



**TESTIMONY BY BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT ERIC ADAMS  
TO THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
REGARDING THE PROPOSED 227 DUFFIELD STREET DESIGNATION**

July 14, 2020

I want to thank New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) Chair Sarah Carroll, Executive Director Lisa Kersavage, and the agency's staff, for reexamining the former Harriet and Thomas Truesdell House at 227 Duffield Street with regard to the proposed establishment of an individual landmark. I would also like to thank all the members of LPC and agency staff who make these hearings possible, as well as commend the community advocates, for their tireless efforts to ensure that, as Brooklyn grows, a balance between the recognition and preservation of this Country's history and development endures.

Thank you for taking the time today to listen firsthand to community input as it pertains to 227 Duffield Street as an historically significant building — and for allowing me to voice my support for the designation of a location where Black lives truly mattered in the context of its role in advancing freedom for enslaved African-Americans through the Underground Railroad network of safe houses and secretive routes.

227 Duffield Street may have been long forgotten if not for the curiosity of Joy Chatel, who, during the public proceeding that led to the adoption of the Downtown Brooklyn Plan, made discoveries that were shared with those who had researched the history of her home and suggested that this house was part of the historic Underground Railroad. While Joy's advocacy merely resulted initially in the co-naming of Abolitionist Place, even after her passing, her legacy of activism lives on through the many who have advocated for individual designation. This public hearing is an important next step toward recognizing Brooklynites' roles in securing freedom for those born into an inhuman practice that sustained a false economy.

What was once a cluster of rare, surviving 19<sup>th</sup> century abolitionist homes has been diminished to a single building. Retaining 227 Duffield Street celebrates an important cultural recognition of the Truesdells' abolitionist leanings during a time when being proactive in aiding Black lives mattered more than the risks of breaking the law. That, along with the possibility of them using their residence for a role in the Underground Railroad, are worthy consideration for protection, rather than the building just being an undervalued asset in this opportunistic real estate market.

Simply put, the establishment of the individual designation is good planning. We are preserving the historical integrity of one of Brooklyn's most revered monuments to show that the Black lives of freedom-seekers mattered, and still matter, while providing enticement to attract tourists to visit our borough and learn more about its Underground Railroad-entrenched history.

I am confident that LPC will agree that 227 Duffield Street is worthy of its approval — and adopt this proposal.

Thank you.

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