

FW: Seeking Your Support

Abebe, Daniel <daniel.abebe@metrostate.edu>

Mon 6/13/2022 10:52 PM

To: #CI-StPaul_Ward1 <Ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Think Before You Click: This email originated **outside** our organization.

Correction: The date for the attached case is June 15. My apologies!

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Celebrating 50 years!

From: Abebe, Daniel <daniel.abebe@metrostate.edu>

Date: Monday, June 13, 2022 at 12:08 PM

To: ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us <ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: Seeking Your Support

Councilmember Dia Thao,

The Saint Paul City Council is considering the case of Ras Ethiopian Restaurant (2616 7th St. West, Saint Paul, MN 55116) at your upcoming City Council Meeting to be held on Wednesday, June 8, 2022. As a member of the Ethiopian American Community I am writing this letter to seek your support for the continuous operation of Ras Restaurant at its current location.

As you are aware, there are an estimated 30,000 to 45,000 Ethiopian American immigrants residing in the state of Minnesota and most of whom find their home in the two major cities of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. A particular note that the area where Ras Restaurant is located is residence to one of the largest populations of Ethiopian-American immigrants – most of whom are employed by the Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport.

As you may be aware, Ethiopian American immigrants did not have an infrastructure to develop a community center that provide a place of social contact, resettlement education, employment resources, literacy education, etc. Consequently, establishments like Ras Restaurant for many have become a place of community contact – where friends and relatives often get together to socialize, discuss business, to plan matters of community concern, etc. More specifically, members of the Ethiopian American community use Ras Restaurant to celebrate birthdays, graduations, weddings, farewells, etc. In addition, Ras Restaurant has spear headed many of the fund-raising activities for humanitarian purposes such as raising funds to pay for funeral expenses for families who could not afford to bury their loved ones, raise emergency fund for individuals who have fallen on hard times and to help rebuild schools and health centers that have been destroyed by the recent war in Ethiopia. So, Ras Restaurant is more than a place to have a meal and a drink with a friend or family. It is an institution where a significant number of the Ethiopian American Community consider home away from home.

I have spent a good deal of my time visiting with friends and families at Ras Restaurant since it opened its doors close to 15 years ago. In the course these years, I witnessed the challenges and opportunities that the owners (Zenash and Dereje) faced to develop Ras Restaurant to an institution that it is today. Ras Restaurant has become a legend for members of the Ethiopian Community in the Twin Cities and beyond. Ethiopian Americans and their friends far and wide visit Ras Restaurant all the time. Those of us who are football fans, for example, look forward to connecting with friends and watching football on Sundays and those who have a passion for European Soccer Ras has become a place for them.

As a university professor, I have heard from many of my students that not only they enjoyed having a good Ethiopian meal at Ras Restaurant but also being introduced to the Ethiopian culture in all its complexities. They often talked about the unique experience they had at Ras and their desire to introduce it to friends and relatives knowing that others would be deeply touched by the experience.

So, in the absence of a community Center most of us Ethiopian Americans call home, we have come to embrace Ras Restaurant as such a center. I am sure many of my contemporaries would be deeply saddened if Ras is no longer part of our community. So, I urge you and members of the Saint Paul City Council to take into consideration the contributions to the city of Saint Paul owners Zenash and Dereje of Ras Restaurant have made for nearly 15 years. I also hope you will recognize the contribution the restaurant makes to the economic vitality of our beloved city of Saint Paul.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my strong support for the legendary Ras Restaurant as I hope you would. Thank you!

Sincerely,



Daniel Abebe, Ph.D.
Interim Director
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