

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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October 25, 2017
Start: 1:10 p.m.
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

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

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

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

Karen Korematsu, Daughter of Fred T. Korematsu

Lorraine Bennai, Professor and Director
Fred T. Korematsu Center for Law and Equality
Seattle University School of Law

Robert Johnson, Attorney/Partner
Akin Gump Law Firm

Cath Goulden
Korematsu Institute

Albert Cahn, Legal Director
CAIR New York

George Herose
Japanese-American Citizens League of New York

Jennifer Hayashida, Former Faculty Member
Asian-American Studies Program
Hunter College, the City University of New York

Yang Chen, Executive Director
Asian-American Bar Association in New York, AABANY

Sharman Sadiki
No Separate Justice Coalition

David Okada, Representative
Japanese-American Citizens League

Tanaya Izu, 3rd & 4th Generation Chinese and Japanese-
American

Christina Tasca, Executive Director
Muslim Community Network

Rosella Clyde, Educational Director
Kaleidoscope Educational Consultants

Andy Kim, Second Year JD Candidate
New York University School of Law and Korematsu
Chair, Asian-Pacific American Law Students Assoc.

Julia Zuma, Japanese-American

Steve Goldberg, Former Attorney
History Teacher, Brooklyn College

Dr. Debbie Almontaser
Yemeni American Merchants Association

Mitchell Wu, Director of Programs
Coalition for Asian-American Children and Families

Kai Ying Guo, Senior, La Guardia High School of the
Arts, Asian-American Student Advocacy Project, AASAP

Andy Kai, Senior, Stuyvesant High School,
Student Leader, Asian-American Student Advocacy
Project, AASAP

Shahana Abdeen, Junior, High School for Construction
Trades, Engineering & Architecture

Jimmy Chan, Member, Asian-Americans Student Advocacy
Project, AASAP

Leria Oh, Sophomore, High School of Language and Innovation, Bronx

Sophia, Member Asian-American Student Advocacy Project, AASAP, and Junior, Manhattan/ Hunter Science High School

Kim Ema, New York Day of Remembrance Committee

Takeshi Foramodo, Born in Tule Lake Segregation Center

Elizabeth OuYang, Civil Rights Attorney & Professor Columbia and New York Universities

Tony Choi, Organizer, 18 Million Rising.org

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[sound check, pause] [background comment]

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay. Good

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afternoon everyone, and welcome this hearing of the

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Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and

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International Intergroup Relations. My name is Jimmy

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Van Bramer, and I am Chair of the committee and. I'm

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joined by Council Member Dromm who is the prime

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sponsor of Resolution 792, the resolution

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establishing January 30th annually as the Fred T.

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Korematsu Day. I know we're going to hear from some

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folks on the phone and then we have a number of folks

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who are speaking with, you know, sort of a two-minute

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clock for folks who are testifying, and I'll ask

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Council Member Dromm to say a few words as well as we

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await more members of the committee. Everyone knows

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the history of Pearl Harbor, and Executive Order

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9066, which President Roosevelt then at the time

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signed, and authorized the military to remove

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approximately 120,000 American citizens of Japanese

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descent to live in prison camps across the United

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States. Mr. Korematsu, a son of Japanese immigrants

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was arrested and convicted of breaking military law

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for refusing to enter an internment camp. Mr.

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Korematsu appealed his case all the way up to the

1 Supreme Court of the United States when in 1944 the
2 Supreme Court ruled against him arguing that his
3 incarceration was justified due to military
4 necessity. Eventually in 1981, research discovered
5 documents that demonstrated that the U.S. Government
6 presented false information to the Supreme Court in
7 Korematsu's case, and suppressed information about
8 the loyalty of Japanese Americans to the country. In
9 1983, Mr. Korematsu's case was reopened, and with the
10 new evidence a federal judge over turned the
11 conviction. Once released, Mr. Korematsu continue to
12 face discrimination and racism, but continued to
13 fight for the rights of all Japanese Americans and
14 was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by
15 President Bill Clinton in 1998, remained an activist
16 for the rest of his life. Today, the Council and our
17 committee looks to honor the legacy of Fred T.
18 Korematsu by establishing the January 20th annually
19 as Fred T. Korematsu Day. Now, I'd like to invite
20 Council Member Dromm to say a few words before we
21 hear from some of the folks who would like to
22 testify. Council Member Dromm.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you very
25 much, Chair Van Bramer for hearing Resolution 792,

1 which would recognize the life and work Fred T.
2 Korematsu by declaring January 30th as the Fred T.
3 Korematsu Day. In these times of Muslim bans and
4 refugee panic, of Neo-Nazi rallies, and presidential
5 failure, it has become increasingly important to
6 reiterate the lessons of history. In our history,
7 certain names stand out for their bravery and
8 insisting that America live up to its promise. Rosa
9 Parks, Caesar Chavez and Harvey Milk are names that
10 every American should know, and so is Fred Korematsu.
11 Korematsu and a handful of his fellow patriots stood
12 up not just for themselves, but for the preservation
13 of our Constitution during the racist and xenophobic
14 hysteria that was unfortunately part of our country's
15 response to World War II. At that time, overwhelming
16 fear stoked by President Roosevelt and the Governor,
17 later Chief Justice Earl Warren among others allowed
18 the darkest elements of our society to have free
19 reign. The rule of law and respect for basic human
20 rights became unfortunate casualties in the rush to
21 demonize, segregate and then persecute Japanese
22 Americans. While fighting Fascism overseas, our
23 government uprooted families here, ruined
24 livelihoods, and tore communities apart. The cruelty
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2 and absurdity of these actions are illustrated by the
3 fact that military units composed of Japanese
4 Americans are the most decorated of the war. Only
5 decades later did the United States recognize the
6 grave injustice perpetuated against its own people.
7 How much has our country learned? Are we doomed to
8 repeat the mistakes of the past? The best way to
9 ensure that we do not is education. One of my
10 primary goals in introducing this resolution is to
11 ensure the younger generation will know about Fred
12 Korematsu. All of us young and old who care about
13 our country don't need to just recognize Fred
14 Korematsu, but also learn from his story and emulate
15 his exemplary life. Thank you very much.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. Now,
17 we will hear from Karen Korematsu and Lori Bennai. I
18 believe we are having them call in. [pause] Hello.

19 KAREN KOREMATSU: Hello.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Hi.

21 Good afternoon. Is this Chair Van Bramer?

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: This is, this
23 is.

24 KAREN KOREMATSU: Well, first of all,
25 thank you very much for including me in this hearing,

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2 and thank you for bringing this to everyone's
3 attention and consideration. I must say I have a
4 very bad echo here. Is there some way the audio
5 person can adjust that.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I don't know.
7 We can hear you pretty darn well.

8 KAREN KOREMATSU: Okay. Alright, well,
9 I'll try to talk, if at all, but it's disconcerting
10 when you're—you can't really—when you're getting all
11 this feedback, but I—I will just try to continue
12 talking, and then you can interrupt me if there's an
13 issue, if that's alright with you.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure.

15 KAREN KOREMATSU: Well, thank you again,
16 Chair Van Bramer and—and the, um, and the New York
17 City Council—the especially Councilman Daniel Dromm I
18 assume is there as well.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

20 KAREN KOREMATSU: And I would like to
21 thank him for bringing this proposal to, you know, he
22 honored my father several years ago when I was in New
23 York City, and that was—that was very exciting and—
24 and we were—I was there on behalf of—of, you know,
25 working with teachers really across this country, and

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2 which this education was a big, you know, part of—of
3 what my father pursued in his mission after his
4 conviction was overturned in 1983. But just briefly,
5 you know, to remind everyone I'm not sure exactly
6 what was said before so I'm—I'm sorry if I'm
7 repeating myself so you can—you can tell me if I am.
8 My, you know, my father was born in Oakland,
9 California, and was an American citizen, and he
10 learned about the Constitution in high school, and he
11 was an ordinary kid just like everyone else, but
12 enjoyed hanging out with his friends, and he was
13 involved in sports. But, you know, when—and even
14 before the war he had tried to enlist in the service,
15 and he tried with his—actually his Caucasian friends,
16 and—and when they went to a post office for
17 applications to first enlist in the—they tried the
18 National Guard and the officer refused an application
19 to my father because he had a Japanese name, and then
20 again when they went over to the table that was Coast
21 Guard, that was the same—the same treatment was
22 endured by my father. And, you know, he said at that
23 time: But I'm an American, and I want to serve my
24 country, and he didn't understand that type of
25 treatment and he was so humiliated, and his is before

1 Pearl Harbor. But that didn't stop him. He still
2 wanted to be involved in a war effort. So, he went
3 ahead and went to welding school and worked into the
4 shipyards and worked in the small holds of ships and,
5 you know, that was even before ear protection, and-
6 and the day after Pearl Harbor, he there was a note
7 in his time slot saying that he had to report to the
8 Boiler Makers Union, and he was fired for just being,
9 you know, Japanese even though he was Japanese-
10 American, and he endured even discrimination growing
11 up. He was refused a haircut. He was refused service
12 in a restaurant. He, you know, he was certainly
13 discriminated against, and-and faced, you know,
14 prejudice and-and racism. So, you know, those are
15 the types of-of experiences that he had and, you
16 know, as I tell students, you know, that those-those
17 type of experiences stay with you and-and in some
18 part are responsible for the decisions that you-you
19 make. So, when he-when Executive Order 9066 was
20 issued, he-he thought it was wrong. Why should he go
21 to a prison camp when he had never been charged with
22 a crime? In fact-in fact for all Japanese-Americans
23 all due process was denied, that as very part-a very
24 important part of-of this-of this story. And-and so
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1 when the opportunity came to have his case, as Mr.
2 Basset (sic) said, who is from the ACLU of Northern
3 California, if need be, we'll take it all the way to
4 the Supreme Court. He thought for sure that the
5 Supreme Court would see that that act was
6 unconstitutional, and he was—people, a lot of people
7 don't know he was vilified and ostracized from his
8 own Japanese-American community from the day that eh
9 entered the Detention Assembly Center in the San
10 Francisco Bay area before he was shipped off to the—
11 one of the ten incarceration camps. His family and
12 he went to Topaz, Utah. No one wanted anything to do
13 with my father because he stood up against the
14 government, and—and so he always went it alone. In
15 fact, my brother and I and our family was ostracized.
16 My own Japanese-American community here in the Bay
17 Area, you know, until the time my father's case was
18 reopened in 1983, but he was never bitter or angry.
19 He was the type of person that just believed in his
20 principles of right wrong and—and with his—his life,
21 you know, up until that time as—as an American who
22 believed that being an American was to be civically
23 engaged, and that's another point of—of Fred T.
24 Komatsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution
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2 is-is the importance of being a part of-of-of the
3 solution instead of being part of the problem. And
4 he gave that back through community service through
5 Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts with the president of his own
6 international Japanese or International Alliance
7 Club, the chapter here in the Bay Area twice even,
8 and I was involved with church and our church, and,
9 you know, really-and later on and in the voting poll.
10 SO, that's the kind of-of-of person that he was, and,
11 but until his case was reopened in 1983, I didn't
12 even know that he had never given up hope that some
13 day he would be able to reopen his Supreme Court
14 case. You know, he waited almost 40 years. He
15 shared that with my mother, but my brother and I
16 never-never knew that. And so, when his conviction
17 was over--overturned and vacated in 1983, he could
18 have very well said well Japanese-American community,
19 you didn't want anything to do with me, why should
20 have anything to do with you? But he, you know, he
21 wasn't like that. He welcomed everyone with open
22 arms and he, you know, treated everyone like he
23 wanted to be treated. And so, he-he criss crossed
24 this country for education. He wanted to be sure
25 that, you know, in some-in some small part that like

1 the Japanese-American incarceration wouldn't happen
2 again, and look what happened—what's happening today.
3 I mean he would be so disgusted and so disappointed
4 that we still haven't learned our—our lessons, you
5 know, from history. But, you know, he—he also just
6 never let that stop him, and I think, you know,
7 that's the reason for, you know his—his tenacity for
8 education, for helping with the Redress and
9 Reparations Movement to—to make sure that, you know,
10 that an apology was made with the Civil Liberties Act
11 of 1988 being signed by—by President Reagan, and he
12 received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in—in
13 1998, but he received those honors on behalf of—of—of
14 everyone that had been incarcerated. He—he just
15 never was the type of person that just had this big,
16 you know, ego. I—I have to point out that his first
17 honorary in regard of laws degree was given to him by
18 City University of New York, and this was back on May
19 27 in 1988. So, that was very—very exciting and he
20 was, you know, so honored, and—and very appreciative
21 of, you know, receiving this—this great award, and
22 then he received three others after that before he
23 passed away. But he—he—he—his legacy is—is about,
24 you know, remembering and—and protecting our—our
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2 civil rights, and—and—and to—and to speak up. You
3 know, I work now through the Fred T. Korematsu
4 Institute that I founded in 2009, you know, for
5 education. I've actually worked with the National
6 Council, that's also studies and spoken to a couple
7 of very different conferences. I have—I don't know
8 if Rosella Clyde is in the audience, but she's with
9 the Greater Metropolitan New York of Social Studies
10 Teachers, and brought me to New York City to honor me
11 and to have me speak to—to students, and to their
12 organization as well. So, I'm carrying on my
13 father's work in education, and, you know, it's-it's
14 my age range of audience now is 5 years old to 100,
15 but I can tell you even 5-year-olds and 6-year-olds
16 understand the difference between right or wrong and
17 through the Korematsu Institute, we have created
18 curriculum kits that we send out to teachers free of
19 charge. So, any teacher of elementary, middle-
20 school, high school, we have lesson times for all of
21 them. They can go to the KorematsuInstitute.org
22 website to sign up for our curriculum kits free of
23 charge. That's—we want to make sure that teachers
24 have these materials in their hands because we know
25 education budgets are—are cut, and we really want to

1 have them understand the—the lessons of history, you
2 know, from generation to generation. It's important,
3 and even to bring in—we bring in now the—the
4 relevancy of those—of those issues, and so also I'd
5 like to say in reading this wonderful resolution that
6 you have recognized Korematsu—the Fred T. Korematsu
7 Day, I would like to respectfully recommend that the
8 day be recognized as Fred Korematsu Day of civil
9 liberties and the Constitution. That's what the
10 States of California, Hawaii, Virginia and Florida,
11 recognize that day, and to standardize that because
12 really the importance of is about civil liberties and
13 the Constitution that we all as Americans across this
14 country, you know, in—in—in New York City need to
15 remember and to keep fighting for, and to uphold.
16 I've even spoken at Columbia University Teachers'
17 College to—to incoming teachers there and to students
18 that they brought in for—for that conference. So,
19 our efforts in a subsidy (sic) in New York City and
20 New York is—is—is great. I know what's working with
21 the National Council for Social Studies that and our—
22 and our conferenced actually this year is going to be
23 in San Francisco and they asked me to be the co-chair
24 but we—we have reached—we have teachers from New
25

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2 Yorkers that are coming to—to attend, and we, you
3 know, feel that we need to support teachers
4 nationwide and—and, you know, New York City I believe
5 is the largest school district in the United States.
6 And so, that's why—why feel that this such a—a great
7 honor, but also because the focus is on education,
8 and our civil liberties and the Constitution. And if
9 my father were there, he would say to you, thank you
10 for standing up for what is right.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, Karen
12 very much. You are rightly proud of your father's
13 legacy. Is—with—I've actually never done this before
14 with a call into my committee, but is Lorie Bennai on
15 the call or available? Okay.

16 KAREN KOREMATSU: Maybe she's coming
17 after me?

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, I believe
19 so, Karen. So, does mean we're losing Karen?
20 [background comment] Oh, okay. So, I think we're
21 going to say thank you, Karen because I think Lori
22 Bennai is going to take the line.

23 KAREN KOREMATSU: Okay. Does anyone have
24 any questions from the committee that since you have
25

1 me on the line that you would like to ask or is that
2 just it? (sic)

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4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
5 So, don't disconnect Karen just yet.

6 KAREN KOREMATSU: Okay.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Is there anyone
8 who has questions? Danny.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you, Karen
10 and thank you for participating. This is Council
11 Member Danny Dromm, the sponsor of the bill, and I
12 also had the opportunity to meet you at the UFT
13 Conference the Social Studies Conference that you
14 mentioned in your testimony and, you know, I'm also
15 the Chair of t he Education Committee in the City
16 Council.

17 KAREN KOREMATSU: Oh.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, I'm very
19 grateful today to Council Member Van Bramer for
20 holding this hearing because this is really of major
21 importance not just to Asian-Americans, but to all
22 Americans and making January 30th Fred T. Korematsu
23 Day I think is going to be an opportunity for
24 teachers throughout the New York City School System
25 to teach about your father's life and the

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2 significance of what it meant for the liberation of
3 all people. And I think when I met you I might have
4 told you that I am a gay male. I am an openly gay
5 teacher in the New York City Public School System,
6 and as a gay person, I can related to the experiences
7 that your father had as well in terms of the fight
8 and the struggle for equality in this country. So, I
9 think this is a lesson that really rings well today
10 in light of everything that's happening in
11 Washington, D.C. and I'm very grateful that you were
12 able to join us at this hearing.

13 KAREN KOREMATSU: Well, thank you very
14 much, Councilman Dromm. I-I really appreciate all
15 your efforts here, and you also upholding the
16 education. I'll look forward to working with you
17 more in the future.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
19 much, Karen and I think now we are going to say good-
20 bye--

21 KAREN KOREMATSU: [interposing] Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --until we hear
23 from Lori Bennai.

24 KAREN KOREMATSU: Alright, thank you all
25 very much--

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2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
3 thank you.

4 KAREN KOREMATSU: --for this
5 consideration. Bye-bye. [background comment]

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And while we're
7 waiting for Lori, let me recognize we've been joined
8 by Council Members Peter Koo from Queens and Helen
9 Rosenthal from Manhattan, also members of our
10 Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International
11 Intergroup Relations Committee. [pause] Great. Is
12 Lori Bennai on the line?

13 LORI BENNAI: Yes, I am.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great. Welcome.
15 This is Jimmy Van Bramer. I'm the Chair of the
16 Committee on Cultural Affairs, and Libraries, and you
17 are here with several members of the committee and
18 the plan sponsor of the resolution, Council Member
19 Dromm, and about 50 people in the City Hall Chambers
20 who are listening. Would you like to begin your
21 testimony?

22 LORI BENNAI: Yes. Thank you very much.
23 Good afternoon, everyone, members of the committee,
24 and thank you so much for allowing me to speak to
25 you. I wish I could be there with you in New York.

1 So, I wear several hats today in addressing you. I
2 teach at Seattle University School of Law where I
3 serve as Director of the Fred T. Korematsu Center for
4 Law and Equality, which works in Mr. Korematsu's name
5 on civil rights and criminal justice issues across
6 the country. [pause] Can you hear me?
7

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, we can.

9 LORI BENNAI: Okay, I am honored—I am
10 very honored also to have been on the legal team that
11 successfully challenge Mr. Korematsu's conviction in
12 the 1980s. I'm also a sponsor (sic) of third
13 generation Japanese America, and during World War II,
14 my parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles were taken
15 from their homes in Los Angeles and incarcerated and
16 taken to (sic) the California Mojave Desert simply
17 because of their race. So through these different
18 lenses, I ask you to adopt January 30th as Fred T.
19 Korematsu Day as a means to honor not only the
20 example of he set for all of us, but also as Karen
21 mentioned, to set aside time to reflect on the
22 continuing lessons of the wartime incarceration. Of
23 course, the main reason I hope the New York City
24 Council will establish Fred T. Korematsu Day is to
25 recognize this really extraordinary man who I've had

1
2 the honor of getting to know. While he was soft
3 spoke and self-effacing, he was a person of really
4 great principle and courage who refused incarceration
5 because he knew that—what the government did during
6 World War II was wrong. But it a day to recognize
7 Fred would, of course, be about much more than him.
8 It would, I hope, call on the City t reflect on the
9 many lacks and lessons of his life and he places
10 among them the danger of ignorance and fear, and the
11 need for constant vigilance to protect civil rights,
12 especially during times of fear. During World War
13 II, as you all know, the country turned on the
14 Japanese-American community out of ignorance and
15 fear. Fred reminded us after 9/11 that the same
16 brand of ignorance and fear led to the similar
17 humanization of Muslims, persons of Middle-Eastern
18 descent and those perceived to look—to look like
19 them, and unfortunately that ignorance and fear
20 persists today. And ignorance and fear that in
21 stereotype built on them continue to develop in the
22 targeting of other historically marginalized
23 communities; communities of color, immigrant
24 communities, including Blacks, Mexican-Americans and
25 others. A day in his honor would also provide the

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2 opportunity to reflect on the importance of knowing
3 and understanding our Constitution, not only the
4 rights it conveys but also the responsibilities of
5 citizenship. One of Fred's most powerful messages
6 was that our rights are fragile, saving lives (sic)
7 and preserved only as each of us values them and is
8 willing to speak out and to fight to preserve them.
9 Fred spoke out regarding World War II and challenging
10 the wartime incarcerations. He spoke out 40 years
11 later in the 1980s when he reopened his case based on
12 proof that the government suppressed, altered and
13 destroyed material evidence to validate his actions
14 during World War II. And after his case was over, he
15 continued to speak up telling anyone who would listen
16 especially students as Karen said of the need to be
17 civically engaged, run for office, to change
18 injustice especially injustice brought against the
19 most vulnerable among us. So, members of the
20 committee, I hope you'll this opportunity to
21 designate January 30th as a day not to only honor
22 Fred, but also to carry on his message that each of
23 us has a duty to be vigilant to ensure that we serve
24 and protect the constitutional rights of every
25 person. Thank you so much for letting patch in and

1 I'm really glad to answer any questions you might
2 have.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
5 much for your testimony and for calling in, and
6 though you can't see her, we've been joined by
7 Councilwoman Elizabeth Crowley from—from Queens, and
8 other members of the committee who have already been
9 recognized. Are there any questions for Lori Bennai?
10 Council Member Dromm, would you like to say anything
11 about the testimony from Lori Bennai?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you very
13 much, Chair Van Bramer and again, thank you for
14 holding this hearing. Now, just to again reiterate
15 the fact that I think this is an important lesson for
16 all students in the United States of America to learn
17 and it's a piece of history that has been hidden and
18 invisible for too long of a period of time. And so,
19 I think part of the reason why we wanted to have this
20 hearing, and again, like I said to the Chair I'm very
21 grateful for holding it is to make it visible and to
22 let people know about Fred's story so that hopefully
23 we never repeat this again in our country, although
24 times today are not looking so good in terms of
25 what's happening in Washington, D.C. But to thank

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2 you for your for legal work on this as well, and-and-
3 and just to-to again say thank you for all that
4 you've done to-to-to make today possible.

5 LORI BENNAI: Well, thank you so much
6 for-for bringing this up, and-and hopefully making
7 this happen.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
9 much for calling in and for being part of the
10 hearing. We could hear you perfectly even if the
11 connection was-was not so great on your side, but no
12 fault of our tech folks in the back of the room who
13 were doing their best. So, thank you very much,
14 Lori, for calling in and for being part of this very
15 important hearing.

16 LORI BENNAI: Thank you so much. Good-
17 bye.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And I think that
19 ends our experiment with calling into hearings for
20 today. So, we will begin with the first panel of
21 folks who are actually here in the audience, and
22 again we'll go five at a time. Everyone whose name
23 will be called will sit in one of those five terrific
24 seats, and then we'll take turns. We're going to go
25 to a two-minute clock for everyone who's here. So

1
2 please be as concise as you can with your comments,
3 though you might have prepared something slightly
4 longer. So, we will go with, and I apologize if I
5 don't read all of the names correctly because I am
6 getting much older and I cannot see the piece of
7 papers that are in front of me, but the first one
8 Robert Johnson from the Korematsu Center for Law and
9 Equality, is Robert here? Okay, why don't you come
10 up and take a seat, and it looks like Cath Goulden
11 from the Korematsu Institute. Could that be even
12 remotely close? Let's see what that looks like to
13 Lena. [background comment] Goulden, Cath, is there a
14 Cath Goulden? Yep. Oh, great. Sorry about that.
15 Albert Cahn, from CAIR New York. Great. George
16 Hirose. Yes, great and Jennifer Hayashida. Great.
17 So these are the first five, and we have four other
18 panels following this one because we might have some
19 other folks who have testimony, but why don't we
20 start, and we start with Robert, and then we'll go
21 down the list one by one as I call the names.

22 ROBERT JOHNSON: [off mic] So, greetings
23 the honorable--

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

Your microphone. Make sure the little red light is on. Okay, great. Here we go.

