As far as  
13 I'm concerned, truer words were never spoken.

14 Baseless hatred, unfounded bias, and anti-Semitism

15 were all factors in what eventually led to the

16 genocide of six million Jews which included 1.5

17 million children. If we want to equip the next

18 generation with the tools they need to build to a

19 peaceful future, then we need to educate them about

20 the consequences of prejudice and mistreating others.

21 One of the scariest things I've heard in the last

22 couple of months is that 66 percent of American

23 millennials don't know what Auschwitz is.

24 Furthermore, 31 percent believe that two million or

25

1 fewer Jews were killed during the Holocaust, and 45  
2 percent could not even name one concentration camp.

3 This certainly indicates that we have our work cut  
4 out for us, as the generation that lived through the  
5 war is dwindling. It is more important now than ever  
6 that we face this crisis head-on, because it is  
7 indeed a crisis. When a new Speaker came into this  
8 City Council and gave out the committee  
9 chairmanships, I chose to be the Chair of the

10 Veteran's Committee for one simple reason. My father  
11 was liberated on May of 1945 with tens of thousands  
12 of others, liberated by the United States Army, and I  
13 felt it was my time to give back to those veterans  
14 who liberated so many who are able to live now and  
15 rebuild their families and future generations and all  
16 those who we lost during the Holocaust, and we cannot  
17 afford to lose the memories. We cannot afford to let  
18 the knowledge of what occurred to be forgotten.

19 Resolution 673 will for the first time acknowledge  
20 International Holocaust Remembrance Day in New York  
21 City. More importantly, it will establish a citywide  
22 week of Holocaust education, urging educators and  
23 parents to approach the subject with the students and  
24 children. It is not just a responsibility of the  
25

1 Jewish people to preserve the memory of the  
2 Holocaust. It is the responsibility of every single  
3 person to do their part and to bring awareness. As  
4 acquaintance of mine once told me and a teacher of a  
5 sixth grade history class, that when she brought up  
6 the subject of the Holocaust in her classroom,  
7 several students asked to leave because they were  
8 afraid that the lesson would be scary. To that I  
9 say, yes, it is scary. What happened was scary, and  
10 if we forget, well then it will be even scarier.  
11 Across the city hate crimes in 2018 rose more than  
12 five percent. Attacks against Jews, anti-Semitic  
13 attacks, were increased more than 28 percent only  
14 here in New York City, and it's important for us to  
15 educate and to let our young adults know that when a  
16 swastika is scrolled, what the meaning of the  
17 swastika is, how it impacts a person, how it impacts  
18 a Holocaust survivor, and how it impacts an entire  
19 community. I will just end off by saying that my  
20 father told me of a story that when he was walking  
21 towards the gas chambers in Auschwitz, and my father  
22 survived three concentration camps, and he saw this  
23 young individual who was probably about his age,  
24 about 15 years old, crying hysterical. So my father  
25

1 walked over to him and put his arms around that  
2 individual who happened to be a gentile. And the  
3 person looked to my father and says that, "I don't  
4 believe in gods, I never believed in gods, and at  
5 least the people that I'm walking with, they will be  
6 going to the world to come after they get  
7 exterminated. I have nothing to look forward to,  
8 because I never had faith and I never believed in the  
9 Almighty." And my father responded to him walking  
10 down again towards the gas chambers that anyone that  
11 is walking with us to their death will end up going  
12 to the world to come, because we're all in the same  
13 category and we're all in the same position. Just a  
14 few minutes after that, Doctor Josef Mengele rode  
15 down with his bike, and I was told he used to ride  
16 around on his bike, and he gave orders for all the  
17 people walking towards the gas chamber to turn back  
18 around and to go back to the camps. He was extremely  
19 upset, because he wanted to be the one to give the  
20 order for the Jews and others to go to the gas  
21 chamber while someone else gave those orders. And  
22 that is one of the miracles my father had to survive  
23 when he was sent back, because one individual who had  
24 hate in his blood did not give that order for Jews  
25

1 and others to go to the gas chamber. Today is really  
2 a monumental day, and I'm looking forward for this  
3 resolution to pass here in the City Council, and I'm  
4 looking forward to hearing from advocates and  
5 Holocaust survivors, and I've never felt safer in my  
6 life being here in the building with Holocaust  
7 survivors who are so blessed for not only what they  
8 went through, but for being here and for repeating  
9 and telling of the story which takes a lot of  
10 courage, to others, and we must always remember to  
11 never forget. Thank you.

12 [applause]

13 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,  
14 Council Member Deutsch for this inspiring and very  
15 touching and vibrant comments. Now we're going to--  
16 before we pass to the vote, I just want to capitalize  
17 on what you said about the veterans, and I had the  
18 privilege also to be the Chairman of Veterans, and I  
19 discovered-- I heard before the importance of the  
20 veteran, what they have done, but when I was the  
21 Chairman of Veterans, I discovered the importance and  
22 the sacrifices also made by American soldiers for the  
23 war. I remember when I was living in New York,  
24 everywhere I used to go to, the people over there  
25

1 they used to give praise and show they are very  
2 grateful to American soldiers and also the coalition  
3 because they liberated Europe and also they changed  
4 the path of the history of the world, and I think  
5 that this is very important that we in New York City  
6 we do remember what they have done, especially, you  
7 know, when they liberated Europe and also the Jewish  
8 people. Before we move forward I would like to call  
9 to Council Member Grodenchik for a statement.  
10

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Very brief  
12 remarks. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank  
13 you all. Thank you to my colleague, Chaim Deutsch  
14 for introducing this resolution, and thank you  
15 especially to the survivors who are here today,  
16 again, yet again to bear witness in the greatest city  
17 on earth to the monstrous evil that was the  
18 Holocaust. I am not on this committee, but I am here  
19 today to remember six million of my brothers and  
20 sisters, including nearly my entire family who were  
21 murdered in the Holocaust. I'm here to be their  
22 voice. I'm here to be a voice against this monstrous  
23 evil. I am here to speak for those whose voices were  
24 silenced, and I'm here to stand up to those who deny  
25 the Holocaust, but mostly I'm here to say never

1 again. We have seen a disturbing rise in anti-  
2 Semitic-bias crimes across our nation with a rise, of  
3 course, in all hate crimes. Some have said that we  
4 need to forgive and forget, and some outright deny  
5 the Holocaust. To those who deny it, I say the  
6 evidence is not only overwhelming, it is  
7 unimpeachable and it is unassailable. You can bury  
8 your head in the sand like an ostrich, but you're  
9 never going to learn anything like that, and it's  
10 only hope that drives people to deny the Holocaust.  
11 There can be no other reason. There's no other  
12 reason. It's only hate. It happened. We know it  
13 happened. It's a historical fact, and we are not  
14 going to be silenced by those people. To those who  
15 say to us who survive, you have to forgive and  
16 forget, have to forgive and forget. It's been 73  
17 years now since the Holocaust ended, almost 74. My  
18 answer to those people is, I am never going to  
19 forget, and I don't have the power to forgive. You  
20 want somebody to forgive, go ask the six million who  
21 were slaughtered, who lie in unmarked graves, who  
22 went up in ashes. They can't forgive and they can't  
23 forget. I honestly don't know how those people live  
24 with themselves. I don't know how they look in the  
25

1  
2 mirror every morning and get up and go do what they  
3 have to do. That's what they have to bear. It's not  
4 what I have to bear. In closing, I want to urge all  
5 my colleagues who are on this committee to vote yes  
6 on this resolution. I want to thank my friend Chaim  
7 Deutsch for bringing it forward. I look forward to  
8 voting for it next week at our Stated Meeting, and I  
9 ask all New Yorkers and all people of good will  
10 everywhere to remember, just to remember. That is  
11 what we owe the victims of not just the Holocaust,  
12 but all the genocides that have occurred,  
13 unfortunately most of them within our recent memory.  
14 We owe them that, that we should never ever forget,  
15 because that in itself is a crime. Thank you, Mr.  
16 Chairman.

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.  
18 Council Member Grodenchik, thank you. Now we are  
19 going to hear from Council Member Koslowitz.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KOSLOWITZ: Thank you. I  
21 was born during the Holocaust, but I'm going to go  
22 back even further. In 1923, my mother, may she rest  
23 in peace, was in Poland. She was eight years old in  
24 Poland, and one day they came and knocked on the door  
25 and took my grandfather out and they killed him



1 because he was Jewish, and only for that reason,  
2 because he was Jewish. My mother came over that  
3 night. They left in the middle of the night. There  
4 were four children and they came here. What my  
5 mother went through in that period of time-- she was  
6 in the house when they came in and took my  
7 grandfather-- lasted her whole life, the fear and  
8 everything else. When my mother would hear thunder,  
9 she would take me and my sister into the closet,  
10 because to her it was the sounds of guns, and she  
11 lived with that her entire life until the day she  
12 died. The Holocaust was the most horrendous thing  
13 that could have happened to six million Jewish  
14 people. It's beyond even words, thinking about it.  
15 These people have to live with it their whole lives,  
16 because even though the ones that got out and  
17 escaped, the memory sticks. So, actually their  
18 suffering-- they suffer their whole lives with people  
19 they lost, children they lost, husbands that they  
20 lost, wives that they lost. How anybody could forget  
21 this? And to this day, to this day, it goes on and  
22 on and on. A few weeks ago I got a letter in the  
23 mail. It was so anti-Semitic. It talked about me  
24 being Jewish, singling me out. They talked about the

1 Holocaust. They talked about what happened in  
2 Pittsburgh, and in the letter they said, "Not enough  
3 people died in Holocaust-- in the Holocaust." Six  
4 million wasn't enough for this person. I went to the  
5 police. It wasn't classified as a hate crime,  
6 because he didn't say I'm going to come and get you,  
7 but nevertheless, that letter really shocked me. So,  
8 it still goes on and on and on, the hatred of the  
9 Jewish people. What I don't understand is why. You  
10 know, we live in a very diverse city and we-- amongst  
11 us we live with all different religions, races, and  
12 to this day, why does someone have to be so mean.  
13 And I'm not the only one that got the letter. I'm  
14 sure hundreds of people get letters every day  
15 condemning the Holocaust, the people that were  
16 killed, not enough people. He mentioned Pittsburgh.  
17 It's beyond belief. I mean, we've had so many  
18 killings in different cities and our country of  
19 people that were walking to a church and just blast  
20 away people. Someone that went into a synagogue in  
21 Pittsburgh and shot people for no reason at all.  
22 People cannot forget. Senator Manny Gold who has  
23 passed on for quite a few years, he was a state  
24 senator, he introduced legislation that children  
25

1 should be taught about the Holocaust in schools. The  
2 legislation passed, but I'm not so sure that it is  
3 being taught in schools. We have to teach our  
4 children about the Holocaust and many other tragedies  
5 that happened to other people, other religions. They  
6 have to understand; otherwise, they just grow up and  
7 know nothing about it, and that's why today we are  
8 confronted with people that say the Holocaust never  
9 happened, not so many people were killed. They were.  
10 And we miss the ones that are not with us today. So,  
11 to me, Council Member Deutsch for introducing this  
12 legislation, I think is a wonderful, wonderful thing.  
13 Thank you.

