



606 W. 113th St. #4A, New York, NY 10025 info@AmericanSlaveryProject.org 212.864.7722

Dear Council Members,

I am Judy Tate, the co-founder and Producing Artistic Director of The American Slavery Project which is a theatrical response to revisionism in this country's discourse around slavery, the Civil War and Jim Crow. And I am here to support INT. 0036 – 2014: A Local Law which will require the placement of an informational sign near the intersection of Wall and Water Streets in Manhattan to mark the site of New York's first slave market.

In 2012, with help from the Department of ^{Cultural}Community Affairs, ASP brought to life for audiences, the world of colonial New York. In our show "Unheard Voices" our writers studied the era and the remains of people buried in Lower Manhattan in the African Burial Ground. Many of the 10,000 people buried there surely passed through the African Slave Market. There are no extant records of them. Our writers had to imagine their names and daily lives from the contents of their graves to give them voice. The proposed plaque will bear witness to the reality of those lives.

When we perform, people are surprised to learn there were enslaved people in New York. They are even more surprised to consider what that means-- that there had to be a way of buying and selling those peoples, that many city structures that we take for granted today were erected by those same people. New York was largely forest which had to be cleared. It was enslaved black workers who did the backbreaking work of cutting down and clearing the trees from the bottom of Manhattan to the top creating the "Broad Way". Wall Street isn't just a name but was an actual wall erected using slave labor to keep the city safe.

The American Slavery Project urges you to place this plaque in a far belated recognition of contributions African descended peoples made to the construction of this city. Their labor was forced, but the fruits of it are real and can still be witnessed every time one of our citizens walk up the "Broad Way", or down the "Wall Street". It is only fitting that we have a plaque that recognizes the origins of Wall Street, and denotes exactly what the most important commodity being traded there was—human beings. It is an important history, a history of survival, of contribution, ingenuity and transcendence. May we forever remember the people who built this city with the blood and sweat of their labor. This plaque gives their children a long overdue acknowledgement and offers every citizen and every visitor the chance to see that we New Yorkers -- all of us-- recognize our history and because of that recognition can claim New York as our own.

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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judy Tate".

**Comments on Int. No. 36
Friday February 28th, 2014
By Chris Cobb**

I would like to thank the committee for holding this hearing.

And well, I hope you realize what you are about to do. Because creating and placing this marker may well alter how New Yorkers see themselves.

Because it's been 303 years since the ancestor of the

City Council, the Common Council, passed a law setting up the City's first municipal slave market, down on Water and Wall Street.

A market, where incidentally the City itself hired slaves as laborers for City projects and collected taxes on every slave bought or sold.

So I just have one thing to say –

FINALLY, FINALLY- It's about time!

You would have thought someone would have memorialized this site a long time ago. But well, maybe not.

The slaves that came through there, mostly imported from the West Indies and a smaller portion from directly from Africa, they laid bricks, cleared roads, they put down cobble stones, they built homes, they chopped wood, carried water, cooked and cleaned, were nannies and through their labor they literally built the city of New York, including the first City Hall!

AND WHEN THEY DIED when they died - those people and their children - and their children's children were buried in the African burial ground. And as soon as it filled up the City paved over the cemetery and sold the lots off to developers. By that time there were an estimated 20,000 people buried there, just south of City Hall.

THAT'S OUTRAGEOUS!

WELL TODAY – all of us here - WE ARE CONNECTING THE DOTS!

We all know New York is a busy place. However, it's one thing to forget but it's another thing to intentionally erase and systematically ignore. They were made invisible on purpose and through neglect.

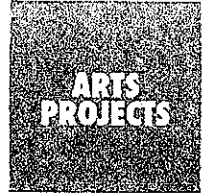
This is an important site. It is the obligation of us the living to help speak for the dead, for they cannot speak for themselves.

The least we can do is acknowledge them.

Thank You.

FOR THE RECORD

Margaret Porter Troupe



Statement in support of Int. No. 36 signage at Water & Wall Street commemorating the slave market

My name is Margaret Porter Troupe, I am a resident of New York City. I am here today, February 28, 2014, on behalf of myself, my husband, the poet and writer, Quincy Troupe, my family, and other like-minded residents of Harlem, the community where we live. I am here in support of placing a plaque at commemorating the slave market at Water and Wall Streets, smack dab in the center of the financial capital of the world. How many people know that over 300 years ago, the buying and selling of human beings took place there? Took place here in New York City? That this sort of human trafficking was a lucrative enterprise, as ordinary and common then as the buying and trading of stocks and bonds and other commodities are today? When did we stop knowing? Why did we stop telling this story? As an African American southerner born and raised in the Jim Crow era of the 1950s and 60s in rural Mississippi, I always thought that I was somehow closer to the history of slavery in this country than people born in the Northeast and other parts of the country, certainly closer than native New Yorkers. But the revelation that there was a slave market right here in our beloved city has changed my mind.

Let us resurrect the history of slavery in our beloved, New York City and mark the spot where this inhumane endeavor occurred. Let us mark the spot where so many of our forefathers suffered the indignities placed upon them so that other men and women could live in wealth and privilege. Let us contemplate and commemorate their struggles at the same time let us be reminded of the depravities of which mankind is capable so that we may learn from our history, that we may vow to prevent a repetition of this history going forward and strive to ensure that all peoples have equal rights a quality life, enduring liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Keith Adkins (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 28 W 126th

I represent: American Slavery Project

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 0036-2014 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/28/14

Name: JUDY Tate (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 606 W. 113th St. #4A NYC 10025

I represent: The American Slavery Project

Address: 606 W. 113th St. #4A NY NY 10025

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 36 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: CHRIS Cobb (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 410 Cumberland St. #2

I represent: artist/writer w SFMOMA

Address: 133 3rd St San Francisco, CA 94110

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms