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QUEENS DISTRICT ATTORNEY RICHARD A. BROWN
ESTABLISHES IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS OFFICE

*Appoints Veteran Prosecutor To Serve As Liaison To Queens Immigrant Communities;
Initiative Praised By Public Advocate, Legislative Members And Others*

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that he had created an Office of Immigrant Affairs which will assist members of Queens County's various immigrant communities in navigating and accessing the criminal justice system.

"Queens County is the most ethnically diverse urban environment in America, with 47 percent of its 2.3 million population foreign born and nearly 140 different languages spoken here," said District Attorney Brown. "As such, our office handles many cases annually in which members of immigrant communities are victimized – both by crimes of violence and crimes of financial exploitation. In some cases, immigrants are specifically targeted because they are immigrants."

The District Attorney continued, "While these cases have been aggressively prosecuted in a number of different bureaus throughout our office in the past, we recognize that with immigration policy changing and evolving on all levels of government there is an opportunity to do more and so we found it fitting to establish an Office of Immigrant Affairs in an effort to provide better coordination of these prosecutions and facilitate greater outreach to all of the affected communities. Members of the public can contact the Office of Immigrant Affairs by calling 718-286-6690."

In creating the Office of Immigrant Affairs, District Attorney Brown also announced that he has appointed senior Queens prosecutor Carmencita N. Gutierrez to be its inaugural Director. (See **attached biography**)

As the Director of the Office of Immigrant Affairs, Ms. Gutierrez will serve as the liaison to immigrant communities in Queens, both to ensure that they are aware of and know how to access the criminal justice system if they are victimized and to assist community members and groups with questions, concerns or complaints and direct them to the appropriate bureaus and divisions within the Queens District Attorney's Office. Internally, Ms. Gutierrez will work across divisional lines to assist the bureaus handling these cases and provide a single point of contact for assistant district attorneys concerning immigrant issues.

District Attorney Brown said, "Carmencita is the ideal candidate to head up the newly created office and I know she will serve with distinction. She is a highly accomplished professional and a dedicated public servant who has devoted her entire legal career to protecting the interests of the

people of Queens County by pursuing justice for those who have been wronged. Both her experience as a prosecutor and her compelling background narrative will undoubtedly help her in her new position.”

New York City Public Advocate Letitia James said, “District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that he has created a new Immigrant Affairs Office within Queens County. This is an important move that will improve the lives of countless immigrant New Yorkers, particularly those who are undocumented. Unfortunately, many immigrants are the victims of financial exploitation and have a hard time accessing the criminal justice system. This office will help more than a million foreign-born residents of Queens and it serves as a model for other district attorneys around the nation to implement.”

New York State Senator José R. Peralta said, “Immigrants are often the targets of scam artists because of their lack of familiarity navigating the legal system. The creation of the Office of Immigrant Affairs will serve to make immigrants aware of, and provide them access to, the criminal justice system in the event they are victimized. I applaud Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown for this initiative and thank him on behalf of the many immigrant communities I represent.”

New York State Assembly Member Francisco Moya (D-Jackson Heights) said, “Queens’ richly diverse population of immigrants is one of its greatest strengths. However, many immigrants are either unaware of how the American criminal justice system works or are afraid to become entangled with it. By creating an Office of Immigrant Affairs, the District Attorney will be able to foster relationships within the immigrant community and better explain to immigrants their rights under the law. As a lawmaker, I seek to write laws that crack down on those who take advantage of immigrants. But those laws only work if crimes are reported and then fully prosecuted. I commend Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown for creating an Office of Immigrant Affairs in the District Attorney’s Office. This new office will help ensure that immigrants seek justice for crimes committed against them. Being an immigrant shouldn’t mean that justice is out of reach.”

New York City Council Member Rory I. Lancman (D-Fresh Meadows), chairman of the Council’s Committee on Courts and Legal Services, said, “District Attorney Brown understands that Queens is a borough of immigrants, and that immigrants face special challenges in navigating the criminal justice system. Immigrants are often crime victims, exploited for their vulnerability and unfamiliar with their rights. Establishing an in-house Immigrant Affairs Office will make a real difference for immigrants who don’t speak English, have unsettled immigration status or need help applying for a U-Visa as a crime victim. It will also help the District Attorney fight crime by forging closer relationships with emerging communities. D.A. Brown should be commended for this foresighted innovation.”

New York City Council Member Daniel Dromm said, “Making our court system more accessible to immigrant New Yorkers is a win for everyone. I commend District Attorney Richard A. Brown for creating an immigrant affairs office. This will go a long way toward protecting immigrant communities in Queens, the borough of nations. I also congratulate Assistant District Attorney Carmencita Gutierrez on her appointment as the director of the Immigrant Affairs Office and hope to work closely with her moving forward.”

Jorge I. Montalvo, Director of the New York State Office for New Americans, said, “Fraud against immigrants is a serious problem and those who commit such crimes must be brought to justice. I join everyone in applauding Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown’s creation of an

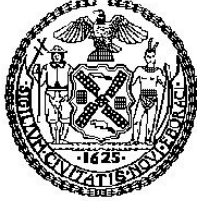
immigrant affairs office and the New York State Office for New Americans stands ready to work with the District Attorney to crack down on those who commit fraud against some of our most vulnerable residents.”

