



New York City Council

Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations

**Oversight – Censorship in the Arts and Cultural Sector**

**Thursday, November 20, 2025, 10:00AM | 250 Broadway - 8th Floor - Hearing Room 2**

**Testimony Presented by NYC Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Laurie Cumbo**

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Good morning, Chair Bottcher and members of the committee. I am Laurie Cumbo, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, here to testify regarding today's topic: Censorship in the Arts and Cultural Sector.

Creative free expression is foundational to our city and who we are as New Yorkers. We are a city of artists, creators, thinkers, strivers, and dreamers. The art forms that were born here and went on to reshape the world, the performances that have attracted audiences since the earliest days of our city, the arts education that enriches young people's lives, the cultural hubs that are pillars of our economy and our communities: this all relies on a fundamental belief in the right to creative freedom and free expression. The world's first children's museum was established right here in Brooklyn. Hip hop was born in the Bronx. Countless arts movements have developed in the arts districts of Manhattan. Queens and Staten Island both incubate artists and movements from all over the world. Any threat to this is a threat to what makes our city great. So we thank you, Chair Bottcher, for inviting us to speak today on this urgent topic.

For nearly 50 years, the Department of Cultural Affairs has played a crucial role in supporting our city's vast, vibrant creative life. At present, the agency provides nearly \$300 million in expense funding to more than 1,100 cultural nonprofits across the city. This is the largest-ever city allocation for DCLA, supporting the full breadth of creative expression found in our communities, and it is a testament to the Mayor's and the City Council's recognition of the pivotal role that art and culture play.

One defining characteristic of DCLA's support for culture is our deep institutional respect for the free curatorial and programmatic decision-making of the private nonprofits we fund. For our Cultural Development Fund, organizations propose public programming in their application materials, which are reviewed by peer panels. Panels review applications with an eye to public service, to organizational accountability, and the quality of the project. Panels don't consider content, and the agency never reviews, shapes, or censors the content of funded programs. For the Cultural Institutions Group, we

provide annual subsidies but similarly have no role in determining their curatorial or programmatic choices. In a democratic society built on the core value of free creative expression, we believe this time-tested balance of public support without government interference in creative decisions represents the best way forward for our arts community.

The enormous variety of programs and groups we fund attests to our commitment to supporting cultural expression in all of the many diverse forms it takes across our city. We support the Drag Queen Story Hour. We support theaters that put on cutting-edge work from around the world, like the Public's presentation of *The Ally* last year – a play that explored the Israel / Palestine conflict, police brutality, and more in deeply personal ways. We also support children's museums, arts education, and public art in all five boroughs. We recently expanded the city's Cultural Institutions Group to include new organizations like *Pregones / Puerto Rican Traveling Theater*, and cut the ribbon on a new home for the Studio Museum in Harlem just last week. We work with the Council to fund the Cultural Immigrant Initiative and the Coalition of Theatres of Color. The 1,100 groups we support uplift the voices, history, and cultures of New Yorkers from every discipline, belief, and background. And, crucially: we don't endorse, control, or censor the content of any of this. We strive to be impartial supporters of cultural dialogue, public access, and excellence in programming. It is this approach that has helped make our city the cultural capital of the world.

While we're proud of this work and this record, we understand that our cultural sector is facing tremendous challenges right now. Trends in individual giving, philanthropic support, and audience habits are upending nonprofit business models. Shifts in federal priorities are putting millions of dollars in cultural support at risk for the city. According to a recent report from the city's Independent Budget Office, federal funds from the NEA, NEH, and IMLS to NYC arts groups totaled \$32 million awarded in 2024. This is a huge amount of support that groups can't afford to lose right now. We'll continue to monitor this situation closely.

With so many mixed and confusing signals coming from the federal administration, we have seen that many groups feel pressure to self-censor, to avoid risking their federal support. This is deeply troubling, and we will continue to monitor the situation and listen to the needs of our cultural constituents closely. The most important thing we can do is reaffirm our support for cultural programming in its full diversity.

We also have witnessed many instances of groups struggling to navigate hot-button issues, most notably the conflict between Israel and Palestine. One organization may have to navigate conflicting



calls from different constituencies, with boards, staff, audiences, or funders falling on one side of an issue or another. These are difficult issues to navigate, and they're something that groups have to do thoughtfully and with great care. But we're here to support our grantees as they work to provide irreplaceable spaces for dialogue, connections, and inspiration. It's somewhat of a paradox: the times we need our artists and our cultural organizations the most are also the times that test and strain our ability to create space for civic dialogue. It won't be easy – but we're confident in our sector's ability to continue to do their work, and we'll be with them every step of the way.

Federal policy regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion is another issue groups are struggling to navigate. While we're proud of our city's strides in making cultural funding and access more equitable than ever before, DEI programs have been in the crosshairs of the federal government. In a city like New York, which is home to the most diverse communities on the globe, focusing on diversity is not an option. If you want to engage with, reflect, and employ our city's residents – by definition, that means you must foster diverse staff, leadership, and audiences. In New York, diversity is not just a moral imperative – it's good business.

I have been dealing with these issues on a very personal level for decades. When I was the executive director of MoCADA, we put on an exhibition with artwork by Dread Scott. The piece tackled police brutality head on in a very visceral way. One of the police unions came out against the exhibition, and local press helped create a major controversy for our small arts organization. At the time, I invited Eric Adams – then a police captain – to see the show. He didn't agree with the content, but he defended our right to present the work and provide space for dialogue. So as commissioner, I see and understand what our groups are going through – and how much it means to have support for putting on daring work.

We're committed to working with the Council to rise to this moment and continue supporting the ability of our cultural community to take the risks necessary to foster a vibrant, engaged creative life for our city. I thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I'm happy to answer any questions you have.

**Senator Andrew Lang**  
Senate District 16  
2205 Minnesota Senate Building  
95 University Ave West  
St. Paul, MN 55115-1606

November 11, 2025

**RE: Support for the preservation efforts of the  
NY Coalition to Save the SS United States**

To the New York City Council,

I am writing in support of a proposal brought forth by: New York Coalition to Save the SS United States supporter Scott S. Brar, Minnesota State Senator Steve Cwodzinski, and myself.

The measure urges the President of the United States, the Executive Director of the Maritime Administration of the United States Department of Transportation, and the Congress of the United States, to purchase the SS United States, which is designated as a national landmark from Okaloosa County, Florida. Then, restore the ship's exterior to its full original condition and outfit the interior with spaces including, but not limited to, a museum celebrating US maritime and engineering history, space dedicated to the celebration of our veterans, dedicated community spaces inspired by the original fittings, etc. as soon as is practicable, using funds transferred from the United States Department of Defense, and name the *SS United States* the official flagship of our nation. A similar resolution advocating for the preservation of the vessel was originally introduced in the Oregon State Senate as SJMO-10A by Sen. Noah Robinson.

The SS United States, built in 1950 and 1951 in partnership with our military, was designed by American naval architect William Francis Gibbs following the conclusion of World War II, during which conflict Gibbs and his company had designed more than 70 percent of all American ships deployed; and at 990 feet in length, the SS United States is the largest ocean liner ever built entirely in this country - with elements sourced from every state in the union at the time of its construction; and remains one of our nation's finest engineering marvels, with groundbreaking innovations in steam propulsion, hull form, fire safety and damage control and still holds the Blue Riband award for the highest average speed crossing the Atlantic Ocean in either direction, a record she set on her maiden voyage in July 1952.

The NY Coalition has been provided with a location for the ship via a board member who owns the Gowanus GBX terminal in New York. Planning has begun on transforming the location in anticipation of the ship's requisition. The Coalition is ready to work with the U.S. government to set up a static display of the ship meant to celebrate one of our nation's greatest engineering marvels and encourage the revitalization of our US maritime sector in celebration of the country's 250th anniversary and beyond.

Sincerely,

Andrew Lang  
State Senator  
District 16

**From:** [New York City Council](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Thu, Nov 20 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Organizations  
**Date:** Saturday, November 15, 2025 7:16:13 PM  
**Attachments:** [Urgent-Preservation-of-the-SS-United-States.pdf](#)

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Attendee name (Zoom name): Toniann

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Hearing: Thu, Nov 20 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Organizations

Subject of testimony: Preventing the Destruction and Reefing of a National Historic Landmark called the SS United States

Organization: Other

Organization if "Other": The New York Coalition to Save the SS United States

If a testimony was uploaded, it will be in the attachments.

# TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS Regarding the Urgent Preservation of the SS United States

November 11, 2025

## Preventing the Destruction and Reefing of a National Historic Landmark

### I. Introduction: The Urgent Call to Save America's Flagship

Chair and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today on a matter of profound national significance: the fate of the SS United States. We are not here simply discussing a piece of old hardware; we are discussing a defining monument of American ingenuity, currently facing demolition by decree.

The plan before us—the calculated decision by Okaloosa County, Florida, in coordination with the SS United States Conservancy, to sink this irreplaceable vessel by 2026 and turn her into an artificial reef—is a historical tragedy, an environmental gamble, and, potentially, an illegal act.

We must recognize that the destruction of the SS United States would represent a failure of our collective cultural stewardship. She is not Florida's responsibility alone; she is America's. And we, the preservationists, historians, and citizens who cherish our maritime heritage, urge this Committee to use its influence to halt this misguided scheme and champion her preservation right here in the great port of New York City.

### II. The Legacy of the "Big U": Speed, Symbolism, and the Cold War

The SS United States, launched in the early 1950s, represents the zenith of American postwar ambition. Designed by the visionary William Francis Gibbs, she was constructed as part of a joint venture between the U.S. Navy and the Maritime Administration.

She is, to this day, the largest liner ever built entirely in the United States, and she holds the uncontested record for the fastest Atlantic crossing—a speed trial trophy she secured on her maiden voyage and has never relinquished.

From 1952 until 1969, the "Big U" served as a floating symbol of American power and elegance, transporting heads of state, Hollywood celebrities, and countless immigrants seeking a new life. But her true strategic importance lay in her dual-use design. She was a crucial asset during the Cold War, secretly designed to be converted into a high-speed troop transport capable of moving 15,000 personnel in the event of conflict—a key piece of American maritime excellence and military readiness that defined an era.

When mass air travel rendered transatlantic liners obsolete, she was withdrawn. For decades, she has languished, awaiting a restoration that never materialized, held now in a limbo that threatens to end her story not with a revival, but with a toxic underwater burial.

### III. The Environmental Reckoning: Why Reefing is Reckless

The argument that sinking the SS United States provides a beneficial artificial reef is a dangerous façade. It ignores established environmental hazards built directly into her structure.

It has been publicly documented that the ship's original structure, particularly within areas like the immense ballroom, contains materials coated with Zinc Chromate. This substance is a known carcinogen, highly toxic, and poses a severe threat not only to those who would strip the ship but, critically, to the delicate marine ecosystem Okaloosa County claims it intends to support.

The notion that this massive hull can be thoroughly scrubbed and prepared to be environmentally neutral ignores the depth of the contamination and the inherent risks of submerging a structure of this age and complexity. To deliberately sink a National Historic Landmark loaded with toxic materials into protected waters is not conservation; it is environmental contamination masquerading as tourism development. We have a moral obligation to protect our oceans, and that duty prohibits turning our nation's greatest ships into underwater chemical hazards.

### IV. Legal Imperatives and Failed Compliance: The National Register Threat

The proposed sinking is not merely environmentally irresponsible; it directly clashes with established historic preservation laws and judicial precedent.

The SS United States has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) since 1999, and she is recognized nationally as a National Historic Landmark (NHL). This status means she is not simply chattels to be disposed of; she is a federally recognized cultural resource.

The legal framework is clear: an owner of an NRHP-listed property who wishes to destroy or demolish that property must first submit a formal petition for removal from the National Register. This petition requires substantive evidence demonstrating that the property no longer meets the criteria for listing. This process mandates public hearings and federal review, especially if the project involves federal assistance—a process that Okaloosa County and the SS United States Conservancy have demonstrably failed to initiate.

Their failure to follow proper legal procedures before moving forward with a demolition plan—a plan that would illegally destroy a vessel of immense national importance—suggests a deeply flawed and potentially illegal undertaking.

We must also remember Congress's prior intentions regarding this ship's utility:

Public Law 92-296 (1972)

This law expressly authorized the Secretary of Commerce to purchase the SS United States, “as is, where is,” acknowledging the vessel’s inherent value despite her retired status. This was a clear statement that the U.S. government recognized her worth as a national asset, not as expendable scrap.

#### Public Law 94-536 (1976)

This measure further reinforced the ship’s value by amending PL 92-296 to specifically include the allowable use of the SS United States as a floating hotel or other uses in U.S. waters. Congress envisioned a future where she would contribute economically and culturally, remaining afloat and accessible. Sinking her flies directly in the face of this expressed Congressional intent.

#### V. Conclusion: Our Obligation to Preserve

The impending destruction of the SS United States is a test of our commitment to history and environment. We stand at a crucial moment. We can passively watch as this legend is turned into a toxic reef, or we can actively fight for her survival and restoration.

Preservation is not just about nostalgia; it is about creating jobs, educating future generations, and honoring the monumental achievements of our past. The SS United States deserves a new life as a museum, a cultural center, or a centerpiece attraction in a major port city like New York, where millions of visitors and descendants of those she carried can walk her decks once more.

We urge the NYC Council to recognize the immediate threat posed by Okaloosa County’s plans, to acknowledge the legal and environmental violations inherent in the reefing proposal, and to lend your powerful voice to the national effort to save this irreplaceable National Historic Landmark.

Let us stand together. Let us fulfill the promise of her legacy. Let us demand preservation, not poisoning. The time to save America’s Flagship is now.

Thank you.

**TESTIMONY OF MELISSA WEST**  
**DIRECTOR & SENIOR CURATOR, NEWHOUSE CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART**  
**SNUG HARBOR CULTURAL CENTER & BOTANICAL GARDEN**

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL**  
Oversight Hearing of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries  
and International Intergroup Relations  
***CENSORSHIP IN THE ARTS AND CULTURAL SECTOR***  
November 20, 2025

Good morning, Chair Bottcher and members of the Committee. I am Melissa West, Director & Senior Curator of the Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art at Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden in Staten Island. Snug Harbor is one of six members of the Cultural Institutions Group located in our borough, providing essential services to our community. I am providing this testimony today to detail the chilling effect of censorship on our organization and Staten Island's arts community.

For nearly 50 years, the Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art at Snug Harbor has been a leading incubator for bold and innovative art, dedicated to developing and presenting new work in visual art and performance. Through exhibitions, performances, and artist residencies, the Newhouse offers a unique, interdisciplinary environment for artists to take creative risks and explore new dimensions in their work. We focus on developing emerging and underrepresented artists from Staten Island and the NYC metro area.

In 2024 the Newhouse supported 20 projects and approximately 279 artists. Over the past five years, approximately 64% of the artists that we work with self-identify with one or more marginalized groups, including racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual minoritized groups, and persons with disabilities. While Staten Island is home to a burgeoning arts community, venues that support new artistic work are few. As a result, Staten Island's arts participation rates are among the lowest in New York City.

In recognition of our efforts to broaden arts participation in our borough, we were awarded funding in December 2024 from the National Endowment of the Arts to support exhibition development of Tatiana Arocha's *Entre la coca y el oro* [*Between Coca and Gold*], which explores the relationship of Indigenous populations with their environment

and the legacy of colonialism. The NEA withdrew funding while work was already underway, the stated reason being that “funding is being allocated in a new direction in furtherance of the Administration's agenda.” We believe that this withdrawal is an egregious attempt by the federal government to censor the voices of marginalized communities.

We appealed the Endowment’s decision but were unsuccessful. With new federal funding priorities, we were also unable to apply to Humanities New York as they had cancelled their funding cycles in response to cuts at the National Endowment for the Humanities. Not coincidentally, the USDA funding and re grants that underwrite our farm has also been withdrawn. So far, Snug Harbor has been able to manage the cuts to our arts programs however the decline in funding across our organization is not sustainable.

*Entre la coca y el oro* opened at the Newhouse in October, with a companion exhibition *Sensorial Fusion: Relationship Art and Architecture* by the New York Latin American Art Triennial opening last week. These two exhibitions give voice to Staten Island’s large and growing immigrant populations from Central and South America – many from Indigenous populations – while prompting conversations about the intersection of history and the environment in contemporary culture.

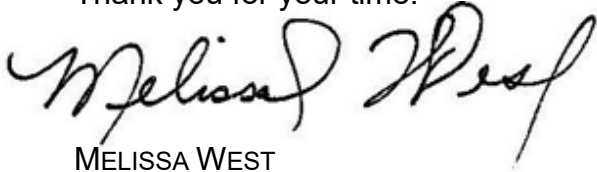
Silencing institutions silences artists. As noted, Staten Island already suffers from a disproportionate lack of access to the arts and artist resources. The erosion of federal funding – and by extension federally supported State regranting programs – deprives our communities of cultural access, engagement, and participation, and the benefits derived thereof. The arts unify communities, improve academic performance, strengthen mental health, and spark creativity and innovation. The arts drive tourism and drive revenue to local businesses.

City Council funding underwrites Snug Harbor’s efforts to create a more culturally connected, thriving community in an underserved area of New York City – programs that are threatened by the rise of censorship, threats to our First Amendment-protected



freedoms, and devaluing the role of the arts in civic life. We urge the Committee and City Council writ large to take all necessary steps to protect artists and the institutions that serve them and to aggressively promote the right to free expression.

Thank you for your time.

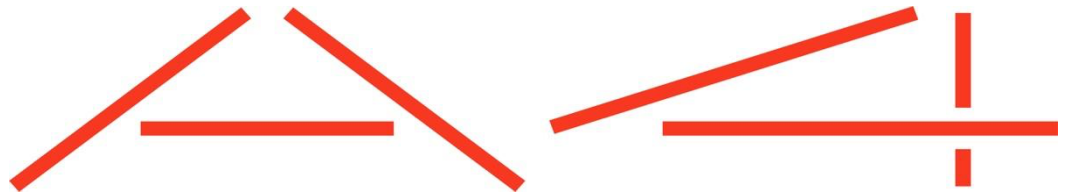
A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Melissa West". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Melissa" and the last name "West" clearly distinguishable.

MELISSA WEST

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New York City Council Committee on Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and  
International Intergroup Relations Hearing Testimony  
November 20, 2025

Thank you Chair Bottcher and Council Members for holding this hearing today.  
My name is Lisa Gold, and I am the Executive Director of the Asian American Arts  
Alliance, a 43-year-old nonprofit serving the AAPI creative community.

Arts and cultural institutions across the city have been directly impacted by shifts in  
policy and the withdrawal of federal government funding due to attacks on diversity,  
equity, and inclusion. And these pressures are leading to a raft of negative consequences  
both large and small—like preemptive compliance with government interests, self-  
censorship, and fear of retribution. As a result, artistic and intellectual freedom is  
currently under serious threat.

The weight of the federal government’s “banned words” that will flag a “closer look” at  
a grant application or the fear of triggering a lawsuit from the false claims act should we  
be lucky enough to receive and accept a govt-funded grant are having an outsized  
impact on what organizations, and thus what artists, present and what ideas are shared.

The AAPI community and the BIPOC community at large are already  
disproportionately impacted by inequitable funding and opportunities. These new  
constraints now effectively close off a source of funding desperately needed by our  
community, not to mention the deeper fear of exposing our constituents to dangers they  
face for simply not creating white, Eurocentric, “acceptable” art.

We’ve had artists ask us to change their bios on our website. We’ve spent undue hours  
internally wrestling with whether we publicly share the names of our artists and grant  
recipients lest they be targeted as a violation of the feds’ “racial preference ban.”  
We aren’t changing our name or who we serve or even our mission statement, which  
literally includes the word **equity**. But we do want assurance from the City Council and  
the DCLA that you will have our backs and that you will stand up for and continue to  
support the incredible and diverse artists who make NYC the cultural capital of the  
world.

Thank you.

**ASIAN  
AMERICAN  
ARTS  
ALLIANCE**

New York City Council Committee on Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and  
International Intergroup Relations Hearing Testimony  
Continued....

