NEW YORK STATE SENATE

THE STENOGRAPHIC RECORD

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3:25 p.m.

REGULAR SESSION

SENATOR ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS, Acting President

ANGELO J. APONTE, Secretary

P R O C E E D I N G S

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: The Senate will come to order.

I ask everyone present to please rise and repeat with me the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Whereupon, the assemblage recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.)

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: The invocation today will be delivered by Father Peter G. Young, of the Mother Theresa Community in Albany, New York.

REVEREND YOUNG: Thank you, Senator.

Let us pray.

In New York City at George Washington's inauguration as President, he placed his hand on the Bible on April the 30th, 1789, to serve with integrity his nation.

May we pray too for our United States Senator today being sworn in. May she be blessed.

And may we especially pray today

for our Senators here in this chamber, so that their leadership will be with their elected office, with dedication in public service.

For all of those, we bless them in Your name so that they carry out their most important work for all of our citizens in this great state. Amen.

Thank you, Senator.

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: Thank you, Father Young.

The reading of the Journal.

The Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY: In Senate, Friday, January 23, the Senate met pursuant to adjournment. The Journal of Thursday, January 22, was read and approved. On motion, Senate adjourned.

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: Without objection, the Journal stands approved as read.

Presentation of petitions.

Messages from the Assembly.

Messages from the Governor.

Reports of standing committees.

Reports of select committees.

Communications and reports from state officers.

Motions and resolutions.

Senator Klein.

SENATOR KLEIN: Madam President, I believe Senator Dilan has a privileged resolution at the desk. I would ask that it be read in its entirety and move for its immediate adoption.

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: The Secretary will read the resolution in its entirety.

THE SECRETARY: By Senator Dilan, Legislative Resolution Number 207, mourning the death of Boxing Hall of Famer and Ambassador Jose Torres, distinguished citizen and devoted member of his community.

"WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to citizens of the State of New York whose lifework and civic endeavor serve to enhance the quality of life in their communities and the great state of New York; and

"WHEREAS, Jose 'Chegui' Torres, a former light-heavyweight champion who became a boxing official and a literary presence in the sport as a biographer of Muhammad Ali and Mike Tyson, died on Monday, January 19, 2009, in Ponce, Puerto Rico, at age 72; and

"WHEREAS, Revered both in Spanish Harlem and in Puerto Rico, Jose Torres was one of New York's renaissance men: world champion athlete, trendsetter, journalist and author; and

"WHEREAS, Fighting professionally from 1958 to 1969, Jose Torres had a record of 41-3-1. He captured the light-heavyweight crown in March of 1965 when the referee stopped his fight with Willie Pastrano after the ninth round. After three title defenses, he lost the championship to Dick Tiger of Nigeria on a decision in December of 1966; and

"WHEREAS, Jose Torres was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1997. He was the chairman of the New York State Athletic Commission from 1984 to 1988, becoming the first former professional boxer

and the first Latino to head the agency, which oversees boxing in the state; and

"WHEREAS, Jose Torres was the author of Sting Like a Bee: The Muhammad Ali Story (1971) and Fire and Fear: The Inside Story of Mike Tyson (1989), and he wrote for the New York Post and the New York newspaper El Diario La Prensa. Jose Torres, a native of the Ponce, Puerto Rico area and the son of a businessman, learned to box in the Army and captured the light-middleweight silver medal at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. He earned his first boxing paycheck serving as a sparring partner for Sugar Ray Robinson in 1957; and

"WHEREAS, Early in his pro career, Jose Torres became friendly with young writers, among them Pete Hamill, who was with the New York Post. Pete Hamill helped Jose Torres get a column in the paper, and Jose wrote often on Latino community affairs; and

"WHEREAS, When Jose Torres was introduced as the state athletic commissioner in November of 1984 by Governor Mario Cuomo, his guests included Cus D'Amato, his former

manager; Pete Hamill; Budd Schulberg, who wrote the epilogue to the Ali biography; and Norman Mailer; and

"WHEREAS, Jose Torres cited Cus D'Amato as 'the man who created the fighter' and Norman Mailer as 'the man who created my intellectual capacity.' Jose vowed that as chairman of the athletic commission, he would promote educational opportunities for fighters 'at least so they can read their contracts'; and

"WHEREAS, Jose Torres, a member of the athletic commission before becoming its chairman, had also been active in societal affairs, working for Paul O'Dwyer when he was the president of New York's City Council and for Andrew Stein when he was the Manhattan borough president; and

"WHEREAS, Jose Torres distinguished himself in his profession by his sincere dedication and substantial contribution to the welfare of his community; and

"WHEREAS, Jose Torres' commitment to excellence, and his spirit of humanity,

carried over into all fields of enterprise, including charitable and civic endeavors; and

"WHEREAS, Jose Torres is survived by his wife, Ramonita; now, therefore, be it

"RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Boxing Hall of Famer and Ambassador Jose Torres, distinguished citizen and devoted member of his community; and be it further

"RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Jose Torres."

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: Senator Dilan.

