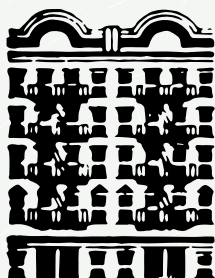


The Cooper Square Committee
presents
Our 56th Anniversary Gala
“Stand For Tenant Rights”



**The Gala Committee,
& The Steering Committee**
of
The Cooper Square Committee
thank you for joining us in celebrating
**56 Years of Community Organizing,
Preserving & Developing Affordable Housing,
Community & Cultural Spaces.**



Thursday, October 1, 2015
La MaMa Experimental Theater Club
66-68 East Fourth Street
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The Cooper Square contingent with thousands of tenants at the #TenantTakeover of the State Capitol to tell Governor Cuomo: Repeal vacancy decontrol and stop the hemorrhaging of affordable apartments from New York City!

The Cooper Square Committee
wishes to thank
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of our
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The Cooper Square Committee rallies in Albany to tell Governor Cuomo to repeal vacancy decontrol and stop the hemorrhaging of affordable apartments from New York City!



Yonatan Tadele, Angee Cortorreal and Daniel Weinberg marching across the Brooklyn Bridge on May 15th for stronger rent laws.



Yonatan and CSC members at rally for the Rent Laws in June.

Dear Friends,

Welcome to Cooper Square Committee's Annual Gala! Our theme is *"Stand for Tenants Rights: Celebrating Affordable Housing Activists."* Cooper Square Committee has been in the forefront of New York City's affordable housing 2015 victories. The economics of real estate ownership have changed in recent years. "Mom and Pop" landlords who owned one or two buildings are disappearing on the Lower East Side. Now we must organize to fight large corporations that own dozens, and sometimes hundreds, of buildings. As ownership changes, tenant organizing has had to match it. Today's tenant organizations must span multiple buildings, and so Cooper Square Committee is forming coalitions of buildings with the same owner. We have continued working to expand and preserve affordable housing on the Lower East Side during our 56 years.

This year, we are proud to be honoring three groups that organize tenants and fight to preserve and expand affordable housing: the *Community Development Project of the Urban Justice Center*; the *Mahfar Tenants Alliance (MTA)* and the *Icon Community United (ICU)*. These groups were an integral part of our 2015 successes.

Here are some Cooper Square Committee 2015 high points.

TENANT ORGANIZING, COALITION BUILDING AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Construction as Harassment. Many tenant associations are fighting against reckless renovations which release lead dust, cause electrical fires and collapsed ceilings. These disruptive renovations are a tactic of chronic harassment by landlords who want to push out rent-regulated tenants. Cooper Square Committee works with tenants to fight for proper code enforcement, repairs and rent abatements, and to fight harassment.



Tenants and Council member
Rosie Mendez speaking at
press conference about Sammy
Mahfar's disruptive renovation
tactics on December 16th, 2014.



Cooper Square Committee called to reform the Department of Buildings. One strategy to protect tenants during renovations of occupied buildings is to push for improved enforcement from the NYC Department of Buildings – faster and more thorough. Our organizers helped form a city-wide organization working with the office of City Councilmember Rosie Mendez and other legislators to move forward on legislation to address these issues, including stiffer fines and faster enforcement. We've held press conferences to call attention to the need for reform, and are having legislative meetings with Councilmembers.

The urgent need for DOB reform hit home on March 26th when a gas leak at 121 Second Avenue caused a massive fire and the collapse of three historic buildings, displacing fifteen people, killing two people, injuring at least twenty more, and leading to multiple vacate orders in adjacent buildings. Illegal gas line connections allegedly caused the tragedy, and may have been prevented with better DOB enforcement of construction work. CSC responded to the disaster by placing ten displaced households in temporary Cooper Square MHA apartments, and we organized tenants in an adjacent building at 41 East Seventh Street to speed up restoration of gas service to that building.



Site of March 26th explosion.

Cooper Square Committee joined city wide groups to pressure the Rent Guidelines Board to be fairer to tenants. Tenants won a 0% rent increase for one-year leases for the first time ever!

Cooper Square Committee mobilized dozens of tenants to go to Albany to lobby our legislators for stronger rent laws.



Brandon Kielbasa at a rally against predatory equity.

