

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

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July 29, 2010
Start: 11:20 am
Recess: 11:35 am

HELD AT: Hearing Room
250 Broadway, 16th Fl.

B E F O R E:
DANIEL DROMM
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Daniel Dromm
Charles Barron
Mathieu Eugene
Ydanis A. Rodriguez
Jumaane D. Williams
Robert Jackson
Vincent J. Gentile

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Good morning.

I want to start off by introducing my colleagues who are here. To my right is Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member Charles Barron. To my left are Council Member Jumaane Williams, Council Member Mathieu Eugene and Council Member Robert Jackson.

Today, the Committee on Immigration will vote on Proposed Resolution 224-A, relating to Arizona Senate Bill 1070. The Resolution at issue today supports the United States and its action against the state of Arizona, challenging the constitutionality of SB 1070. All branches of federal, state and local government using their powers to oppose the Arizona law and the Council's decision to file an Amicus brief in support of the federal action at its discretion.

I want to say that although we support the decision of the court yesterday regarding Arizona, we know that the efforts to protect the rights of all immigrants are not over. We look forward to participating in these efforts as we move forward.

As a co-sponsor of this resolution,

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2 I would like to encourage my colleagues to vote
3 aye. With that, I would like to commence the vote
4 on Proposed Resolution 224-A.

5 WILLIAM MARTIN: William Martin,
6 Committee Clerk.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Excuse me on
8 moment, Council Member Barron would like to make a
9 statement.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I would
11 just like to say the importance of this vote on
12 this whole question of immigration is going to be
13 before us for some time to come. There is going
14 to be national legislation on it and debates on
15 it. But we need to remind people that I would say
16 90 percent of the people in America came from
17 somewhere else. The only indigenous people in
18 this country are the so-called Indians who are not
19 really Indians. Those were Christopher Columbus'
20 historical mistake. He thought he was in India,
21 so he called everybody Indians.

22 But we have to remember that
23 people, even in the state of Arizona and the state
24 of Texas, some of the very people that they don't
25 want in there were there before them. Some of

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2 them are coming back to reunite with their
3 families. So when we think of immigration, the
4 complexion of immigration has changed and the
5 policies have changed along with the complexion.
6 When Irish, Jewish, Italians, Germans and others
7 came, they were discriminated against as well
8 ethnically. But certainly after a certain time
9 they were able to integrate into the society.

10 I think, and people don't like to
11 talk about it based upon race, it's easier to
12 integrate when you immigrate, not to say there was
13 no discrimination, when you're white. But the
14 complexion of immigration has changed. A lot of
15 Africans are coming. A lot of Caribbean people
16 are coming in. A lot of Latinos, Mexicans are
17 coming in. So the race factor, which is the
18 reason why we are against this racial profiling,
19 or the profiling of this immigrants is important
20 to understand.

21 Then finally, we should understand
22 the importance, the value, cultural value,
23 financial value of immigration that can really
24 benefit this nation. That's why we say we have to
25 come up with some kind of formula to try to grant

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2 citizenship to the 12 million as opposed to
3 criminalizing and those kinds of things. I know
4 there are serious questions at the borders. But
5 this is a land, a country that has tremendous
6 wealth, even though you have economic crisis.

7 I think that there can be some kind
8 of way that we can deal with this other than some
9 ridiculous law. That's the state that didn't even
10 want Martin Luther King's birthday to be a
11 holiday. So that's the kind of racism that we
12 have to continue to combat.

13 The supporting of this resolution
14 is just a drop in the bucket in trying to really
15 get to this serious question of immigration that's
16 going to be before us for some time. With that,
17 I'm going to support it 1,000 percent and suggest
18 that we do the same, that all of us do the same.
19 This is an issue we've got to stay on top of.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you,
21 Council Member Barron. I'd like to commence the
22 on Proposed Resolution. Council Member Ydanis
23 Rodriguez would like to comment.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: This is
25 an important resolution. As everyone knows, I've

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2 been supporting the movement of all the colleagues
3 in this committee for immigration reforms. Being
4 against this law 1070 is not the end of the
5 struggle. There has been a movement in the last
6 three decades that have brought together religious
7 leaders, elected officials and labor movement
8 together saying it is time for us to discuss, to
9 have an open discussion about immigration reform.

10 We're going to be joining the march
11 that already is crossing the Brooklyn Bridge. To
12 be part of that movement, we've been part of this
13 movement. We've been participating in civil
14 disobedience. We've been going to Washington.
15 You know what, 20 years from now we will have to
16 continue doing the same thing because this is a
17 matter about the vision.

