



**BROOKLYN 1214 DEAN STREET TENANTS WIN CIVIL SUIT AGAINST LANDLORDS  
GENNARO BROOKS-CHURCH & LORETTA GENDVILLE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - February 24, 2022

Imani Keith Henry (646) 820-9039  
imani@equalityforflatbush.org

Michael Higgins Jr. (917) 704-6994  
mhiggins@brooklynmovementcenter.org

**Former tenants of 1214 Dean Street win monetary civil suit with the help of  
TakeRoot Justice, Equality for Flatbush and Brooklyn Movement Center**

**A Press Conference will take place a Later Date**

From July 7-12, 2020, the tenants at 1214 Dean Street in Crown Heights were harassed by their landlords [Gennaro Brooks-Church and Loretta Gendville](#), who entered the home without notice and attempted to forcibly remove them from their rooms first by removing locks and later their personal property from the premises.

Led by [Equality for Flatbush](#), hundreds of New Yorkers and people from around the country participated in 24-hour eviction defense over the course of 5 days both remotely and in person to prevent the group's expulsion before they left the home by their own volition. Not only were the actions of the landlords, which included verbal harassment of largely LGBTQ+ tenants as they slept, a clear violation of the statewide eviction moratorium but a common form of behavior by landlords against tenants across the city.

"1214 Dean went from a safe haven to a war zone all in the midst of a completely devastating global pandemic," said [Angelina Martinez](#), a former 1214 tenant who was quoted widely in the press, "I could not have survived this, none of us could have, without the overwhelming support from our community and community leaders. We were violated and mentally, emotionally and physically attacked."

The tenants, legally represented by [TakeRoot Justice](#), joined an existing case, *City of New York v. Gennaro Brooks-Church and Loretta Gendville*, to seek accountability for the unscrupulous and dangerous behavior of the landlord during a global pandemic. Lead attorney, Addrana Montgomery of TakeRoot Justice, said, "Aside from our clients getting renumarated for the harm they experienced from these owners' illegal and bigoted behavior, the biggest takeaway from this case is that when

tenants and the surrounding community stand up and demand justice from bad landlords the power dynamic between tenants and landlords begins to shift." Montgomery continued, "The truth is that New York City and State laws and the jurisprudence around these regulations fall terribly short of supporting the average NYC tenant against badly-behaved landlords"

[Jamila](#), a former tenant, was in the midst of recovering from recent brain surgery when the attempted illegal eviction began. "While I am relieved to move on past this chapter in my life, it does not reverse the trauma, loss, and stress I endured for what was the most devastating week of my life." Jamila went on to say, "Having my home invaded by a strange man while I was still struggling to walk, two days out of the hospital from brain surgery, the week of a cancer diagnosis at age 32, is not something I believe I will ever fully recover from emotionally." Jamila also wants NYC tenants to know, "I hope that the greater NYC community will remember this case because tenants do have rights, even if they have to fight tooth and nail to get justice, those rights are ours. Housing is a human right and should not be taken from anyone, especially during a global pandemic"

One former 1214 Dean tenant who asked to remain anonymous said, "This is a win for my roommates and I, but there's still a larger battle here to be fought that other tenants across the city are losing. I hope to see community eviction defenses on an upward trend in favor of tenants for the future."

"This victory could not have been achieved without unwavering support from a community who used their voices when my roommates and I could not. There are no words to express gratitude to the floods of supporters who showed up for us in person and online," said Scout Gottfried, a former tenant of 1214 Dean Street, "I hope that our case can serve as a reference point for people who are intimidated and feel powerless to stop their rights from being violated. Every human being deserves reliable, affordable and safe housing free from the ambient fear of power uprooting them at any moment."

"Equality for Flatbush and the [Brooklyn Movement Center \(BMC\)](#), two Black-led community partners of TakeRoot Justice, organized the tenants, their neighbors and community around the eviction moratorium and their rights. That is how we got to this victorious day," Montgomery said, "Let's be clear, community organizing and tenant power building were the agents of change here. And that has always been the case."

*TakeRoot Justice provides legal, participatory research and policy support to strengthen the work of grassroots and community-based groups in New York City to dismantle racial, economic and social oppression.*

*The Equality for Flatbush Project (E4F) is a people of color-led, multi-national*

*grassroots organization which does anti-police repression, affordable housing, and anti-gentrification organizing in the Flatbush and East Flatbush communities of Brooklyn, NY.*

*Brooklyn Movement Center (BMC) is a Black-led, membership-based organization of primarily low-to-moderate income Central Brooklyn residents.*

###