



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0960-2007, **Version:** *

Res. No. 960

Resolution calling for a symbolic moratorium on pejorative use of the “b” word and the word “ho.”

By Council Members Mealy, Avella, Comrie, Dickens, Fidler, Foster, Jackson, Gentile, James, Liu, Mendez, Nelson, Reyna, Sanders Jr., Stewart, Vann and Vacca

Whereas, The Council of the City of New York strongly believes in promoting the equality of all of City residents and strives to foster an environment free from discrimination; and

Whereas, Acknowledging the great power of the spoken and written word, a power both immediate in its ability to inspire action and subtle in its far-reaching repercussions, the Council of the City of New York, responding to the concerns of constituent groups and the calls of civic leaders, seeks to join the national conversation about the appropriateness of pejorative use of terms like “bitch” and “ho;” and

Whereas, The Council believes that the repercussions of words can be constructive or can be insidious, and that words, when misused, can lay foundations to legitimize the illegitimate and codify the unthinkable, including, for example, the concept that it is acceptable to refer to women as animals or, worse, that women are these words used to describe them; and

Whereas, The Council recognizes that the word “bitch,” primarily defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as “female canine animal, especially a dog,” carries a legitimately non-pejorative definition, but the Council further recognizes that in 1811, Francis Grose, in his “Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue,” described “bitch” as “A she dog, or doggess; the most offensive appellation that can be given to an English woman, even more provoking than that of whore,” thus documenting a long-standing tradition of the word’s use for purposes of degradation; and

Whereas, The word “ho” is commonly used to refer to a whore or woman of loose sexual reputation;

and

Whereas, The Council feels grave concern at the derogatory use of the words “bitch” and “ho” in popular music, and wishes to express particular interest in working together with music industry executives to promote an atmosphere of professional responsibility and public accountability; and

Whereas, While some artists such as Queen Latifah make use of words like “bitch” and “ho” in contexts of strength and power, arguing “Everytime I hear a brother call a girl a bitch or a ho/Trying to make a sister feel low/You know all of that gots to go,” even such reference is an incommensurate response to the verbal assaults of the words employed by artists such as 50-Cent, Eminem, R. Kelly, Snoop Dogg, Juvenile, Lil’ Kim, Foxy Brown, and Bow Wow, as well as the late Tupac Shakur and the Notorious B.I.G.; and

Whereas, Calling “bitch,” “ho,” and the N-word “extreme curse words,” Hip-Hop mogul and Def Jam label co-founder Russell Simmons has called upon record executives to eradicate those words from their industry; and

Whereas, Simmons, joining together with fellow Hip-Hop Summit Action Network Co-Chair Dr. Benjamin Chavis, issued a statement reading, “Our internal discussions with industry leaders are not about censorship. Our discussions are about the corporate social responsibility of the industry to voluntarily show respect to African-Americans and other people of color, African-American women and to all women in lyrics and images;” and

Whereas, The words “bitch” and “ho” are used in popular media other than Hip-Hop music in contexts just as insulting and cruel; and

Whereas, The Council believes that the use of this hateful language creates for all women a paradigm of shame and indignity, a paradigm equally applicable to every woman regardless of whether she is the direct target of such attacks or a tangential but equally impacted victim; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, The Council of the City of New York calls for a symbolic moratorium on pejorative use of the “b” word and the word “ho.”

BRS
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