Based on the testimony of my peers, I would like to add to my comments:

I would like to recommend that the Council revisit the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund and the categories of support through this grant. Adding “Legal Support” to existing categories would obviate the need for the creation of a new system or a new fund for those organizations who are most vulnerable to government censorship, the elimination of DEI initiatives, and the threat of legal action by the federal government.

Lucy Sexton

Executive Director

New Yorkers for Culture & Arts

[lucy@ny4ca.org](mailto:lucy@ny4ca.org)



November 20, 2025

Testimony for the NYC Council Hearing on Censorship in the  
Arts

10AM

Thank you Chair Bottcher and the Committee for holding this urgent hearing. One thing I will say for authoritarians, they make the case very clearly that art is powerful, and that's why they seek to shut it down and control it. You may remember in the first months of the administration in DC they cancelled a kids show at the Kennedy Center about Finn a shark who liked to wear sparkles. It's tempting to say that's silly, it's not. They

fear it has the power to change kids minds and lives---and it does, and it should!

As the chair referenced, federal censorship has already reached NYC. As groups grapple with the NEA grant requirement, They either take the money and risk legal action for their programming, or turn down the grant. Which also results in a silencing of that work. Because defunding is another form of censorship.---if you want to know numbers, the Independent Budget Office reports that in 2024 NYC cultural groups received \$38M from NEA, NEH, and IMLS. All of that funding is gone or at risk.

And make no mistake this defunding is targeted. The administration intends to erase the heritage and culture of Black, indigenous, and immigrant Americans.

It's not just federal funding. A local cultural group was recently told by a private foundation that their funding would be cut if any of their employees expressed political viewpoints the

foundation disagreed with. Censorship from the top trickles down.

Dance artists in Budapest joined the Culture@3 call yesterday, speaking about their oppression and depression under the regime of Viktor Orban---an authoritarian leader much admired by our president. They said that cultural organizations have been systematically defunded to the point where there are few performances and many thousands of artists have fled the country. We must act now to prevent this from happening to NYC.

So our asks of the City Council are

Be LOUD in your support of the rights of artists and cultural groups---and of all New Yorkers--to their right to free expression of ideas.

Be strong in your fiscal support of NYC's cultural field---with a particular focus on increased support for the Black, Brown and Trans cultural groups under attack.

Stand with the First Amendment Cultural Team on December 15<sup>th</sup>, the anniversary of the signing of the Bill of Rights and its First Amendment, which was drafted a few blocks away at Federal Hall.

We will be doing a public event which we invite you to as we say the First Amendment was born in our city, we won't let it die here.

HEARING ON RESOLUTION 0649-2024

NOVEMBER 20, 2025

10AM AT 250 BROADWAY 8TH FLOOR

NEW YORK COALITION TO SAVE THE STEAMSHIP UNITED STATES (“THE COALITION”)

TESTIMONY OF DANIEL J. McSWEENEY, CO-FOUNDER AND A DIRECTOR OF THE COALITION IN SUPPORT OF RESOLUTION 0649 RELATING TO THE STEAMSHIP UNITED STATES

Esteemed Chairperson Bottcher and other members of the Cultural Affairs Committee:

I want to sincerely thank you for making time to hear our testimony today in support of a great American and New York icon. I also want to thank Council Member Gale Brewer for introducing Resolution 649. I know Gale from many years of veterans and community advocacy and if there’s a good cause to support, no matter how unusual or ambitious, she will be there. We appreciate you, Gale.

I believe members of this Committee are familiar with the SS *United States*. This great vessel’s historic importance is on par with any artifact or monument in America. It is the last-remaining ocean liner designed and built in our country and, for millions, remains a vibrant symbol of the American Century, in all its triumphs, challenges, and lessons.

In that light, I want simply to underscore why the effort to save the *United States* is so relevant at this time, in this place.

First off, this Resolution matters because of our great city’s ability to punch way, way above its weight in policy, cultural, economic, and social contexts. Time and again, New Yorkers and our leaders have led efforts that have become national and global in scope. Consider our support for the introduction of the Erie Canal, the Statue of Liberty, and the World Trade Center.



Secondly, though New York is often defined by its traditions, we are also world-class innovators, assessing challenges and offering novel solutions to them in so many ways. Recall the countless engineering marvels that pepper our city and the new approaches to governance that have emerged during critical moments to preserve and improve Gotham.

Finally, think about the unique time in history we are living in. Our country is deeply divided on so many fronts and we yearn for symbolic and practical evidence that unity is possible. Examples of this ability to coalesce diverse citizens are very hard to come by. If only there were a shovel-ready project that we could support locally, state-wide, and nationally.

Enter the *United States*. This incredible ship sailed from New York to Europe and other destinations every two weeks from 1952 – 1969. I am a New Yorker because my father, originally from Glasgow, Scotland came to America in the 1950s to work aboard her and there are tens of thousands of other New Yorkers and Americans who have the same story to tell. Hundreds of thousands sailed aboard her for either personal or professional reasons or immigrated to America aboard her. The ship's passenger manifests include countless celebrities, government/business/military/cultural luminaries, and four U.S. presidents. They shared the decks of this singular vessel with everyday Americans and people seeking opportunity in New York and America.

Sadly, the ship is on the cusp of being sunk to create an artificial reef in Florida. We have important concerns regarding the applicable preservation and environmental regulations that must be fully explored and resolved before that occurs. We also have potential sites for the ship in Brooklyn or elsewhere that would create thousands of jobs, hospitality/event/dining/retail space, energy generation, perhaps even housing on the New York waterfront.

Let us consider everything possible to save this iconic ship. We never want to look back, as we do with the old Penn Station, and regret we didn't do all we could to preserve the irreplaceable and create new opportunities for innovation and development.

Thank you, again, for allowing us to share our passionate views about something which we hope will become self-evident to New Yorkers and Americans from coast to coast: We must Save the United States.

HEARING ON RESOLUTION NO. 0649 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS LIBRARIES, AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

June, 2025

Testimony of David Di Gregorio, Education Officer  
NEW YORK COALITION TO SAVE THE SS UNITED STATES, INC.  
In support of Resolution 0649 Relating to Saving the SS United States

Dear Councilwoman Rivera and Members of the Cultural Affairs Committee,

I respectfully submit this testimony to urge the City of New York to support the preservation and return of the SS *United States*, America's Flagship, to her rightful home in New York Harbor.

As our nation approaches its 250th birthday, what better gift to the people of New York, and to all Americans, than the restoration of this extraordinary symbol of national achievement, innovation, and unity? With her iconic red, white, and blue funnels, the SS *United States* is more than a ship; she is a patriotic beacon, a reminder of our country's past greatness and future promise.

There is an extraordinary opportunity to transform this national treasure into a stationary, dynamic cultural and economic asset. The ship, having been stripped of its original interiors, now offers a blank canvas with hundreds of thousands of square feet ready to be reimagined. With phased redevelopment, she can become:

- A world-class maritime museum and cultural center
- Event and conference space
- A home for maritime, trade, or other schools and academic programs
- A hub for tourism, job creation, and regional pride

Brooklyn's Red Hook waterfront offers ample space for a permanent berth for the ship, and, with visionary planning, the SS *United States* can become the centerpiece of a revitalized and forward-looking district. The potential return on investment, culturally, economically, and symbolically, is not only feasible but highly probable with thoughtful management and public-private collaboration.

To bring her home will require bold action and shared commitment. But the press, pride, and promise that such a move would generate are immeasurable. The exterior of the SS *United States*—sleek, iconic, and nearly as long as the Chrysler Building is tall, can once again inspire millions.

I ask the City of New York to consider supporting this effort by placing the SS *United States* on your agenda for consideration and helping champion her return. Doing so would represent a major cultural and civic leap forward, one worthy of this great city and this historic moment.

Respectfully submitted,

*David Di Gregorio*

David Di Gregorio  
Education Officer, NYCsaveSSUS.org  
Administrator, Tenafly Public Schools  
Former Councilman, Englewood Cliffs, NJ

**THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND  
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP ORGANIZATIONS**

**November 20, 2025**

**Oversight - Censorship in the Arts and Cultural Sector**

Written Testimony from OPERA America

Megan Carpenter, Senior Manager of Government Affairs and Civic Practice

Councilmember Bottcher and committee members, thank you for organizing today's hearing on such an important and urgent topic. I serve as Senior Manager of Government Affairs and Civic Practice for OPERA America with headquarters south of Penn Station in City Council District 3.

Founded in 1970, OPERA America fulfills its mission through public programs, research, professional development, an annual conference, regional workshops, consultations, granting programs, publications, and online resources. The national membership includes over 500 opera companies, educational institutions, and affiliated businesses, 130 of which are based in New York City. OPERA America extends its reach to 80,000 annual visitors to its National Opera Center at 330 Seventh Avenue, the home for the industry in New York. OPERA America is also a proud signatory on the Cultural Freedom Demands Collective Courage statement created by the National Coalition Against Censorship, Collective Courage, and the Vera List Center for Art and Politics.

The ongoing instability and changing landscape at the federal level present significant challenges for the creative industry, which is already facing numerous other obstacles. Opera companies and related organizations must increasingly depend on uncertain sources of institutional funding, individual donations, and local government support. The priorities of the current administration have impacted all these streams, leading to caution and self-censorship driven by concerns over potential loss of support or damage to reputation.

Ensuring diverse participation in the arts in New York City and beyond is essential for sustaining a healthy democracy, which is fundamental to the continued vitality of the arts.

We ask the Committee to invest in support systems, including an emergency funding program for institutions and artists facing censorship or political retaliation. We also ask the Committee to consider establishing a legal defense fund for such organizations and artists who may face censorship or political retaliation.

Thank you for your dedication to supporting and safeguarding the vibrant arts community in New York City.



Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs,  
Libraries, and International Intergroup Organizations  
Hon. Erik Bottcher, Chair of Cultural Affairs  
Hearing: Censorship Oversight Hearing, November 20, 2025

Thank you, Chair Bottcher and esteemed members of this Committee, for the opportunity to testify. With gratitude to City Council for their ongoing support and to Councilmember Bottcher in particular for drawing attention to this important issue, Roundabout Theatre Company joins our colleagues in affirming the critical importance of protecting artistic freedom for New York City's cultural institutions.

Roundabout serves approximately 400,000 constituents each year at our theatres, through our education programs, and through a robust portfolio of initiatives that improve access to the arts for New Yorkers in all five boroughs. Theatre provides an essential civic space for people to gather with their neighbors, talk about what matters most, and create understanding across differences. Today, financial and political volatility pose extraordinary challenges to our institutions' ability to provide consistent, stable settings for artists where they can reach an audience that is hungry for stories that speak to their experience.

Despite an uncertain climate, we are grateful for the tireless advocacy of the City Council and its representatives for ensuring nonprofit arts institutions remain an anchor in their communities, especially through meaningful, annual investment in initiatives like Cultural After School Adventures (CASA), Cultural Immigrant Initiative, and local Member's Items. With such support, Roundabout can freely and authentically carry out its mission to 24,000 NYC public school students, enhance classroom curriculum that celebrates their cultural backgrounds and experiences, and partnering with public libraries to inspire storytelling and theatregoing among New Yorkers young and old.

Onstage and off, the value of free expression in the arts is apparent in the work itself, and in its effect on audiences. Last season, for example, Roundabout produced the world premiere of Bess Wohl's *Liberation*, a timely story about mothers and daughters engaged in the feminist movement. A breakout word-of-

mouth hit, *Liberation* inspired conversation and shared understanding across socioeconomic, racial, gender, and generational differences. It resonated so strongly that the production transferred to Broadway this fall, where it continues to strike a chord.

"This play is an antidote to women's despair," wrote Opinion writer Jessica Gross last week in *The New York Times*. "'Liberation' depicts necessary but messy battles over racial equity, retaining financial power versus capitalist capitulation, and whether you can square romantic and maternal desires with revolutionary ideals that reject the nuclear family. The show, in its depiction of the early feminist movement, is an essential part of the ongoing fight for women's progress. Its sincerity... is a necessary antidote to nihilism."

Theatre offers an antidote to so much of what ails our civic body because it lets us see our struggles and hopes reflected in the stories of others. Last winter, for example, 76 English language learners from James Madison High School in Brooklyn attended our Student Matinee of Sanaz Toossi's *English*—a Pulitzer Prize-winning comedy set in a classroom of English language learners.

"Thank you for the opportunity to see such a magnificent play," reflected Naomi Charne, their teacher. "It resonated with the students—they not only laughed, but they connected with the conflicts the characters were facing. So many of our students are either immigrants or are the children of immigrants. I LOVE how Roundabout theatre is making an effort to put on plays that feature diverse characters. Hearing different voices and seeing different cultures helps us all develop a better understanding of others."

We couldn't say it better than Naomi did. In the most diverse city in the world, our theatre promotes democratic values, civic engagement, and understanding across political faultlines. Theatre is one of New York City's greatest cultural traditions, and it belongs to all of us. We stand in solidarity with our colleagues across the field and City Council as it seeks to protect artistic traditions from threats of censorship.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Mercanti', with a stylized, flowing script.

Sarah Mercanti  
Director of Government Relations

Councilmembers,

I put forward this testimony as an avowed lover of history and someone with a deep sense of care for the environment. The best case for preserving the environment in both Florida and New York is to welcome the SS *United States* back to Brooklyn with open arms as the centerpiece of a waterfront renewal project filled with sustainable technology and returning native biota to the region. Though the situation surrounding doing so is at its 11th hour, successfully passing this resolution would be critical to ensuring a last-minute rescue in light of an ongoing NHPA Section 106 hearing - by giving NYC as a viable, non-destructive alternative.

As a reef, the SS *United States* is at risk of becoming a major point source of contaminants like polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and zinc chromate that promises to threaten wildlife off the coast of Florida. This is due to the period and methodology of her construction and is a distinct issue with older ships being chosen for reefing. Were she to be returned to New York and installed as the jewel in the crown of a much bigger redevelopment project, she would remain safe to visitors and users alike as well as offset the 13,250 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> that an equivalent sized building would produce if built from scratch. Coupled with the return of vast swaths of native plant life, the renewed SS *United States* may well become the greatest green investment in New York City history for a fraction the cost of most alternatives.

For the entirety of her operational life, the SS *United States* proudly called New York home. Now, the last opportunity to bring her home and give her a new lease on life is upon the city. As the 250<sup>th</sup> birthday of the country looms, the SS *United States* awaits a renewal of her own kind and should be, as she once was, a prized example of what a brighter future could look like instead of a hulk bringing harm to a fragile ecosystem. If any city leads the way in such dreaming, it's New York City. Thus I call upon the Council to adopt Resolution 0649 and make this all possible.

- Matthew J. Lesiw

Hello,

My name is Al Stewart. I am advocating for the SS United States to be saved. Since she was designed as dual purpose of troop transport and ocean liner, She's overbuilt and is structurally sound. The engines and boilers that drove her to win the blue ribbon are still in her. She's lasted 70 years and deserves to be saved.

One idea I had was to turn her into a teaching tool for trades to learn their craft. While using what they learn in their practicum to help restore the ship. Trades, museum, you name it she's a blank slate. All set for a new purpose.

Having her move under her own power would be cost prohibitive right now. Future programs can work on that.

Or thought long run have her turbines refurbished for power generation back into

the NYC grid. Using modern boilers to be the most efficient.

Was talking to other people in the museum ship field. They were mentioning she would make an awesome museum ship. If NYC wanted to get her ready for the 250th anniversary. Get her painted and looking spiffy. Then bring her in for the celebrations with the tugs. Or reattach her funnels and bring her as she is. Regardless of how old the technology is. She's still a symbol of science and technology.



Dear Members of the New York City Council,

My name is Alan Looper, and I am writing to express my strong support for bringing the historic SS United States to New York as a restored permanent attraction, museum, and cultural achievement—much like the Queen Mary in Long Beach, but with far greater national significance.

The United States is a technological marvel of the 20th century with an extraordinary history. Designed by the famed naval architect William Francis Gibbs, she was the fastest ocean liner ever built—so fast she could reportedly outrun torpedoes. To this day, she holds the record for the fastest transatlantic crossing in history. Countless families, immigrants, celebrities, and crew members sailed aboard her, and she played a diplomatic role after World War II by being one of the first American-flagged vessels to reestablish service to Bremerhaven, helping mend relations between the United States and Germany.

Today, however, this irreplaceable national treasure faces an existential threat. She is currently slated to be intentionally sunk in the Gulf to become the world's largest artificial reef.

In response, multiple groups—including the New York Coalition to Save the SS United States, the SS United States Preservation Foundation, their contacts in Washington, and many other advocates—are working tirelessly to prevent her destruction. Across several petitions, nearly 20,000 supporters have voiced their desire to see her preserved.

Bringing the SS United States to New York would give the city an opportunity to create a vibrant cultural, educational, and economic asset: a living museum, a public gathering space, and a world-class tourism driver that would generate jobs, revenue, and national pride. She represents the golden age of transatlantic travel and has the power to inspire future generations by showcasing American ingenuity, history, and achievement.

New York's waterfront is uniquely suited to host such a ship. With the colossal success of the USS Intrepid, the city has demonstrated its ability to elevate historic vessels into major cultural institutions. Unlike the Intrepid, the SS United States—being an ocean liner of immense scale—can accommodate a wide range of uses, including a hotel, event spaces, businesses, classrooms, or even a trade school in naval architecture. She could support initiatives such as a Center of Excellence, as outlined in the SHIPS for America Act, or a veterans' center, as proposed in the America 250 Maritime Heritage Act. Her former home port of New York City remains, without question, the most fitting place for her permanent preservation.

As our nation's 250th anniversary approaches, this project would signal New York's commitment to historic preservation, maritime heritage, and cultural leadership. It would stand as a beacon of hope, pride, and inspiration for Americans and visitors from around the world.

I respectfully implore the City Council to seize this unique opportunity, collaborate with all interested organizations, and work with state and federal partners to help make the return and restoration of the SS United States a reality.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

**From:** [New York City Council](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Thu, Nov 20 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Organizations  
**Date:** Thursday, November 20, 2025 7:22:46 AM  
**Attachments:** [Untitled-document.pdf](#)

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[REDACTED]

Attendee will be: Submitting written testimony

[REDACTED]

Attendee name (Zoom name): Alexander Michael Steenhoek

[REDACTED]

Hearing: Thu, Nov 20 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Organizations  
Subject of testimony: SS United States  
Organization: Self  
Organization if "Other":

If a testimony was uploaded, it will be in the attachments.

The SS United States should be preserved because it is a historic and significant part of our American history. It is the largest American ocean liner ever built, it holds a speed record, it has starred in movies, and it carried many celebrities on board. It is a symbol of American strength and pride.

To see a ship like that be sunk would not only be disrespectful to the ship, but it would also be a disgrace to our country.

Sinking the vessel that embodies the United States of America right before our nation's 250th anniversary is incredibly inappropriate. Additionally, future generations will not get to experience the ship being afloat. Also, people who are unable to swim or dive will not be able to experience the ship at all. Plus, though there are many people who want to see the ship sunk, there are also many, if not more, people who want to see the ship stay afloat. A much more appropriate decision would be to restore the ship to its former glory for the 250th anniversary of the United States so that all people can experience and enjoy it.

Some alternative options to having the ship be used as a reef include:

- Restoring the ship as a functioning ship
- Restoring it as a floating hotel (similar to the Queen Mary in Long Beach, CA)
- Restoring it as a floating apartment complex
- Restoring it as a floating events center
- Restoring it as a floating maritime museum

Okaloosa County does not have to sink the SS United States, it can use the ship in alternate ways to attract tourists. Also, if they still would like to sink a ship as the world's largest artificial reef, then a possibility is that the people who want to keep the SS United States afloat, could find another ship to be used in the SS United States' place. The ship could be the same size, or even bigger, than the SS United States. It could even be a custom-built exact replica of the SS United States. The people could trade Okaloosa County the ship, and in return, the county would give them the SS United States. That way, Okaloosa County would get their reef, and the SS United States could still stay afloat.