ROBERT JOHNSON: My name is Robert Johnson, and I am a partner in the Akin Gump Law Firm. We are a global law firm with more than 200 lawyers in our New York office. We proudly represent the Korematsu Center for Law and Equality in connection with the Muslim travel ban litigations. We filed our first amicus curiae brief on behalf of the Korematsu Center and a group of affiliated friends of the court just days after the announcement of the first executive order imposing the travel ban. As of this date, we have filed 10 iterations of our brief in various courts including the Supreme Court. Now that these cases have been sent back to the district courts, we expect to file revised versions of or amicus brief on appeal. I'm here today to express my personal support for the resolution. The designation of Fred Korematsu Day is appropriate because a commemorated day becomes an opportunity for teaching and learning. Curious minds will ask who was this Fred Korematsu and why are we commemorating him? Teachers will have an opportunity to

1 incorporate Fred's story into their lesson plans.
2
3 The media will have an occasion to do features about
4 the Japanese-American incarceration. All of this is
5 desirable because we have important lessons to learn
6 from Fred Korematsu and through him important lessons
7 about the Japanese-American incarceration of during
8 World War II. These are lessons about prejudice,
9 about our treatment of minorities, about honor, about
10 perseverance, about constitutional law and our
11 judiciary, and about how things can go horribly wrong
12 when the truth is hidden from our judicial system,
13 and about redemption when the truth is finally
14 revealed. I say this from my own personal experience
15 of working on these amicus briefs in the past nine
16 months. I myself learned so much more about Fred and
17 about these issues during work on the travel ban
18 litigation. There's so much about his story that I
19 didn't learn in school. Working on these briefs I
20 learned more detail about Executive Order 9066 issued
21 by FDR some ten weeks after Pearl Harbor. The
22 executive order used neutral language with respect to
23 race and ethnicity, but it gave the military broad
24 authority to remove entire classes of people from
25 zones considered to be of military significance. The

1
2 Empire of Japan was, of course, our enemy and the war
3 had just begun for Americans, but there was an
4 underlying anti-Japanese American sentiment broadly
5 shared among many people here in the United States and
6 our government took advantage of that statement.
7 What we learned of the 1980s was that the purported
8 military necessity was fraud. We learned that the
9 War Department had suppressed evidence from the FBI,
10 and other agencies that undermined the justification
11 of the removal and incarceration. Commemoration of
12 Fred Korematsu Day will give New Yorkers a reason to
13 see a film or a television documentary such as *Never*
14 *Give Up* by Holly Assui or *And Then They Came for Us*
15 by Abby Ginsberg, or to see a screening of the film
16 version of the Broadway play *Allegiance* by Jay Cuo
17 inspired by the experience of George Sakai (sp?) or
18 to read from the many books about Fred. Through these
19 works we can remind ourselves of what happens when
20 prejudice overruns the truth, and what we as
21 Americans must not do in similar situations. Thank
22 you.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
24 much, and that's exactly how you do it. You read as
25 fast as you could, and then when you—when the buzzer

1
2 and I was about to chime in, you skipped because I
3 was following along and—and concluded it. So, note
4 to self. Thank you very much for your testimony, and
5 we'll just go left from there.

6 CATH GOULDEN: [off mic] Hello, my name
7 is—

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Press the—Yep.

9 CATH GOULDEN: Hello, my name is Cath
10 Goulden, and I'm here representing the Korematsu
11 Institute, and today we gather to testify that Fred
12 Korematsu's legacy and the educative implications of
13 establishing a Fred Korematsu Day in the State of New
14 York, I come to speak as a daughter and granddaughter
15 of Japanese-Americans incarcerated during World War
16 II, as a resident of Brooklyn, New York and finally
17 as a researcher of the endeavors to teach the history
18 of the Japanese-American incarcerations to public
19 audiences. In 1942, Fred Korematsu defied the
20 racially motivated exclusion orders issued by the US
21 Government, and while this case would eventually be
22 lost in the Supreme Court, the value of Korematsu's
23 case lies in its unmasking or the errancy and
24 fragility of our democracy. I'm going to skip a
25 paragraph for time's sake. The circumstances of our

1
2 current times brings me the decision, the decision
3 before us today to establish a single day
4 commemorating Fred Korematsu. The establishment of
5 Fred Korematsu Day here in New York, a sanctuary
6 city, a city long populated and bolstered by
7 immigrants is a potent symbolic gesture, it is also
8 potent pedagogical move, too. It offers us a day, a
9 pause, and a reason to collectively consider the
10 meaning of descent and vigilance in upholding liberal
11 democracies. This year I became involved with the
12 Korematsu Institute an organization founded by Karen
13 Korematsu. The institute hosts workshops for K
14 through 12 teachers and has developed a popular and
15 widely distributed curriculum. In August, the
16 Korematsu Institute offered a week long curriculum at
17 the Writing Institute for Teachers in Berkley,
18 California. As the co-facilitator of this institute,
19 I saw first hand the enthusiasm of teachers who
20 traveled as far from places like New Mexico, Brooklyn
21 and Massachusetts, and the deep curricula residences
22 they located in Korematsu's story and history of the
23 Japanese-American incarceration. These educators
24 spoke of the meaning this history might have for
25 their socio-economic diverse populations [bell]

1
2 meanings of citizenship, belonging and ways of being
3 in the world. The Korematsu Institute's educational
4 mission is to uphold and the profound limitations and
5 possibilities to align our day-to-day work to uphold
6 our Constitution. Thank you for your consideration.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
8 much. Next.

9 ALBERT CAHN: Good afternoon. My name is
10 Albert Cahn and I serve as the Legal Director for
11 CAIR New York, a Muslim civil rights group. I'm
12 proud to testify in support of Fred Korematsu Day,
13 and I applaud Chair Van Bramer and Council Member
14 Dromm for having today's hearing. At one of this
15 Country's darkest moments, Fred Korematsu was brave
16 enough to step forward and oppose a president's
17 unlawful order, and fight for the best version of
18 American democracy. We must recognize that New York
19 City was actively complicit in the Japanese
20 interment. Immediately following the World-Pearl
21 Harbor, Mayor Fiorello of La Guardia placed all New
22 Yorkers of Japanese descent under house arrest and
23 hundred were detained at Ellis Island. New York Can
24 never fully atone for our past, but we can commit
25 that we never repeat it, and this hearing could not

1
2 be more timely because in 2015, then candidate Trump
3 said he would certainly implement a data base that
4 tracks all Muslims living in the United States. This
5 is why today so many Muslim New Yorkers fear that
6 history may repeat itself. Last November I gave a
7 training at NYU speaking to a room full of Muslim
8 students still in shock from the election. One
9 student told me that she had spoken to Representative
10 Mike Honda who was interned as a child. She had
11 asked him whether a Muslim interment was possible,
12 and he said yes. My answer when she asked me the
13 same question was no, and not because of our laws,
14 and not because of our constitution, but because the
15 people of this city, this state and this country will
16 never again stand silently by when our neighbors are
17 being imprisoned. Today, by commemorating Fred
18 Korematsu we help show all New Yorkers that promise
19 is being upheld, and that we will not stand by again.
20 With passage of this resolution, this Council will
21 transform January 30th into an enduring reminder of
22 the city's commitment to civil rights, [bell] and I
23 caution against anyone who tries to exploit moments
24 of danger and grief into calls for discrimination. I

1
2 thank the Council for its support and for helping to
3 defend any New Yorkers who face discrimination.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

5 GEORGE HEROSE: Hi. I'm George Herose.

6 I will speak on behalf of the Japanese-American
7 Citizens League in New York. Thank you Chair Van
8 Bramer for scheduling this hearing. I thank the
9 committee and thank you very much to Daniel Dromm for
10 sponsoring this resolution. I'm testifying on behalf
11 of Japanese-American Citizens League, New York
12 Chapter in order to ask you to support the passage of
13 Resolution 792. This resolution is important not
14 only to New York City Asian community, but to
15 communities of all colors. Resolution 792 represents
16 essential values of a great majority of New Yorkers
17 that we will never accept discrimination base on
18 race, religious orientation or any other marginalized
19 identify. Here in New York City during World War II
20 many innocent people in our community were targeted
21 and imprisoned on Ellis Island or under house arrest
22 without due process of law. To make things worse,
23 when those were—who were incarcerated in U.S.
24 Government concentration camps tried to come to New
25 York, Mayor Fiorelli of La Guardia public stated that

1 he did not want any Japs coming to New York. Though
2 only a college student at the time, Fred Korematsu
3 refused to accept this gross breach of justice—breach
4 of justices challenging the legality of Executive
5 Order 9066 at the Supreme Court in *Korematsu versus*
6 *the United States*, 1944. In doing so, Korematsu
7 acted like a true American in standing up his rights
8 as a citizen. After the war, Korematsu became an
9 important role model as a key to fight for Japanese-
10 American redress and reparations—reparations
11 resulting in the passage of the Civil Liberty Acts of
12 1988. In fact, Korematsu was awarded the
13 Presidential Metal of Freedom by President Bill
14 Clinton in 1988, and was an ardent civil rights
15 activist until the end of his life in 2006. He was
16 an outspoken proponent for the fair, just and equal
17 treatment for all people regardless of race, gender
18 or religion. The establishment of the state is not
19 about the actions of one man, but it's a highly
20 symbolic acknowledgment of how racially motivated
21 policies and the effacement of our basic civil rights
22 are morally wrong. This resolution is clearly not
23 about one community, but extends to all marginalized
24 communities, that are easily targeted when the
25

1
2 political tide turns against them. Japanese-
3 Americans are the only group that—that has been mass
4 incarcerated by the U.s. Government. The [bell]
5 Japanese-American community in New York City is
6 painfully aware and very concerned that the same type
7 of racist, unjust exact—executive orders that
8 incarcerated Japanese-Americans 75 years ago are
9 being repeated today with the Muslim and immigrant
10 communities. Now is the time to make a strong
11 statement that racial profiling and persecution is
12 not acceptable. Unless we acknowledge the mistakes
13 of the past, we cannot move forward as a society.
14 Lastly, I would like to thank Chair—Chairperson
15 James—James Van Bramer for scheduling this hearing,
16 and I would also urge the Committee on Cultural
17 Affairs to proceed with a speedy vote so that New
18 York City can join the states of California,
19 Virginia, Florida, and Hawaii in celebrating the
20 official Fred T. Korematsu Day on January 30th. Thank
21 you.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
23 much. I appreciate the recommendation, and last but
24 no least of this panel.

1
2 JENNIFER HAYASHIDA: Thank you. My name
3 is Jennifer Hayashida. I am a former faculty member
4 at Hunter College, the City University of New York
5 where I taught for 11 years around our Asian-American
6 Studies Program from 2008 to 2017. My estimate is
7 that in a class of 30 students, 5 to 10 of my
8 students, 90% of whom had attended New York City
9 public high schools, would know that the World War II
10 mass incarceration of Japanese-Americans even
11 happened. Fewer, though, knew that two-thirds of
12 those quote, unquote Japanese people who had been
13 locked up without due process were U.S. citizens.
14 Most importantly, I never had a student who came into
15 my class knowing that there were Japanese-Americans
16 who resisted the incarceration, and stood up for
17 justice as Fred Korematsu did. The history of the
18 incarceration serves as a clarion call for so many
19 students who learn about it. Coincidentally, in the
20 weeks following the most recent presidential
21 election, students in my class on Asian-American
22 literature were reading Citizen 13660. Japanese-
23 American author and illustrator Mine Okubo's graphic
24 novel that chronicles her experience at the Topaz
25 "War Relocation Center" in Utah. This is the same

1
2 camp—camp where my Uncle Allen spent the first three
3 years of his life, and where Fred Korematsu was
4 eventually incarcerated. As the effects of
5 Islamophobic and Xenophobia steadily increased last
6 fall and winter, my students wanted to bring Citizen
7 13660 to the streets of our city. Self-organized
8 groups of students read passages from Okubo's book in
9 unison in public spaces at Hunter College on Fifth
10 Avenue and in the Trump Tower Lobby. Technically,
11 it's not spiritually a public place. They engaged in
12 respectful conversations with curious passersby some
13 even going so far as to give away their copies of the
14 book in an effort to educate the public. This
15 resolution is a crucial reminder to all of us that
16 history is not what we imagine or wish it had been,
17 that it lives with us always and requires continuous
18 vigilance. January 30th [bell] will be a day for all
19 of us of all racial backgrounds to unite in large and
20 small ways and reflect upon the continued legacy of a
21 man who insists that civil rights be granted to all
22 of us regardless of skin color. This resolution does
23 not simply honor the past. It gives energy and hope
24 to those of us who continue to work towards justice
25 today. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
3 much, and as someone who worked for our public
4 library systems before I was elected eight years ago,
5 that is a really, really amazing action to go ahead
6 and read the book all over the city of New York
7 including in the lobby of the Trump Tower and--

8 JENNIFER HAYASHIDA: [interposing] Would
9 you like a copy?

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I would love
11 one, and I, too, participated in some demonstrations
12 inside that semi-quasi [laughter] public lobby.

13 JENNIFER HAYASHIDA: The gilded lobby.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, yes with
15 lots and lots of secrete service agents watching us,
16 although we were just with a bunch of artists, and
17 still they watched us like hawks. So, with that, let
18 me recognize council Member Costa Constantinides who
19 has joined us from the committee and I'll see if
20 Danny has any comments for this panel as well.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I just have one
22 comment to Jennifer-Hash-Hayashida to say in that
23 class, that was a class that was studying Asian-
24 American History?

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2 JENNIFER HAYASHIDA: It was—it was a
3 course on Asian-American literature and
4 representations of citizenship. Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So because
6 that's like students who are already probably had
7 some interest in Asian-American history, and only
8 five or ten of them out of the 30 would even know. I
9 think the numbers in general education classes is
10 probably even lower than that. I don't think I was
11 ever taught this when I went through high school and
12 learned this on my own, and that's really why I think
13 this resolution is so vitally important because, you
14 know, we need Americans to know, all Americans to
15 know what happened to Fred Korematsu.