Cooper Square Committee successfully organized many tenant associations this year.

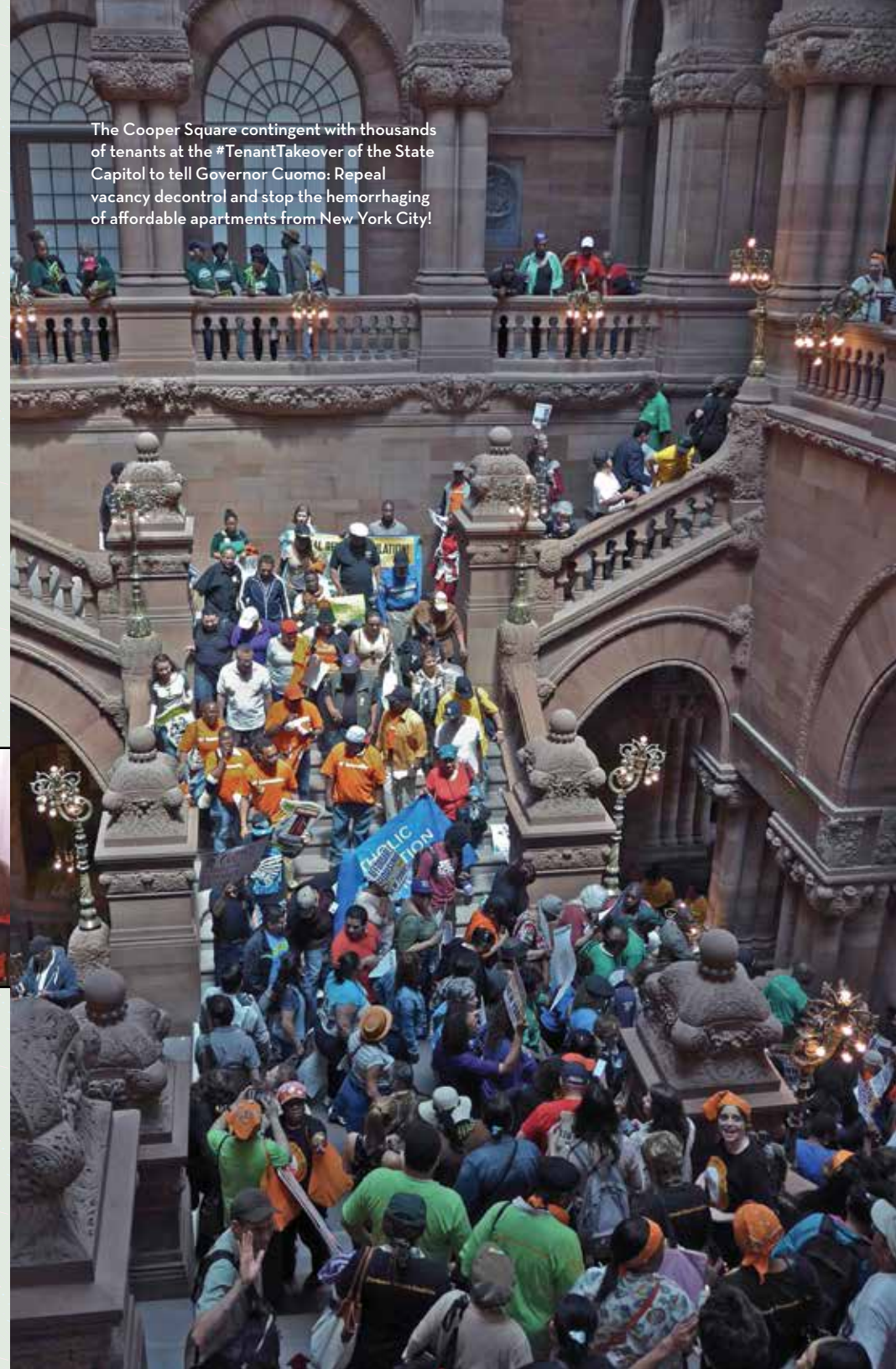
In coalition with Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence (CAAHV); Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES) and Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE) we have formed coalitions of tenants from multiple buildings with the same “bad acting” landlord.