14 [applause]

15 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much  
16 Council Member Koslowitz. Now I'm going to call on  
17 clerk to proceed to the vote.

18 COUNCIL CLERK: William Martin, Committee  
19 Clerk, Roll Call Vote Committee on Civil and Human  
20 Rights, Resolution 673B. Chair Eugene?

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I vote aye.

22 COUNCIL CLERK: Dromm?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Permission to  
24 explain my vote?  
25

2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Yes.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you. Yes,  
4 this is a very emotional piece of legislation, one  
5 that affects me deeply. Some people may know, a few  
6 of the people here on the panel, the elected  
7 officials, were instrumental, along with myself in  
8 creating a Holocaust Center at Queensborough  
9 Community College, and I was fortunate to serve on  
10 the board of that while we built that center. That  
11 center stands as a monument to those who died, the  
12 six million Jews who died, but also as a reminder to  
13 all of the students who attend that campus that the  
14 Holocaust was real, and I'm very proud of having been  
15 on the board. I want to thank Council Member Deutsch  
16 for his work on passing this resolution. It's really  
17 important that we continue to remind people about  
18 what happened during the Second World War. I also  
19 represent the district where the final Nazi living in  
20 the United States was just deported, and it took  
21 years and years to get him out of Jackson Heights,  
22 and he passed away just a few days ago as well, in  
23 Germany. I admonish those who would deny the  
24 Holocaust, and as a former New York City public  
25 school teacher, I am aware that the state curriculum

1 mandate on the Holocaust be taught, and I agree with  
2 Council Member Koslowitz that it is not taught, and  
3 more needs to be done, and so a resolution like this  
4 is very, very important that we continue to  
5 acknowledge the fact that the Holocaust happened. I  
6 want to be added to the list of co-sponsors, please,  
7 on this legislation, and I want to end by  
8 highlighting just the paragraph that Council Member  
9 Eugene spoke about before also, which says the  
10 genocide of six million Jewish people at the hands of  
11 Nazi soldiers as well as the Nazi killing crusade  
12 that resulted in the deaths of thousands of  
13 homosexuals and Jehovah Witnesses, hundreds of  
14 thousands of people with disabilities, those from  
15 Roma heritage, and Serbian civilians, and millions of  
16 non-Jewish Polish and Soviet civilians and prisoners  
17 of wars remains one of the most inhumane periods in  
18 modern history. Although there were millions of  
19 victims of Nazism who were not Jewish, anti-Semitism-  
20 - repeat-- anti-Semitism formed the basis of Nazi  
21 ideology that climaxed with the Holocaust. And so we  
22 must always remember that, and in these times where  
23 we see Nazism raising its head again in various parts  
24 of this country, having a resolution passed is  
25

1 vitally important. And let me just add one little  
2 last note as well. When the liberation happened after  
3 World War II at the end of World War II, and as a  
4 member of the LGBT community, you know, LGBT folks  
5 were kept in the-- they remained detained even after  
6 others were liberated because it was still considered  
7 to be against the law in Germany, and it was taken  
8 many years after that to change those laws, and so I  
9 also feel that personal identification with the  
10 Holocaust as a LGBT as a gay man as well. So, I  
11 thank you Council Member Deutsch for introducing this  
12 resolution and support it fully. I have to leave to  
13 go to an Education Committee hearing, and that's the  
14 only reason I'm going to leave a little early today  
15 as well, but thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,  
18 Council Member Dromm.

19 COUNCIL CLERK: Kallos?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Permission to  
21 explain my vote?

22 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Yes, permission  
23 granted. I'm sorry, buddy.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you to  
25 Chair Eugene for this important hearing. Thank you

1 to Council Member Chaim Deutsch who incidentally is  
2 the Chair of the Jewish Caucus and has done so very  
3 much with it in just the first year, and this is yet  
4 another important item that he continues to  
5 highlight. Resolution 673 would recognize January  
6 27<sup>th</sup> as an International Holocaust Remembrance Day in  
7 New York City and declares the week following as a  
8 citywide week of Holocaust education. Council Member  
9 Ben Kallos, my great grandfather was killed on the  
10 Danube on Crystal Noch [sic], and those that survived  
11 Crystal Noch went to-- some of my family left  
12 immediately thereafter. I come from that part that  
13 came to America. Still another part found their way  
14 to the camps, and those that survived are in Sweden  
15 and scattered across the globe. So very many people  
16 were touched by this. I had the great privilege and  
17 honor going to Park East yushiba [sic] led by Rabbi  
18 Arthur Schneier, and growing up where Holocaust  
19 education was part of the curriculum at the Rabbi  
20 Arthur Schneier Park East Day School where we have a  
21 living memorial to the Holocaust educating generation  
22 to generation, L'dor v'dor, to ensure that folks know  
23 that this happened, and whether at my inauguration or  
24 at our states of the district every year-- year in  
25

1 year out we've read a poem that speaks volumes to me.  
2 It's found at the United States Holocaust Museum.  
3 It's a poem by a pastor Herman Niemöller. "First  
4 they came for the socialist, and I did not speak out  
5 because I was not a socialist. Then they came for  
6 the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because  
7 I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the  
8 Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a  
9 Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one  
10 left to speak for me." And I think that as we are  
11 part of a more secular and broader society in the  
12 United States of America, seeing hate crimes on the  
13 rise being led at the highest levels of government,  
14 it is more important than ever to remember the  
15 Holocaust, to remember that the consequences of the  
16 type of hate speech that we've seen before and the--  
17 and we're seeing now is nothing less than the deaths  
18 of six million Jewish people for nothing more than  
19 hate, and we must do this. We have to stand up for  
20 it. Across the street from our district we literally  
21 had an incident of hate crimes involving a Proud Boys  
22 [sic] which is nothing less than an American Movement  
23 of Neo-Nazis, and we must be a light unto the nations  
24 and spread this. And I hope that this resolution and  
25



1 the support of all the folks here and in this room  
2 can bring that light to the world and repair the  
3 shattering that happened and continues to happen  
4 every day. I vote aye.

5 [applause]

6 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,  
7 Council Member Kallos.

8 COUNCIL CLERK: Rodriguez?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Permission to  
10 explain my vote?

11 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Yeah, permission  
12 granted.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: So, I'm  
14 raising two beautiful daughters, Isla [sic] and Yaris  
15 [sp?] and Yaris is 12, and one of the best from Yaris  
16 is Mila whose parents go to Israel at least two or  
17 three times a year. We're raising that generation of  
18 children that they're learning from each other, and  
19 it is our responsibility as adults to be sure that  
20 the history of so many people that look like us,  
21 human being like us, are never forgotten. So, as a  
22 Social Studies teacher that I was in the classroom  
23 for 13 years, co-founder to a school, this is a great  
24 day to work with this resolution. This is a great  
25

1 day that we send a message loud and clear, that when  
2 any Jewish is on the attack, all of us is on the  
3 attack. And what happened in the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is  
4 still fresh. There are so many people that I can see  
5 new faces here, people that suffered directly the  
6 loss of your parents, the loss of your grandparents.  
7 I think that we need to take that pain as our pain,  
8 and we need to continue standing for each other. So,  
9 a few years ago I had this great opportunity to go to  
10 Israel with Council Member Greenfield and the Rabbi  
11 Association, and being the largest museum there, the  
12 Holocaust museum, was not fun, but was an experience  
13 that I would never forget, because I was teaching my  
14 students about the Holocaust for many years, but it's  
15 different when you get to be there and see those  
16 images of what people went through. As a Council  
17 Member for 10 years, I have been standing here with  
18 my friends from the Jewish community shoulder-to-  
19 shoulder as they've been standing for all of us. So,  
20 as we are voting on this resolution, it is important  
21 to express our commitment, our solidarity, and the  
22 best way to do it is to make a pledge that when any  
23 Jewish is on the attack in our city in our state in  
24 our nation in the whole world, we will take it as our  
25

1 attack. Because of what the Jewish being able to do  
2 after what happened, the Holocaust, and as a  
3 Dominican I'm very proud to say, as you know, that  
4 Dominican opened its country to welcome the Jews when  
5 not even the United States made that decision at that  
6 time. So we have a history there Puerto Plata where  
7 many Jews got there and we were able to show our  
8 support. But that group of Jews, they also played  
9 many role for the economic development of the  
10 Dominican Republic. So for me again, no, I can never  
11 say that I will understand the pains of the Jewish  
12 people as you live it, but it is my responsibility to  
13 be there standing shoulder-to-shoulder, and the best  
14 way that I make that commitment is to make that  
15 pledge that I will always be a strong ally and friend  
16 of the Jewish community in the United States and the  
17 whole world not only as a Council Member, but from  
18 any office that I will hold in the future. The  
19 second piece of my commitment is, I represent Yashiba  
20 [sic] University and [inaudible], and I will be  
21 working to build to create a Jewish-Latino Council.  
22 So continue developing the strong relationship so  
23 that we can support each other and support all New  
24  
25

1 Yorkers when we are the victim of any hate attack.

2 Thank you.

3 [applause]

4 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,  
5 Council Member Rodriguez.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: I vote aye,  
7 and I would like to add my name to that resolution,  
8 too.