16 JENNIFER HAYASHIDA: I would agree. I—I
17 would also like to add, if I may, that—and I edit
18 this paragraph out, but the thing that was most
19 disturbing was students who came in with a complete
20 misunderstanding who thought that Japanese-American
21 were incarcerated for their own safety.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And thank you to
23 CAIR also for coming in, and to everybody on the
24 panel, but for especially to CAIR for making the
25

1 connection between what's happening with our Muslim
2 communities today. Thank you.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
5 much. Can I really keep this book?

6 JENNIFER HAYASHIDA: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's awesome
8 thank you.

9 JAMES HARRIS: First, you have the
10 capacity (sic) of Washington.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
12 much. I will treasure it. Thank you very much to
13 this panel. Very enlightening, and I hope everyone
14 is learning along. So, the second panel is first Yon
15 Chin from the Asian-American Bar Association, Charmin
16 Saadiq perhaps, Charmin. I apologize. David Okada
17 from the Japanese-American Citizens League, Tanaya
18 Izu, Tanaya. Yep, and Christina Tasca from the
19 Muslim Community Network. So, we'll, yep, go right to
20 left once again, not politically only in terms of how
21 you were sat, but ultimately you want to end up on
22 the left. So, we'll start first with you. Again,
23 two minutes. Thank you very much.

24 YANG CHEN: Good afternoon. Thank you
25 Council Member Van Bramer for holding hearing, and

1
2 thank you Council Member Dromm for sponsoring
3 Resolution No. 792. My name is Yang Chen, and I'm
4 the Executive Director of the Asian-American Bar
5 Association in New York. We call ourselves AABANY
6 for short. I am honored to be here today on behalf
7 of AABANY's support of Reso-Resolution No. 792 to
8 establish January 30th annually as Fred T. Korematsu
9 Day. AABANY has been around since 1989. We're a
10 non-profit professional membership organization
11 representing and promoting interests of Asian-Pacific
12 American Legal Professionals in New York City and New
13 York State, but we also advocate for the larger APA
14 community of which we are a part, and which in New
15 York City numbers more than one million strong and
16 stands as a vital part of the diverse fabric of New
17 York City. AABANY is an affiliate of NAPABA, the
18 National Asian Pacific American Bar Association, a
19 nationwide group representing the interest of more
20 than 50,000 APA attorneys across America, and AABANY
21 is one of NAPABA's largest affiliates in the country
22 and through NAPABA, Albany signed onto Amicus Briefs
23 opposing the Muslim Travel Ban. AABANY through trial
24 reenactments project keeps alive the memory of Fred
25 Korematsu and other Asian-Pacific Americans who have

1
2 suffered injustice, inequality and deprivation of
3 their civil rights and human rights. Since 2007, we
4 have produced and performed one trial reenactment a
5 year of a famous legal case involving APAs as a way
6 to teach lawyers and the general public about the
7 significant but often forgotten contributions of APAs
8 to American society and to the development of
9 American law. The first reenactment was about Mine
10 Souie (sp?) who like Fred Korematsu challenged the
11 lawfulness and constitutionality of Executive Order
12 9066, and suffered greatly throughout his life for
13 it. We also enacted the Hartman Draft Resisters
14 Cases in which Japanese-American attorneys challenged
15 the legality and constitutionality requiring them to
16 be drafted to fight in World War II [bell] when they
17 had been stripped of their rights as Americans. We
18 have handed up to make—to be made part of the record
19 those scripts. We would urge members of the Council
20 to perhaps pick up the script and perform it
21 themselves. I want to say that next week in
22 Washington D.C. we're performing for the first time
23 the Korematsu case as our next re-enactment, and
24 we're doing so to recognize that 2017 marks the 70th—
25 70th anniversary, 75th anniversary of Executive Order

1
2 9066, and we do these re-enactments simply because we
3 must learn the lessons of history. And at this time
4 in our history it seems that we are slipping
5 backwards, and forgetting—forgetting the important
6 lessons of history, and we urge the City Council to
7 stand up for what is right, to pass Resolution No.
8 792 so that January 30th, Fred Korematsu Day will
9 become a reality, and serve as a constant reminder of
10 the principles of equality, justice, civil rights,
11 human rights and due process enshrined in the U.S.
12 Constitution. Thank you very much.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, and
14 right behind my love of books is my love of theater.
15 I am the Chair of the Cultural Affairs and Libraries
16 Committee after all, and I think this is terrific and
17 I love the power of theater and the arts to remind us
18 of history and also make political statements. It
19 reminds me of a Laramie project among other things.
20 So, why don't we go to your right, and my left?

21 CHARMIN SAADIQ: Good afternoon. Thank
22 you, Council Member Van Bramer, and other members of
23 the committee for holding this hearing and allowing
24 the public to share our voices about Resolution 792.
25 My name is Sharman Sadiki, a member of the No

1
2 Separate Justice Coalition. We work around—we work
3 to—so support families who have been targeted by the
4 United States in the war on terror under the pretext
5 of—of national security. We engage in public
6 education programs about civil and human rights
7 violation that most in the American Community is—
8 continue to face up until today. As a member of a
9 marginalized religious and racial community targeted
10 by the state under the war on terror, my family has
11 been directly impacted by this and anybody imprisoned
12 whose First Amendment rights have been violated by
13 the federal agencies. Many American families that I
14 work with as a member of the No Separate Justice, and
15 I personally know have—have been devastated as a
16 result of these racist policies, and—and by
17 entrapment cases, and enlistments continue to be
18 collected, we're blamed racially and religiously
19 profiled and imprisoned based on suspicion without
20 any evidence of any wrongdoing. Japanese-Americans,
21 of course, have similarly faced these—these kind of—
22 projected or this kind of racist policies 65 years
23 ago. I support the resolution 792 because I
24 understand validating the dignity of human beings,
25 collective blaming, collective remaining groups and

1
2 imprisoning innocent people on the manufacture of
3 suspicion, as a liberal, regressive, undemocratic and
4 morally wrong. I urge the honorable members of this
5 committee to pass the resolution so this day can be
6 celebrated, but more importantly so we can—we can as
7 the citizens can use the very different Fred
8 Korematsu as opportunities to learn and educate
9 people about human dignity and improve the social,
10 political and economic conditions of marginalized
11 groups in this country. Thank you so much.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
13 much. Next.

14 DAVID OKADA: Thank you, committee, for
15 having us provide our testimony. I was a—I was born
16 in—in an internment camp or in a incarceration center
17 in Minidoka. When I was born, it was harsh
18 condition. It was like minus 20 degrees when my
19 mother gave birth. So, they were in tar barracks and
20 one pot belly stove. That was it. I served in the
21 military in Vietnam and I'm a veteran, and
22 participate in the American Legion as well as the
23 American—Japanese-American Veterans Association. My
24 name is David Okada, and I represent the Japanese-
25 American Citizens League, and the reason I'm here

1
2 today is because in this current administration the
3 executive orders to ban immigrants is a little
4 frightening, and we don't want to repeat the history
5 of the Japanese-American incarceration. In the wake
6 of September 11th, Fred Korematsu spoke out against
7 the dangers of racial profiling of Americans, and
8 urge you as leaders not to repeat the wrongs
9 inflicted upon Japanese-Americans. No one should be
10 locked away simply because they share the same race,
11 ethnicity or religion as a spy or terrorist. If that
12 principle was not learned from the internment of
13 Japanese-Americans, then these are very dangerous
14 times for our democracy. We filed to amicus briefs
15 for the Supreme Court on behalf of American Muslims
16 being held at the notorious Guantanamo Bay prison,
17 and basically he spoke about rounding up Arab and
18 Muslim Americans and putting them in camps. You—
19 you've heard from Karen Korematsu. She mentioned
20 that she has an educational center. We are concerned
21 as we are in favor of that as well. As the Japanese-
22 American Citizen League, we go out to schools to
23 promote Japanese-American history, and to have them
24 understand what transpired in the past. California
25 [bell] marks the first Korematsu Day, which was

1
2 signed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger followed by
3 the states of Hawaii, Virginia, and Florida. There
4 are other resolutions in place similar to 792 in
5 Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Utah that have
6 submitted resolutions honoring the day and South
7 Carolina has submitted a bill to their legislator.
8 So, I thank the—the City Council for hearing my
9 testimony. I thank Honorable Dromm, Daniel Dromm for
10 holding this hearing.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
12 much for your testimony and for your service. Next.

13 TANAYA IZU: Hello. Thank you for
14 opening this hearing today. My name Tanaya Izu, and
15 I am a third and fourth generation Chinese and
16 Japanese-American from Oakland, California living in
17 Washington Heights. My pronouns are they and them.
18 Designation January 30th as Korematsu Day would set a
19 precedent for adults and children alike teaching and
20 remind them that sweeping punitive measures targeting
21 minorities even when authorized and encouraged by the
22 highest up—highest power in office are wrong. In a
23 political climate the prioritizes protecting serial
24 rapists, over-seeking basic safety for transgender
25 people, we need to recognize as heroes those have had

1
2 the enormous courage to stand up often alone to state
3 violence who refuse to budget at enormous costs of
4 their freedom and safety when the state demands they
5 shrink themselves: Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera,
6 Chelsea Manning. The list goes on. Today there is
7 increasing fear of speaking out. People like me and
8 many of those in this room know that we are viewed as
9 threats to the inordinate (sic) order of the U.S. We
10 are marked as other and therefore become targets for
11 hatred and fear both in policy and everyday practice.
12 Meanwhile, white supremacists gather in mass enlisted
13 to reclaim America as it should be, White, male,
14 cisgender bigoted. There's the same climate of fear,
15 xenophobia and bigotry that alleges the scapegoating
16 of 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry during World
17 War II. In the retelling of the incarceration
18 stories there's always emphasis on the fact—whoops,
19 on the fact that many of our American citizens what
20 is overlooked is that those who are not citizens were
21 legally denied citizenship because they were born in
22 Japan and, therefore, ineligible for citizenship
23 because of the xenophobic racist laws of the time.
24 There are clear parallels between the fear of corners
25 (sic) than, and the fear of brown and black migrant

1
2 workers and refugees today. As history has
3 demonstrated, this was wrong. It continues to be
4 wrong in the scapegoating of queer people, Muslim
5 people and all people of color for those bigoted
6 insecurities and fears of those in power. America
7 was never white, but it has always depended on the
8 oppression of those deemed undesirable for the state,
9 non-whites, woman, queers, [bell] immigrants,
10 refugees, poor people, et cetera. Designating
11 January 30th as Korematsu Day will remind children
12 and adults alike that necessity is standing up to
13 what is wrong even if it seems they stand alone. It
14 will send a strong message that yes, we, too, are
15 America. We have been America. We are what America
16 will look like. We need to recognize more heroes
17 like Fred Korematsu. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
19 much, and Council Member Dromm and I both are part of
20 the LGBTQ community. So, I appreciate you bringing
21 in and paying respects to Marsha Johnson and Sylvia
22 Rivera, who I once shared a jail cell with after we
23 committed an act of civil disobedience. Last but not
24 least on this panel.

1
2 CHRISTINA TASCA: Good afternoon. My
3 name is Christina Tasca. I'm the Executive Director
4 of the Muslim Community Network, a non-profit
5 organization that builds civic leadership and
6 cultivates compassion, and understanding amongst
7 diverse multi-faith communities of New York City. On
8 behalf of MCN, I would like to express my sincere
9 appreciation and gratitude to the Committee of
10 Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International
11 Intergroup Relations for officially establishing the
12 Fred T. Korematsu Day, and a special thank you to
13 Council Member Dromm and Chair Van Bramer and the
14 other Council Members who are championing this cause,
15 and see a value of in the establishment of NY-of this
16 day for New Yorkers who remember dark time in our
17 history. The incarceration of 120,000 American
18 citizens based solely on their heritage remains a
19 dark glaring stain on our nation's history. During
20 World War II, Japanese-Americans were profiled,
21 abused, and relocated far from home and internment
22 camps where they faced human rights abuses,
23 starvation, neglect and were stripped of their
24 rights. We now live in a time where we see
25 reflections of a period that we should never revisit.

1
2 As a Muslim-American, I have born witness to my own
3 faith communities and other communities facing
4 similar infringements on civil rights and liberties
5 for other reasons than fear, ignorance, political
6 gain. Our elected leaders have the responsibility
7 towards the care and protection of all of their
8 constituents regardless of their heritage, national
9 origin, race, faith, gender or any other
10 identification, which may be exploited to marginalize
11 and oppress them. What we do here in New York City
12 has ripple effects across the country. The
13 establishment of this day is a testimony to Fred
14 Korematsu's Courage and conviction to rise against
15 bigotry and fear mongering at the highest level. It
16 is an act of honoring what it means to be an
17 American. Let us today set the example for our
18 nation by establishing January 30th as Fred T.
19 Korematsu Day, a day to commemorate [bell] the value
20 of our civil liberties—civil liberties and U.S.
21 Constitution. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
23 much for your testimony, to this entire panel, and
24 Council Member Dromm.

