

new york city community garden coalition

NYCCGC FORUM 2013

STAND FOR OUR LAND!

MAYORAL FORUM and GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING TEACH-IN

SATURDAY APRIL 27

GREAT HALL
COOPER UNION

Schedule of Events

9:30am

**Forum Registration
and Voter Registration**

*Welcome music by
Rude Mechanical Orchestra
and Fula Flute*

10:00am

Welcome Remarks

NYCCGC President
Raymond Figueora-Reyes
and Executive Director,
Aziz Dehkan

Guest Speakers

Scott Stringer, Manhattan
Borough President
Eddie Stone, Greenthumb

Keynote Address

Karen Washington

10:30am – Noon

**Mayoral Candidates
Forum**

Robert Knight, Moderator

12 Noon

Music Performances

Pete Seeger, Morley,
Stephan Said, Pierce Turner

12:45 - 1:30pm

Lunch break

*(Please note: No food/drink
is allowed in The Great Hall)*

1:30 - 3:00pm

**Grassroots Organizing
Workshops**

Various locations, TBA

3:00 - 3:30pm

**Workshop Feedback
in The Great Hall**

3:30pm

Raffle Drawing

NYCCGC Forum 2013

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the generous support of
Citizens Committee for
New York City and
North Star Fund.*

Welcome

Dear Community Gardeners,

Thank you for joining us today. As you all know 2013 is a critically important year for our community gardens here in New York City. This year we will elect new a mayor and today we are very grateful to the mayoral candidates who have joined us at our forum. We call on all of the mayoral candidates to take a stand on community gardens, parks and open spaces and to let us know how they plan to ensure that all gardens are permanently preserved city-wide.

Today, while many community gardens have been preserved, even more community gardens are without long-term protections. We cannot afford to lose not even one of these precious spaces.

Let's elect a mayor who respects and recognizes the environmental justice struggles of our urban communities for open space equity. We want a mayor who prioritizes the permanent preservation of community gardens and community gardener's self-governance.

Community gardens are community anchors, providing space for wildlife, community building, food production, and neighborhood beautification. Built and managed by the labors-of-love of countless volunteers, community gardens are a testament to the investments New Yorkers make in their neighborhoods every day.

We want a visionary mayor who will integrate community open spaces with our city's infrastructure by real funding to create more green spaces. We can create green jobs through recycling food compost (carbon sequestration) locally and citywide; by mandating green education and growing our own food in school community gardens and farms. We want an advocate for green health providers to teach healthy living and grow healthy food. We want funding for the music and arts that reflect each neighborhood's diverse cultural heritage. We need a mayor who will promote local water management through rooftop water harvesting, preventing sewer overflow, and more innovative ideas to make New York City the leading green city in the world that it ought and needs to be. We owe this to our children and their children.

There are 15,000 community gardeners in New York City, We're talking about a lot of tomatoes out there – and community gardeners vote! We are watching this election very closely and we will have a direct impact in choosing the next mayor of New York City.

Stand with NYCCGC today to hold our elected officials accountable for making a genuinely meaningful quality of life in New York City a priority by permanently preserving all community gardens and by encouraging the creation of new community gardens citywide.

Today we are also very excited to introduce Aziz Dehkan the New York City Community Garden Coalition's first Executive Director. Hiring an Executive Director signals a new day for the Coalition as we strive to expand our vision and nurture our beloved gardens and gardeners. We are blessed to have a person of Aziz's experience and character to help us grow.

Today we are also so pleased to be in the presence of a true American hero, our esteemed guest Pete Seeger, who has been in the forefront of the struggles for justice and equality throughout this land. Please get ready to sing!

We invite you to participate in today's myriad workshops. The workshops are as varied and interesting as the gardens themselves. Let's have a great forum. And let's enjoy ourselves as we STAND FOR OUR LAND!

Aresh Javadi, Forum coordinator
Mara Gittlman, NYCCGC Vice President
Raymond Figueroa Reyes, NYCCGC President

Introductions

Keynote Speaker Karen Washington

Karen Washington has lived in New York City all her life, and has been a resident of the Bronx for over 26 years. Since 1985 Karen has been a community activist, striving to make the New York City a better place to live. As a community gardener and board member of the New York Botanical Gardens, Karen has worked with Bronx neighborhoods to turn empty lots into community gardens. As an advocate, she has stood up and spoken out for garden protection and preservation. As a member of the La Familia Verde Garden Coalition, she helped launch a City Farms Market, bringing garden fresh vegetables to her neighbors.

