CITY COUNCIL CITY OF NEW YORK

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

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Of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

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February 28, 2014 Start: 10:23 a.m. Recess: 10:55 a.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers City Hall

BEFORE:

JIMMY VAN BRAMER Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Costa Constantinides Laurie Cumbo Peter Koo Helen Rosenthal Stephen Levin Jumaane D. Williams

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

Judy Tate Co-Founder/Producing Artistic Director American Slavery Project

Keith Adkins Artistic Director The New Black Fest

Chris Cobb Artist/Writer/Columnist Brooklyn, NY 2

1 3 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Are we ready? 3 Okay. 4 [Pause] 5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good morning. 6 My name is Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer and I am proud to be the chair of the Committee on Cultural 7 8 Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup 9 Relations. This is the first hearing on Into 36, 10 sponsored by Council Member Jumaane Williams and I 11 want to congratulate and thank Council Member 12 Williams for this important piece of legislation 13 and I want to recognize our colleagues who have 14 joined us from the committee. Council Member Costa Constantinides; Council Member Laurie Cumbo; 15 16 Council Member Peter Koo; Council Member Helen 17 Rosenthal and I know that Council Member Levin is 18 in the adjoining room and will be joining us. 19 This is Black History Month and the 20 Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and 21 International Intergroup Relations is holding this 22 hearing as a result of this important piece of 23 legislation Council Member Williams has placed, and 24 that is to permanently record and mark the 25 intersection of Wall and Water Streets in Manhattan

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 4 to mark the site of New York's first slave market. 2 3 In 1711, New York City was bustling and quickly growing, but we had one out of every five people 4 5 living in New York were living in New York as enslaved Africans and at least 40 percent of white 6 households included a slave. On December 13th, 7 8 1711, a law was passed by this body's predecessors, the New York City Common Council, that made Wall 9 Street the city's official slave market for the 10 sale and rental of enslaved Africans and Native 11 12 Americans. The slave market, also known as the 13 meal market, was located on Wall Street and Water 14 Street. This unspeakable injustice of this dark period in our city's history and our nation's 15 history requires our attention. I think it's safe 16 to say that are markers all over the city of New 17 York marking important places in our city's 18 history, but it is shocking that still today there 19 20 is not one mention or permanent marker of this 21 slave market, so we thank our colleague, Council Member Jumaane Williams, who has brought this to 22 In Lower Manhattan, with exception 23 our attention. of the African Burial Ground Memorial, there are no 2.4 reminders of the slave market and the incredible 25

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 5 2 injustices that happened there and have been 3 unrecognized by our city. We must never forget what happened and it is important that native New 4 5 Yorkers, tourists and everyone alike be reminded of 6 what happened there and that we mark the contributions of enslaved Africans who built the 7 city, including our first City Hall and the wall 8 that would bring the name to Wall Street. 9 So with that I want to thank Council Member Williams for 10 this important piece of legislation. This is the 11 12 first hearing where we will talk about the merits 13 of the legislation and then we'll have a second 14 hearing on the technical aspects of this sign and hopefully pass it into law very speedily, and with 15 that I want to ask the prime sponsor of Intro 36, 16 17 Council Member Jumaane Williams, to speak on the legislation. 18

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Well, thank 20 you, Mr. Chair and I wanted to thank the chair for 21 allowing this to go through and not only that, agreeing to co-sponsor this probably over a year or 22 almost two years ago and he merely agreed to try to 23 24 get this done, and I look forward to a day, as I before, when we don't have Black History Month. 25 We

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 6 just have history that is taught properly 2 3 throughout the year, but until that day comes I'm glad that we have something that will commemorate 4 5 Black History and I'm glad we're doing this at the tail end of that month, and for those who will be 6 watching or the people who testify, let me 7 8 apologize. There are some people who should have been here, but we sped this up a little bit to try 9 10 to get this through. It wasn't for lack of importance. It was kind of a lack of time. 11 I am 12 Council Member Jumaane D. Williams and I am the co-13 sponsor of legislation of Intro Number 36. Also I 14 wanted to thank Margaret Chin, who is the council member for where this marker will be, who has also 15 been supportive from the beginning. I'd also like 16 to thank the advocates that are here with us who 17 have submitted testimony, including historian, 18 artist and writer Chris Cobb, who was actually the 19 20 first person to bring this to my attention; 21 Margaret Porter Troupe from the Harlem Art Saloon; 22 Judy Tate of the of the American Slavery Project and Keith Adkins of the New Black Festival on 23 24 American Slavery and Carol Fisler from Center for Court Innovation. I also thank all of those who 25