25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Just very—just
3 very quickly, we also want to thank the panel for
4 coming in and to point out, you know, how our Mayor
5 La Guardia and Earl Warren in particular cracked on
6 LGBT people as well as Japanese people, and how we
7 see similarities today. I think it was this panel
8 that booked to play, right? I'm getting a little—
9 yeah, okay so in the—in the timeline of events on
10 the—on the first page, it's very similar almost to
11 the timeline of events that's happening here today in
12 the United States of America as well especially with
13 the issuance of proclamations and executive orders.
14 So, it is, in fact, very, very frightening to see
15 what's going on in light of even looking at this
16 material that you presented. So, thank you for that.
17 I will read it. So, thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
19 much to this panel, and I'm going to call the names
20 of this next panel, but there is a delegation of
21 Council Members going to Puerto Rico for relief
22 efforts. I am a member of that delegation and there
23 is a meeting downstairs right now about that that I
24 have to attend. So Council Member Dromm will preside
25 for the next two panels. So, again, we have on this

1 next panel, Rosella Clyde. Is Rosella Clyde here?

2 Andy Kim. Andy Kim. It looks like Steve Goldberg.

3 Steve Goldberg. Julie Azuma. Julie. Yes, and

4 Debbie Amantare. (sp?) [pause] Okay. I guess we

5 will start again on the right and go to the left.

6
7 ROSELLA CLYDE: Good afternoon. My name
8 is Rosella Clyde and I am the Educational Director of
9 Kaleidoscope Educational consultants. From 2007 to
10 2011, I was the president of the Association of
11 Teacher of Social Studies, ATSS UFT, and I'm here to
12 basically to thank Councilman Dromm for picking up
13 this initiative and moving this initiative forward.
14 I think that the—that New York City needs Resolution
15 792 now more than ever for all the reasons that have
16 already been stated. But, I'd like to call attention
17 to the seventh whereas paragraph, which deals with
18 the Federal Commission on Wartime Relocation and
19 Internment of Civilians concluding that the executive
20 order 9066 was not justified by military necessity
21 and the decisions which followed it—from it.
22 Detention ending—detention ending exclusion were not
23 driven by analysis of military conditions, but
24 instead by race, prejudice, war, hysteria and the
25 failure of political leadership, and as the

1
2 Councilman has reiterated several times today, I
3 think that we stand at a rather parallel point in
4 time when the word sanctuary city has become a
5 negative term. I also want to point to the fact that
6 as an educator, it is extremely important to anchor
7 dates so by having the date January 30th as an anchor
8 date, it provides an opportunity for educators to
9 place this experience in context and in time, and
10 that's extremely important with all of the
11 conflicting responsibilities that ed—that educators
12 are faced with today. By having this particular date
13 and having this date connected with importance of
14 Fred Korematsu birthday. It provides [bell] a
15 tremendous opportunity for us to move forward with
16 this. Thank you very much.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you very
18 much, and yes as being a former teacher myself, I
19 know that this will be very helpful to teachers to
20 zero in on that date, and look for curriculum around—
21 around the issue. Thank you.

22 ANDY KIM: Good afternoon. My name is
23 Andy Kim, and I'm a second year JD candidate at New
24 York University School of Law, and Korematsu Chair of
25 our Asian-Pacific American Law Students Association.

1
2 I'm honored to testify today in support of the
3 establishment of Fred T. Korematsu Day in our city.
4 My role with the APA Law Students Association is to
5 organize NYU's annual Korematsu lecture. The lecture
6 series was established in 2000 in honor of Fred
7 Korematsu and it provides a forum to address Asian-
8 American perspectives on the law, and to honor those
9 who have substantially contributed to the legal
10 profession while challenging status quo racism and
11 injuries. We have hosted many distinguished jurists
12 in the year including Professors Herald Ko and Ken
13 Yoshino (sic), Judge Pamela Chin of the Eastern
14 District of New York and most recently Judge Shaklin
15 (sp?)Wynn of the Ninth Circuit. During much of Fred
16 Korematsu's life it would have been hard to imagine
17 such talented and accomplished Asian-Americans in the
18 law. It is—it is a terrible burden to be the first
19 in anything, but as law students we have the
20 incredible blessing to stand on treaded ground,
21 albeit lightly. The lecture series serves as a
22 reminder of the progress we have made not just as
23 Asian-Americans, but as a civil society, but
24 Korematsu' name also reminds us that civil liberties
25 are not to be taken for granted. They must be fought

1
2 for. This was the case in 1942. It was the case in
3 2001, and unfortunately, it remains the case in 2017.
4 The 1944 Supreme Court decision that bears
5 Korematsu's name has never been overturned. While it
6 is widely discredited, it is a reminder to remain
7 ever vigilant. Fred Korematsu fought for his
8 constitutional rights long after he had served out
9 his sentence. He had nothing material to gain, and
10 acted simply on the principle of justice. He, and
11 Gordon Hirabayashi (sp?) and Minoru Asudi (sp?) just
12 knew that what had happened to them and their loved
13 ones was unconstitutional, and even un-American. I
14 hope that New York City will join us in remembering
15 Fred Korematsu, but more importantly what he stands
16 for in civil liberties and our Constitution. [bell]
17 In establishing Fred T. Korematsu Day, I look forward
18 to joining the growing numbers of cities, and states
19 that celebrate January 30th accordingly. Thank you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you very
21 much. Next please.

22 STEVE GOLDBERG: (coughs) I'm Steve
23 Goldberg. In a former life I was an attorney. Now,
24 I'm a history class student at Brooklyn College. As
25 an attorney in reading the Korematsu Decision, it's a

1
2 total abomination, and I must say even if the
3 military had allowed in the evidence to show that the
4 decision was not necessary and determined it wasn't
5 necessary, it wouldn't have mattered. The court
6 would have deferred to the military's judgment anyway
7 incorrectly, thus it would have done. Why did Frank
8 Ford (sic) sign it? I think in studying the matter,
9 Frank Ford signed it? Because he was a very
10 prominent Jew in the Court. There were still
11 allegations for anti-semites, many of us saying that
12 this was a Jewish war, that the Jews were forcing FDR
13 to fight the Germans and the Japanese. As such,
14 Frank Furter (sic) may have felt compelled to show
15 there were no dual-dual loyalties that he was going
16 with the military, and if that's the case, and I
17 think it probably is, he got it wrong. He could have
18 made a much stronger statement by saying he supports
19 American values, and those values of what we're
20 fighting for, and that's what motivates us, and that
21 would have been better in 1942. It would have been
22 better in 1944. It would have been better in 2001.
23 It would be better today. Thank you very much.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you. Next
25 please.

1
2 JULIA ZUMA: Hi. I'm Julia Zuma. I'm a
3 third generation Japanese-American. My parents
4 applied to be released early from Tule Lake
5 Concentration Camp 1943 so I could be born later that
6 year in Chicago without the stigma of camp. My
7 parents were part of the Reset List Group in in
8 Chicago, and endearing name for people who had lost
9 their livelihood through their incarceration, and had
10 to move away from the West Coast. I was born on the
11 South Side of Chicago where my parents' family both
12 all came to live with us. Together they all started
13 a new life. As a young child in the family, the
14 entire family chose not to tell me about camp. They
15 kept it a secret. Imagine the shame, humiliation,
16 and sheer suffering that caused them to keep the
17 experience hidden. They wanted me to remain hidden
18 and innocent of the injustices done to them. This
19 happened to all of my childhood friends back then or
20 else we would have learned from each other. I didn't
21 learn about the concentration camps until I was 13
22 when I put it together, and went to the public
23 library. I went through childhood trying to figure
24 out what the mystery of the camp experience and it
25 took three decades before the Redress Movement

1 started. After I moved to New York, I found the
2 Redress Movement here in New York in the early--late
3 '70s, early '80s, and there was a real catharsis in
4 the community. Through the Redress Movement--Movement,
5 I learned what happened to the families of all the
6 Japanese-Americans from the West Coast. I always
7 wondered why we didn't stand up for our
8 constitutional rights, but I can now see a community
9 full of pride wanted this humiliating chapter of
10 their lives hidden away. The camp experienced
11 reshaped an entire community, the sense of self,
12 their confidence in many ways are subtle and through
13 the generations. So, it's important for us to have a
14 day named after Fred Korematsu. It's relevant to the
15 country to have a shared moment when we could stand
16 together and remember the tragic time when racism
17 created a loss of our collective freedom and damaged
18 our civil liberties. [bell] It will be a reminder
19 for all of us not to let it happen again to any
20 group. Thank you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you also.
23 Next, please.

24 DR. DEBBIE ALMONTASER: Good afternoon.
25 [Speaking Japanese] to every one, peace and

1
2 greetings. My name is Dr. Debbie Almontaser. I am
3 offering testimony behalf of the Yemeni American
4 Merchants Association, an organization that was
5 birthed out of the Yemeni Bodega strike on February
6 2nd of 2017 against the Muslim ban. It is my honor
7 to be here on behalf of them as well as the Yemeni-
8 American and Muslim-American Woman in New York City.
9 First, I want to applaud and thank the committee of
10 the Cultural Affairs, Libraries, the International
11 Intergroup Relations for officially considering to
12 establish the Fred Korematsu Day, a day to commemor-
13 sorry. A day to commemorate the value of our civil
14 liberties and the U.S. Constitution that we hold dear
15 on January 30th of each year. Also, a special thanks
16 to Council Member Dromm, and all of his colleagues
17 for seeing the value to the establishment of this day
18 for New Yorkers to remember a dark history in our—a
19 dark day in our history, and to say never again.
20 Fred Korematsu courageously fought the U.S.
21 Government in the U.S. Supreme Court for the
22 incarceration of 120,000 Japanese-Americans during
23 World War II. His courage gives Muslim-Americans and
24 I the courage to stand up to the travel ban that is
25 created to—that was created to target Muslim Majority

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2 countries. The Establishment of this day is not just
3 about the accomplishments or actions of one man, but
4 is a highly symbolic acknowledgement of how racially
5 and religiously motivated policies can infringe on
6 our basic civil and human rights, which are morally
7 wrong. The time we are living in carries a tinge of
8 the treatment of Japanese-Americans during World War
9 II where they were rejected, profiled, abused,
10 neglected and displaced due to the fact they were
11 Japanese. The scare tactics [bell] used to justify
12 the travel ban are the exact scare tactics used right
13 here today under this administration. Our nation's
14 current state is a reflection of this power then, and
15 the fact that it's happening in the 24th Cent--21st
16 Century is alarming. The current administration has
17 caused a great deal of insecurity for Muslims,
18 Blacks, immigrants [bell] Mexicans, LGBTQIA
19 communities and women. As a nation, we should not be
20 turning back on the dark times of our history where
21 exclusion, propaganda and fear mongering dictated
22 policies. This resolution speaks for all
23 marginalized communities who easily targeted when the
24 political tide turns against them. The continue mass
25 incarceration, racial profiling, separation of

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2 immigrant families, the ban of Muslim majority
3 countries, and the contemplation of a Muslim registry
4 as promised by the U.S. Commander in Chief are
5 unacceptable. The abuse of power in our nation and
6 the violation of our civil liberties are beyond
7 belief. As a nation recognized by the world as the
8 land of the free and the land that welcomes
9 immigrants with open arms, we have earned a
10 reputation of exclusion and bigotry. We must learn
11 from our past and say never again. We can no longer
12 remain silent. Our silence is a psychological
13 violence. At this moment in time, we must defend and
14 protect our civil rights to live with respect and
15 dignity. So, today let us change the course of our
16 city by establishing January 30th as Fred Korematsu
17 Day, a day to commemorate the value of our civil
18 liberties and U.S. Constitution, which we all hold
19 near and dear. Thank you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you very
21 much, Dr. Almontaser, and thank you for mentioning
22 all the Council Members that are included on this. We
23 actually have 35 Council Members, which is a veto
24 proof majority on this, and I'm sure that Council
25 Member Van Bramer will be bringing this forward for a

1
2 vote because I know that he's also very interested in
3 these social justice issues. So, thank you for that.
4 I wanted to just ask Ms. Zuma about the family hiding
5 the fact of internment, and the shame that it caused.
6 Can you elaborate a little bit further on that?

7 JULIA ZUMA: To this day I have a hard
8 time asking my family about what happened to them
9 during that period time. They did—they would talk
10 about camp, and when you'd say, what happened? Why
11 were you at summer camp without me, which is what I
12 thought. Most of us did think that, they would just
13 say you don't, you know, it's nothing. It's none of
14 your business or they—it was—it was a really darkly
15 held secret for—for as long as I could remember.
16 Even as I worked on redress it was hard to ask them
17 directly what their experiences were.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: And it had that
19 much of an impact on them?

20 JULIA ZUMA: I think the impact—the
21 impact I could see in their children and the
22 children's children--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Uh-hm.

