



TWIN TOWERS ALLIANCE

WHAT THE PEOPLE WANT — WHAT NEW YORK NEEDS — WHAT AMERICA DESERVES

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New York, NY | October 20, 2006

Twin Towers Advocates Call On Attorney General To Investigate Official Misconduct

Representatives of a grassroots organization delivered an appeal to Attorney General Eliot Spitzer's Downtown Manhattan office on Friday. Richard Hughes of the Twin Towers Alliance reported that he handed an officer in the Investigations Bureau a well-documented narrative charging Governor Pataki and the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation with deceptive practices in the redevelopment of the World Trade Center site. Their group is seeking an immediate injunction against further activity on the "Freedom Tower" on behalf of the citizens of New York, pending an inquiry into alleged malfeasance on the part of officials.

Hughes said that the charge is not made lightly and that a copy of the appeal will be made available at <http://www.twintowersalliance.com>. "We are on solid ground. There is hard evidence of a disinformation campaign by the LMDC, which was *aimed* at deceiving the public. Its website is rife with deliberately misleading claims regarding the selection and rebuilding process.

"We believe that that rendered them unfit to serve and made all that followed illegitimate," Hughes added. "The master site plan that has been on and off the operating table since 2003 can never be made worthy of our city and people because it was based on a fraudulent, arrogant, and self-serving process. It's just that simple," he said.

"The truth is that we are not trying to derail a project that has the heart of the people. We are trying to prevent something that never has been and never will be popular from being forced on the public by officials who are in office to serve the common good, not the special interests. Earlier this year Attorney General Spitzer called it 'an Enron-style debacle' and termed the LMDC 'an abject failure' that 'violated' its 'duty to the public,'" Hughes noted. "If they were running a public corporation they would be off to prison or at least out the door. We are prepared to be mischaracterized by some as spoilers and fringe extremists, but that is silly. We're mainstream New Yorkers and very reluctant activists – but we're not giving up and can back up all we say. Those who go on the attack against us should be prepared with facts, not innuendo."

When asked for an estimate of how strong the support for rebuilding is, Hughes said that the Twin Towers Alliance website has received almost no coverage in the media "so the true number of supporters of rebuilding is anyone's guess, but all the polls over the years have shown a healthy majority of New Yorkers and Americans agree with us. What is remarkable is the way it cuts across all divides and unites Americans of every political persuasion."

He added: "While it's not possible to please everyone, the way to please *most* people, including a significant number of first responders and victims' families, would be to erect new Twin Towers and a noble memorial. And if that is what we want, and what we have wanted all along, why should anyone stand in the way?"

"We have the right to demand that what is done with our money, on our land, in our name reflect what we want! And if that is not what our public servants want to give us then we have a right to expect them not to go behind our backs and attempt to deceive us to accomplish their ends."

The group insists that people were encouraged to participate in a process that was "open" in name only and to think that their input was valued when it was in fact worthless. "We do not maintain that public opinion was the only thing to consider, but it should have played a real part in a debate that never took place – and that has to be redressed in order for true progress to occur. What could be more important than to do the right thing at the WTC," Hughes asks, "and who can legitimately say what that is without an honest national referendum? There is ample evidence to suggest that if a vote were held in New York or the country at large, the Twin Towers would easily win the popular vote. That should tell us something."

He maintains that the narrow definition of who qualified as a "stakeholder" willfully ignored the legitimate interests of people who were not personally touched by the tragedy, but were nevertheless profoundly affected – and that it was a crucial miscalculation. "They excluded the one segment of the population that hadn't been directly affected and could therefore be the most clearheaded about the recovery. That proved to be an enormous mistake. Within the various groups who do have a say in the process you can find those who want to rebuild the Towers and those who do not – for a variety of reasons. When you zoom the lens out a little you get a more tempered perspective on the competing interests, which should all be weighed against the overriding national interest. Then the reasons to rebuild the Twin Towers become compelling.

"The attack on the World Trade Center was an attack on America executed in New York and what we build on the ashes will affect all Americans," Hughes continued. "Governor Pataki would be much more likely to stand out above the presidential crowd and energize a natural bipartisan constituency if he chose to rethink the plan. Rebuilding the World Trade Center by imperial fiat is not going to endear him to the American people, but changing direction still could.

"Meanwhile, we know that what we are trying to accomplish will resonate with most of the public. The unforgettable unity that was the hallmark of the weeks and months following the 9/11 attacks is still pent up – waiting to be poured into a true resurgence. As recently as May of last year there was a groundswell of excitement that the obvious mismanagement of the rebuilding process might be swept away by the megawatt aura and undoubted abilities of Donald Trump. And then the politicians, behind-the-scenes interests, and the media mugged him. But they can't mug us all.

"We are confident that this is the first step toward a World Trade Center of which we can all be proud for generations to come. Examination of our submission will reveal that there is a clear imperative to correct course. Once we put our hearts into it, we will find ourselves much closer to the goal of restoring the beloved New York skyline than most would imagine."

Hughes charges that a massive PR onslaught has convinced most people that we are stuck with the current plan, "but we are confident that a whiff of real hope would energize the population to speak out." After five long years, he concedes that many have given up and reconciled themselves to diminished expectations in the name of progress. "That's pretty sad in the city that claims to be the Capital of the World. But it is still in our power to make New York *New York* again."

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