

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—February 21, 2005

**Death Knell of Eminent Domain Abuse Is Nigh
Brooklyn & Harlem Say: “We’re Not Going Anywhere!”
*Ratner & Columbia University Proposals Threatened by
Pending Supreme Court Decision***

NEW YORK, CITY HALL—Opponents of eminent domain abuse today braved snowy conditions to gather at City Hall steps and celebrate tomorrow’s landmark Supreme Court hearing of *Kelo v. City of New London*—a case that will determine whether it’s legal for states to confiscate private property and give it to other private interests for reasons of “economic development.”

“Eminent domain has run amok in this country,” noted Civil Rights Attorney Norman Siegel told the crowd, arguing that private development for private profit does not meet the Constitution’s test for eminent domain. Brandishing a copy of the brief he filed with the Supreme Court on behalf of clients Develop Don’t Destroy Brooklyn (DDDB) and the West Harlem Business Group, Siegel said, “The Supreme Court’s decision will change the landscape in New York City. I call upon the Mayor and the Governor to suspend all use of eminent domain until the United States Supreme Court has spoken.”

In filing their “amicus curiae” (friend of the court brief) in support of the New London homeowners who are suing to keep their property, DDDB and the West Harlem Business Group joined over a hundred organizations such as AARP, the National Association of Homebuilders, the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

The community leaders, residents, and political officials who stood on City Hall steps today said loudly and clearly that proposed developments by Bruce Ratner in Brooklyn and Columbia University in West Harlem cannot use eminent domain to condemn and demolish the homes and businesses of hundreds of citizens. DDDB spokesperson Daniel Goldstein said, “Bruce Ratner—with the vigorous support of Pataki, Bloomberg, and Markowitz—wants to level a neighborhood that includes my home and hundreds of others. In West Harlem, Columbia University also wants to destroy a community so they can expand. We will not stand by and let this happen!”

Goldstein’s vow was echoed by City Councilperson Letitia James, and by the West Harlem residents who spoke today: Nellie Hester Bailey (President, Harlem Tenants Council), Jordi Reyes Montblanc (Chairperson of West Harlem’s Community Board 9, which passed a unanimous resolution condemning eminent domain abuse), Harlem footprint resident Hamidullah Al-Amin (Coalition to Preserve Community) and Maritta Dunn (Manhattanville Area Consortium of Businesses).

Joe Wright, representing the Institute for Justice, which will argue for *Kelo* to the Court, concluded, “Individual rights are sanctified in the Constitution and are fundamental requirements for man’s life. The Founders in this respect were ingenious. They said these rights are “inalienable” which means that they cannot be violated or regulated by anyone, at any time, for any purpose whatsoever.”

“We believe the Supreme Court will make the right decision,” Goldstein stated. “If they do not, it’s open season on every property owner in America.”

Download the DDDB amicus brief at: www.dddb.net/public/DDDBamicusbrief.pdf

DEVELOP DON’T DESTROY BROOKLYN leads a broad-based community coalition, fighting for development that will unite our communities instead of dividing and destroying them.