Brooklyn A News
BROOKLYN LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION A
BROOKLYN LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION A—DEDICATED TO EQUAL JUSTICE FOR BROOKLYN NEIGHBORHOODS FOR OVER 28 YEARS • SPRING 1996

A Victory at Noble Drew Ali Plaza

The voices of Noble Drew Ali Plaza tenants were ringing in the ears of Federal Judge Reena Raggi on February 28, 1996. After hearing about the hell of living in this 383-unit federally-subsidized Housing and Urban Development (HUD) housing complex in Brownsville, from the bench the Judge appointed a receiver to manage the properties and in addition ordered the owner to immediately turn over more than one million dollars taken from the project account.

The Noble Drew Ali Tenants Association and 153 tenants went to Brooklyn Federal Court after three of their buildings, in the midst of sub-zero temperatures and blizzard conditions, had to have their boiler shut down by Brooklyn Union due to imminent danger from carbon monoxide poisoning. The heating unit's chimney was cracked. This danger, combined with years of hazardous housing code violations documented by the City of New York, demonstrated to the Court that the owner, Linden Realty, was incapable of maintaining the complex.

As they had previously done on behalf of the Tenants Association at the nearby Elva McZeal Apartments, lawyers from the Community & Economic Development Program at Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A (Brooklyn A) are representing the Noble Drew Ali Plaza Tenants Association. Joining these efforts are pro bono volunteers from Chase Manhattan Bank's Litigation Division. Chase is an active member of Brooklyn A's Partnership for Community & Economic Development.

Photo: Denis Berger

Noble Drew Ali Plaza residents with tenant leaders just before their success in Brooklyn Federal Court.

Once again, HUD has completely abdicated its enforcement responsibilities and Brooklyn A is suing the owners directly on behalf of the tenants. In one year, the "turnaround" at the Elva McZeal Apartments has become a model for what honest management can accomplish under the HUD, Section 8 rent subsidy program. "It is not that the Section 8 program doesn't work," stated Brooklyn A's Director of Litigation, Richard Wagner, "it is the combination of dishonest owners and grossly negligent HUD bureaucrats that causes this housing to deteriorate. I have no doubt that with honest management at Noble Drew in 1996, we will achieve the same results that were achieved at Elva McZeal in 1995.

In late February, cable TV Channel New York One News aired an exclusive, six-part investigative series on this story. The following *Brooklyn A News* interviews were recently conducted with Noble Drew Ali Plaza residents.

SERENA AUDAIN

I have lived in my apartment at Noble Drew Ali Plaza for two years, with my son, who is now three years old, and my daughter, who is now six. Recently, I caught eight rats in my apartment in one week! They come in through holes behind my kitchen stove which I can't get to, and which the owner hasn't fixed. The fear of my kids being attacked by rats sometimes drives me crazy.

OLIVE BROWN

I have lived in my apartment since 1987, but have actually lived in this project since 1974. The entire building, including

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Eastern District High School Parent Association President Maria DeLeon leads parents and community residents, joined by Assemblyman Vito J. Lopez, demonstrating for a state take-over of the failing school. The P.A. has complained that planning for the redesign of the school has been dominated by the "same people who caused it to fail in the first place."

Photo: Denis Berger

Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A's purpose and goal is to provide high quality neighborhood-based civil legal services to low-income individuals and groups in the North and East Brooklyn communities of Williamsburg, Greenpoint, Bushwick, Oceanhill-Brownsville, East New York, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Cypress Hills, Starrett City, City Line, East Flatbush, Flatlands, and Canarsie.

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A WORD FROM THE PROJECT DIRECTOR

Brooklyn A Fights Big Federal Cut

In late February, I advised our union that Brooklyn A will be laying off twelve additional staff on April 1st. Two staff members had already been laid off on February 1st. This is the first time in Brooklyn A's history, despite other hard times in the past, that we have actually had to lay people off.

The number of people slated to be laid off is huge, exceeding 25% of our work force. But more importantly, the quality and uniqueness of the people who are now clearly at risk of losing their jobs is immense. Each staff member, in their own special way, is critical and invaluable to the services that we deliver.

