

At Business Summit, Low-Income NYers Call for Role in Planning “Future of NYC”

During Bloomberg Speech, Communities Hit Hardest By Recession Call for Voice in Recovery

“THIS IS WHAT DEMOCRACY LOOKS LIKE”

New York – At 1 pm today as Mayor Bloomberg delivered the keynote address to business executives gathered at the Grand Hyatt Hotel for a conference on “The Future of New York City,” a group of low-income New Yorkers in the grassroots coalition Right to the City-NY entered the conference to demand the Mayor hear the concerns of low-income residents of the city.

Chanting “this is what democracy looks like,” the group attempted to deliver a letter to the Mayor in which they noted the absence of working-class, minority and immigrant New Yorkers at the conference and called for a meeting on the concerns of low-income New Yorkers. After being removed from the conference room, the advocates gathered in the lobby of the Grand Hyatt to voice their priorities and concerns about the future of the city.

“This event does not represent the real people that live in the many different communities around New York,” said Anne Washington, a 30-year resident of Harlem, member of Community Voices Heard, and a resident of NYCHA’s Grant Houses. “Mayor Bloomberg needs to have a real dialogue with the people he represents. He should listen to the issues we care about and include them in the decisions he makes. Right now it feels like low-income people are being pushed out of their neighborhoods and out of the city. We have been part of these communities for many years and deserve to be heard,” Washington stated.

In the letter to the Mayor, Right to the City-NY advocates called for another economic planning summit that addresses the needs of low-income New Yorkers.

“The policy recommendations that come out of today’s “The Future of NY” conference could have a serious impact on the lives of low-income people – those that are most impacted by the current economic crisis. We are asking you to broaden your circle of advisors to include us, and to stop holding closed-door meetings with the political and business elite of New York. We have the right to be involved in the decision-making process that affects our lives and communities,” the letter to the Mayor states.

“We ask that you extend the same courtesy to us that you have shown the city’s elite by organizing a convention of low-income New Yorkers to produce policy recommendations that actually reflect community priorities for the city’s economic future,” the letter concludes.

“We are not going to be shut out of our city or the places where people are discussing issues that affect our lives. We demand to be heard. We are a part of the city, we live here, and we should have a voice – bottom line. Most of the wealthy CEOs at this forum don’t even live here, they come here to make money and then go home while poor people live and work here,” said Chevelle Johnson, Brooklyn resident and Member of NYC AIDS Housing Network/ VOCAL.

“As Mayor Bloomberg and business leaders hole away in a \$250-per person meeting, Chinatown residents are here to say that it’s the people of New York City - low-income workers, immigrants, and working class people - and not them, who are the future of this city,” said CAAAV’s Chinatown Justice Project Coordinator Esther Wang. “They’re the ones who knowingly led us into the economic crisis we find ourselves and who are still giving themselves six-figure bonuses while we suffer the real consequences - why should we trust them to lead us out?” she stated.

Right to the City-NY (RTTC-NY) is an alliance of grassroots, primarily membership-based organizations working in low-income, immigrant and other communities of color in New York City.

Right to the City-NY includes: CAAAV/Chinatown Tenants Union; Center for Social Inclusion; Community Development Project, Urban Justice Center; Community Voices Heard (CVH); FIERCE; Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE); Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ); Make the Road New York; Mothers on the Move (MOM); NYC Aids Housing Network/V.O.C.A.L. NY-Users Union (NYCAHN/VOCAL); Picture the Homeless; Red Hook Initiative; West Harlem Environmental Action (WEACT).

###