Cooper Square Committee is developing a new generation of tenant leaders to reenergize the struggle for stronger tenant protections at the state and city level, and to bring them into leadership positions at the Cooper Square

Committee. Tenants are learning power analysis and organizing strategies. They are gaining a fuller understanding of tenants’ rights and learning where to go in the system to get enforcement thanks to Cooper Square Committee’s leadership development workshops.



Stand for Tenant Safety (STS) training meeting.



The Cooper Square contingent with thousands of tenants at the #TenantTakeover of the State Capitol to tell Governor Cuomo: Repeal vacancy decontrol and stop the hemorrhaging of affordable apartments from New York City!

Cooper Square Committee's new walking tours show off tenant organizing victories in our community.

Cooper Square Committee's housing staff not only organizes, but counsels and empowers tenants to prevent evictions, protect their rights when dealing with lease renewals, subletting, rent overcharges, preferential rents, fraudulent rent registration, harassment, lack of services and much more.



Brandon giving a walking tour of buildings dealing with disruptive renovation.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Finding potential development opportunities in an overheated housing market is not easy. However, we are partnering with other nonprofits on some exciting projects.

The Bea Arthur Residence: Cooper Square Committee with the Ali Forney Center are renovating this historic townhouse to create housing for eighteen homeless LGBTQ youth. We expect the project to be completed by September, 2016.

Rendering of the fully renovated Bea Arthur Residence at 222 East 13th Street. (left)



Bea Arthur Residence cheese cake cutting ceremony. Left to right, Two Ali Forney Center clients, Corey Johnson, City Councilman; Carl Siciliano, Ali Forney Center, Steve Herrick, CSC; Senator Brad Hoylman; Allen Roskoff; Rosie Mendez, City Councilperson.



La MaMa: Look around you! Cooper Square Committee helped La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, with a \$180,000 grant from the State housing agency, to renovate the basement at 66-68 East Fourth Street to create this multipurpose room. Renovation work was recently completed. We are happy to be celebrating tonight's gala in this space.



La MaMa's newly renovated performance space.



La MaMa's performance space at various stages of the new construction.



HDFC GREENING PROGRAM

Cooper Square Committee's Greening Program is making low income cooperatives more environmentally efficient so that they can remain affordable for years to come. We are partnering with the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, the White Roof Project, and Franklin Energy Services to deliver an array of energy retrofits to low income cooperative buildings from the Bowery to Avenue D.

346 East 21st Street



We enrolled 346 East Twenty-First Street in the Weatherization Assistance Program so that they will receive energy efficiency retrofits. We continue to reach out to other low income cooperatives interested in the program.

SOCIAL SERVICES AND SENIOR SERVICES

Cooper Square Committee's Social Service Specialists assist low income residents and seniors to secure housing and health care entitlements.

Senior Health, Advocacy and Recreation Program (SHARP), our elders' program, is organizing seniors to improve their quality of life and help them age in place. Cooper Square Committee provides workshops and social events such as movies, operas, game gatherings, and pot luck dinners. In 2016, we aim to create a pilot Neighborhood Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NNORC) to bring more programming and services to the more than 750 seniors living in a twelve block area in our community.

WE ARE PROUD OF OUR MANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE PAST YEAR

Our development of new multi-building tenant coalitions fighting bad acting landlords, our increased visibility citywide as one of the main community based groups spearheading an organizing campaign to reform DOB, our pioneering project developing transitional housing for homeless LGBT youth, our ongoing work greening low income HDFCs, and our efforts to launch a neighborhood NORC. **Thank you for helping to make these achievements possible.**

2015 HONOREES

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AT THE URBAN JUSTICE CENTER

The Urban Justice Center serves New York City's most vulnerable residents through a combination of direct legal service, systemic advocacy, community education and political organizing. The Community Development Project at UJC partners with grassroots organizations in New York City's low/moderate income communities to win legal cases, helps negotiate community benefits agreements, publishes community-driven research reports, helps form new organizations and supports their work toward social justice.

In recent years, UJC-CDP has been an essential part of Cooper Square Committee's organizing work. Their staff, past and present, have all had an integral role in our work organizing against and challenging the predatory practices of bad acting landlords on the Lower East Side.

Harvey Epstein of the Urban Justice Center
with Cooper Square's Yonatan Tadele,
Brandon Kielbasa and Shawn Dahl.



