

"We are hurt. This decision negatively affects homeless people throughout America and that's really what this fight was about: having our voices heard, challenging an irrational decision made by the Mayor to please some rich folk. But the fact that we got this far in the conversation and exposed the City for the inhumanity it has not just towards homeless individuals but towards all Black and Brown people is a huge win.

We exposed the Mayor, the City, Randy Mastro and his clients as utter liars. We exposed that they care very little for us experiencing homelessness and more about their agendas to perpetuate this homeless crisis and further destabilize the homeless population that is already destabilized by a shelter environment that fails us day after day, perpetuating dependency, substance use and mental illness. We have proven that the City does not care about our wellbeing, because if they did, we would be able to stay at a place where we are thriving.

But what we want you to remember today, is that even though we didn't get the outcome we wanted in court, by fighting and speaking out against this inhumanity, we have already won. Because we fought, we have maintained our dignity, to tell the city that while they may be able to move our bodies on a whim, they cannot silence our voices. Because we fought, residents are better served with on site services, and we have generated a shelter model that works better for residents and the community. Because we fought, 30 of us have moved into permanent housing--the city figuring that was the only way to keep us quiet.

And we will not stop doing this work. From this point on, we will be meeting with elected officials, including the Mayoral candidates, city and state legislators, and many others to draft policy and laws that will protect the invisible, vulnerable, and voiceless population that is the homeless community. We hope the mayor will join us in trying to unite the community here on the Upper West Side, as well as the community downtown, rather than sowing division. I will be personally working to make this happen--as a first step, we will be inviting those downtown with questions to get to know us as neighbors in the coming days, and open the door to work together to ensure everyone's needs are addressed.

This case was not as much about the Lucerne as it was about homeless people being able to challenge the city and its agencies in regards to their well-being, and while the law doesn't fully protect us as of present, we will from this day forward be committed towards fixing those laws that are so obviously broken. This flawed system has allowed people like the Mayor to profit off of poverty by funneling money to his political and personal benefactors, while leaving us to languish in a broken system.

We won whether the City will admit it or not because at the end of the day DHS has been served notice. If you violate our humanity we will fight you in the court of law and we will keep fighting until we beat you, and until your broken system is replaced. Like a phoenix from the ashes, still we rise."