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# MITCHELL-LAMA RESIDENTS COALITION

Vol. 10, Issue 3  
September 2004

FAX (212)864-8165

WEBSITE: [www.mitchell-lama.org](http://www.mitchell-lama.org)

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## Is Albany Broken?

Article on Page 2

### GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

**SATURDAY, October 2 , 2004**

**10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (Refreshments at 9:30  
a.m.)**

PLACE: Musicians Union Local 802  
322 West 48th Street.  
Ground Floor, "Club Room"

Trains: 2,3, to 50th St. and 7th Ave; Q,W to 49th St. and  
Broadway; E train to 50th St. and 8thAve.;D,F to 47th-50th St.  
and 6th Ave.

Buses: M50 westbound 49th Street; M7,M10,M11 to 48th St.  
The building is located between 8th and 9th Avenues.

### Invited Speakers

**State Senators:**

**Eric Schneiderman and Liz Krueger**

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MLRC

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Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition  
P.O. Box 20414  
Park West Finance Station  
New York, New York 10025

## Something's Rotten in Albany

The Observer — Editorial June 28, 2004

Members of the State Legislature have left Albany for the comfort of their home districts without having caused an inordinate amount of havoc. This is to be expected. Creating havoc, after all, requires the expenditure of energy along with a certain amount of ingenuity. Both qualities are in short supply in Albany, and for this, perhaps we should be grateful. After all, if the distinguished State Senators and members of the Assembly actually believed they ought to do something to justify their paychecks, well, who knows what damage they might inflict on the average state taxpayer.

So they leave Albany without having passed a budget, without having passed many new laws or regulations, without figuring out how to better fund New York City's public schools. What exactly have they done over the past few months? Well, they've held lots of fund-raisers. Oh, those delightful little parties! They are as common upstate as horse flies and, to any thinking person, just as annoying. This is not to say that the Legislature has been inactive. Indeed, some might have been a good thing, but the police blotter would have been somewhat less entertaining to read. Assemblyman Clarence Norman is under indictment; Assemblyman Roger Green resigned his seat after pleading guilty in an expense-padding case; and Assemblyman Adam Clayton Powell IV was accused of sexual improprieties by a young staffer. So it would be wrong to say that no news was produced during the legislative session, but perhaps this is not the sort of news a lawmaking institution ought to be producing.

Years go by, and nothing changes. Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver of the Lower East Side collaborates with Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno and Governor George Pataki in a bipartisan compact to protect the status quo. Members of the Legislature go along with the program, and as their reward, they rarely ever have to fight for their re-election—most will win their seats again this year with the sort of margins of victory we used to associate with Soviet elections.

It is all just so cozy and comfortable in Albany, where nothing gets done and everybody gets along and nobody is accountable for late budgets and egregious corruption. There's really only one thing we can ask of our legislators: In your re-election speeches this fall, ladies and gentlemen, please do not tell us about your special mission to bring democracy to other parts of the world.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### GENERAL MEMBERSHIP

**Saturday, October 2, 2004**

10:00 am - Noon

Musicians Union Local 802

January 23, 2005

### \*EXECUTIVE BOARD Meetings

Saturday, October 23, 2004

10:00 a.m. - Noon

Saturday, November 20, 2004

Saturday, December 11, 2004

Saturday, January 8, 2005

\*Executive Board meetings are held at  
Columbus House, 95 West 95th St.  
at Columbus Ave., NYC

*All dates are subject to revision. Please call the voice  
mail to confirm (212) 465-2619.*

## JOIN THE MITCHELL-LAMA RESIDENTS COALITION, INC.

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(\$25 Minimum; \$100 Maximum)

# 2004

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MLRC fights for you and your right to affordable housing!

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Robert Woolis

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Circulation: 10,000

Articles, letters, and photographs are welcome.

Send to MLRC, P.O. Box 20414,

Park West Finance Station, New York, NY

10025

Fax (212)864-8165

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# Mitchell-Lama Tenants Seek High Court Appeal

By Sue Susman (Note: this article appears in the Tenants & Neighbors' newsletter)

The Westgate Tenants Association and the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal are seeking permission from New York State's highest court, the Court of Appeals, to appeal a decision that affects all pre-1974 Mitchell-Lama rental buildings. They have the support of 22 tenant organizations - from Tenants & Neighbors and the Mitchell Lama Residents Coalition to building tenant associations from one end of New York City to the other - who have signed a "friend of the court" brief supporting the Westgate tenants.

The Appellate Division, First Department, ruled on February 26, 2004 that all Mitchell-Lama buildings constructed before 1974 are subject to a particular provision of the Emergency Tenant Protection Act of 1974. This is bad news for tenants.

Two laws put New York City buildings into rent stabilization when they leave the Mitchell-Lama program: the Rent Stabilization Law (RSL) of 1969 and the Emergency Tenant Protection Act (ETPA) of 1974. Under the RSL, a landlord can only get an increase in the initial stabilized rent by showing hardship - such as being unable to pay the maintenance bills for the building. But under the ETPA, a landlord can also ask the State to approve an increase if there are "unique and peculiar circumstances" resulting in the initial stabilized rents being lower than those of comparable apartments in the area. When Westgate's landlord left the Mitchell-Lama program in 1998 and asked DHCR for an increase under ETPA, DCHR said no dice: the ETPA doesn't apply to buildings built before 1969 - only the RSL applies. Westgate's landlord sued.

After losing in the lowest court, the landlord appealed to the Appellate Division. That court held that the RSL and ETPA have to be read together, so that the landlords of buildings constructed even before 1969 can apply for a "unique and peculiar circumstances" increase. Then - without ever having heard arguments on the issue from the parties - the court suggested that this type of increase is appropriate whenever a building leaves the Mitchell-Lama program. So on August 13 DHCR, the Westgate Tenants Association, and its president, Jean Dorsey, filed motions asking the Court of Appeals to hear their appeal. Twenty-two tenant organiza-

tions supported their request with an amicus brief. As this newsletter went to press the court had not acted.

Tenants maintain that the 18,846 apartments in 65 buildings are too many to be "unique and peculiar," and that the Appellate Division decision, if it stands, could result in many hundreds of homeless families.

With such important policy issues and homes at stake, we hope the Court of Appeals will agree to hear the appeal. If the Court of Appeals does take the case, it may take anywhere a long time for a decision. We don't know how DHCR would administer landlord requests for ETPA increases in the interim, or if the Westgate landlord prevails. The 250% increase that they sought would raise rents far beyond what Mitchell-Lama residents can afford, in effect nullifying the whole purpose of rent stabilization. The stable stock of affordable housing that was the goal of the Mitchell-Lama program has long suffered erosion.

This request for leave to appeal to the Court of Appeals is one more effort to maintain what's left. There are further resources on this issue on [www.save-ml.org](http://www.save-ml.org).

Sue Susman is president of Central Park Gardens Tenants' Association on West 97th Street in Manhattan.

## Mayor Bloomberg's Visit to West Village Houses

By Betsy Mickel

"Hear some good news about our future!!" With these words, Katy Bordonaro and the West Village Houses Tenants Association Board of Directors called together a gathering of tenants last May 20 at the highly unusual time and place of 12:45 p.m. at the south complex courtyard. Something was certainly up. I entered the courtyard and the scene stopped me in my tracks. Beyond the several dozen people standing around chatting was a large, square tent, with a raised platform and lectern to the north, lunch (!) to the west, and, amazingly, eight huge, stationary television camera set-ups to the south. The event, clothed in secrecy, was a press conference. Television cameras and lunch could only mean one thing—we were victorious in our two-year-long quest to buy our Mitchell-Lama complex and create affordable, non-eviction co-ops.

Two years ago, the owners of West Village Houses, Insignia/Island Capital Group, had announced to tenants that it intended to buy out of the Mitchell-Lama, middle-income housing program and to begin charging rents approximately three times the current levels. The Tenants Association, in perhaps its strongest incarnation ever (I have been a tenant since 1977 and should know), had anticipated this action. They went into high gear, raising money, negotiating with the owners, fund raising, negotiating with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, starting a lawsuit, lobbying in Albany, soliciting dues, and negotiating some more. They were tireless, they were smart, they had a great lawyer in Carol Ule, and most of all they were persistent.

On May 20 the first fruit of those labors were tasted. Mayor Michael Bloomberg; Shaun Donovan, the newly appointed commissioner of HPD; Jeff Cohen, appearing for the owners; and Katy Bordonaro representing the tenants spoke to the grinning, sign-waving ("We are Saving Our Homes") crowd under the tent.

Afterwards the four participants sat down and signed an agreement of intent to make the project work. The Bloomberg administration's part of the agreement includes forgiveness of interest, abatement of real estate taxes, deferral and restructuring of mortgage principal, and a plan to pro-

tect tenants and our purchase option during the period after the owner leaves Mitchell-Lama.

The owners have agreed to sell the property to the Tenants Association for approximately \$116 million, and we are counting on 50% of the tenants purchasing their apartments in order to make the whole deal work. The conversion is expected to be complete by next spring.