24 JULIA ZUMA: --that were still retiring,
25 you know. I—I watched her go beyond time, and I was

1
2 still on time because I was afraid that that kind of
3 fear of authority is-is part of that-that lack of
4 confidence. It's something that happened during that
5 internment.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Well, certainly
7 sharing your personal story has a very strong impact,
8 and that's why I wanted to ask you about it because,
9 you know, hearing that, I think really makes a
10 difference.

11 JULIA ZUMA: Thank you.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: And finally, let
13 me just ask also Mr. Andy, what would it take to
14 overturn the decision in the Supreme Court. I mean
15 would somebody have to go back. I don't know the
16 law. How would that happen? Would you have to go
17 back to the Supreme Court and have them overturn it?
18 Is that even a possibility?

19 ANDY KIM: I believe so, but it's-it's-in
20 terms of the scholarship on the matter, it has
21 already been addressed in how this type of precedent
22 is very front when it comes to both the law, but also
23 the facts especially when it came out on exactly what
24 type of facts the case itself rested on. I-I cannot
25 speak more on the matter unfortunately.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: So, would we lose
3 any of the historical importance if it was to be
4 overturned? There's--there's not--

5 ANDY KIM: [interposing] Well, excuse me.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: One time I asked a
7 very ignorant question in a--in a hearing about the
8 Constitution on the two-thirds first answer was that
9 decision. It saved people. [background comments]
10 The three-fifths cause of the Constitution, and there
11 were those who argued, you know, that--well, first of
12 all, you know, it can't really be overturned, but
13 then do we really want to or do we want to use that
14 as a lesson for history? I'm just wondering what
15 your sentiment is on that?

16 ANDY KIM: Right. Having a case like
17 this overturned would not diminish the historical
18 significance of having so many Japanese-Americans
19 interned. The case itself it stands as a record of
20 how the government was--and the--the judiciary was so
21 complicit in allowing this awful event to happen, and
22 I--I really cannot say that a court's action could
23 take away that history from our country.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Okay, well, I--I
25 thank you all again for coming in, and we're going to

1
2 call up the next panel. Thank you. Okay, now we
3 have Sophia Zang from CACF, Hunter High School;
4 Leira. Uh—Yow (sp?) Sorry, Leria Oh (sp?). It's
5 very hard for me to read these also. The print is
6 very small from La Guardia, College International
7 High School; Vin Lao (sp?) from CACF High School
8 Language and Innovation. Shahanna Abdeen (sp?), High
9 School Construction Trade and Andy Kai, Stuyvesant
10 High School, and I do apologize for--

11 MALE SPEAKER: [interposing] And Mitch
12 Wu.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: And Mitch—and
14 Mitch Wu. [background comment] Bring—bring them all
15 up. Well, you know, I need a slip on them, Mr. Wu.
16 So, if they can fill out a slip before they speak,
17 that would be great. You can sit—sit them—seat them,
18 and then yes. I mean we'll get the slip.

19 [background comment] It's turned in? [pause] And so
20 then we're going to—we have Nada Almandra, Brooklyn
21 Tech High School; Kai Ing Gual (sp?), La Guaradia
22 High School; and Mitchell Wu. Mr. Wu, is everybody
23 there?

24 MITCHELL WU: [off mic] Yes.
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COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Okay. Very good.

So, would you like to start for us?

MITCHELL WU: [off mic] Yes, I would like to. [on mic] Alright, thank you very much. My name is Mitchell Wu, and I'm the Director of Programs with the Coalition for Asian-American Children and Families, CACF. CACF would like to first thank Committee Chair Van Bramer and other members of the committee to hold this important hearing on Resolution 792 as well as a thank you for the sponsor of the resolution, Council Member Dromm. CACF is the nation's only Pan-Asian children's advocacy organization. Our mission is to prove the health and wellbeing of Asian-Pacific Americans APA children and families, and I'm just going to use APA for short for the rest of my testimony for the sake of time. There is a long history of APAs in this country with the first documentation of APAs in American as early as the 1570s and some of them as early as the 1760s. In New York city, APAs are by percentage the fastest growing racial community doubling every decade since 1970 constituting over 15% of the older population speaking over 40 languages and dialects from approximately 100 different regions of origin. Now,

1 despite this rapid population growth and diversity,
2 APAs often face invisibility or very little
3 representation in various fields such as media and in
4 history textbooks. There are over one million APAs
5 in New York City. One out of two APA children are
6 born into poverty. Seventy-eight percent of the APAs
7 are foreign born and 20% speak little or no English.
8 These statistics indicate deeper and more complex
9 issues in a community when it comes to barriers of
10 our cultural community development and access to
11 resources. By taking a deeper look in our community,
12 one can see that APAs are not a monolithic "model
13 minority group." APA youth now also face significant
14 barriers school. According to the New York City of
15 Department of Education, one out of five APA children
16 do not graduate on time or at all from high school.
17 Fifty percent of Aps in New York State are not
18 considered college ready when they do finish high
19 school, and that number is actually higher in urban
20 concentrations like New York City. APA youth face
21 many challenges such as language and cultural
22 barriers, having to take on extra responsibilities
23 both financially and domestically for their families
24 and schools and face bullying, much aggression and a
25

1
2 lack of support [bell] when the culture calls for the
3 competent services. CACF actually have the Youth
4 Leadership Program for high school youth from all
5 across five boroughs. We actually brought them here
6 today. They actually traveled very far to also share
7 their personal testimonies on this issue. Thank you
8 very much.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you, and
10 before we go to the others, I just want to thank you
11 personally for helping to make this hearing happen,
12 and for all the work that you did to get co-sponsors
13 onto the legislation. So, I'm very grateful to you.

14 MITCHELL WU: Yeah, we're grateful to you
15 guys, both of us for being the lead sponsor, and
16 we're very happy to be help and excited to be here.
17 Thank you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Next, please.

19 KAI YING GUO: Hello. Good afternoon, my
20 name is Kai Ying Guo (sp?). I'm a senior at La
21 Guardia High School of the Arts, and I'm here as a
22 representative from the Asian-American Student
23 Advocacy Project, AASAP. We are a citywide youth
24 leadership program under the Coalition for Asian-
25 American Children and Families, CACF Coalition for

1
2 Asian-American Children and Families. I would like
3 to thank committee Chair Van Bramer and the members
4 of the Committee of Cultural Affairs for holding this
5 important hearing on Resolution 0792. I was born in
6 a small suburban town in Southern China. Shortly
7 after I turned five, my parents and I came to
8 America. This—I've been here ever since then. This
9 city is my childhood and this country is my home. My
10 school have decided to have a great culture diversity
11 that is reflective of the city's melting pot nature.
12 Asian-Pacific Americans, APA students make up more
13 than 20% of my student population, but APA history is
14 hardly taught or mentioned. On occasions where APA
15 history is mentioned, it is over simplified or served
16 the students like side dishes. In my history class
17 last year, nearly a quarter of my classmates were
18 APA. However, a few of us participated in
19 discussions because of an apparent disconnect. My
20 APA peers and I felt alienated within our own
21 classroom because we couldn't find a piece of
22 ourselves within what was being taught. In the back
23 of our heads what we learned about war and slavery we
24 kept thinking well, where were the African-Americans?
25 What was—where would I—where would I have fit in all

1
2 of this. I felt like an anomaly because of my ethnic
3 background. As my education was confirming the
4 stereotype that APAs are perpetually foreigners, and
5 that we've played minimal, if any, part in creating
6 this country. I think establishing Fred T. Korematsu
7 Day would encourage the much needed conversation in
8 classrooms about Asian-Pacific Americans in American
9 history. Korematsu's fight will bring awareness to
10 the unequal treatment and the exclusion of Asian-
11 Americans in nearly all of American history from
12 policies to forms of social institutions. I deeply
13 regret not knowing about Fred Korematsu in my
14 childhood. His legacy helped me connect to this
15 country in a way that gave me courage to speak today
16 at this hearing. [bell] His deeds not only inform
17 us of the struggles and accomplishments of the APA
18 community in this country, but also what it means to
19 take essential American values and put them into
20 action. I believe Fred Korematsu's valuable
21 experience has something every New Yorker can take
22 away from. Thank you.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you. Next,
24 please.

25

1
2 NADA ALMAVAR: My name is Nada Almavar. I
3 am a member of the Asian-American Student Advocacy
4 Project. I'm a sophomore at Brooklyn Technical High
5 School, and I would like to thank Chairperson Van
6 Bramer for holding this important hearing on
7 Resolution 0792. As someone who is half Asian-
8 American, I never felt like my Asian identify was an
9 important one because I was in America for the
10 majority of my life. I learned about the expeditions
11 of so many bold explorers, war heroes and advocates
12 of social change, and never an Asian-American one.
13 Without learning about the Asian-American history, I
14 would not feel connected to that part of my identity.
15 I didn't know anything about the history of Asian-
16 American like me and I never thought to explore it
17 because they were never mentioned in school meaning I
18 was unaware of the significance of Asian-American
19 figures like Fred Korematsu. Similarly, Asian-
20 Americans in my high school who make up 50% of the
21 population are just as unaware about Asian-American
22 history. I'm sure many students in the New York City
23 Public School system feel the same way. This is why
24 we need to learn about the significance of figures
25 like Fred Korematsu. He's a roll model of what

1 Asian-Americans truly are in America, and what every
2 Asian-American should strive for. He fought against
3 racial profiling and was a civil rights activist his
4 entire life. By incorporating Fred Korematsu in the
5 curriculum, students begin seeing how Asian-
6 Americans, one of the many marginalized communities,
7 has contributed to this country. Learning about
8 American history through multiple perspectives, can
9 help students like me connect with their curriculum,
10 and their racial identity. I wish someone told me
11 that my Asian-American identity was one to be
12 explored and learned to the utmost. I want to learn
13 more about the empowerment and struggles of Asian-
14 Pacific Americans in American history so I can engage
15 in my community like Fred Korematsu did and feel more
16 empowered because I can advocate and create positive
17 change, too. Thank you.

19 ANDY KAI: Good afternoon. My name is
20 Andy Kai, and I am senior at Stuyvesant High School.
21 I'm here as a student leader from the Asian-American
22 Student Advocacy Project, AASAP. We would like to
23 thank Chairperson Van Bramer and the members of the
24 committee for holding this important hearing on
25 Resolution 792. There's just stereotypes of all

1
2 Asian Pacific Americans, APAs or foreigners. Many
3 people assume that we all came from Asia. A common
4 experience many Asian-Americans including myself
5 share if someone asks me where we are really from, in
6 middle school I remember going to the park to play
7 basketball. After playing for a while, one of the
8 people watching came up to me and said Hey, you play
9 pretty well for an Asian. Where are you from? I
10 told him I was from Brooklyn here. (sic) He said, I
11 mean where are you really from? I didn't understand
12 what he meant. He said like are you from Japan,
13 China, Korea? I responded that I was born in
14 Brooklyn, New York and I had never been to Asia
15 before. He looked confused. He had this expectation
16 that I immigrated to the U.S. People don't think
17 that APAs have been in America for long. They have
18 this misconception that APAs are not truly American
19 or rather they're just here in America. I have just
20 had this interaction so many times, I decided to
21 question those that are not always actually American.
22 They refused to accept the answer that I was in
23 Brooklyn, New York. I thought there couldn't be any
24 way that so many people were mistaken like searching
25 out someone who is wrong. However, after I learned

1
2 about what Fred Korematsu did, it became clear to me
3 that APAs are an important part of America. Whenever
4 people hear the term Asian-American, or Japanese-
5 American, they tend to focus on the first part, the
6 non-American part. People often forget or ignore
7 that we're also Americans. Fred Korematsu is an MPA
8 who definitely acted as an American citizen. He did
9 what I think is the most American thing. When these
10 rights are being violated by executive order, he
11 stood up against the unjust rules. Japanese-
12 Americans were being sent to internment camps without
13 a trial. This violated their First Amendment Rights,
14 which says that no person shall be deprived of the
15 life, liberty or property without due process of law.
16 Fred Korematsu's story made me realize that APAs are
17 not only Americans, but also an important part of
18 America. I wish that I had learned about Fred
19 Korematsu earlier. I didn't learn about Fred
20 Korematsu in school. [bell It wasn't until I joined
21 AASAP that I heard Korematsu's story. When I finally
22 did learn about Korematsu, I was surprised by what
23 APAs, APAs have done for this country. I wish Fred
24 Korematsu's story was taught in school so others will

1
2 have the same identity crisis I did. Thank you all
3 again fro holding this hearing.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you. Next,
5 please.