Steven Choi, Executive Director of the New York Immigration Coalition, said, “We are excited to hear that the Queens District Attorney has opened an Immigrant Affairs Office. Raising awareness of the harm that immigrant communities face at the hands of unscrupulous actors has long been a priority for the NYIC. Queens, as New York City’s most diverse borough, has long been a hotbed for unauthorized practices targeting immigrants. We especially commend District Attorney Brown for taking such a comprehensive approach to address crimes being committed against our communities across the spectrum of schemes.”

Valeria Treves, Executive Director, New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE), said, “NICE commends the Queens District Attorney, Richard A. Brown, for the establishment of an Immigrant Affairs Office. At NICE we have seen first-hand how immigrants in Queens are often victimized by immigration service providers, providers of other services targeting immigrants, and by employers who fail to pay wages, a rampant problem which can be prosecuted criminally. Additionally, immigrant communities may be reticent to approach law enforcement, even when they are victims of crimes. For this reason having a specialized unit at the District Attorney Office with tailored outreach will make a great impact in better serving Queens large immigrant community.”

The Office of Immigrant Affairs operates within the District Attorney’s Special Prosecutions Division, which is supervised by Executive Assistant District Attorney Jesse J. Sligh.

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**BIOGRAPHY:
Carmencita N. Gutierrez
Director of the Queens District Attorney's
Office of Immigrant Affairs**

Carmencita N. Gutierrez was appointed Director of Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown's Office of Immigrant Affairs in January 2015.

Ms. Gutierrez is a first-generation Colombian-American and the first member of her family to be born in the United States. Her father, Dr. Humberto Omar Gutierrez, was born in Colombia where he obtained a medical degree from the University of Cartagena. Her mother, Carmen Z. Gutierrez, was also born in Colombia and was one of four women in her class who obtained a Doctorate of Law degree from the University of Cartagena. The family emigrated to the United States in 1962, where Dr. Gutierrez served as a Lieutenant Commander in the United States Navy before establishing a practice as a psychiatrist in New York. Dr. Gutierrez's last job before he passed away in 2011 was working as a psychiatrist at St. Barnabas Hospital in the Bronx, where he counseled many Spanish-speaking immigrants. His wife worked as an associate to the Queens regional director of the New York City Department of Social Services and retired after nineteen years.

Ms. Gutierrez's older brother, Dr. Omar de Jesus Gutierrez, who graduated from Weill Medical College of Cornell University, is an adjunct professor for the biomedical program at City College of New York and is a physician at a medical center serving one of Brooklyn's most culturally diverse communities. Dr. Gutierrez was born in Cartagena, Colombia, and like his parents, proudly became a United States citizen.

Her younger brother, Soren N. Gutierrez, graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 2003, served in Iraq and the National Guard, and is currently the operations director at a middle school academy in Connecticut. Ms. Gutierrez's younger sister, Paloma Espinoza, who graduated from Trinity College in Connecticut and was a Fulbright scholar to Mexico in 2010, is an associate director at a business management consultant firm in North Carolina.

Ms. Gutierrez's family lived on Long Island until they moved to LeFrak City in Corona, Queens, when she was six years old. She spent the next twenty-five years growing up in Queens, where she immersed herself in its multifaceted and diverse culture. She attended both public elementary and high school in Queens before obtaining a Bachelor of Arts degree from the State University of New York at Binghamton and her law degree from Brooklyn Law School in 1988.

Witnessing her parents working within the public sector and making a difference in people's lives inspired Ms. Gutierrez to choose the path of a public service career in prosecution. As a career prosecutor, Ms. Gutierrez has spent twenty-two years with the Queens District Attorney's Office and two and one-half years as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney with the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office in Seattle, Washington. Throughout her career as a prosecutor in Queens County, she has served in a variety of bureaus and has handled an array of criminal cases, including robberies, burglaries, possession of dangerous controlled substances, sex crimes, vehicular homicides and murders. For the past fifteen years she has been assigned to the District Attorney's Public Integrity Bureau as the Deputy Bureau Chief and was responsible for investigating allegations of corruption and brutality leveled against members of the law enforcement community and violations of the public trust by public officials, municipal employees and attorneys.

Ms. Gutierrez is an accomplished prosecutor who has successfully tried several high-profile cases in her career. Those cases include "ATM rapist" Derrick Bonner, who is serving one hundred and fifty-eight years to life for attacking ten women; Abel Rosas who is serving two life sentences for orphaning a young immigrant boy from Lithuania when he shot and killed the child's parents in their Astoria home; Jerry Perez, a Port Authority Police Officer who stole a Liberian minister's wallet containing cash; Leopold McLean, a New York Police Department detective who is serving seven years for shooting an unarmed fleeing man; and most recently Alexandra Schmid, a TSA Officer who stole ten thousand dollars from two immigrants traveling through John F. Kennedy International Airport to Bangladesh and India

In addition to her prosecutorial duties, Ms. Gutierrez conducts training on behalf of the District Attorney's Office and speaks at recruiting engagements at City University of New York Law School and other locations throughout New York City. Ms. Gutierrez, who is fluent in Spanish, is a member of the Latino Lawyers Association of Queens County. She and her husband, Franco Quartuccio, who also served in the United States Army as an 82nd Airborne Division paratrooper and currently works for a major luxury automobile manufacturer, live in New York City.

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Note to Editors: Press release and bio e-versions posted at www.queensda.org.