For tenants like me who never expected to own her own apartment in her lifetime, it's all a little unreal. That night last December when the Tenants Association felt it was finally able to announce the "strong possibility" of persuading the owners to sell to us, I couldn't sleep. Then I went into high gear myself. Bought a book on buying co-ops in New York. Checked my credit score. Started squirreling away more money.

Meanwhile, as we prepare, the actual figures of purchase prices and maintenance charges, as well as rents for tenants who opt to remain renters, have not been finalized. We're not in the home stretch yet, but moving steadily toward our bit of the American dream.

Says Katy Bordonaro, "This is a tremendous achievement for all of us and may provide the template for solutions at other Mitchell-Lama complexes in dire straits. We should be very proud of our collective success in reaching this point and should feel equally proud of contributing our ideas for the benefit of the wider Mitchell-Lama community."

**MLRC Raffle Winners:** First Prize: Joe Matis                      Second Prize: Elliot Wilkins  
Third Prize: Tony Natolli

## BUILDING BRIEFS JUNE 2004

The following DHCR developments are facing rent increase preliminary applications within the next six months.

CLINTON PLAZA, Syracuse	JAMES LENOX HOUSE, Manhattan
SEVEN PINES, Yonkers	JAMIE TOWERS, Bronx
ECKELBERGER TOWERS, Johnson City	KINGSLEY HOUSE, White Plains
EXECUTIVE HOUSE, Albany	MCGRAW HOUSE, Ithaca
LAFAYETTE-MORRISON, Bronx	OCEAN TOWERS, Brooklyn
NORDECK APARTMENTS, Queens	OCEAN VILLAGE, Queens
RADISON-LYSANDER, Lysander	SUNSET GREEN APARTMENTS, Yonkers
REGINA PACIS, Brooklyn	
SCHOOL STREET GARDENS, Livingston Manor	
DENTON GREEN, Hempstead	
EAST 106TH STREET, Manhattan	

**Unruly Women:** We celebrate our country's unruly women, like Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mother Jones, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Rosa Parks, Fanny Lou Hamer, Dolores Huerta, and the countless unheralded women who fought like hell for their rights, their dignity, their families and a myriad of causes. A feisty new generation of young women is continuing that "we can do it" tradition.

**Scrie Program:** This program is designed to protect eligible seniors of limited income who live in rent-controlled or rent-stabilized apartments and Mitchell-Lama units. It gives landlords dollar-for-dollar tax credits for qualified apartments. Mitchell-Lama tenants apply to HPD, 212-863-8494.

**Wal-Mart:** As the nation's largest employer, Wal-Mart is a dangerous predator that is driving down wages and benefits and robbing communities across the nation of more and more decent paying jobs. Its use of foreign factories, where workers endure slave-like conditions, is forcing whole sectors of U.S. manufacturing out of business. Until Wal-Mart can demonstrate that being a good neighbor is more than a slick marketing campaign, it deserves our scorn. What can we do? Let's vote with our pocketbooks by shopping elsewhere.

Find information about your building on line: New York City has a program called "ACRIS," which is accessible through the NYC Department of Finance. Here's the web address (the "URL"): <http://a836-acris.nyc.gov/scripts/docsearch.dll/index>.

Cut and paste that into the address line at the top of your web browser (Explorer or Netscape or Mozilla, for example).

OR: If you forget that address, you can type "NYC Dept of Finance" in the Search line of Google. Then you'll get the "New York City Department of Finance Home Page," and look for "ACRIS." Then hit Enter.

You'll see a list of ways to locate documents. You can click on "party name." In the next screen that comes up, you'll see a box that asks for "NAME." In that box, click on Business (instead of Individual) and type in the name of the housing project. OR if the landlord is an individual rather than a company, you can keep it on INDIVIDUAL and then type in the name of the landlord. Then you can click on "search."

When you get a list of documents, you can click on "Image" (in the left-hand column) to see an image of the actual document. You may need a special program on your computer called "JAVA" (thus the coffee-cup-logo) to read it.

For accounting/advocacy assistance, contact the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition (MLRC) — (212) 465-2619.

This column is by Robert Woolis.

