

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS,
LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL
INTERGROUP RELATIONS

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November 24, 2014

Start: 1:15 p.m.

Recess: 2:21 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: JAMES G. VAN BRAMER
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Elizabeth S. Crowley
Julissa Ferreras
Peter A. Koo
Stephen T. Levin
Andy L. King
Costa Constantinides
Laurie A. Cumbo
Helen K. Rosenthal

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

Paul Yoo
Korean-American Association of Queens

Sung K. Min
Korean-American Association of Greater New York

Kwon Kim
Korean Community Services

Sunny Hahn, Retired Specialist
Commission on Human Rights
2013 New York City Council Candidate

Dr. Kim
The Korea Society

Sam Yoon
President and Executive Director
Council of Korean Americans

Kyung B. Yoon
Executive Director and Co-Founder
Korean-American Community Foundation

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And now, good
3 afternoon for the record. Welcome everyone. My name
4 is Jimmy Van Bramer, and I am proud to be the Chair
5 of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and
6 International Intergroup Relations. With me today
7 are Council Members Helen Rosenthal from Manhattan
8 and Peter Koo from Queens who is the prime sponsor of
9 the important resolution that we are taking up today.
10 I do want to recognize Council Member Andy from the
11 Bronx. He has already been here, and may come back,
12 and welcome to everyone who is joining us. The
13 Committee is thrilled to be taking up Resolution No.
14 417, sponsored by my terrific colleague from Queens
15 Council Member Peter Koo. And this resolution would
16 recognize and commemorate January 13th as Korean-
17 American Day in the City of New York. I know that
18 everyone here knows how important and significant the
19 Korean-American Community is in Queens where we get
20 to live, but all throughout the five boroughs in New
21 York City.

22 According to the U.S. Census Bureau's
23 2011 American Community Survey, New York City is home
24 to at least 100,000 ethnic Koreans with two-thirds
25 living in the Borough of Queens. According to the

2010 United States Census, the Korean population of Manhattan has nearly doubled to approximately 20,000 since the Year 2000, Council Member Rosenthal.

Korean-Americans make up thriving enclaves across New York City. Many communities throughout the five boroughs including Flushing and Bayside, but also including Sunnyside where I live and represent--we have a thriving Korean community in Sunnyside--are home to so many merchants, small business owners, and cultural and other establishments, entrepreneurs, professionals, self-starters. Their contributions have helped shape the city that we live in today, and have had a measurable impact on the country as a whole.

Therefore, it is entirely appropriate that the City recognize the extraordinary contributions of Korean-Americans. Resolution 417 is the first step towards ensuring that New Yorkers of Korean ancestry receive the recognition and appreciation that they so richly deserve. I want to recognize our Counsel Anita Kilawan to my left, and my Legislative Director, Cody Reiter, who is to our right. And ask our distinguished colleague Council

1
2 Member Peter Koo, prime sponsor of this resolution to
3 say a few words.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you, Chairman
5 Van Bramer. I appreciate you holding the hearing
6 today on legislation that I have introduced, which
7 seeks to make January 13th Korean-American Day in the
8 City of New York. Because of the leadership, we are
9 taking an important step in the legislative process
10 today. So I thank you. January 13th is the day the
11 first Korean-American, and first Korean immigrants
12 cam to the United States back in 1903, 102 men,
13 women, and children traveled across the Pacific Ocean
14 and landed in Honolulu, Hawaii seeking better lives
15 for themselves in America. Today, according to the
16 2010 U.S. Census, there are now over 104 million
17 Korean-Americans living here. After China, the U.S.
18 is the home to the largest Korean community outside
19 of Korea.

20 Korean-Americans have made tremendous
21 contributions to all sectors of our society such as
22 the rural, government, academia, medicine, science,
23 and business. For example, Korean-Americans own and
24 operate 192,465 businesses in the country of which
25 23,948 are in New York State. I want to thank all my

1
2 colleagues who are supporting this bill, including
3 Council Members Vallone and Johnson, who himself is
4 part Korean. I hope to earn everyone's support. I
5 also want to thank Congresswoman Meng and all the
6 members of the Congressional Asian-Pacific American
7 Caucus, and their ongoing efforts in recognizing
8 January 13th as the Korean-American Day. And most
9 importantly, I want to thank all the members of the
10 public who have taken time out of their busy day to
11 have their voices heard on this matter. I appreciate
12 all of you coming here, and I look forward to
13 listening to your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
15 much, Council Member Koo, and now we'll call up the
16 first panelists, Paul Yoo, Korean-American
17 Association of Queens; Soo Min, Korean-American
18 Association of Greater New York; and Kwon Kim, Korean
19 Community Services. If the three of you would take
20 your place here at the table, the sergeant-at-arms
21 will take your testimony.

22 [background discussion]

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.
24 We're missing a seat so why don't we-- We'll call up
25

1 Sunny Hahn. Is Sunny Hahn there? You can have the
2 fourth seat. Okay.

3 [Pause]

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: We'll add one
5 more. Why don't we start with you from my left to
6 right. Is that good?

7 KWON KIM: Please.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Mr. Kim.

9 [Pause]

10 KWON KIM: Okay. Thank you to all of the
11 City Council Members and the Committee on Cultural
12 Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup
13 Relations who are here today advocating for this
14 important legislation. On behalf of Korean Community
15 Services of Metropolitan New York that was found in
16 1973 as a non-profit multi-social service agency
17 currently serving 1,100 individuals everyday, I'm
18 Kwon Kim. I'm here to testify today to ask the City
19 to pass this important piece of legislation for the
20 Korean-American community of the City of New York.