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 7 weren't able to make it today for their tireless 2 3 It is appropriate that we consider this efforts. legislation during Black History Month, a time when 4 5 we pause to recognize the many contributions of 6 people of African descent and to reflect on their experiences in America. It might be inconceivable 7 that just 200 years ago, people of African descent 8 were considered three-fifths of a person; bought 9 10 and sold as property; people who lived life as the 11 engine that helped plantation owners turn a profit 12 in the cotton business. These are people who 13 suffered whippings and lashings, hangings and other 14 brutal acts under the hands of his or her slave Their lives and the lives of their 15 master. children were given dollar values and they were 16 17 considered nothing more than mere commodities. Those who have seen the movie Glory and more 18 recently, 12 Years a Slave were reminded that the 19 institution of slavery, which helped to build this 20 21 city and this nation was not one where captives gleefully submitted to the rules of his master, but 22 one where men and women were made to eat the scraps 23 2.4 left over from their masters, where children were not taught the right to read and write and were 25

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 8 deprived of the ability to establish an identity 2 3 unto themselves beyond slave, an institution that did not recognize the humanity. And let's be clear 4 5 that America would not have been America and would 6 not have the prosperity without the free labor of chattel slavery. We all know the history. Lincoln 7 8 signed the Emancipation Proclamation, the 13th amendment was signed and the institution of chattel 9 10 slavery was finally dismantled in America. Then we saw the innovation of Jim Crow Laws, such as 11 12 redlining, which relegated Blacks to second-class 13 citizenship. The legacy of slavery and Jim Crow 14 Laws resonates absolutely with us today and we still feel the effects of it. Intro Number 36 15 honors the memory and sacrifice of those courageous 16 17 men and women who were bought and sold at New York's first slave market in 1711 by placing a 18 plaque at the intersection of Wall and Water Street 19 20 in Downtown Manhattan. This plaque would make sure 21 that those who visit the financial capital of the world know that this city was built on the backs of 22 This is where captive African slaves would 23 slaves. 24 arrive on slave ships along the East River and be brought to market on this site as part of the 25

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 9 2 transatlantic slave trade. Some ships came 3 directly from Africa, but most came from the West Indies, leaving from ports in Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica 4 5 and elsewhere. Native Americans were also sold as 6 slaves here. To be clear, New York's early economy was fueled by slavery. Slaves were used to clear 7 8 the lands to create Broadway, to build the first City Hall, the Fraunces Tavern, and the very wall 9 that Wall Street is named for. Let us also honor 10 the memories of those who sacrificed their lives 11 12 for us. That is not just Black History. It is 13 American History. I look forward to hearing the 14 testimony and once again, thank you to Chairperson Van Bramer for hosting this hearing and co-15 sponsoring the legislation with me. 16 17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much, Council Member Williams and we have one panel 18 19 of three distinguished individuals. I'll ask Keith 20 Adkins, Judy Tate and Chris Cobb to please take the 21 three seats over here to begin testimony on Intro

36, and you can choose amongst yourselves who you'd

23 like to go first.

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[Pause]

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 10 JUDY TATE: Hello. Good morning, 2 3 council members. Thank you very much. I'm Judy tate, the co-founder and producing artistic 4 5 director of the American Slavery Project, which is a theatrical response to revisionism in this б country's discourse around Civil War, slavery and 7 8 Jim Crow and I'm here to support Number 36, the Local Law, which will require the placement of an 9 10 informational sign at the intersection of Wall and Water Streets in Manhattan. In 2012, with a grant 11 12 partially from the Department of Cultural Affairs, 13 ASP brought to life for audiences the world of 14 Colonial New York. In our show "Unheard Voices" our writers studied the era and the remains of 15 people buried in Lower Manhattan in the African 16 17 Burial Ground. Many of the 10,000 people buried there surely passed through the African slave 18 There are no extant records of them. 19 market. Our 20 writers had to imagine their names and daily lives 21 from the contents of the graves and to give them voice. The proposed plaque will bear witness to 22 the reality of those lives. When we perform people 23 24 are surprised to learn that there were enslaved people in New York. They're even more surprised to 25