In conclusion, the SS United States does not have to, and should not, be sunk. It is a priceless American artifact that should be properly preserved for future generations. There are better ways to use the ship than by sinking it. This ship is not just a vehicle, it is part of our American family. One should never dispose of family.

## **In Defense Of SS United States**

**As it currently stands, the SS United States, the last of America's great ocean liners, is in Mobile, Alabama awaiting to be stripped and dismantled in preparation to be sunk as the world's largest artificial reef off Destin, Florida. It seems this is all set in stone by Okaloosa County who purchased the ship once she was kicked out of her pier in Philadelphia. A fight to save her seemingly ended with a bittersweet outcome, but this is not the end. It shouldn't be, for this ship stands as one of the most significant displays of marine engineering, if not American engineering as a whole. Despite first impressions, this ship is no rotting bucket of bolts. Here is what makes the SS United States so significant, and why her**

**preservation is key for both maritime conservation and the city of New York.**

- **1: SS United States was, and still is, the fastest ocean liner to ever cross the Atlantic Ocean. She still holds the transatlantic speed record for a monohull vessel, having made the passage from New York City to Le Havre, France in just three days, ten hours, and forty minutes at an average speed of 35 knots.**
- **2: Speed was the United States' primary weapon, and was once classified as a military secret. During her test trials on June 10, 1952, she reached a confirmed top speed of 38.32 knots out on the open sea. In reverse, she could top out at 22 knots. For visualization, 22 knots is the top speed for the world's largest cruise ship, Icon Of The Seas (which is diesel-electric), and the nuclear powered aircraft carrier USS Nimitz tops out at 31 knots.**
- **3: The power plant used to give the United States her immense speed and power was of a military-grade design supplied by the United States Navy, therefore her construction was funded by the US Government.**

**Four double-reduction geared steam turbines, eight 925 PSI/975 °F boilers, and four propeller shafts all culminated into a power plant that could push out 240,000 horsepower, allowing the ship to reach the speeds she could.**

- **4: In addition to being the world's fastest ocean liner, SS United States is the largest ocean liner to ever be built in America. At 990 feet long and 101 feet wide with a tonnage of 53,329 gross tons, she is a very large ship even by today's standards where the biggest cruise ships often exceed 100,000 tons.**
- **5: Whereas many ships before and since SS United States were built with steel, the United States was built out of both steel and aluminum. Her hull was steel, but her lean superstructure and giant twin funnels were built of aluminum. During the time of her construction, SS United States was the world's largest aluminum construction project before the advent of the World Trade Center, and the first major application of aluminum on a ship. In fact, the twin funnels of the ship which proudly sport the colors of the American flag (even when tired and weather-worn) are the largest**

**funnels ever installed on a ship, and were among the largest aluminum structures in the world when built.**

- **6: SS United States was the work of many smart and hard working men and women at the Newport News shipyard in Virginia. The experienced architect of the ship, William Francis Gibbs, who designed many of America's great ocean liners and warships, ensured not a single detail was missed. He designed the ship (effectively his magnum opus) to be as fast and as safe as possible. This meant that the ship would have to be incredibly fast and incredibly fireproof, and the all-female interior design firm Smyth, Urquhart & Marckwald, plus the team of Elaine Kaplan, a female marine engineer, took to this job with gusto. The results were incredible mid-century modern public rooms and cabins, and a powerful power plant.**

- **7: The interior of SS United States was, as aforementioned, the spitting image of American Mid-Century Modern. The black and silver color palette of the staircases and corridors, plus the simple yet elegant depictions of fauna, rivers, and Native American imagery in the art fixtures of the grand**

**public rooms displayed restrained elegance compared to the palatial grandiosity of her contemporaries. Not a single aspect of her interior used any flammable materials, the only wood used on the entire ship was the butcher's block in the galley, and the mahogany piano in the grand ballroom.**

- 8: During her 17 year career with United States Lines from 1952 to 1969, SS United States carried a plethora of influential people. Famous names that sailed aboard her included Coco Chanel, Sean Connery, Walt Disney, Judy Garland, Bob Hope, Marilyn Monroe, John Wayne, Grace Kelly, and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, plus four US Presidents (Harry Truman, Dwight D Eisenhower, John F Kennedy, and Bill Clinton).**
- 9: Because of her naval-grade propulsion and construction plus government funding, SS United States' design doubled as a military asset, and if she was ever called upon for military service (which thankfully never happened), she would be capable of carrying 14,000 troops across 10,000 miles. Her speed meant she would theoretically be able to rapidly deploy**



**a division anywhere in the world without needing to refuel.**

- **10: Out of many iconic and famous ocean liners that sailed our oceans, only fifteen survive in the present day, and only four large ones survive today. They are the RMS Queen Mary, the SS Rotterdam, the MS Queen Elizabeth 2, and the SS United States. Queen Mary is a hotel and museum in Long Beach, California.**

**Rotterdam is moored in her namesake city in the Netherlands as a museum, hotel, and activity center.**

**Queen Elizabeth 2 is a hotel and nightclub in Dubai, but United States is none of those things, instead she is at the mercy of the very people she was built to represent.**

**The work needed to save and revitalize SS United States will take money, it will take hard work, but even so, shouldn't America's next generation of marine engineers, perhaps engineers and architects as a whole, have a prime example of American ingenuity standing tall for them to see and study? One**

shouldn't have to get a diving license to see this ship up close and personal, there are indeed better alternatives. Famous museum ships such as USS Alabama and Queen Mary rake in 300,000 visitors yearly, with USS Intrepid right in New York City trumping both with 1,000,000 visitors respectively. If SS United States, at a hypothetical \$75 million price tag to restore and revitalize as a museum, received at least 250,000 people yearly at \$40 per person, she'd make \$10 million on ticket sales alone. With other factors like jobs, revenue to local shops, food sales, and hotels, she could generate \$15 to \$20 million dollars for a city like New York.

In comparison, the wreck of the aircraft carrier USS Oriskany (which was sunk as an artificial reef like what is currently planned for SS United States) only generated \$3.2 million in 2024 as a diving destination. This in addition to serious environmental

**concerns, as well as plans to revive American industry (particularly shipbuilding) show the best way forward not only for this ship, but for the preservation of great engineering and technological feats that anyone can aspire to.**

**That is why SS United States should come to New York. I am not American, I live in The Bahamas, but my parents both lived in New York for five years and I've been a regular visitor to the city. If SS United States could return to New York, I will visit the city again and again for years to come.**

**Blair Hastedt**

**From:** [New York City Council](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Thu, Nov 13 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
**Date:** Saturday, November 15, 2025 6:11:09 AM  
**Attachments:** [ss-united-states-Google-Search-6.pdf](#)

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[REDACTED]

Attendee will be: Submitting written testimony

[REDACTED]

Attendee name (Zoom name): Charlie Patrick McDowell

[REDACTED]

Hearing: Thu, Nov 13 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
Subject of testimony: I hear by declare that due to heritage and historical significance the SS United States ocean liner should be preserved  
Organization: Other  
Organization if "Other": New York coalition to save the SS United States

If a testimony was uploaded, it will be in the attachments.




# The SS United States Becomes the World's Largest Artificial Reef -

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The Fate of the SS United...

 Robert Reich - Substack



Historic passenger ship make...

 The European Magazine

**From:** [ColeArt](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] re censorship in the arts, keeping NYers in the dark...  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 19, 2025 1:14:12 PM  
**Attachments:** [Screenshot 20251119-125142.png](#)  
[Screenshot 20251119-125142.png](#)

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To whom it may concern:

A large donation of documents was made to a national park museum, cedar Grove in Catskill, Ny. The donation was comprised of 3,000 19th century documents and preliminary sketches by the American NY artist Thomas Cole. Every known correspondence to and from Cole detailing his paintings before modern documenting was donated by wealthy gallery owner Alex Acevedo as a tax write off for 300,000.00. These critical documents were donated with the stipulation for unilateral access for scholarly purposes and study by the taxpayer. A number of currently "unlocated" paintings were documented and concealed by a privileged few, under the tutelage of the dishonest Allen Wallach, the only person who can issue an attribution letter for newly found long lost paintings by Thomas Cole. He refused to make public letters documenting the paintings sizes and subject matter, narrowing down the circle of conosci to a few greedy people. He is dishonest and has abused his powers as being chosen, and as a result censored the letters regarding long lost painting to the general public out of insider trading scams. As the art market is largely unregulated, Wallach continues his greedy crusade to disenfranchise owners of long lost works by verbally denying their authenticity and writing secretly letters of attribution to private collectors. These paintings are worth Millions and wallach continues to get away with it. He had Betsy Jacks curator fired and replaced with Maura O'Shea recently as a liability issue for his fraud. Can someone do something about this issue or does the ny taxpayer have to lose money playing the lottery in order to win money during grueling economic times? Wallach defrauded me out of 22,000.00 over this issue. Please get back to me if you can, or allow me to speak at the upcoming meeting regarding censorship in the arts and it's effects on the art investor. 1825 marked the bicentennial Cole sold his paintings to wealthy NY patrons Dunlap, Wordsworth and Lyman Reed. These men saw Coles paintings in a shop on Broome street in today's SoHo. The reason why laws need to change is because owners of these works are being illegally defrauded of their property bc they lack the access these documents were intended to keep informed about and not everyone can afford an art law attorney as their advocate. Sincerely Julia. 929 668 6342 516 360-7870

Enclosed was deleted article by Alan Wallach to the green county newspaper on its website. Wallach deletes information people can use to authenticate their works including Wikipedia and AI Google loop.

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

## **Subject: Urgent Call to Action: Preserving the SS United States as America's Flagship and a Centerpiece for the 250th Anniversary**

**To:** The Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Organizations

**Date:** November 15, 2025

**Regarding:** Resolution 0649-2024: Declaring the ocean liner the SS United States a historic location, allocating funds for the ocean liner's restoration, and its relocation to the city of New York.

Dear Chair **Rivera** and distinguished members of the Committee—including Council Members **Ung, Williams, Hudson, Ossé, Hanif, Louis, Hanks, and Carr**—

My name is Conner Christensen, and I submit this testimony as an **Amateur Naval Historian** residing in Arizona. My engagement from outside New York serves to underscore the **national, not merely local, importance** of this vessel. **This ship, and the visionary work of her designer, William Francis Gibbs, is the very reason I became interested in naval architecture and history.** I stand in unwavering support of the effort to save the magnificent SS United States and finally secure her future home right here in New York City. I submit this testimony not merely to advocate for Resolution 0649, but to implore this City Council to recognize that we are standing at a critical juncture: we must utilize every resource to prevent the destruction of this irreplaceable national treasure.

The SS United States is not merely a relic of maritime history; she is a powerful, tangible piece of **American** history. She is **America's Flagship**. For nearly two decades, she held the undisputed Blue Riband as the fastest ocean liner in the world—a record she holds to this day. Her sleek, all-American design was a **Cold War marvel** and a strategic military vessel capable of high-speed troop transport. She represents the absolute pinnacle of our country's post-war ingenuity, engineering prowess, and confidence. Allowing this majestic ship to be scuttled as an artificial reef would not just be an architectural failure; it would be an act of profound cultural and historical self-sabotage, permanently erasing a unique, inspiring, and economically powerful opportunity for our city.

There is no better time for New York to save this national icon. As we approach the nation's **250th birthday celebration (America 250) in 2026**, the fully restored SS United States could, and should, serve as a monumental, living symbol of American ambition. Relocating her to the Brooklyn or Manhattan waterfront would not only create a world-class maritime museum and public space but also offer a dynamic, revenue-generating economic hub. Imagine celebrating the **Semiquincentennial** aboard America's fastest ship—a testament to what our nation can achieve. This ship belongs to the city that launched her, and her preservation offers a powerful, hopeful testament to New York's enduring relationship with the sea and the American spirit.

I urge the City Council to fully support Resolution 0649, to immediately identify and allocate the necessary funding, and to actively partner with the New York Coalition and national preservation efforts. Let us make history by saving this irreplaceable piece of our past. Please do everything within your power to safeguard America's Flagship from destruction so that she may stand proud as a centerpiece of our nation's 250th birthday celebration.

Thank you for your time and serious consideration of this critical, time-sensitive matter.

Sincerely,

Conner Christensen  
Amateur Naval Historian  




**From:** [Craig Perkins](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Artistic freedom testimony  
**Date:** Monday, November 17, 2025 12:37:47 AM

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[REDACTED]

I can't be there in person Thursday morning and this might be off those topics but it's my experience and important. I'm a playwright in New York City and I've had actors tell me that they like my plays but probably shouldn't do them because they might have their visas revoked or something like that. We are supposed to be the country people come to so they can escape that sort of thing. No we're the country of that sort of thing. I'd like a reply or a phone call or something and I'd like to continue this dialogue with you or anyone else. This fight is just beginning and Trump's MAGA cult is only getting worse.

Craig Perkins  
Engage Playwrights Lab

[REDACTED]

Dear New York City Council

The Statue of Liberty sits in New York Harbor as a welcoming beacon of a great city, yet it was upon ocean liners like the SS United States that those who gazed at the city for the first time were standing.

There are many artifacts, structures, and items, from history that were once seen as nothing more than trash. A Model-T that was thrown in a barn and seen a pile of junk, may be the centerpiece of a transportation museum when the barn is opened and the old car is found. A building that was once one of a dozen on a street may find itself preserved as a museum when all the buildings around it have been replaced.

The SS United States, is one of the last of its kind, the last American made Ocean Liner, the design of one of our greatest naval architects. From the moment she retired from service there has been a demand to save her, president Clinton spoke in favor of preservation, and the current historical protections she has were implemented with the expectations that she would be preserved.

She is an opportunity to have a unique attraction that currently only exists on the West Coast with the Queen Mary, something that would fit perfectly with New York's grand history.

She is also an opportunity that will never come again.

There were thousands of Model-T cars, there are thousands of historical buildings, hundreds of steam locomotives. But the SS United States is the last of her kind, if she is lost, that is it. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity, a chance for New York to put front and center one of this nation's greatest ships,

Thank you very much for you time  
-Daniel J Lanier

I am in full support of the Resolution calling on the U.S. Congress to pass, and the President to sign, legislation declaring the ocean liner the SS United States as a historic location, allocating funds for the ocean liner's restoration, and its relocation to the city of New York.

My reasoning being, to insure that the East coast of the U.S. has its own historic piece of US history to compliment the West coast's prize artifact of the R.M.S. Queen Mary, itself with its own, now preserved history. Such an endeavor, if handled well, would provide a potentially prolific venue for business, vacation and education.

Conversely, the squandering of this opportunity by sinking the historic vessel would be an unforgivable wasteful debacle, surely to be viewed by future generations as abject ignominy.

Signed,

David R. Maier

Edu\*Craft Diversions DBA

Los Angeles, CA

Business: [store@educraftdiversions.org](mailto:store@educraftdiversions.org)



November 17, 2025

Deborah B. Broyles, DMD

[REDACTED]  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27615  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

In reference to SS United States

To: New York City Council,

My name is Dr. Deborah Broyles from Charleston, South Carolina. Charleston will go to extreme levels to preserve our country's history. We don't tear down dilapidated old buildings, we restore them if they have any significant history or importance. A perfect example is when a developer petitioned to demolish Mr. Philip Simmons home and workspace because it became run down since his death. Mr. Simmons was the famous master blacksmith known nationally and internationally for his wrought iron gates, fences and railings seen all over Charleston. The famous "Sword Gates". The Charleston citizens went into action to fight against this proposed destruction and WON.

Our 250 years of American history are being destroyed on a daily occurrence. We as citizens must stand our ground and stop it. If we don't take a firm stand, everything historical, doesn't matter what material it is made of: wood, brick or rusty steel (SS United States ocean liner), we will have absolutely nothing to teach or show our citizens of America, the world, or our future generations. We can fire history professors in our schools and cancel the courses.

The SS United States is an historical ship and the last of its kind. She is an irreplaceable national treasure built to be unsinkable, fireproof, and shattered both east bound and west bound transatlantic speed records. She is the pride and marvel of American design, innovation and engineering that every state in America played a role. The SS United States served many roles in her lifetime. She has carried four presidents, royalty, celebrities, endless immigrants, diplomats, artists and American service members and their families.

My family and I are one of those Army service families that sailed on the SS United States from New York City to Le Havre, France to join my father in Germany on his second tour of duty. He served 40 years for this country.

In conclusion I hope you will seriously consider ruling against Okaloosa County, Florida from deliberately sinking the SS United States. She is an American icon. Preserve her at Ellis Island as a nationally treasured monument of American history and heritage.

Sincerely,

Deborah B. Broyles, DMD

**From:** [New York City Council](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Thu, Nov 20 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Organizations  
**Date:** Thursday, November 20, 2025 11:12:03 AM  
**Attachments:** [SS-UnitedStates.docx](#)

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[REDACTED]

Attendee will be: Submitting written testimony

[REDACTED]

Attendee name (Zoom name): ERIK JAMES

[REDACTED]

Hearing: Thu, Nov 20 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Organizations  
Subject of testimony: SS United States  
Organization: Self  
Organization if "Other":

If a testimony was uploaded, it will be in the attachments.

Once Upon A Time, in a not so far away place, a dream was launched by one man, that dream took most of his lifetime to become reality, that man was William Francis Gibbs, that dream was the S.S. United States. The S.S. United States was unlike any ship before her, she was the symbol of a great nation that was also not only able to dream impossible dreams, but was unlike any other nation able to make theses dreams become reality.

The S.S. United States took a mere three years to become the pride of the American Merchant marine Fleet, she was designed with all that was the best of America, built by the best Americans of their time. She was the fastest ship of her type at sea.

The SS United States contained the best art, top furnishings of the period, she was completely fireproof, and one of the safest ships afloat. She was designed for time of war, but her emphasis of might and strength allowed her to sail as a symbol of peace.

She sailed flawlessly for 17 years with never a delay or mechanical issue, just as fast as she sailed that first Transatlantic crossing, collecting the Blue Riband, she quietly and without fanfare was gone, as if she was a dream, but she was not gone and is awaiting her return to become once again The Pride of The American Merchant Marine Fleet.

Only we as Americans can save this great piece of our maritime history for future generations, if we can save countless other great symbols of our past, we must do all that is in our power to make sure this irreplaceable piece of our past is not lost forever!

Contact anyone and everyone that you know, from that small town one page newspaper to the Commander In Chief!

"Nothing is too small or too great to be accomplished through  
Unity."

Finn Hamilton

Essex Jct. Vermont 05452

NOV 12 2025

Dear members of the New York City Council. I am writing to you today to discuss the preservation of America's flagship, the SS United States. First, let me introduce myself. My name is Finn James Hamilton. I am 15 years old and live in Vermont, about a five-hour drive from New York City. I have been fighting to save this ship for well over a year now, and I think it's an amazing idea to bring this ship back to her home port in New York City! Not only will this provide an economic and tourism boom to Brooklyn and the surrounding property, but you will be saving not just a part of history but also a part of American history!

First, let's talk about how this will provide an economic boom for the area. New York City has hundreds of historic structures like the Statue of Liberty and the Empire State Building, places that millions travel 1000s of miles to visit. In fact, according to Experience First, "The Empire State building attracts over 4 million visitors each year, generating 80 million dollars in revenue." The SS United States, with its also very historical status in history, you can accomplish the same, if not more. Another great example of this is the city of Long Beach with the RMS Queen Mary. Another historic ocean liner that was about to be lost to history, but was saved by the city upon her arrival in Long Beach, she was greeted by millions of Americans to see her arrival at her final home. (See image 1) You can also expect millions, if not hundreds of millions, of Americans to come out and travel and see her as she enters New York waterways. After all, her name is the United States!

