



## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

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## **Joy Chatel, Kevin Powell, Shawne' Lee, and Concerned Citizens Unite to Save Historic Underground Railroad Site in Brooklyn Fundraiser Takes Place at Rush Corridor Gallery: February 29, 2008**

Brooklyn, NY - - Led by **Kevin Powell**, a collective of community activists have joined resources to raise awareness about **227 Duffield Street** - the building that was the hub of Brooklyn's own abolitionist movement in the 1800's. The organizers will present a fundraiser on **Friday, February 29, 2008** at **Danny Simmons' Rush Corridor Gallery** from **7:00 pm to 10pm**. The Rush Corridor Gallery is located at 334 Grand Avenue in the Fort Greene section of Brooklyn (between Lexington and Gates Avenues). The program will feature cultural entertainment, guest speakers, and special remarks from **Ms. Joy Chatel**, current owner and resident of 227 Duffield Street. Donation: \$100. For more information about the event, please call 718.643.1385.

### **Background and Purpose of the Fundraiser**

Since 2004, Joy Chatel has been organizing to save her home from corporate take-over. There were plans to turn the building into a parking lot. While that battle is won, the focus now has shifted to making the building a new kind of "safe house" for the 21st Century. Currently, the space doubles as a residence and a cultural center where children can experience cultural enrichment and learn West African dance, drumming, drama, and spoken word. Ms. Chatel's vision is to turn it into a museum/cultural center - a permanent cultural institution that honors the legacy of freedom seekers and those who sought to help them gain their freedom. "Our children need to know about this address and what it represents. I have been offered millions of dollars over the years, by developers and others, to sell this place, but I will not! It belongs to the people. I can't sell out; this is our heritage, our ancestry. I intend to keep this place sacred in honor of their memory," Ms. Chatel affirms.

Ms. Chatel and fellow activists' achievements in protecting 227 Duffield Street (also known as 227 Abolitionist Place) were recognized by many publications as one of the most important New York stories of 2007.

The fundraiser is produced and developed by activist writer Kevin Powell. "The struggle to preserve the life and the history of 227 Duffield Street is also the fight against

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inhuman and irresponsible development in New York City. As a long-time Brooklynite, I decided to help Ms. Chatel and her building because she should not have to fight this battle alone, particularly given all the resources and people power that exists here in Brooklyn. Our mission is two-fold: bring mass awareness about the legacy of 227 Duffield, and move toward Ms. Chatel's goal of making the building into an underground railroad museum and cultural center. We owe this not only to the people who came before, but for the future generations to come."

The Wall Street Alpha's **Tony Johnson** found great significance in the 227 Duffield story. As a part of their Black History Month programming, this cause is perfectly aligned with the **Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity** (who counts as one of its fraternity brothers, famed orator, editor, and abolitionist **Frederick Douglass**).

### **The Organizers**

The presenters of the February 29 fundraiser include a powerful group of concerned activists and advocates, including Ms. Joy Chatel, Kevin Powell, BE368 Entertainment, The Wall Street Alphas (Kappa Xi Lambda Chapter, April Silver of AKILA WORKSONGS, Inc., Hot 97.1, Crème Magazine, The Persaud Brother, Ralph and Eisa Richardson, Grae Enterprises, LLC; Ace Media Corp; The Industry Cosign; Rev. Clinton Miller of Brown Memorial Baptist Church; Upper Echelon Entertainment; The Sharland Norris Group; The Brotherhood/Sister Sol; The Black and Latino Filmmaker Coalition; The Fort Greene Association; and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (Delton Rho Omega Chapter).

### **More about 227 Duffield Street/227 Abolitionist Place**

227 Duffield Street is a home in downtown Brooklyn between the Fulton Mall and MetroTech. The area was an enclave of abolitionist activity at a time when most New Yorkers supported slavery. The owner of 227, Joy Chatel, decided to turn her home into a museum/cultural center to celebrate the inspiring history of her home and the block. More than a dozen historians have studied the site, and they have concluded that in addition to abolitionist activity, the home represents the most exciting site for Underground Railroad slavery/safe house research in the country. The NYC Economic Development Corporation, on the other hand, wanted to confiscate the home (using eminent domain), destroy it, and build an underground parking lot in its place. On November 29, 2007, after almost four years of advocacy, the City agreed to let the owner pursue her vision.

Currently, 227 Abolitionist Place is no longer threatened with the wrecking ball, but many difficult structural and financial challenges remain. Massive hotels and other mega-developments are rising on every side of the site. Organizers have launched a massive and ongoing fundraising drive to secure the safety of 227 Abolitionist Place and bring Mrs. Chatel's vision to fruition.

For more information, please visit [www.myspace.com/227abolitionistplace](http://www.myspace.com/227abolitionistplace) and [www.duffieldst.blogspot.com](http://www.duffieldst.blogspot.com). You may also call 718.643.1385. Media inquiries are welcome and member of the press must RSVP their attendance. Please direct all media requests to AKILA WORKSONGS Public Relations at 718.756.8501 or via email: [pr@akilaworksongs.com](mailto:pr@akilaworksongs.com)