## New MLRC Executive Board

Eleanore Bailey: "Coalition to Save Affordable Housing" Co-op City Co-op  
 Ruben Berkowitz: "Coalition to Save Affordable Housing" Co-op City Co-op  
 Loretta Booker: Parkside Development Co-op  
 \*Katy Bordonaro: West Village Houses Rental (buyout)  
 Geneva Brown: Noble Mansion Co-op  
 Jimmy Carter: ?River Park Towers Rental  
 Naormi Chappelle: Lindsay Park Co-op?  
 Arthur Coake: Columbus House Rental  
 Ivy Forde: Concourse Village West Co-op  
 Ari Goodman Esq.: Westgate Rental (buyout)  
 Marie Howse: Fordham Towers Rental  
 \*Carmen Ithier: Heywood Towers Rental (buyout)  
 Barbara Jeter: Lands End Rental  
 Aloma Legall: Tower West Rental  
 Anna Lewis Esq.: Member at Large  
 Evelyn Lloyd: Columbus House Rental  
 \*Bernice Lorde: RNA Houses Co-op  
 Monica McIntyre: Harry Silvers Houses (co-op)  
 Judy Montanez: Castleton Park Rental  
 \*Jackie Peters: Metro North Riverview Rental  
 Fredricka Pol: Lafayette-Boynton Rental  
 Ed Rosner: Independence Plaza North Rental (buyout)  
 \*Louise Sanchez: Michaelangelo Rental  
 Vivienne Smith: Clayton Apartments Rental  
 Margo Tunstall: "Concerned citizens of Sea Park East Rental (buyout)  
 Sharon Valentin: Castleton Park Rental  
 Patricia Winston: Atlantic Plaza Rental  
 \*Bob Woolis: Columbus House Rental

\*Current officers, officer elections will be held in October, 2004

## By-laws Amendment Passed

The following amendment was passed at the June general membership meeting:

Former Resident Member.

Shall be defined as a person residing in a building whose owner has bought out of the Mitchell-Lama Program.

## Dues-Paid Developments

MLRC strength comes from you, the membership. Support the Coalition's educational, advocacy and outreach programs with your membership dollars.

**Individual Membership: \$10  
 Development - 15 cents per apt. (\$25 minimum;  
 \$100 maximum)**

Donations above the membership dues are welcome.

**These developments are 2004 dues-paid members of  
 the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition**

Bay Towers	RNA House
Bethune Towers	Robert Fulton Terrace
Central Park Gardens	Ryerson Towers
Clayton Apts	St. James Place
Columbus House	Sea Park East
Coalition to Save Affordable Housing (Coop City)	Skyview Towers
Court Plaza	Tilden Towers
Dennis Lane	Trinity House
1199 Housing	Village East Towers
Esplanade	West Side Manor
Fordham Towers	West Village HousesWestview
Independence House	
Independence Plaza	
Lionel Hampton	
Manhattan Plaza	
Masaryk Towers	
New Amsterdam House	
Pratt Towers	
Promenade Apts.	
Riverbend Housing	
River Terrace	

If your development has not received an invoice, please call the MLRC Voice Mail: (212) 465-2619. Leave the name and address of the President of your Tenants Association, Board of Directors, or Treasurer and an invoice will be mailed.

## GUY VELELLA'S CROOKED GANG

An Editorial by Robert Woolis

You may pleaurably recall the lead article in the June 2004 edition of the Coalition Newsletter (headline: GUY VELELLA'S CROOKED GANG). It generated more response than any other article. The Coalition knew that Guy Velella was a scoundrel. There is every reason to believe that all the New York State Republican legislators knew as well. The day that Guy Velella reported to the hoosegow for duty, the state legislature should have taken some action, any action, to follow up on Velella's perdition. The only thing being heard was a LOUD SILENCE. It was not just Velella. He had the support of his fellow Republican legislators. And our Democratic senators failed to react, except to participate in the LOUD SILENCE. So much for bipartisan cooperation. Twenty senators, all Republicans, tangibly supported the convict now calling Riker's Island HOME. That notorious group contributed \$147,500 in bribes for help in steering New York State contracts. Not only does Velella have that dinero but also he will be awarded an \$80,000 pension to help him time of need. These people take care of their own. No question of ethics, good government or corruption. (Just what is it that you have in mind?)

And so 20 of Velella's get-tough-on-crime legislative buddies each contributed \$7,500 for a total of \$147,500 — a good parting gift. The donors were Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno, State Senators Steven Salano, Ray Meier, Nick Spano, Vincent Leibell, William Larkin, Dale Volker, Hugh Farley, Betty Little, Thomas Morahan, Jim Wright, Jim Alessi, Nancy Hoffman, Ken LaValle, Caesar Trunzo, Michael Balboni, Owen Johnson, John Flanagan, and Carl Mercelino. Cheapskate Frank Padavan tossed in only \$5,000.

No trial. A brief period in Riker's. Maybe on Liberation Day, the notorious "twenty" will contribute some loose change for a "Welcome Home Party."

So, my fellow Mitchell-Lama residents, vote against electing any Republicans to office, all

offices. Let's hope that electing Democrats will counteract the misdeeds of vermin like Guy Velella.

