



For more information, contact:
Elise Brown, Supervising Attorney
212-417-3753 (cell: 917-929-0048) ebrown@mfy.org
Dolores Schaefer, Communications Director
212-417-3731 dschaefer@mfy.org

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***MFY Legal Services Offers Free Legal Help
to Tenants Displaced in Chinatown Fire***

NEW YORK, April 14, 2010—Lawyers from MFY Legal Services will offer free legal assistance to residents who were displaced after fire destroyed their buildings at a meeting on Thursday, April 15, at 5:30 pm at the Chinatown Consolidated Benevolent Association at 62 Mott Street in Manhattan.

“In situations like this, tenants need to know their rights and to move quickly to make sure their rights are protected,” said Elise Brown, supervising attorney of MFY’s Lower Manhattan Justice Project, which provides free legal assistance to tenants and workers in lower Manhattan.

MFY has already begun explaining to residents how to gather documents to prove that they lived in the building so they can qualify for emergency housing assistance from the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development. In most cases, tenants lost all of their belongings, including important papers and documents. MFY has also called upon the private bar to provide pro bono assistance to residents to help them apply for compensation for the belongings lost in the fire.

“In lower Manhattan, landlords have tried to get rid of tenants after a fire so they can renovate the building and get higher rents,” said Ms. Brown. “We will work with tenants in the buildings that were damaged to make sure the landlord makes repairs in a timely manner so they can return to their homes. MFY has a successful track record of representing displaced tenants of other buildings, and has successfully won lawsuits to force landlords to make repairs.

Community organizations, city agencies, and elected officials will offer information and support to the residents at Thursday’s meeting.

MFY’s Lower Manhattan Justice Project works to preserve diversity in lower Manhattan and is supported by a grant from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation/U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development.