Lastly, there is the United States is one of, if not the most, historically American-built ocean liners. Built in 1951, she was made with materials contributed by all 48 states at the time. The United States is over 100 feet longer than the Titanic and still has the biggest funnels on any ship ever. She broke the transatlantic speed record previously held by the already mentioned RMS *Queen Mary* and won the coveted Blue Riband a record she still holds to this day completing the crossing with 1,984 passengers in just 3 days, 10 hours, and 40 minutes. The ship was dubbed "**America's Flagship**" because she embodied U.S. technological and industrial might during the Cold War era and could be converted into a troop ship carrying 14,000 troops if ever a war would break out with the Soviet Union.

Even now, as the SS United States is being prepped to be sunk, tens of thousands of people have signed the coalition's petition from all 50 states and 95 countries and territories all over the world in a final effort to save the ship. And now, it's up to you. I urge you to consider bringing this ship back to her home port in New York City. Doing so will not only create an economic boost for your team and the region, but it will also help preserve a vital piece of American history just in time for our nation's 250th anniversary. Thank you for your time.



Scinciely:

Finn James Hamilton.



*The Queen Mary upon arrived in Long Beach in 1967.*

## New York City Council Testimony

Nov. 21, 2025

George Emilio Sanchez

Good morning and thank you for your service to our great city. This committee has rightly pinpointed the matter of censorship in the arts as an urgent one for this city council to formally address. C

As an artist, censorship is a key adversary to the core principles and rights afforded by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. These five foundational rights, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom for the right of the people to peaceably assemble, and the freedom of dissent, are currently being ignored, and unconstitutionally abused by the current executive branch of the federal government. To paraphrase Frederick Douglass, “Liberty is meaningless where the right to utter one’s thoughts and opinions has ceased to exist. That, of all rights, is the dread of tyrants. Equally clear is the right to hear. To suppress free speech violates the rights of the listeners as those of the speakers.” One of the aspirational redeeming values of the U.S. Constitution is how it allows for the evolution of consciousness that permits for the redefinition of “who” is included when we pronounce “We the People”. And the First Amendment makes the evolution of consciousness possible. The Department of Cultural Affairs is the main artery to the existence and life of these institutions. It is paramount this committee and our City Council keep their eyes on the prize of the First Amendment. This city has witnessed the claws of censorship rear its disdainful head in our institutions in the recent past. From Mayor Guiliani threatening to withdraw city funding to the Brooklyn Museum for exhibiting Chris Ofili’s “The Holy Virgin Mary” in 1999, to the Whitney Museum suspending its Independent Study Program when confronted over censorship of a pro-Palestinian event earlier this year. When the debates get hot, when the atmosphere becomes toxic and divisive, the elected representatives of this city need to stand up, be strong, and embrace how all points of view and expressions of free speech must be visible and present in our public spaces and institutions. It is paramount this City Council clarify that boycotts are protected speech, that institutions not be penalized for accepting or rejecting calls to boycott. This City Council must protect the rights of workers to hold political positions outside of work, and cannot be fired. And most importantly, the attacks on our First Amendment rights most deeply impacts our communities of color, indigenous folks and the L.G.B.T.Q. members of our city.

# Notes for testifying at City Council - Censorship oversight hearing

**Position a strong stand against censorship as protecting NYC's cultural leadership and economic engine. Frame it as:**

- Preserving NYC's competitive advantage as a global cultural capital
- Protecting the \$110 billion cultural economy from political interference
- Ensuring diverse voices can continue making NYC a laboratory for democratic discourse
- Ensure NYC as a sanctuary city continues to welcome all creatives regardless of citizenship into its cultural institutions
- Ensure NYC continues to welcome diverse creatives from around the world standing up to federal government denying visas to artists

## **Contemporary Pressure Points to Address:**

- The "Heckler's Veto" Problem - Institutions cancel programming citing "security concerns" after manufactured outrage, effectively letting threateners determine cultural programming
- The chilling effect of organized, targeted campaigns against cultural institutions featuring artists who support Gaza, Palestine and other marginalized communities
- Corporate sponsor withdrawal as de facto censorship mechanism
- Philanthropic Redlining - certain topics become functionally unfundable, creating de facto censorship through financial starvation
- Board members threatening resignation or funding withdrawal over programming
- Self-censorship by artistic directors anticipating controversy
- The particular vulnerability of BIPOC-led institutions and artists addressing decolonization
- At-will employment and gig economy structure of cultural work makes individual artists/workers vulnerable to retaliation

## **Economic Mechanisms:**

- Anonymous donor threats via development departments
- Orchestrated email campaigns to overwhelm administrative capacity
- Social media campaigns targeting institutional reputation
- Board members leveraging personal relationships with other funders

## **Self-Censorship Indicators:**

- Institutions now requiring "sensitivity reviews" for anything touching on Israel/Palestine, decolonization, or police violence
- Pre-emptive cancellation of events to "avoid controversy"

- Quiet removal of artists from rosters without explanation
- Addition of vague "balance" requirements to programming

## **Possible initiatives:**

### **Transparency Mechanisms**

- Require cultural institutions receiving city funding to publicly report any instances of content restrictions, program cancellations, or artist disinvestments based on political pressure
- Establish a "censorship incident database" maintained by the Department of Cultural Affairs to track patterns across institutions

### **Structural Protections**

- Create firewalls between donor/board influence and artistic programming decisions - similar to editorial independence standards in journalism
- Mandate that institutions have written policies protecting curatorial/artistic independence
- Safe Harbor provisions - protect institutions from liability/funding loss for controversial art
- Establish whistleblower protections for staff who report censorship pressure
- Worker protections - Supporting cultural workers' right to conscience without retaliation

### **Proactive Support Systems**

- Emergency funding pool for institutions/artists facing political retaliation or boycott campaigns
- Legal defense fund for First Amendment challenges in cultural programming
- Required First Amendment training for board members of city-funded institutions
- City Council can support the First Amendment rights to speech and protest by promoting guidelines that call on artists, institutions and funders to reject boycotts, defunding and censorship as mechanisms of political debate and activism.

## **Revising Enforcement Policies for Cultural/Academic Expression:**

### **Campus Protest Protections**

- Prohibit NYPD from entering university campuses for peaceful protests without explicit request from university president AND documented imminent safety threat
- Require 48-hour "cooling off period" before enforcement action on campuses, allowing for negotiation and de-escalation
- Ban use of riot gear, horses, or tactical units for non-violent campus demonstrations
- Establish "academic sanctuary" zones where political expression cannot trigger police response

## **Cultural Event Protections**

- Create "First Amendment buffer zones" around cultural venues - minimum 50 feet where protesters cannot block access but police cannot disperse peaceful assembly
- Prohibit preemptive arrests or "kettling" at cultural events based on anticipated controversy
- Require police to distinguish between actual threats and political disagreement in security assessments
- Ban coordination between private security and NYPD to shut down events over content

## **Accountability Measures:**

- Require public reporting of all police responses to cultural venues and campuses, including who requested intervention
- Create civilian oversight specifically for First Amendment-related enforcement
- Personal liability for officers/commanders who violate established First Amendment protocols

## **De-escalation Requirements:**

- Mandatory First Amendment training for Community Affairs officers assigned to cultural districts
- Require cultural liaisons (not regular patrol) as first responders to expression-related incidents
- Establish "expression protection teams" trained specifically in constitutional protest rights
- Prohibit intelligence gathering on artists, cultural workers, or academics absent specific criminal predicate

## **Systemic Changes:**

- End NYPD's "Strategic Response Group" deployment to protests - return to community policing model
- Prohibit use of "disorderly conduct" or "blocking pedestrian traffic" as pretextual arrests at political/cultural events
- Create presumption against arrest for any expression-related activity at cultural institutions
- Establish independent monitor for First Amendment violations with power to discipline/refer for prosecution

## **Historical NYC Examples to Reference:**

**Brooklyn Museum (1999)** - "Sensation" exhibition featuring Chris Ofili's "The Holy Virgin Mary"  
- Mayor Giuliani threatened to withdraw city funding and evict the museum. The museum won in court, establishing important precedent.

**New York Theatre Workshop (2006)** - Cancelled production of "My Name is Rachel Corrie" citing community pressure, though this predates your current timeframe it established patterns still playing out

**The Public Theater (2017)** - "Julius Caesar" depicting Trump-like figure led to corporate sponsors withdrawing support and death threats. While the institution stood firm, the financial pressure was significant.

**The Center for Fiction (2023)** - Cancelled multiple events featuring Palestinian authors after donor threats

**Lincoln Center (2023)** - Faced campaigns against performances featuring artists who signed BDS pledges

**The Tenement Museum (2023)** - Staff upheaval over limitations on discussing parallels between historical and contemporary displacement

**92nd Street Y (2023-2024)** - Cancellation of events featuring Palestinian writers and activists, revealing how institutions self-censor under pressure about Israel/Palestine discourse.

**Fire Island Artist Residency (2024)** - Lost funding after hosting Palestinian artists, showing how smaller organizations are particularly vulnerable.

**The Shed (2024)** - Cancellation of performances addressing Gaza, demonstrating how even new institutions without deep roots succumb to pressure.

**The Joyce Theater (2024)** - Faced pressure to cancel performances by Israeli choreographers, demonstrating how censorship cuts multiple directions

**The Kitchen (2024)** - Staff resignations and donor pressure over Palestinian solidarity events

**Noguchi Museum (2024)** - Fired three employees for wearing keffiyehs, claiming dress code violations, leading to significant backlash and discussions about symbolic speech

**Fotografiska (2024)** - Cancelled Palestinian photography exhibition after board intervention

**Queens Museum (2023)** - Director ousted after staff signed Palestine solidarity letter, revealing how institutional leadership becomes the pressure point

**Dia Art Foundation (2024)** - Postponed exhibitions indefinitely that touched on Middle East politics

**Whitney Museum (2025)** - Suspending Independent Study Program (ISP) for 2025-26 when confronted with criticism over censorship of a pro-Palestinian event.

**Drag Story Hour programs** - Libraries and cultural centers across NYC faced coordinated harassment campaigns (2022-2024)

**Asian American Arts Alliance members** - Faced pressure over exhibitions addressing anti-Asian violence that implicated systemic racism

**El Museo del Barrio** - Pressure over exhibitions addressing Puerto Rican independence and colonialism

## Notes on the BDS

Institutions can't navigate purely political pressures while maintaining artistic freedom. The city needs to create a framework where cultural decisions are made on artistic merit, not political pressure from any direction. Regardless of one's position on BDS, using cultural institutions as political battlegrounds damages NYC's cultural ecosystem and requires protective policy responses.

**Many institutions face impossible situation:**

- Accept Pro-Israel funding/partnerships → Face BDS protests and progressive artist withdrawals
- Reject Pro-Israel funding/partnerships → Face defunding threats and conservative boycotts
- Stay "neutral" → Accused by both sides of taking a position

**Ask City Council to:**

1. **Clarify that boycotts are protected speech** - Whether supporting or opposing BDS is First Amendment activity
2. **Prohibit viewpoint discrimination** - Institutions shouldn't be penalized by city for either accepting or rejecting boycott calls
3. **Protect workers' conscience rights** - Cultural workers can't be fired for personal BDS positions expressed outside work
4. **Prevent state interference** - City should resist state-level anti-BDS laws affecting cultural funding
5. **Transparency requirements** - Disclose when programming changes result from boycott pressure (from any direction)

## BDS Campaigns against NYC Institutions

**Open Letter Campaigns (2021-2024):**

- Multiple open letters calling for boycotts of institutions accepting Israeli government funding
- Targeted institutions include Lincoln Center, BAM, and 92nd Street Y
- Artists withdrawing from exhibitions/performance at institutions with Israeli ties

- Specific campaigns against Museum of Modern Art over board members' connections to Israeli arms manufacturers

### **Venue Pressure Campaigns:**

- The Shed faced BDS pressure over hosting Israeli dance companies
- Joyce Theater targeted for presenting Batsheva Dance Company
- Film Forum pressured over Israeli film festivals

### **Institutions Targeted FOR Supporting BDS/Palestine**

**The New School (2024)** - Faced donor withdrawal after student/faculty BDS resolutions

**Alvin Ailey Dance Theater** - Faced pressure after dancers posted pro-Palestine content

**Brooklyn Academy of Music** - Caught between BDS activists demanding cutting Israeli ties and donors threatening withdrawal if they comply

### **Complex Dynamics**

#### **"Cultural Boycott" Distinctions:**

- Some campaigns distinguish between Israeli government-funded vs. independent Israeli artists
- Debates over whether cultural exchange serves peace or normalization
- Split between institutional boycotts vs. individual artist boycotts

### **Counter-Campaigns:**

- Zionist Organization of America and StandWithUs organizing counter-boycotts of institutions perceived as "giving in" to BDS
- Blacklists of artists who support BDS being circulated to venues
- "Anti-BDS" legislation at state level affecting city-funded institutions

### **Examples**

**Adalah-NY** - Has organized pickets outside venues hosting Israeli companies, creating security cost pressures

**Within Our Lifetime** - Organized protests at museums and venues, sometimes resulting in event cancellations

**Jewish Voice for Peace** - Cultural workers chapter has organized withdrawals from exhibitions

**Artists4Ceasefire** - Over 1,000 NYC artists pledging various levels of institutional pressure



## **TESTIMONY OF GILMA (JENNY) FIELDS, ASSOCIATE OF THE** **SS UNITED STATES OCEAN LINER PRESERVATION FOUNDATION**

**I am an advocate for preserving the history and legacy of Americas' Flagship Ocean Liner, the SS United States. The timing of my testimony could not be more dire. The current owner of the ship, the Okaloosa County Board of Commissioners in Florida has set a goal of sinking her in the Gulf of America as soon as possible.**

**My first sighting of the ship was in 1951 before she set sail from the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company in Virginia where she was built. She was huge, her beauty was stunning and her potential for service was overwhelming. I will never forget that vision. She was magnificent! It pains me today to see the level of neglect inflicted by the SSUS Conservancy that had taken responsibility for repurposing her. They failed and finally sold her to Okaloosa whose only goal was, and is, to make her an artificial reef for tourism. We are told that they have sunken over one hundred ships.**

**My Uncle, Duncan McClure, was an immigrant to America and a war veteran. He was one of hundreds of immigrants and war veterans who built the ship. He was a proud new American citizen and a laborer there his entire working life. The workers were offered a tour for their families before she left for New York and her maiden voyage. My mother and I toured the ship and that is when I fell in love with her, an inanimate object.**

**It grieves me to think that our beloved country, that normally treasures our maritime history of excellence and exceptionalism, could stand by and watch the purposeful destruction of our historic ship and deny intervention to save her. Without intervention it will be an unthinkable catastrophe.**

**As inconceivable as it is, this highly controversial, unpopular, highly charged event would show the world, our allies and our adversaries, that America does not value its treasured history enough to save it from the tragedy of wanton destruction. Destroying an American historical object, place or monument should be against the law. The ship is a designated historical place and is the fastest ocean liner in history.**

**I fear that if we do not prevent this, it will bring shame on us as a nation that we will never be able to overcome. I appeal to all America - save our magnificent ship!**

**From:** [graviton6](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] comments on upcoming committee items  
**Date:** Monday, November 17, 2025 6:42:13 PM

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[REDACTED]

Eric - you seem like a reasonable fellow. I encourage you to better serve tax paying New Yorkers and reduce the influence of special interests in your agenda in favor of what works for *Americans*.

Some comments on your suggested items for review

### **Oversight: Censorship in the Arts and Cultural Sector**

A comprehensive look at how censorship is affecting artists, institutions, and communities and what steps New York City can take to safeguard free expression.

Removing DEI from the funded arts - funded by the federal government - is the best thing that has happened to the art scene in 75 years. I applaud the President's efforts and support them wholeheartedly. And so should you.

### **Res. 0649-2024**

Calling on Congress and the President to designate the SS United States, the iconic ocean liner, as a national historic location, invest in its restoration, and bring this American treasure to New York City.

not needed - a waste of money.

### **Res. 0987-2025**

Declaring July 26 as Haitian Konpa Day in New York City, honoring the deep cultural legacy of Haitian music and dance in our city.

not needed - a waste of money. These groups should strive to integrate into society.

**Res. 1063-2025**

Designating November 12 as Sigma Gamma Rho Day in New York City, recognizing the sorority's nearly century long commitment to service, education, sisterhood, and community empowerment.

not needed - a waste of money.

Best Regards.

**Testimony of Gregory George Leo, Jr.**  
**In support of Resolution 0649 Regarding the SS United States**

Dear Esteemed Councilmembers,

An American icon is on the verge of disappearing forever. The SS United States - the fastest ocean liner ever built, made entirely in the USA with American labor, materials, and through a military partnership - is at risk of being dismantled and shamefully sunk if swift, decisive action is not taken. New York City, long her home port and cultural backdrop, is the only truly fitting place for her rebirth.

This is not just about preserving a ship - it's about preserving the American Dream.

In the early 20th century, two self-taught American brothers, William and Frederic Gibbs, dreamed of building a world-class flagship.

Although not formally trained in ship design, they'd do anything to achieve their dream - for years they'd spend every moment of their free time studying ships and working hard every single day to break into the shipbuilding industry - but then the world was plunged into the First World War. As these men would continually prove, they were committed to defending the values of the United States, with William Francis Gibbs being appointed Assistant to the Chairman of the Shipping Control Committee of the General Staff of the U.S. Army in 1917, and then Assistant to the Chairman of the U.S. Shipping Board on the American Commission to Negotiate Peace.

Emerging from the war with tremendous experience, the brothers founded their own firm right here in New York, the very well known Gibbs & Cox - eventually becoming the largest independent naval architecture and marine engineering firm in the entire country.

Over the following years they'd design many new ships to exacting safety and engineering standards while actively proving to the world that US shipbuilding was, as is also true today, a sleeping giant just waiting to be awoken.

As we all know, that giant was awoken soon after, with the onset of the Second World War - their previously completed peacetime vessels were converted to troopships and 63% of all merchant ships 2,000 tons or more and 74% of all American naval vessels between 1940 and 1946 were built to Gibbs & Cox's designs.

It is not hyperbole to state that the US Naval dominance of WWII was built on the backs of the Gibbs Brothers.

Their crowning achievement, and fulfillment of their ambitious shared American Dream, came after the war: the SS United States, a nearly 1,000-foot marvel that shattered speed records and symbolized postwar American excellence. With "UNITED STATES" proudly displayed on her bow, she sailed the world as a floating ambassador of American cultural influence - carrying presidents, celebrities, and even the Mona Lisa - while simultaneously designed to become the fastest and safest troopship ever built, if the unthinkable need ever arose again.

The SS United States is a living monument to American ingenuity, service, and cultural leadership. New York City has the history, infrastructure, and global visibility to give this ship new life - as a museum, innovation center, and national landmark. A resolution to bring the SS United States home is more than symbolic; it's a statement of pride in American history, resilience, and vision for the future, while recognizing the importance of preserving the incredible achievements of our past.

I urge you to support this resolution.

Help bring the SS United States back home to New York - where she belongs.

-Gregory George Leo, Jr.

Dear Members of the Committee on Cultural Affairs,

My name is Hannes Brag, and I am a Swedish national with a profound passion for ocean liners. These vessels represent exceptional achievements and stand as testaments to human ingenuity. They embodied the pinnacle of their respective nations, serving as significant sources of national pride. The SS United States, as its name implies, was a powerful symbol of American excellence. I believe it is imperative to endorse Resolution 0649 because the SS United States belongs to a diminishing class of vessels, with the RMS Queen Mary 2 being the sole operational example and only a few, such as the Queen Mary and SS Rotterdam, having been preserved. The preservation of the SS United States is essential to narrate the story of the American dream. While we cannot resurrect vessels like the Olympic or the Aquitania, nor can we recover the Leviathan and SS America, we have the opportunity to save the big U from her impending fate. The SS United States offers significant employment opportunities and embodies the American optimism of the 1950s. A preserved SS United States would be a remarkable addition to the New York City skyline, complementing the historic architecture, contemporary skyscrapers, the Statue of Liberty, and its distinctive blue, white, and red funnels.

