



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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DOI ANNOUNCES RESULTS OF MULTI-AGENCY INSPECTION TASKFORCE OF 27 BUILDINGS
--More than 1,300 violations or citations issued --

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), announced today an investigation that prompted a multi-agency inspection of 167 apartments in 27 Brooklyn apartment buildings owned and/or operated by Abdur Rahman Farrakhan, president of the Oceanhill Brownsville Tenants Association, (OBTA), a Brooklyn-based not-for-profit organization. Inspectors from four City agencies issued more than 1,300 new violations or citations for conditions that included rodent and roach infestations, blocked or padlocked emergency exits, holes in walls and ceilings, and serious water leaks.

While investigating allegations concerning OBTA, DOI found safety and health issues in OBTA properties. During DOI's initial site visits, a tenant showed inspectors peanut butter containers that had been gnawed through and eaten by rodents. Another tenant showed investigators how she had rigged a makeshift drainage system to relay water from a ceiling leak to her window to drain outdoors. That prompted DOI to organize an inspection task force in which DOI was joined by inspectors from the New York City Department of Buildings, Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Housing Preservation and Development.

These inspections occurred over a nine-day period last month. DOI will work with HPD, DEP, DOB, and DOHMH to ensure that emergency conditions are addressed and that remaining violations are corrected through the appropriate enforcement actions available to the City.

Conditions of note:

- a) **MOST VIOLATIONS:** At **1933 Union Street**, at least 130 violations were issued (more than any other building) for conditions including rodent and roach infestation, missing window guards, slide bolts and pad locks on emergency exits instead of panic hardware, water leaks, holes in the walls of several apartments, cracked exterior walls, rusted fire escapes, garbage scattered outside, and open garbage cans. See attached photo.
- b) **RESIDENTS NEEDING ASSISTANCE:** DOI contacted the Human Resources Administration's Adult Protective Services (APS) regarding three adults who lived in two different buildings inspectors visited. After visiting **257 Mother Gaston Blvd.**, DOI investigators contacted APS to aid two elderly residents, one of whom appeared to be in poor health. The elderly male resident was emaciated and the elderly female resident appeared to have difficulty caring for herself. Inspectors found deplorable conditions in the couple's apartment and issued 11 violations to OBTA for roach infestation; damaged plaster; leaky/defective bathroom faucets and sinks; missing carbon monoxide detectors; and, missing, broken or defective closet and cabinet doors. In addition, Inspectors issued 19 other violations in the building for broken windows in public halls on the first floor; missing handrails on steps; garbage strewn in hallways; and, among others, missing carbon monoxide and smoke detectors. Another APS referral was made for a tenant at **251 Mother Gaston** whose apartment needed a heavy duty cleaning to address odors, garbage, vermin and necessary repairs. See attached photos.
- c) **MOUSE, RAT AND ROACH INFESTATION:** 23 of the 27 buildings inspected were found to be infested with mice, rats or roaches and DOHMH and HPD issued a total of 218 violations for this condition. At **1752 Sterling**, in one apartment, investigators found mouse droppings in the kitchen, bedroom and amidst clothing in dresser drawers. The tenant also complained of finding rodent droppings in her baby's crib. At **864 Macon Street**, residents resorted to stuffing foam and other objects in holes in the walls to block a rat nicknamed 'Big

Ben' from entering their apartments. At **1939 Park Place**, inspectors discovered a rat that had recently died. See attached photos.

- d) **WINDOW SAFETY CONCERNS:** 17 of the 27 buildings inspected were issued more than 60 violations for conditions such as broken windows or missing window panes, and missing or improperly installed window guards. Numerous tenants used household items, including books and baseball bats, to keep windows open that would otherwise slam shut because of defective window frames. There were even instances in which the inoperative window was located at the fire escape, which could cause an egress problem in case of fire. For example, at **1350 Park Place**, the Task Force issued 38 violations, including one for window panes missing from window frames in the second and third-floor stairwell landings, and, thus, left corridors partially exposed to the elements. Inspectors also found that the roof door that had been removed and was lying on the roof floor, which is a safety and fire hazard, as well as a possible entrance for burglars. Like other OBTA buildings inspected, **1350 Park Place** also had water leaks, among other problems. See attached photo.
- e) **FIRE ESCAPE CONCERNS:** 19 of the 27 buildings inspected were issued more than 50 violations for obstructed or rusted fire escapes. At **257 Mother Gaston**, the rear fire escape has rusted and, in various spots, the metal steps have bent and twisted, possibly hampering egress in an emergency. At **1939 Park Place**, the Task Force issued 100 violations including obstructed and defective fire escapes (including one that had a chain across a gooseneck ladder from the roof), leaks with cascading water, and illegal locks on basement doors, which could block tenants' egress in the event of a fire or other emergency.
- f) **BROKEN STAIRS IN EMERGENCY EXIT:** At **1719 Sterling Place**, 39 violations were issued, including a serious violation for a missing/broken step in a stairwell used as an emergency exit. An inspector noted this as a hazardous condition and referred it to HPD's Division of Code Enforcement for immediate action. See attached photo.
- g) **APARTMENT:** At **1828 Eastern Parkway**, inspectors issued 101 violations. In one apartment, inspectors issued 21 violations that included defective or broken wooden floors; cracked, broken or defective plaster, holes in the walls, and rodent infestation. Inspectors also issued violations for the failure to abate peeling lead paint in an apartment occupied by children under the age of seven. See attached photos.
- h) **FAILURE TO MAINTAIN BUILDINGS:** Inspectors cited structural conditions in 16 of the buildings inspected. For example, at **563 Howard Ave.**, bricks were found to be bulging and cracked at the southwest corner of the building, and mortar was either missing from the joints or had separated from the bricks. These conditions could lead to leaks and structural damage. Citations at other buildings included broken or missing handrails, missing stucco, deteriorating rubble stone in foundation walls, and open and spalling roof mortar joints.

In addition, DOI has determined that OBTA owes the City approximately \$6.3 million in property taxes and \$1.25 million in outstanding water bills. Noble Drew Ali Plaza, a Farakan property that was not part of this task force, owes the City \$911,287 in late water fees. That property, which is in Chapter 11 bankruptcy, was recently mentioned in news reports as the most delinquent of the top 10 buildings with unpaid water bills.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "I am pleased that, with this task force, DOI can help the City make every effort to ensure that New Yorkers receive not only the housing subsidies they deserve, but also provide access to safe, affordable housing."

Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn thanked HPD Commissioner Shaun Donovan, DOB Commissioner Patricia J. Lancaster, FAIA, DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd, and DOHMH Commissioner Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH, and the inspectors from their respective agencies for their assistance. Commissioner Gill Hearn also thanked HRA Commissioner Verna Eggleston and her staff for their assistance.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country. The agency investigates and refers for prosecution City employees and contractors engaged in corrupt or fraudulent activities or unethical conduct. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City.

***Get the worms out of the Big Apple.
To report someone ripping off the city, call DOI at (212) 825-5959.***