

Not so Long Ago (or so Far Away)

Over the weekend I went on a pilgrimage. It wasn't to some religious establishment or miraculous shrine, but it was still both very inspiring and deeply moving.

I have been to this place three or four times in the past several years and am always amazed by its power to speak to me. Sometimes I come away with something new, but more often – and I think more importantly – I come away feeling renewed. This place is not far – either from my home or my heart. It's a rather pleasant two hour drive from the city, but is also accessible by rail or bus. And it stands close to the center of what we as progressives, as Democrats believe.

You may have guessed by now that I am talking about Franklin D. Roosevelt's home and Presidential Library in Hyde Park, New York. I always stand in awe before the desks he used – both at the library and in the Oval Office. The sound of his voice on the various recorded programs inspires me and reminds me of what clear, confident leadership with good intentions can do for this nation and the world. It also makes me guffaw, particularly when I hear the Fala speech from his last campaign. In visiting the Eleanor Roosevelt wing, I always find my eyes misting. Nothing conveys this experience better than the Bill Mauldin cartoon, drawn after her death, which shows angels hiding behind clouds and whispering to each other in awe, "it's her."

On this particular trip I found myself wanting to come to a deeper understanding of FDR's struggles as a per-

*By Steven Skyles Mulligan,
CRDC President*

son with a disability. I spent several moments studying his leg braces and wondering how it must have felt to wear them, as well as how the locking mechanism worked to enable him to sit down. I studied the cane he used upon occasion – an ordinary stick that supported an extraordinary man, and I marveled at the ingenious design of his wheelchair, far removed from the giant, immobilizing devices in use at the time that condemned people to virtual invalid status. In spite of all this, this man looked well beyond himself with confidence, intelligence and optimism seldom equaled in leaders of this or any other nation. What he personally accomplished – and enabled others to accomplish – still has a tremendous positive impact on our lives today. Without being aware of it, I found my own sense of struggle and annoyance with so much in my daily life melting away.

Many people go to church, synagogue or mosque not because they think it is expected, nor because they feel needy, but simply in order to be reminded of the signal importance of their beliefs in their lives. My trip to Hyde Park was a similar experience and I find myself full of renewed hope and energy, fearing nothing but fear itself.

What places serve as similar touchstones for you, reminding you of your deeper purpose and transporting you to that place where you can stand firm and without fear? Go there if you can and prepare for the struggle ahead; we have much to do and more to undo.

GENERAL MEETING

THURSDAY, MAY 24, 2007

8:00PM (SHARP)

(Note time and date change)

Hudson Guild

441 West 26th Street

(btwn. 9th and 10th Avenues)

AGENDA

Election of Club Judicial Delegates

This year we will elect 6 regular
and six alternate delegates

Nominated for the position are:

Andrew Berman • Doris Corrigan

Carol Cramer • Maarten deKadt

Tim Gay • Phyllis Gonzalez

Paul Groncki • Lynn Kotler

Estelle Katz • Marc Krasnow

Carla Nordstrom • Judy Richheimer

Remember:

to vote, your 2007 dues must be
paid. A 2006 member can pay the
night of the meeting

ALSO ON THE AGENDA

What's (going) Up in Chelsea

Guest Speakers:

Miguel Aceveo, Fulton Houses

Andrew Berman, Preservation Guru

Mansions On The Lower East Side????

By Gloria Sukenick, CRDC Housing Chair

Well...I never!!!! But it's true! There's this couple, Alistair and Catherine Economakis, who have decided to give up their present luxury digs in a plush Brooklyn brownstone and move to a walk-up, 5 story tenement at 47 East 3rd Street, between 1st and 2nd Avenues.

There is a glitch: the 15 apartments in this building were occupied by long term, rent-protected tenants. But wait ... there's more! This couple decided that they were going to evict these tenants and then began the harassment. Those who weren't about move (to go where?) were surrounded by the noise, dust and chaos of walls coming down as they began reconstruction of emptied units. The Economakis' were beginning to transform this 15 unit building into a 60 room mansion, that included a gym with attached bathroom and shower, rooms for their two children, the children's nanny, and, of course, mom and dad. One can only imagine what other luxury additions can be included in a 60 room mansion.