9 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.

10 COUNCIL CLERK: Rosenthal?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Just I think I  
12 need to say that I vote aye, because I don't think I  
13 said I vote aye.

14 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: You forgot that is a  
15 member of the committee there.

16 COUNCIL CLERK: Council Member Rosenthal?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I vote aye,  
18 and just for quick explanation of my vote with  
19 permission?

20 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Permission granted.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I want-- I  
22 often have a lot to say those who know me, but this  
23 time I really-- there are no words. So, I vote aye.  
24 I'm grateful to my colleagues for spearheading this.  
25

1 So, thank you so much, Council Member Deutsch. Thank  
2 you, Council Member Eugene for this hearing. Thank  
3 you.  
4

5 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,  
6 Council Member Rosenthal. Thank you.

7 COUNCIL CLERK: By a vote of 5 in the  
8 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,  
9 Resolution has been adopted by the Committee.

10 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.  
11 Now, we're going to hear from Council Member Deutsch  
12 again.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you,  
14 Chair. Firstly, I want to thank my colleagues for  
15 this unanimous vote, important vote, and we're also  
16 passing this historical bill here in the City of New  
17 York, and before I get into that I just want to say  
18 that January 27<sup>th</sup> is National Holocaust Remembrance,  
19 and here in New York City, January 27<sup>th</sup> will be  
20 Holocaust Remembrance Day officially here in New York  
21 City for the first time ever, and in addition to that  
22 will be Holocaust Education Week. So, I will be  
23 going with my colleague in different areas throughout  
24 the City during that week and to schools and for all  
25 the middle schools and high schools speaking about

2 the Holocaust, and I will also be viewing films  
3 throughout my district, and the first film will be  
4 Schindler's List. It's going to be a free movie for  
5 young adults. that information will be spread out  
6 throughout the school system here in New York, and  
7 everyone is invited to come, because now is a time  
8 when we need to let people know and continue to build  
9 upon this, and something very historical will be  
10 happening this month in the City Council, and I'm  
11 proud to say that working with my colleague, Council  
12 Member Mark Levine, we have introduced a bill in the  
13 City Council to have a new office in the Mayor's  
14 Office to go out to schools from K through 12 and to  
15 teach about hate crimes. So this brand new office  
16 will be-- you'll have educators who will be going out  
17 to schools K through 12 and teaching about hate  
18 crimes throughout the City of New York, and I'm  
19 looking forward to that. We had a hearing on this  
20 bill, and I'm looking forward for this bill to pass  
21 this month, and also first time ever here in the City  
22 of New York where we can do-- have outreach. I want  
23 to thank the many advocates who are involved and I  
24 worked with in the past and I just want to-- I don't  
25 want to miss anyone out, but I just want to give

1  
2 recognition to Ruth Lichtenstein who is here today  
3 who I have had many meetings with, and she came up  
4 with a curriculum which is going out to all of my  
5 colleagues for that week of January 27<sup>th</sup> for  
6 Holocaust Education Week, and we're using their  
7 curriculum to use for our schools during that week.  
8 And I want to thank you for everything you do and all  
9 the advocates that are here, including the ADL. We  
10 stand side-by-side all the time, and I see many of my  
11 constituents, Bella Gabanko [sp?] who does  
12 unbelievable work in southern Brooklyn and so many  
13 others that I'm not going to start mentioning,  
14 because I'm going to miss out. But I just want to  
15 thank my colleagues because without the partnership  
16 of the embers in the City Council we wouldn't be able  
17 to accomplish or get this far, and finally, I want to  
18 thank our Speaker Corey Johnson. He is the leader  
19 here in the City Council. Without his support none  
20 of this would have happened. So, I really want to  
21 give him a shout out and say thank you, Speaker for  
22 being who you are and for your sensitivity towards  
23 all communities and you are really special to me.  
24 Because of your leadership millions of memories will  
25 never, never be forgotten. So, at this time I'm

1  
2 looking forward to giving this over back to the Chair  
3 and hearing from the Holocaust survivors. Just to  
4 let you, everything here today is being recorded, so  
5 it could always be viewed later on, and people are  
6 watching live right now on their screen on TV, so  
7 whatever you say is going to be public, and I'm  
8 looking forward to taking your experience and what  
9 you're bringing us today and passing that message on  
10 for years to come. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,  
12 Council Member Deutsch. Before we call the first  
13 panel, I just want to take the opportunity to commend  
14 you again, to thank you, Council Member Deutsch, for  
15 this wonderful resolution. Very important, thank you  
16 very much. And I want to take the opportunity also  
17 to commend and advocate my colleagues also. All of  
18 you for your courage and your resilience and for  
19 willing to come to share with us your experience and  
20 your suffering as people. And again, I want you to  
21 know that we in New York City, we stand with you. We  
22 have been there with you, and we will continue to  
23 stand with the Jewish community because no people  
24 should go through what you have been through before  
25 and during the Holocaust. Thank you very much. Now



1 let us call the first panel: [inaudible] Thank you  
2 very much. You know, I'm sorry, because-- thank you.  
3 Very-- okay. Is it Hava Agar [sic]. Okay. Is that  
4 Lamuel [sp?]? Samuel? Samuel Bykov. Samuel-- would  
5 you please come? Thank you. Thank you very much.  
6 Would you please state your name for the record, and  
7 you can start any time.

9 RUTH LICHTENSTEIN: Ruth Lichtenstein.

10 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Before you start, I  
11 just want to remind you that it is being recorded.  
12 You are on tv. Your statement is going to become  
13 public. Thank you.

14 RUTH LICHTENSTEIN: Good afternoon.

15 Thank you for inviting me. Thank you Council Member  
16 Chaim Deutsch for your crucial and very important  
17 initiative. Let me introduce myself. I was about  
18 seven years old when the Eichmann trial began in  
19 Jerusalem, Israel. One day, during the course of the  
20 trial I heard a knock on the door. There stood Leon  
21 [sic]. Leon was a man we considered our uncle, as  
22 during the holocaust Leon had spent eight months with  
23 my mother in a bunker in Warsaw, the capital of  
24 Poland, at that time almost entirely reduced to  
25 rubble by the Nazis. Leon was a man I knew as a

1 pillar of strength, always smiling, always had a  
2 candy for me, but now he stood all shaken at the  
3 verge of tears. The moment my parents saw him, they  
4 took him into the dining room and locked the door. A  
5 few minutes later I heard bitter sobbing. It was  
6 loud. As a little girl I couldn't understand why he  
7 was crying. As an adult I learned slowly and  
8 painfully all about the Holocaust, and then I  
9 understood that my parents, both of them survivors  
10 whom I loved so dearly and their friends whom I  
11 respected so much had emerged alive but deeply scared  
12 from a unique form of hell. It took me years to  
13 understand that the survivors wore a mask so we could  
14 go on living so they could pretend to the world  
15 outside and to us the children that everything is  
16 normal and life is going on. Only as an adult did I  
17 finally begin to understand the trauma that the  
18 Eichmann trial. Eichmann was the Nazi criminal in  
19 charge of the execution of the final solution. What  
20 his trial represented for survivors, it forced them  
21 to confront the pains they carried within them and to  
22 remember the past they tried so hard to burry, and  
23 that's why Leon was crying. Many years had passed.  
24 I lost my beloved father at a young age. He was a  
25

1 published author of more than 35 books about Polish  
2 Jury [sic]. He was an intellectual. He was the  
3 founding editor of the Hebrew language Hamodia in  
4 Israel. I promised to continue his mission. Since  
5 then, in 21 years of me carrying there [sic] and  
6 serving as the publisher of the English language  
7 Hamodia and as the Founder and Director of Project  
8 Witness which is educational resource center, I have  
9 seen much and what I have seen more was how we forget  
10 more than remember and how I witness again and again  
11 that only 75 years passed, but we keep forgetting.  
12 Time and again I witness at my desk of rise of anti-  
13 Semitism which we like to believe that it happened  
14 only in Europe, but it is not. Again and again I  
15 witness desperate calls that are coming from Jewish  
16 students from different campuses in New York City and  
17 out. Again and again I hear about Jews who are  
18 walking in traditional garb on certain streets in  
19 Crowne Heights or Williamsburg or even you know in  
20 Borough Park, and they are being mistreated to say  
21 the least. And again and again I ask myself what are  
22 we doing to stop it? And what are we doing to  
23 remember? And what are we doing that it should never  
24 ever happen again? So, by the name of survivors like  
25

1  
2 my parents, by the name of my half-brother who was  
3 only four years old when he was sent to Auschwitz  
4 just four months before liberation, I am here to  
5 support, to beg, to ask help us to give more  
6 education. Help us to stop this. Help us to make  
7 sure that it will never, ever, ever happen again in a  
8 city like New York and in our wonderful country like  
9 the United States. Thank you very much.

10 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.

11 [applause]

12 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Will you please  
13 remain seated, Ms. Don't leave yet, please. Thank  
14 you very much. Thank you. The next one?

15 UNIDENTIFIED: My name--

16 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] No,  
17 would you please remain seated, please?

18 UNIDENTIFIED: Okay.

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I'm sorry, you have  
20 to leave?

21 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: I'm sorry about  
23 that. Please feel free. Please feel free to leave.  
24 I'm sorry about that. Thank you.