In the past year, UJC-CDP has helped tenants in the Mahfar, ICON and Croman coalitions to bring legal actions when they were dealing with reckless renovation work that resulted in denial of basic services, collapsed ceilings and dispersal of lead dust into apartments. Tenants in all above cases, with UJC-CDP's help, are negotiating stipulations that will likely include a rent abatement, get repairs to many apartments, and protections against future harassment.

UJC-CDP's partnership stretches far beyond the court room. They are an organization that truly understands community organizing and uses their position as attorneys, researchers, and advocates to fortify organizing efforts.



Tenants speaking at press
conference about Sammy
Mahfar's disruptive renovation
tactics on December 16th, 2014.

Cooper Square Committee
participated in a Stabilizing New York
press conference on June 11, 2015.



2015 HONOREES

ICON COMMUNITY UNITED (ICU)

The Icon Community United (ICU) is a multi-building tenant coalition the Cooper Square Committee helped form over the past year. The tenants have the same landlord, Icon Realty Management, which owns 25-30 properties in the Lower East Side, who tenants claim has engaged in harassment and carried out disruptive renovation work. In response, Icon tenants have organized and fought for their rights.

At **128 Second Avenue**, tenants were already facing numerous issues from Icon, but things escalated after the Second Avenue explosion in March, 2015. A building inspection revealed illegal plumbing and improper work on gas lines by Icon's construction workers; this startling discovery led to the shut-off of cooking gas, hot water, and heat. As a result of nearly 100+ HPD violations, Cooper Square Committee helped the tenants retain the Urban Justice

Center to litigate an HP Action. The case is ongoing, but – as a result of CSC & the tenants' work in publicizing the issues – the tenants will get their necessary repairs as well as a significant financial settlement.

Tenants at **222 East Twelfth Street** – a 22-unit SRO building – were under siege for months due to messy

ICON tenants at a rally against predatory equity.



construction work in the building. With CSC's help, the remaining seven tenants organized and reached out to city agencies. As a result, two DOB Stop Work Orders were placed on the building. In May, 2015, MFY Legal Services helped tenants file a group HP Action against Icon (for repairs & harassment claims), which is currently being litigated in Housing Court.

When Icon purchased **57 Second Avenue** in February, 2015 for a jaw-dropping \$24.8 million, tenants were well-prepared to stand their ground. Back in November, 2014, CSC – observing that the building was listed for sale – conducted door-to-door outreach, and worked with tenant leaders to conduct a "Know Your Rights" meeting the following month. The tenants have presented a united front in dealing with Icon Realty. As a result, early attempts by Icon to displace tenants have been unsuccessful. As of August, 2015, not one of the building's 23 rent-stabilized units has been vacated.

Tenants from these and other Icon buildings formed a tenant coalition earlier regularly and consists of tenants from about ten Icon buildings. They are a model for the kind of tenant unity that can prevent large scale displacement of rent regulated tenants from our community.



ICON tenants at a Stabilizing New York press conference on June 11, 2015.

2015 HONOREES

MAHFAR TENANTS ALLIANCE (MTA)

Cooper Square Committee helped tenants in multiple buildings owned by Sammy Mahfar to get organized and form the **Mahfar Tenants Alliance (MTA)** in the past year. In December, 2014, they came together and held a press conference after a second Mahfar building, 210 Rivington Street, was found to be contaminated with lead dust. Working together, they increased their leverage by coordinating legal actions to fight back against Mahfar's speculative investment practices in the Lower East Side. In April, with the help of the Urban Justice Center, tenants from four Mahfar buildings – 102 Norfolk Street, 210 Rivington Street, 113 Stanton Street and 22 Spring Street – brought multiple HP Actions at the same time, and held a press conference on April 20th announcing the legal actions, which garnered a lot of local media coverage.

The MTA used its political savvy to work productively with our local elected officials, including Council members Rosie Mendez and Margaret Chin, Borough President Gale Brewer and NY State Senator Daniel Squadron, all of whom spoke at their press conference. They effectively publicized the unsafe renovation work carried out by Mahfar, which resulted in disbursement of lead dust at several buildings at levels of between 200 to 3,000 times the legal limit. Their efforts led to new regulations being made within the NYC Department of Health to better notify and protect tenants from dangerous levels of lead dust during renovation.