## Update: Independence Plaza North

Independence Plaza North – Harold Donohue

On June 28, Independence Plaza North refinanced, leaving the Mitchell-Lama program. Those who were eligible signed up for the Enhanced "Sticky" (to friends) Voucher program, protesting all the way. The objections had changed by now from saying that few people were eligible to saying that it would not last over a year. Rumors to this effect scared many eligible tenants so that they only took the Voucher at the last minute after considerable hectoring from the TA. One side-effect of this panic was a boost in fundraising for our payroll of lawyers, lobbyists, and tenant organizers.

Those who were overcome for vouchers abandoned political fixes like asking the Mayor to condemn the property and give it to the tenant, and started negotiating with the landlord in earnest. They reached an agreement on rent-stabilization based increases similar to Haywood Towers and others.

Just as things were settling down, people started reading the leases they had signed, under duress. Tenants were being asked for photographs of all alterations in their apartments, down to nails to hold up pictures. Another clause enshrined \$75 late fee, collectible after the 5th day. I found it amusing that they wanted a picture of my cat, but dog owners who were required to pay a \$200 "deposit" for each dog owned were not amused. And more of that sort.

Meanwhile, HPD, apparently totally overwhelmed, thanks to the Giuliani downsizing, was making wholesale errors in calculating tenants' eligibility and rent. The board hired a tenant lawyer to review cases. Then the president quit.

The tenants are frightened and confused, both about their status and the future of their tenancy. Leadership has been silent. This is how it is in the Independence Plaza North buyout of 2004.

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## Luncheon Honors A. Jackson, New HUD Secretary

By Margo B. Tunstall, MLRC Board Member

The Director and Board members of NAHT (National Alliance of HUD Tenants) attended a luncheon at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., in honor of Alphonso Jackson, the Bush administration's newly appointed Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

In his remarks to over 600 invitees, Mr. Jackson said that a priority of President Bush was to initiate a "Home Ownership" program that would give first-time home buyers a chance at the American dream. According to Mr. Jackson's calculations, the Home Ownership program of today is up by 44%; minorities, however, do not share evenly in this growth. Mr. Jackson proposes low and moderate mortgage rates that minorities can afford.

Now, what happens to the Section 8 subsidy program? This year Bush's budget request of \$1.6 billion falls short of being able to renew all Section 8 contracts in fiscal year 2005. Underfunding the program at such a level could evict over 250,000 families in 2005 and 600,000 by year 2009. If this is not a ploy to dismantle Section 8 subsidies in lieu of Home Ownership programs, what is it?

According to the National Housing Trust, 300,000 units of affordable rental housing have been lost nationally in the last eight years as owners end HUD subsidy contracts to convert to high-rent housing.

In response to Mr. Jackson's statement that "poverty is not a condition, it's a state of mind," I must say that I'm living poverty 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Homeland Security, Mr. Jackson, begins with a home. I can't do much for my family from a cardboard box on someone's corner somewhere.

**If you DON'T VOTE**

**That is One VOTE Lost!**

**Remember to Vote this Presidential Election.**

**Your Vote Counts!**

**Deadline for registration:**

**October 8, 2004**

**NEW COMMISSIONER OF HPD: Shaun Donovan  
HUD COMMISSIONER: Alphonso Jackson**

## CO-OP CITY? ON THE AUCTION BLOCK?

By Tony Illis

As this is being written Co-op City is in the grip of near-financial bankruptcy. A New York State Housing Finance Agency (HFA) loan agreement that promised mortgage refinancing and capital funds receded, somewhat mysteriously, from availability. What happened? Four months ago the proposed HFA loan was approved by both Co-op City residents and the Board of the HFA. Somehow, between then and now, HFA has suddenly discovered problems with our credit standing. What could have happened to Co-op City's credit in four months?

As hopes for the HFA loan dimmed, private lending with the Community Bank of New York has taken center stage. Leaders of the Riverbay Board of Directors, the corporate entity that operates Co-op City, maintain that this private lending will not affect Co-op City's Mitchell-Lama status. But there is some concern that after rehabilitation is accomplished there will be a renewed push for privatization.

### SOME CO-OP CITY BACKGROUND

As the buildings of Co-op City rose 35 years ago from the marshland that formerly was the site of an amusement park known as Freedom Land, a marvelous vision was unfolding. It was a vision of thousands of modern, well designed apartments at a cost that most working families could afford, a vision made possible by Mitchell-Lama low interest mortgages, tax abatement, and regulation of resident income.