2 UNIDENTIFIED: My name Hava [inaudible] I  
3 was in Auschwitz when I was 13 years old.

4 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Can you speak to the  
5 microphone?

6 UNIDENTIFIED: I'm sorry, am I not  
7 speaking to the microphone? Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you, Council  
9 Member Deutsch.

10 UNIDENTIFIED: I'm sorry, I didn't  
11 prepare anything written. I didn't know exactly what  
12 the questions will be, what the circumstance going to  
13 be. So, now I'm just apologizing for that. But the  
14 short [sic] I'm going to tell you. When I was 13  
15 years old, they were taking my family and I to  
16 Auschwitz. I lost my father only two years earlier.  
17 They took him to work [sic] camp. He never returned.  
18 He was later found out that he was murdered by  
19 Ukraine [sic] people. No other reason than being  
20 Jewish. At the age of 14 I was, thank God,  
21 liberated, but before I was liberated I was taken to  
22 a second camp and then to a third camp. I was  
23 liberated the last day of the war, and I was on my  
24 own at the age of 14. And I knew exactly what I have  
25 to do, how to behave, where to go, and thank God I

1 succeeded. Today, I have-- I am a mother,  
2 grandmother, great-grandmother, a lot of kids, and  
3 thank God they're all useful and good citizens of the  
4 United States. The only fright that stayed with me,  
5 mainly, it should never occur again. And I'm not  
6 just saying it today. I said it the moment I entered  
7 this country. I'm afraid of it. I'm afraid of it,  
8 because it could happen in a second. If we're going  
9 to be quiet about one instance happening and to  
10 submit-- clears up in a moment. So people have to be  
11 very vigilant. And the main-- one more thing I'm  
12 going to mention, that those who deny the Holocaust,  
13 I lost everyone. I lost my parents, my grandparents,  
14 my aunts, my uncle, extended families, everybody  
15 except one brother. So, let them try to tell it to  
16 me that it didn't exist. I really appreciate it--  
17 appreciate your committee what you're trying to do,  
18 and I hope you'll be very successful, and it should  
19 never ever again occur again. Thank you very much.

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.

22 [applause]

23 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you. Thank  
24 you very much. Would you please state your name,  
25 sir, for the record?

1  
2 SAMUEL BEIKOF: My name's Samuel Beikof  
3 [sp?]. I'm a Holocaust survivor. Probably the  
4 youngest Holocaust survivor, because I'm going to  
5 tell you my story, and you're going to understand why  
6 is youngest one. First away [sic], I would like to  
7 thank you, Councilman Chaim Deutsch, and all the  
8 councilmen who were sitting here behind the tables  
9 for giving me opportunity to tell you my story, what  
10 was happened with me during the Second World War. I  
11 would like-- thank you. I would like to share with  
12 you my story. When I was 18 months old my family, 33  
13 people, were transported to camp in Ukraine,  
14 Bogdanovka. Bogdanovka, this name never mentioned  
15 not-- attending several meetings in the United  
16 Nations. I attending several meetings in Ukraine.  
17 It never was mentioned as a concentration camp, but  
18 was a real concentration camp, and all the documents  
19 you can find out this was concentration camp. But  
20 this was horrible concentration camp, not like  
21 [inaudible]. Bogdanovka was mentioned as a third  
22 [sic] place after Auschwitz, Dachau, and after  
23 [inaudible] it was named Bogdanovka. And Bogdanovka  
24 were killed 55,600 people. Within these people was  
25 29 members of my family. These people were killed

1 during the two months starting December 1941 'til  
2 February, I believe, five. People were killed  
3 immediately. Group of 200 people were brought to  
4 this place. We put [inaudible] took for them clothes  
5 and the belongings and were killed and thrown in  
6 burning hay. In this case, no one person could be  
7 survived, and fortunately, in some moment it was  
8 given order from German army to stop killing people,  
9 and 127 people were survivors. Within this 127  
10 people this was four members of my family, me, my  
11 mother, my grandmother, and my sister. Like was  
12 mentioned before over here, like Chaim Deutsch said,  
13 Council Member, he said this was forbidden story to  
14 talk about that, and in my family very, very little I  
15 can hear from my parents, from my mother and  
16 grandmother what was happened during the second war.  
17 But when I became older and older I start to find out  
18 a lot of things from people, stories about Second  
19 World War, about ghettos, about concentration camps,  
20 and I came to conclusion, and I can say today in this  
21 particular moment my dream came true. I can sit and  
22 express my feelings, express my story in front of  
23 people who is the same nationality as me. I am  
24 Jewish person, and all these 56 people-- 56,400  
25



1 people who were killed, it was pure Jews. Because  
2 let's say we're talking about in Kiev [sic]  
3 [inaudible], this was killed a lot of people, but  
4 within Jewish it was all kind different people. This  
5 was people mentally distorted. This was people,  
6 gypsies, Ukrainian people, in particular in  
7 Bogdanovka only people were killed and burned for one  
8 particular reason, because we were Jew, only. This  
9 story is what was bothering me, and I decide to  
10 dedicate my life to be messenger to people because  
11 with God willing I was survived and I was only five  
12 years, four years old. And God probably decide to  
13 make for me a messenger who can deliver to people  
14 this massacre what was happened. This terrible,  
15 horrible moment would be-- I'm not remember, but my  
16 sister, my mother, my grandmother [inaudible] like  
17 all the close people from their family were murdered.  
18 What I can tell you about, I did myself-- I'm not  
19 belong to organizations. I belong to organizations,  
20 but I do on my own. First what I did-- I have strong  
21 feeling, like education, it's a very, very, very  
22 important one for people who came through Holocaust  
23 who understand like nobody else like this supposed to  
24 be never happen again. And my family gave a monument  
25

1  
2 as a present, as a donation to-- as was mentioned,  
3 about Kingsborough College, and wrote on the plaque  
4 which it says, "For six million Jews were killed  
5 during the Second World War." I traveled to Ukraine.  
6 I found the place, I found Bogdanovka, and I came  
7 over there and I decide over there to put a monument,  
8 too. But fortunately one of survivor who lived in  
9 Israel, he put over there a monument, and I was  
10 staying and looking at monument, and I said, "What I  
11 can do for these people who were killed over here?"  
12 Because it's only ash you can find over there. You  
13 can't find even bones of these people. and I decide  
14 to plant over there Memorial Park for 127 who were  
15 survivors, and we put over there 127 trees in the  
16 memory of everyone who were killed, and I was  
17 thinking, like, trees when this going to grow, what's  
18 [sic] of these trees when wind is going to come?  
19 It's going to deliver to them our sorrow and it's  
20 going to deliver to all the world about we are  
21 witnessing these terrible moments what was happened.  
22 Traveled back to Odessa where I came from. I decided  
23 to put a moment, which is-- I would like to present  
24 to you some picture in Odessa. This is monument that  
25 we put in Kingsborough College. Excuse me, I'm a

1 little bit nervous. This is the monument that we put  
2 in Odessa for all who were killed in Transnistria.  
3 Sorry, this is one. With-- I would like to mention  
4 to you something. In Bogdanovka middle school, which  
5 is Principal of this school, Ukrainian gentleman,  
6 whose name is Pascale [inaudible], he's doing such a  
7 tremendous job to keeping this memorial, which I  
8 mentioned to you was 127 trees, memorial keeping  
9 clean, nice, and every year on January 27<sup>th</sup> in school  
10 we make meetings about National Holocaust Day,  
11 International Holocaust Day. This is the picture  
12 students, and I brought for them t-shirts. You're  
13 going to see over there, which is we're wearing these  
14 t-shirts. I'm going to give you more pictures  
15 please. And even winter time, we [inaudible] right  
16 now, winter time, pictures which is taking care about  
17 our memorial. This is too. This is-- even children  
18 like five, six years old helped us to plant the  
19 trees. If somebody-- you can see these pictures,  
20 please. And there's one more. We put over there.  
21 We put over there, you can see. My dream, my dream  
22 to make Bogdanovka place where people going to come  
23 from all over the world, where people going to come  
24 to observe this place, and where people can stay and  
25

1 think about these innocent lost lives in Bogdanovka.  
2 I'm fully compliant with Chaim Deutsch idea, not  
3 idea, presentation, and everything else, and I have  
4 strong feeling like this be very helpful, but, but  
5 every small thing that we can do to prevent this  
6 happen again, every from us sitting in this  
7 auditorium can do something, small things. For  
8 instance, the little pin [sic] about Transnistria,  
9 about lost lives in places where the [inaudible] was.  
10 I made bigger and you can see, and our slogan is  
11 "Strength of humanity is keep the memory alive."  
12

13 [applause]

14 SAMUEL BYKOV: If you going to give me few  
15 minute more, I'm going to say something else. May I?  
16 Councilman? Council Member?

17 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Yes, this is such a  
18 very important topic and very important moment.

19 SAMUEL BYKOV: Okay.

20 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: So, I'm, yes,  
21 granting you few minutes.

22 SAMUEL BYKOV: Thank you very much.

23 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: We have a lot of  
24 other speakers, but I'm giving you two minutes more  
25 or one minute.

SAMUEL BYKOV: I'll be short.

CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.