In Williamsburg, they include our main receptionist who is fluent in both Yiddish and Spanish, our only Social Worker who is a key part of our family law unit, two attorneys who make up our special team addressing the needs of people with HIV/AIDS, and two excellent, highly experienced attorneys who represent tenants and their families in Housing Court to prevent them from losing their apartments.

In East Brooklyn, we stand to lose our entire reception and process serving staff, two Spanish-speaking housing attorneys, and a bilingual paralegal who is a key member of our comprehensive rights unit which addresses the needs of individuals and families afflicted with HIV/AIDS.

The drastic reduction in federal support for legal services programs nationally, which provoked these lay-offs, has been an unfortunate but predictable outcome of recent Congressional election results. The 30% tentative national cut in the Legal Services Corporation budget caused a reduction in our budget of over $375,000. Restrictions on receipt of attorneys fees will cause us to lose at least $275,000 more. Although we have been able to effect significant cost reductions, the net impact of these cuts is to leave us with a $300,000 deficit that makes these layoffs necessary.

However, as usual, we will not roll over and just accept these new attacks as an unchangeable reality. They are a big obstacle that must be overcome. The interests of our staff and—even more importantly—our clients and communities demand no less. Our plan is threefold:

1. Brooklyn A will continue to reach out to the private sector for collaboration and support. Our Advisory Committee, and its Partnership for Community & Economic Development, has been leading this effort over the past two years. This logically flows from the new philosophy in Washington that requires us to depend less on government and more on businesses and individuals with the capacity and concern to help.

Under Judge Harold R. Tyler Jr's leadership, we are launching a campaign among major Manhattan law firms to create a Fund for Commu-nity & Economic Development. Firms are being asked to contribute $10,000 a year for three years. A number of commitments are already in place.

Brooklyn A will initiate an Annual Fund Campaign for unrestricted gift giving to its programs from individual donors as well as from corporate and foundation supporters. This will include two direct mail appeals as well as personal visits to contributors and possibly an annual phonathon.

Finally, in October, we will have our annual Partnership Awards Buffet Reception hosted and underwritten this year by the Bankers Trust Company.

Fortunately, we continue to have Denis Berger's great skill and energy in leading and organizing these efforts.

2. We will reach out to the neighborhood-based organizations which are our partners in community development projects to obtain fees for our legal work on those projects.

3. We will reach out to the state and city government, on our own and in conjunction with the entire legal services/legal aid community, to replace the money no longer flowing from Washington.

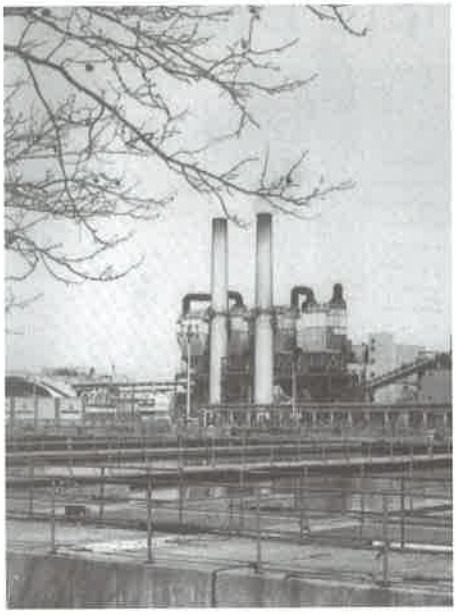
Not only must we raise the additional $300,000 in 1996, we must collect that money as fast as possible in order to avert the April round of layoffs and/or recall staff who were laid off as soon as possible.

Now more than ever we need the help of our friends and those who support our work. If you, our friends, value our work as much as our enemies fear it, we will be alright. The causes of civil rights and justice, and community empowerment, are very much on the line.

—Martin S. Needelman

The De-Industrialization of North Brooklyn

By Henry Ludmer



Recently, the Brooklyn Office of the New York City Planning Department proposed a major rezoning of North Brooklyn, which will effectively discourage future industrial development and instead open up our neighborhoods to large-scale market rate housing development. This initiative, if approved after community and governmental review, will cause a sea change in the character of Williamsburg and, to a lesser extent, Greenpoint.

