



Assemblyman

Keith L.T.  
**Wright**

*Reports to  
the People*

WINTER 2011

## Joining The Drumbeat

For many years, people throughout our City have fought for a fair distribution of wealth, basic social services, and the civil and human rights supposedly guaranteed to all of us. But why after all this time are we still fighting the same battles which began generations ago? The fact is that we have not seen a cohesive front in our opposition to those who seek to deny us our unalienable rights. That was true, until a group of committed individuals stood for us all at Zuccotti Park. In just over a month, they have taken groups fragmented, and oft-times competitive, and unified us with the prospect of a movement for true change. Occupy Wall Street is more than just another protest, but the drumbeat of a grassroots revolution that with the proper support, will ultimately strengthen the fabric of our Nation.

Some have suggested that “Occupy” is just a phenomenon of the disgruntled middle class, but anyone who has suffered or witnessed the suffering all too common within “the 99%,” knows the truth. We have children starving, senior citizens dying because of lackluster medical care, mothers and fathers working themselves to the bone just to keep their heads above water, while at the same time corporations make record profits and receive larger than ever tax breaks. This is an equation that has held our Nation back for decades and it’s one that must change, for the survival of our communities. Occupy Wall Street is about justice for all, not just for one particular group, which is what makes it stand apart from those that came before.

Lest we forget, the inequities that we face are man-made. George W. Bush got us into two wars, then cut taxes for the richest and created billions of dollars in loopholes for corporations. Coupled with the unemployment and poverty that many now experience on a daily basis, it is no wonder that our people are taking to the streets and saying no to the status quo and no more to the miseducation put forth by many in the media. In many

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*Assemblyman Wright with the Reverend Al Sharpton and Congressman Charles Rangel at Occupy Wall Street.*



*Assemblyman Wright on his way to address the crowd at the Grand Re-Opening of the Hamilton Grange National Memorial.*

## Assemblyman Wright and Staff Attend Cornell Labor Policy Seminar

This summer, Assemblyman Wright along with the entirety of his Albany and New York City staff, attended a three-day Labor Policy Seminar at the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations. During these three days of intensive seminars, lectures, and team building exercises, “Team Wright” learned about the history of the labor movement internationally and in America, the current state of the labor movement in New York State and the many intricacies of government and labor union relations.

The seminar, led by Professor Richard Hurd and highlighted by Professor Esther Bigler, helped much of the staff wrap their heads around the complex nature of the labor movement as it stands today. Assemblyman Wright is the Chairman of the State Assembly Labor Committee and it was important that the staff understood the issues and the players within the movement. “Cornell University’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations was so generous with their time and guidance throughout our retreat. Even a few hours spent with these very talented educators brought us greater understanding of what our role is in the movement and how best to accomplish our goals. I look forward to working with Cornell to develop new laws to better address the problems faced by many New Yorkers as they enter or navigate the labor market,” said Assemblyman Wright.

The retreat was capped by a lecture from Dean Harry Katz, who came and discussed New York State Labor Law and showed us why Cornell is the best labor relations school in the Nation.



*Assemblyman Wright and staff with Cornell Industrial and Labor Relations School professors and staff during our recent Labor Policy Seminar.*



*Assemblyman Wright celebrating the passage of same-sex marriage legislation at the 2011 Pride Parade in New York City.*



*Assemblyman Wright with members of the Freelancers Union after passage of the Assemblyman’s Freelancer Payment Protection Act.*

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ways, Occupy Wall Street is akin to the “Arab Spring,” with the citizenry rising up and refusing to trust a government with a track record of ignorance and abuse. The only difference is that our revolution has the institutional support of many elected officials, which is one reason why it has such a high likelihood of success.

The refusal to follow our government blindly is the most patriotic facet of American democracy. People in communities like Harlem have been rejecting the “official line” for generations and Occupy Wall Street is indeed a protest for civil rights. Like the civil rights movement, nothing will get done without a strong coalition. We need Black and Brown people from every “Harlem” throughout the City to join this movement and protect the rightful occupation of Zuccotti Park. As Ben Franklin said during our greatest revolution, “we must indeed, all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately.”

## Assemblyman Wright Hosts 10th Annual African American Day Parade Breakfast

Keeping up a decade-long tradition, Assemblyman Wright hosted the 10th Annual African American Day Parade Breakfast. Formerly co-hosted by City Comptroller Bill Thompson, this was Assemblyman Wright's tenth year hosting the breakfast, and by all accounts it was a resounding success. Planned in conjunction with the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and the African American Day Parade Breakfast Committee, this annual event hosted hundreds of proud community members from Harlem and beyond.

Among the many dignitaries, Governor Cuomo was in attendance and spoke to the need of increased anti-gun measures in New York City, one of Assemblyman Wright's prime concerns. Congressman Rangel and Schomburg Director Dr. Khalil Gibran-Muhammad also spoke at the event and helped introduce the breakfast's honorees. Honored for their commitment to Communities of Color were upstanding leaders such as: Mr. George Gresham—President of 1199 SEIU, Dr. Sandye Johnson—Former Principal of Thurgood Marshall Academy, Ms. Lynda Ireland—Director of the New York & New Jersey Minority Supplier Development Council, Mr. Abe Snyder—President of the African American Day Parade Committee and the entire graduating class of Rice High School.