SAMUEL BYKOV: Yesterday, on special [sic] [inaudible] next to the memorial, Holocaust Memorial Park School, and children were staying outside. I came to the children, and I was a little bit afraid, because I look like a stranger, but I asking, "Kids, do you know what this is across the street, because I am not from that place?" Nobody could answer me. This school is number of the school, it's District 21. It's called Bay Academy School. I asking four people after I came to another four people, to four children, and I ask them-- make like this, and they said, "No, we don't know nothing about." I traveled again, and I asked-- only two girls said, "This is Holocaust. This is Holocaust memorial." I said, do you know something about Holocaust, and they said, "No, no, no, no, we do not." I looked in internet and I see school mission, and I believe every school in their mission they should put like they [sic] said over here, very nice phrases like generations type [sic], and people put generation standards. One of the standards,

1 generation, it should be standard to help to not to  
2 happen this again in the world, and I can say--

3 [applause]

4 SAMUEL BYKOV: And I can say who is our  
5 future? Our future is our children. We going to  
6 build future, they have to teach them how to build a  
7 future. We have to tell our children to not to  
8 forget this horrible and terrible times which was  
9 happened. And they going to help build our future  
10 and build us from not to happen anymore, anti-  
11 Semitism, Nazism, fascism, Holocaust again, and it's  
12 not going to happen, hate, hatred, which is very rise  
13 right now in New York and all over the world.

14 Everywhere in the world I'm going, I'm traveling, I  
15 come to synagogues, I come over there, I speak with  
16 people, and I can see everyone scared. We have to do  
17 something. Like I said, me, I don't want see for me.  
18 I want to see we, we supposed to do it. Take from  
19 people scariness forever. Thank you very much.

20 [applause]

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,  
22 sir, thank you. Now, we are going to call the next  
23 panel.  
24

1  
2 SAMUEL BYKOV: Sorry, [inaudible] give to  
3 Council Member.

4 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you.

5 SAMUEL BYKOV: I promise him to give this  
6 picture.

7 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you, sir.

8 SAMUEL BYKOV: And one more.

9 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you.

10 SAMUEL BYKOV: One more very, very-- my  
11 mother, my mother used to write special books because  
12 we were starving after when we can came from  
13 concentration camp. We came together, and my mom,  
14 she used to write books for Russian people in Russian  
15 language about food, about this and that and that,  
16 and every book, four words, which is she put on the  
17 top of this book, "Dedicated to Holocaust survivors."  
18 Two words, "Dedicated to Holocaust survivors" help to  
19 not to happen again. It's very important. And I'm  
20 sorry.

21 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,  
22 sir. Thank you for sharing that. Thank you.

23 UNIDENTIFIED: May I?

24 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Yes, you may leave,  
25 sir. Now, I'm going to call the next panel. Before

2 I do that I want to acknowledge that we have been  
3 joined by Council Member Lander. You want to go now?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Yes, please.

5 Thank you so much.

6 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Will you please?

7 COUNCIL CLERK: Continuation Roll Call  
8 Vote Resolution 673B, Council Member Lander?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Request  
10 permission to very briefly explain my vote?

11 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Permission granted.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you. first  
13 of all, Mr. Chair, thank you so much for convening  
14 this hearing, and of course, thank you to Council  
15 Member Deutsch for bringing forward this important  
16 resolution. You know, obviously like all American-  
17 Jews, all Jews around the world, I had family who  
18 were killed in the Holocaust. It's for all of us  
19 very personal at this moment when hate crimes of all  
20 kinds are on the rise, but of course, ones against  
21 Jews especially, it's just really important that we  
22 underline what we're fighting against, and I really  
23 want to say thank you for bringing this resolution  
24 forward. I would like to be added as a co-sponsor to  
25 it, and I vote aye. Thank you.



2 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you--

3 COUNCIL CLERK: [interposing] Vote now  
4 currently stands at 6 in the affirmative.

5 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much,  
6 Council Member Lander. Now, we're going to call the  
7 next panel: Tatyana Seigel, Evander-- is it Banster  
8 [sic]? Anat Barber. Thank you very much. Rita  
9 Iosefson? Any one of you can start anytime, but  
10 before you start, would you please state your name  
11 for the record?

12 TATYANA SEIGEL: Good afternoon, honorable  
13 members of New York City Council. My name is Tatyana  
14 Seigel [sp?]. As a daughter of Holocaust survivors  
15 and an attorney who assists elderly Holocaust  
16 survivors in New York City, I'm here to testify in  
17 support of Resolution 673. Resolution 673 is  
18 sponsored by honorable Chaim Deutsch in order to  
19 recognize January 27<sup>th</sup> as Holocaust Remembrance Day,  
20 and the week beginning January 27<sup>th</sup> as a citywide  
21 week on Holocaust education in New York City. First  
22 of all, Resolution 673 is analogous to the United  
23 Nations' General Assembly Resolution 60-7, which  
24 passed in November of 2005. The United Nation  
25 Resolution came after special session which was held

1 earlier that year in January 2005 during which the  
2 United Nations General Assembly marked the 60<sup>th</sup>  
3 anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi  
4 concentration camps and the end of the Holocaust. My  
5 family was forever scared by the tragedy of the  
6 Holocaust. My father is 78 and my mom is 76,  
7 respectively. So, my family experienced the  
8 Holocaust in the Ukraine when German army invaded the  
9 Soviet Union on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1941. My mom was just one  
10 month old--  
11

12 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: [interposing] I'm  
13 sorry, Ms., I just want to-- I'm going to step out  
14 because I got another public hearing going on at the  
15 same time. It will take me only few minutes.  
16 Council Member Deutsch will take over for me,  
17 alright?

18 TATYANA SEIGEL: Sure.

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you so much.  
20 I'll be back right away.

21 TATYANA SEIGEL: May I continue?

22 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

23 TATYANA SEIGEL: Okay. So, as I was  
24 saying, my mom who is 77 years old right now and she  
25 can't be here. She's disabled. So, I'm here in her

1 place to tell her story and the story of my family.  
2 My mom was one month old at that time. They resided  
3 in Odessa, Ukraine. My baby mom, my grandmother and  
4 my great grandmother managed to evacuate from Odessa,  
5 Ukraine to Uzbekistan. However, my great grandfather  
6 and his other two adult children stayed in  
7 [inaudible] Ukraine, and they perished there. The  
8 town was occupied by the German army from July 1941  
9 to March 1944. ON November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1941 5,300 Jewish  
10 residents of the town and surrounding villages were  
11 shot by the Nazi. A ghetto [sic] was formed on  
12 December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1941 where all surviving Jewish  
13 residents had to settle and were subject to forced  
14 labor. They were subsequently killed in the fall of  
15 1942. More than 9,500 Jews were killed in the town  
16 in total. As a result, my mom became an orphan  
17 during World War II because her mom died during the  
18 hardships of evacuation and her father died at the  
19 front line fighting the Nazis. My other relatives on  
20 my maternal side perished in [inaudible] Ukraine, the  
21 city which experienced horrific programs in 1941 and  
22 mass shootings by the Nazi and their collaborators.  
23 Right now, as an elder law attorney, I assist many  
24 Holocaust survivors in New York City with healthcare  
25

1 and homecare issues as well as public benefits and  
2 housing concerns. While working as a temporary staff  
3 attorney in New York Legal Assistance Group, NYLAG in  
4 2016 and 2018 I helped many Holocaust survivors with  
5 preparation of advanced directives and claims  
6 conference forms. When I met them in their homes in  
7 self-help community centers and in Jewish community  
8 centers, I learned about their stories of survival  
9 and hardships during World War II. For example, one  
10 elderly client in Brooklyn told me that she was born  
11 in Belgium in 1933. Her parents were killed by the  
12 Nazis and she was saved by nuns, Catholic nuns, who  
13 took her and she stayed in the Monastery until she  
14 turned 13 years old. Then a Jewish organization  
15 transported her with other orphans to the United  
16 States. She went to high school in Manhattan and  
17 later she married and had two children. As an  
18 attorney from NYLAG I prepared the healthcare proxy  
19 and power of attorney for her for this client so that  
20 her adult daughter could assist her by going to the  
21 bank and dealing with her finances on her behalf. My  
22 NYLAG colleagues and I have heard many moving stories  
23 of survival from elderly Holocaust survivors in New  
24 York City. These survivors came from Poland,  
25

1 Muldova, Belarus, Ukraine, France, Belgium, Romania,  
2 and other European countries. Nonprofit  
3 organizations such as NYLAG self-help community  
4 services, JASA, UJA Federation have assisted  
5 thousands of elderly Holocaust survivors in New York  
6 City. Due to the efforts of social workers and  
7 lawyers form self-help community services, many  
8 Holocaust survivors have homecare assistance from  
9 claims conference which helps them to stay in their  
10 homes with dignity and the respect they deserve.  
11 NYLAG also has Holocaust compensation assistance  
12 project which provides free legal assistance to  
13 Holocaust survivors in the areas of compensation and  
14 restitution. Elie Weisel, a Nobel Prize winner and  
15 Holocaust survivor from Romania once said, "How do we  
16 mourn for six million people who died?" And he  
17 responded, "They left us without a trace and we are  
18 their trace." As children of Holocaust survivors, we  
19 have a duty to remember and to never forget. We have  
20 a duty to educate our children and others about the  
21 genocide and mass murder. We have a duty to teach  
22 about Holocaust, because to teach about Holocaust is  
23 to teach about the nature and dynamics of mass crimes  
24 like genocides, crimes against-- I'm sorry-- crimes  
25

1  
2 against humanity and war crimes. In addition, I  
3 would like to add that just on Monday, this Monday,  
4 President Trump assigned into law bipartisan  
5 legislation names for the late Holocaust survivor and  
6 Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel. The Elie Wiesel  
7 Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act aims to  
8 improve the United States response to emerging or  
9 potential genocides, and this legislation was passed  
10 final vote-- final vote last month in the Senate and  
11 in the House of Representatives. In conclusion, I  
12 encourage the members of the committee to support  
13 resolution 673, and I hope that once this resolution  
14 is passed the New York City Department of Education  
15 in partnership with the United States Holocaust  
16 Memorial Museum will develop the age-appropriate  
17 curriculum about the Holocaust, incorporating such  
18 important and moving works as the Diary of Anne Frank  
19 and the novels by Elie Wiesel. Thank you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you,  
21 Tatiana, and thank you for sharing your family's  
22 story. It was really touching and moving and very  
23 important for people to know. Alright, next is Evan  
24 Bernstein from the ADL. I just want to say a few  
25 words about Evan. Over the last three or four

1 months, as I've said before, we had an increase of  
2 hate crimes, specifically targeting the Jewish  
3 community, but in the broader community throughout  
4 New York City. So, I had the pleasure of standing  
5 with Evan at the ADL at almost a dozen unity rallies  
6 across the city, standing up against hate, against  
7 bias against any individual. Anyone that has  
8 attacked here in the City of New York is an attack on  
9 all of us. So, thank you, Evan, for everything you  
10 do on behalf of the community. So, if you could go  
11 ahead with your testimony. Thank you.