It may come as a surprise to learn that our North Brooklyn, a crazyquilt of factories, small houses, waste transfer stations, and highrise public housing, was first settled by Dutch farmers seeking open fertile land. Two centuries later, the second wave of settlement was by an upper class seeking a pleasant "suburban" environment away from the urban hurly-burly of Manhattan.

However, the proximity of the East River and its transportation possibilities eventually attracted industry to North Brooklyn; for a century, from the middle 1800's on, industrial development dominated the history of this area. The first waterfront industry was shipbuilding, as exemplified by the Brooklyn Navy Yard and the Greenpoint docks (where the Civil War ship "The Monitor" was partially built). Then came such related industries as an iron foundry, lumberyards, and metal stamping. Charles Pratt located his world-famous Astral Oil Refinery in North Brooklyn and by the late 1880's the area had become the center of those craft industries known as the "Black Arts." Most notably brass and iron, glass, printing, porcelain and pottery were fabricated there. Indeed, 18 of the 20 glass factories and the most prestigious pottery works in the city were located in Greenpoint.

The 1916 Zoning Resolution of New York City, its first ever, supported and furthered this kind of industrial development in manufacturing, and housing construction was thus discouraged. Of course, there was actually quite a bit of housing in North Brooklyn, much of it for the workers in industry, but often this housing was nonconforming to industrial zoning and existed there in an uneasy truce with its factory neighbors.

In the 1950's, as American society moved into a post-industrial era, the industry in North Brooklyn began to decline, just as it declined throughout the urban Northeast. The loss of jobs over the following three decades was enormous, mounting into the hundreds of thousands in New York City including tens of thousands in North Brooklyn, that supported immigrants from Puerto Rico and Eastern Europe. For the first time, the NYC zoning laws began to recognize the need for housing in the area. As an example, the 1975 Northside Mixed use District in North Williamsburg promoted the co-existence of housing and industry, and it started a revitalization that continues today.

In the recession of the early 1980's, North Brooklyn industry hit rock bottom, but since then it has begun a steady rebirth by transforming itself from such heavy industrial uses as steel forging and chemical manufacturing to lighter industry such as food distribution and furniture assembly. (An example of this "new industry" is the Brooklyn Brewery currently under construction near McCarren Park.)

At the same time, increasing public awareness of the environmental damage caused by the presence of heavy industry led to an anti-industry view on the part of many residents, and this attitude has discouraged expansion or even the continued presence of existing heavy industry. Unfortunately, this "NIMBY" reflex often ignores the job loss resulting from the exodus of commerce and industry.

Today, North Brooklyn faces some difficult questions about its future, and there are no easy answers in the ongoing debate over such issues as the need for more housing versus the loss of jobs. One example of the current conflict is the projected use of the former Eastern District Railway Terminal, which lies largely unused. Should it become part of a nearly waste transfer operation to be run by a rising star of the fast growing national recycling industry, or should it be rezoned for possible residential reuse? The Community Board's Waterfront Committee is currently examining this site and will probably issue its recommendations to the public and City Planning Commission by this summer.

Another question is whether the Broadway Triangle adjacent to Pfizer Inc. (one of the most illustrious names in Brooklyn's industrial history), which was earmarked for industrial development by Mayor Koch should instead by rezoned to serve the urgent housing needs of the nearby Hasidic and Latino communities?

In forthcoming articles we will examine more closely these and other issues, such as the explosive growth of the industrial Brooklyn Navy Yard thanks to public subsidy, and the ongoing battle over illegal residential conversion of factory loft space by artists and non-artist users. ●

Henry Ludmer co-founded Williamsburg's first small business incubator and chairs Community Board #1's Economic Development Committee.

Assaults Against Community Efforts to Eliminate Discrimination

by Edwin Ortiz

"The attack on our lawyers is nothing more than an attempt to undermine the struggle to eliminate illegal racial quotas in public housing. All fair-minded people in the City should step forward to defend the rights of Latinos and African-Americans in Williamsburg to fight for their basic civil rights."—read a statement of the Southside Fair Housing Committee.

Latino and African-American activists have recently launched a campaign to defend Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A (Brooklyn A) from an "organized vendetta" aimed at prohibiting Brooklyn A from pursuing anti-discrimination litigation in Williamsburg.

New York State Assemblywoman Nettie Mayersohn of Queens, and some of her Assembly colleagues, recently sent a letter to Speaker Sheldon Silver opposing an increase in support for legal services statewide unless Brooklyn A withdrew from its civil rights cases. Interestingly, no Assembly member from Williamsburg signed the letter. The immediate target of this effort is a two decades-long federal court case against the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) for its use of absolute numerical racial/religious quotas dramatically favoring Hasidic families. The Court has twice previously ordered NYCHA to remedy this illegal discrimination.

Photo: Denis Berger

Activists from Concerned Residents of Taylor-Wythe with one of their attorneys, from left to right: Foster Maer, Elsie Caraballo, Patricia Davis, Connie Ayala, and Rosa Perez.

Hasidic families in the three housing complexes. Fifty Hasidic families have already been identified as apparent owners of private homes, sometimes worth many hundreds of thousands of dollars, while wrongfully keeping their NYCHA apartments.

Sworn testimony in pretrial depositions has revealed that NYCHA employees at these Williamsburg developments ignored

"What good are the civil rights laws if you're denied the means to enforce them."

At the same time this unprecedented pressure was being mounted in the State Assembly, Brooklyn A and law enforcement agencies stepped up their investigations of illegal schemes seeking to maintain quotas favoring Hasidic tenants at three local developments—Taylor-Wythe Houses, Independence Towers, and Williams Plaza.

Brooklyn A recently completed a survey of tenant, telephone, and property records and identified 200 more apartments likely to have been improperly transferred to Hasidic families. This brings the total to more than 300 apartments out of the approximately 1,000 units illegally-occupied by

Authority rules when it came to Hasidic families and approved additions to tenant households when even the development's own staff openly stated they should be denied. NYCHA staff at these developments improperly approved such requests even in instances where the request was submitted after the lawful tenant had long since died or the requested additions created unlawful overcrowding.

In response to the Mayersohn letter, Project Director Martin S. Needelman wrote Speaker Sheldon Silver that Brooklyn A has "proudly" represented individuals from every ethnic group in the community and that the representation of Latino and African-American victims of housing discrimination was a small but very significant part of its work. "[A]ll elected officials and citizens should support this crucial work [fighting racial discrimination]. As with other representation that we and other legal services and legal aid programs do, lawyers effectively representing poor people in addressing inequity and illegality are crucial to the survival of our system of civil justice and fair play."

Community leaders have written letters to Speaker Silver condemning this attack on the ability of Latinos and African-Americans to defend themselves against discrimination. The New York City daily Spanish-language newspaper *El Diario* has reported on the attack as well. With the state budget set to be approved by April 1, local fair housing activists are seeking to involve concerned legislators from across the state in this battle. Serafin Flores, Co-Chair of the Southside Fair Housing Committee, explained: "What good are the civil rights laws if you're denied the means to enforce them." ●

Edwin Ortiz is a legal services assistant in the Fair Housing Unit of Brooklyn A's Williamsburg office.

People with HIV/AIDS Face New Threat

Mandatory Medicaid Managed Health Care

by Carol Horwitz

The vast majority of managed care plans are "for-profit". People with HIV and AIDS are not likely to find access to the special care and services they need from "for-profit" plans simply because it is not profitable to provide them. If managed care becomes mandatory for Medicaid recipients who have HIV or AIDS, it is likely that unnecessary deaths, and suffering will result.

"Managed health care" has been around for decades. More commonly known as "HMO"s (health maintenance organizations), managed care programs such as HIP were developed in response to soaring health care costs and a growing awareness of the benefits of prevention and well-care. By requiring that HMO members select a "primary care physician" from the Plan, and by encouraging preventive visits for inoculations, routine physicals, and diagnosis of health-related problems, cost-containment experts predicted tremendous savings. And in fact, high-quality, consumer-oriented (as opposed to "profit oriented") managed health care organizations have had some success in cost savings by reducing the number of emergency room visits, and diagnosing and treating potentially catastrophic illness before it results in long-term hospitalization.

