

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

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January 25, 2012  
Start: 10:19 a.m.  
Recess: 11:30 a.m.

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

B E F O R E:  
DANIEL DROMM  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Charles Barron  
Mathieu Eugene  
Ydanis A. Rodriguez  
Jumaane D. Williams

## A P P E A R A N C E S

Guy Sansaricq  
National Center of Haitian Catholic Apostolate

Jocelyn McCalla  
Haitian-Americans United for Progress

Schency Augustin  
Beraca Baptist Church

Ace Robinson  
Gay Men's Health Crisis

Laura McLoughlin  
Manager of Business Development  
Diaspora Community Services

James Desbrosses

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Good  
3 morning. My name is Daniel Dromm and I am Chair  
4 of the New York City Council's Committee on  
5 Immigration. Before going any further, I'd like  
6 to introduce my colleagues. I have, to my left,  
7 Mathieu Eugene from Brooklyn, Charles Barron from  
8 Brooklyn, and Jumaane Williams from Brooklyn,  
9 council members. We are here today to discuss  
10 three resolution affecting immigrants not only  
11 here in New York City, but also nationally.  
12 Immigrants everywhere are affected by the lack of  
13 comprehensive immigration reform. When Congress  
14 passed the illegal Immigration Reform and  
15 Immigration Responsibility Act, it changed the way  
16 the federal government handles immigration cases,  
17 enforcement and detention. Resolution number 761  
18 urges the US Department of Justice to implement a  
19 comprehensive hiring plan and to hire an adequate  
20 number of experienced immigration judges.  
21 Immigration judges play an instrumental role in  
22 the outcome of an immigrant's future. Since  
23 federal enforcement agencies have been  
24 apprehending and detaining immigrants in record  
25 high rates, it's important that immigration court

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2 are equipped with knowledgeable judges who have  
3 all the necessary resources at their disposal to  
4 make concise and informed decisions. Resolution  
5 number 1096, sponsored by Council Member Mathieu  
6 Eugene calls for the implementation of a Haitian  
7 Family Reunification Parole Program, which would  
8 allow for Haitians to wait in the United States  
9 for their Visas instead of Haiti. New York City  
10 has long been an entry point for millions of  
11 immigrants, and after the January 2010 earthquake  
12 in Haiti, New York City once again opened its arms  
13 to Haiti and Haitian nationals in response to the  
14 devastation. This resolution supports the  
15 preservation of the family unit, the Haitian  
16 community, and is just another statement from the  
17 Council of its support of Haiti and its people.  
18 Resolution number 1193, sponsored by Council  
19 Member Ydanis Rodriguez would authorize the  
20 Council to join an amicus brief against the  
21 controversial Arizona Senate Bill 1070. New York  
22 City, along with other municipalities have long  
23 voiced their opposition to the harsh immigration  
24 law the state of Arizona is trying to implement, a  
25 law that would deter immigrants from reporting

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2 crimes to local enforcement and alienate a  
3 vulnerable community. By joining the amicus  
4 brief, the Council would make it clear that it's  
5 important not to compromise the relationship  
6 between immigrant communities and law enforcement  
7 agencies as we try to promote and strengthen  
8 public safety. This morning we look forward to  
9 hearing from immigration advocates as well as  
10 legal service providers about this important issue  
11 and the potential impact that the passage of these  
12 resolutions could have not only on immigrants  
13 within New York City, but also nationally. At  
14 this time I would like to thank everyone for  
15 attending this morning's hearing, and give my  
16 colleagues the opportunity to speak. Council  
17 Member Eugene?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: Thank you  
19 very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you. Good morning.  
20 I want to thank Chair Daniel Dromm for introducing  
21 this resolution with me, along with all my  
22 colleagues who have shown their support for the  
23 resolution. In addition, I want to thank the  
24 legislative counsel to the Immigration Committee,  
25 Julene Beckford, and the policy analyst, Jennifer

1 Montalvo, for their work on the resolution.

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3 Finally I just want to recognize the effort of our  
4 immigration advocates, who have been at the  
5 forefront of addressing this issue, including  
6 those who are here to testify and participate in  
7 today's hearing. And I want to express special  
8 thanks to my legislative director, Jonah Rogoff,  
9 who did a wonderful job on this resolution also.

10 As you know, the past few years have been a  
11 difficult period for Haiti. The earthquake that  
12 shook the country on January 12 of 2010 devastated  
13 the capital city of Port-au-Prince, displacing  
14 millions of people and causing an unprecedented  
15 humanitarian crisis. Two years after the  
16 disaster, people are still struggling to survive.  
17 People affected by the earthquake do not have  
18 access to basic necessities such as food, clean  
19 water and medical care. Moreover, there are many  
20 Haitian orphans without homes and children who  
21 cannot go to school. Haiti's road to recovery  
22 will take time and require support from  
23 individuals, organizations, governments throughout  
24 the world. While the country recovers and  
25 rebuilds, there are civil actions we can take to

1  
2 help improve the quality of life for those who are  
3 suffering and for people living in the United  
4 States who have family members in Haiti. The  
5 Department of Homeland Security can issue family-  
6 based visas for individuals who are spouses,  
7 parents, and children of United States citizens or  
8 green card holders. Currently over 10,000 people  
9 have been approved by the federal government to  
10 come to the United States under the visa program,  
11 but must wait to enter the United States. I  
12 believe that the federal government should make a  
13 priority and bring in these individuals to the  
14 United States, where they can be reunited with  
15 their families and be in an environment where to  
16 better support themselves, especially the  
17 Department of Homeland Security has the ability to  
18 create a parole program to expedite the arrival of  
19 these thousands of people with approval visa.  
20 Philadelphia, North Miami, and several other  
21 cities have adopted resolutions in support of  
22 creating a Haitian Family Reunification Program.  
23 As one of the largest concentrations of Haitians  
24 outside Haiti, now I believe it is our turn for  
25 New York City to show its support. This issue not

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2 only would benefit the Haitians who cannot leave  
3 Haiti, but also the thousands of families here in  
4 the United States, in New York and places around  
5 the country, who are waiting for their loved ones  
6 to be part of their life again. As the primary  
7 sponsor of the resolution, I want to express my  
8 strong support and urge all my colleagues to join  
9 me in addressing this issue. I want to again  
10 thank everyone for coming today in support of this  
11 resolution. By holding a hearing on this topic,  
12 we are taking an important step in making sure  
13 that New Yorkers stand together again in assisting  
14 Haiti. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
16 much, Council Member Eugene. Council Member  
17 Williams?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you  
19 very much, Mr. Chair. Thank everyone for this  
20 legislation. It's very important. I come from an  
21 immigrant household. I'm a first generation  
22 Brooklynite, so these issues are very dear to me  
23 and I was happy that President Obama mentioned his  
24 desire to have some immigration reform on the  
25 federal level. While these resolutions are great,

1 we really need our federal counterparts to do the  
2 same. I'm hoping it was more than just words.  
3 And I'm very happy to support all these pieces of  
4 resolutions. Immigrants and immigration are what  
5 makes this country keep going forward. And for  
6 some reason we keep treating them as if that's not  
7 the case, and it's proven where there is immigrant  
8 and immigrant labor, wages usually go up around  
9 those areas. That's important to remember. In  
10 particular I'm very happy to support Council  
11 Member Eugene and his resolution for the Haitian  
12 Reunification Program, together with my colleague,  
13 we represent the largest Haitian Diaspora outside  
14 of Haiti. So, it's very, very dear to us and  
15 further underscores even within the immigration  
16 issue, for some reason the darker your hue, you're  
17 treated much differently, and there should be no  
18 reasons why Haitians and Haiti are treated  
19 differently than any other countries. And I want  
20 to make sure I recognize Bishop Sansaricq, who I  
21 think will be testifying later as the highest-  
22 ranking bishop in the Catholic Church. Thank you  
23 very much.