"It was a proud day in Harlem! Not only was it the tenth

anniversary of the breakfast but also it was a day to honor those who have dedicated so much of their time to making our communities better. Our honorees have gone above and beyond in that respect and it was especially heartwarming to have the opportunity to honor the entire graduating class of Rice High School, unfortunately the last graduating class that Rice may see for some time," said Assemblyman Wright.



*Assemblyman Wright giving awards to the final graduating class of Rice High School at the 10th Annual African American Day Parade Breakfast.*

## Assemblyman Wright Blasts Mayor Bloomberg Over Anti-Homeless Policy

In what may be the biggest effort to deny homeless people the shelter guaranteed by law since the Mayor attempted to charge rent to the underemployed homeless, Michael Bloomberg is putting forth a policy which will pressure the adult homeless to find other places to stay than city shelters. Not only will this new policy, if implemented, cost our city more than it will save, it will also put thousands of our most vulnerable residents onto the streets because they cannot prove that they have no other place to stay. Using the guise of a State law and ruling from the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, a ruling which was never issued, Mayor Bloomberg seeks to force those seeking shelter on a nightly basis to somehow guarantee that they have no other place to stay.

This proposed policy was immediately opposed by true anti-homeless advocates and legal assistance groups, such as the Legal Aid Society. They claim it will for all intents and purposes put a lock on the shelter door and turn away non-English speaking immigrants, the truly neediest and the mentally ill when they are most

in danger. When running for his first re-election, Mayor Bloomberg set a goal reducing the roughly 38,000 homeless individuals in New York City by two-thirds; today that number stands at over 41,000. Not only has Mayor Bloomberg tried to push out the City's homeless with bus tickets to other cities, punitive measures within shelters and by charging rent for staying in City-funded shelters, but also he has overseen a net increase in homelessness throughout the City.

"Mayor Bloomberg is a complete and utter failure when it comes to addressing the homelessness problem in New York City. It shows just how little commitment that this Mayor has to communities unlike his own and how little empathy he has to the plight of those with no other place to go. While the Mayor can take his private jet to the Bahamas during a snowstorm, our City's homeless have fewer options with winter upon us. To push them out into the cold, night after night, is both wrong and inhumane and I strongly urge him to reconsider this proposal," said Assemblyman Wright.

## Assemblyman Wright Awards Scholarships to Harlem Youth

Realizing that college students are facing tougher times than ever when attempting to finance their college educations, Assemblyman Wright has awarded four area youth with scholarships, funded through the Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus, that will hopefully help them continue their educations with lessened fiscal pain. The scholarship awardees are all active in the Harlem community and are well on their way to success and academic excellence.

The scholarship awardees are as follows: **Ms. Kathryn Dallam**, a student at John Jay College of Criminal Justice who is majoring in Criminology, **Mr. Larry Pruitt**, a student at the City College of New York who is majoring in Political Science, **Ms. Eleny Tavarez**, a student at St. John's University who is majoring in Business Management and **Mr. Rudy Gomez**, a student at SUNY Oswego who is majoring in Public Justice.

"I would like to congratulate all of the scholarship recipients for their hard work thus far in achieving their education and their tireless work on behalf of the Harlem

community. These young men and women are truly the leaders of tomorrow and I feel fortunate that I am in a position to help them realize their dreams. I wish them the best of luck and cannot wait to see what miracles they accomplish in the future," said Assemblyman Keith Wright.



*Assemblyman Wright and District Leader Marisol Alcantara with scholarship awardee Eleny Tavarez, and the family of awardee, Rudy Gomez.*

## Assemblyman Wright Outlines Goals for State Assembly Labor Committee

Entering his second year as the Chairman of the State Assembly Standing Committee on Labor, Assemblyman Wright is setting some lofty goals aimed at getting New Yorkers back to work with efficiency and empathy. Nearly 800,000 people in our State remain unemployed and African-Americans and Latinos are overrepresented in this number, with the rates among young African-American males rising over 50%. "Even before the recession, unemployment was high in Harlem and now the numbers are even greater. It is time that our City and State get serious and address the root causes of this problem and create well-paying jobs in our neighborhoods, for our residents," said Assemblyman Wright.

With job creation still at the forefront of his legislative agenda, Assemblyman Wright looks to preserve current funding for his Career Pathways program, which seeks to bring low-income individuals into the labor market through education, training and internships. He has also introduced legislation

which increases unemployment insurance payments to those out of work but in training programs, thus allowing people to afford to go to training programs rather than face underemployment. Perhaps most importantly, Assemblyman Wright will be introducing legislation which gives unemployment payments to those working part-time after unemployment, giving them their full benefit, minus their current income.

"By supplementing the underemployed and those seeking training, we will allow many families to regain their footing during these difficult times. There is nothing more important than making sure that every family in our community has an opportunity to better themselves and have access to the opportunities that have long evaded our residents. Economic justice shouldn't be just a concept, it should be something that we as a State actively implement and as Chairman of the Labor Committee, I will be pushing for the justice that all New Yorkers rightfully deserve," said Assemblyman Wright.

## Assemblyman Keith L.T. Wright

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