

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 14, 2020

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PA Williams, Mayoral Candidates, Ruth Messinger, Electeds, and Lucerne Residents: Keep Men at the Lucerne

On Monday, Nov 16, Judge Debra James will hear case to determine if the men move

Community distributes winter gear to shelter residents

Today, Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, Maya Wiley, Dianne Morales, Ruth Messinger, elected officials, advocates, and shelter residents from the Lucerne rallied in support of the men staying at the Lucerne. On Monday, Judge Debra James will hear the case that decides whether or not they can stay through the pandemic, or move to Lower Manhattan.

On October 19th, Judge Debra James granted the men a TRO in response to a suite of [affidavits](#) from Lucerne shelter residents, a physician who specializes in substance abuse, a social worker, and a co-founder of UWS Open Hearts attesting to the irrational and harmful nature of the move. Because of the TRO, dozens of residents have started working through Goddard Riverside's Green Keepers program, offering residents privately funded, stable employment. Photos are attached. More affidavits were filed in support of the men from current and former elected officials including Obama HUD secretary Shaun Donovan, Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, former BP Ruth Messinger, Senators Brad Hoylman and Robert Jackson, and CM Helen Rosenthal.

[WATCH THE RALLY HERE](#)

At the event, members of the UWS Open Hearts Initiative distributed donated coats, hats, gloves, and other winter gear to shelter residents and others in need.

Residents at the Lucerne are now receiving 6-day-a-week services on-site from [Project Renewal's Recovery Center](#), which provides intakes, occupational therapy, and group meetings. At a standard shelter such services would normally only be available off-site. This is on top of the robust case management, nursing, and wellness programs offered by Project Renewal's nearly 100 on-site staff members, and supplemental programming offered in partnership with local organizations and volunteers, such as walk and talks with faith leaders, resume workshops, and community donation events.

A NY1/Ipsos [poll](#) from October found that sixty-two percent of New Yorkers support housing people currently homeless in their neighborhoods.

"During the pandemic while in the congregate shelters, I became a victim of Covid-19 and almost died. Since recovering, I - and my fellow residents - have been moved around several times like cattle.

Through my advocacy and with the help of UWS Open Hearts Initiative and cooperation from Project Renewal we've been able to create a life-enriching environment at the Lucerne. Here we've secured jobs in the community and resources, like therapy and harm reduction meetings, that are not available elsewhere. We have a community here. We are rebuilding our lives. And that's why I and my fellow residents would like to stay here. Losing that would be very detrimental to our health and wellness," **said Shams aka Da Homeless Hero.**

"The COVID pandemic bringing shelters to our neighborhood created an opportunity to learn about the needs of shelter residents and ways the community can support them. So many Upper West Siders have risen to the occasion, from the Jewish grandmothers who have stood in the rain with us handing out clothes to the families that have welcomed and befriended the residents of the Lucerne. We hope the city will agree that community models like this should be built upon and expanded, not disrupted with destabilizing moves.," **said Corinne Low, co-founder of UWS Open Hearts Initiative.**

Dozens of community people and elected officials have stood with the men of the Lucerne, including Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, former Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger, Senators Brian Benjamin, Robert Jackson, Jose Serrano, and Brad Hoylman, AMs Linda Rosenthal, Yuh-Line Niou, and Dick Gottfried, every candidate for Manhattan Borough President, CMs Helen Rosenthal, Ben Kallos, Carlina Rivera, Brad Lander, Steve Levin, Keith Powers, and Mark Levine, Comptroller Scott Stringer, Mayoral candidates Maya Wiley, Shaun Donovan and Dianne Morales, Cynthia Nixon, Zephyr Teachout, and others.

"This game of playing ping-pong with shelter residents has got to stop. New Yorkers who do not have homes are nevertheless human beings with the right to stability and self-determination. They have bravely gone to court to express their desire to stay at the Lucerne where they have on-site services, jobs they cannot get elsewhere and significant community support. The Mayor should listen to our most vulnerable, not to wealthy New Yorkers who "otherize" people and want to banish those they don't like," **said former Borough President Ruth Messinger.**

"Displacing people in need to keep those with means comfortable is not the way to fix New York City's housing crisis. The men of the Lucerne, like everyone who has experienced the devastation of homelessness deserve the chance to change their circumstance with the access to programs and training, the kind being provided by Project Renewal and Goddard Riverside. This program is working and the city should be looking to replicate its success elsewhere, not disrupting it with a move from one commercial hotel to another," **said New York City Public Advocate, Jumaane D. Williams.** "If New York City is ever going to address the systemic racism and prejudice it is reckoning with at this moment, we should look no further than working together to fix what is happening on the Upper West Side of Manhattan."

"New York City must be a place where we can all live with dignity, and that begins, at a minimum, with having a safe place to live. Even as we fight for permanent housing solutions for New Yorkers experiencing homelessness, the relationship that has been developed between the men of the Lucerne

and the longtime residents of the Upper West Side can serve as a model for how communities can come together to take care of each other in times of need. We cannot allow our city's leaders to put the fears of the few over the good of the many. The mayor must reconsider his decision to relocate these men from the Lucerne until there is a long-term solution that puts their wellbeing and safety first," said Mayoral Candidate **Maya Wiley**.

