



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0678-2024, **Version:** *

Res. No. 678

Resolution designating January 31 annually as Cecilia Gentili Day in the City of New York to recognize her significant contributions as an author, performer, policymaker, and activist, who fought for the rights of undocumented immigrants, sex workers, and LGBTQIA+ individuals.

By Council Members Cabán, Bottcher, Ossé, Hudson, Hanif, Restler, Avilés, Williams, Krishnan, Farías, Rivera, Banks, Gutiérrez, Ayala, Schulman and Dinowitz

Whereas, Cecilia Gentili was born on January 31, 1972, in Gálvez, Argentina; and

Whereas, She moved to the larger city of Rosario to attend college and came out as transgender at the age of 18, after which she faced discrimination and repeated acts of brutality from the police in Argentina; and

Whereas, Working hard, she managed to save enough money to buy a plane ticket to Miami in 1998 in order to live a freer life; and

Whereas, As an undocumented immigrant in Miami, she made a living as a sex worker and was arrested before moving to New York City (NYC), where she struggled with addiction and faced more arrests; and

Whereas, She began her community service work as an intern with the NYC Anti-Violence Project- which is today the largest anti-violence LGBTQ organization in the United States (U.S.)-in order to help marginalized groups she was part of: sex workers, undocumented immigrants, and transgender women, especially transgender women of color; and

Whereas, From 2012 to 2016, she worked with Apicha Community Health Center to create a program for transgender services, including gender-affirming care, and manage a clinic for transgender patients that grew from four patients to over 500 during her time there; and

Whereas, From 2016 to 2019, she worked as the Director of Policy at the GMHC (formerly Gay Men's Health Crisis), well known for its long fight against HIV/AIDS and its work on behalf of those affected by the

epidemic; and

Whereas, Known for her warm embrace of those who needed help on their personal journeys, her longtime partner Peter Scotto noted after her death that their “phone would ring all the time in the middle of the night and she’d jump into action to help people in crisis”; and

Whereas, In 2019, she founded Trans Equity Consulting as an organization that could pay transgender individuals for their expertise on community matters, such as how to make businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies more inclusive and more supportive of LGBTQIA+ rights; and

Whereas, She worked successfully for the 2019 passage of GENDA, the New York Gender Expression and Nondiscrimination Act, which bans discrimination based on gender expression and identity; and

Whereas, In 2019, she received a Community Health Award from Callen-Lorde Community Health Center for her leadership, including the creation of the first free health care clinic for sex workers, Cecilia’s Occupational Inclusion Network (COIN); and

Whereas, She helped lead the DecrimNY campaign to decriminalize sex work in NYC and worked for the repeal of the “walking while trans” law, used to justify the arrest of transgender sex workers; and

Whereas, As a performer, she played Miss Orlando on the FX television series *Pose*, launched her own live one-woman show *The Knife Cuts Both Ways*, and made her off-Broadway debut in her autobiographical *Red Ink*; and

Whereas, In 2022, she published her memoir *Faltas: Letters to Everyone in My Hometown Who Isn’t My Rapist*, which comprises eight letters, written to people in her past who had treated her either kindly or cruelly, including the daughter of the man who sexually abused her from childhood; and

Whereas, She noted that *Faltas* “is not a book that tries to create social change,” but also explained that she hoped that people would read the book and ask, “How much damage are we doing by not validating the identities of trans children?”; and

Whereas, As the organizer of the fundraiser Transmission Fest 2023, NYC’s first all-transgender music

festival, held in Marsha P. Johnson State Park and featuring 20 transgender musical artists, she explained that transgender artists “are often included in Pride events,” but are not “centered,” commenting pointedly that “there’s a difference”; and

Whereas, Following Gentili’s death on February 6, 2024, she was honored in NYC both at a memorial service at Judson Memorial Church and at a funeral at St. Patrick’s Cathedral; and

Whereas, The designation of a day is fitting to commemorate Gentili’s groundbreaking activism in NYC carried out in support of the marginalized communities to which she belonged and which she championed with ferocity, humor, and unwavering dedication; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York designates January 31 annually as Cecilia Gentili Day in the City of New York to recognize her significant contributions as an author, performer, policymaker, and activist, who fought for the rights of undocumented immigrants, sex workers, and LGBTQIA+ individuals.

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