Overall, experience with managed care plans, however, has been far more negative than positive. Plans employ a staff of "gatekeepers" whose only job is to assess member illness and decide what kind of treatment is necessary, and for how long. Physicians and health care providers are discouraged from referring plan members to specialists or from ordering tests, x-rays, other diagnostic tools, and hospitalizations. Why? Because they receive a "capitated" rate (a fixed sum of money typically about $38.00 per month) which must pay for each member's yearly health needs. The fewer referrals and diagnostic tools per plan member, the higher the profits for health care providers and the managed care corporations.

In 1992, New York City requested from the federal government that a mandatory demonstration project in SW Brooklyn be implemented where Medicaid recipients would be mandated to enroll in a managed care plan. Two year approval was given up to 1994, and in 1995 NYC again requested authority to continue this mandatory model for the same SW Brooklyn area. Approval was granted. Medicaid recipients had originally received notice that they must enroll in a managed care plan, and could no longer receive "fee-for-service" health care. Suddenly, managed care plan representatives began appearing in welfare centers throughout Brooklyn using fraudulent tactics to enroll as many Medicaid recipients as possible.

Some sales persons threatened Medicaid recipients that if they did not enroll in managed care by mid-July, 1995, their Medicaid assistance would be terminated. Some plans were enrolling many Medicaid recipients before they had contracted with physicians or hospitals to provide services. Other plans enrolled recipients without informing them that health care services were only available in distant areas.

Once enrolled, many plan members had difficulty in locating physicians who accepted their plans, found that outpatient psychiatric care was not covered, and that the number of yearly physician office visits was limited. Others discovered that treatments for some conditions were being denied. For example, one asthmatic AIDS patient needed oxygen to be supplied at her home in order to be released from the hospital. Her Plan denied this coverage. Upon learning of the denial, she suffered a relapse and had to be hospitalized for an additional two weeks.

These are but a few of the examples of the difficulties people with chronic illness encounter in managed care programs. If a plan is paid the same premium for the care of all patients, whether sick or well, the plan will seek to enroll healthier members, and will look for ways to discourage or deny membership to people with chronic illness. Some plans already exclude from coverage essential services offered by social workers, counselors, substance abuse therapies, and case management.

Recently, a consortium of North and Central Brooklyn agencies providing services to people living with HIV/AIDS applied for a planning grant from the State Department of Health(DOH). The Consortium listed four principles for a managed care design for people with HIV/AIDS: first, it must be incorporated as a "not-for-profit" organization; second, it must be community controlled with significant input from people living with HIV/AIDS; third, any surplus income must be returned to the members in the form of additional or enhanced services; and fourth, it must ensure access to the full range of essential services required by people with HIV/AIDS.

The DOH received 27 applications from hospitals, managed care plans, and other health care agencies throughout the state, and 23 applications were funded. Unfortunately, the North and Central Brooklyn Consortium—the only applicant demonstrating a significant involvement of people with HIV and AIDS —was not funded!

The Consortium has continued to meet, however, and is applying for private funding to develop a "consumers' union" for people with HIV/AIDS. A strong and well-informed consumers' organization is an essential element in shaping the future of health care delivery and access to life enhancing treatment. ●

Carol Horwitz is the Comprehensive Rights (HIV/AIDS) Unit Director at Brooklyn A's East Brooklyn office.

AIDS IN BROOKLYN

- Brooklyn has had more cases (17,240) than the state of Illinois
- As a city, Brooklyn ranks fourth in the country in the number of AIDS cases, after Manhattan, Los Angeles and San Francisco.
- For 1994, Brooklyn had 29% of newly reported AIDS cases citywide, for the first time matching Manhattan's numbers. The Bronx had 20%; Queens, 15%; and Staten Island, 3%.
- Brooklyn has the highest number of pediatric AIDS cases—33% of all those reported to date.
- With 1,241 cases, 31.1%, Brooklyn has the highest percentage of women living with AIDS of any borough.
- Eighty-four percent of people with AIDS in Brooklyn are minorities—28% are Latino and 56% are African-American.