Back then mistakes of planning, design and construction laid the foundation for some of the problems that have now grown to monstrous proportions while the Department of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) was supposedly overseeing construction at a fee. When construction was completed some of the firms that did faulty work simply dissolved or disappeared leaving the faults for Co-op City residents to cope with for years and decades to come. Where was DHCR?

Now more than three decades later, original construction defects, the natural wear of time, and, the mismanagement of Riverbay

Boards controlled by autocrats (Riverbay is the corporate name of the community) have brought us to deep crisis. Riverbay Boards have failed to match income to costs. Again and again, DHCR and HFA seem out to lunch while collecting supervisory fees regularly.

### RUNNING OUT OF FINGERS TO PLUG THE DIKE

Since 1995, Riverbay money has been diverted bit by bit, and sometimes by the bucketful, from vital projects while Riverbay leaders have dodged tough or unpleasant decisions.

Failure to perform required ? and budgeted ? balcony and facade work, triggered a city regulation requiring 35 high rise Co-op City buildings to be enmeshed in a labyrinth of protective fences. Funds budgeted for garage maintenance or repair also went somewhere else. Eventually five of eight garages were closed, and 7000 cooperators had to find places for their cars elsewhere. One of the ?elsewheres? was our lovely ?Greenway? which was covered with asphalt partially making up for the loss of the garage spaces. So we lost the both the garages and the Greenway. Every contingency fund has been emptied. Now, Peter and Paul are both broke!

### ARE WE BEING REDLINED?

It shouldn't be a struggle to get a reasonable loan from the HFA. The HFA was created specifically to promote and protect affordable housing for the non-rich. But it isn't doing that. It's doing the opposite. Desirable loans are floated for expensive downtown housing, but a loan for Co-op City is placed further from reach with every step of negotiation. Meanwhile, growing joblessness among our residents is adding to the urgency of protecting this island of relative housing affordability. Local leaders and elected officials, working without any attempt to enlist the potential political power of the cooperators, have been unable to nail down an acceptable HFA loan. They are toying with private lending schemes that would lead to privatization. Many, if not most, present cooperators would then have to say goodbye to this place and New York State would lose a major part of its remaining

affordable housing program.

Some draconian measures may be taken at Co-op City in the two or three weeks between when this is written and when it is read. All the forces arrayed against Mitchell-Lama are at work to achieve the anti-social goals of the real estate industry: co-opted resident boards, hypocritical elected officials, hustlers yearning for fees, commissions, pay-offs and the induced non-involvement of too many residents.

But, as the baseball player once said, It ain't over till it's over. There's a chance that the people of Co-op City may get stunned into organizing before the hustlers bring down the axe.

Fingers crossed!

## Conventional Wisdom From a Bush-Basher

By Malachy McCourt

August 2004 from the Spirit and Westsider

Boston. There was a well-disguised event happening there called the Democratic National Convention. The idea behind this hidden event is to select a candidate and a deputy to run for the office of President of the United States of America.

As a few voters across the country had selected Senator John Kerry to be their man in the White House and he in turn had selected John Edwards to be his attack dog, it would seem redundant to gather to vote again. But that is what they did and I had to go to Boston to see what it's all about.

As usual the Dems were up front about who their candidates are, unlike the Republicans, who are not letting us know who they have in mind to scum up the White House for the next four years. If they do get in, the Lincoln Room will become the Haliburton Room and Lockheed, Fox No-News and the N.R.A. will all get naming rights to a room each, as in the N.Y.C. subways.

Dese and dose Dems are very concerned that the people of the U.S. should be aware that they are Americans and that they are patriots and that we should pay for more young people to put on silly clothes, daub their faces, pick up an assault rifle and go and kill strangers in a

strange land. And when they get killed they get a spanking new flag on the coffin, a bugler and a lot of lads in uniform to carry the box and they will mention the word "hero" a few times before dashing off to the next funeral.

People have no idea that when a young man is blown to bits in Iraq how difficult it is to put him together again. But there's the flag, the Star Spangled Banner – always a comfort when you know your son will never, never walk through that door again to smile, to laugh, to whistle and maybe to hug you.