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25 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very

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much. And Council Member Barron.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you very much. This issue of immigration is always interesting to me. The history of immigration, everybody--most whites in America are immigrants. The land was stolen from the indigenous people of this country, of this land, and now especially in Arizona, when people come back to unite with their families, a land that was stolen from them, they're the ones that are the bad ones. So, immigration, when years ago the immigrants were Irish, Polish, Italian, German, white Euro-ethnics, it had discrimination, but their path to citizenship was much easier than now that it's African and Caribbean and Haitian and Latino. Now that the face of immigration has changed, now the pathway to citizenship is more difficult. So when they say they have 12 million undocumented, not illegal aliens--people from space that have no legal right to be here--but undocumented people who have come to this country--and yes, Obama said he'd put more boots on the border to stop people from getting in and they want some comprehensive immigration plan, you know, this is a lot of

1 racism. The demographics of American is changing  
2 just as is New York City's demographics. Most of  
3 the people in New York City now are so-called  
4 people of color. By the year 2050, they say,  
5 2060, American, the browning of America they wrote  
6 about in some article, will be people of color. A  
7 lot of this has to do with politics. I remember  
8 doing--I'll never do it again--Bill O'Reilly's  
9 show on Fox. And him and I were going back and  
10 forth on immigration. And he said, I finally  
11 discovered it, the Left Agenda, thank you, Mr.  
12 Barron. So that's it, that's it, you want power.  
13 You want people of color to take over. I said,  
14 you're a fool. You know, we were talking about  
15 white privilege and immigration. So, you know, I  
16 support these legislations, but we have a very  
17 large question and it's a question of Haiti, it's  
18 a disgrace and a shame to this nation, to France  
19 and to the world that they're just not paid  
20 reparations. Haiti should be paid reparations for  
21 the pillaging of Haiti over the centuries by  
22 French. Do you know the French--and I'll stop in  
23 a minute, Mr. Chair--the French had the nerve to  
24 have Haitians pay them reparations after they  
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1  
2 stole their land, oppressed them, murdered them,  
3 killed them, left them--Haiti is not the poorest  
4 nation on the planet; it is a rich country that's  
5 oppressed and exploited. So these resolutions are  
6 the micro part of immigration. The macro part is  
7 that we've got to get this nation to understand  
8 that the intellectual capital, the cultural  
9 capital, the financial capital that immigrants can  
10 contribute to this country is immense, and I hope  
11 these legislations keep moving up the ladder to  
12 look at the macro issue. I say let's not  
13 criminalize them--legalize them, so that we can  
14 have a pathway to citizenship and make this nation  
15 pay its debt to those that they stole to bring  
16 here and stole land from. It's time for this  
17 nation to pay its debt and be more respectful to  
18 immigrants. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you,  
20 Council Member Barron. Gee, the Bill O'Reilly  
21 Show. That must have been some show. Anyway, I  
22 also want to make an announcement, that if you  
23 would like to speak, you should have filled out  
24 one of these forms, which you can get from the  
25 Sergeant-At-Arms over there, so please make sure

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2 that you've done that if you intend to speak at  
3 the hearing today. And our first panel, I'd like  
4 to bring them up now. Bishop Guy Sansaricq from  
5 the National Center of Haitian Catholic  
6 Apostolate. Jocelyn McCalla from the Haitian-  
7 Americans United for Progress, and Schency  
8 Augustin, from the Beraca Baptist Church in  
9 Brooklyn. And Bishop, would you like to start us  
10 off?

11 GUY SANSARICQ: Yes. Greetings of  
12 peace to all present. I would like to thank Mr.  
13 Rogoff, the legislative director, for inviting me  
14 to voice my support to Resolution 1096, introduced  
15 by Council Member Mathieu Eugene. As you know, it  
16 calls upon the President and Department of  
17 Homeland Security to create a Haitian Family  
18 Reunification Parole Program for Haiti. The  
19 reasons for my supports are the following. First,  
20 the earthquake of January 2010 was one of the  
21 greatest catastrophes that struck the world for  
22 decades. The Japanese tsunami produced eight  
23 times less human victims than the Haitian disaster  
24 of two years ago. The United States, as a leader  
25 of the western world and close neighbor to this

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2 distraught island, is expected to demonstrate  
3 extraordinary - - towards Haiti in conformity with  
4 the noble traditions of this great nation. While  
5 admittedly Haiti has received considerable  
6 assistance from the United States in response to  
7 tragedy, it has become obvious to all observers  
8 that the help given has been inadequate. The  
9 present resolution offers another avenue of  
10 assistance, which is not novel, but in line with a  
11 similar policy in favor of Cuban immigrants whose  
12 plights are real, but less severe than the case at  
13 hand. Though the present resolution is very  
14 limited in its scope, it doesn't request an open-  
15 door policy of wide scale admission of refugees.  
16 The objection is simply to expedite the process of  
17 admission to a relatively small number of approved  
18 applicants for permanent residency visas. There  
19 are people who have here in the United States  
20 successful relatives who have sponsored them.  
21 Unfortunately they have to wait 3 to 11 years  
22 before updating their visas of entry. These  
23 people will not be supported by public funds but  
24 by wives, husbands, fathers, mothers, brothers and  
25 sisters, who have already demonstrated their

1 financial ability to support them. Family  
2 reunification is a valued concept in American  
3 jurisprudence. By implementing such policy, the  
4 government will be supporting family  
5 reunification, hence alleviating the anguish of  
6 sponsoring United States citizens, facilitating  
7 early adjustment for these newcomers to this land,  
8 and relieving the labor market in Haiti. It will  
9 constitute a humanitarian gesture of great moral  
10 and social significance. This resolution along  
11 with similar ones taken in most other major cities  
12 in the United States, further convince the  
13 President and the Homeland Security Administration  
14 to adopt this low-cost family reunification  
15 policy. In this era of globalization, remaining  
16 aloof to the distress of innocent families torn  
17 apart by a natural disaster is a disgrace to the  
18 ideals of modern civilization. Thank you for your  
19 consideration.  
20

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
22 much, Bishop. And Mr. Augustin.

23 SCHEUCY AUGUSTIN: Sure, sure.  
24 Thank you very much. Good morning. I bring to  
25 you personal testimony. I'm a first generation

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2 Haitian-American. I was born in Haiti, Port-au-  
3 Prince. My family, my mother and my father--my  
4 father came up here first. He applied for my mom;  
5 she came up with me. So I've been here since I  
6 was three, four months old. So, people usually  
7 just say, you're not really Haitian, you're  
8 American. My birth certificate is from Haiti.  
9 But this, in looking at this resolution, I see  
10 that it would serve a huge purpose within the  
11 Haitian community. And you know, just from  
12 personal testimony, again, my mother has her only  
13 sister, who is in Haiti with--she had three  
14 children. For years my mother applied for them to  
15 come up, but there was a list, and it goes  
16 according to years. So now when their year came  
17 up, you know, the paperwork started coming through  
18 and everything started moving, and we're happy,  
19 we're praying, and it's just like, okay,  
20 everything is working. And then everything was  
21 moving along and then everything just came to a  
22 standstill. They're waiting for visa numbers.  
23 Now, at my church--I go to Beraca Baptist Church,  
24 which is a predominantly Haitian church. And, you  
25 know, you hear there's a whole bunch of different

1 families that are experiencing all levels of  
2 poverty. You know, you have people that are, you  
3 know, they have their families in Haiti, but  
4 they're working and trying to send money back, or  
5 they're sending whatever they can. And it's  
6 difficult. So, you know, during the time that  
7 we're waiting for the visa numbers to come  
8 through, one of my cousins died. My mother's  
9 sister's son, he passed because there wasn't  
10 enough medical attention to be able to help him,  
11 you know, to deal with what he was dealing with.  
12 And so, we believe that, you know, if he had the  
13 opportunity to be here with us that he would have  
14 gotten the necessary medical attention to be able  
15 to live to see another day, you know, to be able  
16 to--and these are not--there's so many people in  
17 Haiti. And I've traveled back a number of times,  
18 and there are so many smart young people, older  
19 people full of wisdom. It's just rich. Like Mr.  
20 Barron was saying, there's just so much in Haiti  
21 that it's a disadvantage to not put this forward.  
22 So, now it's just a matter of us just reaching out  
23 and helping the Haitian community. I know that  
24 when it comes to financial support in allowing the  
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2 families to come up, the families are going to be  
3 supported. And it's obvious from the way the  
4 families are being supported from abroad that it  
5 can be done. You know, it's not something where  
6 it's like, oh, you know, we're not sure if this is  
7 going to work. It will work, because it's been  
8 working from across the seas. So to bring the  
9 families, you know, home--home being with their  
10 families, you know, I believe that it would  
11 definitely serve a great purpose within the  
12 Haitian community. So, you know, I bring that to  
13 the table, just saying thank you for allowing us  
14 to even speak. Thank you very much.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And  
16 Mr. McCalla.

17 JOCELYN McCALLA: Thank you, Mr.  
18 Chairman. My name is Jocelyn McCalla. I'm  
19 pleased to testify before this Committee on behalf  
20 of the Haitian-Americans United for Progress.  
21 HAUP was founded 37 years ago by Haitian-American  
22 community leaders and advocates to help resettle  
23 and integrate Haitian asylum seekers and  
24 immigrants in New York City. These leaders  
25 included--and I'm pleased to again see my good

1 friend the Bishop Sansaricq, at my left--as well  
2 as Dr. Carolle Berotte Joseph, who now currently  
3 serves as president of Bronx Community College.  
4 Now, who would have thought that 37 years ago that  
5 these people would have risen to such a height in  
6 this city? But it has been possible. Haitians at  
7 that time that were deemed to be undesirable by  
8 the federal government, and a lot of obstacles  
9 were put in their path to welcoming them as  
10 refugees and so on. So, it is become many of us  
11 rose to welcome them, to fight for their rights to  
12 entry in the United States--because they were  
13 fleeing persecution and seeking asylum--that these  
14 people now have become--some of them have become  
15 fairly successful at what they do, and in fact  
16 have contributed greatly to the welfare and well-  
17 being of the people of America. I, myself, I led  
18 the National Coalition for Haitian Rights, you  
19 know, for several years. And I'm very familiar  
20 with the process of taking the government to court  
21 to make sure that government abided by both  
22 domestic and international law. So, I am pleased  
23 again to offer my expertise to the Committee and  
24 to speak on behalf of HAUP, on behalf of, in  
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1 support of the resolution. Now, why the  
2 resolution and why should the entire City Council  
3 in fact approve it unanimously? Well, the Obama  
4 Administration responded fairly quickly and  
5 aggressively two years ago after the earthquake.  
6 It deployed thousands of troops to support the  
7 actions of a government that literally collapsed,  
8 and to facilitate the relief and recovery response  
9 that poured from all over the world into Haiti.  
10 Stateside, it promptly granted temporary protected  
11 status to Haitian non-immigrants who were in the  
12 United States at that time. Last year, the  
13 Administration extended TPS for this class and  
14 broadened it to include Haitians who had hurriedly  
15 joined their relatives after the earthquake  
16 because their livelihood had been destroyed. Most  
17 recently, this year, the Administration has  
18 decided--I mean a little bit last year--the  
19 Administration has decided to allow Haitians to  
20 take part in the guest worker programs that the  
21 U.S. growers and farmers use to ensure that they  
22 have sufficient legal labor to bring in the  
23 harvest. Yet there's one more step the  
24 Administration could have taken, and which, as  
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1  
2 Resolution 1096 notes, it has not taken. It has  
3 not speeded up the family reunification process  
4 for Haitian immigrants who are already in the  
5 pipeline. And as Mr. Augustin has very eloquently  
6 said, this creates a real threat and a burden on  
7 the families who are waiting to be reunited with  
8 their relatives. And because the situation in  
9 Haiti is so shaky and so fragile, some of these  
10 people who might have been benefitted of medical  
11 assistance are not in the position to access good  
12 medical care. So, HAUP supports the resolution  
13 and urges the Committee on Immigration and the  
14 entire New York City Council to approve it. Such  
15 an action would send a very strong signal to the  
16 Obama Administration that this great city, which  
17 has one of the most diverse and productive  
18 immigrant populations in the United States,  
19 supports the Haitian Family Reunification Parole  
20 Program. And I want to emphasize the parole  
21 program. It's not a blanket grant of amnesty,  
22 which is so that people have to demonstrate that  
23 they qualify. Part of the reason why this is very  
24 important is because really Haiti has barely  
25 gotten off the ground since the earthquake, in

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2 spite of the close to \$10 billion pledged in the  
3 March 2010 International Donors Conference and the  
4 commitment to hasten efforts to build back Haiti  
5 better. As time went by, frustration with  
6 political management of Haitian affairs and of the  
7 recovery efforts led both Haitians and  
8 international allies to turn to electoral  
9 politics. These turned to be highly  
10 controversial; a disaster was only averted by  
11 heavy-handed management of the process by the  
12 United States and its key allies. Haiti's  
13 capital, Port-au-Prince, remains home to more than  
14 half a million internally displaced earthquake  
15 refugees. Many have returned to homes that are  
16 really very unsafe. While the United States and  
17 its allies have done much in the past year to  
18 support Haiti's recovery and reconstruction,  
19 economic growth and political stability remain a  
20 dream deferred in Haiti. We hope that the new  
21 leadership in Haiti will take provide the  
22 leadership necessary to allow for growth and  
23 prosperity. Most observers, however, agree that  
24 real economic progress is years away. Meanwhile,  
25 Haiti remains vulnerable to floods, tropical

