

**MUNICIPALITY OF SAN JUAN
CAPITAL CITY OF PUERTO RICO
SAN JUAN CITY COUNCIL**

**RESOLUTION NO. 32
SERIES 2001-2002
(Bill of Resolution No. 33, Series 2001-2002)**

Approved on September 24, 2001

RESOLUTION

TO EXPRESS OUR MOST FORCEFUL REJECTION AND DISGUST FOR THE SHAMEFUL WORDS WRITTEN BY MRS. CELESTE BENÍTEZ ON HER OPINION COLUMN TITLED “WELCOME TO THE 21ST CENTURY”, PUBLISHED ON A LOCAL NEWSPAPER ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2001, IN REGARD TO THE TERRORIST ATTACK AGAINST OUR NATION ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2001; CALL ON EVERY RESIDENT OF THE CAPITAL CITY OF PUERTO RICO WHO TREASURES HIS RIGHT TO LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS, AND HIS FORTUNE TO LIVE UNDER A SYSTEM OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT, TO UNITE – SUCH AS THE WORLD HAS DONE – IN A COMMON EMBRACE WITH THE VICTIMS OF THE TERRORIST ATTACK TO THE TWIN TOWERS OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER, PENNSYLVANIA, AND THE PENTAGON; AND RESPECTFULLY REQUEST THE GOVERNOR OF PUERTO RICO, HON. SILA M. CALDERÓN; THE MAYOR OF SAN JUAN, HON. JORGE A. SANTINI PADILLA; THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE OF PUERTO RICO, HON. ANTONIO FAS ALZAMORA; THE PRESIDENT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF PUERTO RICO, HON. CARLOS VIZCARRONDO; THE MAJORITY AND MINORITY LEADERS OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF PUERTO RICO; AND THE REST OF THE LEADERS OF THE ISLAND, TO PUBLICLY CONDEMN THE EXPRESSIONS OF MRS. CELESTE BENÍTEZ IN THE CITED COLUMN.

***The hottest places on hell are reserved for those who remain
neutral in moments of great moral crisis.***

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321)

WHEREAS: On Friday, September 14, 2001, a San Juan newspaper published an opinion column written by Mrs. Celeste Benítez, former Puerto Rico's Secretary of Education and candidate to become a member of Congress as Resident Commissioner, titled “Welcome to the 21st Century”, in which she exposes her point of view regarding the terrorist attacks upon the Nation on the previous Tuesday;

WHEREAS: In that column, Mrs. Benítez made some statements that, although should not be repeated, we reproduce with the sole purpose of remaining on fact:

"After Tuesday, an airport will stop being a comfortable place from where nice experiences start or finish. From now on, an airport will be a warehouse of human beings, where we will be subjected to interminable searches of luggage and identity documents. The airports will become a slightly watered version of a concentration camp where the traveler will spent long hours to the mercy of some inspectors with dictatorial attitudes, dedicated to the cult of their own authority.

Welcome to the 21st Century.

On this Century, humanity tired that through the nineteenth and twentieth Centuries, the United States had waged wars of conquest outside the North American national territory, will take its war directly to the U.S.A.'s "front lawn". On Tuesday, we saw the Third World wage its first battles of all places, in the isle of Manhattan and the banks of the Potomac, in the up to now inexorable Pentagon.

War is hitting home. United States is starting to taste the first drops of the medicine that they had been giving the rest of humanity for the past two centuries.

Welcome to the 21st Century." Emphasis supplied;

WHEREAS: This City Council is not in the habit of expressing itself over any opinion uttered on the various means of communication. But in light of what took place on September 11, 2001, when the Nation and the world suffered the ravages of an evil, abominable, and detestable attack, to remain silent would imply a surrender of reason, since in her expressions, Mrs. Benítez did not even repudiate the terrorist acts upon New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. She did not even utilize a single line of all the words used to express her condolences to the families, loved ones, and friends of the victims. There is simply no sympathy for the victims' families, not even to those of Puerto Rican heritage. She does not mention the heroes that fought, and still fight, to save lives and that still work on the rescue operations;

