

GOOD OLD LOWER EAST SIDE
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PHROLES Calls on City to Give Public Housing the Money it Needs

On October 4, 2007, hundreds of people, including public housing residents, advocates, unions, and a host of City Council Members, converged on City Hall Park in a rally organized by PHROLES and its partners to demand that Mayor Bloomberg modify the City's budget to fund public housing. By annually baselining \$30 million to fund 6 developments the City built 30 years ago but for whose operation it has stopped reimbursing NYCHA for over half a decade, the City could help reduce NYCHA's current budget deficit of \$195 million. With a City budget surplus of over \$100 million dollars announced last year, the over 500 demonstrators demanded that the City seize this opportunity to fund public housing. Furthermore, NYCHA uses large portions of its budget to pay the City directly for services such as police and sanitation. Whereas the general public not living in public housing pays for such services solely in the form of taxes and fees. Meanwhile, NYCHA's financial status remains weakened while residents continue to suffer about the anxiety of the future of their homes as well as from cutbacks in services such as repairs, maintenance, and administrative services.

PHROLES Continues the Fight for the Future of Our Homes

While announcements by elected officials such as former Governor Spitzer and Mayor Bloomberg unveiling affordable housing initiatives worth millions of dollars would seem like good news, these officials have been remiss to outline plans to prioritize and preserve the 178,000 *existing* housing units operated by NYCHA. This year NYCHA faces another daunting budget deficit of \$195 million due to funding cuts and neglect from all levels of government. This funding crisis persists despite NYCHA's cost-cutting actions such as raising rents and various fees for residents, laying off employees, and consolidating management offices. If this deficit continues, then NYCHA could be forced to sell or demolish some of its developments, potentially displacing thousands of New Yorkers. With cuts to essential services already implemented, buildings and the quality of life of residents living in them could deteriorate. This dangerous problem must stop, which is why PHROLES and its members have been working in a citywide coalition to address it. We need the help of every resident who cares for the future of their home. For more information on ways to get involved please give us a call at 212-358-1231.

Bringing the Voices of Public Housing Residents to City Hall

For over a decade PHROLES has strived to bring the voices of public housing residents to the corridors of political power in New York City and beyond. This mission has continued over the past two years with an important platform: the City Council's Subcommittee on Public Housing, chaired by Council Member Rosie Mendez. Council Member Mendez has held hearings on a variety of topics facing NYCHA and its residents, including the police presence in developments, Section 8 vouchers, repairs, and the way the Housing Authority spends its money. PHROLES has worked with Council Member Mendez to bring issues to the forefront that later became the subject of the hearings. Housing Authority Board Members appear before the Subcommittee for public testimony and questioning, and later members of the public have an opportunity to testify before the subcommittee. PHROLES and its members have been a visible presence at these public sessions; on February 26th PHROLES member Cora Cofield spoke on

NYCHA's termination and administrative hearing procedures, which she testified have unfairly led to the probation and eviction of numerous public housing residents. Let's continue to show our strength by being seen and heard in City Hall! Attend a public hearing, and spread the word to your neighbors! For more information call PHROLES at 212-358-1231.

GOLES & PHROLES Sponsor the First National Public Housing Leadership Summit

On February 29 through March 2, GOLES & PHROLES, along with the National Training and Information Center and the Coalition to Protect Public Housing sponsored the first-ever National Public Housing Leadership Summit in Chicago, Illinois. This was an exciting and historic event that brought together more than 50 public housing leaders and organizers from across the country. They discussed the issues, pledged their commitment to working in a united front to protect, preserve, and increase funding for public housing, and build a Housing Justice movement. More coming in the months ahead so stay tuned!

