



**Greenwich  
Village  
Society for  
Historic  
Preservation**

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December 13, 2006

Hon. Patricia Lancaster  
Commissioner, New York City Department of Buildings  
via e-mail to [PatriciaL@buildings.nyc.gov](mailto:PatriciaL@buildings.nyc.gov)

Hon. Robert Tierney  
Chair, NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission  
via e-mail to [rtierney@lpc.nyc.gov](mailto:rtierney@lpc.nyc.gov)

**Re: Discovery of Burial Ground at 246 Spring Street, Manhattan**

Dear Commissioner Lancaster and Chair Tierney,

As you are both aware, more than 100 year old human remains have been uncovered on the construction site at 246 Spring Street, Manhattan. I thank the Department of Buildings for issuing a stop-work order for the site in response to this discovery. However, I urge that no further work be allowed to continue until the source and origin of the remains have been independently identified, and their significance fully evaluated by proper authorities.

Given the history of this area, there are many reasons why a burial ground on this site may be of special significance to our city. The southern part of Greenwich Village was once home to a community known as "Little Africa," which was in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the largest African-American community in New York. Some reports indicate that the church on this site throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was one which served an African-American congregation. Regardless of whether or not this is the case, this land is in one of the oldest settled areas of New York, with origins which go back to some of New York earliest figures and institutions, such as the families of Aaron Burr, Nicholas Bayard, and Anthony Lispenard, as well as Trinity Church. This is also land which is known to have been settled during the 17<sup>th</sup> century by freed African slaves, whom the Dutch used as a "buffer" between the New Amsterdam colony and the Indian territory to the north. Depending upon what the origins of this burial ground are, a significant layer of our city's history may have been uncovered with this discovery. Regardless, however, it would seem that these human remains should be treated with the utmost care and respect, regardless of their source.

I thus strongly urge that no further work be allowed on this site until the history, origins, and significance of these remains can be fully investigated and appropriate actions taken.

Sincerely,

Andrew Berman  
Executive Director

Cc: Mayor Michael Bloomberg  
Council Speaker Christine Quinn  
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer  
Congressman Jerrold Nadler  
State Senator Tom Duane  
Assemblymember Deborah Glick  
City Councilmember Charles Barron  
State Senator-elect Bill Perkins  
Schomburg Center