

August 31, 2016, NEW YORK—Elderly tenants at 211 Madison Street have won their fight to have their gas restored after having been without service since early December. The tenants' landlord had performed illegal construction, made unsolicited buyout offers, and failed to restore the building's cooking gas in an effort to force the tenants to move out. The tenants are represented by **Legal Services NYC's Manhattan program** and **Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE)**.

The majority of tenants at 211 Madison are elderly (four of the 11 plaintiffs are 80 or older) and on fixed incomes, and many have lived in the building for 20 years or more. Most are limited English proficient, and live alone. Their cooking gas had been shut off due to their landlord's numerous Department of Buildings violations, including electrical work without a permit and "unapproved/unsafe/unsuitable electrical equipment or wiring." Rather than rectify the problem, landlord Silverstone Property Group provided hot plates, which are costly to use and create unnecessary hazards. In addition to the restoration of the gas service, the tenants' victory means that they all now have access to working stoves.

**Ms. Yam Cheung Yee**, an 85-year-old tenant of the building, said "The 211 Madison Street Tenants' Association deeply appreciates the assistance of Asian Americans for Equality and Manhattan Legal Services for listening to our plight and working with us for the past year to save our homes and to enforce our housing rights. We also want to thank New York City Council Member Margaret Chin, New York State Senator Daniel Squadron, the New York City Commission on Human Rights, and the Manhattan District Attorney's Office for their continuous support. We would not have prevailed without their support."

Asian Americans for Equality organized the tenants of 211 Madison Street and has been working with them closely for the past year. **AAFE's Executive Director, Christopher Kui** said, "Today, the greatest threat to our city's stock of affordable housing stems from predatory landlords pushing out rent-regulated tenants. 211 Madison fit the profile of just another building of rent-regulated tenants to be harassed out and converted to market rent. With tenants who are low-income, senior, and monolingual Chinese-speaking, I am sure it looked like an easy mark. But instead, the tenants and the community bound together, made a stand, and fought back. The restoration of cooking gas at 211 Madison Street shows potential property hustlers that this a real community that bands together and will not be pushed out for their profit. I want to thank Manhattan Legal Services, Councilmember Chin, and Senator Squadron for standing with the community and the tenants of 211 Madison and saving these units of affordable housing."

"This victory is an important message to Silverstone Property Group and all other landlords trying to harass low income tenants out of their rent regulated apartments" said **Larry Leung, Staff Attorney at Manhattan Legal Services**. "Their scare tactics will not be tolerated. Although the dynamics within the Chinatown community have changed over recent years, this community will continue to stand together as one in an effort to combat these bad actors."

"Every tenant has a right to livable conditions, including safe and consistent access to cooking gas," said **Council Member Margaret S. Chin**. "By banding together, the tenants of 211 Madison secured an important victory, and sent a message to unscrupulous landlords in Chinatown and throughout the City that harassment, illegal construction, and unsafe living conditions will not be tolerated. I thank Asian Americans for Equality and Manhattan Legal Services for their excellent work to empower these tenants in their fight for safe and livable housing, which is a human right that should not be denied."

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