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2 storms, hurricanes, and societal misfortunes,  
3 health emergencies such as cholera outbreak,  
4 malnutrition, increased commodities and food costs  
5 due to world price fluctuation. In conclusion,  
6 Haitian-Americans United for Progress, which is  
7 serving about 15,000 people a year in the greater  
8 Cambria Heights area, in parts of Brooklyn and  
9 Nassau County, is ready and willing to assist  
10 these people when they come to the United States--  
11 assist them with settling, assist their families,  
12 their relatives and so on. So, we see very little  
13 downside to establishing the parole program, but  
14 we see much upside for both the Administration,  
15 for the City of New York, and the people of the  
16 United States. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
18 much to all three of you for coming in to  
19 participate in this discussion and to give  
20 testimony. I agree with you in the sense that as  
21 President Barack Hussein Obama said last night,  
22 that much has been done, but more remains to be  
23 done, and that the United States is losing out by  
24 not allowing such talented people--I think Mr.  
25 Augustin, you referred to that in your testimony.

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2 But I'm going to just turn this over to questions  
3 from my colleagues. And first, Council Member  
4 Charles Barron.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I want to  
6 thank all three of you for your testimony.  
7 Bishop, it's always good to see you on the  
8 frontline, as always. How much money did the  
9 United States actually give?

10 JOCELYN McCALLA: The United States  
11 pledged--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON:  
13 [Interposing] Not pledged. How much did you  
14 actually give?

15 JOCELYN McCALLA: I'm going to get  
16 to that.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I got the  
18 pledged part.

19 JOCELYN McCALLA: Most of the money  
20 that the United States said it has spent on the  
21 recovery effort has really gone to cover to the  
22 expenditures made by the United States for, for  
23 example, the American troops that were deployed  
24 following the earthquake, and most of the  
25 personnel that was deployed after the earthquake.

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2 So in effect, the United States, if we were to  
3 figure out what went into Haiti into the hands of  
4 Haitians, from the amount that was pledged and  
5 what it says it was given, I would say about 10%  
6 of the money that was pledged really went--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON:

8 [Interposing] 10% of the money pledged the United  
9 States actually gave. Give me a dollar figure on  
10 that? What, \$100 million a couple hundred  
11 million?

12 JOCELYN McCALLA: Well, the United  
13 States said it spend about \$2.5 billion already.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: \$2.5  
15 billion.

16 JOCELYN McCALLA: Yeah, so that's--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And that  
18 went to their troops?

19 JOCELYN McCALLA: Most of it went  
20 to the troops, yes.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right.

22 Come on, now. I mean, I know we got to try to get  
23 what we want out of this place and we've got to  
24 play some politics, but that is ridiculous for a  
25 country of this great wealth having a Black

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2 president and having a Black nation in the trouble  
3 that it's in to have that kind of commitment. And  
4 when you compare the commitment, the money to  
5 Israel, money to other European countries, it is  
6 much greater than the disaster in Haiti. And  
7 Cuba, and other countries and, like, Venezuela,  
8 these are countries that they complain so much  
9 about, look at their contribution and look how  
10 they set up doctors camps and all of that stuff,  
11 gave so much medical aid. And these are poor,  
12 struggling nations that--according to the United  
13 States--are headed up by bogeymen. And yet they  
14 were able to contribute so much. So, you know, I  
15 just wanted to get a sense of that. And then  
16 Bishop, you talked about the limits of this bill  
17 and how it needs to be opened up more to refugees  
18 and others. Could you just elaborate a little  
19 more on that?

20 GUY SANSARICQ: Well, I understand,  
21 of course, this resolution targets only a  
22 particular population. I'm here to back up the  
23 resolution. Of course much more could be done.  
24 Regarding this, I think it would involved  
25 something like 20,000 people.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay.

GUY SANSARICQ: And they are--they have already been approved, because all the documents that backs up their application has been approved. Therefore, they are not people who are going to come to have nowhere where to go. They have families here, established, who have already demonstrated their ability to support them. I think it's about 20,000 people.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: About 20,000.

GUY SANSARICQ: The idea is that once you present all your papers you are approved, then you have to wait for five, three, ten, eleven years.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right.

GUY SANSARICQ: Before you are approved. So, the purpose of this resolution is to allow them to come at once. That would benefit them; that would benefit their families, and that would benefit also the United States of America.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right. And especially with the testimony that it could, has and will continue to cost lives--

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[crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: --it could  
literally save people's lives.

GUY SANSARICQ: It's a low-cost  
program.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right.

GUY SANSARICQ: Because it doesn't  
require--possibly an added agent in Port-au-  
Prince.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: At best.

GUY SANSARICQ: To expedite--

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON:

[Interposing] Facilitate the paperwork.

GUY SANSARICQ: --the process.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So there's  
no real public monies that need to be put into  
this, because you already got the families that  
made that commitment. Thank you for your  
testimony.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And  
Council Member Eugene?

COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: Thank you,  
Chair Dromm. Thank you very much. I just want to  
thank one more time Bishop Sansaricq, not only for

1  
2     testifying today, but for your fine work on behalf  
3     of Haitian immigrants, because we know that you  
4     have always been in the forefront of the fight for  
5     Haitians--not only in the United States, way  
6     before, for many years. I commend you for that.  
7     You are a role model and inspiration for all of  
8     us. Even for, I know for Mr. McCalla too. Thank  
9     you very much for taking time from your busy  
10    schedule to come over here. And to Mr. Augustin,  
11    you know, your testimony was very moving,  
12    touching. You know, like you, I was born in Haiti  
13    and raised in Haiti also, as you know that. And I  
14    know firsthand what you are talking about. I have  
15    family members who have been through that also,  
16    and every day in my office in my district in  
17    Brooklyn, Haitian people come every single day  
18    raising the issues and seeking for assistance to  
19    bring their family members who are waiting in  
20    Haiti to United States. And this is a big burden  
21    for the family members--American citizens, I'm  
22    talking about. American citizens, and people who  
23    are legally admitted into United States who are  
24    working, being part of the fabric of United  
25    States, paying their dues to the system. It is

1  
2 fair enough we believe in family values. We do  
3 believe in United States of America and family  
4 values. We want to see the families together, you  
5 know, the father, the mother, the children. But I  
6 think that we are not doing enough, and it is  
7 wrong to keep those people waiting so long. And  
8 we Haitian people, we know the situation. Most of  
9 the young people, 17, 16-years old, they are  
10 qualified and they went through all the system.  
11 And as the Bishop Sansaricq said, they are  
12 qualified to come over here. Even the parent paid  
13 for the visa already--they have to wait. But when  
14 they got to 21 years old, they are not qualified  
15 anymore. They lose their opportunity and their  
16 right to come to United States, because of  
17 bureaucracy, because of the waiting. And as you  
18 say, Mr. Augustin, many of them die because of the  
19 crisis in Haiti, because of the lack of  
20 infrastructure and medical care. And those  
21 people, they were qualified. They went through  
22 all the system, all the protocol. They were  
23 supposed to be here. And what are we asking? We  
24 are just asking for fairness, for equality, for  
25 equal treatment, because they did it for the