For the sake of history, engineering heritage, and the legacy of American spirit, I respectfully urge the council to take every possible step to ensure the preservation of the SS United States. This ship represents a chapter of maritime achievement that should not be lost. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely, Hannes Brag



The SS United States was the fastest and largest passenger ship built in the United States. These points were advertised by her operator, United States Lines, to attract customers on trans-Atlantic voyages. This poster was designed by American graphic designer Lester Beall as part of his broader graphic design for the ship's identity. Published in 1952 and is in the Public Domain.

Hello Everyone I Hope This Reaches You Well. Today I Am Writing To You About The SS United States. From Birmingham, England.

I Am Writing To You Concerning Americas Flagship.

She Is A Icon To New York City.

And I Feel Like This Ocean Liner Should Be Saved Because This Ship Holds A Lot Of History To New York.



In The Photo Above You Can See The SS United States Arriving Into New York Breaking The Transatlantic Speed Record And Getting The Blue Ribbon (Which She Still Holds To This Day!) The Ship Has Had 4 U.S Presidents Sail On Her! Including:

- Harry Truman
- Dwight Eisenhower
- John F Kennedy
- Bill Clinton

She Has Also Has Had Several Hollywood And Cultural Icons Such As Walt Disney, Marilyn Monroe And Elizabeth Taylor Along With Several Other Icons. She Had The Privilege Of Transporting The Mona Lisa To The USA For An Exhibition In 1963.

The Ship Has Been Laid Up In Mobile Alabama For A Few Months Now Awaiting Being Turned Into A Artificial Reef But With Your Support The Coalition Could Bring The Ship To New York And Restore The Ship To Her Former Glory As A Museum For People In New York City To Enjoy!



If The Ship Gets Saved I Feel Like It Would Boost Tourism In New York Because Of The Fact That People Including Me Would Come To New York To See Americas Last Ocean Liner.

I Hope This Helps Support The Coalitions Idea Of Saving Americas Flagship. It Holds A Place In Peoples Hearts Because Some Of Their Relatives Or Parents Might Have Sailed on This Ship Or People Might Have Memories On The Ship As Kids.

Have A Nice Day.

Harry Latham.

**From:** [New York City Council](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Thu, Nov 20 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Organizations  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 19, 2025 7:47:39 PM  
**Attachments:** [Untitled-document.pdf](#)

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[REDACTED]

Attendee will be: Submitting written testimony

[REDACTED]

Attendee name (Zoom name): Henry Sandegren

[REDACTED]

Hearing: Thu, Nov 20 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Organizations

Subject of testimony: Saving The SS United States

Organization: Self

Organization if "Other":

If a testimony was uploaded, it will be in the attachments.



The SS *United States* must be saved. She is one of the last great ocean liners still afloat, and as a nation we have already preserved the RMS *Queen Mary*. If we could give that honor to a British vessel, then surely an American-built ship—crafted with materials from all 50 states—deserves equal, if not greater, commitment.

Are we truly prepared to let a ship built by the entire nation be scrapped, while a foreign vessel remains preserved in California? In 2026, the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding, will we really commemorate that milestone by allowing America's last ocean liner to be destroyed?

The SS *United States* earned her place in history. She was designed and ready to serve our country in times of war. She still holds the record as the fastest ocean liner ever built, beating every major nation in the race for the Blue Riband. And beyond her achievements, she is a designated national landmark—a recognition that her importance goes far beyond steel and rivets.

For all these reasons, the SS *United States* deserves to be preserved, honored, and protected for future generations.

To the members of the Committee:

My name is Jacob Leggiero, and I am from Garrison, New York. I am currently a college student at Dutchess Community College, and I am writing in strong support of Resolution 0649, urging the preservation of the historic ocean liner SS *United States*. This vessel is one of the most significant achievements in American engineering, and it has deep historic ties to New York City.

The SS *United States* is the fastest ocean liner ever built, capturing the Blue Riband on her maiden voyage in 1952 with an average speed of over 35 knots—an accomplishment that still stands unmatched. Throughout her years of service, she sailed regularly in and out of New York Harbor, departing from Pier 86, where thousands of New Yorkers once gathered to watch her transatlantic departures.

The ship also carried thousands of immigrants, families, service members, and refugees to the United States during her career. For many, the SS *United States* was the vessel that brought them to a new life in this country. Preserving her means preserving those stories and honoring the generations whose journeys to America began on her decks.

I've witnessed firsthand the power this ship still has to inspire people. When I traveled to Philadelphia to watch the SS *United States* depart for her tow to Florida, there were thousands of people lined up along the waterfront just to see her move. I saw people from many different backgrounds and generations. I even spoke with a woman who had been a passenger on board in the 1950s. Seeing so many people gather simply to witness the ship make her way down the Delaware River was incredible. Even miles downstream, crowds were still lined up waiting to get a view of her.

New York City has long been a gateway to America, and the SS *United States* is part of that story. Preserving her here would create enormous cultural, educational, and economic benefits. Like the *Intrepid*, she could serve as a museum, historic site, event space, and cultural landmark. And because she is the last great American-built transatlantic ocean liner still in existence, preserving her is truly a now-or-never opportunity.

I respectfully urge the Council to pass Resolution 0649 and support all efforts to secure a sustainable future for the SS *United States*, ideally bringing her home to New York, where so much of her history was written.

Thank you for your time and for considering this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacob Leggiero

Garrison, NY

**From:** [jacob saulig](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Res. 0649-2024 - SS United States  
**Date:** Monday, November 17, 2025 9:23:56 AM

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Hello,

I live in City Council District 3 (Manhattan). I would like to add my support to Resolution 0649-2024, which calls for the designation of the SS United States Ocean Liner as an historic location, fund it's restoration, and re-locate it to New York City. It is a national treasure that was a technological marvel for it's time, setting the transatlantic speed record while providing luxurious accommodations for it's passengers. I, along with my father (A merchant seaman) have visited the SS United States many times when it was berthed in Philadelphia. It was a true marvel to behold in person, and would be a tremendous asset to New York City.

Please enter my testimony and support for this resolution into the official record.

Sincerely,

Jacob Saulig

# My testimony on saving the SS United States

James Geraci

Like many of my fellow citizens, I am a firm supporter of saving the SS United States for display in New York City. Like the nearby Intrepid museum, or the RMS Queen Mary in Long Beach, California, she would make an excellent attraction to our city. Given how the ship is now stripped of any remaining hazardous materials, and inside is virtually a blank canvas, makes it incredibly conducive to redevelopment.

The proposed location for the ship, GBX Gowanus Bay Terminal, would greatly benefit the surrounding area. I recently visited Red Hook, and the area unfortunately looked rather run down. A large, world-class attraction such as the SS United States would greatly benefit the surrounding area. Additionally, it would also benefit the terminal itself, as it has sat derelict for decades. Once the area is dredged to accommodate the liner, it would make a fine sight for the area, and the city as a whole.

The redevelopment of the ship, as stated by the New York Coalition to Save the SS United States, could be done in phases over a set period of time, and given how port fees will not be an issue like they were at Pier 82, the restoration funds could be focused exclusively on the ship.

Now, it goes without saying that the SS United States is a very historically significant vessel, being the largest and final ocean liner built in the United States (and arguably the best looking) and of course now the last surviving, and was the winner of the Blue Riband, a title it still holds today. The vessel was an engineering marvel, even now, and its loss would be a devastating blow to maritime preservation. Given how the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding is coming up, and the SS United States, the former flagship of America, and the record-breaking vessel that carries the name of our country, is now stripped down of all hazardous materials, now is the perfect time to restore the ship, as a monument to our country, and to celebrate the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding. The fact the ship has lived to see a third of our nation's history is an equally

historic feat, and would make it all the more fitting for restoration for our nation's birthday.

I do hope that my words today will be considered by your council, and you choose to save history, and save America's flagship, so it may become a world-class tourist destination and a monument to our history.

With great thanks,

James Geraci.

James Michael Maloney, Esq.  
Testimony re: Res 0649-2024

Good morning. My name is James Maloney. I am an attorney at law, and have performed legal services for the New York Coalition to Save the Steam Ship UNITED STATES, Inc. I am not one of its directors or officers, and I am speaking here today on my own behalf and in my personal capacity.

I am also a graduate of the State University of New York (SUNY) Maritime College at Fort Schuyler, and since 2016 I have been employed there as an adjunct lecturer teaching Admiralty and International Law. I am speaking here today not as a member of the College's faculty but on my own behalf.

I want to tell this body about a hope I have had for SS UNITED STATES for many months now. And that is that it be taken for public use by the federal sovereign, the People of the United States of America, and returned to its home port to serve as an important component of the Shipbuilding and Harbor Infrastructure for Prosperity and Security for America Act, better known as the SHIPS for America Act, which was first introduced in both the Senate and the House of Representatives in late 2024. As I'm sure you're all aware, the SHIPS for America Act would revitalize the United States shipbuilding and commercial maritime industries.

So how does bringing the SS UNITED STATES back to New York relate to the SHIPS for America Act? It's very simple, really.

If we are going to revitalize United States shipbuilding, we need to grow the next generation of naval architects and marine engineers to accomplish that. If the SS UNITED STATES were taken for public use, refurbished, and brought back to New York, the vessel could be used to host high-school students here for competitive, federally funded internships where they would live aboard, see firsthand our one-of-a-kind masterpiece of naval architecture, and visit the campuses of the **USMMA, SUNY Maritime, Webb Institute, and Stevens Institute**. The SHIPS for America Act will have an education budget, and by seeking out talented young people nationwide, we would be recruiting talent nationwide, drawing from a pool of future naval architects and marine engineers who come from all over the country, including landlocked states, who may never even have thought of pursuing such a career. The four institutions I just mentioned [repeat] would synergistically benefit for increased applicant pool, and I am sure they would happy to cooperate in the program.

This is, of course, *not an alternative* to making the SS UNITED STATES a national landmark and maritime center. In fact, the internship program could begin even as that work is at its early stage.

I'll close with this thought. The Haudenosaunee or Iroquois confederation had a leadership concept that, in English, is called the Seventh Generation Principle. The idea is that the decisions we make today should result in a sustainable benefit seven generations into the future. I think saving the SS UNITED STATES and using her in harmony with the SHIPS for America Act is in accord with the Seventh Generation Principle.

Thank you.

Jason Lashin

Lincoln, CA 95648

November 11th, 2025

Dear Members of the New York City Council:

My name is Jason Lashin and I am writing to you advocating for the preservation of the historic ocean liner, Steam Ship United States, in hopes that you will be able to take action that will lead to legislative action to save a historic ocean liner from being sunk off the coast of Florida to be turned into an artificial reef.

This ship is unique and special. Built in the United States, she is a symbol of post world war II technology that allowed her to be the fastest ocean liner ever built, an achievement that stands today. Everything on her and in her was made in the USA. She is a symbol of national pride and ingenuity but is in critical danger of forever being lost because Okaloosa County, Florida, sees more worth in her as a tourist attraction for divers and fisherman.

Built in the 1950s, she was state of the art, but the last of her kind, as air travel became mainstream and she found herself out of a job. For the past several decades there was talk and plans on how to repurpose her, all that fell through. It is only just recently last year that she was ejected from her home port in Philadelphia that she was purchased to become a reef.

Right now there is a last ditch effort to save the vessel in her 11th hour. A group called the New York Coalition to Save the SS United States is trying to work with congress to save and restore the vessel as a flagship of our nation. [www.nycsavessus.org](http://www.nycsavessus.org)

Lastly, here is a piece CNN did a few years ago regarding the history and the ongoing saga of the SS United States here: <https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/ss-united-states/>

The congress back in the mid 1990s tried to save the ship by drafting legislation but it never made it to the floor to get voted on. The ship is currently on the national register of historic places but is not recognized as a national monument.

Please consider supporting efforts to save this historic vessel. It would be an absolute travesty to modern American history to loose this vessel.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jason Lashin

# Written Testimony to the New York City Council

## Re: Urgent Appeal to Intervene and Save the SS United States

To the Honorable Members of the New York City Council,

My name is **Jonathan Lamb**, and I am writing to urge you — with every bit of urgency those words can hold — to take immediate action to help stop the dismantling and sinking of the *SS United States*, the greatest American ocean liner ever built. She is currently in Alabama, being stripped and prepared to be sunk as an artificial reef. Once she's gone, she's gone forever — and with her goes one of the last great physical symbols of America's post-war innovation, craftsmanship, and pride.

### Why This Ship Matters

The *SS United States* is not just a ship. She's a masterpiece of American engineering, a floating cathedral of speed and strength. Built at Newport News and launched in 1952, she remains the fastest ocean liner in history — a record that has stood untouched for more than seventy years. She carried presidents, world leaders, immigrants, artists, and soldiers returning home. She represented America at its best — confident, innovative, and united. And her home port was **New York City**. When she sailed past the Statue of Liberty, she was a moving embodiment of what this city and this nation once stood for: courage, elegance, possibility.

### What's Happening Now

As of this month, the *SS United States* has been moved to Alabama and is actively being dismantled for sinking as an artificial reef off the Gulf Coast. This plan, while presented as “environmentally positive,” is in truth an irreversible act of cultural destruction — one that would take one of the most significant vessels ever built on U.S. soil and reduce her to scrap and memory. This is happening because funding ran out, dockage disputes dragged on, and no one in authority — yet — has stepped up to intervene at scale. That can change today. And New York can lead that change.

### Why New York Must Step In

This city has always been a guardian of history and a birthplace of renewal. The *SS United States* belongs here — not at the bottom of the sea. She carried generations through the Hudson, past these docks, under these skies. Her story is New York's story. If the Council takes a public stand — even a symbolic one — it will matter. A resolution, a public appeal, an official letter from the Council President — that single act could trigger the federal review process, halt dismantling under heritage preservation grounds, and galvanize national support.

### What You Can Do — Right Now

1. Introduce and pass an emergency resolution declaring the *SS United States* a maritime landmark of New York significance and urging immediate federal and state intervention to halt her dismantling and sinking.
2. Request an emergency injunction through the New York City Law Department to pause all dismantling activity until her preservation status can be reassessed.
3. Engage the National Park Service, Maritime Administration, and U.S. Department of Transportation to investigate alternative preservation or relocation options.
4. Invite the *SS United States* Conservancy to testify before the Council on what is required to save the ship and how New York can lead the rescue effort.
5. Offer docking or exhibit space in New York Harbor for the ship's return or, at minimum, her



preservation if relocation is feasible.

### **The Stakes**

Once the torches and cutting gear reach her hull, there's no coming back. We'll have lost more than a ship — we'll have erased a living chapter of American history. The *SS United States* is the Statue of Liberty of the sea — a testament to what we once built and what we can still stand for if we act now. New York City has led the nation before in preservation battles — Grand Central, Carnegie Hall, the High Line — each time proving that progress and history can coexist when leadership has the courage to care. This is that moment again.

### **Closing**

I ask this Council to act quickly, publicly, and decisively. The world is watching whether America will let its greatest ship be cut apart and sunk, or whether we'll fight — even at the last moment — to keep her afloat as the living monument she deserves to be. New York can be the reason she's saved. Please don't let her story end beneath the waves.

Respectfully submitted,

**Jonathan Lamb**

The SS United States holds a special place in my heart as a proud symbol of American determination. She represents the dreams of those who built her, the journeys of those who sailed on her, and the enduring belief that greatness should never be left to fade.

Her story reminds us that America once built the fastest, most beautiful ship in the world, and that her legacy still inspires us to reach higher. Seeing her preserved as a museum would ensure that future generations can stand before her and feel the same awe, pride, and inspiration that she has always stirred in me.

Thank you,

Joy M. McCartney

Lake Wales, Florida

**From:** [New York City Council](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Thu, Nov 20 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Organizations  
**Date:** Thursday, November 20, 2025 4:54:03 AM  
**Attachments:** [TestimonySSUS.pdf](#)

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[REDACTED]

Attendee will be: Submitting written testimony

[REDACTED]

Attendee name (Zoom name): Karen McCormack

[REDACTED]

Hearing: Thu, Nov 20 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Organizations

Subject of testimony: SS UNITED STATES ocean liner, preservation for use as NYC venue

Organization: Self

Organization if "Other":

If a testimony was uploaded, it will be in the attachments.

I am writing this testimony in hopes that action will be taken to save the iconic ocean liner SS UNITED STATES from scuttling and defacement so it can be preserved as a stationary museum and educational venue that will adorn the New York City waterfront it once called home.

The ocean floor would not be a fitting end for this legendary and majestic ocean liner bearing the name UNITED STATES, especially approaching the 250th year of this nation's founding. SS UNITED STATES deserves to be a source of inspiration today and for future generations. The time is running very short to save this unique example of American ship design: Okaloosa County in Florida is planning to sink the vessel in the Gulf of America to create an artificial reef very soon. Any ship could be used for that purpose—it should not be this venerable ocean liner.

Its presence above the water would have more impact capturing the imagination of millions of visitors and tourists, not just a relative few scuba divers. The preservation of SS UNITED STATES might be attached to the SHIPS FOR AMERICA ACT, for example, in order to fund and repurpose it for maritime and technology education with training, workshops, lecture halls, an interactive museum and media center. The remainder of the ship would be for private development funded separately. What better venue to inspire the future of American shipbuilding and innovation than SS UNITED STATES?

This ship is not only our country's namesake, it's one of great significance and pedigree—it has been listed on the National Register for Historic Places since 1999.

SS UNITED STATES, registry in port of New York City and launched in 1951, is a stunning example of American Mid-Century Modern nautical design and engineering. It is the creation of famed American naval architect William Francis Gibbs, with an innovative propeller configuration by Elaine Kaplan. The all-female design company of Smyth, Urquhart and Marckwald styled the numerous interior spaces.

SS UNITED STATES is still the Blue Riband award holder for fastest transatlantic crossing on her maiden voyage, breaking the record previously held by RMS Queen Mary. SS UNITED STATES has survived for nearly 75 years on the water and is the last entirely American-built passenger ocean liner in existence.

The fact that it was towed through open seas to Alabama from Philadelphia by one tug, arriving ahead of schedule, demonstrates the vessel's structural integrity and the design's resilience.

SS UNITED STATES is an emblem of an American Golden Age and would be a glamorous return to the New York City shoreline where it will cultivate appreciation for inventive shipbuilding and New York maritime history. Please help stop its destruction so it may be restored as a monument to American ingenuity and craftsmanship. Thank you.

Testimony for the City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs and Libraries

Hearing on Censorship in the Arts

Hon. Eric Bottcher, Chair

November 20, 2025

Testimony of Lynn Nottage

Thank you for this opportunity to speak about the significant impact that federal funding cuts have had on the arts community. My name is Lynn Nottage. I am a playwright and a professor at the Columbia School of the Arts, and I am one of the initiators of Fall of Freedom, a nationwide movement of artists united in opposition to censorship and authoritarianism.

In February, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) implemented two executive orders issued by President Trump. These new guidelines sought to ban funding for arts organizations that engage in so-called "illegal" DEI programs, as well as projects which promote so-called gender ideology. Then in May, the NEA cancelled a grant cycle at the request of DOGE.

Even though the withdrawn grants impacted only one grant cycle and the revised guidelines were either struck down by the courts or had only dubious legal force to begin with, the damage has been profound. Many artists and arts institutions now perceive the NEA as fatally compromised.

In other words, the message being sent by the administration has been received. Uncertainty surrounds the future enforcement of the new guidelines, and the potential consequences of not following them remains unclear. As a result, many artists and organizations are choosing not to apply for NEA funding, and those who do are self-censoring, often avoiding projects that feature transgender artists or focus on racial justice. Because arts organizations are uncertain about the potential repercussions of violating Trump's disgraceful and damaging executive orders, the chilling effect is real and immediate. Now, fear is shaping how critical decisions are being made.

I urge the city council to work with the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) to establish an emergency funding mechanism that would specifically support artistic projects that have lost funding due to federal cuts or have been discouraged by the executive orders, especially those that center marginalized voices and those promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. Local and vocal support from the city can serve as a powerful rebuttal to federal efforts at suppression. By clearly communicating that New York City stands behind every artist's voice, the city would send a strong message of solidarity to both the artists and the institutions that champion them.

## Testimony of Annie Dorsen

Good morning Chair Bottcher and Committee members.

