



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2B

January 15, 2015

Chairwoman Ruthanne Miller
Alcoholic Beverage Control Board
Reeves Center
2000 14th Street NW
Washington, DC 20009

Re: A Pattern of Violence at Heritage India (ABRA-09005)

Dear Chairwoman Miller:

On January 3, 2015 a physical altercation and stabbing occurred inside Heritage India/Zanzibar located within the boundaries of the Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC 2B) at 1901 Pennsylvania Ave NW. ANC2B believes this event indicates an emerging pattern of violence at this establishment and strongly encourages you and the ABC Board to consider revoking this license and finding its owner to be unfit to hold a license.

ANC2B is responsible with representing the best interests of the almost 20,000 residents, hundreds of business owners and innumerable visitors of the Dupont Circle neighborhood. We offer an educated and unique perspective on alcohol policy because of our experience with liquor-licensed establishments: over 25% of the city's liquor licenses are in ANC2B. Today we offer our perspective on dealings with the owners and representatives of Heritage India.

The ANC first learned of the January 3rd stabbing in the news and then discovered that Chief Lanier had ordered the temporary closing of the establishment to protect public safety. In her order to close Heritage India, she summarizes the seriousness of the events well:

A review of the video recording of the activity revealed that numerous physical confrontations were occurring and they lasted approximately eight (8) minutes in duration...

During the incident, uniformed officers responding to the scene were confronted with aggressive actions by several patrons who were being removed from the establishment. The situation at the establishment was so chaotic that officers on the scene were forced to summon additional units, ultimately requiring the response of the majority of the police

units in the lower end of the Second District to get the scene under control and restore order. This response diverted public safety resources from the rest of the Second District.

...something went clearly wrong when eight (8) minutes of continuous physical altercations had occurred ending in one victim almost being stabbed to death.

Chief Lanier goes on in a letter to ABRA Director Moosally to say, “the management of the nightclub clearly failed to maintain a safe environment for its patrons. The club’s security protocols allowed a knife-wielding subject to enter the club, stab one patron, and leave the Night Club without being detected by security personnel of the club. The club’s security staff also proved inadequate to manage the aftermath of this significant crime of violence.”

We could not have said it better ourselves.

This is not the first significant crime of violence to occur at Heritage India under the same owners. In November 2011 when the establishment was on the 1300 block of Connecticut Ave NW, one man was shot dead and five others were wounded when a fight inside the club spilled onto the streets at 2:45 a.m. The establishment was closed temporarily, but soon reopened on Pennsylvania Ave NW as a restaurant without significant late-night activities.

In the Spring of 2014, Heritage India approached ANC2B and requested changes to their negotiated settlement agreement to allow for entertainment and other late-night activities at the Pennsylvania Ave location. The ANC was willing to negotiate a new agreement with the owners and one was reached in May to allow for entertainment and promotion activities. This was contingent on the implementation of a security plan (attached), which was provided to the ANC as an example of how the unsatisfactory operations at the former Connecticut Ave location resulting in the shooting death of one man would not be translated to the new location. In short, the owner said he had learned his lesson and assured us violence would not occur in his establishment again.

The introduction to the security plan reads “Heritage India / Zanzibar will be operated in a manner designed to provide the best possible degree of public safety for its employees and patrons.” Clearly, this did not happen and we feel our trust has been violated. We ask that you task ABRA investigators with determining if any specific requirements of the approved security plan were violated. If so, that should weigh on your decision to allow this establishment to open its doors again.

Violence cannot be tolerated. Not only are the impacts extremely serious for the victims, but there are also real and negative impacts to the character and reputation of the neighborhood. We understand that this may be indicative of a broader pattern of violence throughout the city and we ask that the ABC board address these issues more proactively. We do not feel this establishment has been operated in a manner that will ensure the public’s safety and we do not feel that a monetary settlement or revocation of a particular

endorsement will result in any safer operations. We would be remiss if we did not express our frustration with repeat offenders such as Heritage India and ask you to strongly consider revoking their license to sell alcohol.

We thank you for this consideration and are available at anytime to answer your questions.

ON BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Noah Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "N" and a long, sweeping tail on the "t".

Noah Smith
Chairman