1  
2 people who come from Cuba. And as you said, all  
3 three of you, it's going to be a win-win  
4 situation. We are talking about people who are  
5 qualified to come over here. They have a place to  
6 live and they have people to support them and they  
7 will be working to support the system. And I  
8 commend all of you and I thank all of you, you  
9 now, for being part of this and your support of  
10 the registration. And Mr. McCalla, I know, how  
11 hard you are working on behalf of the Haitian  
12 community, and you know--because since I know--we  
13 are not serving only people in Brooklyn, but we  
14 are fighting on behalf of all the Haitians across  
15 the nation who are waiting for this resolution to  
16 pass, who are waiting for the federal government  
17 to take the decision, because there are so many of  
18 our brothers and sisters who are suffering in  
19 Haiti, and especially right now as we speak,  
20 because the crisis as a result of the earthquake,  
21 the crisis in Haiti still exists. People are  
22 still suffering because of the impact of the  
23 earthquake. And I think that we are talking about  
24 rebuilding Haiti--this is a good way to continue  
25 to show that we want to rebuild Haiti. Because

1  
2 rebuilding Haiti is not about building buildings  
3 and infrastructure, but we have also to rebuild a  
4 life of people, the people who are suffering. And  
5 I think this is a humanitarian gesture. This is  
6 something very important that United States could  
7 do to demonstrate that yes, we want to rebuild  
8 Haiti, yes, we want to bring Haiti on track and we  
9 want to help those people who are suffering,  
10 bringing those people who are qualified, who are  
11 waiting for so long, bring them to United States  
12 for them to be united with their family members,  
13 and for them to experience also what all of us, we  
14 are enjoying now, the American dream. And again,  
15 to all of you, thank you very much. Thank you,  
16 Mr. Chair, and to all my colleagues Council Member  
17 Jumaane, Charles Barron and Ydanis and all of you  
18 here, thank you for your support. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very  
20 much, Council Member Eugene. And I just want to  
21 recall also how when we went to Israel you brought  
22 the message of what happened in Haiti to the  
23 people of Israel and were quite eloquent in terms  
24 of speaking to the media and to the people there,  
25 and visited a young victim of the earthquake in

1  
2 one of the Israeli hospitals, and I'll always  
3 remember that message that you brought there, that  
4 was very, very good. Thank you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: Thank you,  
6 Mr. Chair, and if you allow me, let me from the  
7 bottom of my heart on my behalf, and also on  
8 behalf of my Haitian brothers and sisters, to  
9 thank you for your support of us. You have been  
10 always there, always in the forefront of the fight  
11 with me, every time. Especially for this  
12 legislation, resolution. When I spoke to you  
13 about it you said, I want to do it, put me on it,  
14 we're going to move it on. Thank you so much. I  
15 appreciate that. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And  
17 I'd like to say now we've been joined by Council  
18 Member Ydanis Rodriguez, who also has some  
19 questions. Council Member?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Thank  
21 you, Chairman Dromm. I just have a comment to  
22 make, which is like, first of all, I thank the  
23 Bishop for being here and supporting our  
24 resolution, and Mathieu Eugene for having a  
25 leadership in this with the support of Chairman

1  
2 Dromm. As someone born and raised in the  
3 Dominican Republic, we know that we share a small  
4 island. And at the end of the day it doesn't  
5 matter how much some members of the elite of the  
6 island tried to divide our two countries; at the  
7 end of the day we share so much--from our history.  
8 I think all Latin American countries have to be so  
9 proud - - Haiti for being a role model of getting  
10 our slavery freedom. The freedom. And I think  
11 that we owe a lot to Haiti. It's not enough to  
12 say that Haiti is the poorest country in the Latin  
13 American hemisphere. It's also why we created  
14 that condition, and how Haiti has been going so  
15 much exploitation and how we all not only after  
16 another year when Haiti experienced one of the  
17 worst earthquakes, but also Guantanamo was--when  
18 Haitians also went to Guantanamo years ago, we  
19 also failed the Haitian families. Haitian  
20 children was born in Guantanamo. And still, they  
21 were sent back to Haiti, something that is  
22 unconstitutional. And I think that we all have to  
23 remember also that chapter of the history where we  
24 all have to make the connection on how there is so  
25 many questions on why. Why did we allow Haitian

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2 children born there in Guantanamo when they're  
3 getting rid of the dictatorship and the economic  
4 situation, and still how we sent them back and we  
5 did not allow them to stay here in the United  
6 States? But here we are more like supporting  
7 Council Member Eugene and Chairman Dromm's  
8 resolution that we believe will hope to continue  
9 the United States' relief efforts for tens of  
10 thousands of Haitians who have already been given  
11 the permission to join their families in this  
12 country, but have been waiting for visas to become  
13 available. I think that's the bottom line. I  
14 think that this hearing is taking place at a  
15 moment where it is the day after where the  
16 President Barack Obama already said that it is  
17 time for this country to have a comprehensive  
18 immigration reform, and I think that we have  
19 something on the table ready. We should work with  
20 the Haitian community and allow the families to  
21 come back to join the other family members that  
22 they have in this country. So, thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And  
24 just--I'm sorry, Council Member Williams also had  
25 questions.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank  
3 you. It's more of a quick comment. Just thank  
4 you guys again for coming out and sharing your  
5 stories. And I'm hoping--now, this is one of the  
6 best years that we can show our political will.  
7 So I'm hoping that Haitians are organized--  
8 Florida, Boston, DC, New York--not to just give  
9 someone a pass because it's the person we want to  
10 support, but to make sure he knows our  
11 enthusiastic support comes with some things,  
12 particularly in Florida that is going to be up to  
13 play. We should really get the boots on the  
14 ground so they understand what it is that's needed  
15 for our enthusiastic support, and not just give it  
16 away like we usually do, and then nothing happens  
17 after we've done that. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And my question  
19 really just has to do with, does anybody know the  
20 potential number of people who would be helped or  
21 affected by this? Have we heard any estimates on  
22 that? No?

23 GUY SANSARICQ: The estimate I  
24 heard is about 20,000.

25 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: 20,000?

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2 GUY SANSARICQ: That's what I  
3 heard, yes. I have not verified, but that's what  
4 I heard.

5 JOCELYN McCALLA: I think the  
6 resolution itself contains a few figures on the  
7 number of people who would be eligible. But there  
8 are different--of the people who are just waiting  
9 for their visa numbers to come up, there's I think  
10 there may be as many as 50,000, but there are  
11 different categories within that segment. So,  
12 that's part of the reason why we think it's not  
13 going to be a huge burden on the part of the  
14 United States, for example, to establish the  
15 parole program for Haitians, just like it  
16 established it for the Cubans.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right.  
18 Thank you very much, and we'll go to our next  
19 pane.

20 JOCELYN McCALLA: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Now I'd  
22 like to call up Ace Robinson from Gay Men's Health  
23 Crisis. Laura McLoughlin from Diaspora Community  
24 Services and James Desbrosses. Maybe we can start  
25 with Mr. Debrosses. Thank you. Whenever you're

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ready. Yeah.

JAMES DEBROSSES: Hello? Okay.