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 11 consider what that means; that there had to be a 2 3 way of buying and selling these people; that many city structures that we take for granted today were 4 erected by those same people. New York was largely 5 6 forest, which had to be cleared, and as Councilman said, it was enslaved black workers who did the 7 back breaking work of cutting down and clearing 8 trees from the bottom of Manhattan to the top of 9 10 the Broadway. Wall Street isn't just a name, but was an actual wall erected using slave labor to 11 12 keep the city safe. The American Slavery Project 13 urges you to place this plaque in a far belated 14 recognition of the contributions African descendent people have made to the construction of this city. 15 Their labor was forced, but the fruits of it are 16 real and can be still witnessed every time one of 17 our citizens walks up the Broadway or down the Wall 18 Street. It is only fitting that we have a plaque 19 that recognizes the origins of Wall Street and 20 21 denotes exactly what the most important commodity being traded there was; human beings. It is an 22 important history, a history of survival, of 23 24 contribution, of ingenuity and transcendence. May we forever remember the people who built this city 25

1	committee on cultural affairs, libraries and international intergroup relations $12$
2	with the blood and sweat of their labor. This
3	plaque gives their children a long overdue
4	acknowledgment and offers every citizen and every
5	visitor the chance to see that we New Yorkers, all
6	of us, recognize our history and because of that
7	recognition can claim New York as all of our own.
8	Thank you. Keith.
9	CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Keith is up
10	next, alright.
11	KEITH ADKINS: Oh, there we go. I am
12	the artistic director of The New Black Fest, which
13	is a theater organization here in New York City
14	that supports the diversity within the black
15	narrative globally, and two years ago, I teamed up
16	with Judy Tate and we co-founded the American
17	Slavery Project. So I'm not going to go basically
18	to repeat what Judy said because that was quite
19	beautiful and accurate. I did write a small sort
20	of statement that I want to talk to you about that
21	I want to read to you and then afterwards just talk
22	a little bit about why I wrote this. And I have my
23	android, so please, there's no copies available.
24	New York City is a city of diversity.
25	It is a city that takes pride in the many cultures
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1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 13 and ethnicities that have provided the city with 2 its social, political, intellectual reputation. 3 From Wall Street to Chinatown to Central Park to 4 Harlem many people have lived and worked and loved 5 6 and helped and fought in these streets and many take pride in that. New York City is a city of 7 It's also a city that didn't build itself. 8 pride. 9 Yes, many immigrants from Ireland, Germany and 10 beyond have put sweat and blood in the making of New York City, but many of them came by choice or 11 12 by economic or religious circumstances. Enslaved 13 Africans, who we all know were used for free labor, 14 did not come here by choice. They were a part of a much larger and institutional strategy to build a 15 country from the ground up. Many enslaved Africans 16 17 and free Blacks labored over the cobblestone, the erection of buildings and churches here in Downtown 18 Manhattan. They worked tirelessly at the docks; 19 20 helped their owners, some of whom were merchants, 21 cobblers, restaurant owners, ministers, attorneys, doctors, shippers. They helped without pay or with 22 very little pay to help build their owners' 23 24 financial security. So a memorial in the city of any kind is respectful and it is responsible. 25 Ιt

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 14 says that the city doesn't ignore its past and the 2 3 people who have helped make it what it is and a memorial isn't just an indicator for the enslaved 4 5 Africans who were auctioned on Wall Street. It's 6 also a signifier that you respect and appreciate the descendents; the people who moved into Five 7 Points, which is this area... was once this area; 8 the people who moved to an area called Seneca 9 10 Village in York Hill, which is now at present day 11 Central Park; the people who migrated out of the 12 city into Bed-Stuy and deeper into Brooklyn and 13 these people migrated and moved not because of 14 choice, but because of inequities in the city; because of race riots simply by being alive; simply 15 by wanting higher wage. These people were 16 17 descendents of the people who were auctioned on the slave market. And so I think it's also important 18 that we think about this banner or this symbol not 19 20 just for those Africans sold, but the people who 21 migrated and dispersed and now exist as present day black New Yorkers. Thank you. 22 23 CHRIS COBB: Thank you. I'd like to 24 thank the committee for holding this hearing this

I deeply appreciate it. And while I hope

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morning.