Source: NYC Department of Health

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Chemical Bank World Headquarters was the scene of a fabulous celebration on October 26th honoring Judge Harold R. Tyler, Jr. and Joseph K. Francois. Three hundred and twenty-five friends shared this evening with a breathtaking sunset over the New York City skyline. Brooklyn A's first annual benefit raised $50,000 for its Partnership for Community & Economic Development.

Honorees and honored guests (left to right) Douglas S. Eakeley, Dale Steven Johnson, Rev. Peter A. Mahoney, Paul J. Acinapura, Martin S. Needelman, Honoree Judge Harold R. Tyler, Jr., Keynote Speaker Richard D. Parsons, John M. Imperiale, John M. Leonard, Alexander D. Forger, and (seated) Honoree Joseph K. Francois.

Members of the Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A board, management, and staff are (left to right) top row: Myrna Sanabria, Alma Brown, Victor Torres, Jim Provost, Jennie Ortiz-Bowman, Martin S. Needelman, Sarah Escobar, Arline Ford; bottom row: Virginia Silva-Payne, Lissette Claudio, and Senora Berthe.

Photos: Marian Goldman

PROFILES

MIRTA M. DeJESUS, Secretary, Board of Directors, Brooklyn Legal Services, Corporation A.

Mirta has been on Brooklyn A's Board of Directors for over five years. "We have," she says, "the best lawyers in the world." Mirta has lived in Bushwick for decades and has been deeply involved in community affairs just as long. She works at the NYC Housing Preservation and Development Office (HPD) as a Senior Community Liaison Worker, assisting both owners and tenants with advice, referrals, and loan applications. She also serves on the Bushwick Geographic Targeting Task Force, a federally funded effort to promote substance abuse prevention. She is thrilled to make a referral to Brooklyn A; she knows there will be skillful, caring follow-up at the other end.

In the neighborhood, Mirta has been active in school board affairs and community relations activities of the 83rd precinct. Bushwick has been through a lot of ups and downs, as she well knows. Some people visiting Bushwick see devastation and certainly that is the dominant image in the media. Mirta prefers to envision the prosperity of years to come, the result of new housing and ever vigorous community leadership. People power, she says, is 'what Bushwick really has going for itself.

Mirta lives with sons, Jimmy, 16, and Erickson, 14. In her fleeting free time, she does ceramics, knits, and crochets.

JOE PACHECO, Senior Housing Legal Assistant, Williamsburg Office, Brooklyn A.

Seventeen years ago, Joe came to Brooklyn A has a process server and investigator. In 1985, he was promoted to Housing Legal Assistant, and then to Senior Housing Legal Assistant. Joe helps tenants on the brink of eviction go to court to stop city marshals. He also goes to the apartment and stops evictions in progress. (Joe lives in Williamsburg and frequently responds to emergency calls after business hours.) Some evictions are illegal landlord lock-outs. Joe stands by while a locksmith is called. For tenants who have already suffered eviction, Joe can sometimes get the family restored to their apartment. He recalls one especially sweet triumph when the tenant was put out and then restored in one day, Christmas Eve. In addition to this crisis-oriented work Joe also handles a wide range of paperwork on Human Resources Administration matters.

Joe is a single parent to the two youngest of his three children (Joey, 18, Sergio, 12, and Alina, 5.) He also (amazingly) finds the time for professional appearances as a magician for children and adults. In shows for school kids, he mixes his razzmatazz with the themes of hard work and drug-abuse prevention.

MARIA DE LEON, President, Eastern District High School Parents Association.

Maria thrives in the hub-bub of the Parents Room at Eastern District High School, where she and a core group of six parents maintain a full-time advocacy effort for the school's students and parents. The Parents Association helps to make sure that necessary classes are offered so that students can graduate on time, assists students with immigration difficulties, and makes referrals for family problems. Thanks to the vigilance and cheerful energy of Maria and her colleagues, parents have a voice in school affairs, and students enjoy a safer and more productive environment.

Maria has held every office the Parents Association has to offer; over the last eight years. The group really sprang into action in the late 80's, thanks to organizing efforts of America Ruiz. (America is the wife of Brooklyn A's *jefe*, Marty Needelman.) Marty has also been deeply involved in the school, advising the Parents Association and helping individual students with legal problems.