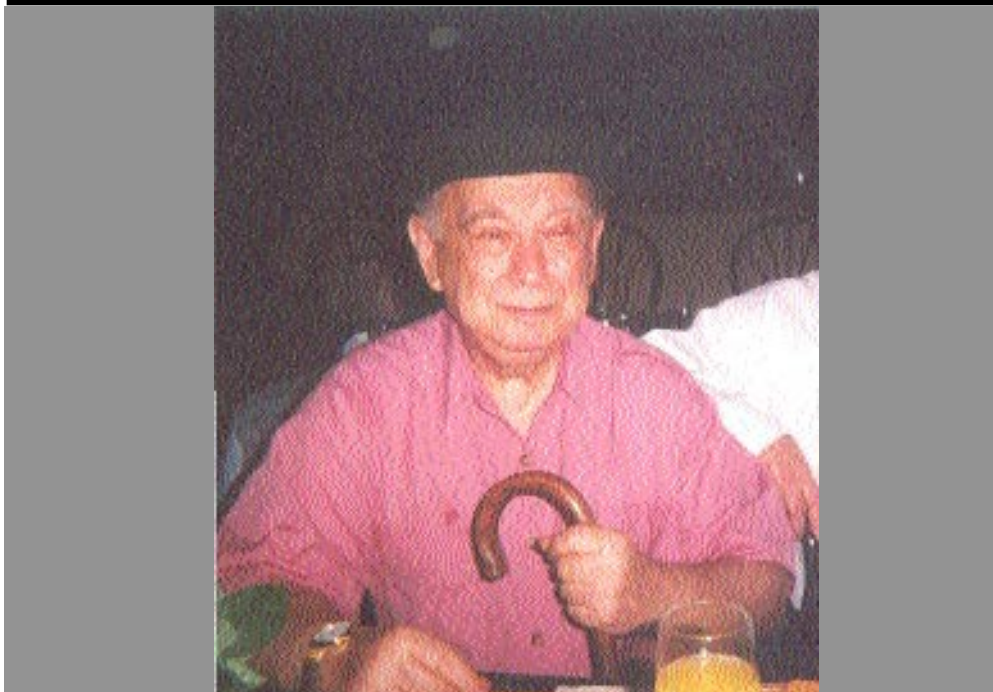
You will wonder what he was thinking when he saw his arms blown away, his legs mangled and saw his blood pouring out in an unstoppable flow. Did he sing "God Bless America?" Was he grateful that God never sent George Wanker Bush or his children, those smiley, lovely daughters into battle? Or Cheney Dick or Johnny Ashcroft or the patriot Rush Limbaugh or Sean Hannity or so many members of Congress and their children – whose main problem will be whether their Texas beef steak is blood rare or just raw?

If dese Dems are not talking about the creation of a nation of obese children from fried macs and fried everything else and teeth-rotting, sugar-filled drinks, or the quiet terrorism of the cigarette makers who addict and murder 400,000 citizens every year, or the murder of

1,500 children every day with legal guns, or the deaths of 35,000 children every day of the week from hunger and bad water – are they any different from the Republicans who cheerfully go about the business of murdering and maiming people in the sacred cause of profit?

The Portuguese woman of war, Teresa Heinz Kerry, subdued herself so that the organizers had more hair on their heads than anticipated. Kucinich hued to the party line after setting off some firecrackers. Dean was amicable and Jesse Jackson – in non-prime time – was safely corralled so that his words fell on few ears. However, it was Al Sharpton, who energized that crowd with his "Our vote is not for sale, Mr. President" speech. The Edwards mater and daughter were charming and John did talk a bit about what's happening in our country, but ruined it with the yap about the war on terrorism.

What are we afraid of anyway? If it's disease, then stop smoking, drinking, drugging, get some exercise and we'll forestall it for a few years. Is it death? No, you are not going to head it off by calling it "passing away," "passing on," "leaving us," "at rest," "in heaven," "no longer with us," "with the herd," "at peace," or simply "passed!" And what? Passed what? About three million Americans die every year not from terror- Continue on Page 7



## A Warrior Steps Down

By Bernice Lorde

Bob Woolis, co-founder (with Charles Rangel) and long-time co-chair of the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition, has stepped down as active co-chair. Age and illness have taken their toll and made it impossible for Bob to attend meetings and zip around Manhattan's five boroughs and upstate New York.

As you all know, Bob has had a long and distinguished career as an advocate for the Mitchell-Lama housing program. City, state, and federal agencies acknowledge his integrity and recognize that he is the dean of the program — the most knowledgeable person in all of the program's aspects.

Bob, however, has not retired. He remains available to provide information and advice not only to the various government agencies but also to the Coalition and its members.

From now on, please address Bob as Co-chair Emeritus! Look for him at our next General Membership meeting.

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## Continued from Page 6 **Conventional Wisdom**

ism, but from poisons in the air, pollution of water – not air from the White House, fake wars causing real deaths.