6 SHAHANA ABDEEN: (coughs) Good afternoon.
7 My name is Shahana Abdeen and I am a Junior at High
8 School for Construction Trades, Engineering and
9 Architecture. I'm here as a representative from
10 AASAP, and I would like to thank the Committee Chair
11 and the Committee for holding this hearing on
12 Resolution 0792. I am a Muslim-Bangladeshi-American.
13 I am an American, and no matter what others may say
14 or assume, I will always remain an American. Many
15 people are discriminated against to their beliefs,
16 race and/or ethnic background which negatively
17 impacts them and leaves them to feel fearful and
18 helpless as if they are not accepted by their fellow
19 citizens. Knowing you are an American and feeling
20 like an—like an outcast in your own country is
21 terrible. Korematsu like many minorities fought a
22 need to fit in to be perceived as more American. At
23 one point he underwent eye surgery—eye surgery to
24 look less foreign. He also took upon a new identify
25 by changing his name and pretending to be of another

1 ethnic background. Korematsu, however, eventually
2 realized that he was proud of the ethnic-ethnicity
3 and accepted it with pride. He sets a great example
4 for others. He shows that one should be proud of who
5 they are, that they should not change themselves in
6 order to fit in and to please others. Only a portion
7 of minorities stand up for their rights because the
8 majority don't feel like they fit in. They don't
9 feel like they have a say in their country, causing a
10 lack of representation, and the few that do take a
11 stand and try to make a difference are under-
12 represented, and by the—and by the media and the
13 education system. There have been many biases this
14 past year towards minorities especially Muslims with
15 the creation of the Muslim ban. Being banned from
16 the country due to beliefs is a clear violation of
17 the Constitution and the foundation of America. It
18 is a difficult time for minorities. They need to be
19 provided with hope. They need to be shown that they
20 belong and that they are accepted. Celebrating and
21 honoring Fred Korematsu would be a great way to
22 provide hope not only to Japanese-Americans, but all
23 communities. He is a nationally rights hero—a
24 national-national civil rights hero, who supported
25

1
2 and stood up for Japanese-Americans when they were
3 being incarcerated during World War II. He also
4 stood up for the rights of many others. After 9/11,
5 many Muslims were being mistreated. [bell] He spoke
6 out against this mistreatment. For example, in 2004,
7 a Muslim-American was being held in solitary
8 confinement without trial so he filed a brief with
9 the Supreme Court. With everything that is going on,
10 today, it is imperative to showcase and celebrate a
11 person who helps, accepts and advocates for everyone
12 rather than discriminates against us, and sees us as
13 inferior. Korematsu is a great example of a person
14 who stands up for the rights of all Americans, and it
15 is crucial especially to have--right now to have good
16 role models and examples that provide hope for all
17 communities. Thank you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you and
19 we're going to have the next group of students coming
20 up. [background comment] Steve Levin--Council Member
21 Steve Levin has joined us as well. Thank you,
22 Council Member Levin. [background comments, pause]

23 JIMMY CHAN: Good afternoon. My name is
24 Jimmy Chan. I'm a member from Asian--Asian-
25 Americans Student Advocacy Project, AASAP. I want to

1
2 thank Committee Chair Van Bramer, and members of
3 Committee on Cultural Affairs to hold this important
4 hearing on Resolution 792. I'm—I am English Language
5 Learner and a current senior in the International
6 High School at La Guardia Community College, which is
7 in District—District 36. To help Fred Korematsu Day
8 can help us to build a connection to this country,
9 encourage us to learn, to be self-counselors and to
10 make us think well represented while we're part of
11 this country. Most of the students in my high school
12 and in my neighborhood are new immigrants who are
13 English Language Learners. We don't speak English
14 very well. We feel that we are not connected to this
15 country, and many of us are free to speak English in
16 public. We're even afraid to order food in McDonald.
17 In New York State, the overall high school graduation
18 rate is about 78%, but for English Language Learners,
19 it's only 37%. When I studied history in my school,
20 I didn't learn anything about Asian-American history.
21 I didn't know there is something called Asian-
22 American history. The only time I learned something
23 about Asian-America is in my English class. We
24 learned about Japanese-American Concentration Camps.
25 We read two asco—we read two articles and some

1
2 pictures. We go through this very quickly without
3 deeper discussion about the issue, but Asian-American
4 has deeper roots in this country just like Fred
5 Korematsu's story. Before I joined ASAAP, I didn't
6 know anything about him, who he is, what he did and
7 why he is important, but now he has become my role
8 model. His suit—his spirit is now free power, the
9 courage to tell if something is not right really in
10 this part of me. Now, I'm not afraid to speak in
11 public and I feel the connection to this country, and
12 I'm a part of this country. Thank you again for
13 holding this important hearing, and giving me this
14 opportunity to testify.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Next.

16 LERIA OH: Hello, everyone. My name is
17 Leria (sp?) Oh. I was born in China, and I came here
18 one year ago. I am a current sophomore in the High
19 School of Language and Innovation in the Bronx. I am
20 also a youth leader of Asian ministers (sic) at the
21 World Project AASAP. Thank you again Committee Chair
22 Van Bramer and the members of the Committee of
23 Cultural Affairs for holding hearing on Resolution
24 792 so that I have this opportunity to testify for
25 Fred Korematsu. My high school is a diverse school

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2 for new immigrants. The majority of my school are
3 Latino. In fact, Asian-Americans like me are the
4 minority in my school and classmates think I am smart
5 and ushers know everything. If I am confused about
6 questions, they will be very surprised. Every time
7 when we mention to China or other Eastern Asian
8 countries, my classmates will look at me and they
9 usually will say Ching-Chong to make fun of me. It
10 makes me so upset and angry. I try to ignore them,
11 but you can hear them. Even when I'm not in the
12 school, I feel experiencing things. This makes me
13 very uncomfortable. In the subway, a group of
14 children talked about where I am from in front of me
15 loudly. They said something rude about my community
16 to their friends, and I heard those. I want to get
17 rid of this stereotype and I want to say I'm not you,
18 minority. I think this frustration happens in many
19 Asian-Americans life because people don't know enough
20 about our community. Having Fred Korematsu Day on
21 January 30th will make more and more students,
22 children and adults be knowledgeable about the
23 diverse culture in America. In addition, starting
24 Asian-American street helps people better understand
25 and to respect each other's community. Learning

1
2 about the history [bell] of Fred Korematsu enforce
3 people that we are also part of America. Also, there
4 will be less bullying on the refugees (sic) on there.
5 Thank you again for holding this hearing.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
7 much for your very powerful testimony. Did you say
8 you came from China one year ago?

9 LERIA OH: Yeah.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Wow, that's
11 amazing and you're already here at City Hall.

12 LERIA OH: Thank you. [laughter]

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: The White House
14 cannot be far behind. Thank you and—and hearing your
15 testimony was, of course, somewhat painful to hear
16 some of the experiences that you're having, but I
17 want to say thank you for telling the story, sharing
18 the story, and—and for being here. It's very, very
19 powerful that you're here.

20 LERIA OH: Thank you so much.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Next.

22 SOPHIA: Good afternoon, everyone. My
23 name is Fu Wijen (sp?) You can call me Sophia. I'm a
24 member of Asian-American Student Advocacy Project,
25 AASAP and a junior in Manhattan/ Hunter Science High

1 School, which is represented by Council Member Helen
2 Rosenthal. I would like to thank Committee Chair Van
3 Bramer, and members of the Committee of Cultural
4 Affairs for holding this important hearing on
5 Resolution 792. I immigrated here one year and a
6 half ago from China. At first I didn't consider
7 myself as part of America especially when most
8 immigrants around me also see ourselves as
9 foreigners, but we're not so many Asian-Pacific
10 Americans or APA or indifferent about most social
11 issues. This strongly conflicted with my strong
12 sense of social responsibility that teenagers should
13 have. I realized why there is no participation of
14 APA in politics. Even though APA have long term
15 lived in America. We should have role model to look
16 up to. After learning about Fred Korematsu's
17 inspiring experience of fighting for civil rights in
18 hard conditions, I could believe that I am a part of
19 America. I became more aware of that. I have civil
20 rights like others in a country, and I should always
21 speak out like any-for any other foreigners instead
22 of being silent. Additionally, in all of time in
23 high school, which is very diverse, I noticed that my
24 teacher never talk about APA history, and there were
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1
2 no materials to attribute it on. Sometimes I feel
3 more left out, and I know that there are so many APA
4 students really missing the way.(sic) I truly
5 believe that we cannot fully understand American
6 history without learning about APA history because it
7 is vital since we were rooted here for hundreds of
8 years, and took part in constructing this country.
9 Establishing a Fred Korematsu Day isn't a bridge
10 between APA communities and other ethnic groups
11 because knowing the date will make people to talk and
12 learn more about APA culture. As only one student
13 who will in future I could involve cosmopolitan, it
14 is critical to inform that that it's always backed of
15 different cultures. [bell] Establishing a Fred T.
16 Korematsu Day it not just help the APA community, but
17 all New Yorkers can owe for—upon the courage and the
18 civil rights that we should have in order to avoid
19 more fictitious (sic) history. Thank you all again
20 for having the hearing. Thanks.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
22 much all three of you. I'm proud to—to have you here
23 and thrilled with your participation. Incredibly
24 impressive panel. Council Member Dromm, do you have
25 anything to add?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: No, just to say
3 that I am always impressed by AASAP. They do a
4 wonderful job connecting the youth with their
5 history, and getting them involved in City Council
6 hearings, and getting them to know city government.
7 So, thank you to all of the AASAP youth who were here
8 today.

9 SOPHIA: Thank you so much.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and
11 now we have two more panels. Looks like Kim Ema
12 (sp?) Tokeshi Foramodo (sp?). I think I'm saying
13 that right, and Elizabeth Ouyang. Those three and
14 then there's one final panel after that of three.
15 [background comment, pause]

16 KIM EMA: My name is Kim Ema. I'm a
17 fourth generation Japanese-American. I just kicked
18 my father out of my seat. He didn't hear correctly.
19 He's on the next panel.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay.

21 KIM EMA: And I—he was a child in the
22 camps. So, I'm a daughter or of a child of the
23 camps.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Would you like
25 to testify together? Is that?

1
2 KIM EMA: Oh, it's okay.

3 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay.

4 KIM EMA: Okay. I am here on behalf of
5 the New York Day of Remembrance Committee. First of
6 all, we would like to thank you so much for having
7 this hearing today. The New York Day of Remembrance
8 Committee was a part of bringing the Commission on
9 Wartime Relocation of Civilians to New York in 1981
10 to hear the testimony of Japanese-Americans from the
11 West Coast, but also Japanese-Americans New Yorkers
12 who were wrongfully imprisoned during World War II in
13 their homes and on—and on—at Ellis Island. And the
14 findings of that commission, which the hearings were
15 nationwide was published in a report, *Personal*
16 *Justice Denied*, and in that report the causes of this
17 chapter of history were characterized as being caused
18 by racism, war hysteria and the failure of political
19 leadership. New York City in many areas has been
20 role model to the world as a city that embraces a
21 civil society, and though Mayor La Guardia posed the
22 resettlement of Japanese-Americans in New York City
23 after World War II, our city is and always has been a
24 beacon in a time—in times that need many lights to
25 shine fiercely against the darkness of hate and

1
2 bigotry. Seventy-five years ago—75 years since the
3 Japanese-American incarceration when we find
4 political surrogates of the Trump Administration
5 calling for Muslim registries, and when ICE raids are
6 being conducted on immigrant communities, we must
7 stop to consider the parallels to World War II when
8 Japanese-Americans were singled out, registered,
9 rounded up, stripped of their rights, and targeted
10 with similarly racially—racially motivated policies.
11 Our community [bell] knows well the dangers of
12 racism, war hysteria and the failure of political
13 leadership. I just want to add that Mr. Korematsu is
14 a national hero for standing up to injustice in his
15 time, and his story of resistance of courage resonate
16 hope and are the cause for celebration and honest
17 reflection in a time when we all need to reflect.
18 Thank you so much.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.
20 Next.

21 TOKESHI FORAMODO: My name is Tokeshi
22 (sp?) Foiamodo.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Is the
24 microphone on? The little red light? There you go.

25

1
2 TOKESHI FORAMODO: Thank you. My name is
3 Tokeshi Foramodo, and I was born in Tule Lake
4 Segregation Center. I thought it was appropriate to
5 wear my combat uniform that I wore 50 years ago in
6 1970-71. Our Chief-Commander in Chief was nursing
7 his wounds first, but my experience is a little bit
8 different. We went back to Japan, and we were told
9 never to come back again because they are not. We
10 came back. It took us four years one by one. My
11 parents could not come in-come back because
12 automatically they lost their citizenship, but us
13 kids we had it, and we came back joining the American
14 community. I would like to say that patriotism has
15 many forms depending the country or like Fred
16 Korematsu who believe in the Constitution. That is
17 patriotism. I want to read a letter that I got form
18 President Clinton, an apology letter. So uncanny. It
19 is so similar to what's happening today. Just part
20 because I'm given a time limitation.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Why don't you go
22 ahead and read the whole letter.