Maria has so far successfully shepherded her daughter, Maritza, and two nieces through Eastern District. Her son Neftali is currently a senior. She has lived in Williamsburg for a dozen years (Brownsville before that) and loves the neighborhood's *sabor español.*

JOHN M. IMPERIALE, Co-Chair, Brooklyn A Advisory Committee; Vice-President and Manager of Community Relations, Chase Manhattan Bank.

Three decade of banking experience have taken John all over the globe. His duties at Chase include supervision of all services to low and moderate income neighborhoods throughout the city. The Chemical-Chase merger will result in the new position of Manager of Community Relations. For all his travels, this Flatbush boy's heart still belongs to Brooklyn. He still gets a kick out of hanging in school yards and until recently played in a Brooklyn softball league. For cheap thrills, he and his wife Joan (also a Chase Vice-President) ride the Dragoncoaster at Coney Island every year on her birthday.

John is active in Brooklyn community affairs, serving on several boards, including the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce and the Caribbean-American Chamber of Commerce. Watch for John in the media, too. He's a frequent guest editorialist on WNBC and has contributed pieces to *New York Newsday* and the *New York Times.*

Brooklyn A is dear to this pragmatic banker for its ability to set clear long-term goals and to pursue them with tenacity, leadership, and creativity. He wants to see Brooklyn A maintain its forward momentum, especially with a strengthened and expanded Public-Private Partnership.

Profiles are written by Brooklyn A Advisory Committee member Jane N. Barrett. Jane is a partner in the firm of Spodek & Barrett, L.L.P., a litigation practice whose clients include the Metropolitan Transit Authority and constituent agencies. She was a staff attorney at Brooklyn A from 1977-1979.

Noble Drew Ali Plaza

Continued from page 1

my apartment, is infested with rats, mice and roaches. It is terrifying.

One time, the water leak in the bathroom ceiling was so bad that it soaked the wires to the lights. I was so afraid of an electrical fire starting that I called the Fire Department.

When the building workers were on strike, the owner used unskilled, irresponsible people including some who have drug and alcohol problems because he can pay them much less than our regular workers and not give them any benefits.

CHARLENE BURWELL

My transfer from apartment 1-F became necessary after a sewer backup that lasted for three days. Raw sewage came flooding out of my toilets, sinks and bathtubs. The stench was horrendous and the management did nothing to fix it.

The owners of this project have known about the sewer backup problem since they bought the project. I've been told that 4-inch sewage waste pipes are simply too narrow and whenever rain water or melting snow from the roofs is added to the flow into the pipes they back up into people's apartments.

YVETTE DOZIER

I moved into Noble Drew in March, 1988, shortly before Linden Realty took over the project.

In 1992, I had an infant daughter and a five-year old son and I was very concerned about the rotting wood floor in my bedroom.

I called the office a lot but no repairs were made. In October, 1992, I was walking out of my bedroom and I fell through the floor into the apartment below. I suffered a badly herniated disc and I've gotten lots of therapy for it but it still causes me pain.

BARBARA KELLEY

I am 47 years old and live in my apartment with my three daughters, ages 11, 6 and 3 years. I suffer from emphysema and a heart condition, and I have had a stroke.

My oldest daughter, Rachel, is very disabled with cerebral palsy. The problem that I consider most serious is the lack of elevator service.

There is only one elevator in our building and it's out of service at least half of the time. I live on the top floor of my building, and this presents problems that are literally life threatening to my daughter and to me.

Rachel has very serious respiratory problems from her cerebral palsy. Six times during the last year I have had to call the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) when my daughter was having difficulty breathing.

Every single time, the elevator in this building was broken. Not only did the EMS workers have to run up six flights of stairs with their medical bags and a stretcher but they were unable to take Rachel down the stairs on the stretcher.

They had to take my terrified daughter up onto the roof of 37 New Lots Avenue, carry her over to the roof of the adjoining building, 250 Lott Avenue, and then carry her down the stairs from the roof to the sixth floor so that they could use the elevator in that building. Each time Rachel was released from the hospital, EMS would again take her back home over the roofs.

The families living here are mostly working poor on fixed incomes such as social security and public assistance. The fact that we are poor does not mean that we deserve to be treated like animals. ●

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