SENATOR DILAN: Yes, Madam President. I rise to honor the memory of a distinguished gentleman and human being.

Mr. "Chegui" Torres was an unsung hero, but definitely he was a hero in the Latino and Puerto Rican community. As the resolution indicates, he definitely distinguished himself in many professional areas.

And I'd really like to publicly

offer my sympathies to his family, and my condolences, and thank them for his many years of service to us.

And I respectfully request that this resolution be opened up to all members. Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: Thank you, Senator Dilan.

Senator Adams.

SENATOR ADAMS: Thank you, Madam President. I too rise to show my support for our great fighter Torres and to really reflect on how he was a historical, historical figure.

At the beginning of the year -- as we talk about historical figures, at the beginning of the year I did a little unscientific survey where I brought an old survey that was done many years ago with two dolls, one of the dolls being black and one of the dolls being white. And I went to a public school, and I held the dolls up and I asked the students in the classroom -- young children, second- and third-graders -- which

one of the dolls were smart. Eighty percent of the children said the white doll was smarter than the black doll.

After the Obama race, I returned to the school and I held up the dolls again, and it turned to 60/40 where the students said the black doll was smarter than the white doll.

So the concern is not so much who is brighter or who's not, but it's to shatter myths and misconceptions.

And as we stand here in this chamber feeling the residue of the Obama election, we once again see a first, by having you stand and adorn our Senate environment. So you now are, just as Obama, the first woman and person of color to stand in that position as the Temporary President and the President of the Senate, and we commend you for that.

We are in a major point in our lives as Americans that we start the process of becoming modern-day Johnnie Appleseeds and planting the seeds of prosperity and opportunity everywhere from the tip of the state to the bottom of the state.

And I believe that not only has the wave of Obamamania taken over the country to breathe change into our lungs so that we can have the energy, the capacity to blow the state in the direction that it ought to go into, but that change also has found its way into the State Senate.

You are doing a great job. We're happy to see you here. And little children all over the country will see that they too can aspire to be not only a great senator but to stand in front of this great conference and do great things for this state and this country.

Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: Thank you, Senator Adams.

Senator Serrano.

SENATOR SERRANO: Thank you, Madam President.

And it is also an honor to see you there in the chair. Congratulations.

I want to speak on the resolution and thank Senator Dilan for bringing this

resolution to this floor.

As a fan of boxing, I have always been aware of the great career of Jose Torres. But I think what's even more fascinating about this amazing person was his career outside of the ring.

In a time when we see many athletes having a very hard time coming to grips with the fact that their athletic career may be over and having little to do after that, Jose Torres showed that his exploits in the ring were only part of the tremendous wealth of knowledge and opportunity that he presented not only to the Latino community, to the Puerto Rican community, but to all communities.

We lost a great person. We lost a great man. Someone who inspired us through his exploits in the ring as well as the things he wrote in his books and memoirs. He was an advisor to a tremendous champion such as Mike Tyson and well-respected throughout the sport.

I think that as we look to role models and we look to people to try to

emulate, here's a perfect example of brawn and brains. And I am very proud of all that he accomplished. We will miss him dearly.

And I once again thank Senator Dilan.

Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: Thank you, Senator Serrano.

Senator Perkins.

SENATOR PERKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair -- Madam President.

I want to take a moment to first thank Senator Dilan for putting forward this resolution, and to also thank the family of Jose Torres and to express my condolences to them.

I had a personal friendship with Jose "Chegui" Torres. I obviously came to know him, as most of us did, by virtue of his extraordinary boxing skills, which made him a world champion; in fact, the first world-class champion from the Latino Puerto Rican community.

He came up out of East Harlem, El

Barrio, a place where some of us have maybe a little bit of extra pride about being associated with him. He was especially proud of his roots and often returned to his roots, recognizing, as a champion, the significance that his return would have on the young people from that neighborhood as an inspiration.

He was funny. He was generous. He wasn't just a boxer, a world-class boxer, he was a world-class individual who was active in the political arena and in the community arena as well.

And so I just wanted to remember him with the fondness of memories. He was a great New Yorker. And I think that Dave Dinkins, when he became the first black mayor of the City of New York, would be the first to pay tribute to the role that Jose "Chegui" Torres played in his election to that very important position.

So we have been honored by his presence, have been inspired by his model of being a champion not just in the ring but also in the community. And we all should remember

him that way.

Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: Thank you, Senator Perkins.

Senator Espada.

SENATOR ESPADA: Thank you, Madam President.

And I too share in the joy and sense of pride of having responded to you in giving me permission to rise here today in this historic moment. We thank you.

And we also thank Senator Dilan and Senator Serrano and Senator Perkins and others who will get up and acknowledge the contributions of Jose "Chegui" Torres.

I do so in a very personal way, as does Senator Perkins. I was a friend of Jose "Chegui" Torres. He was some twenty years my elder. And so as I was pursuing a career in boxing at St. Mary's Gym in the South Bronx, he happened to come in. And everything stops when a champ is a champ is a champ forever. And so he came in, and we all stopped what we were doing. And he talked to us not about

boxing but about life.