21 As mentioned in this resolution, the
22 first Koreans immigrated to the United States on
23 January 13, 1903. Then, in 1952 then that current
24 Voter, Immigration and Nationality Act went into
25

1
2 effect, then killing the National Origin Act from
3 1924, and Asian immigrants were allowed into this
4 country. But the total was only one in five people
5 per year. But in 1965, President Johnson signed a
6 new immigration law that allow repealed the
7 Nationality Act, but also established a new
8 immigration policy to enable Asian immigrants to come
9 to the United States. After this law was passed,
10 many Koreans came to the United States for a better
11 life for themselves, and for their children.

12 After the devastation of the Korean-- and
13 a weak economy, Koreans immigrated to the United
14 States with the hope of a brighter future themselves
15 and no less their children. Since then, the Korean-
16 American community has established themselves all
17 over the nation in many areas especially as small
18 business owners. Koreans immigrated here and started
19 a grocery store, dry cleaners, fish market, nail
20 salon, and many other businesses. That was a time
21 when the Korean-American community was surviving and
22 establishing themselves here in this new country.
23 Many of them did not know the English language, but
24 managed to run a successful business and not only
25 survive, but also thrive.

1
2 Koreans are very hardworking and value
3 education, and these values were passed on to their
4 children many of whom were born in the United States
5 and known as the second generation. Because of the
6 sacrifice of the first generation, the second
7 generation was able to attend college and with a
8 post-college degree and become successful
9 professionals in various fields. The second
10 generation is now starting their own traditions,
11 business, culture and starting their own family.
12 Now, that we have a third and future generation
13 growing up in the United States, it is important to
14 recognize our heritage, history, and roots. It is
15 important for our children to know where they came
16 from, and understand the sacrifices that were made so
17 that they could live a better life here in the United
18 States.

19 The federal and New York State already
20 commemorate January 13th as a Korean-American day. We
21 are grateful that the New York City Council is taking
22 the initiative to make this an official day within
23 the city. We sincerely appreciate the forthcoming
24 New York City Council and the Committee of Cultural
25 Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup

1
2 Relations in trying to pass this important
3 resolution. We strongly urge the Council to pass
4 this resolution so that we can recognize the Korean
5 immigrant history for the future generations in this
6 very important proud City of New York. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
8 much, and I want to recognize that we have been
9 joined by Council Member Laurie Cumbo from Brooklyn
10 also on our committee. Next.

11 SUNG K. MIN: Good afternoon. I'm very
12 glad to appear before you today. I wish to speak in
13 favor of January 18th-- January 13th as Korean-
14 American Day in New York City. My name is Sung K.
15 Min, and I am the President of the Korean-American
16 Association of Greater New York. My organization
17 represents half a million Korean-Americans in the
18 Greater New York area. It is an umbrella
19 organization for over 20 communities, businesses,
20 artistic, and really just schools. There is a deep
21 history about why we should have a Korean-American
22 Day in our city. And I would like to share six
23 historic facts. The first Korean immigration was in
24 1903 as a group of 102 people in Hawaii.

1
2 Fact No. 1: However, 20 years before
3 that, in 1883 there was a historic meeting at the
4 Fifth Avenue Hotel at 21st Street and Fifth Avenue in
5 Manhattan. It was the first actual meeting between
6 the 21st President Chester A. Arthur and the
7 representatives of the Korean Government, known as
8 the Probing Mission. They followed the United
9 States-Korean Treaty of 1882, also known as the
10 Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce, and Mitigation.

11 Fact No. 2: On this occasion, the
12 important mission was to visit the post office on
13 31st Street and Eight Avenue, which enabled adopting
14 a postal system fashioned after the U.S. model one
15 year later in Korea, known as Chusong [sp?] at that
16 time.

17 Fact No. 3: This widget or service
18 majority [sic] in Korea adopting an electrical
19 system, a communication system, a postal system, and
20 the best of farming tools and techniques.

21 Fact No. 4: We are close to the place
22 where the first nationwide meeting of the Korean-
23 Americans took place. This was in 1921.

24 Fact No. 5: The New York Korean Church
25 founded in 1921 around 15th Street was mainly key

1 figures recognizing their efforts to resist the
2 Japanese government, which had colonized Korea. They
3 include: Seo Jae-pil, who was the first Korean-
4 American medical doctor; Kim-Il-Sung, [sp?] who was
5 the first president in Korea. Jovian Liu, who is a
6 famous politician; Kim Dai-Yung, Chan Dae-Fu, [sp?]
7 Chesan Joo, [sp?] Il Chai Wong, [sp?] Wocho Si, [sp?]
8 Kim Hanon, [sp?] and Cho Meng. [sp?] After the
9 Korean independence, many of these individuals became
10 the political leaders of Korea.
11

12 Fact No. 6: New York City was also the
13 birthplace of the Korean National Anthem written by
14 world famous composer and conductor Ahn Eak-Lay.

15 Conclusion: So I repeat once again that
16 New York City was definitely responsible for the
17 advance of electricity, communication, and the postal
18 system spreading to Korea. It was the focal point to
19 Korea's Independence Movement, and the place where
20 Korea's subsequent leaders were incubated. Today,
21 the hard work and good nature of the Korea-American
22 have contributed greatly to the quality of New
23 Yorkers. We hope to grow to a community that can
24 receive the love of the entire city, and designation
25 January 13 as Korean-American Day in New York City

1 with the goal of our name [sic] in achieving that.

2 Thank you very much.

3
4 Thank you for inviting me to testify
5 before you today. Recognizing the others who have
6 gathered here that January 13th is commemorated as
7 Korean-American Day in the City of New York. My name
8 is Paul Yoo and I am the President of the Korean-
9 American Association of Queens. My organization
10 represents the hundreds and the thousands of Korean-
11 Americans in the Borough of Queens. Our other
12 directors is made up or our community's major non-
13 profit organizations such as Korean Community Service
14 of Metropolitan New York; the Korean-American Family
15 Service Center at Lincoln Center [sic]; Korean-
16 American City Empowerment; Korean-American Chamber of
17 Commerce in Greater New York, and more.

18 I believe that the diversity is one of
19 the most important elements that contributes to our
20 empowerment. [sic] The service that you provide,
21 the communities in which we live and work, and the
22 lives of us all. By promoting an inclusive
23 environment where everyone respects individuals and
24 the contributions of the people of different
25 backgrounds, experience, and perspective. I believe

1 that we can each strengthen the quality of our lives.
2 New York is one of the most ethnic diverse cities in
3 the United States. New Yorkers come from all
4 backgrounds, some from considerable generations of
5 Americans, and some who are first generation
6 immigrants. The diversity is part of what makes our
7 great city strong, and that we Korean-Americans are
8 proud of ourselves for leaving our contributions.

9
10 In the 2011 American Community Survey,
11 New York City is the home of 100,000 Koreans with
12 two-thirds living in the Borough of Queens. On the
13 other hand, overall Greater New York combined it's a
14 typical area enumerated with 218,764 Korean-American
15 agents as of the 2010 United States Census. The
16 second largest population of Koreans outside the
17 Korea. However, we believe that actually about half
18 a million Koreans are living in the Greater New York
19 area. But above this, I want to emphasize the
20 contribution that Korean-Americans have made to our
21 city. There are over 10,000 small business owners
22 and operated by Koreans in the Greater New York area.
23 And we Koreans have been one of the great providers
24 of goods and services here for the case.

1
2 The New York Times had documented that
3 Korean-Americans has delivered fresh produce to many
4 areas in the city that would have otherwise have gone
5 without. This is backbreaking work that requires
6 constant diligence. Korean-Americans also operate
7 roughly 80% of all dry cleaner business in the city.
8 Those are just two examples among many in the area of
9 our business. Countless New York City ledgers have
10 also entered the Korean food as well as the Korean
11 artistic complements [sic], and also improve
12 themselves by learning the arts of the tech window.

13 Everywhere we go, we improve
14 neighborhoods making them safe, and a wonderful place
15 to live and to raise children. And we have improved
16 this in the modern hill sic] area surrounding the
17 Long Island Railroad Station what used to be a
18 dangerous and a dark area. So many thousands of
19 people come and celebrate the merchants in the area
20 and the Korean culture. This has become an annual
21 event, but it's just the beginning. Whenever you may
22 have a Samsung or AG phone in your pockets, or you
23 may drive cars made by Hyundai, these global
24 companies show what we are capable of. Friendship
25 with our neighbors in the greatest city in the world

1 will greatly overcome our languages, and the cultural
2 barriers and all of us to reach our full potential.

3
4 Commemorating January 13th as Korean-
5 American Day in the City of New York will have raised
6 awareness of our community, and have such friendship.
7 More importantly, it is shown as a memento of us
8 Korean-Americans to work harder than ever
9 continuously making contributions to the developments
10 of our great city. So, again, I thank you for
11 inviting me to testify, and I would like to thank
12 Councilman Paul Vallone, and Councilman Peter Koo, as
13 well as everyone here for all of their efforts.
14 Thank you very much.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
16 much. I just want to recognize that we have been
17 joined by Council Member Costa Constantinides also of
18 Queens, and a member of this committee. And the last
19 person on this panel, Sunny Hahn.

20 SUNNY HAHN: Yes. Thank you Council
21 Member Peter Koo for introducing this great
22 resolution, and thank you Council Member and
23 Committee Chair Van Bramer, and, too, Council Member
24 Cumbo and Council Member Constantinides. Thank you,
25 and also Committee Counsel for all of you working on

1 these things for Korean-Americans in New York City.

2 Thank you very much. My name is Sunny Hahn. I'm a

3 long time Queens resident and New York City

4 Commission on Human Right specialist, a retired Human

5 Rights Special and 2013 New York City Council

6 candidate. America becomes multi-racial, multi-

7 ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural society.

8 In a few decades the preeminent racial and cultural

9 group, which founded and built America, there is

10 less.

11
12 It will become a member of a minority

13 themselves. In most all the centers in America,

14 white Christians are no longer the majority. The

15 majority of Koreans are Christians. It is my firm

16 belief that the majority of Koreans are descendants

17 of Israelites holding traditions and values that are

18 very similar to that of Jewish people. Koreans live

19 or try to live by Judeo-Christian principles or way

20 of life. Just like Jewish people, Koreans seek

21 excellence in achievements almost to an insane level.

22 Evidence of that can be seen everywhere. Koreans

23 have been in New York City for only a little over 40

24 years. Yet, we have changed the landscape of the

25 city's economy and cultural lives.

1
2 We invented 24/7 delis and restaurants
3 and salad bars. Now, we are the leader of spa and
4 wellness movement. A disproportionate number of
5 students in high school students are Koreans. Many
6 members of the New York Philharmonic are Koreans.
7 Korean influence, Koreans' influence is in many
8 fields. The World Bank's President is a Korean, who
9 was formerly the President of Dartmouth University a
10 prestigious university in America. We are in
11 academia, in science as well as medical and cultural
12 fields. A Jewish friend told me that-- told me last
13 Friday that one of the two largest synagogues in
14 Manhattan is led by a Korean woman. But more than
15 for their achievements and economic status, they are
16 peacemakers.

17 Nevertheless, I know that we caused great
18 anger and animosity for the Korean language, signage,
19 and building so many Korean churches. Yes, we are
20 unique people. We work hard, study hard, play hard,
21 and worship God hard. I have no doubt when we are
22 fully assimilated into American society, we will
23 become an invaluable asset to this greatest country
24 in the world. For these reasons, I would like to
25 strongly support the designation of January 13th of

1
2 Korean-American Day in New York City as it was the
3 day in 1903 when the first group of Koreans landed on
4 American soil to become a part of this great country.
5 Please say yes and support the Resolution No. 417.
6 Thank you to all of you.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
8 much for your testimony. I want to recognize that we
9 have been joined by Council Member Elizabeth Crowley
10 also of Queens. We have you outnumber Laurie Cumbo.
11 [laughter] I want to let you know that, and I want
12 to thank the four panelists so much. A very
13 fascinating history, some of which I was not aware
14 of, and I'm grateful to Council Member Koo for bring
15 this very important resolution to us so we could
16 learn more about the history of the Korean-American
17 community in New York. And also take this rightful
18 step in honoring and recognizing the many
19 contributions of Korean-Americans in the City of New
20 York.

21 I also want to say that I haven't been
22 this self-conscious about the brand of phone that I
23 have until you mentioned which phones I have. I'm
24 not sure that I have one of those two makers, but--
25 No, I don't think it is Samsung, but it is an iPhone

1 here. I don't know. We'll figure that out, but I
2 couldn't agree more, and I really thank all of you
3 for being here. I know Council Member Koo and
4 several members of the committee have questions. So
5 I will first turn it over to the prime sponsor of
6 this resolution, our good friend Peter Koo.
7

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you all for
9 coming to testify. I just have a few quick
10 questions. Do you think that this Korean-American
11 Day celebration could attract tourism and help to
12 contribute to the City's economy. I think I should
13 ask Mr. Kim.

14 KWON KIM: We have said for some time
15 that it's the identity. When a person seeks their
16 identity, the personality is secured, and is
17 spiritually healthy. That means that a person can
18 contribute more. And a different thing by
19 recognizing the Korean Day is give them the following
20 generation where they can form, and that they are in
21 it for themselves. And with that identify,
22 definitely they can contribute more, and that's the
23 basic starting life or status. And after a few
24 generations later, not only to second generation and
25 a first generation, that is so important. So giving

1
2 them where they came from is the basis of their life,
3 and they can contribute more as a very healthy
4 citizen and a member of New York City.

5 [Pause]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: [off mic] What
7 would be the significance-- What would be the
8 significance of recognizing Korean-American Day in
9 New York City? Sunny Hahn.

10 SUNNY HAHN: Well, if I may, that while,
11 as I said, Koreans are hard working and working hard
12 to really succeed, and actually a lot of them are
13 actually made it. But, by designating or creating
14 Korean-American Day in New York City, we are bringing
15 the Korean-Americans into the mainstream rather than--
16 - And giving them as an immigrant, while running
17 businesses and seeking success. However, certainly
18 the designation will give Korean-Americans a pride,
19 as well as sensible responsibility as fellow
20 Americans and fellow New Yorkers. So that there will
21 be, in my opinion, an invaluable thing to give them a
22 sense of responsibility to fellow other contributors
23 and mainstream members of New York City to work to
24 promote the wealth of the city.

25 [Pause]

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: There are other
3 cities in the U.S. that celebrate Korean-American
4 Day. I heard you mention a couple. And so, what are
5 those cities that celebrate Korean-American Day? Mr.
6 Min, do you know?

7 SUNG K. MIN: I don't remember except
8 that the federal government announced the Korean-
9 American Day on January 13th. I think that was done
10 three years ago. Does anyone remember that?

11 PAUL YOO: I think in 2003.

12 SUNNY HAHN: Oh, 2003 we celebrated?

13 PAUL YOO: Yes, we celebrated it. Yes.

14 [background conversation]

15 SUNNY HAHN: But in Hawaii for sure. I
16 lived in Hawaii for three years where the whole thing
17 originated, and it is a big thing. And actually, we
18 celebrated the 100th Anniversary in New York as well
19 as Hawaii. It was a really big thing in Hawaii, as
20 it was in the city when we reached the 100th, the day
21 of our immigration to the United States of America,
22 which is 2003. A huge celebration. In fact, I
23 organized a photographic exhibition celebrating that
24 was importing a lot of history photos from Hawaii.
25 As it was collected tons of photos to create an

1
2 exhibition in Flushing Town Hall. I was told by the
3 Flushing town staff it was the most visited, the most
4 successful exhibition in the history of the Flushing
5 Town Hall.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you. So I
7 will now ask more questions. Has there been a
8 national movement to recognize Korean-American Day?
9 I know they have done some work in Congress to
10 promote legislation.

11 [Pause]

12 SUNNY HAHN: Sorry, I didn't get your
13 question clearly.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Has there been a
15 national movement to recognize Korean-American Day in
16 the USA.

17 SUNNY HAHN: Maybe Sung. Sung, you may
18 be the right person to answer because he represents
19 the Council of Korean Americans in Washington, D.C.
20 So if any national movement, he may be the one who
21 may know. Excuse me.