My name is Annie Dorsen, I'm a theater maker, Guest Curator of Art and Technology at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and one of the organizers of Fall of Freedom. Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you about some of the non-economic effects of Trump administration actions.

Legal scholar Jonathon Penney has demonstrated that chilling effects are strongly influenced by social norms. Faced with uncertainty about possible legal or financial consequences for their speech, people "seek guidance in the norms of others...following others in how they speak or act in the circumstances."<sup>1</sup> Penney notes that these *conforming effects* can be even more salient than traditional chill.

To avoid risk, institutions may postpone an author's talk, pause a longstanding program, take their diversity statement off their website. Institutional leaders take their cues from each other and nervous board members and try to stay out of the fray. It's not exactly anticipatory compliance – it's anticipatory silence.

Non-citizen artists face an even more precarious landscape. Visa uncertainties, potential immigration enforcement, and unpredictable work permit requirements lead many institutions to simply opt out, quietly cutting back on programming non-citizen artists. A trans artist from Brazil, a Palestinian filmmaker on an academic exchange, or a performance artist from Nigeria might find themselves effectively erased from cultural discourse, not through explicit prohibition but through administrative risk aversion.

The Council, and this committee in particular, can act. Let artists and arts institutions know that the city has our back. That art matters. Even art or especially art by disfavored groups or art that speaks uncomfortable truths.

Because chilling and conforming effects are socially transmitted, making clear and explicit statements of public support can be an effective counter. As the Fall of Freedom slogan goes, courage is contagious.

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathon W. Penney, "Understanding Chilling Effects," 106 MINN. L. REV. 1451, 1505 (2022).

My name is Margaret Anteblian. I lived in New York City, in Manhattan in various places for over 25 years. My mother was actually born in Manhattan on the upper west side, I believe near Riverside Drive then moved to Boston where my father's family was from actually just North of the city. I was born in Boston and moved to New York City. So I have strong connections with New York City and many fond memories.

One of those memories is of visiting the piers on the West side along the Hudson as a child to see the beautiful ocean liners docked there. My favorite was one I traveled aboard as a 4 or 5 year old with parents to visit relatives in France, the S.S. United States. That is why I am writing this.

The S.S. United States is a very special and historically significant ship having been built just after WWII by a renowned naval architect, William Francis Gibbs. She was built for speed (with a highly secret design) to quickly convert to a troop carrier during war. Fortunately they never needed to use her for that. Her lines and hull were streamlined and a beauty to behold even now when we watched her being towed to Mobile, AL to be dismantled. I saw videos gliding proudly and gracefully through the water.

Even though a young child I remember the thrill of sailing aboard her. There is a child's book with the story of two children who toured the ship during their voyage to or from Europe. They visited the bridge was quite modern for those days. Also I memorized the part about the turbines which turned the immense propellers.

I would love to see the ship return to home port of New York and refurbished, made into a museum with both her own historic memorabilia and that of other ships so future generations could experience the life aboard an ocean liner in the golden era of ocean travel. The RXR developers had a wonderful plan to restore her and turn into a hotel, convention center and museum along the NYC waterfront. I had hoped to be able to take up residence in one of the "staterooms" in retirement. Unfortunately the pier owners in Philadelphia tried to increase the rent and she was forced to find a new location to dock. It seems NYC did not want her!! Shame. But now there is a place in Brooklyn where she could once again be brought to good use.

I hope you will consider bringing the flagship of the United States Lines, the S.S. United States, back "home" especially for the 250th Anniversary celebration of the United States.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

**An Analogue-Based Environmental Review of the Planned SS *United States* Reef**

Matthew J. Lesiw



## Introduction

The SS *United States* (“*United States*”), owned by Okaloosa County, Florida (the “County”) is currently in Mobile, Alabama in anticipation of being remediated and deployed as an artificial reef. Though this has been a common practice for several decades in the Gulf, the size, design, and age of the ship have presented potential causes for concern against the backdrop of to-be-anticipated concerns for reefing a ship (i.e., presence of light non-aqueous phase liquids, dense non-aqueous phase liquids, lead in paint, loose debris, and related materials). This writeup seeks to explore concerns unique to the *United States* proper through analogous ships and events, and propose where potential issues may emerge in deploying the ship. The most significant agents of concern on board are polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), which are well-known carcinogens<sup>1</sup> in humans and wildlife, and the extensive use of aluminum aboard the ship, which is highly toxic to marine life. Overall, it appears that the ramifications of the unique nature of the ship have not been fully explored.

## I. Extrinsic Effects

*Case study: USS Oriskany, 2006*

The ex-USS *Oriskany* (“*Oriskany*”) was reefed in 2006 off the coast of Pensacola, Florida, in support of artificial reef development. The *Oriskany* is a useful model for the *United States* as it is roughly contemporaneous in age (1945 vs 1951) and intended use. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has conducted surveys of fish populations since the reefing event in an effort to track any emergence of contamination in the biosphere. When the *Oriskany* was reefed, about 700 pounds of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were left in situ and rendered exempt by the EPA.<sup>2</sup> Though not seen as a concern at the time of reefing, Florida Fish and Wildlife tracking indicated significant increases in PCBs in the fish populations around the *Oriskany* reef:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/pcbs/learn-about-polychlorinated-biphenyls>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.epa.gov/archive/epapages/newsroom\\_archive/newsreleases/0596ba557b46787b852571170062cf36.html](https://www.epa.gov/archive/epapages/newsroom_archive/newsreleases/0596ba557b46787b852571170062cf36.html)

|   | Pre Sinking Site | Post Sinking Site |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| Red Snapper Samples   | 17               | 157               |
| Red Snapper Mean PCB Concentration                            | 2.36 ppb         | 54 ppb            |
|   |                  |                   |
| Total Samples   | 62               | 180               |
| Total Mean PCB Concentration                                  | 3.8 ppb          | 58.75 ppb         |
|   |                  |                   |
| Total Fish Above 20 ppb (EPA Screening Level)                 | 2*               | 60                |
| Total Fish Above 50 ppb (Florida DoH Fish Advisory Threshold) | 1*               | 38                |

Table 1: PCB concentration in fish populations at the *Oriskany* reef, 2006 to 2009. Reproduced from “Petition to EPA to Protect Human Health and the Environment from Unreasonable Risks Associated with the Navy’s Sinking Exercise Program (SINKEX),” 2012

Though the present concentration of PCBs aboard the *United States* is not currently known, it is well-established that ships contemporary to the *United States* in age contain significant amounts of PCBs in wiring, gaskets, and other non-liquid phases. This is supported by the need to sign a waiver on boarding the ship, as well as the largely preserved state of equipment and machine rooms on board.<sup>3</sup> The 700 pounds of PCBs aboard the *Oriskany*, though comprising less than 0.1% of the ship’s total mass, contributed to a 1,446% increase in average concentration in fish against a 30-fold increase in detection. This situation emerged despite the Navy’s pre-sinking estimates not forecasting a significant impact in general fish populations.<sup>4</sup>

So significant was the impact to life in the Gulf that this information was compiled in a formal petition to the EPA in 2012 entitled “US Navy Ocean Dumping Program: Petition to EPA to Protect Human Health and the Environment from Unreasonable Risks Associated with the Navy’s Sinking Exercise Program (SINKEX).” This petition discusses the repercussions of the risk-based disposal permit the EPA approved for reefing the *Oriskany* and indicates that existing leach rate modeling was woefully insufficient for predicting impact to the biosphere in Florida. SINKEX was ended because of this protest.

It may be argued that the simplest solution is to merely remove all potential PCB point sources. Indeed, the County’s paperwork forecasts this as the most effective remediation plan. However, serious doubt must be cast over the feasibility of this removal as difficulty of removal was the genesis of signing off on disposing of in situ PCBs by reefing. It seems virtually inevitable that the *United States* will be subject to a similar exemption for similar reasons. The consequences of this are, of course, somewhat dire – sampling done on the ex-AGERHOLM, the only significant PCB study done before the *Oriskany*, revealed that PCB concentrations in sablefish were higher than samples taken off site, and the surrounding sediment demonstrated almost double the PCB

<sup>3</sup> Author’s personal experience, having toured the *United States* in September 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Ecological Risk Assessment, Ex-ORISKANY Artificial Reef Project (Jan 2006)

concentrations in close proximity of the ship, all this *16 years* after sinking with an estimated 12 to 80 pounds of PCBs.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, though it was planned for the EPA to produce more stringent regulations to support reefing ships with PCBs on board, to the author's knowledge the only existing documentation is a relatively non-binding guidance document dated from 2006, which requires that all material with  $\geq 50$  ppm of PCBs be removed from the ship to be reefed. In fact, if this material proves infeasible to remove:

...an application to EPA for a risk-based approval to dispose of the PCB bulk product waste in a marine environment for purposes of creating an artificial reef is required pursuant to 40 CFR 761.62(c). (EPA's decision includes consideration of a risk assessment submitted by the applicant, and a public participation process. Please consult the responsible EPA office for more information)<sup>6</sup>

The overwhelming conclusion to draw is that the process of disposing of shipboard PCBs has not meaningfully changed since the *Oriskany* was reefed, and the potential for a similar level of catastrophe is indeed possible, with the reef acting as a major point source for contamination for decades to come.

Additionally, the aluminum present in the superstructure – what might remain of it – also has an extremely high risk of bioaccumulating, to the point that no contemporary studies exist on what releasing 2,000 tons of aluminum into the biosphere will do to marine life. As it stands, the EPA has a freshwater chronic exposure limit of between 0.63 and 3,200  $\mu\text{g/L}$  depending on water characteristics – meaning that the *United States* has the potential to contaminate at least 500 billion liters of water just from slowly galvanically dissolving.

## II. Intrinsic Effects

*Case study: SS Andrea Doria, 1956-present*

One of the most relevant contrasts between the *Oriskany* and the *United States* is the *United States'* aluminum superstructure, which the *Oriskany* contains little of. The critical factor for the *United States'* speed and agility, combining aluminum and steel on the same ship was one of the last great innovations in the age of ocean liners. This is down to simple chemistry – in the presence of an electrolyte (i.e., salt water), dissimilar metals will become two ends of a galvanic cell, and one will preferentially corrode. The *United States* features several thousand feet of isolation gasket between its aluminum superstructure and steel hull to prevent this, but in salt water the aluminum will begin corrosion first, rapidly becoming weaker and then succumbing to the currents and forces of gravity.

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<sup>5</sup> Final Report: Risk Assessment of the Potential Release of PCBs and Other Contaminants from Sunken Navy Ships in the Deep Ocean: Ex-AGERHOLM Case Study (March 2006)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-09/documents/artificialreefguidance.pdf>

Though this is a well-reasoned fact, there aren't many good analogues to how the ship will behave in this environment as a reef – the innovation came about too late for any major shipwrecks, and of those shipwrecks of the time period only a few are regularly surveyed. In fact, there is exactly one ship of contemporary age and construction that has been thoroughly documented over the last 70 years underwater – the Andrea Doria.

The Andrea Doria was of this innovative construction and sank in 250 feet of water after colliding with the MS Stockholm in July 1956. Since then, her relative accessibility for skilled divers and noteworthy nature have been a regular draw between the technical challenge and the promise of untouched fittings ready for salvage. In fact, enough data exists to build a relatively strong timeline of her decay underwater:

| Event  | Date         |
|--|--------------|
| Ship intact on side                                  | 1956         |
| Marine growth  | 1957         |
| Wheel house falls off                                | 1972–1973    |
| Top superstructure gone                              | 1975 to 1981 |
| Superstructure survey                                | 1993         |
| Lowest level of the forward superstructure falls off | 1995         |
| Internal decks decay                                 | 1996         |
| Crack in lower superstructure                        | 1996         |
| Cracks in superstructure expand                      | 1997         |
| Lower parts of the superstructure start to slide off | 1998         |
| Portions of hull above A Deck begin collapsing       | 1999         |
| Hull cracking  | 2000         |
| Final superstructure collapse                        | 2000         |
| Stern collapse                                       | 2001         |
| Hull cracking continues                              | 2002         |
| Start of ship flattening                             | 2003         |
| Bow starts breaking off; hull continues to flatten   | 2004         |
| Ship flattening continues                            | 2006         |
| Bow continues cracking off                           | 2009         |

Table 2: Summary of major events in the decay of the Andrea Doria, adapted from “The Decay of the Andrea Doria,” 2010

What this reveals is an astonishingly fast rate of decay, with the superstructure beginning collapse 19 years after sinking and then entering a rapid, catastrophic failure phase 40 years after sinking. While the Andrea Doria is on its starboard side, inducing a load path that it was never designed for, a 2010 literature review concluded:

The middepth Andrea Doria is exposed to some abrasion from tidal flows, and corrosion is likely to be faster in the slightly warmer middepth water than for the cold deepwater ships.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <https://onepetro.org/JSPD/article-abstract/26/03/187/172254/The-Decay-of-the-Andrea-Doria>

This could be meaningfully extrapolated – given water temperatures in the Gulf – to say that the *United States*, once reefed, will in fact decay faster than the *Andrea Doria* and may become a significant diving hazard with a collapsed superstructure within as little as a decade. This would additionally put much of the ship out of access to anyone but the most experienced divers, as the following render derived from the County’s statements indicates:

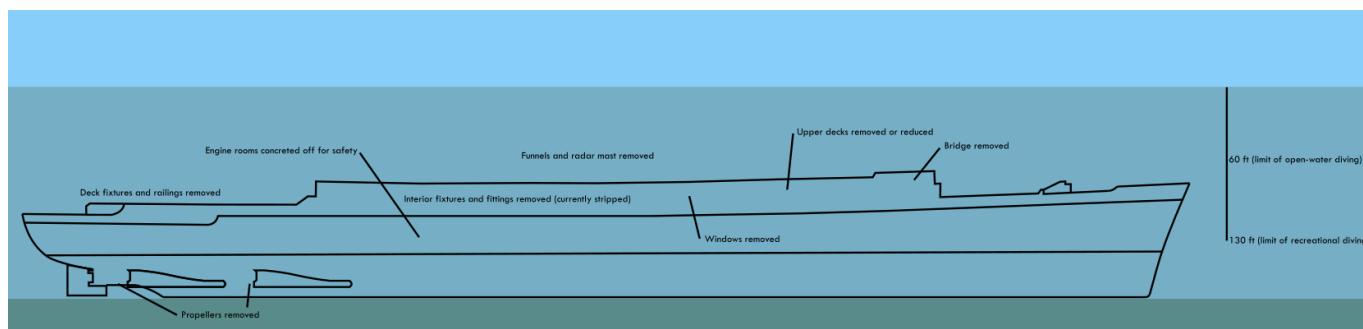


Figure 1: Approximately scaled graphic of the reefed *United States*

## Conclusions

The overall picture of the reefed *United States* paints a cause for significant concern between the presence of PCBs attested to to the ex-*Oriskany*, the tremendous amount of aluminum used on board the ship with no real analogue in warm tropical waters, and the impact this superstructure will have once immersed in an electrolyte as attested to by the *Andrea Doria*. Given the precedent, it seems exceptionally prudent that the reefing plan is investigated for all possible contamination sources and further explored by relevant authorities before an irreversible environmental catastrophe occurs. As attested to by the Petition, the *Oriskany* almost caused this, some four years after deployment:

In fact, the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) considered issuing a fish consumption advisory for snapper caught at the EX-ORISKANY site prior to the June 1, 2010 opening of snapper fishing season. However, a fish consumption advisory was not released by FDOH because a Federal fishing closure was released in May as a result of the Deepwater Horizon Oil spill. Fishing was prohibited under Federal closure which encompassed the EX-ORISKANY site; therefore a PCB fish advisory was not deemed necessary. The facts leading FDOH to consider issuing a fish advisory (including elevated PCB concentrations above FDOH thresholds), however, indicate a serious risk to human health and the marine environment from PCB exposure.

It should be noted that the Petition successfully ended the Navy’s SINKEX program due to these concerns in the same year the EPA reviewed it. It seems that the potential for disaster exists and must be addressed as soon as is feasible.

**From:** [Michelle Joiner](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Censorship of the Arts  
**Date:** Monday, November 17, 2025 10:57:15 AM

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I AM A PATRION OF THE ARTS. ANYONE'S DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO ATTEND GALLERY OPENINGS AND TO SUPPORT OR NOT SUPPORT THE ARTS SHOULD BE THAT INDIVIDUAL'S DECISION. Let us be reminded of the classic "Lord of the Flies" in which books were burned as evil. Is this prophecy a reality? How are we to learn, to compare, to debate or recall. Imagine if the paintings of indigenous population of long ago cultures or the ceiling in the Sistine Chapel were monitored and deemed indecent. Would we know about the pyramids if a council could have decided to tear them down because their shape did not conform to standard set by a group without due process. What if a person could be arrested because their poetry was deemed too explicit?

We need to continue to allow artists their freedom to interpret the world through their eye just as the bible is still being studied and interpreted today. TO CENSOR ART IS TO CENSOR THE BRAIN AND DEMONIZE GROWTH!

Thank you,  
Michelle Greenidge Joiner

**From:** [New York City Council](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Thu, Nov 20 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Housing and Buildings  
**Date:** Saturday, November 22, 2025 10:52:40 PM  
**Attachments:** [Why-Res-987-Matters-to-the-Haitian-Community-in-New-York-City.pdf](#)

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[REDACTED]

Attendee will be: Submitting written testimony

[REDACTED]

Attendee name (Zoom name): Moise St Louis

[REDACTED]

Hearing: Thu, Nov 20 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Housing and Buildings  
Subject of testimony: Why Res 987 Matters to the Haitian Community in New York City  
Organization: Other  
Organization if "Other": Haitianbeatz.com

If a testimony was uploaded, it will be in the attachments.

# Why Res 987 Matters to the Haitian Community in New York City

What if a simple date on the calendar could tell a whole story about music, migration, pride, and home?

That is what **Res 987**, the New York City Council resolution that declares July 26 as Haitian Konpa Day every year, does for Haitians in New York and across the diaspora. It takes a sound that has filled living rooms, basements, and dance floors for generations, and gives it a public place in the life of the city.

Konpa is a beloved Haitian music and dance style. It brings people together, shapes parties and nightlife, and helps many Haitians feel grounded in who they are. With Res 987, New York is not just picking a random day to party. It is recognizing that Konpa is part of the city's cultural story.

Res 987 is a resolution passed by the New York City Council that declares July 26 as Haitian Konpa Day every year. On paper, it is a symbolic act. In real life, it is a public promise that Haitian music and dance count as part of New York's culture.

The resolution does not create a paid holiday or change school schedules. Instead, it tells the city, its agencies, and its people that Haitian Konpa is worth celebrating in the open. It gives organizers a clear date to rally around and reminds everyone that Haitian culture belongs in parks, on stages, and in citywide calendars.

Konpa started in Haiti in the 1950s, linked to band leader Nemours Jean Baptiste and the growth of modern Haitian dance bands. Over time, many Haitian communities have chosen late July dates to honor the music's roots and long history.

July 26 works as a symbolic birthday for Konpa's legacy. It does not have to match a single historic moment. Instead, it serves as a steady landmark that says, "This is our day to celebrate Konpa and what it means to us."

Having a fixed date matters because it lets:

- Families plan reunions, cookouts, and dance nights.
- Schools and youth programs schedule workshops and performances.
- Community organizations apply for funding and book venues in advance.
- The city promote events and include Konpa Day in official calendars.

A set day turns a private tradition into a shared public celebration that can grow every year.



When New York sets a day to honor Konpa, it is not just praising a sound. It is honoring a body of stories, feelings, and memories that connect Haitians in Haiti, Brooklyn, Queens, and across the diaspora.

New York is home to many Haitian neighborhoods and families. Yet Haitian culture has not always received the same spotlight as some other groups. Res 987 helps shift that by stating clearly that Haitian music and dance are part of New York's cultural fabric.

Haitians have been in New York for decades. They have built churches, restaurants, taxi companies, beauty salons, and community groups. They have helped power hospitals, schools, and city agencies. Their art and music have filled local venues, even when bigger stages were closed to them.