Good morning. My name is James Debrosses. I'm an attorney. I've been an attorney in New York State for about 20 years--1991. I've been focusing on immigration law, particularly in the New York City area. I have an office in Brooklyn, in Queens, and on Long Island, and I've been dealing with nationalities from all over the world. So, I've been doing immigration for approximately the whole world. I've done a lot of immigration for Haiti. And since the earthquake I've been there six times, so I know what's going on over there and I know what's going on here. Let me give you a little history on the 1096 resolution that we're requesting. Back in November of 2007, the Department of Homeland Security started and enacted the CFRP, which is the Cuban Family Reunification Program. That program was started for two purposes; number one, family reunification, number two, to discourage dangerous maritime migration. In other words, they didn't want Cubans to die at sea, so that's one of the reasons they started the reunification program, so

1  
2 they could come in and wait here for their green  
3 cards. In the meantime, have we counted how many  
4 Haitians have died at sea trying to come here?  
5 Nobody has mentioned that. It could be even more  
6 than Cuba. That's one. Number two, January 12,  
7 2010, we know for a fact hundreds of thousands of  
8 Haitians have died or have been severely injured.  
9 I know at least a million are homeless. Myself  
10 personally, I send money every month to Haiti just  
11 to help some people go to school, buy food,  
12 etcetera, because even though Haiti is poor, it's  
13 a very expensive place to live. Everything is  
14 expensive in Haiti, which makes no sense to me.  
15 Based on my information and my research, the  
16 Haitian Family Reunification Act would help  
17 approximately 150,000 Haitians get their green  
18 card. Not 20,000, not 50,000--150,000. Because I  
19 looked at the immigration statistics; they're  
20 understated. Because I have clients who are the  
21 spouses and children of US citizens--they're still  
22 stuck in Haiti for some technical reason. There  
23 could be a document problem. If the archives or  
24 household documents are destroyed, it's not that  
25 person's fault that they're destroyed because of

1  
2 an earthquake. If they give enough proof, they  
3 should be able to come in. And we all know, in  
4 order to bring a relative here, you have to give  
5 an affidavit of support. You have to give your  
6 tax returns, so that alone relieves the US  
7 Government for at least three years. Because that  
8 person will take on the responsibility of  
9 supporting that person until they are a US  
10 citizen. I know also that most Haitians that come  
11 here to work, and immigrants, they refuse to go on  
12 government assistance. It's like an insult to  
13 them. It's against their culture. The US  
14 congress and the US government have to understand  
15 that. Immigrants do not like welfare; they do not  
16 like government assistance. They want to work.  
17 That's their culture. So, I don't like to hear an  
18 excuse, oh, they're going to take government  
19 money. As a matter of fact they're giving taxes  
20 while they're here because they're working. They  
21 want to be on the books. They don't want to be  
22 off the books. So, what I'm saying is, if the  
23 Cubans can have that special treatment--which I  
24 don't call special because it's--because no matter  
25 what it's just a matter of time before they get

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2 their green card and come here. So what's the  
3 reason of holding up the process? Because I know  
4 Haitians here that send money back to Haiti, it's  
5 also understated. They say \$2 billion; it's way  
6 more than that. Because they're not counting the  
7 money that Haitians carry with them when they  
8 travel on the plane. That's not counted in the  
9 money transfers. Money that they cross over from  
10 the Dominican Republic on themselves to go over to  
11 Haiti. There's over 1 million Haitians in the  
12 Dominican Republic. He can testify to that. They  
13 carry money with them to Haiti. So, the \$2  
14 billion is really \$5 billion, but because Haiti is  
15 so expensive, it goes like that. Because the--I  
16 would say the elite in Haiti triple or quadruple  
17 their profits, which has to do with economics and  
18 government. Haitians that are here--figure out if  
19 we helped 150,000 Haitians get their green card,  
20 they will come here and work, they would help at  
21 least five more family members. So that's 750,000  
22 Haitians that would help, that would either  
23 continue to go to school, have healthy conditions  
24 which they'd all have, and then they would--the  
25 ones that are here in turn would apply for the

1  
2 ones in Haiti and help them come here and survive.  
3 Like Council Member Barron said, this is a land  
4 for all immigrants. The native immigrants are the  
5 American Indians, they were here first. So  
6 everybody should have equal rights. It's not  
7 first come, first served. It shouldn't be that  
8 way. We should have an open policy; as long as  
9 you qualify, you know, you're not a criminal,  
10 you're coming here to work, everybody should have  
11 equal opportunity. so, based on my clients, based  
12 on the research I've done, I know the  
13 reunification of Haitians would help a minimum of  
14 150,000 Haitians get their green card and send  
15 money back to Haiti. Okay. Thank you very much.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes. And Ms.  
17 McLoughlin? Oh, I'm sorry. Okay.

18 LAURA McLOUGHLIN: Good morning.  
19 My name is Laura McLoughlin. I'm here  
20 representing Carine Jocelyn, Executive Director of  
21 Diaspora Community Services. Diaspora Community  
22 Services was formerly known as the Haitian Women's  
23 Program. We are an international non-profit  
24 organization with offices in Brooklyn, NY and  
25 Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Since Haiti's devastating

1  
2 earthquake two years ago, Diaspora has been at the  
3 forefront in providing much needed support and  
4 services, both locally and in Haiti. Diaspora's  
5 commitment and knowledge of the Haitian community  
6 is demonstrated in our over 30 years of services  
7 community. The Haitian population works very hard  
8 and similar to other immigrants want a better life  
9 for their families. Unfortunately though in  
10 Haiti, where there are good intentions, there  
11 remains widespread devastation. Despite the  
12 promises and statements of many world leaders and  
13 public officials, an estimated 500,000 people  
14 still live in tents and thousands live on the  
15 streets. Families have been divided across  
16 continents as a result of this tragic earthquake.  
17 To address such hardships in the past, the US  
18 established the Family Reunification Parole  
19 Program, which allows immigrants from other  
20 countries who have been approved for family  
21 reunification and visas to come to the United  
22 States and be with their family members while they  
23 await their visas. This allows legal status in  
24 the US, giving immigrants the right to work and  
25 contribute to their own growth and the rebuilding

1  
2 of their home country. Pardon me. Thousands of  
3 Cubans have come to the US under the program. We  
4 ask that Haitians be given the same fair and equal  
5 opportunity. The nation of Cuba has historically  
6 provided greater educational opportunities, better  
7 medical care, better food, housing and overall a  
8 greater quality of life to its citizens than many  
9 Haitians have ever imagined. We are not asking  
10 for special privileges for the Haitian community,  
11 only that which is right and fair. New York has  
12 through most of its history provided a refuge and  
13 opportunity for many of the world's disadvantaged  
14 to build a new life. The Haitian people seek our  
15 support of the reunification parole program and  
16 the opportunity to advance the lives of their  
17 loved ones, and ultimately the livelihood of their  
18 nation. Along with many republicans and  
19 democrats, we urge President Obama and Secretary  
20 Napolitano of the Department of Homeland Security  
21 to take a simple step to save lives and speed  
22 recovery. The Haitian Reunification Program would  
23 cost virtually nothing, while reuniting families  
24 and helping thousands in Haiti. The Department of  
25 Homeland Security has approved them for US