12  
13 EVAN BERNSTEIN: Thank you, Council  
14 Member Deutsch, for having me today representing the  
15 ADL and to all the other members of the City Council--  
16 -

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: [interposing] I'm  
18 sorry, Evan, just give me one second.

19 EVAN BERNSTEIN: Sure.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: I just want to--  
21 we have Council Member Perkins here. So, if you want  
22 to go ahead and vote.

23 COUNCIL CLERK: Continuation roll call on  
24 Resolution 673B, Council Member Perkins?

25 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: Aye.

2 COUNCIL CLERK: Final vote on that is now  
3 7 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative and no  
4 abstentions.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you very  
6 much. And what happens after it passes here in the  
7 Committee it goes to a full vote of the full council,  
8 which is 51 members of the Council for a full vote,  
9 and that's going to happen later this month. Okay,  
10 Evan, go.

11 EVAN BERNSTEIN: Thank you so much again,  
12 Council Member Deutsch, and for all of your  
13 friendship and support where this difficult time,  
14 especially over the last you know, six to eight  
15 months here in New York, the amount of hate crimes  
16 especially seen in Brooklyn towards the Jewish  
17 communities have been very disturbing. At the ADL--  
18 my name is Evan Bernstein. I'm the New York Regional  
19 Director for the Anti-Defamation League. We're  
20 pleased the City Council is considering ways to  
21 commemorate the Holocaust, including K-12 education  
22 programming here in New York City as this serves as a  
23 constant reminder to our city and our country and the  
24 world that the atrocities that mankind had and the  
25 audacity that they could commit them. More



1  
2 importantly, a full week of Holocaust education would  
3 squarely fall in line with the ADL's mission, the  
4 values of stopping the defamation of the Jewish  
5 people and securing justice and virtue before all,  
6 particularly those of inclusion in respects and the  
7 hopes that eventually all citizens in our city and  
8 country will establish relationships held by the  
9 fabric of those values without labels to separate  
10 them. You know, as the numbers I know are mentioned  
11 and some of your opening remarks by the Claims  
12 Conference, studies that have been done, I think it's  
13 shocking that 31 percent of Americans believe based  
14 on polling that only two million or less died in the  
15 Holocaust. Sixty-six percent don't know what  
16 Auschwitz is, and 22 percent of millennials had never  
17 heard of the Holocaust. Clearly, there is a need for  
18 education. The education that the ADL has had a long  
19 history of providing this kind of Holocaust education  
20 to schools across the country, especially here in New  
21 York, and bigger [inaudible] tradition providing  
22 anti-bias training to educators and students, and you  
23 can count on us an ally, as I've said to you in  
24 private, now I'm saying publicly. And if this  
25 important resolution, you know, six-- Resolution 673

1 passes, and we want to be much a part of this as  
2 possible. In 2005, the Anti-Defamation League  
3 launched Echoes and Reflections campaign curricula, a  
4 resource, a written guide by the ADL in partnership  
5 with Yad Vashem and the USC Shoah Foundation is a  
6 guide to empower middle school and high school  
7 educators with day [sic] classroom lesson materials  
8 professional development free of charge, and today  
9 this guide has impacted more than 50,000 educators  
10 reaching an estimated 5.2 million students across the  
11 United States at no cost. I know there's a lot of  
12 other partners that are here as well, and we all are  
13 here, I know, to stand with you and the City Council  
14 to provide educational resources needed to get to as  
15 many students as possible. Personally, the  
16 Holocaust, my family was in Denmark, and thank God  
17 for righteous Christians that were able to protect my  
18 family through the Holocaust, and I know so many did  
19 not have that, but it's something that's near and  
20 dear to me, and near to our organization. And again,  
21 I can't thank you enough for your support of this and  
22 how necessary Holocaust education is this moment and  
23 time. Thank you.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you very  
3 much, and thank you for that shout out to mention the  
4 Righteous Christian, and I just want to mention now  
5 we have someone here, Svetlantika Bankov [sp?] who  
6 just planted a tree in the Holocaust Memorial in  
7 Sheepshead Bay for those, the righteous amongst the  
8 nation who helped those Holocaust survivors and  
9 during the Holocaust put their lives on the line and  
10 at risk. So, thank you very much for your  
11 partnership and it's only with the partnership of  
12 organizations and individuals such as yourself that  
13 we could get the message out, and remember that the  
14 Holocaust for future generations. So, thank you,  
15 Evan for everything that you do. So, now, I'd like  
16 to ask Rita on behalf of the Museum of Jewish  
17 Heritage. Okay, So--

18 ANAT BARBER: Whenever.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: You can go.

20 ANAT BARBER: Okay.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: So, Anat, you go  
22 first.

23 ANAT BARBER: Thank you. Hi, good  
24 afternoon. Thank you so much for having me. My name  
25 is Anat Barber and I'm the professional at UJA

1 Federation of New York who has the privilege of  
2 leading our community initiative for Holocaust  
3 survivors through which last year alone UJA cared for  
4 nearly 10,000 survivors living in the New York City,  
5 Long Island, and Westchester areas, and I also have  
6 the privilege of being the granddaughter of four  
7 Holocaust survivors, including one of the oldest  
8 living survivors of Schindler's List, which you  
9 mentioned you plan to screen next week, or two weeks  
10 from now. Through our programming we support  
11 socialization programs that relieve the crippling  
12 isolation that many survivors experience. We provide  
13 individualized support from specially trained social  
14 workers, emergency cash assistance, Legal Aid, that  
15 was referred to by others here, and we wrap survivors  
16 really in the warm embrace of community and assure  
17 them that they're not alone. UJA applauds the  
18 leadership of the City Council for its continued  
19 investment in Holocaust survivors through the Elie  
20 Wiesel Holocaust Survivor Initiative through which  
21 many of our nonprofit partners receive funding to  
22 provide these services to Holocaust survivors, and a  
23 refrain we here time and again from the clients who  
24 we serve is that when they pass away they worry that  
25

1 not only that their own stories will be forgotten,  
2 but that the stories that they hold of their loved  
3 ones and family members who did not survive will  
4 perish with them. And our compassionate providers of  
5 care, our social workers, and our attorneys always  
6 ensure our clients that those memories as they share  
7 them with the professionals will live on, but we must  
8 widen the circle of responsibility of those who will  
9 transmit the survivors' stories beyond those direct  
10 service providers to the broader New York City  
11 community. We have the profound distinction of  
12 living amongst the last generation of Holocaust  
13 survivors, about 40,000 of whom live in our area, and  
14 we must ensure that their legacy lives on and bear  
15 the sacred responsibility to never forget what  
16 happened. We hope to see Resolution 673B to fruition  
17 to accomplish this sacred goal, and I'm here today to  
18 advocate on behalf of establishing January 27<sup>th</sup> as a  
19 New York City-wide Holocaust Memorial Day and the  
20 week of the 27<sup>th</sup> as Holocaust Education Week. As was  
21 mentioned by others, the resolution holds a sense of  
22 urgency and timeliness. The urgency is real. The  
23 ignorance is growing as was mentioned. Many don't  
24 even know what the word Auschwitz signifies or what  
25

1  
2 it means and it's shocking and horrifying. By  
3 establishing this Holocaust Memorial Day and  
4 Education Week, we will be providing the platform for  
5 schools, organizations, politicians and others to  
6 join in honoring the memory of those who perished and  
7 preserving the stories of all, those who survived and  
8 those who perished. As the population of survivors  
9 wanes, we have a unique responsibility to pay tribute  
10 to them and amplify their voices in a meaningful way,  
11 creating an official Holocaust Memorial Day and  
12 Education Week in New York City will allow us to do  
13 just that. January 27<sup>th</sup>, the day when Auschwitz was  
14 liberated, represents the physical transition from  
15 imprisonment of so many to their freedom. It's only  
16 fitting that this be the day that we offer the  
17 symbolic freedom of knowing that their stories will  
18 not perish with them. UJA Federation, again, thanks  
19 the City Council and Representative Deutsch for  
20 taking up this important resolution and for its  
21 continued support and compassion for this vulnerable  
22 population, and we look forward to partnering with  
23 you on helping make this a reality. Thank you.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you.