How can this be? Well, the Rent Stabilization law says landlords can take one or more apartments for their personal use. Could this loophole be used as a scam to get rid of rent controlled or stabilized tenants and a year or so later, start renting or selling apartments at sky high prices? Could be! And if these evictions are permitted, just think what the results could be. The diminishing supply of affordable housing would disappear at an astonishing speed. Mass evictions would be on the agenda of every landlord. Another tool to get rid of rent regulated tenants.

I am happy to say the rally on Saturday, April 14th drew a huge crowd of supporters and elected officials. Councilmember Rosie Mendez, Senator Liz Krueger, Borough President Scott Stringer all spoke out in support for the tenants, Assemblymember Deborah Glick, who couldn't be present, sent a statement of support. I spotted lots of television cameras and reporters taking notes.

Acting Justice Paul Feinman denied the Economakis' plans, but that ruling was overturned by the Appellate Division of the NYS Supreme Court. But the tenants are not giving up; they will take their battle to Albany.

A fund raiser is planned to help with their legal expenses which are considerable. More information is available at 47 East 3rd Street Tenants Association, 212 330-8783 or you can call Steve Herrick of the Cooper Square Committee, 212 228-8210.

In order to stop the further loss of rent regulated and affordable housing, and point out the need for more new affordable housing, a campaign is being launched by Housing Here and Now, advocates, tenant groups across the five boroughs, labor unions, Working Families Party, starting with the "hands across Stuyvesant Town" demonstration (May 23rd, 5 p.m.). Stuyvesant Town is now currently 30% market rate and that number grow steadily. This campaign will make many demands: repealing the Urstadt law which will return control of New York City's rent laws to the City; protection for Mitchell/Lama middle income housing; and repeal of rent destabilization laws that allow landlords to remove rent protection when rent reaches \$2000 per month (pretty easy with major capital improvement increases) and tenant income reaches \$75,000 for two years.

Show up at 14th Street and First Avenue, 5 pm, on May 23 and show your support. Who knows; you could be next!

More Hot Flashes next time!

A Victory Worth Celebrating

By Andrew Berman, CRDC Member

In March, General Theological Seminary announced it was withdrawing its controversial plan for a 155 ft. tall tower on Ninth Avenue, which would have required a special exemption from the zoning limits of the Chelsea Plan. Instead, the Seminary will come back with a revised plan for a development of no more than 75 ft. tall, the limit prescribed by the Chelsea Plan. This was a tremendous victory for CRDC, Save Chelsea Historic District (SCHD) and countless Chelsea residents and other advocates who fought together against the overdevelopment of the original GTS plan, and for preserving the Chelsea Plan and other hard-won measures that protect our neighborhoods.

Many of us were greatly concerned about the ramifications of allowing GTS to violate the limits of the Chelsea Plan, especially for luxury high-rise development, and particularly in light of the massive upzonings and

overwhelming development Chelsea has experienced in the last few years. But with this victory, the limits the Chelsea Plan places on high-rise development in our neighborhood continue to stand and ensure, along with the Chelsea Historic District, that at least some of our neighborhood will not be swept away for new luxury high-rises.

Now SCHD will work to ensure that GTS' new proposal (which has not yet been released) fits Chelsea's character in terms of design as well as height. GTS had promised to offer an affordable housing component as part of its new development plan, and according to some of the housing advocates who worked with GTS on the plan, they still intend to do so. This is good news, as we can all agree that Chelsea needs more affordable housing. Operating within the parameters of our neighborhood protections, hopefully GTS and the Chelsea community can find common ground and agreement upon GTS' new plans and a means for their remaining in their Chelsea home in perpetuity.