1  
2 residency, and all have a US family support  
3 network in place. Many have paid a large fee to  
4 the US treasury, and yet for no apparent reason,  
5 they have been delayed access to the United  
6 States. For two full years administration  
7 officials have stalled on the Haitian Family  
8 Reunification Act, stating that the step is under  
9 consideration. Under consideration has become a  
10 euphemism for apathy, and this is an outrage.  
11 112,000 people in Haiti are beneficiaries of  
12 family-based visa petitions, which the DHS has  
13 already approved, but who nevertheless remain on a  
14 three- to eleven-year waiting list in Haiti, where  
15 many must survive under poor living conditions,  
16 poor access to healthcare, inadequate housing,  
17 limited employment, and a recent cholera outbreak.  
18 In closing, Diaspora Community Services remains  
19 committed to supporting the needs of the immigrant  
20 communities in New York, and we support resolution  
21 1096. The Haitian Family Reunification Parole  
22 Program must be promptly enacted in order to  
23 improve and save lives of thousands of Haitians.  
24 It is truly the only humane and just course of  
25 action. Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And  
3 now we have Mr. Robinson, who I believe is going  
4 to speak on Resolution 761.

5 ACE ROBINSON: All right. Thank  
6 you to City Council Member Dromm, the Committee on  
7 Immigration and the New York City Council, for  
8 calling this hearing. I come to you today to  
9 offer you my remarks as an American Citizen who  
10 has resided in Post Apartheid South Africa, Haiti,  
11 Senegal in West Africa. And most recently I have  
12 lived in the cities of Phoenix, Arizona, followed  
13 by Los Angeles. And now I've relocated to New  
14 York City, living in the Bronx. In addition, I am  
15 a trained biological scientist, social scientist,  
16 and public policy advocate, who has witnessed  
17 firsthand how discrimination has led to the  
18 reduction of health outcomes for individuals and  
19 for entire communities. I come to you today also  
20 as an employee of the Gay Men's Health Crisis, the  
21 world's oldest HIV/AIDS service organization.  
22 GMHC is and has historically been a national  
23 leader in the fight against AIDS. We have helped  
24 countless men and women and families that love  
25 them to live better, healthier lives. GMHC was

1  
2 founded by a group of brave individuals who dared  
3 to have the compassion for people who for one  
4 reason or another did not receive the respect and  
5 human dignity that they rightfully deserved. The  
6 mission of GMHC can be best described by the well-  
7 known phrase, give us your poor, your tired, your  
8 huddled masses, longing to be free. We fight to  
9 reduce the challenges that those infected and  
10 affected by HIV face each and every day. At one  
11 time the people who were most impacted by HIV had  
12 any number of characteristics and demographics.  
13 Today that is not true. Our clients that we  
14 advocate for on a daily basis share very similar  
15 demographics. They are disproportionately people  
16 of color, of lower socio-economic status, and less  
17 educated. From this pool, those clients of  
18 foreign origin or who speak English as a second  
19 language often are at even greater risk for  
20 contracting HIV. These particular individuals  
21 face challenges to realizing a stable and healthy  
22 existence. So, as a health and social advocate  
23 for those who are often without a political voice,  
24 GMHC supports Resolution number 1193. This allows  
25 the Council to support an amicus brief to be filed

1  
2 in the US v. Arizona case that the US Supreme  
3 Court is hearing. The brief will support the US  
4 position on the litigation. The case involves the  
5 constitutionality of an Arizona statute commonly  
6 known as S.B 1070. In short, 1070 gives the  
7 police the right to stop any person at any time  
8 and ask for their immigration documentation. S.B.  
9 1070 is unconstitutional, since it is in effect  
10 allowing Arizona state officials to enforce  
11 immigration laws. The US is ensuring that all  
12 citizens and residents are treated with fairness,  
13 and without implicit or explicit discrimination no  
14 matter what color, ethnic origin, or socio-  
15 economic status. As you Council Members may  
16 already know, GMHC has a staff of experienced  
17 attorneys, accredited immigration advocates, and  
18 volunteers who provide free legal services to  
19 people living with HIV and AIDS. The people  
20 receiving these services come from all walks of  
21 life. We assist the clients with immigration  
22 matters, employment discrimination and public  
23 benefits, just to name a few of our services. As  
24 a local, and especially as a national advocate for  
25 these individuals, GMHC also fully supports the

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2 City Council passing Resolution 761, because it  
3 addresses the current concerns about the operation  
4 of the immigration courts, some of which were  
5 highlighted in the Supreme Court opinion *Judulang*  
6 *v. Holder*. In *Judulang*, reversing the decision of  
7 the 9th Court and the Immigration Court, Justice  
8 Kagan observed that the Immigration Court based  
9 its decision on an irrelevant comparison between  
10 statutory provisions that did not relate to the  
11 case before it. Justice was not upheld in the  
12 lower courts and it took many expensive appeals  
13 before the Supreme Court finally corrected it. We  
14 believe the Council knows that the people staffing  
15 the Immigration Courts are hardworking and ethical  
16 individuals, and that they are doing the best they  
17 can with the limited resources available to them.  
18 Since Resolution number 761 promotes additional  
19 funding to add competent judges to the Immigration  
20 Courts, and because it also, and more importantly,  
21 adds diversity on the bench. Gay Men's Health  
22 Crisis believes this is a step toward addressing  
23 the lack of resources at the heart of what  
24 obviously went wrong in the *Judulang* case and  
25 others like it. In closing, I would like to

1  
2 commend the City Council for taking an active  
3 stance in ensuring all people are treated with  
4 decency and respect, irrespective of their  
5 background or current location in the United  
6 States of America. As a new resident of this fine  
7 city, I am highly impressed and humbled to be  
8 represented by a group of conscientious, fair and  
9 caring group of legislators. Thank you for  
10 allowing me to speak, and I look forward to  
11 working with you in the coming years.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you all  
13 very much for coming in, and I know Council Member  
14 Williams has some questions.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: It wasn't  
16 a question; it was a comment. Thank you again for  
17 all the testimony. I want to underscore something  
18 Mr. Debrosses said, which was pointing out that  
19 immigrants when they come don't really want to get  
20 on all the social services, and I wanted to  
21 underscore that, because just being in that  
22 community, that's something that they feel they  
23 don't want to do. They're proud. Even though I  
24 think some of them are in situations that the  
25 service was created for, and I don't think they

1  
2 would abuse it, they would actually use it to help  
3 them get out of the situation and move forward,  
4 they still refuse to get on it. So, I think  
5 that's an important issue to point out, so that  
6 when they come here they're actually putting much  
7 more into society than they're taking out. Thank  
8 you.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Council Member  
10 Eugene.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: Thank you  
12 very much, Mr. Chair. I just want to thank and  
13 congratulate you. Each one of you, and all three  
14 of you for coming to testify today, even if the  
15 topic is different, this is--I thank you for your  
16 advocacy, and this is very important. And Mr.  
17 Debrosses, I want to thank you also, because you  
18 know that better than everybody, this topic that  
19 we are, you know, we are talking about today,  
20 because you have been serving the community, the  
21 Haitian community for so long as an attorney. And  
22 I know you personally as a strong leader in the  
23 community. Thank you for taking time from your  
24 busy schedule to come over here. I know you have  
25 been there in the Court, going to Haiti, and the

1  
2 community, to send for Haitian people. Thank you  
3 so much. And thank you also for the information  
4 that you brought to us also, some piece of  
5 information.

6 JAMES DEBROSSES: I'll give you  
7 copies.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: Yes. And I  
9 hope that we will continue to work together until  
10 we get to the result that we are looking for,  
11 because it is very important that, as you say,  
12 that the Haitian people that come over here--  
13 immigrant people--that they want to work. They  
14 just want to have a better life for themselves and  
15 their children. They want to come over there to  
16 work and be part of the system. And like other  
17 people, other immigrants who came before, you  
18 know, before us, they had the opportunity. They  
19 were granted the opportunity to have a piece of  
20 the American Dream. And I think that immigrants  
21 today also, they are entitled to have a piece of  
22 the American Dream, that the reason we are  
23 fighting, we are fighting not only for Haitians  
24 but for all immigrants. And as the Chairman said,  
25 we have to fight to get comprehensive immigration

1 reform, because United States, you know, this  
2 country has been built by immigrants. This is a  
3 result of immigrant effort, sweat and blood. So  
4 we have to continue to fight together. And also  
5 to Ms. Laura McLoughlin, I just want thank you  
6 also and commend the Diaspora Community for the  
7 wonderful job that you are doing, because we have  
8 so many wonderful organizations in the Haitian  
9 community, fighting for immigrants--not only for  
10 Haitians--fighting for everybody, providing a  
11 wonderful job to improve the quality of life for  
12 people in the community. To all three of you,  
13 thank you so much. And let's continue to work  
14 together to make New York a better place, to make  
15 this United States one of the best countries in  
16 the world. Thank you very much.

18 JAMES DEBROSSES: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you,  
20 Council Member Eugene. And just kind of to wrap  
21 it up, I put my resolution in, Resolution number  
22 761 because I was very shocked to hear of the  
23 quality of the judges who are appointed to  
24 Immigration Court. And I was even more shocked to  
25 learn of the qualifications to become a Judge,

1  
2 which really are only that you be a lawyer, and  
3 that probably you know someone in a high place to  
4 place you there, which I think oftentimes leads to  
5 the decisions like you referenced in your  
6 testimony. Do you have an opinion on that or a  
7 feeling about that that you could help elaborate  
8 on that?

9           ACE ROBINSON: So, essentially, as  
10 we know, as when the immigration law, the federal  
11 immigration law was made, it brought the  
12 Immigration Court four times the number of cases.  
13 So, thereafter there was a problem with just being  
14 able to receive a fair adjudication, like, you  
15 know, making sure that they judges had all the  
16 information that was necessary to make appropriate  
17 judgment--what is the situation, where is the  
18 person coming from, Judulang again for example,  
19 you know Filipino, eight years old came over, got  
20 in trouble as a youth, and then later on got in  
21 trouble again for something that was a  
22 misdemeanor. And then because there was--I would  
23 say there was like one hand or the other, like you  
24 were going to have one opportunity to look at a  
25 case and say, oh, this person should be gone for

1  
2 whatever reason, and then you have the exact same  
3 reason, and that person gets to stay in the  
4 country. And there was no set policy. And so  
5 basically what your resolution could do would  
6 allow for the judges to not only have the proper  
7 training so that they are making, like, an  
8 appropriate decision--if you do not match the  
9 demographics, do not have all the education on it,  
10 not through your own personal life--it will give  
11 you the opportunity to learn about it so you can  
12 make an appropriate judgment. And then also would  
13 push the Immigration Courts to make sure that  
14 there is a level of diversity where you're not  
15 relying on--basically where you're not relying on  
16 a certain segment of the population, which is  
17 essentially lawyers who had good connections, who  
18 needed a cush job, which was immigration law  
19 before because it was something relatively simple  
20 that required little political advocacy. So if  
21 you're trying to remove that portion of it and say  
22 if you're going to become an immigration judge,  
23 you have to have these set of qualifications, you  
24 have to have this sort of training, and you have  
25 to be able to understand the issues that are in

1  
2 front of the defendant. So, if you're talking  
3 about what you're talking about--Mexicans,  
4 Haitians, Cubans--anyone who comes into the  
5 country--you want to make sure that you understand  
6 where they're coming from, what's the situation  
7 they're in, and, like, whether or not, like you  
8 know, they're removing them from--deporting them  
9 from this country will be a detriment to not only  
10 their own personal life, but the society from  
11 which they came from and the society from which  
12 they grew in, and the society which they are  
13 developing the fabric of, the current and real  
14 America.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And it's for  
16 all of the reasons that you just elaborated on  
17 that I hope that my resolution will shine a light  
18 on some of these things and expose it to people  
19 who generally don't know that this is occurring in  
20 our immigration system. And I thank all of you  
21 for coming in. But before I let you go, I just  
22 want to say that we also, today, are hearing  
23 testimony on resolution number 1193, which deals  
24 with joining an amicus brief against the Arizona  
25 Law, and although we don't have anyone, I believe,

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who is going to testify on that today--

COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE:

[Interposing] Mr. Chair?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Did you want to say something on that?

COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: About your resolution. When you finish. When you finish.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Absolutely. I just wanted to say that that also is an important piece of legislation that we will pass here in the City Council, hopefully very shortly. So again, that we can show that the City of New York, which has been at the forefront of a lot of immigration issues, won't stand for a law that basically comes down to racial profiling and using whatever standards or means by which--I don't even know if it's possible--to identify somebody of suspected, quote unquote, of being here undocumented or illegally. So, we look forward to passing these laws in the City Council and I think that Council Member Eugene has a statement to make.

COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just want to commend you also. And Mr. Chair, I just want to commend

1  
2 you and thank you also for your resolution 761.  
3 This is a very important piece of resolution also,  
4 because in life, in any area of expertise, any  
5 profession, we're talking about experts. Let's  
6 say in medicine, for example, everybody--we have  
7 many doctors, but we have different - - so that  
8 means it is very important also for the judge to  
9 have certain knowledge and expertise in  
10 immigration if they are dealing with immigration,  
11 because this is a very sensitive, very important  
12 issue. They should know exactly the different, as  
13 you mentioned, they should have knowledge about  
14 the different aspects of immigration and also the  
15 culture of different people that they are serving.  
16 I think this is a wonderful piece of immigration,  
17 and I will support it and add my name. I - - my  
18 name was supposed to be there already, if it's  
19 not. And I commend you for that, and I will work  
20 together with you and make sure we have the most  
21 support of our colleagues from the City Council.  
22 Thank you very much.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And  
24 My Counsel reminds me that, Mr. Robinson, you did  
25 in fact in your testimony make reference to

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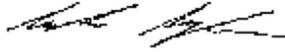
ACE ROBINSON: 761.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, exactly.

I don't know what's going on with me today, but  
you did. And I was meaning others to come in to  
testify, so. With that being said, we will  
adjourn this meeting. Thank you very much, all,  
for coming.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Erika Swyler 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 2/16/12