ONEIDA INDIAN NATION

ONEIDA NATION HOMELANDS

August 20, 2010

The Honorable Michael R. Bloomberg
City Hall
New York City, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Bloomberg:

We were deeply offended and saddened by your comments to Governor Paterson regarding the State's relationship with sovereign Indian nations. Using imagery of the governor "wearing a cowboy hat and holding a shotgun" to confront Native Americans is offensive and hurtful to us. Worse, these remarks incite dangerous fringe elements in an already volatile situation.

When our ancestors welcomed the newcomers to this land and helped feed and assist them, the act alone demonstrated how we always desired to find a way for all of us to live successfully and freely together. Instead, the newcomers took what they wanted by any means necessary, often by brute force. For you to suggest that New York State follow that disturbing and immoral pattern today is more than simply disrespectful. It implies that, even in the 21st century, the dominant society thinks there is nothing wrong with continuing to encroach upon the rights – through force, if necessary – of the first Americans.

Moreover, Native Americans and American Jews share a common interest in protecting our respective homelands from those who seek to exterminate an entire culture, just as the "cowboys" sought to eliminate Native Americans. You can similarly imagine how members of the Jewish community would react if a politician urged the governor to "wear a red armband and hold a shotgun" to confront Jewish people who defend their lands as we defend ours. While you claim to be calling just for the law to be enforced, surely as a Jewish leader you would recognize the tragic history of laws being used to suppress ethnic minorities. These laws are not defensible. Our Jewish friends were right to object to such laws in Europe, and we would hope you would stand with us in opposition to calls to "just enforce the law" against us without recognizing the consequences far beyond merely a tax revenue issue for the State.

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As the mayor of America's largest and most diverse metropolis, you know that the only effective way to resolve differences is through honest, mutually respectful dialogue, not by perpetuating stereotypes that incite dangerous thinking that does not respect life.

Nʌ kiʔ wa,

Ray Halbritter
Nation Representative