Tenants from 113 Stanton Street also looked into the role of the banks in over-leveraging Mahfar's buildings and discovered that Mahfar had received significant financing from Signature Bank, and reached out to bank officials to alert them to the negative impact their banking practices were having on tenants. They also reached out to bank regulators about the impact of the loan on them.

Mahfar tenants continue to work to publicize their struggles with Sami Mahfar, including writing an op ed piece about construction as harassment for English and Spanish language papers. The Mahfar Tenants Alliance continues to remain vigilant as their court cases move forward.



Tenants speaking at press conference about Sammy Mahfar's disruptive renovation tactics on December 16th, 2014.



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on hosting your
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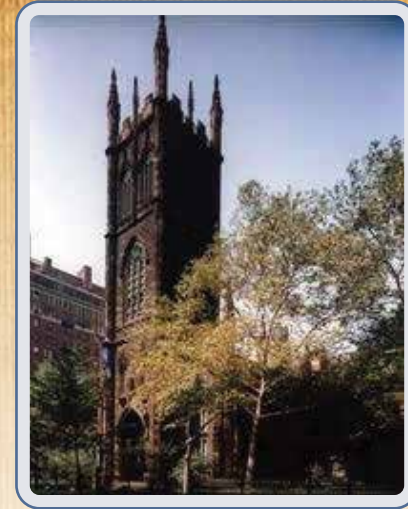
The Community Development Project
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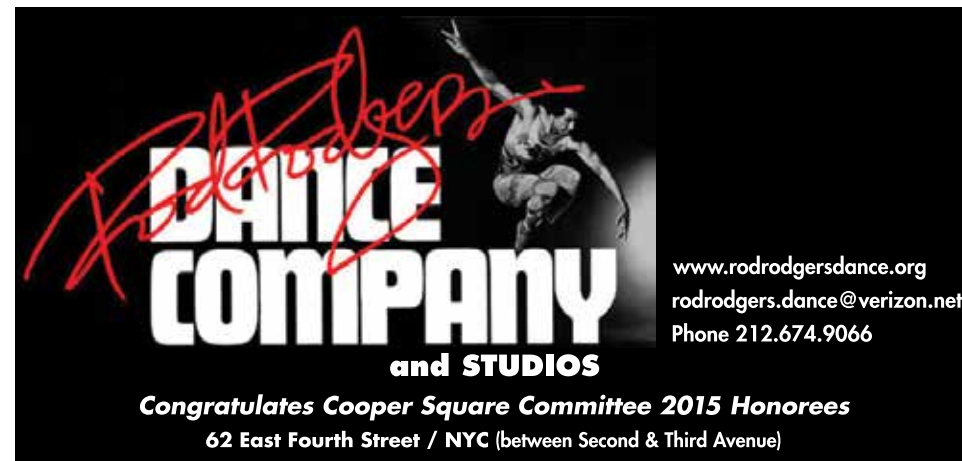


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**Thank you,
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For your dedication to the
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Happy 56th Anniversary!

*Council Member Margaret S. Chin
District - 1, Lower Manhattan*



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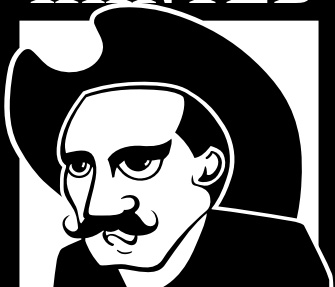
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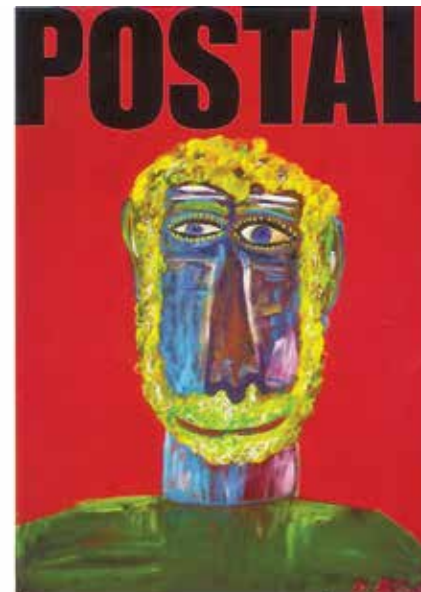
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Congratulations to Cooper Square Committee on another year of advocating for tenants in New York City, and being a voice for those who might otherwise be silenced. I am proud to have you as advocates in my district and look forward to continuing to support your great work in the years ahead.