23 TOKESHI FORAMODO: Okay. White House,
24 Washington, October 1, 1993. Over 50 years the
25 United States Government unjustly interned, evacuated

1 or relocated you and many other Japanese-Americans.
2 Today, on behalf of your fellow Americans, I offer a
3 sincere apology to you for actions that unfairly
4 denied Japanese-Americans and their families
5 fundamental deportation during World War II. In
6 passing the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, we
7 acknowledge the wrongs that have passed, and offer
8 redress to those who endured such great injustice.
9 In retrospect understand that the nation's actions
10 were rooted basically in racial discrimination and
11 wartime hysteria, and lack of political leadership.
12 We definitely lack political leadership today. We
13 must learn from the past and dedicate ourselves as a
14 nation to remove the scourge of authority in lieu of
15 freedom so that we can heal in peace in the future,
16 with liberty and justice for all. You and your
17 family have aspirations for the future. We must
18 preserve, and not—don't let it for the masses years
19 in prison or our interment for years, and let that be
20 the last one that we must preserve our Constitution.
21 Thank you very much. [applause]

22
23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you for
24 being here. Thank you for your service. Thank you
25 for your story and for sharing your passionate

1
2 statements with us, and I can assure you that this
3 City Council will-will pass this resolution that we
4 support everything behind it and, you know, may it go
5 a long way towards informing the-the-the head of our
6 government right now in-in Washington who may have
7 less appreciation for all of this, but thank you very
8 much and last but not least on this panel.

9 ELIZABETH OUYANG: I support January 30th
10 the day Fred T. Korematsu was born as Fred T.
11 Korematsu Day. Today is my birthday, and of the 57
12 birthdays I've celebrated today is the most
13 meaningful one to celebrate my freedom and civil
14 liberties by being here today. For the past 30
15 years, I have been a civil rights attorney, and for
16 the past 16 years, I have taught at Columbia and New
17 York Universities. I teach a pre-law course,
18 Constitution and Communities of Color, and a course
19 on post-9/11 policies impacting immigrants.
20 Korematsu versus United States is a landmark Supreme
21 Court case we cover each year along with Judge
22 Patel's decision years later, overturning his wartime
23 conviction. Judge Patel stated: As a legal
24 precedent, it is now recognized as having very
25 limited application. Unfortunately, since September

1 11, 2011–2001, the misguided policies of exclusion,
2 removal, and detention based on discriminating
3 identifiers have only become more intensified in the
4 past 16 years. What was rampant racial and ethnic
5 profiling of Japanese-Americans during World War II
6 is rampant and relenting religious and ethnic
7 profiling of Arabs, Muslims and South Asians today.
8 Our country needs to be reminded of the human
9 consequences of these vagrant, unconstitutional
10 atrocities especially now. The remaining survivors
11 of Japanese-American internment, are a dying
12 generation. Declaring January 30th Fred Tl Korematsu
13 Day is a permanent reminder that in times of war or
14 declared military necessity, our institutions must be
15 vigilant in protecting Constitutional guarantees, and
16 our young children must have heroes that look like
17 Fred Korematsu. Earlier this month, I was giving a
18 talk to fifth graders at PS 130 on what legacy means.
19 To prepare, I asked my eight-year-old nephew Timothy
20 of famous people he knew that he had died. He cited
21 Martin Luther King, Amelia Earhart and George
22 Washington. When I asked him about famous Asian-
23 Americans who had died, Timothy said he didn't know
24 any. Having a day specifically set aside to honor
25

1
2 Korematsu, will cause these young people to ask who
3 was he? And Fred Korematsu is a role model for all.
4 By memorializing January 30th as Fred T. Korematsu
5 Day, it will serve as a reminder that persons of
6 Asian ancestry can be American. It will be a
7 reminder that resistance to unlawful policies that
8 defy our Constitution's guarantees of equality and
9 due process is our civic duty, and it will be an
10 unequivocal reaffirmation that New York City [bell]
11 whose Mayor at the time did not want released
12 Japanese Internees to relocate to the Big Apple
13 welcomes all ethnicities, including persons of
14 Japanese ancestry. Thank you, Council Member Dromm
15 and Chairman Van Bramer, and we hope that this—you
16 will Tokeshi it to a committee vote as soon as
17 possible so on January 30th, 2018 we can celebrate
18 Fred T. Korematsu Day.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
20 much and happy birthday.

21 ELIZABETH OUYANG: Thank you to you.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You got extra
23 time because it's your birthday.

24 ELIZABETH OUYANG: I took it.
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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: As my-my gift

[laughs] And Mr. Foramodo, I-I took the liberty of reading the rest of your-your testimony and some of your life story in here, which you didn't get a chance to say, but it's incredible. Thank you so much. Thank you to this panel, and I will, in fact, call our father now. [laughs] Mr. Ema who came up earlier now would be the appropriate time, and I think it's Joseph. What's that?

MALE SPEAKER: Pidoriano.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's it, Pidoriano. Great. It doesn't look like that on the paper, but I'm going to trust you because it's your last name. Come up to the panel, and I think this is the last person who's registered. [background comment] Fair enough, fair enough. So, Tony Choi. Yes. You got right up when I said your name. Okay and I think that's it for the testimony. So, why don't we hear from Mr. Ema first and out of respect and then the two of you can go after that.

KIMCHI IMAYANAGITA: [off mic] My name is-[on mic] My name is Kimchi Imayanagita. At four years of age I was incarcerated in Minidoka, Block 36, Barrack 6, Room D. That's just impressed in my

1
2 mind, 36-6-D. Now, I am the only one left in my
3 family with the camp experience and at four years of
4 age I wondered what could I say, but it turns out
5 that no one else in my family is left except me.
6 Several years ago I went to Minsk in Belarus. I was
7 with a Jewish-American group who visited the
8 Holocaust sites, and at one of the sites they
9 mentioned in the spring of 1942 on the path we were
10 standing, they had Tokeshi Jews to their death. Now,
11 I'm wondering what this would have to do with me.
12 And then someone asked me about that, and what
13 happened was a I had a memory, and the memory in that
14 same year in the same spring, in Seattle on a cold
15 and dark day, I remember being on a busing going to
16 camp. Now, for a four-year-old, there's nothing you
17 could say or articulate except feeling. On that very
18 day [bell] I remember fear, and anxiety. Now, you
19 could say the child can imagine this, but I had the
20 recurrent nightmares throughout my childhood of that
21 very day. So, my testimony is that of a four-year-
22 old child saying that this injustice shouldn't go
23 unspoken. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
25 much. Why don't we go to the left there? Yep.

1

2

TONY CHOI: Yeah.

3

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, I sorry.

4

[laughs]

5

TONY CHOI: To his left, okay?

6

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, to Mr.

7

Ema's right.

8

TONY CHOI: Okay.

9

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's you.

10

TONY CHOI: Yes. Good afternoon. My name

11

is Tony Choi, and I am the organizer for 18 Million

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Rising.org and 18 Million Rising.org is an Asian-is

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an organization that brings Asian-Americans

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communities together online and offline to reimagine

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Asian-Americans identify with nuanced specificity and

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power and we use technology and popular culture to

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develop new ways for Asian-Americans and our allies

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to collaborate and create new ways of being and

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transform the world around us. And because of our

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emphasis on connecting young Asian-Americans to our

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heritage and Social movements, we've long held Fred

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T. Korematsu in high esteem as an ancestors who's

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worked speaking out against injustice, provides

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inspiration as we grapple with our own generation

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challenges. Mr. Korematsu's life from his beginnings

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2 as the son of Japanese immigrants ran a plant nursery
3 to joining his peers as one of the best known
4 individuals to resist the wartime incarceration of
5 Japanese Americans under the Executive Order 9066.
6 It's serves as a powerful reminder that ordinary
7 people are capable of extraordinary courage, and his
8 commitment to speaking out against government
9 profiling against members of other racial, ethnic and
10 religious groups well into his 80s makes him a
11 lifelong role model for all those who know the fight
12 for civil and human rights is an enduring struggle.
13 In these times examples like Mr. Korematsu are
14 especially important for every immigrant in the city
15 who feels threatened by xenophobic rhetoric, every
16 Muslim in the city who worries about Islamophobic
17 violence, every black person in the city who fears a
18 chance deadly police encounter, Mr. Korematsu's life
19 story gives strength and hope. But the actions of
20 individuals speaking out in the face of prejudice and
21 profiling can and do make a difference for all of us.
22 Fred T. Korematsu Day is a celebration of a man who
23 did not give up in the face of adversity because he
24 know his cause was just. It's an opportunity for all
25 of us not just Japanese Americans and not just Asian-

1
2 Americans to honor the work of this freedom fighter,
3 and those who worked them, and his life long struggle
4 for equal protection under the law. [bell] And Fred
5 T. Korematsu Day—I'm going to skip ahead a paragraph.
6 I—I look forward to celebrating Fred T. Korematsu Day
7 on a personal note because, you know, as a gay DACA
8 recipient it's, I look up to figures like Fred T.
9 Korematsu, Edith Windsor, those who came before us
10 because they serve as powerful examples of where we
11 can go, and who we are, and I would like to extend my
12 thanks to the Cultural Affairs Committee for—to bring
13 Mr. Korematsu's life and story into the more
14 attention of more New Yorkers, and yeah, I hope to
15 celebrate Fred T. Korematsu Day with you all in 2018.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I think you'll
17 get that opportunity, but thank you so much for your
18 testimony, and I think last but not least—Hi.

19 MALE SPEAKER: Good afternoon, everybody.
20 Good afternoon, Councilman Van Bramer and the
21 wonderful people in this Council. Good afternoon
22 everybody. I want to talk to you about this. I
23 understand your issue with regard to Mr. Korematsu.
24 I understand his bravery, his courage, his strength,
25 his fortitude. However, he's not the only one who

1 had that within him. I understand that Asian-
2 Americans have suffered from repression during World
3 War II. However, we cannot just agree—we can agree
4 that all immigrants have suffered from a form of
5 oppression. When the Irish immigrants came here
6 back in the mid to late 1800s, they were repressed,
7 and they suffered from discrimination. They were
8 discriminated against on the jobs, and furthermore,
9 their churches were burned down. I'm sure if you
10 look back in history, that happened. Furthermore,
11 when the Italian immigrants came here, they were
12 mistreated, too. They were called very derogatory
13 names, which I'm not going to say here, because they
14 would not be appropriate here. Furthermore, when
15 Hispanic immigrants came here, they suffered from
16 labor repression. So, what I'm trying to get at is
17 this: Every group has suffered some form of
18 discrimination, racism, bigotry, hatred, marg-like
19 they were marginalized, charted, all these other like
20 however you could describe it, it's all the same
21 thing, they're repressed. And I think we should name
22 instead of after just one person specifically while
23 he was a great model—model like I've said, we should
24 name it after all immigrants who suffered from
25

1
2 repression, and all figures who led the charge in
3 ending repression or discrimination against
4 immigrants. Would you be in agreement with that,
5 Council Member Van Bramer and the rest of the panel?

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Generally
7 speaking, we ask the questions, but you have 16 more
8 seconds. So, I would say that if you're asking me--

9 MALE SPEAKER: Would you be in agreement
10 of naming it after all immigrants instead of just one
11 specific person. While he was a great--a great
12 fighter for Asian-Americans, each immigrant group
13 suffered some form of repression, interment [bell].

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: The answer to
15 your question is no I do not agree with you. I
16 believe that we should name this day after Fred T.
17 Korematsu, which was the purpose of our hearing.

18 MALE SPEAKER: Oh, I understand that.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, thank you
20 very much for your input. That concludes the
21 testimony for the hearing.

22 MALE SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Council Member
24 Dromm, would you like to say anything in closing?

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: You know, as an
3 Irish-American myself and as the Chair of the Irish
4 Caucus, I am concerned about your invoking the Irish
5 experience in opposition to the naming of Fred
6 Korematsu Day. It's specifically because of the—I'll
7 get emotional. Because of the struggle of the Irish
8 people and as a gay person, that I think naming Fred
9 Korematsu Day is so vitally important because I can
10 identify because of the discrimination that my people
11 faced, and as a gay man, and that's why it's so
12 important to have Fred Korematsu Day. We need to
13 have Fred's story told in every single school in New
14 York City, and I will do everything humanly possible—
15 -

16 MALE SPEAKER: [interposing] The fight
17 here is bad. (sic)

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: To make that
19 happen.

20 MALE SPEAKER: [interposing] The story
21 you hold. (sic)

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, I—I
23 think [applause] I—I think we will excuse this panel,
24 and thank every one for their testimony and just say
25 that not only in—in honor of Fred Korematsu but also

1 anyone who is here today who—who heard the testimony
2 of Mr. Foramodo and Mr. Ema and other agree that it
3 was incredibly powerful and moving experience and
4 obviously this is the right thing to do on so many
5 different levels, and—and but small gesture, but a
6 powerful one at that. So, with that, I want to thank
7 every person who's been here today. Thank Council
8 Member Dromm for sponsoring the resolution, and we
9 will convene again as a—as a committee to vote on
10 this before it goes to the full City Council for a
11 vote, but I would fully expect that we will vote in
12 favor of this resolution very soon. So, with that,
13 thank you all very much. This hearing is now
14 adjourned.
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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 October 30, 2017