



July 12, 2005

The Honorable George E. Pataki
Governor of New York
Executive Chamber
The Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Re: The International Freedom Center

Dear Governor Pataki:

We write to you as a diverse coalition of civic representatives who have contributed to and supported the planning and rebuilding process for Lower Manhattan since shortly after 9/11. We are moved to write because of the recent debate over the International Freedom Center and the Drawing Center. We fear that this controversy may threaten the existence of civic and cultural uses at the World Trade Center site, activities that we feel have a rightful place at Ground Zero.

The Civic Alliance, New York New Visions and LCAN strongly support the basic framework provided by the World Trade Center Master Plan, originally conceived by Daniel Libeskind, and the mix of activities it contains. In particular, we support the placement of the memorial at the heart of the World Trade Center site and the degree of focus and honor it is afforded by its central and defining location. Second, we support the cultural buildings at the site as a transition between the memorial and the commercial activities and as a gateway to the sacred activities at the site's heart.

The integration of memorial and cultural activities, first articulated by Libeskind, is an important element of the master plan. For this to be a truly living memorial, the memorial quadrant must contain both activities that continue to engage the living as well as honor the dead. A central aspect of the master plan is its effort to simultaneously memorialize and revitalize, not to segregate and isolate these two paramount functions. The institutions at the World Trade Center site will act to sustain and promote civic and cultural life in New York City and Lower Manhattan, a goal that is as appropriate and as important at the site as restoring the economic vitality of Lower Manhattan by rebuilding office space.

Concerns have been raised about the mission and program of the International Freedom Center and other cultural institutions on the site. These issues should be addressed in an open public process and dialogue, in which we intend to play an active role. We strongly believe that programming concerns should not threaten the existence of cultural activities at the site. These activities are vital to balancing the commercial office and retail space and serve an essential public purpose. Efforts to censor these institutions are contrary to the principle of freedom of expression.

Very truly yours,

Robert D. Yaro, Chair, Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York

Marcie Kesner, Ernest W. Hutton Jr., Jordan L. Gruzen, Co-chairs, New York New Visions

David Dyssegaard Kallick, Coordinator, Labor Community Advocacy Network

CC: John Cahill, Chief of Staff and Secretary to the Governor
John Whitehead, Chairman, Lower Manhattan Development Corporation
Stefan Pryor, President, Lower Manhattan Development Corporation
Gretchen Dykstra, Chief Executive Officer, World Trade Center Memorial Foundation
Anita Contini, Vice President, Lower Manhattan Development Corporation
Jennifer Brown, Vice President, Lower Manhattan Development Corporation