Then in Boston they set up a free speech zone, which had all the advantages of Abu Ghraib and none of its architectural charm. Wasn't the U.S. of America a free speech zone before Bush and Ashcroft assassinated the Constitution and our traditions? How dare anyone decide a free speech zone – but dese Dems, with a few exceptions, had no cojones and caved in. If, as Truman said, the people have the choice of a real Republican or a fake, they are dumb enough to pick the real one.

Anyway, Kerry-Edwards are playing the waiting game for a Bush screw-up and I wish them good luck. In the meantime, the book is "Bush Lies in State," and I will sign your copy at Barnes and Noble on 82nd Street, Tuesday, August 10th, at 7:30 p.m. Would you believe only 168 days 'til Blinky bin Bush and the Texiban scum are cleared out of the now filthy White House.

The website is malachymccourt.com.

## NEW HARLEM HOUSING COALITION: FIGHTING THE HOUSING WAR IN HARLEM

By Jackie Peters (Metro North Riverview Apartments)

The New Harlem Housing Coalition is planning a political forum and community gathering to spotlight the housing changes in Harlem, New York. We are a group of Mitchell-Lama developments slated to be bought out of the program, most by March of 2005. Recent developments affected are: Metro North Riverview, Schomburg Plaza, 3333 Broadway, UPACA 1 & 2, and Lakeview. We need the help and participation of the entire community of Mitchell-Lamas and all other subsidized housing tenants including those in rent regulated and NYC Housing Authority. The impact of affordable housing losses will change the ability of poor and working families to live within New York State.

We are busy working on two fronts, strengthening our separate tenant organizations and organizing as a coalition. When we call on our brother and sisters in the housing war, we are looking for expertise and support.

We will be contacting your development and inviting you to join us in our various activities to 'save affordable housing'.

## MLRC

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September 2004

Advertisement

**The Battleground at Home**

In this Presidential year we all know that certain battleground states are critical, and many New Yorkers have traveled to Pennsylvania and other key states to join in the fight to take back our country. The Bush Administration is undoubtedly the most conservative, and among the most corrupt, administrations in our lifetime, and I am confident that Democrats across the country are going to go to the polls in November in droves to defeat George Bush and elect John Kerry.

This presents us with a unique opportunity to also win races in battleground districts right here in New York City, and take back our state from elected leaders who are just as conservative as President Bush. Majority Leader Joe Bruno controls the State Senate by a margin of seven seats. With that control he has turned the State Senate into a graveyard for progressive legislation, including bills to increase the minimum wage, give fair funding to our schools, and to protect and expand affordable housing in our state, including Mitchell-Lama housing. This year we have an opportunity to capitalize on the high Democratic turnout for the presidential election to also win back State Senate seats from the Republicans, and get closer to ousting Bruno from power.

As many of you know, the State Senate recently passed a bill to raise the state minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.15 per hour. The Governor vetoed the bill. To override the Governor's veto, the Senate must deliver a two-thirds majority vote. Though the bill has almost unanimous support in the Senate, Majority Leader Bruno is refusing to allow the bill to be brought to the floor for another vote.

Senator Bruno's decision to allow a vote on the minimum wage bill the first time was purely a political calculation. As the New York Times reported on July 24, 2004, "For the Republicans in the State Senate in particular, the issue meant a choice between irritating the Conservative Party and irritating voters in pivotal New York City districts, where at least two Senate seats are up for grabs. The Senate leader, Joseph Bruno, apparently decided to help his candidates in the city". We must make him feel that pressure again by supporting Democratic candidates around the state.

Similarly on the issue of protecting Mitchell-Lamas, Senator Bruno has refused to bring to the floor legislation that would place Mitchell-Lama buildings into the rent stabilization program. That's where you come in.

In New York City, one key is in East Harlem and the Bronx against Republican Olga Mendez. She is being challenged by progressive City Council Member Jose Serrano. Another is the 34th Senate District seat in the North Bronx and Southern Westchester, recently vacated by Guy Velella. Assembly Member Jeff Klein is running in the Democratic Primary with the support of Democratic leaders across the state against Assembly Member Stephen Kaufman, who is being supported and funded by the Republican Senate leadership, Governor Pataki, and Mayor Bloomberg. Also, Diane Savino, a progressive, activist labor leader, is running in a competitive race for an open seat in Brooklyn and Staten Island.

All of these candidates, and others around the state, are running to defeat the Republican agenda that is dominating Albany and blocking an increase in the minimum wage, efforts to shore up the Mitchell-Lama program, and other progressive reforms. They need your help.

If you want to help these candidates please email me at [Friends@Schneiderman.org](mailto:Friends@Schneiderman.org), or call my campaign office at 646- 207-2104. Also, if you haven't registered to vote, please register and remember to vote! The primary is September 14th and general election is November 2nd.

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