40 Years is Too Long--New York City, Keep Your Promise!

On November 4, 2007, GOLES leaders gathered with more than 100 people on the corner of Delancey and Norfolk Streets to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the remains of the Seward Park Urban Renewal Area – the largest piece of city-owned undeveloped land below 96th Street. Ribbons marked with the names of former site residents were tied to the fence which encloses the parking lot now occupying the area where more than 2,000 apartments were torn down and 7,000 people displaced forty years ago. Speakers at the event, which was sponsored by the Seward Park Area Redevelopment Coalition (SPARC), remembered the city's un-kept promise to return residents and called on the city to build affordable housing on the site.

Coming Soon! Free Housing Rights Training Series

Beginning in the spring of 2008, GOLES will offer free monthly legal workshops to all residents of the Lower East Side. Every month the program will focus on a variety of issues faced by tenants of rent-regulated, Section 8, and public housing. Tenants will learn their legal rights, how to avoid being the victim of a frivolous housing court case, and what to do if they ever have to appear in housing court. Call Lorena at GOLES for more details.

Section 8 Tenants Insist on Washington Action

On March 19, 2008, project-based Section 8 tenants from all over the city, including members of GOLES, met with members of the New York Congressional delegation, include Lower East Side Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez, at Judson Memorial Church to protest the Bush administration's \$2 billion cut from the Section 8 program. Tenants called on local congress members to fight for the restoration of the Section 8 funding and sign on to a letter calling on Washington to restore funding to the program. Congresswoman Velázquez spoke at the event about the devastating impact of these budget cuts on this vital federally subsidized affordable housing program in her district and pledged her support by signing the letter. For more information on the fight for Section 8, call GOLES at 212-533-2541.

Law Passes to Protect Tenants from Landlord Harassment

The city-wide anti-harassment campaign, in which GOLES members have been major participants, realized a major victory on February 27, 2008, when the full City Council approved the bill that will penalize landlords who harass tenants; Mayor Bloomberg later signed the bill

into law on March 13 as Local Law 7 of 2008. GOLES celebrates the passage of this much needed legislation and anticipates it will be an important tool in our work for Housing Justice. For more information call GOLES at 212-533-2541.

Community Demands Answers About Pathmark's Future

On December 21, 2007, the O.U.R. Waterfront Alliance, of which GOLES is a member, organized a rally and speak-out amid rumors of the possible closure of the Pathmark supermarket located at 227 Cherry Street, after the supermarket chain had recently been sold to A&P. Many Lower East Side and Chinatown residents have relied on the supermarket's presence in the community for over 25 years and have expressed outrage about rumors of its closure. The nearly 100 attendees at the rally demanded that the supermarket remain, that A&P be clear about its intentions for the site, and that the site not be turned into luxury development that would not serve the basic alimentary needs of the tens of thousands of people who live within close proximity to the supermarket.

Standing Up for O.U.R. Waterfront

O.U.R. Waterfront (Organizing & Uniting Residents on the Waterfront) is an alliance of community-based organizations and tenant associations representing residents of the Lower East Side and Chinatown that are organizing to ensure that development along the East River waterfront serves the needs of the diverse communities that live closest to it, especially low-income people, people of color, and immigrant communities. We believe that these communities must be included in the decision-making processes focused on the development and management of their waterfront.

O.U.R. Waterfront Alliance meets every 2nd & 4th Wednesday of the month. Come join us! Call 212-533-1231 for more information.

\$1.4 Million Award in Back Pay From Yellow Rat Bastard Retailer

The Retail Action Project, a partnership of GOLES and the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU), celebrated the victory of a major settlement to recover unpaid wages and overtime pay for employees of Yellow Rat Bastard stores and their affiliates. A march and press event on February 12th on lower Broadway in SoHo announced the \$1.4 million award that was the result of a lawsuit vigorously pursued by New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo and a successful campaign by the Retail Action Project demanding legal wages and improved working conditions. The settlement will provide full restitution and damages for over 1,000 current and former employees. For more than a year, the retail workers who are members of RAP had fought to highlight poverty wages, unsanitary working conditions, and abusive managers. These employees were often paid as little as \$5.25 per hour and received no overtime pay, in violation of state and federal labor laws.