What's Good for the City

by *Carla Nordstrom, CRDC Member*

A couple of years ago when Mayor Mike proposed that New York be the site of the 2012 Olympics something didn't feel right. The only local kid that I could think of who was an Olympic athlete was a bicyclist who had trained as a messenger. While we New Yorkers are in good shape from walking, stair climbing, and gym workouts, we're not exactly athletes. At the same time having just experienced another of Mayor Mike's bright ideas, the Republican Convention, I was leery about turning our city over to out-of-towners again. We suffered through blocked off streets, cops everywhere, a bill for world wide surveillance, and a dump truck full of sand on Seventh Avenue. They didn't even give us hanging flower baskets or newly paved streets. Figuring that the Olympics would give us aggravation without any perks I was pleased when the IOC chose London for the games.

Through travel, I have come to respect what the Olympics can do for a city. I visited Athens shortly after the 2004 games and was dazzled by what I saw. True, it was reported to have been an economic disaster, yet everything in the city was either new or renovated. They had new roads, trams, and upgraded services. It was a wonderful city to visit and, I suspect, to live in.

It looked like the whole city had been given a fresh coat of paint.

I recently visited Barcelona, now fifteen years after their Olympics. There are still many references to the 1992 Games. Once again, the transportation system is up to date. The Olympic Village is now housing. Beautiful boulevards and parks can be found in the areas where the games were held. I'm sure it was a hassle to live through the games but the benefits even fifteen years later are still evident.

As I ponder why I don't think that would have happened in New York, I realize that Mayor Mike never told me what the Olympics would do for me. All I knew was he desperately wanted a stadium for a New Jersey football team that didn't have tickets available for the neighbors.

You see, Mayor Mike is a bottom line kind of guy. I think he saw the 2012 Olympics as a money-making bonanza for his wealthy friends and concluded that what's good for his friends is good for New York. He doesn't appreciate that a hanging flower pot, a spiffed up subway, or getting the Olympic Committee to build housing for our community might make a couple weeks of discomfort worth the effort.

As a businessman, Mayor Mike is always looking out for "money-making" opportunities for the Big Apple. I suspect that he'll come up with some other schemes that are similar to the convention and the Olympics before his term is up. Of course, we know that New York City is not a business. The next time he calls the captains of industry into his inner bullpen to promote a New York money-making extravaganza we must ask him, what's in it for us? Or more importantly, what's in it for me? His refrain, "It's good for the city," shouldn't be good enough for any of us.

CRDC Street Fair

**Please volunteer to help staff CRDC's table
at our annual St. Fair on 8th Avenue,
from 14-23 Street**

**This year it will be on Saturday May 26,
from 11am until 4pm.**

**To volunteer, or if you have any questions
call District Leader Tom Schuler at
917-716-4428.**

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Chelsea, Madison Sq., Flatiron, Rosehill



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CRDC Street Fair

Volunteer to Help on Saturday, May 26

Hudson Guild's Chelsea Housing Group

serving tenants who live between
14th and 34th Streets, West of 5th Avenue

New schedule announced:

Fulton Center, 119 9th Ave (btwn 17th & 18th St.)
Second and Fourth Thursday of the month.

Elliott Center, 441 West 26th St. (btwn 9th and 10th Ave.)
First and Third Thursday of the month

Thursday drop-in/in-take hours from 3:00pm to 5:00pm

Contact Rosa Maria de la Torre at 212-760-9875
for an appointment or information.

Join CRDC Today!

If you haven't already, become a 2007 member of CRDC, New York City's most progressive Democratic club. Just fill out this form and return it to us.

Name(s) _____

Address: _____

Phone (Day): _____

(Evening) _____

Email: _____

___ \$25 Individual ___ \$40 H'Hold ___ \$50 Patrons

___ \$10 Ltd. Income ___ \$15 H'Hold Limited Income

Make checks payable to CRDC and mail to:

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New York City, NY 10113-1120

Questions? Call 212-924-5433 or email us at
info@crdcnyc.org