1 15 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS you all realize what you're about to do by voting 2 3 on this bill, but... [crosstalk] 4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Chris, do you 5 б want to... 7 [crosstalk] CHRIS COBB: 8 Okay. 9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: State your name and... and... 10 CHRIS COBB: Oh, I'm sorry. 11 12 [crosstalk] 13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: ...and your 14 proposal. 15 CHRIS COBB: My name is Chris Cobb. Ι am an artist and writer. I also am an arts and 16 culture columnist for the Museum of Modern Art in 17 San Francisco. I live in Fort Greene, Brooklyn and 18 19 I've spent quite a lot of time with Christopher Morton at the Schomburg Center in Harlem and one of 20 21 the things I learned from him is that the more you 22 study this topic; it's a broad topic and it goes on and on and when you think you know all the facts 23 you know, the reality is that there's more and 24 there's always more because it's not just a single 25

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 16 2 historical period. It's something that needs to 3 stand for hundreds of years. I mean it's a very, very old tradition of institutionalized slavery 4 5 that was instituted here in New York, so I hope 6 with that said I really do hope that all of the committee members realize what you're about to do 7 8 by considering this plaque because by placing it you're not only attacking the dominant historical 9 10 narrative of this city, but also the very system 11 itself that instituted these policies that made 12 this possible, the slave market. You're also going 13 to affect how New Yorkers see themselves, which is 14 a huge issue because the New Yorkers like to think of themselves in a very good way and this 15 complicates things. And furthermore, it's been 303 16 years now since the ancestor of the City Council, 17 that is, the Common Council, passed a law setting 18 up the city's first municipal slave market down on 19 Water and Wall Street. It wasn't merely a slave 20 21 market. It was a city-run slave market because they wanted to be able to tax every person who was 22 bought and sold there and they also wanted to 23 24 control the sales and the auctions and they needed a central place and that was it. So that said, the 25

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 17 city also hired slaves from that market to do road 2 3 construction and road clearing and what have you; laborers, what have you. So I just want to say 4 this: so finally, finally it's about time, right? 5 6 You'd have thought somebody would've memorialized this corner by now. Well, maybe not. The slaves 7 8 that came through there they were mostly imported from the West Indies because they were considered 9 10 easier to deal with. A smaller portion came from 11 Africa and they were more difficult to deal with 12 for the people who wanted to buy them and why? 13 It's because the Africans as soon as they got off 14 the boat they said, "We don't like this," and what happened actually the year after the market was 15 created was the first slave revolt in New York City 16 17 and it was conducted by a group of Africans, who had tribal affiliations and they immediately 18 revolted and the thing is is it... it's a very hard 19 20 thing to find out good information about because 21 not a lot of people know of it. But the thing is that they chopped wood, they carried water, cooked 22 and cleaned. They were nannies. 23 They were 24 laborers and they literally built the city of New York including the first City Hall, so there's some 25

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 18 culpability here, and when they died... when they 2 3 died they were buried in the African Burial Ground right by here, right by City Hall and the people 4 5 that died and their children and their children's children were buried in the African Burial Ground 6 and then when it was filled up you know what 7 8 happened. The city went ahead and paved it over and sold off the land and lots to developers back 9 10 in the 1700s. How about that? And no trace of the 11 burial ground remained until ground was broken in 12 '89 and '90. And there are still probably tens of 13 thousands of people buried there, so that's 14 outrageous, right? That's outrageous and today all of us here are here because we're going to connect 15 16 the dots. We're going to connect these dots and we 17 all know that New York is a busy place; however, it's one thing to forget about something, but it's 18 another thing completely to intentionally erase and 19 20 systematically ignore a people or a history and 21 they were made invisible on purpose and through neglect as well and this is an important site, so 22 it's an obligation of us, the living, to speak for 23 24 the dead because they can't speak for themselves.