3 Thank you, Anat, and thanks to UJA Federation for  
4 everything that they do. Go to Rita?

5 RITA ISOEFSON: Thank you. Good  
6 afternoon. Thank you so much. My name is Rita  
7 Iosefson, and I am the Deputy Chief of Staff at the  
8 Museum of Jewish Heritage, a living memorial to the  
9 Holocaust in Battery Park City. We are New York's  
10 Holocaust Memorial Museum and the third-largest  
11 Holocaust museum in the world. Our mission is to  
12 educate diverse audiences about Jewish life before,  
13 during, and after the Holocaust. We whole-heartedly  
14 support this resolution recognizing January 27<sup>th</sup>,  
15 2019 as Holocaust Remembrance Day and the week  
16 beginning on January 27<sup>th</sup> as a city-wide week of  
17 Holocaust education in New York City. Each year we  
18 serve more than 60,000 students who visit the museum,  
19 and this year we launched New York's Holocaust  
20 curriculum, a series of lesson plans and educational  
21 resources that we developed with the support of the  
22 New York City Department of Education. With the  
23 curriculum we are poised to reach even greater number  
24 of students throughout the boroughs in their own  
25 classrooms. In our public program offerings,

1 Holocaust remembrance and education are inextricably  
2 linked. There are particular moments in the year  
3 when we invite our greater community to gather,  
4 remember and learn. One such moment is International  
5 Holocaust Remembrance Day which is observed on  
6 January 27<sup>th</sup>, the date of the liberation of Auschwitz  
7 as we discussed. The United Nations designates a  
8 particular theme for contemplation and action each  
9 year. This year's theme is "Holocaust Remembrance,  
10 Demand and Defend Your Human Rights." In response to  
11 this theme, the museum will offer programs that  
12 encourage public audiences to consider the lessons of  
13 the past and their relevance to our shared future.  
14 January 27<sup>th</sup> begins a week of Holocaust education at  
15 the museum. This week will include professional  
16 development for teachers on the Chancellor's  
17 Conference Day of Professional Learning on the 28<sup>th</sup>  
18 and a series of public programs. We will present two  
19 films and post-screening talks from pre-imminent  
20 historians, a public lecture by a leading Holocaust  
21 educator and a community project to listen to, learn  
22 from, and discuss the recorded testimonies of Jewish-  
23 American veterans who liberated the Nazi  
24 concentration camps. Our International Holocaust  
25



1  
2 Remembrance Day programming will culminate with the  
3 opportunity to hear from a Holocaust survivor as she  
4 shares her life story in her own words, and Gabriella  
5 is here today, which I'm excited about. At the  
6 museum we have found that testimony is often what  
7 gets through to visitors, communicating the lived  
8 experience of history and allowing people to make  
9 human connections. During this week of Holocaust  
10 education museum admission is free to all, and I  
11 should also mention that New York City public school  
12 students and educators, they're always welcome and  
13 it's always free for them. We invite our community  
14 to light candles, spend time in our Memorial Garden  
15 and engage in conversation about the legacies we all  
16 carry. The International Nature Commemoration on  
17 January 27 communicates that Holocaust remembrance  
18 and education are global responsibilities. The  
19 connectedness of our modern world and the diversity  
20 of our local communities makes this commemoration  
21 uniquely meaningful. The museum wholly supports this  
22 resolution and remains committed to providing a space  
23 where all New Yorkers can gather to learn and  
24 remember. Thank you so much.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Thank you very  
3 much. Next panel: Sandy Meyers, Selfhelp Community  
4 Services, Gabriella Major, and a Genia Kovelman.  
5 Yeah, come on up. And I just want to say thank you,  
6 Genia. You should come up to testify. Thanks for  
7 coming down, and I just want to mention that Genia is  
8 part of an organization. She's a very big part of an  
9 organizations called RAJE, Russian American Jewish  
10 Experience. I'm fortunate that every Friday night I  
11 speak to the group, and Genia has a lot of passion in  
12 her, and I'm sure I'm going to see some passion when  
13 you speak, working with Holocaust survivors. So  
14 we'll start first from, also a good friend, Sandy  
15 Meyers who I had an opportunity to come down to  
16 Selfhelp to see your work firsthand, and it's amazing  
17 when you see Holocaust survivors enjoying themselves  
18 and having hot meals and really some of them who have  
19 no family here in New York, and we really-- it's--  
20 you put them all together, and they're all like one  
21 big happy family. So, it's really-- it amazes me all  
22 the work that you do, Sandy. So go ahead.

23 SANDY MEYERS: Thank you, Council Member.  
24 I's a privilege to be here. I would like to first  
25

1  
2 have Gabriella speak, just as her family is here and  
3 is on a time constraint, and then--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: [interposing]

5 Okay.

6 SANDY MEYERS: if you could come back to  
7 me, I would appreciate it.

8 GABRIELLA MAJOR: They're not on here  
9 anymore, but distinguished members of City Council,  
10 fellow survivors, family, all guests. My name is  
11 Gabriella Major. I feel very privileged and honored  
12 to be part of this important day, and I really thank  
13 you, Representative Deutsch. As a child-survivor of  
14 the Holocaust from Hungary, invaded last by the Nazis  
15 in 1944, it is quite a miracle that I am alive and  
16 here to celebrate the resolution to have January 27<sup>th</sup>  
17 as Holocaust Remembrance Day for New York. I was  
18 invited to give my testimony as a survivor. Being a  
19 two-year-old child at the time I was not destined to  
20 live, but to be murdered in the crematorium  
21 Auschwitz. Together with my mother and my  
22 grandmother, we were herded into the ghetto in  
23 Debrecen, Hungary, then squeezed into cattle cars for  
24 three days without any food and water. Somehow,  
25 miraculously, the train took a detour and we wound up

1 in a concentration camp called Strasshof near Vienna.  
2 I was between life and death for six weeks. My  
3 grandmother died in the camp, and 28 members of my  
4 extended family were killed in Auschwitz. We rebuilt  
5 from the ashes after the war back in Hungary, living  
6 through once again persecutions under the communist  
7 regime. Eventually we escaped from Hungary in 1956  
8 after the Hungarian Revolution. Soon we were able to  
9 come to United States and rebuild again our lives in  
10 freedom this time. I have devoted the last five years  
11 to Holocaust education of students and adults, as a  
12 docent at the Museum of Jewish Heritage. I also had  
13 the greatest experience in an incredible program  
14 called Witness Theater, sponsored by Selfhelp and UJA  
15 where survivors together with high school juniors and  
16 seniors learn about each other. The students that  
17 enact vignettes [sic] from the survivors' harrowing  
18 experiences, telling their stories through an amazing  
19 play. In addition, I have been speaking to groups of  
20 students from fifth grade through high school and  
21 college throughout the City, Long Island,  
22 Westchester, and neighborhood states. I am very  
23 passionate about teaching children and adults about  
24 the horrors and the lessons of the Holocaust. It is  
25

1 vital and of utmost importance to have every student  
2 know what happened and how we can prevent such  
3 genocide from happening again. If not now, when?  
4 Unfortunately, we are losing many survivors, but we  
5 still have much to do. We must remember and never  
6 forget. That is why we need to insist that everyone  
7 know about the Holocaust. The children are our  
8 ambassadors. Our hope toward the future. I hope that  
9 they will speak up and will not tolerate prejudice,  
10 anti-Semitism or hatred of any group. My hope and my  
11 prayer is that through small acts of kindness and  
12 good deeds, we will repair the world one percent at a  
13 time. Thank you.

14 [applause]

15 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.  
16 Thank you. The next speaker?

17 SANDY MEYERS: Thank you, and good  
18 afternoon everyone. Again, my name is Sandy Meyers,  
19 and I'm the Vice President for External Affairs and  
20 Communications at Selfhelp Community Services. I  
21 want to thank Council Member Eugene and Deutsch for  
22 being here, and Council Member Deutsch for sponsoring  
23 this resolution and also for attending our coffee  
24 houses and being part of the Selfhelp community. We  
25

1 really appreciate it. So, Selfhelp's commitment is  
2 to serve as the last surviving relative to every  
3 remaining Holocaust survivor, and we're honored to be  
4 the largest provider of services to this community  
5 and North America and touch the lives of about 4,500  
6 survivors annually through our case management,  
7 social work services, our socialization event that  
8 Council Member Deutsch referenced, and homecare  
9 services that enable them to age in their homes and  
10 communities. Our commitment to serving this  
11 population extends beyond services as well as to  
12 educating the next generation so that never again  
13 remains true, and we continue to pass these lessons  
14 on. As Gabriella mentioned, one of the programs that  
15 we're thrilled to be running since 2012 is Witness  
16 Theater, which pairs together high school students  
17 with Holocaust survivors for a year-long drama  
18 therapy program by which they are able to talk about  
19 their history, and it culminates with a public  
20 performance whereby the students re-enact key moments  
21 of the survivor's lives with them together on stage.  
22 This is a transformative experience for both the  
23 survivors as well as the students who have the  
24 opportunity to learn about history and to bring  
25

1 history to life. What's really special for us that  
2 helps us further this educational objective and why  
3 we're so thrilled to be part of this hearing today is  
4 that in the last few months we concluded the  
5 production of a documentary called "Witness Theater,  
6 the Film," that documents the process of Witness  
7 Theater and the relationships that are built between  
8 the high school students and the survivors as well as  
9 the public performance where we reach larger diverse  
10 audiences including at the museum of Jewish heritage  
11 in the last couple of years who have hosted us, as  
12 well as public and private schools throughout New  
13 York City, and we're working with a distributor to  
14 get this film out, working with Manemsha [sic] Films  
15 for those of you who are familiar with that. In  
16 addition to the film, which we hope will be  
17 accessible to audiences soon after we conclude with a  
18 few film festivals, we're developing not only a  
19 website, but also a study guide that we hope will get  
20 into the hands of high school educators in both  
21 public and private schools to use together with the  
22 film, and the film provides an opportunity to learn  
23 about the Holocaust through the stories that we're  
24 hearing about of the survivors. We look forward to  
25

1  
2 working with the City Council in Holocaust Education  
3 Week by using the film and the trailer which we  
4 encourage everyone to take a look at at  
5 WitnessTheaterTheFilm.com, and we're happy to see  
6 this resolution move to the full City Council for a  
7 vote. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.  
9 Next speaker? Good afternoon.