18 This is a matter of the vision of
19 this nation. Something wrong is going on when we
20 have certain people that don't understand that
21 especially anyone who is in the 80-years-old, as a
22 grandfather who is an immigrant. I came clean and
23 for me I would say I will allow my vote on the
24 first immigrant who set in this island, Juan
25 Rodriguez, and Dominicans that came to this

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2 country in 1613 and his information reported by
3 the Historical Society. But they will say it's
4 exhibition about Latino in the United States, that
5 we open August 17, that they expect Sotomayor that
6 will come. They will say that Juan Rodriguez was
7 an immigrant. That he came here Dutch, in a Dutch
8 boat, and he settled the first one the indigenous.
9 So this is a country of immigrants.

10 We're going to be voting for this
11 resolution. As I have said, many of us supported
12 a boycott on Arizona, I mean all the way, but at
13 least here we are not calling for the whole
14 boycott, but at least we're calling for the city
15 employees and government employees not to be
16 allowed to use tax dollar money to travel to
17 Arizona. So that's what I would like to say.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very
19 much, Council Member Rodriguez. Now, Council
20 Member Eugene has a comment.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: Thank you
22 very much, Mr. Chair. I just want to mention what
23 other Council Members have mentioned already. But
24 because each one of us, each person living in the
25 United States can trace his roots back to one or

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2 several countries. This is a reality. I believe
3 that the law of Arizona, it's against the American
4 way of life, American philosophy.

5 What makes the United States great
6 and wonderful is the philosophy to embrace, to
7 welcome immigrants, regardless of where you come
8 from, to allow them to be part of this wonderful
9 country, to give them opportunity to have a better
10 life for them and their children. They come over
11 here to work, to be part of the system.

12 If you see, for example, in the
13 American life, doctors, nurses, teachers, people
14 are working in the house, most of them they are
15 immigrants, but they are part of the fabric of
16 this country. We cannot destroy the bridge after
17 we finished across. We cannot close the doors to
18 other immigrants.

19 I think this is the right thing to
20 do. We have to respect the American way of life,
21 the American philosophy. That's what makes
22 American the wonderful country, a very special
23 country. I think that it is a wonderful thing,
24 the right thing to do to stand together and to
25 ensure that such legislation be stopped. We have

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2 to ensure that America stays the same America it
3 was before, for those who came before, the same
4 America it is for those who are living now in the
5 United States, and the same America for those who
6 would come later on. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very
8 much. I think I'll add my two cents now since
9 we've had other Council Members make statements.
10 The reason I was a little late getting here today
11 was because I just left court. I was arrested on
12 June 21st, protesting the law in Arizona, an act
13 of civil disobedience, much in the way that Dr.
14 Martin Luther King would do as well. I feel that
15 strongly about it and that's why I did what I did.

16 Although my case was dismissed
17 today, the case that immigrants in Arizona and
18 across the country have to face every day and the
19 discrimination, the prejudice that they face is
20 not dismissed. That's why we still have a long
21 battle ahead of us to ensure equality and the
22 protection of the rights of all the people who
23 live in this country. So unless there are any
24 other comments to be made, we'll proceed with the
25 vote.

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2 WILLIAM MARTIN: William Martin,
3 Committee Clerk, roll call vote on Committee on
4 Immigration. Council Member Dromm?

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Aye.

6 WILLIAM MARTIN: Barron?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes.

8 WILLIAM MARTIN: Eugene?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: Aye.

10 WILLIAM MARTIN: Rodriguez?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Aye.

12 WILLIAM MARTIN: Williams?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: May I be
14 excused to explain my vote?

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, you may.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank
17 you. I'm definitely going to be voting aye. I
18 also wanted to add I'm very happy about what the
19 judge decided yesterday, but we still have to
20 remember there are still some parts of the law
21 that still need to be looked at. Particularly,
22 people not being able to find work on the street,
23 which is problematic and there's still a long way
24 to go. The law itself, obviously, is
25 discriminatory and there are obviously huge

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problems with it.

I think it goes against everything that America says it should be. Unfortunately, in practice, historically, it's very much in line with what America has done to immigrants and people they deem to look differently, or not look American. I know there are some people that might disagree with what we're doing. But I believe that New York City in particular that benefits so much from immigrants just in the city, and America in general, as was mentioned, most of us come from someplace else, has every right to say in the harshest language and the harshest actions that this shouldn't stand anywhere in this country. Thank you.


CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Council Member Williams.

WILLIAM MARTIN: By a vote of five in the affirmative, zero in the negative and no abstentions, item is adopted. Members please sign the committee report. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much. The meeting is adjourned.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Donna Hintze certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.



Signature_____

Date August 16, 2010