Res 987 brings that history into view. When Haitian Konpa Day appears on city calendars, it becomes easier to:

- Host public concerts in parks
- Fly Haitian flags at civic events
- Include Haitian performers in summer festival lineups

For a young Haitian kid in Brooklyn, seeing their culture named and celebrated by the city sends a clear message: "Your roots matter here."

## **Telling a proud story of Haiti beyond crisis and struggle**

Many headlines about Haiti focus on disaster, poverty, or political unrest. Those problems are real, but they are not the whole truth about Haitian people.

Haitian Konpa Day helps share another story. A story of:

- Creative genius
- Joy on the dance floor
- Deep spiritual and community life
- A long tradition of resistance and strength

When New Yorkers see Haitian bands on stage, dancers in the streets, and elders teaching Konpa steps, it pushes back against stereotypes. Haiti is not just a country in crisis. It is also a source of beauty, rhythm, and powerful ideas about freedom and dignity.

For many older Haitians, Konpa was the soundtrack of life in Haiti. They remember slow dances at school parties, live bands at weddings, and late night radio shows. Younger Haitians in New York might listen to hip hop, Afrobeat, R&B, and modern kompa gouyad remixes.

These moments keep language, jokes, and family stories alive. They remind young Haitians that their roots are not something old and distant. They are living, moving, and dancing right next to them.

Res 987 is also a form of “thank you” to the people who carried Konpa into New York life. Many artists and organizers spent years playing in small clubs, church halls, basements, and community centers with little money or recognition.

Res 987 is not just about pride. It also shapes how people feel about themselves, how they connect with each other, and how the city grows.

Many Haitian American kids grow up hearing jokes about Haiti or only seeing sad images on the news. Some feel pressure to hide their accent, food, or last name.

When the city celebrates Haitian Konpa Day, it tells those kids, “Your background is something to be proud of.” Public events, flags in windows, and official posts from city agencies can:

- Boost self esteem
- Help kids feel safer speaking Creole with family
- Make it easier to share Haitian culture with friends at school

Pride in culture supports better mental health and stronger confidence in daily life.

Haiti is the first Black republic in the Americas, born from a successful slave revolt. That is a powerful story about freedom and justice, yet many students barely hear about it in school.

Haitian Konpa Day gives teachers and youth leaders a clear moment to bring that history to life. They can:

- Use Konpa songs to talk about migration and daily life
- Share stories of Haitian independence and resistance
- Invite elders to speak about their journeys to New York

When kids learn history through music and real stories, it feels alive, not dusty. It becomes part of how they see themselves and their place in the world.

## **How New Yorkers Can Celebrate Haitian Konpa Day and Support Res 987**

Res 987 will only stay strong if people treat Haitian Konpa Day as more than a line on paper. It grows when everyday New Yorkers take part.

### **Attend Haitian Konpa Day events and share the experience**

On or around July 26, look for:

- Park concerts and block parties
- Live bands and DJ nights in local venues
- Family friendly events in community centers

Bring friends and family. Wear red and blue, the colors of the Haitian flag. If you share photos or videos, use respectful captions and mention Haitian Konpa Day and Res 987 so others can learn.

Showing up in person sends a clear message to the city: this celebration matters.

## **Support Haitian artists, venues, and small businesses all year**

Konpa Day is a highlight, but support should not stop there. You can:

- Follow Haitian musicians and DJs online and share their work
- Buy tickets to shows instead of only streaming for free
- Take a Konpa dance class with friends
- Eat at Haitian restaurants and food trucks
- Book Haitian owned spaces or services for your own events

Consistent support helps artists and small businesses stay strong, teach the next generation, and keep Haitian culture visible.

## **Work with schools, churches, and community groups to honor Konpa**

If you are a student, parent, teacher, or community leader, you can help bring Konpa into shared spaces. Ideas include:

- A Haitian culture night with music, food, and art
- Inviting a Konpa band or dance teacher for a workshop
- A small talent show with Haitian songs and poetry
- Bulletin boards that share facts about Haiti and Konpa music

These do not have to be huge events. Even a simple gathering in a school gym or church hall can carry the spirit of Res 987.

## **Use your voice to protect and grow Haitian Konpa Day**

Resolutions are stronger when people stay engaged. You can:

- Write or email local officials to thank them for Res 987
- Ask for continued support for Haitian cultural events and youth programs
- Join or support Haitian led nonprofits and cultural groups
- Share accurate stories about Haitian Konpa Day online

When people speak up in favor of Haitian culture, it protects the meaning of the day and keeps it alive for future generations.

Res 987 matters to the Haitian community because it turns a sound and a feeling into **public recognition**. It honors Haiti's history and creativity, gives Haitian Americans pride and

visibility, opens doors for artists and small businesses, and invites all New Yorkers to listen, learn, and dance together.

Each year, July 26 can be more than one more summer party. It can be a step toward deeper respect for Haiti, stronger bonds between neighbors, and more support for the people who carry this music in their hearts.

You can help by taking one simple action: attend a Konpa Day event, support a Haitian artist or business, or teach someone new about Konpa. One song, one story, one shared dance at a time, Res 987 becomes more real.

## Support for Resolution 1063 – Sigma Gamma Rho Day

Good morning Chair Bottcher, Councilmembers, and staff.

My name is Nakia Yates Stewart, and I am a proud member of the Xi Omicron Sigma Chapter, representing Midtown–Downtown Manhattan of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. I was inducted in Spring 2023 through the Nu Beta Sigma Queens Alumnae Chapter.

Founded on November 12, 1922, by seven educators dedicated to uplifting women, children, and communities, Sigma Gamma Rho has spent more than 100 years advancing education, service, empowerment, and social action nationwide—and right here in New York City.

Across Manhattan and the greater NYC area, our members consistently show up for the community through:

- Youth mentoring and leadership development,
- Health, wellness, and public safety initiatives,
- Educational partnerships with local schools,
- Service projects addressing community needs, and
- Civic engagement and voter education efforts.

We also proudly collaborate with local nonprofits, faith-based institutions, and community leaders to ensure our work aligns with and supports the needs of New Yorkers.

For me personally, Sigma Gamma Rho has strengthened my leadership skills, deepened my commitment to community service, and connected me with a sisterhood that continues to support my growth. I am honored to represent our organization today.

Recognizing November 12 as Sigma Gamma Rho Day not only celebrates our founders but also acknowledges the ongoing, positive impact our members make in neighborhoods across this city every single day.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

I respectfully urge the Council to adopt Resolution 1063.

**From:** [New York City Council](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Thu, Nov 20 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Organizations  
**Date:** Thursday, November 20, 2025 8:07:14 AM  
**Attachments:** [The-SS-United-States-is-a-national-treasure-and-deserves-to-be-saved....pdf](#)

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[REDACTED]

Attendee will be: Submitting written testimony

[REDACTED]

Attendee name (Zoom name): Peter Fritz Mack

[REDACTED]

Hearing: Thu, Nov 20 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Organizations  
Subject of testimony: Saving the SS United States  
Organization: Self  
Organization if "Other":

If a testimony was uploaded, it will be in the attachments.

The SS United States is a national treasure and deserves to be saved. While preserving her would be costly, to lose her to the depths of the gulf would not only be a crime but the image of our nation's flagship being sunk in the Gulf of America would be a detriment to national pride. Okaloosa County needs to be stopped and the ship preserved in her current state until a plan can be put in place and the Federal Government gets involved in finding her a permanent berth like the Queen Mary. SS United States is an American built ship and a symbol of our nation's craftsmanship and needs to be shared with future generations. I truly believe funding could be found through public and private sources especially now that awareness of her plight is at an all time high. We need to stop Okaloosa before it's too late.

## Written Testimony on Preserving The SS United States

Hello New York City Council,

My Name is Presley Roush and I am a graduate student at the State University of New York Maritime College. I am deeply passionate about Maritime history and am currently writing my Master's thesis on ocean liner preservation. Although I reside in Denver, Colorado, I want to emphasize that even those of us far from the shoreline care deeply about this ship and the history that she represents.

The SS United States means so much more than steel and rivets. She embodies groundbreaking American engineering, artistry, and innovation. She was also the first major passenger vessel to feature interiors designed entirely by a woman—Dorothy Marckwald. Francis Gibbs, her designer, set new standards for fire safety, modernist style, and revolutionary engineering design. On her maiden voyage in 1952, she earned the Blue Riband- the record for the fastest crossing of the Atlantic Ocean in 3 days, 10 hours, and 40 minutes- a record that still stands. This record-setting speed is a powerful symbol of the spirit of American innovation.

The ship's very existence tells a story of technological excellence, cultural progress, and national pride.

We are watching the golden age of ocean travel disappear before our eyes. The SS United States is one of the last surviving true ocean liners, joined only by the Queen Mary, the Queen Mary 2, and the SS Rotterdam. To lose her now would erase a crucial chapter of maritime history that can never be recovered.

Sinking this vessel as an artificial reef is not only a loss of heritage—it carries environmental risks and represents, quite frankly, the easiest way out of a difficult problem. The zinc chromate paint still stuck to her hull will be toxic to Florida's marine environment. We can and must do better. The ship deserves better.

If I may be honest, I think sinking her is disheartening, lazy, and sad. What legacy are we leaving future generations if we sink a historical treasure- one that is likely hazardous to marine life?

The SS United States is the last of her kind. Once she is gone, there will never be another ship like her. I believe we have a rare and fleeting chance to save an irreplaceable piece of our national heritage and transform it into something that can continue to inspire future generations. I urge the Council to support preservation efforts and pursue a path that keeps the ship accessible, educational, and above the waterline where she belongs. Please, I implore you to reconsider her fate, seek alternative solutions, and allocate funds to preserving her historical memory.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,  
Presley Roush, RN BSN



Dear New York City Council Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. My name is Ren-Horng Wang. I'm a filmmaker and maritime historian, but I'm also an American who believes our shared heritage deserves to be seen, touched, and experienced, not just remembered in photographs.

The SS *United States* is not simply an old ship that needs a home. She is the last surviving American-built ocean liner, the largest passenger vessel ever constructed entirely in this country, and the fastest ocean liner in history. That record has stood since 1952. No ship, before or since, has matched her engineering achievements.

When she sailed, she embodied the best of American innovation. Her design was so advanced that the Navy classified her technology for 25 years. Her engines produced more horsepower than an *Iowa*-class battleship (all of which are preserved), and yet she carried families, immigrants, presidents, and everyday Americans across the Atlantic. Four U.S. Presidents—Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and a young Bill Clinton—have sailed aboard her. She is, in every sense, our “Ship of Presidents.”

But beyond the awards and recognition, the SS *United States* represents something uniquely powerful: the story of a nation that once built boldly, dreamed ambitiously, and led the world in design and engineering. She represents the optimism of the era that shaped modern America. We are fortunate that this ship still exists. Every other American-built ocean liner is gone. She is the final one. If she is scuttled as an artificial reef—as her current owners propose—we lose her. You cannot replace the last, great, American ocean liner once she is gone. When we talk about “once-in-a-generation” opportunities, bringing her to New York is actually a “once-in-history” opportunity.

New York is this ship's natural home. For over a century, ocean liners were the gateway to this city. They delivered hopeful newcomers who saw the skyline for the first time. They embodied the movement, growth, and energy that built New York into a world capital.

The SS *United States* offers New York the unique opportunity to restore one of the greatest engineering achievements in U.S. history. The ship could be a mixed-use cultural venue, educational space, innovation incubator, museum, film location, and tourism anchor, generating revenue and jobs in construction, restoration, events, hospitality, tourism, and more, all while honoring history. Her interior today offers unmatched flexibility for adaptive reuse.

Today, the *Queen Mary* in California proves what a preserved ocean liner can be: a cultural landmark, an economic engine, a museum, a hotel, a community gathering space. New York deserves its own counterpart, one that is American-built, American-designed, and deeply tied to our nation's identity.

New York has always been a city that embraces the iconic, the bold, and the visionary. Saving the SS *United States* tells the world that we still value American ingenuity and that we understand the importance of preserving the landmarks that tell our story.

I urge this Council to support efforts led by the New York Coalition to Save the SS *United States* to bring the SS *United States* to New York, to explore a permanent berth, and to help build the partnerships that will ensure she survives for future generations. New York City can be the steward that transforms a threatened national treasure into a world-class landmark.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to protecting our shared history.

Sincerely,  
Ren-Horng James Wang

**From:** [New York City Council](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Wed, Nov 19 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Public Safety  
**Date:** Saturday, November 15, 2025 2:47:29 PM  
**Attachments:** [united-states-ship-.pdf](#)

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[REDACTED]

Attendee will be: Submitting written testimony

[REDACTED]

Attendee name (Zoom name): Ryan w.

[REDACTED]

Hearing: Wed, Nov 19 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Public Safety  
Subject of testimony: Reefing of the BIG U safety concerns for the American people  
Organization: Self  
Organization if "Other":

If a testimony was uploaded, it will be in the attachments.

once they sink the big U, it will be the first 990 ft giant to be reefed 100ft deep very close to gulf of Americas in shores. the chemically bonded toxins will dissolve and cling to marine life's organs then eventually humans will eat those marine life. Plus scuba divers will get the same treatment as these toxins can also get to human skin. And people who scuba dive the wreck have high chance to die if they get lost in the dark 600,000 square feet super structure. At the end of the day, Okaloosa County only cares about their own profits and tourism and not the safety of the American people. This is why the EPA needs to prevent this disaster from happening. When you play god, you create destruction in conclusion, I would rather see the ship scrapped.

## **Testimony in Support of Resolution 987. A Resolution Declaring July 26 as Haitian Konpa Day in New York City**

To the New York City Council, Committee Members, and Honorable Chair:

My name is **Samuel Georges**, and I am honored to submit this testimony in strong support of Resolution 987, which proposes to designate July 26 as Haitian Konpa Day in the City of New York.

### **Why July 26 Matters**

July 26, 1955, is widely recognized as the date when Maestro **Nemours Jean-Baptiste** introduced Konpa, the musical genre that reshaped Haitian artistic expression and influenced music throughout the Caribbean, North America, and the world. This date marks the birth of a musical tradition that continues to carry the spirit, creativity, and cultural pride of the Haitian people.

### **Konpa's Cultural Significance**

Konpa represents far more than music. It is:

A heritage art form rooted in rhythm, dance, celebration, and storytelling

A symbol of resilience, identity, and national pride

A unifying force connecting the Haitian community across generations and continents

In New York City, home to one of the largest Haitian diaspora communities in the United States, Konpa has played a meaningful role in:

- Preserving immigrant identity and cultural continuity
- Inspiring artists, musicians, and cultural innovators
- Strengthening social and community bonds
- Enriching the city's vibrant multicultural arts landscape

## **Why New York City Should Recognize July 26**

Designating July 26 as Haitian Konpa Day would:

1. Honor the Haitian community's significant contributions to the life, culture, and economy of New York City
2. Promote cultural understanding and appreciation among the city's diverse populations
3. Support local musicians, dancers, cultural organizations, and small businesses connected to Haitian arts
4. Provide an annual platform for education, performance, cultural exchange, and community celebration

## **Economic and Tourism Benefits**

Establishing Haitian Konpa Day would also provide meaningful economic and tourism benefits for New York City. A designated day of celebration would draw visitors from across the region, the United States, the global Haitian diaspora, and people from all over the world who love Konpa music. This increased flow of visitors would support local businesses, including restaurants, hotels, transportation services, retail shops, and cultural venues. Beyond its economic impact, Haitian Konpa Day would further strengthen New York City as a mosaic city, showcasing the multicultural richness of the world. By attracting international visitors and encouraging cultural tourism, Haitian Konpa Day would highlight the city as a vibrant destination that embraces and celebrates diverse cultural traditions.

Recognizing Konpa reflects New York City's commitment to celebrating the cultures that enhance and strengthen our shared civic life.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the New York City Council to approve Resolution 987 and officially declare July 26 as Haitian Konpa Day.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and dedication to honoring the communities that enrich our city.

Respectfully submitted,

**Samuel Georges**

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Samuel Georges.

Date: 11/20/2025

**From:** [New York City Council](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Thu, Nov 20 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Organizations  
**Date:** Thursday, November 20, 2025 9:46:08 AM  
**Attachments:** [S.S-United-States.pdf](#)

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[REDACTED]

Attendee will be: Submitting written testimony

[REDACTED]

Attendee name (Zoom name): Sean Dale

[REDACTED]

Hearing: Thu, Nov 20 2025 @ 10:00 AM - Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Organizations

Subject of testimony: Bring the S.S United States Home.

Organization: Other

Organization if "Other": The New York Coalition to Save the S.S United States

If a testimony was uploaded, it will be in the attachments.



# SS United States



Over the Course of Our History. Maritime History. And Human History. Humans sought to build ships for transportation. For Shipment. And For Travel. We have relied on such sources until planes were normalized and used for ships one purpose. History Tends to Leave the Unreliable Behind and our Future will turn into our Past. In the American Times there was no other faster travel than on the One Only Star. Her name is the S. S United States. Built with American Hand Steel Aluminum And Cold Hard Labor. A Revolutionary Usage of Certain Techniques and Technologies. Something that outraces any other vessel afloat with Innovation, Creativity and Learned Lessons. Designed By William Gibbs, She was to be the Safest, Most Reliable Source of Travel in her day. And that she was. At over 990 feet long with 12 decks, she stood high like the American Pride. Designed with Fireproofing and Extra Compartmentalization, She was to be the safest Afloat. A Navy Secret Even. Her propeller design was to be a top secret, something that made the competition curious about her speed. Lest we not forget her importance in Her Time Today as she was Before. 48 States made a Contribution to her Design. And Designed with Careful Attention. The Aluminum Top Helped The United States to gain a Speed of over 38 MPH due to its Light Weight Compared to the Metal Hull. The Funnels were the tallest ever installed on such a vessel. Painted old red, white and blue, they stood high over the Atlantic. She was one of the first ocean liners equipped with radar equipped on her Radar Mast. Lifeboats For All Rafts For More. She Was the safest Ship That America Adored. While she is guttered, I think that enables a New Space New Creations Businesses and Events. The Guttered Interior, while Seen as Burden, Was Necessary to get rid of Asbestos. As of today, the Forward Funnel, The Aft Funnel and Radar Mast were removed 3 months ago. Today she sits on mobile waters Awaiting Reefing. If such Is Permitted, it could open the door for Much More Historical Destruction. With a Museum In New York City With a Guttered Interior, Some Spaces

Can Be Restored while Others are Turned into Businesses to Help Profit. It would Also Help With Popularity In the Area with a Historical Vessel in A Populated City. She is America's Last Flagship. Let's treat her as such.



Photos Of the New York Coalition

# SEAN MEAD'S TESTIMONY TO THE NYC COUNCIL REGARDING THE "S.S. UNITED STATES."



The S.S. United States in 1966.

Dear honorable members of the Council of the City of New York, My name is Sean Michael Chesser Mead, I am 15 and I write to you from Florida. I write to you in regards to the Historic Ocean Liner S.S. United States for the November 20th Council Meeting

regarding the committee on Cultural Affairs. The S.S. United States is a Historic American Ocean Liner built in 1951 for the United States Lines and is the Incumbent Holder of the Transatlantic Blue Riband. But right now, she's in danger. The ship is now in the possession of Florida's Okaloosa County, who has plans to sink the ship and turn it into the World's Largest Artificial Reef. Ever since the plan was announced, it was highly controversial and major preservation groups started popping up such as the New York Coalition to Save the Steamship United States Incorporated and the Steamship United States Preservation Foundation Incorporated. The Coalition and the Preservation Foundation have racked up over 20,000 signatures on both their petitions that are against the sinking of the S.S. United States and have campaigned for the ship to be relocated, restored, and preserved as a permanent Waterfront attraction as a Hotel/Museum Ship, the Coalition also filed a lawsuit against Okaloosa County that was ultimately dismissed on August 6th, 2025 due to "lack of standing". But nonetheless, sinking the ship still remains controversial, sparking heavy criticism from Preservationists and Others who have followed the Ship for years. The Coalition has announced a phased restoration plan for the Liner to be Relocated to GBX Terminals in Brooklyn, New York that offers significant Job and Economical Opportunities to help New York's Economy and Provide Thousands of Jobs to those in Need and Not just that, if this Ship is Saved and Comes to New York, it also provides a Great Tourism Opportunity considering she is the Last American Ocean Liner still in existence, there are none like her that still exist built by American Hands, forged by American Materials, and Ran by an American Company. Not just that too, most importantly, if you agree to support our cause, you are agreeing to help Save and Restore National Pride! Let's also cite the Queen Mary, she just recently won the Historic Hotels award of 2025, think about the Opportunity the S.S. United States could bring to Brooklyn! Tourism, jobs, economical benefits, awards, and a heck of a lot of 'Thank you!'s from Passionate Historical Preservationists like yours truly, I could go on for much longer but I think this is enough, Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Best Regards:

Sean Michael Chesser Mead

Respectfully Submitted on November 14th, 2025.