WHEREAS: When Mrs. Benítez denigrates the security measures that must, and will be taken at airports, shamelessly comparing them to the genocidal camps of World War II, and insults the personnel that will safeguard our lives, she only belittles the pain felt by the families and loved ones or friends of the victims, who would not hesitate in backing those measures to avoid others to feel the same pain. She also demeans the heroic efforts of those who died overpowering the terrorist hijackers and in the process surrendered their own lives in order to avoid the further loss of souls;

WHEREAS: To remain silent amidst this infamy also implies a surrender of reason, compassion, and all that we consider determinant in our lives: "[t]he citizenship of the United States of America and the aspiration to continually enrich our democratic tradition in the individual and collective enjoyment of our rights and prerogatives; the loyalty to the postulates of the Federal Constitution; the coexistence in Puerto Rico of the great two cultures of the American Hemisphere; the zeal for education; the faith in justice; the devotion for a labored and pacific life; the fidelity to the values of the human being over social positions, racial differences and economic differences; and the hope of a better world based on these principles." Preamble, Constitution of Puerto Rico, July 25, 1952.

WHEREAS: Ironically, the words written by Mrs. Benítez, splattered with some degree of acquiescence (and completely devoid of any degree of compassion, piety or humanity), are an echo of those expressed by the evil incarnate, Sadam Hussein, the only "leader" in the world that, using the same arguments of Mrs. Benítez, judged the attacked as deserved;

WHEREAS: The fallacy exposed by Mrs. Benítez, is a mockery and disrespect to the thousands and thousands of citizens that gave their blood in what she wrongly calls “*wars of conquest outside the North American national territory*”, including the thousand of Puerto Rican grandparents, parents, siblings, and sons and daughters, who, with their courage, allowed us to live and enjoy today the American Dream and the attainment of a “more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity”. Preamble, Constitution of the United States of America, September 17, 1787;

WHEREAS: Equally, it is inconceivable that Mrs. Benítez, obliquely and implicitly, justifies this barbaric attack, by appealing to deftness and historic half-truths. In fact, even though Mrs. Benítez mentions in her ill-considered commentary the Japanese suicidal soldiers during World War II, she does not acknowledge that that war, far from being a “war of conquest”, as she would like to describe it, saved the world from the atrocities and claws of the totalitarian, fascists, genocidal and antidemocratic regimes of Hitler, Mussolini and the Japanese Empire. Only after Japan attacked the United States, the American Nation rose and assumed its responsibility imposed by historic events to rescue, defend, and protect democracy and liberty around the world. The United States rose also against the furiously antidemocratic and totalitarian communist regimes, which resisted the principles of liberty that we all treasure;

WHEREAS: Those interventions, among many other things, have allowed Mrs. Benítez to write her infamy, the presses to distribute it, and guaranteed her right to do so. It does not matter how we describe it, the participation of the United States of America in armed conflicts, for better or for worse, correctly or incorrectly, has always being directed to preserve those principles that each and everyone of us take for evident and granted:

“[t]hat all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”. Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776;

WHEREAS: To us, it is inexplicable that this lady, creator of the campaign slogan “the best of two worlds” [to describe Puerto Rico’s current relationship to the United States], and who in the article includes herself in the Great Generation that faced the horror of the “kamikaze”, could have been capable of uttering those words, when New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania still burned and innocent human beings still died under millions of tons of steel and concrete, including Puerto Ricans whose only fault was to live their lives;

WHEREAS: Those words, as inconceivable as the terrorist act itself, humiliate and scorn the altruism of those, who, even though were doing their duty, ran towards the disaster and found the inferno that trapped them;

WHEREAS: Instead of using the standing which she enjoys and that allows her to express her opinions on the press to attack in a slanted way, utter her prejudices and monomania and feed distrust, we would have expected that Mrs. Benítez would express her condolences and called for wisdom, union, brotherhood, and the intrinsic and inherent values to our ties with the American Union;

WHEREAS: It is the duty of all of us to emphasize again and again that the attack of September 11th, was a direct assault to our system of democratic government, that guarantees the right to freedom of expression, of the press, of religion and its practice, to express grievances, of association, and of movement – even when events like the one of that fateful Tuesday on September prove that to some, this means the freedom of opportunity to do evil;

WHEREAS: We are fully committed with our Nation in the war against terrorism;

WHEREAS: This City Council, as the legitimate representative of the citizens of the City of San Juan, can not stay indifferent; therefore, today, we break our policy of not expressing ourselves in regard to opinions expressed on the media and voice, publicly and rightfully, our most forceful rejection and disgust for the shameful words written by Mrs. Celeste Benítez on her opinion column titled "Welcome to the 21st Century", published on a local newspaper on Friday, September 14, 2001.

WHEREFORE: BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO:

First: To express our most forceful rejection and disgust for the shameful words written by Mrs. Celeste Benítez on her opinion column titled "Welcome to the 21st Century", published on a local newspaper on Friday, September 14, 2001, in regard to the terrorist attack against our Nation on Tuesday, September 11, 2001, copy of which is made part of this Resolution.

Second: To call on every resident of the Capital City of Puerto Rico who treasures his right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and his fortune to live under a system of democratic government, to unite – as the world has done – in a common embrace with the victims of the terrorist attack to the twin towers of the World Trade Center, Pennsylvania, and The Pentagon.

Third: To respectfully request the Governor of Puerto Rico, Hon. Sila M. Calderón; the Mayor of San Juan, Hon. Jorge A. Santini Padilla; the President of the Senate of Puerto Rico, Hon. Antonio Fas Alzamora; the President of the House of Representatives of Puerto Rico, Hon. Carlos Vizcarrondo; the majority and minority leaders of the Senate and the House of Representatives of Puerto Rico; and the rest of the leaders of the Island, to publicly condemn the expressions of Mrs. Celeste Benítez in the cited column.

Fourth: To send a copy of this Resolution to the Hon. Jorge Santini Padilla, Mayor of San Juan.

Fifth: To send a copy of the English version of this Resolution to the President of the United States of America, the Honorable George W. Bush; and the leaders of the Majority and Minority of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States of America, with the request that it be published in the Congressional Record.

Sixth: To send a copy of this Resolution, in addition, to the Governor of Puerto Rico, Hon. Sila M. Calderón; the President of the Senate of Puerto Rico, Hon. Antonio Fas Alzamora; the President of the House of Representatives of Puerto Rico, Hon. Carlos Vizcarrondo; the majority and minority leaders of the Senate and the House of Representatives of Puerto Rico; and the media.

Seventh: To send a copy of this Resolution, via electronic mail, to all the employees of the Municipality of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Eighth: This Resolution will take effect immediately upon its approval.

Angeles A. Mendoza Tió
President

I, CARMEN M. QUIÑONES, SECRETARY OF THE SAN JUAN CITY COUNCIL, PUERTO RICO:

CERTIFY: that the previous text is an original of the bill of Resolution Number 33, Series 2001-2002, approved by the San Juan City Council, in its Ordinary Session convened by the City Council, dated the 24th of September 2001, with the

affirmative votes of members of the City Council; Mrs. Dinary Camacho Sierra, Linda A. Gregory Santiago, Paulita Pagán Crespo, Ivette Otero Echandi, María Antonia Romero, and Migdalia Viera Torres; and Messrs. Roberto Acevedo Borrero, José A. Dumas Febres, Rafael R. Luzardo Mejías, Ramón Miranda Marzán, José Picó del Rosario, and the President, Mrs. Angeles A. Mendoza Tió; and the abstained votes of Mrs. Nilda Jiménez Colls, Claribel Martínez Marmolejos and Mr. Miguel A. Doménech Vilá; was absent and did not participating in the proceedings Mrs. Elba A. Vallés Pérez.

I ALSO CERTIFY, that all members of the City Council were adequately requested to attend this Session, in accordance with legal requirements.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, and for the proper proceedings, I hereby issue this Certificate, and the Seal of the Municipality of San Juan, Puerto Rico is affixed in the six pages of this Resolution the on this 25th day of September, 2001.

Carmen M. Quiñones
Secretary of the Municipal
Assembly of San Juan