10 GENIA KOVELMAN: Hi, good afternoon. I'm  
11 Genia Kovelman. Firstly, before I begin, I just want  
12 to say thank you so much to Councilman Deutsch and  
13 everyone here. I'm, honestly as I mentioned before,  
14 I'm not anyone major. I have no title attached to my  
15 name. In fact, I'm just a regular girl. I live in  
16 Great Neck, New York. I just graduated from Law  
17 School about two years ago, Turo [sic] Law School.  
18 And my passion was to go for elder law and special  
19 needs law. a few years ago-- I'm going to make this  
20 short be; I know people have to go, but I'll just  
21 give you a little bit of what I want to say today.  
22 I'm really nothing major, but a few years ago-- I  
23 didn't grow up so religious. I didn't grow up with  
24 much education about the Holocaust. Admittedly and  
25 embarrassingly, I'm going to be honest, I'm one of



1 the recipients, even now, to still be learning about  
2 my heritage. Unfortunately, my father passed away  
3 four years ago, and as I was learning more about my  
4 heritage, learning more about Judaism, going to  
5 Shabbat dinners in Brooklyn at this wonderful woman,  
6 [inaudible] home. I met Councilman Deutsch and I  
7 met so many people that just had such a beauty and  
8 love for their heritage, and I just felt so lost  
9 about it. I said what is going on? Why is it me,  
10 post-college, young girl, how come no one my age  
11 knows about this? And so after I graduated, you  
12 know, I graduated two years ago, I was at a Shabbaton  
13 upstate-- it was a weekend away-- and Doctor Faty  
14 [sic] Zak [sic] actually had someone there and her  
15 mother is a Holocaust survivor. And there was a man,  
16 Mr. Leon Goldenberg [sp?], that spoke about his  
17 mother, and I sat around with other college students,  
18 my friends, RAJE students, people that never grew up  
19 with it that were totally secular, and I felt so  
20 lost. I felt so disconnected to my heritage. Here I  
21 am, I was keeping Sabbath, I was keeping kosher. I  
22 went to Israel on a trip, but I wasn't feeling what  
23 it really felt like to be Jewish. So, Leon  
24 Goldenberg's mother gets up and Doctor Zakheim's  
25

1 [sic] mother gets up, and I start crying inside, and  
2 I say why is it-- God, I don't understand,  
3 something's missing in my life. I graduated from law  
4 school. I have an MBA. I have an amazing family,  
5 amazing people in my life, yet I feel so void in my  
6 Jewish heritage, and I'm embarrassed. I'm really  
7 embarrassed, and I'm humbly telling you this, because  
8 I feel like I'm not anything major, but I'm speaking  
9 from the person that actually is receiving these  
10 types of things, gifts in my life, because I met  
11 these people that helped me. So, after that weekend,  
12 I was so moved. His mother-- he spoke about his  
13 mother and the Holocaust, and I still felt so lost.  
14 So, it was June [sic] time and Rabbi Lin [sp?] who is  
15 a Rabbi of a [inaudible] group. It's a Polish-- they  
16 do like Polish-- Poland trips and Holocaust trips for  
17 college students. He was there on that Sabbath, and  
18 he told everyone, "Does anyone want to go on a trip?"  
19 And I was like, you know, honestly, this is from God.  
20 I'm going to raise my hand and do it. So, at first,  
21 I was like, you know, maybe I'll do it, maybe I  
22 won't. I'm not working at a law firm. I'm just-- I  
23 love community work, so maybe I'll apply. I applied,  
24 and I got accepted, and the weekend before that, I  
25

1 had met with my dad's aunt, my dad's sister, who  
2 knows a lot about her heritage and my aunt, my dad's  
3 second cousin who's a genealogist. She started  
4 telling me about where I came from. She spoke about  
5 my grandparents that came from Poland and from  
6 Russia. She spoke about my great grandmother who  
7 escaped Nazi Germany because my great uncle sponsored  
8 her and my grandparents and their brothers, and as  
9 we're talking, my aunt who is not religious, she's  
10 not interested, she comes out with a platter with  
11 Shabbat candles. And I say to her, "Aunt Barbara,  
12 where did you get that from?" She's like, "These are  
13 your great grandmother's, and she brought them from  
14 Poland." And I looked at those candles and I said,  
15 "She could have brought money, she could have brought  
16 anything she wanted, but she brought those candles."  
17 And so that from that day, I said I have to go to  
18 Poland. I went to Poland. That trip utterly  
19 changed my life. And I'm speaking from my heart. I'm  
20 not-- I'm not anything major. I'm not even writing  
21 any-- I didn't prepare anything for today, but that  
22 trip changed my life. I went to Auschwitz. I went  
23 to the camps with 30 college students, my friends,  
24 Rabbi Lin, Rabbi Sperber [sp?] who runs this trip.  
25

1  
2 They changed my life, and everyone on that trip, we  
3 saw the gas chambers. Obviously, we can't compare  
4 with Gabriella's story, but I'm speaking from my  
5 heart, and I was so moved. And I said, "What am I  
6 going to do." And Rabbi Lin said to everyone on that  
7 trip, "You know, on college campuses there was a story  
8 of someone that asked one of the students do you know  
9 what Auschwitz is? And someone raised their hand and  
10 said, is it a restaurant?" And as I left that trip,  
11 Rabbi Lin told everyone in that group, "Yes, you got  
12 this amazing sponsored trip. Yes, it's a birth [sic]  
13 [inaudible], but what are you going to do about it  
14 when you get back home?" And that is why I'm here  
15 today. I'm not a big speaker, but I'm an ambassador,  
16 because ii think it's really important for everyone  
17 in this room to know that as a young person I see it,  
18 and after that trip, I actually ended up-- I didn't  
19 have a job, I still don't, but God willing I'll find  
20 the right place. I applied to a job at the JCC in  
21 Brooklyn as a lawyer. My parents are lawyers, and I  
22 have a passion to help seniors and special needs.  
23 It's not about the money. It's about helping people.  
24 So, the JCC offered me a job. I was there for a  
25 little bit, and now I'm volunteering, and I was so

1 excited. And everyone was like, "Why are you so  
2 excited?" I'm like, you don't understand. I need to  
3 meet these survivors. I just came out of Poland, and  
4 for them to go through all that hell and atrocity and  
5 still stand up, those are my heroes, not someone with  
6 a million ESQ MBAs behind their backs, not people  
7 with a million dollars in the bank, the people that  
8 went through that hell and stood up and got their  
9 lives together like Gabriella, like all those other  
10 survivors that spoke today, those are my heroes. And  
11 when I went to the JCC and saw them, I saw their  
12 numbers on their arm, and I said, "How the hell does--  
13 - excuse my language-- how the heck does no one my  
14 age or younger know about the Holocaust?" And I held  
15 their hands, and I said, "You are my heroes." I'm  
16 sorry I'm crying, Councilman, but I had to say this  
17 on record, because I think that this resolution is  
18 super important, and I really hope that everyone in  
19 this room, all the councilmen, people understand that  
20 it is so important to recognize where we come from.  
21 It's so important to teach the younger generation.  
22 It is so important to continue this mission, to  
23 educate, to teach, to love, to reach out, to  
24 advocate, and to truly make a difference. It is my  
25

1 honor and it's my pleasure. Thank you so much, and  
2 thank you.  
3

4 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much.  
5 Thank you. You don't have to be sorry. As you said,  
6 you are an ambassador. You had a lot to do, and I  
7 think that, you know, you have the willing, you have  
8 the energy to make a difference in this society right  
9 now, and I commend you for your courage. And one  
10 thing that you said is very important. You were  
11 frank and honest. You said that you don't know  
12 enough about your culture. You're not the only young  
13 person to be in this situation, but the great thing  
14 now you take the decision, you say, "No, I have to  
15 know more, and I have to do something." This is  
16 good. I commend you for that. Thank you for your  
17 touching testimony.

18 [applause]

19 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Now, Council Member  
20 Deutsch.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DEUTSCH: Yes, I just want  
22 to add something Genia, and you know, what people  
23 don't realize and something that you don't realize,  
24 and I will say that, you mention all your role  
25 models, and what the role models never get to mention

1 if you don't know, is that they are not your role  
2 models. You become our role models, and exactly what  
3 you just said is something that we, who you call role  
4 models, learn from you. So, thank you for coming  
5 down today, and I did say that you have a lot of  
6 passion in you. I wasn't wrong. You didn't make me--  
7 - didn't prove me wrong, and I just want to say thank  
8 you. And finally, I just want to say we have--  
9 before I give it over to the Chair. When my father  
10 got his transfer papers out of Mokhausen [sic] first--  
11 - it was Auschwitz Mokhausen [inaudible]. So I went  
12 back to Yad Vashem. I actually got his original-- a  
13 copy of his transfer papers, and his prisoner number  
14 was 124812, and that is when my father realized that  
15 no matter what happens he will survive the Holocaust  
16 because if you add up those numbers it equals hi  
17 [sic] 18, and 18 is life, means life, and that's when  
18 he knew that he could do whatever he wanted. He  
19 could sneak in foods to others because he will  
20 survive, and he had that faith that he will survive,  
21 and that is the faith that you have right now, and  
22 that is the faith you gave all of us and all the  
23 people that are watching now, and your faith will be

1  
2 a lesson for future generations, and so thank you  
3 very much.

4 GENIA KOVELMAN: Thank you, Councilman.  
5 Thank you everyone. You guys are awesome. Thank  
6 you.

7 CHAIRPERSON EUGENE: Thank you very much  
8 for all the members of the panel. Thank you. And I  
9 want to take the opportunity also to thank Council  
10 Member Deutsch for being so kind to take over the  
11 public hearing for me when I went to the other  
12 committee meeting. Thank you very much. Thank you.  
13 Now, let me call the next speaker. Abraham Kirk  
14 [sic]? Okay, so that-- [inaudible] Alright, so  
15 since we don't have no more speaker, but I just want  
16 to take the opportunity one more time to thank every  
17 one of you for your testimony. It was a very special  
18 moment. It was a great moment for the Jewish  
19 community and I think also for New York City, and I  
20 want to take the opportunity also to comment one more  
21 thing, one more time, Council Member Deutsch for this  
22 remarkable resolution, and I'm very proud to be one  
23 of the co-sponsors. Thank you very much. With this  
24 the meeting is adjourned.

25 [gavel]



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COMMITTEE ON CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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COMMITTEE ON CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date February 5, 2019