Apopka, Florida.



**From:** [Shirine Saad](#)  
**To:** [Testimony](#)  
**Cc:** [Kneaku, NY4CA](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony  
**Date:** Thursday, November 20, 2025 7:41:29 PM

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Hello,

I applied to testify at the Culture hearing but didn't receive a Zoom link to join. Here is my testimonial.

2025-11-20

I am here today to share my troubling experiences in culture, the arts, philanthropy, and education, as a professional working in the field for over 20 years now. I hope that this moment of change will inspire us to take an honest look at the institutions we work within, uphold, and support, and act for lasting and sustainable transformation within our communities and beyond.

Coming from Lebanon, a war-torn country, I chose working in the arts seeking justice, liberation, healing, truth, collaboration, and free expression. What I have found, however, is rampant nepotism, corruption, dishonesty, repression, inequality, censorship, coercion, ableism, racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia, and a toxic attachment to capitalist, colonial, carceral ways of operating and communicating.

I have personally experienced relentless censorship, bullying, surveillance, shockingly unethical behaviors and speech, verbal and psychological abuse, illegally broken contracts and agreements, isolation, and anti-Arab discrimination throughout my work with leading cultural organizations claiming innocence and representation. There are many resources documenting the systemic abuse within the cultural environment and the attacks on solidarity movements - and I would be glad to compile them towards a comprehensive report of ethical violations, nepotism, and dishonesty within the field. Thank you for listening and I hope we can work together for the New York and world we dream of.

Best,

Shirine Saad  
[www.shirinesaad.com](http://www.shirinesaad.com)

Dear New York City Council,

My name is Spencer Chew, and I am writing to you today to informally plead with you on my hands and knees to take refuge of the SS United States which is in great peril of being sunk off Florida's coast by Okaloosa county. By now you have undoubtedly been in talks with harboring the returned SS United States ocean liner by your city harbor. Please accept the New York Coalition to Save The SS United States' proposal and rule in favor of the Coalition. The planned sinking has been all but reviled by US residents of all 50 US states and from nearly 100 countries. Most notably, I should inform you that, in the last 10 months since the ship's relocation to Mobile, Alabama, the many passionate and driven groups of people fighting to save the ship have been unified in a way that's unprecedented in maritime history or the history of this country. That's sacred. That's worth fighting for. These groups have convinced an entire generation or two that this is a ship that



country. That's sacred. That's worth fighting for. These groups have convinced an entire generation or two that this is a ship that they could save, and they're starting to garner support.

We can't let them down. And it wasn't luck that saved the last historic ship the last time. It was hard resolve.

But that does not in any way obscure the fact that American maritime history is in grave existential jeopardy. With the undignified demise of the SS America on the shores of Fuerteventura in the [Canary Islands](#) in 1994, the SS United States is the sole remaining American built and operated ocean liner, all others have been cut up for scrap decades ago. If the sinking by Okaloosa county is allowed to proceed unimpeded, the American people will never forgive you.



This is your chance to undo nearly 60 years of mismanagement, corruption, subterfuge, greed, and neglect done to this once magnificent ship by the SS United States Conservancy and its subsidiaries. To have the ship safely above the waves, restored to her former and rightful glory if not both restored and restored to sail again are the only two outcomes these groups are striving for. Reefing is absolutely out of the question. And it just so happens that all of this coincides with this country's approaching 250th anniversary. As grand as the festivities will be, I have no doubt that having the ship above water with a fresh coat of paint will add a degree of brilliance to the grandeur of said festivities that you can barely imagine.



Furthermore your acceptance of the ship will not only bolster your tourism revenue and practically guarantee your reelection, but you will serve to inspire future generations of passionate and likeminded Americans while doing a service to the names of all the ordinary shipyard workers along with the brilliant minds at Gibbs and Cox who collectively poured blood sweat and tears and great love into the building of this ship.

I ask you not to delay seeking a ruling in favor of the Coalition and to not be swayed by any and all testimony from Okaloosa County officials. As I speak the ship's remediation for reefing is nearing completion. The clock is ticking, and even more so for this country's 250th anniversary.

It's up to you, City Council, please do not fail us.

Thank you.

Dear Members of the New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations,

I appreciate the council taking the time to read this testimony. My name is Steven Lopez, I am a resident of Whittier, California, a suburb of Los Angeles, and I am a first-year History major at Whittier College. I am testifying in support of NYCC Resolution 0649-2024, *Resolution calling on the United States Congress to pass, and the President to sign, legislation declaring the ocean liner the SS United States a historic location, allocating funds for the ocean liner's restoration, and its relocation to the city of New York.*

The SS United States, Ref# 99000609 in the National Register of Historic Places, is the fastest ocean liner ever built in the United States, and the last remaining US-built ocean liner in existence. Launched in June of 1952, she won the Blue Ribband, the accolade for the fastest transatlantic crossing in regular service with the record highest average speed in both eastbound and westbound passages, on her maiden voyage in July of the same year, at a speed of 35.59 knots (40.96 mph).

Designed by renowned naval architect William Francis Gibbs, with the intention of serving as a discreet troop transport vessel during the Cold War, if needed, featuring top-secret features classified by the US Navy. The United States was well-known not only for its incredible speed but also for its elegant, modern design. She featured two iconic, finned, tear-drop-shaped, red, white, and blue funnels that hold the record for the tallest ever constructed for maritime use, with the forward funnel reaching 65 feet in height.

During her career, she carried presidents, foreign heads of state, and celebrities such as Harry Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Bill Clinton, Marlon Brando, Salvador Dali, Grace Kelly, Prince Rainier of Monaco, Walt Disney, Kim Novak, Cary Grant, Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson, Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Eleanor Roosevelt, Katharine Hepburn, Irving Berlin, Bob Hope, Rita Hayworth, Sean Connery, Marilyn Monroe, Walter Cronkite, Fred MacMurray, Joan Crawford, etc, transported the Mona Lisa in 1962, and appeared in various films during this period, with prominent roles in United Artists' "Gentlemen Marry Brunettes" (1955) and Walt Disney's "Bon Voyage!" (1962).

At this very moment, the SS United States, owned by Okaloosa County, Florida, is at high risk of being sunk as an artificial reef, which would result in a hazardous diving site and potential environmental danger, due to corrosion of the aluminium superstructure caused by warm water temperatures in the Gulf of Mexico, and would result in a piece of history, from a time when America believed that it could do anything, and the pinnacle of American post-WWII progress and innovation, would be gone, all in the name of financial gain.

To those who think it's not possible to save this stately ship, consider this. In 1967, the Cunard Line retired the RMS Queen Mary after the rise of the airline industry. They were considering options on what to do with the ship and got many offers, including from scrapyards. However, the City of Long Beach, California, put up the highest offer of \$3.45 million (\$33.55 million in

2025). Cunard sold the Queen Mary to Long Beach and turned it into a hotel and museum ship. To this day, the Queen Mary sits in Long Beach harbor as a major tourist attraction for the area. I believe that with the approval of this council and federal backing, the SS United States can reach the same, positive fate.

Given that the SS United States is a symbol of our nation and is one of our greatest achievements, and as she bears the name of our great nation, losing her would be a blow not only to the legacy of ocean liners but also to the pride of the United States. With my testimony, I proudly advocate for the passage of the resolution and for the SS United States to be preserved in New York City.

I thank and appreciate the members of the council for taking the time to read this testimony. I wish you all a good day, and greetings from the State of California.

Warm regards,  
Steven Lopez  
November 14th, 2025

# Testimony to the NYC Council regarding the “S.S United States” :).

Dear Honorable Members of the City of New York Council, My name is Summer Lukes, and I am 16 years old. I am from Illinois. I am writing to you regarding the Historic Ocean Liner S.S. United States for the November 20th council meeting. To start off, I may not know that much about the S.S. United States, but I would like to say this testimony to show I support and want to help save the beautiful S.S. United States in any way possible. As the info I know about her is that she is worth saving and does not deserve to be sunk. The reasons she shouldn't and should be saved are because the things that have been happening to her are not right and are causing a lot of conservancy that is not needed. The S.S. United States is very special to a lot of people, meaning that it may not seem like it, but other people, not just me, want her to be saved ,and at least have her as a museum or turn her into something lots of people can remember her for,and learn more about her than we already do. In conclusion, she is a historic ship that should have her story be told to others. If she were to come to New York, there could be many more good memories she could make with her story being told to others and being able to be in use of something than just “standing” there where she is now. Thank you for your time to read this.

Best Regard:

Summer Lukes

Submitted on November 20th,2025

As someone who has had a lifelong fascination with ships, particularly ocean liners, the destruction of the SS United States completely appalls me, and I am totally opposed to it. Many other people around the world share my view and have already expressed their disapproval. As soon as this shameful plan was announced, I joined the race to help save this wonderful ship, and I was determined to do everything in my power to try to stop her scuttling from taking place.

### ***Why fight to save the SS United States?***

I feel there are several reasons. Quite simply she is so very, very, special and deserves to be saved. She was designed by the brilliant William Francis Gibbs, one of the greatest, if not the greatest, naval architects the world has ever seen. She is the last ocean liner to hold the coveted Blue Riband for the fastest crossing of the Atlantic, a record set in 1952 and, as far as I am concerned, still stands. Even with her hull in the dilapidated state it is today, she still looks very much a champion. But most importantly, perhaps, she is one of the last links to the golden age of ocean liners, the likes of which we will never see again. The ocean liner era was a very special period in human history, one which deserves to be remembered and honoured.

Before she was moved from away from Philadelphia many people speculated that her hull was too far gone to be saved. Many people thought she would never survive the tow. She survived that tow, one of nearly two thousand nautical miles, and came through with flying colours. This is surely testament of the excellent condition of her hull, all credit to her superb design and build. This majestic ship refused to give up and deserves to be saved.

It will take a great deal of work to restore her, and no one person can undertake this task on their own. We will only be successful in saving her if we like-minded enthusiasts who want to preserve her come together and share their talents. The SS United States as a floating tourist attraction would be a great success, not unlike the RMS Queen Mary at Long Beach, Ca. and the SS Great Britain at Bristol.

Together we can - and should - save this magnificent vessel from destruction and preserve her for generations to come.

Please feel free to get in touch. I look forward to hearing from you.

Tim Silcocks

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear New York City Council,

I submit this testimony regarding the imminent fate of the SS *United States*, a vessel that represents the pinnacle of American ingenuity, ambition, and maritime history. It is imperative that the City of New York act now to prevent the destruction of this national monument.

The SS *United States*, launched in 1952, is far more than an old ship; she is an irreplaceable piece of our collective heritage. Designed by the brilliant William Francis Gibbs, she was a marvel of Cold War-era engineering—the largest passenger ship ever built in the United States, and still the fastest ocean liner to ever cross the Atlantic. Her maiden voyage shattered the transatlantic speed record (earning the coveted Blue Riband) a record she holds to this very day, nearly 75 years later.

Crucially, the ship was designed as a dual-purpose vessel, capable of being converted into a military troop transport in just 48 hours, capable of carrying 14,000 soldiers ten thousand miles without refueling. This strategic capability, built with fire-resistant materials and innovative design, made her a potent symbol of American power and technological dominance. She carried four U.S. Presidents, countless celebrities, and served as a cultural bridge for thousands of travelers and immigrants sailing from New York Harbor. To lose her is to erase a chapter of American greatness.

We are now faced with the tragic reality that the SS *United States* is being prepared for scuttling off the coast of Okaloosa County, Florida, where she is slated to become an artificial reef. While I appreciate the effort to reuse the vessel rather than scrapping her, sinking this iconic monument—the fastest ship in the world—is an unacceptable act of cultural vandalism.

Turning this flagship into an artificial reef is a permanent, irreversible step that denies future generations the opportunity to experience her grandeur. A ship of this caliber deserves to be viewed above the waves, providing inspiration, education, and economic benefit as a physical embodiment of American history.

New York City, as the vessel's original home port and the nation's premier port of entry, is the only rightful place for the permanent preservation of the SS *United States*. We need only look at the success of the RMS *Queen Mary* in Long Beach, California, to understand the massive potential she holds.

The *Queen Mary* has operated for decades as a floating hotel, museum, and event center, generating revenue and acting as a cornerstone tourist attraction for the entire region. The SS *United States* offers the same—if not greater—potential right here on the East Coast. Repurposing the SS *United States* as a stationary, mixed-use attraction would allow her to become the East Coast's premier floating historic attraction, drawing maritime enthusiasts, history buffs, and tourists globally. Furthermore, the establishment of hotel rooms, restaurants, event spaces, and museum exhibits would create hundreds of local jobs and a new, reliable source of tourism revenue for the city. Crucially, keeping her afloat and accessible ensures that her story can be told and her immense size and historic fabric can be experienced firsthand.

I urge the New York City Council to heed the calls of the New York Coalition to Save the SS

United States. Utilize this body's influence, resources, and vision to explore viable development and pier space options within the five boroughs. Let us secure a future for America's Flagship that respects her past and leverages her potential to anchor a magnificent new chapter in New York City's maritime story. Do not let the fastest ship in history sink without a fight.

Thank you for your consideration,

William B. Powell

SS United States has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1999. She's the safest and fastest ocean liner of all time, built here in the USA. Designed to quickly convert to a troop transport, she was a warship disguised as a passenger vessel. She was the flagship of the US Merchant Marine, and she broke the transatlantic speed record on her maiden voyage in 1952 without ever coming close to using her full power.

Surely with the SHIPS for America Act bringing back shipbuilding to our nation, she could fit the intent of the bill to provide jobs, education and inspire future marine engineers and naval architects as a museum/ teaching vessel.

Intentionally sinking this historic ship that bears our name on her bow plates is a national disgrace especially considering 2026 is America's 250th birthday. We should preserve our history, not sink it.

Since her arrival in Mobile, Alabama tourism has increased as people from all over the country book dinner cruises to see her in person.

Organizations working to save the ship have petitions that have collectively amassed at least 20,000 official signatures so far.

Oregon's Senate Joint Memorial 10 (SJM10) was introduced to prevent the ship's destruction.

The America 250 Maritime Heritage Act bill proposal envisions a transformative rebirth of the SS United States—not merely as a restored vessel, but as a living, breathing monument to American resilience and innovation.

Additionally, the ship is covered with zinc chromate primer paint just about everywhere over a vast surface area. The reaction with salt water will leach out toxic hexavalent chromium and poison the food chain with a known carcinogen. Safely preserving her above the water line will prevent this hazardous chemical reaction, thereby avoiding an environmental disaster.



The benefits of having the steam ship SS United States moored in the New York area,

Firstly the ship would make a good museum, tourist attraction working along side the USS Intrepid, Working together, they would bring many more visitors to this area of New York and intern help to revitalise this area of the city.

Secondly the restoration can be helped by volunteers, from the retired older members of the city community through to the younger members that have little to do in the evenings, turning part of the ship over to a vibrant social hub for like minded people.

Thirdly, the ship would make for a good music, exhibition platform. Much like the Queen Mary in Long Beach, she would make for a good tourist attraction in her own right. She would help to bring more tourist dollars to the city.

She would help educate the next generation about the time when travelling to other continents by this type of ship was the only way, in a time before the jet aircraft.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Monique Chandler-Waterman

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYS Assemblywoman

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 4630 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11/20/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Laurence Mason

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Myself / Thirteen

Address: 150 8th Ave

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: FRANCHIE GRABER-COHEAN

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: the REGINA OPERA COMPANY

Address: 599 E. 7 ST (11th) BKLYN

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LISA GOLD

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: ASIAN AMERICAN ARTS ALLIANCE

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JOHN GUADROZZI, JR.

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NY COAST GUARD SARGENT

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: James S. Kappeler

Address: 390 K.K.M. Avenue Suite 90

I represent: New York Coalition to Save Standard State

Address: Same as above

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 0649

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: EMIL BROWN

Address: [REDACTED] BROOKLYN, N.Y. 11208

I represent: MANHATTAN LIBRARY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 0649 Res. No. 0649

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David Segregato

Address: [REDACTED] Englewood Cliffs

I represent: NYSave SSUS.ORG

Address: New York New York

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 0649

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11/20/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DAN MCSWEENEY

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: NEW YORK COALITION TO SAVE SS UNITED STATES

Address: BROADWAY NYC

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 0649

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JAMES MICHAEL MALONEY, ESP.

Address: [REDACTED] PORT WASH, NY

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

4260

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11/26/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elizabeth Larison

Address: [REDACTED] Brooklyn, NY

I represent: The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC)

Address: 29 Broadway, Ste 1400, New York, NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 1063

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11-20-25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shevonne Catherine Bascom

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Sigma Gamma Rho, Inc

Address: 100 Southhill Drive Suite 200  
NC 27513

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 0069 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: GEORGE EMILIO SANCHEZ

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: FACT

Address: (same)

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Harry AB. Homme

Address: Brooklyn 11201

I represent: Haiti Cultural Exchange/HPI

Address: 35 Lafayette Brooklyn

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 1063  
☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11-20-85

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Angela Guyton-Cyril

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Sigma Gamma Rho, Inc.

Address: 100 South Hill Drive Suite 200, Cary, NC

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 1063

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11/20/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JEANNINE HINT

Address: [REDACTED] NY, NY 10044

I represent: SIGMA GAMMA Xi Omicron

Address: CARLY, NC. SIGMA

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 0987

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11/20/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mahadya J. Mary

Address: [REDACTED] Rosedale NY 11422

I represent: Hartman Day Parade Inc. & Family

Address: same

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 1063

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11/20/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Frances Bates

Address: PO Box 472802 1360 Flighthush Ave

I represent: Rita Joseph Council member

Address: Sigma Gamma rho

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Annie Dessen

Address: [REDACTED] Brooklyn

I represent: Fall of Freedom

Address: N/A

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 0699

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 12/20/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: James Geraci

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: SS UNITED STATES

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 1063

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kim O'Neale, Eta Nu Sigma 11216

Address: PO Box 472802 [REDACTED] NY

I represent: Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc

Address: SGRHO1922.ORG

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☒ in opposition

Date: 11.20.25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Briana Dixon

Address: [REDACTED] Brooklyn, NY

I represent: Musical Theatre Factory

Address: 223 W 38th St, NY, NY, 10018

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LUCY SEXTON

Address: 64 Bleeker

I represent: New Yorkers for Cultural Art

Address: 64 Bleeker

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lynn Nottage

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: Fall of Freedom

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DJ McDONALD

Address: [REDACTED] Brooklyn

I represent: Dance Parade

Address: 255 TDR Drive

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

Censorship ☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: November 26, 2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alida Camp

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: Community Board 8 Ad Hoc Committee,

Address: Manhattan

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11/20/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christopher Leon Johnson

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: Self

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 897

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 11/20/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: NANCY VEDRINE

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ 11230

I represent: Haitian Day Parade Inc

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mimi Pierce Johnson

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Elmont

I represent: Haitian Culture/Elmont Cultural Center  
Haitian Day Parade Inc

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 7205-4360 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 10/20/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Melissa West

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Staten Island, NY

I represent: Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden

Address: 1000 Richmond Terrace, Staten Island, NY 10301

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms