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THE COUNCIL OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS
COUNCIL MEMBER, 45TH DISTRICT, BROOKLYN

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February 25, 2013

Assembly Member Dov Hikind
1310 48th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11219

Dear Assembly Member Hikind:

We would like to address an incident involving you that has received considerable publicity in the last 24 hours. Your decision to appear in blackface at a party hosted at your home is both disturbing and troubling for the message it sends to the African-American community of Brooklyn.

It is understood that cultural celebrations such as Purim can be opportunities to appear in various styles of costume, and we have certainly been defenders of individuals' freedom of expression. As elected officials though, we bear a different responsibility for our role in the public discourse, whether we like it or not. Your costume is offensive to a significant segment of this borough for its connection to the sordid history of blackface in American theater. People associate blackface with offensive African-American stereotypes popularized in minstrel shows and vaudeville, stereotypes such as laziness, stupidity and cowardice. In fact, this same art form negatively depicted other communities, including the bigoted portrayal of Jews as corrupt and conniving.

Not only have you appeared publicly in blackface, you have offered an initially fierce defense of your actions, declaring on your blog that "this is political correctness to the absurd." This is a disconcerting response, especially when we consider that on multiple occasions you have come out to loudly defend the Jewish community against real and perceived indignities. Now that the proverbial shoe is on the other foot, why should there

be a different standard? People are sincerely offended; that should be enough to engender your apology.

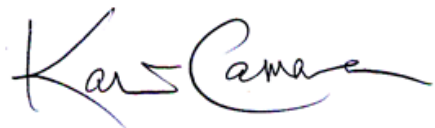
The relationship between the Jewish and African-American communities of Brooklyn has strengthened in recent years, but not too long ago it was deeply fractured. Leaders from these communities have worked hard to calm tensions and build bridges of tolerance and cooperation. However, to many concerned New Yorkers, your act and subsequent comments fly in the face of those efforts.

For these reasons, we are asking that you provide a sincere public apology for the damage caused by this episode. Additionally, we are asking that you make the commitment to working with community leaders to improve cross-cultural understanding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Williams'.

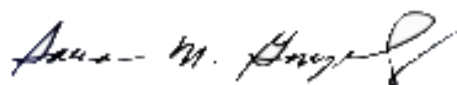
Council Member Jumaane D. Williams

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Karim Camara'.

Assembly Member Karim Camara

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lewis A. Fidler'.

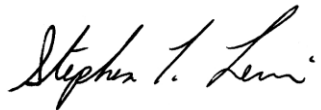
Council Member Lewis A. Fidler

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara M. Gonzalez'.

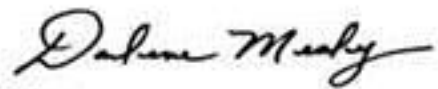
Council Member Sara Gonzalez



Council Member Brad Lander



Council Member Stephen Levin



Council Member Darlene Mealy



Council Member Diana Reyna



Council Member Al Vann