

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS,  
LIBRARIES, AND INTERNATIONAL  
INTERGROUP RELATIONS

----- X

February 24, 2020  
Start: 1:07 p.m.  
Recess: 1:13 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway Committee Room,  
14th Floor

B E F O R E: James G. Van Bramer  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Jimmy Van Bramer  
Joseph C. Borelli  
Laurie A. Cumbo  
Mark Gjonaj  
Francisco Moya  
Fernando Cabrera

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

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES,  
AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

3

2 KEITH POLITE: Testing one, two, one two,  
3 today is February 24, 2020. Today's hearing is on  
4 Cultural Affairs, Libraries, International Relations,  
5 being record by Keith Polite.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good afternoon,  
7 everyone, and welcome to today's hearing, the  
8 Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and  
9 International Intergroup Relations is now in session.  
10 My name is Jimmy Van Bramer and I'm proud to be chair  
11 of this committee. Today our committee will be  
12 holding a vote on proposed Introduction 1451-A,  
13 sponsored by Council Member Cabrera, a proposed law  
14 related to the creation of a task force regarding a  
15 museum about New York City's African American civil  
16 rights history. Ah, we have heard, ah, a lot about  
17 this important piece of legislation in a prior  
18 hearing and today I'm really proud that we're holding  
19 a vote on it. I know Council Member Cabrera cares a  
20 great deal about this issue, this bill, and has done  
21 a lot of work on it, so I'd like to ask him to say a  
22 few words about this important piece of legislation.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: And I want to  
24 take a moment, Mr. Chair, for your help and  
25 leadership, especially in the last hearing, you were

2 so just up in front, ah, and, ah, as well to all my  
3 colleagues, ah, who were present as well. And so to  
4 get straight to the bill, the bill would create a  
5 task force to consider the establishment of an  
6 African American civil rights history museum in New  
7 York City. New York City's African American civil  
8 rights history is another untold story. New York  
9 City was the nexus of civil rights in the north that  
10 preceded and helped sparked what is known as the  
11 civil rights movements, which largely took place in  
12 the south from 1955 through the 1950s, through the  
13 1950s. New York City rights activism was fueled by  
14 the great migration of African Americans from the  
15 south to large northern cities and whose large  
16 presence call attention to segregation and other  
17 injustices. The New York City rights agenda and, and  
18 address exclusionary housing practices,  
19 discrimination and segregation and employment and  
20 representation in government. This activism  
21 transformed the labor movement in New York to include  
22 civil rights. The proposed museum will reveal the  
23 activism of African American New Yorkers, which  
24 includes Adam Clayton Powell, Ozzie Davis, Paul  
25 Robinson, Stan Baker, Motley Julius Archibald, and

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, 5  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

2 the first African American member of the New York  
3 Senate, and Bessie Buchanan, first African Americans  
4 elected to the assembly, both who won their Brooklyn  
5 districts on civil rights platforms in the 1950. I  
6 would like to thank committee staff members, Brenda  
7 McKinney and Christie Dyer, Dwyer, for their work on  
8 this bill. Thank you for the favorable consideration  
9 of this legislation. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
11 much, ah, Council Member Cabrera, and  
12 congratulations. I want to recognize all the members  
13 of the committee who are here, which includes the  
14 entire committee, Council Member Francisco Moya,  
15 Council Member Mark Gjonaj, Council Member Joe  
16 Borelli, and Majority Leader Laurie Cumbo. Do you  
17 want to say a few words?

18 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: Thank you so  
19 much, Chair, and I also want to thank Council Member  
20 Cabrera for this ground-breaking legislation and just  
21 very pleased to speak on this issue, as it is Black  
22 History Month. I can think of no other time, ah, to  
23 certainly bring this forward and to have the cultural  
24 committee here today. But also to really bring  
25 attention to the fact that New York City has the

2 largest population of African Americans anywhere in  
3 the United States, and it's important that we  
4 recognize this incredible culture and the  
5 contributions that African Americans have made here  
6 in New York, but also throughout the entire nation,  
7 and so much of what we recognize in terms of American  
8 culture is rooted and based in African American  
9 culture. And so it is imperative that we, um,  
10 educate our children, but also educate the world  
11 about our historical contributions. And if we also  
12 look at Washington, D.C. at the National African  
13 American History and Arts and Cultural Museum there  
14 we also see how successful that has been in  
15 Washington, D.C. and if we only want to look, ah,  
16 population served as well as the economics behind  
17 that it's certainly prudent for any city to take on  
18 an institution of this caliber and scale. But if we  
19 look at more deeply the educational and the spiritual  
20 upliftment that a museum has the ability to provide  
21 people, um, it's imperative that we do this now and  
22 it's imperative that we bring this forward at this  
23 particular time. So I thank Council Members Van  
24 Bramer as well as Council Member Cabrera for your  
25 incredible work on this. And this is really

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES,  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

7

2 revolutionary and extraordinary, and it's certainly  
3 an idea whose time has come. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Ah, thank you  
5 very much, and I want to once again thank all the  
6 staff, including my staff, Matt Wallace, my chief of  
7 staff, Jack Branadovitz, my legislative director,  
8 Brenda McKinney, and our legislative policy analyst  
9 Christie Dwyer, and principal finance analyst, Alea  
10 Ali, also here today. Thank you again to Council  
11 Member Cabrera for bringing this very important issue  
12 to light and, ah, it will one day make our cultural  
13 world in the City of New York more complete, ah,  
14 because it is incomplete unless this museum exists.  
15 So with that I'll ask Billy Martin to call the roll.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Introduction  
17 1451-A. Chair Van Bramer.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I vote yes.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Cumbo.

20 MAJORITY LEADER CUMBO: I proudly vote  
21 yes.

22 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Gjonaj.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I vote aye.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Moya.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Aye.

1 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES,  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

8

2 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Borelli.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Aye.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: I have a vote of  
5 5 in the affirmative, zero in the negative, no  
6 abstentions. The item has been adopted by the  
7 committee.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Congratulations.

9 And with that we are adjourned. [gavel]

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25



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 March 13, 2020