22 SUNG K. MIN: [off mic] Maybe Ms. Yoon
23 will know. I mean she has been in that-- [sic]

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right, I think
25 Ms. Yoon will testify after this panel.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: [interposing] Oh,
3 okay.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So we will get
5 that answer in the second round for Council Member
6 Koo.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you very much.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
9 much Council Member Koo, and I think we are going to
10 go to Council Member Cumbo and then Council Member
11 Constantinides and Council Member Crowley has
12 questions as well.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you. Thank
14 you so very much for your testimony, and thank you to
15 our Chair Jimmy Van Bramer, and thank you so much to
16 Council Member Koo for bringing this to our body.
17 This is so important, and just hearing the testimony,
18 I was very excited to learn so much more about the
19 history of Korean-Americans in the United States of
20 America. I certainly think it's a history that more
21 New Yorkers and those nationwide should also know
22 about. And I think that this is a great opportunity
23 to do so. My question involves wanting to know more
24 about in New York City without it being legislated,
25 up until this point what has typically happened in

1
2 New York City on the date of January 13th? Have
3 there been events? Have there been programs maybe
4 organized with the United Nations or with other
5 organizations that are Korean based? Has there been
6 something or a tradition going on every January 13th
7 up until point.

8 [background conversation]

9 SUNNY HAHN: Yes, I believe we have a
10 celebration in this city, and I am sure they have a
11 big celebration in Hawaii. There are two that I
12 know, but in other states and cities, including
13 Washington, D.C., I'm not aware.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: But in New York
15 were there events happening that happened right here
16 in this city on a regular basis?

17 SUNNY HAHN: I believe the Korean-
18 American Association of Greater New York as well as
19 Korean-American Association of Queens they do little
20 celebrations.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Because I like
22 celebrations. [laughs]

23 SUNNY HAHN: Oh, really? And if you
24 designate, I am sure either association will initiate
25 a big celebration. No doubt about it.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: And also inform me
3 in my ignorance, and I apologize about that, are
4 there Korean Day parades or Korean Day festivals that
5 happen in that way already on other days?

6 SUNNY HAHN: In October because I'm sure
7 of the weather situation because it's easier to have
8 a celebration in the fall instead of in the heart of
9 the winter. So since the Korean nation began on
10 October 3rd, that's around the time that the Korean-
11 American Association of Greater New York, they
12 organize a big Korean festival including a Korean-
13 American Day parade.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Oh, it's
15 fantastic.

16 SUNNY HAHN: Yes.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: And would-- Do
18 you anticipate in any way that Korea, Korea, the
19 Mother Land Korea would be able to-- Do you think
20 that they would anticipate any level of support or
21 any engagement in the sense--

22 SUNNY HAHN: [interposing] But if we
23 succeed in designating January 13th as Korean-
24 American Day of New York City, I have no doubt that
25

1 we are going to get some support from our mother
2 land.

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Oh, that would be
5 absolutely fantastic and amazing. And has there been
6 any thought in terms of education wise some way of
7 bringing this into the schools to inform them that
8 it's Korean-American Day so that way they would have--
9 - our schools and our students would have an
10 opportunity to learn about this rich culture as well.

11 SUNNY HAHN: That would be wonderful.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: And that's
13 something--

14 SUNNY HAHN: [interposing] Absolutely
15 wonderful.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: --that you would
17 be thinking about. Well, I just want to say that I'm
18 in favor of this. I think that this is very
19 exciting. Again, I love celebrations, and as a new
20 Council Member, I had an opportunity to go to Council
21 Member Koo and Vallone's district. And it was really
22 very moving to me because I chair the Women's Issues
23 Committee, and we were organizing a great deal in the
24 month of October around Domestic Violence Awareness
25 Month. And I had an opportunity to meet Grace Yoon,

1
2 who is the Korean-American, Executive Director of the
3 Korean-American Family Service Center. And I was
4 really very impressed with the work that they were
5 doing in Council Members Koo and Vallone's district.
6 And so, I certainly applaud their efforts in terms of
7 bringing very serious issues to the forefront, and
8 being a unified body. And I was very proud to work
9 with them, and to be in Flushing in the district to
10 discuss that. So I thank you very much.

11 SUNNY HAHN: Thank you.

12 KWON KIM: One more piece so that I can
13 emphasize the Korean Day in the City. Koreans have
14 such a long history of their lives with the United
15 States. Koreans were in the industrialization of the
16 South Korea as with America, and for a long time in
17 the future also. And our following generation there
18 may be some connection that South Korea is giving
19 them this input and demonstration within the city.
20 They are emphasizing them an example of how America
21 is supporting South Korea. And we have still
22 responsibility within a corporation within the two
23 countries.

24 SUNNY HAHN: And also, if I may add
25 piggybacking on what Mr. Kim said, that when-- About

1
2 20 some odd years ago when Korean merchants had some
3 difficulty dealing with-- running businesses in
4 African-American neighborhoods there were some
5 frictions and things like that. So that out of that
6 there was a wonderful thing that happened. So the
7 Korean groups organized some scholarships as well as
8 some programs to send African-Americans, young
9 African-Americans to Seoul to study for one year, or
10 something like that. I don't know in detail, but I
11 know that program exists, and just as Robert
12 Sinclair, who was the spokesperson of the Triple A,
13 he is one of those-- a beneficiary of that program.
14 He went to Korea. With only one year of studying in
15 Yongsan [sp?] University he speaks fluent Korean. I
16 was so impressed.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I just want to say
18 that as a teenager when those challenges were
19 happening with the African-American and Korean
20 community. And up to this point, it seems that there
21 has been a growing understanding and mutual respect
22 for one another's culture--

23 SUNNY HAHN: [interposing] Yes.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: --that has grown
25 since that time.

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SUNNY HAHN: [interposing] That's right.

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COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I think what you bring up is a very interesting point, the ability to have Korean Day be really a day to show a lot of the collaborations and a lot of the intersections with other cultures. And what that has actually brought to the City of New York would be very interesting to bring everyone in to show what those relationships look like today.

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SUNNY HAHN: Just like in human relations, we went through the growing pains, a period of growing pain. Now, it is time for us to step up to become a mainstream to really take responsibility as we enjoy the freedom to succeed.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much, Council Member Cumbo, and I believe Council Member Constantinides is next.

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COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: First, I want to thank our chair of this committee, Jimmy Van Bramer for holding this hearing today, and for Peter Koo for your great leadership in bringing this. Echoing my colleague's comments earlier saying thank you for bringing this to our attention. I actually have no questions for you. I just want to say thank

1
2 you for your great testimony, and for your advocacy
3 on behalf of the Korean-American community. And I
4 just want to ask if the committee staff could add my
5 name as a co-sponsor of the resolution. Thank you.

6 SUNNY HAHN: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
8 much. I believe Council Member Cumbo also would like
9 her name added to the resolution. So you are already
10 growing in power [laughter] simply by being here.
11 The numbers are dramatically increasing. Did you
12 have anything else Council Member Constantinides?
13 Council Member Crowley.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Thank you,
15 Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer for having this
16 hearing today. I would like to thank my colleague
17 Peter Koo for introducing this resolution. Please
18 also add my name on as co-sponsor in recognizing
19 January 13th as Korean-American Day.

20 SUNNY HAHN: Thank you.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: I'm proud to
22 represent an area of Queens with a growing Korean-
23 American population, areas in Maspeth, Woodside,
24 Middle Village, and throughout the 30th Council
25 District. I know for generations going back over a

1
2 100 years, you have enriched the City of New York.
3 And more recently, you have technology that comes
4 from Korea, and the art, and the culinary expertise
5 that comes here to New York that we are able to share
6 amongst ourselves. Such a strong culture, and in a
7 patriotic way your country has been a storage ship
8 holder of America. Whenever we need you in times of
9 turmoil, and I know your location to North Korea
10 sometimes, it's difficult to be such a strong
11 democracy next to a Communist country. So I look
12 forward to our growing relationship together not only
13 as a city, but as a country. Thank you.

14 SUNNY HAHN: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
16 much, Council Member Crowley, and I just want to say
17 one story about the Korean community in my district.
18 I was very proud when a young Korean-American man
19 came to my office asking for a letter of
20 recommendation to Annapolis. And I was thrilled to
21 meet his mother and his younger brother. And we were
22 very, very thrilled to write that letter of
23 recommendation. And, needless to say, he was
24 accepted, and he is currently serving at Annapolis
25 and serving our country with great distinction. And

1
2 every year we have a terrific Memorial Day parade in
3 Woodside, Queens and stop at all of the various
4 monuments. And Sean and his family take part in that
5 ceremony as representatives of our local Woodside
6 Korean-American community. So that is a great honor,
7 and he is going to go on to do great things for our
8 country. And his brother wants to follow in his
9 footsteps and go to Annapolis as well. So with that,
10 I'm going to say thank you to this panel for your
11 testimony and your support. It was completely
12 overwhelming because you got three council members to
13 sign onto this resolution just based on your
14 testimony alone. So thank you very much.

15 I'm going to call the next panel. Sam
16 Yoon, who has been referenced many times. The
17 Council of Korean-Americans; Kim Yoo, Korean
18 American Korean Foundation, and Dr. Yung Buk Kim,
19 also from the Korea Society. So if the three of you
20 will join us, and Mr. Yoon will start with you
21 perhaps.

22 [Pause]

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And now that
24 you've switched seats, we'll start with Dr. Kim.

25 [background conversation]

[Pause]

DR. KIM: Members of the Committee,
thank you for your time and thank you for the
opportunity to testify on behalf of the Korea Society
in support of Resolution 417 recognizing and
commemorating January 13th as Korean-American Day in
New York City. The Korea Society was founded in
1957, none other than under the leadership of James
Van Fleet, an American General who led the United
States Army and the United Nations forces in the
Korean War, and defeating and the liberation of the
Europe in World War II. General Van Fleet knew at
that time, the first time, the high cost of freedom
and started a great teaching of the Korean people as
they struggled to overcome a legacy of a Colonialism
world and the hardship to establish a vital
independent state. He chose New York City when
founding the organization dedicated to the friendship
between the United States and Korea. That is the
Korea Society.

Since that time, Korea has grown into one
of the world's largest economies as you all know, and
the relationship between the United States and Korea
has blossomed into a great partnership in world

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2 affairs, business, culture, and education. This
3 friendship, which benefits all Americans, has come
4 about in North Moore Park thanks to the Korean-
5 American Community. Their accomplishments and
6 successes have made Korean-Americans our greatest
7 ambassadors for the strong relationship between the
8 United States and Korea.

9 Today, New York City is alive with the
10 benefits of U.S. Korea ties, our museums, galleries,
11 and concert halls in which Korean artists and
12 students from all backgrounds. Who know Korean as a
13 foreign language in New York City public schools,
14 Korean businesses from the corner neighborhood store,
15 to the corner of his own work street make great
16 contributions to the economic development of our
17 city. And New York City remains the center of the
18 diplomatic city societies and organizations that
19 foster a greater understanding between cultures. In
20 all these areas, Korean-Americans have taken the
21 lead, and provide a vital people-to-people contacts,
22 and create strong international ties. Therefore,
23 with deep appreciation for the invaluable
24 contributions Korean-Americans have made to the
25 United States and New York City in particular, the

1 members and Board of Directors of the Korea Society
2 enthusiastically support the recognition and
3 commemoration of January 13th as Korean-American Day.
4 Thank you.

5
6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
7 much, Dr. Kim and we learned another thing that the
8 Korea Society was founded by a Dutch American, James
9 Van Fleet. And as you can see, I am a Dutch American
10 with the first name of James.

11 DR. KIM: [interposing] Right.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So I'm glad that
13 our people could be a part of this celebration in
14 such a meaningful way. So thank you very much, Dr.
15 Kim. I do want to recognize that we have been joined
16 by our Finance Chair Council Member Julissa Ferreras
17 also of Queens, which has such a large Korean and
18 Korean-American population that we all so cherish.
19 Next, we will hear from Stan Yoon from the Council of
20 Korean Americans.

21 STAN YOON: Thank you very much, Chairman
22 Van Bramer, Council Member Koo, and the other Council
23 Members. I really appreciate the opportunity to
24 testify before you today. I want to say that as a
25 former City Councilman from the City of Boston, I

1 really appreciate the role that the City Council can
2 play in the life of a constituent community like the
3 Korean-American community. To lift them up and to
4 celebrate their contributions to the City. So I
5 appreciate that. My name is Sam Yoon, and I'm the
6 President and the Executive Director of the Council
7 of Korean Americans. We are based in Washington,
8 D.C. We are a non-partisan, a non-profit membership
9 organization whose mission is to be a strong clear
10 voice for the Korean-American community at the
11 national level. We have 79 members across the
12 country including eight here in New York. Each of
13 our members is highly accomplished in their own
14 right, but also passionate about community service
15 and leadership.

17 My testimony is going to just offer three
18 points about this resolution, which, obviously, I
19 fully support. First of all, for the City of New
20 York to recognize Korean-American Day, it's important
21 for our entire community, but it's particularly
22 important for people in my generation who you would
23 call second generation Korean-Americans. The first
24 generation Korean-Americans who were and raised in
25 Korea, naturally have a stronger attachment to their

1 Korean identity than those of us who were born here.
2
3 And the concern of organizations like mine is that--
4 and you've heard this before I think from Kwon Kim--
5 we maintain a sense of ethnic pride and identity
6 through successive generations where, in fact, it
7 gets easier and easier to lose.

8 And we look to our Asian immigrant
9 brothers and sisters in the Chinese and Japanese
10 communities, and see how they maintain that strong
11 sense of identity by celebrating their history in
12 America just as much, if not more, than in their home
13 country. In recognizing Korean-American Day gives
14 the younger generation, but for all generations, a
15 chance to affirm a dual identity as Koreans and as
16 Americans. And for my kids, for example, who will be
17 third generation Korean-Americans it says to them
18 that we have a place as immigrants in the history and
19 life of this country, and that's really important.

20 Second, the recognition of Korean-
21 American Day I think is timely. As we have discussed
22 a little bit, Korean-American Day was established in
23 2003 by Congress on the 100th Anniversary of the
24 first Koreans arriving in Hawaii. However, within
25 the past five years, Korean-American leadership I

1 think is really coming to its own. First generation
2 Korean-American organizations have plowed the fields
3 for us for decades. I want to mention that you've
4 heard from some of the first generation civic
5 associations who for decades we stand on their
6 shoulders. Their work has benefitted us, but here in
7 the City of New York as early as 2009, a record five-
8 - I believe five Korean-Americans ran for City
9 Council. It is unprecedented, and I just met someone
10 who ran two years ago. And then two years ago I
11 think Ron Kim, of who we are incredibly proud
12 nationally, became the first elected Korean-American
13 in the New York State Legislature. So new Korean-
14 American organizations have really flourished over
15 the past five or ten years as well. KALCA, Yoon Kim
16 [sic] was a founding chairman or board member of this
17 organization, The Korean American League for Civic
18 Action, the Korean-American Community Foundation to
19 my left holding some of the largest galas I've seen
20 in the country literally for our community. My
21 organization, the Council of Korean Americans was
22 part of this very trend. Just recent. We were
23 founded just three years ago by leaders from
24 Washington, DC from Silk and Dowling here in New York
25

1
2 who recognized that our community needed a national
3 network of leaders, and a strong voice. So here we
4 are. You have offered your Resolution in the year
5 2014, but your timing is very good.

6 Finally, Korean-American Day gives
7 civically Korean-American organizations a chance to
8 speak and to advance, to advocate on behalf of our
9 community. I noticed that in your resolution, you
10 congratulate the efforts of dedicated individuals for
11 their outstanding advocacy. Korean-Americans like
12 their Asian immigrant brothers and sisters come
13 stereotyped as not being very vocal or loud. I can't
14 tell you how many times people have said to me that
15 they wish that we had an Asian-American Al Sharpton.
16 You know, that may or may not be a good thing in your
17 eyes, but nevertheless, Korean-Americans do have
18 advocates, and they have important causes. Some like
19 New Yorkers Jim Dae Yung [sp?] Kim call attention to
20 universal human rights issues like at the historical
21 recognition of the so-called comfort women during the
22 Japanese occupation. And they have done incredible
23 work in bringing that issue to light at the local
24 level and the national level. Others call attention
25 to our broken immigration system. Like one of my

1
2 board members, Haipin Yin [sp?], who literally sat in
3 the Oval Office with President Obama to press him to
4 take action on immigration reform. Dae Yoong Yoon,
5 the same last name. No relations, but she fasted for
6 22 days on the Capital Hill lawn calling Congress to
7 pass an immigration bill. As you know, President
8 Obama made a major address to the nation last
9 Thursday outlining executive actions that he's taking
10 to fix, to temporarily fix the broken system that
11 affects hundreds of thousands of Koreans living in
12 America as well as millions of other immigrants and
13 families.

14 I ask the New York City Council to
15 recognize that among the Korean-Americans living in
16 your city--and I know that there are very precise
17 numbers in your resolution--but among them are easily
18 tens of thousands of Koreans who are undocumented and
19 qualify for relief under the President's plan. So I
20 ask for your support on their behalf because they are
21 members of our community. They are here in the
22 United States and the City of New York for all of the
23 reasons that your resolution celebrates. This
24 country, this city is a land of opportunity. It's a
25 place where anyone who works hard enough can start a

1 business, raise a family, and find a cure for cancer.
2
3 And, even, as you've mentioned Chairman Van Bramer,
4 serve in our military and fight for our freedom, as
5 your resolution points out.

6 So thank you once again for recognizing
7 Korean-Americans and our accomplishments and our
8 history. Thanks also to Representative Grace Meng
9 and Charlie Wrangle for celebrating Korean-American
10 Day this past January. And thanks to this committee
11 for holding this hearing. I look forward to
12 celebrating with you, hopefully, if this passing this
13 coming January 13th. And I am happy to answer any
14 questions you may have. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
16 much, Mr. Yoon, for the final testimony at today's
17 hearing.

18 KYUNG B. YOON: Right. So thank you very
19 much, and I am so pleased to be able to testify at
20 this hearing today. And I've learned a lot too, and
21 I know that today we've heard a lot about the great
22 contributions of Korean-Americans to New York City to
23 our economy, to the culture to our culinary
24 diversity. But equally important I want to address
25 how Korean Americans are helping to strengthen the

1 social fabric that makes our city great. So I am the
2 Executive Director and the Co-Founder of the Korean-
3 American Community Foundation. We are a 12-year old
4 organization, and since 2002, we have provided nearly
5 \$4 million in funding and capacity-building support
6 to more than 40 organizations in the Greater New York
7 area that are serving our most vulnerable and
8 marginalized neighbors.
9

10 This has all been possible because
11 Korean-Americans with a shared vision of giving back
12 collectively and strategically to strengthen the city
13 and country where we have chosen to put down our
14 roots and to build our future. And to build the
15 future of our children's generation. From day one,
16 the focus of our foundation has been to help
17 children, adults, families and seniors access
18 opportunities to allow them to not only survive in
19 the short term, but to thrive in the long term. And
20 it's not lost on us because this approach mirrors the
21 journey of many immigrants in this country,
22 immigrants and their children who move from merely
23 surviving to thriving in this land of opportunity.

24 And everyone of us in this city brings
25 our own stories of struggles and victories. And as

1
2 Sam has just said, the timing of this is all-critical
3 because most of us are immigrants or our children
4 immigrants. And that makes us different in that many
5 of us in this room know someone who couldn't get a
6 job because of limited English proficiency. Or had
7 to choose to go without health insurance so that
8 their children could go to school. Many of us know
9 someone, many in our own families or a friend's
10 circle who have been touched by domestic violence or
11 mental health issues, or financial hardships. And we
12 know how daunting it is to try to tackle these kinds
13 of issues on our own.

14 So we at KACF understood that change,
15 real deep lasting change, the change that will
16 transform communities can only be achieved when
17 donors, non-profits, policymakers and activists, all
18 of us come together with a shared purpose. And we
19 hope that the City Council will recognize the
20 positive difference that Korean-Americans have made
21 and continue to make in creating a city in which we
22 all can thrive. So I thank you for this opportunity
23 to the City Council for recognizing the contributions
24 of Korean-Americans by designating January 13th as
25 Korean-American Day. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you so very much to this second panel, and I am really very excited by this because you have all conveyed so powerfully how much this would mean to the Korean-American community in New York City. And I wanted to ask our sponsor of the resolution if he wanted to say a few words in closing. But I just want to say I support this 100%, and we will look to move this and the entire City Council. I am very hopeful. So I want to thank Council Member Koo for bringing this to this City Council, for his leadership, and look forward to celebrating with everybody on January 13th.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you, and thank you very much for coming to this hear and speaking. I myself as a first generation Korean-American. I came here 40 something years ago, and in the beginning I struggled, and went to college, and was working many low wage jobs through college. And formed a family, and worked in the hospital. Then later on, I started my business. So America is really good to immigrants. I always use my story as an example. So I see the same thing in Korean-Americans, too. All the first generation Korean-

1
2 Americans they came here to work in grocery stores,
3 in the dry cleaning business, in delis, in
4 restaurants. They all are hard jobs, but they
5 struggled, and they had perseverance. And all the
6 children, the second generation remember it. They
7 all go to different fields in managing, and in
8 academia. They have contributed so much for America.
9 So I want to thank all of you guys for doing a
10 wonderful job, and working for yourself first, but
11 also bring up the second generation, the third
12 generation. Especially, the new generation I come
13 across, they are really, really needed. They do a
14 lot of volunteer work in our city. I can see in
15 Midtown Center a lot of people are laborious. They
16 are doing pro bono work for the community. Those are
17 really appreciated by our community. They are all
18 trying to help. They are only trying to help not
19 only there, but actually everyone in our community.
20 So I want to thank each one of you for coming here to
21 testify, and we will pass this resolution in the next
22 session very probably.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Not tomorrow,
24 [laughs] but we hope very soon after that, Council
25 Member.

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COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So this is something we want to celebrate with all of you, and also an indication with all the minorities groups that together we will make New York City a better city. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much, and we are officially adjourned. Thank you again so much everybody.

KYUNG B. YOON: Thank you.

[gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date November 30, 2014