



**LEGAL
SERVICES**

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***MFY Defeats Bowery Landlord's Last-Ditch Effort
to Keep SRO Residents Locked Out of Their Homes***

Over 50 Residents of 81 Bowery Return to Their Units After Nine Months of Court Battles

NEW YORK, NY, AUGUST 28, 2009—After shuttling between New York State Supreme Court in the morning to successfully argue against the landlord's request for an injunction to prevent tenants from returning to 81 Bowery, and an afternoon appearance in the Appellate Term against a similar appeal from the landlord, attorneys from MFY's Lower Manhattan Justice Project joined over 50 tenants to watch as the giant padlock that had kept them homeless for nine months was removed.

With cheers and tears, the tenants—Chinese immigrants of all ages—moved back into the single-room occupancy hotel at 81 Bowery after spending nine months in a Bronx shelter. The Department of Buildings, which had issued a vacate order last December, lifted it on August 12, but the landlord refused to allow the tenants to return.

That refusal prompted MFY Legal Services, which has been representing tenants in the building for over three years, to file an emergency motion seeking an order directing the landlord to open the premises to the tenants. Despite the landlord's last-ditch efforts to reverse the judge's order, MFY attorneys Donna Chiu and Rachel Spector prevailed in court.

"We've been in housing court, supreme court, and the appellate term on this case," said MFY Christopher Schwartz, supervising attorney for MFY's SRO Law Project. "The landlord pulled out all the stops but these tenants were not about to give up, and MFY never gives up." In addition to negotiating with the landlord to get the needed repairs made, MFY attorneys made dozens of court appearances and filed countless motions on behalf of the tenants.

"It was a team effort," said MFY Attorney Donna Chiu. "The Department of Buildings stayed on top of the landlord to make sure the repairs were done, and the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence (CAA AV) worked with the tenants to keep them informed of progress," she said. The tenants' cause was also supported by Susan Stetzer, District Manager of Community Board 3, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, City Councilmember Alan Gerson, and State Senator Daniel Squadron.

MFY Legal Services, Inc. provides free legal assistance to tenants, workers and others on a wide range of civil legal issues. It's Lower Manhattan Justice Project is supported by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation through funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

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