And so there started a friendship that led me to seek his counsel to go, instead of a boxing career, to go to Syracuse University, later to Fordham. And we always corresponded.

I grew up on Caldwell Avenue in the South Bronx. His presence was absolutely felt there, as the foremost nonprofit provider of healthcare services and housing services was born on that street. He was the titular head, the spirit of that organization. He paraded in Puerto Rican day parades. And he was very much a part of the fabric of the Puerto Rican Latino experience in the sixties when a lot of us were just getting here and learning the English language.

He never shed his heavy accent, God bless him. He never shed his roots in Ponce [in Spanish].

And so we remember him today much like Senator Serrano said, not just as a boxer but as a person who leaves so much behind, so much that he did in the literary community

with the literary champions of his age.

We will miss him, but he is celebrated coast to coast in Puerto Rico, coast to coast in the United States. And we thank you, Senator Dilan, for remembering him today.

Thank you.

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: Thank you, Senator Espada.

Are there any other Senators who wish to speak?

Senator Diaz.

SENATOR DIAZ: Thank you, Madam President.

I join my colleague Senator Adams in congratulating you. And I will join also my colleague Martin Dilan on his resolution.

But, you know, I don't know anything about boxing. Nothing at all. So I cannot stand here and tell you how great a fighter was Chegui Torres. I know that he won his title against Willie Pastrano and he lost a few years later against Tiger.

But the only thing that I know

about him besides certain, some columns that he wrote about me, is that he did something for us Puerto Ricans to make us feel proud. And when any Puerto Rican -- being a Puerto Rican, when any Puerto Rican put our country, our homeland in the place that Chegui Torres did, it's something that we appreciate and that we feel proud of.

And yes, we lost someone that gave to Puerto Rico and to us Puerto Ricans a moment of glory, a moment of pride. And Chegui Torres was a star in our community. He not only was a fighter, he was somebody that was a person that fought for the poor, for the needy, and he was always there.

He was not a champion, a boxer that when he retired he went on his own. He kept in the community, especially in New York, fighting and criticizing even people like me when he was against, you know, what I always believed in.

But Chegui Torres was somebody that we Puerto Ricans feel proud to have. And today I'm very proud that this Senate is

honoring him through the resolution of my colleague Martin Malave Dilan from Brooklyn. So this Bronxite and this Bayamonist from Bayamon, Puerto Rico, Martin, thank you for this resolution. I join, as a Puerto Rican, join you and our colleagues here in honoring and remembering this.

And you, Madam Chairlady, you look so beautiful there.

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: Thank you, Senator Diaz.

SENATOR DIAZ: You look so elegant.

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: Thank you.

SENATOR DIAZ: You look so dignified there. You are -- you always be like that, but today, there, you know, looking at you up there, being the first Afro-American woman in that place. Then the next one will be us, the first Puerto Rican over there. Soon.

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: Soon. Soon.

SENATOR DIAZ: Thank you, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: Thank you, Senator Diaz.

Does anyone else wish to speak on the resolution?

(No response.)

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: The question is on the resolution. All those in favor please signify by saying aye.

(Response of "Aye.")

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: Opposed, nay.

(No response.)

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: The resolution is adopted.

At the request of the sponsor, the resolution is open for multisponsorship to the entire house. Any member wishing not to be a multisponsor of the resolution should so inform the desk.

And also I want to thank my colleagues for their kindness during this moment.

And I also wanted to say that I wanted to thank Majority Leader Smith. Because it is certainly an opportunity, and I'm sure most of my colleagues will have as well.

But it is a privilege. And if it is dignified, it is because it reflects all of you.

Senator Klein.

SENATOR KLEIN: Thank you, Madam President.

I too would like to join the chorus of all of my colleagues in congratulating you as the first African-American woman to preside over this legislative chamber.

January, as everyone knows, has been certainly a very historical month. The election of Barack Obama as the first African-American president, and now you.

And I do agree with my colleague Reverend Diaz; you look awfully good up there, Madam President.

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: Thank you very much.

SENATOR KLEIN: I'd like to now, Madam President, just talk briefly about some housekeeping, the upcoming schedule for February and March.

As most of you know, there's a four-day week beginning, of course, next week, February. Monday, session will begin at 3:00 p.m., Tuesday, 3:00 p.m., and Wednesday will be at 3:00 p.m. And Thursday will be at 11:00 a.m.

Just in the future, if Wednesday is the last day that we're in session -- in other words, going Monday through Wednesday -- we will adjourn at 11:00 a.m.

We're doing this to accommodate the busy committee schedules that are going to take place in the weeks and months ahead.

So, Madam President, is there any further business at the desk?

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: Senator Klein, the desk is clear.

SENATOR KLEIN: At this time, Madam President, there being no further business, I move we adjourn until Tuesday,

January 27th, at 11:00 a.m.

ACTING PRESIDENT STEWART-COUSINS: There being no further business to come before the Senate, on motion, the Senate stands adjourned until Tuesday, January 27th, at 11:00 a.m.

(Whereupon, at 3:46 p.m., the Senate adjourned.)