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It's our job to do that. The least we can do is to
acknowledge them. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: First of all, 4 5 I want to thank all three of you for that very 6 powerful and compelling testimony. I don't have a number of questions. Obviously I'm a supporter 7 8 'cause I'm also a prime co-sponsor of this legislation, but I want to once again thank Council 9 10 Member Williams. This is long overdue and I'm sure that all of our colleagues will join in supporting 11 12 this very important recognition. So with that, I 13 want to pass it over to Council Member Williams.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you, thank you again for all of your support. 15 I did want to again give a special thanks to Chris Cobb, 16 who first brought this to my office and through the 17 arduous process has provided everything that we 18 19 needed to try to get this through, so I want to say 20 thank you again. I wanted to recognize my staff 21 Rance Huff [phonetic], my chief of staff; Nick Smith, who helped us get it over the hump, but I 22 want to give a special shout out to Kay Bane 23 24 [phonetic], who worked with Chris through the process and really to through the red tape and the 25

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 20 rigamarole to get this here, so I wanted to give 2 3 him a special shout out as well and I'm very glad we're here. Just growing up I often felt that this 4 5 part of history was ignored and it still is and I 6 remember I was in college when they tried to just pretend like the bones that they found in the 7 African Burial Ground meant nothing and were still 8 going to build it over. Just last year they were 9 10 going to try to do something else with a building and thankfully Council Member Charles Barron 11 12 brought it to our attention. They were doing the 13 same thing again. So this is... history repeats 14 itself when it comes to this and we try to pretend like it didn't exist and we still try to pretend 15 like it doesn't have an effect with the descendents 16 17 and people who look like slaves today, which all is not true, so I'm glad we're going to have an 18 opportunity hopefully to try to do this and the 19 20 people who are watching now and they're going to be 21 people who I think would've like to be here, but it was just the speed of which we've tried to put this 22 together to move forward we were unable to get it 23 out as much we wanted to, but I understand we're 24 going to have another hearing and perhaps if there 25

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are some key people who want to make sure they said
something we can give them an opportunity then, but
thanks again and thanks to my colleagues who are
today.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Do any other7 colleagues... Council Member Laurie Cumbo.

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I want to thank 8 you all for being here. I want to thank our chair 9 10 for bringing us together today and Council Member Williams, I think this is fantastic. I just wanted 11 12 to ask you in terms of this plaque, which I think 13 is so important and it's really a step in the right 14 direction, I also wanted to know has there been any thought in terms of how this information can be 15 incorporated into our schools' curriculum in a way 16 17 that young people would know about this. I see... I've read the testimony from the American Slavery 18 Project, but wanted to know if there has been... 19 20 because it's one of those things where I'm thinking 21 about in my own educational curriculum I know and you all probably know this history was not a part 22 of our curriculum growing up and so for many adults 23 they're learning this for the very first time and 24 it would be so critical because not every teacher 25

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is going to have the foresight to take them to the
African Burial Ground or to go to some of great
places such as the Schomburg and beyond, so wanted
to pose that question because that seems like the
next step as well.

JUDY TATE: Well, in fact, you're in 7 8 luck. The American Slavery Project has a curriculum supported by the Lower Manhattan 9 10 Cultural Council through their creative curricula 11 project and we did the pilot program last year. 12 We've been funded again for this semester, in which 13 a teaching artist goes into the schools and takes 14 the... it's usually high school students through the same process that our commissioned writers went 15 through to study the bodies at the African Burial 16 17 Grounds, study slavery in New York through the New York Historical Society archives and inspired by 18 the contents of the burials go through the same 19 20 process our professional artists went through to 21 imagine the lives and the ordinary lives of these people who happened to be living in extraordinary 22 And then professional artists come in after 23 times. 24 a semester long workshop of monologue writing, development of literacy skills, understanding how 25

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 23 to research through archives and they perform the 2 3 work of the young people and in fact, in our pilot project that work was so powerful that we are 4 looking at a couple of those monologues to be 5 incorporated into our professional show "Unheard б 7 Voices."

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you. 9 KEITH ADKINS: I just want to tag onto 10 what Judy Tate just said. I recently... there's a 11 theater company in the city called Epic Company 12 that is committed to socio and political justice 13 and they recently commissioned me through the New 14 York State Council on the Arts to write a new play about Seneca Village, which is the black community 15 that is now Central Park and the purpose behind 16 17 this commission was to use it in classrooms in New York City. The pilot... well, I'll just start with 18 the pilot program right now is Chelsea High School 19 20 and so the purpose of the play itself is to 21 introduce the students one, to the history of the city itself, but also allow the students to think 22 about their own history in the city whether or not 23 24 their parents or grandparents or great-grandparents were here in the 19th century or not, but usually 25

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2	in most cases some person in the city, whether or
3	not they're Haitian descent or Dominican descent or
4	Chinese decent, they have some historical legacy in
5	the city and so the purpose of this commission is
6	to actually get students talking about their own
7	histories and to write stories and plays that sort
8	of are shaped by their own histories in this city.
9	So there's a lot of education that can happen that
10	is already happening and what was really exciting I
11	think for Epic Theater with this particular
12	commission with NYSCA was that it was the first
13	time NYSCA gave them all the funds that they needed
14	because they saw that there was a real desperate
15	need to have this conversation about Black History
16	in the city, so yeah.
17	COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Alright, what
18	village you said in Central Park?
19	KEITH ADKINS: Oh, Seneca Village and
20	for those who don't know that Central Park before
21	it was Central Park was a very, very swampy sort of
22	unlivable place and very rocky and so there were a
23	few black communities that lived there. The first
24	one was called York Hill, which was around 6th
25	Avenue and between like 77th and 85th Street, and

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 25 that community was removed by eminent domain. 2 The 3 Community Council at that time removed them by eminent domain to build the reservoir. It was an 4 5 above ground reservoir and many of those people who lived in York Hill then migrated over a couple 6 avenues to 8th Avenue and moved into what was 7 8 Seneca Village. That was primarily populated by the AMEzine community, so there was a lot of 9 10 property owners and very educated blacks, but then by the 1850s; I think it was 1856, the community 11 12 had actually grown and there were Irish and German 13 immigrants in the area, who also sort of lived 14 around Seneca Village, but the city actually removed everyone through eminent domain to create 15 Central Park, so. 16

I would like to mention... 17 CHRIS COBB: and I'd like to mention the name of a gentleman 18 19 named Alan Singer. He's an educator and I believe he's in Hofstra. He teaches a curriculum about New 20 21 York and it's related to slavery and indentured servitude. He's actually written a book as well 22 about many of the topics that are connected to the 23 24 slave market and to something I discovered as well is like when you come down and you start talking to 25

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 26 people in Lower Manhattan, especially the national 2 3 park rangers that staff Federal Hall and the African Burial Ground, those people they do tours 4 around Lower Manhattan and sites related to the 5 Atlantic Slave Trade that have no markers. б There are a lot of them that you know ships used to come 7 8 up and down the East River all the time every day. There were ships coming and going every day through 9 10 the Colonial Era and there is not a single marker 11 saying anything and at South Street Seaport there's 12 not a single marker. You can go up and down Wall 13 Street and you won't see a single word Negro, black 14 or slave or any marker. There are hundreds of signs along Wall Street and they celebrate 15 architects and politicians and what have you, 16 17 bankers. But Alan Singer is definitely somebody who's already developed a curriculum and implements 18 it and has for probably like 10 years I would 19 20 imagine. His book is very informative as well. Ι 21 can't remember the title offhand, but Mr. Singer's book is available on Amazon if you look up Alan's 22 It's you know, connected to the curriculum 23 book. 24 he teaches. They bring teenagers down here too to

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the African Burial Ground and do a tour to all
these sites that are not marked.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Alan Singer 4 was invited to testify today, but he was unable to 5 make it, but we will definitely invite him again to 6 the second hearing on this bill. Council Member 7 8 Williams, do you have anything else you'd like to add? So with that, I do want to recognize that Al 9 10 Mullen is here representing the administration and 11 at the second hearing we will have the appropriate 12 agencies who will implement this present, but this 13 is also Al Mullen's last committee meeting and last 14 day after over 40 years working for the city of New York, so [applause] we want to thank him. And in 15 one way or another, Al and I have worked for 15 16 years together on this committee, as I worked for 17 the library system before I was elected, so with 18 that, I want to say thank you to the panelists. 19 20 Thank you and we will follow this through and push 21 this forward as quickly as possible to make sure that this gets done as soon as we can. 22 So with that, thank you very much and this hearing is 23 24 adjourned.

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[gavel]

## CERTIFICATE

World Wide Dictation certifies 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.



Date:\_\_\_03/05/2014\_\_\_\_\_