**Assemblymember
Deborah J. Glick
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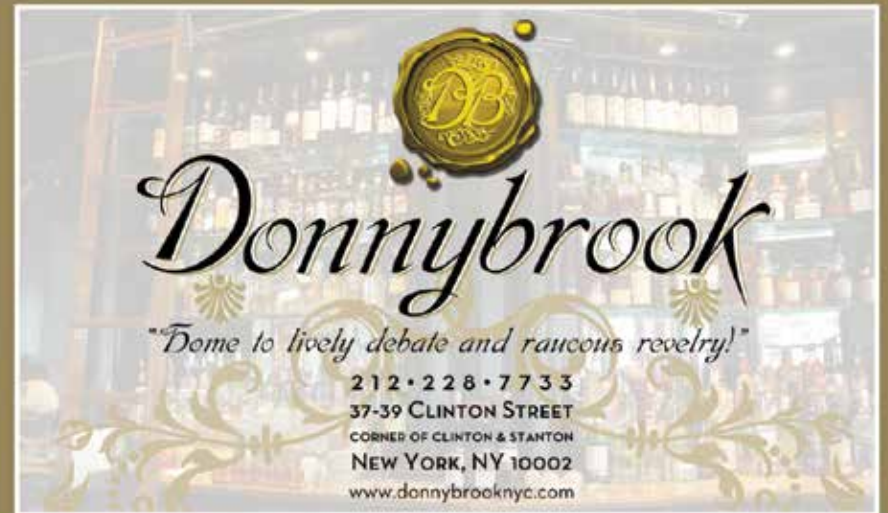
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212.228.1260



**Congrats
Cooper Square Committee
on 56 years
of Serving our Community**

*from District Leader
Anthony Feliciano & Family*



NEW YORK

63 East Fourth Street • www.miscelaneany.com

CONGRATULATIONS TO
HARVEY EPSTEIN

&

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
OF THE URBAN JUSTICE CENTER



CHARLES & ANNE K. JOHNSON



**Congratulations to the
Cooper Square Committee
on your 56th Anniversary!!!**

**Congratulations to the 2015 honorees:
Icon Community United
The Mahfar Tenants Alliance
The Community Development Project
of the Urban Justice Center**



CONGRESSWOMAN CAROLYN B. MALONEY
New York's 12th District
1651 3rd Avenue, Suite 311
New York, NY 10128-3679
Phone: 212-860-0606 • Fax: 212-860-0704



"I love coming to Housing Works Health Center and seeing other mothers with their children. Someday that will be me. I will get there."

AILEEN VEGA, HOUSING WORKS' CLIENT

Housing Works congratulates The Community Development Project of the Urban Justice Center, The Mahfar Tenants Alliance and the Icon Community United.

According to the World Health Organization, half of the people living with HIV are women. And, for women ages 15-44, HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death and disease worldwide.

As the largest AIDS service organization in the nation, Housing Works provides women with the practical tools and support to stay healthy, productive, and self-sufficient. Our holistic approach to HIV prevention and treatment emphasizes empowerment. Furthermore, we address the greater societal conditions that perpetuate the epidemic—stigma, poverty and homelessness.

Join Housing Works to help women in New York—and around the globe—confront challenges of HIV/AIDS with comprehensive services and effective advocacy.

housingworks.org



**Congrats to Cooper Square and Frances Goldin,
the only remaining founder of this terrific organization.**

Keep on truckin'!

With much love, Reeni and Sally

BORINQUEN EXTERMINATING CO., INC.

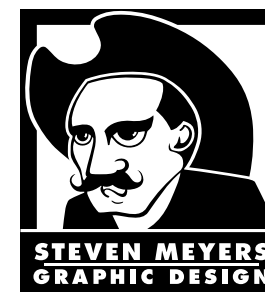
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The Cooper Square Committee would like to thank
the following companies for their technical support:



We would like to thank the following companies
for their contributions towards this year's Gala:



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Ristorante Italiano