"Moving residents in the midst of a pandemic is callous and a public health failure. This situation reflects a larger structural problem. We need to support the residents in securing permanent housing and provide all New Yorkers with the services and support we need to live in dignity," said Mayoral Candidate **Dianne Morales**.

On November 1st, Mayoral Candidate and former Obama HUD secretary **Shaun Donovan** also visited the Lucerne, saying, "Instead of closing the door to our neighbors in need, we need leadership that will bring all New Yorkers together to reimagine the right to shelter in New York City as a right to housing. I know we can help people in need move from the streets and shelters into permanent housing because as President Obama's HUD Secretary, I led the national strategy that reduced street homelessness by a quarter across the country and ended veteran homelessness in more than 80 cities and states. Historically, affordable housing has always been a big part of how New York City pulls itself out of crises – and this time should be no different."

Additional quotes:

"We urge Judge James to stop City Hall from uprooting the men staying at the Lucerne. We desperately need a thoughtful perspective on our homelessness crisis, not the Mayor's reactive and, sadly, destructive approach. Moving human beings from place to place as if they were pieces of furniture can no longer be acceptable. Our fundamental public policy priority should be to end homelessness once and for all. As a first step, this means that New Yorkers struggling to overcome homelessness and substance addiction deserve consistency and support, not chaos and hostility," said Council Member **Helen Rosenthal** (Manhattan, District 6).

"It is beyond comprehension that more than eight months into the worst public health emergency of our time, the City has not yet figured out how to meaningfully manage the homelessness crisis. It's also a reflection of the City's failed housing and homelessness policies, which contributed to the ballooning homelessness crisis in the first place. We stand on the precipice of an almost certain second wave of COVID-19, and we are still debating whether to shuttle dozens of homeless for the third time into a new temporary placement. So little care or thought has been given to the best interests of the men in the Lucerne and the destabilizing impact this last-minute planning has had on their ability to get back on their feet," said Assemblymember **Linda B. Rosenthal** (D/WF-Manhattan).

"Monday's court hearing should not be necessary; New York City should be treating its homeless with more respect. This bungled move is ill-advised and that continues to be true," said Council Member **Ben Kallos**. "Our City needs to work on building and finding permanent housing for these residents and really work to support homeless New Yorkers in need on the Upper West Side and around the City."

“Every New Yorker deserves shelter in our community. As a city, we have a moral and legal responsibility to take care of all our people and especially those experiencing homelessness. Instead of creating additional barriers to an already disenfranchised group of people who are at high risk for the coronavirus, we should all find our moral compass and fully support the men at the Lucerne who deserve every opportunity at stability and safety,” said BP candidate **Lindsey Boylan**.

“I remain opposed to the displacement of the Lucerne residents,” said BP candidate **Elizabeth Caputo**.

“Leadership in New York City has wronged them and has failed to develop a just, equitable, health-centered, actionable plan to support those experiencing homelessness. Now is the time to work together and include all voices. That is why I have created the Community Conversation Plan to address critical issues that affect our borough.

“I remain troubled by the increase in homelessness in New York City, the lack of leadership around solutions to support our most vulnerable, and the nature of the debate over the men who have now been living at the Lucerne Hotel since the summer. As COVID19 cases rise again, and the threat of restrictions related to restaurants, shops, and schools is once again the reality of New Yorkers, this is the time to press the pause button,” said BP candidate **Kim Watkins**. “Assuming that the Monday, November 16 hearing takes place as scheduled, I hope the court will recognize that our city’s resources should be focused on staying safe, socially distancing, and ultimately preventing further spread of this virus. Lucerne Residents should not be moved at this time, unless they have chosen to move or will be assigned a permanent home.”

Three Lucerne residents responded to starting work with the Goddard-funded program:

"This opportunity gives me a chance to become more independent instead of being dependent on others. I think what Goddard Riverside did in creating this program is a great thing, because it not only helps us, it also helps show the community that we're here to work and to take care of the community," said **Larry Thomas**.

“We’re helping the community, upgrading the area and we’re praying we can stay at the Lucerne. I work and I go to school here. If we move we can’t do these jobs anymore and then I have to figure out a way to get to school,” said **Joseph Humphrey, Jr.**

“I really need this job and I enjoy working here. I don’t want to move,” said **Corey Spencer**.

Background

In late July, clients of Project Renewal were placed at the Lucerne after being transferred from another hotel in Midtown. Soon after, Bill de Blasio caved to a group of Upper West Siders who started a racist facebook group and raised \$150,000 to hire former Giuliani deputy Randy Mastro to kick Project Renewal shelter residents out of the Lucerne. The Mayor's decision to move the shelter has emboldened

NIMBYs across New York City to privately fundraise ever-growing sums to keep shelters out of their neighborhoods.