Karen is a Just Food board member and Just Food Trainer, leading workshops on food growing and food justice to community gardeners all over the city. Karen is a board member and former president of the New York City Community Garden Coalition, a group that was founded to preserve community gardens. She also co-founded Black Urban Growers (BUGS) an organization of volunteers committed to building networks and community support for growers in both urban and rural settings. Professionally Karen has been a Physical Therapist for over 30 years, and she continues to balance her professional life with community service.

Moderator Robert Knight

Robert Knight anchors the daily “Five O’Clock Shadow” investigative newsmagazine, and the weekly free-form “Earthwatch” on New York Pacifica station WBAI (99.5 FM). He has worked as a correspondent for Comedy Central’s “The Daily Show,” the Public News Service, the national election series “Informed Dissent” and the syndicated news programs “Flashpoints” and “Contragate/Undercurrents,” where his coverage has aired on hundreds of stations. Knight has also reported internationally from North and South Korea, Libya, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Panama, earning him the George R. Polk Award for Radio Reporting.

Guest of Honor Pete Seeger

“We stand in awe of Pete Seeger’s tenacious and eloquent life-long commitment to people’s rights, his profound dedication to the land, his passion for peace and justice, his uncanny ability to give us all hope. Pete’s work has led many of us to where we are now, and his spirit will inspire generations to come. Pete lives his message. He is a true sower of seeds. Pete Seeger has made the world a better place.”

– Cindy and Haja Worley

It’s no exaggeration to say that internationally-acclaimed folk troubadour Pete Seeger has done more to popularize American folk music than any other contemporary musician, authoring or co-authoring the songs that have become folk standards: “If I Had a Hammer,” “Where Have All the Flowers Gone?” and “Turn! Turn! Turn!” to name just a few. His work has inspired countless musicians including Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen and the Dixie Chicks, and his tireless political and environmental activism have galvanized generations of admirers to follow his lead and take action.

Seeger’s commitment to the revival of American folk music is rivaled

NYCCGC Executive Director Aziz Denkan

Aziz Dehkan was born and raised in New York City. After earning a degree in Biological Sciences from Rutgers University in 1976, Aziz built a passive-solar house, and started one of the first organic farms in New Jersey. After 12 years, he went into the environmental field, specializing in the disposal of hazardous waste materials. As a community activist, he served on his local planning board, and then as a board member of two agencies devoted to helping women recover from domestic abuse and breaking cycles of poverty.

Switching professional gears, Aziz created a regional major gifts program for the Humane Society of the United States, which led to senior development positions at the NYC Coalition for the Homeless; STRIVE, an organization advocating for workforce development opportunities; The Fortune Society, where the formerly incarcerated are empowered through services and advocacy, and *Mother Jones* magazine. Currently Aziz is president of the Eighty20 Group, a fundraising consultancy. A dyed-in-the-wool pacifist, Aziz has taken up boxing as a challenging workout form, fully recognizing the irony of this choice. An enthusiastic cook, Aziz loves American roots music and theater, and he is grateful to have his fingers back in the soil in Clinton, CT.

only by his commitment to using music as an instrument for social change. His activism has been a constant in his career. Throughout the 1940’s, he was singing protest and union songs--first with Woody Guthrie, and his first group, The Almanac Singers, then after the Almanacs disbanded, with The Weavers, the popular folk quartet Seeger founded with Lee Hays.

In the 1960’s, his Civil Rights and Vietnam War protest songs spoke to a new generation of fans. Then in the 70s, Seeger turned his attention to the environment, a cause to which he remains devoted, going green long before it became popular to do so.

And now, at age 93, Seeger still performs on occasion in public, and continues to receive accolades for his many achievements. Of note, he received a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1993, the Presidential Medal of the Arts in 1994, an induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1996, was named a Living Legend by the Library of Congress in 2000, and as of today, nearly 18,000 people and counting have signed the petition to nominate Seeger for a Nobel peace prize.

<http://www.peteseeger.org>

12 Questions...

In advance of this year's Forum, NYCCGC sent twelve questions to the 2013 Mayoral candidates...

We believe it is our responsibility to question the mayoral candidates on matters that affect the health and well-being of all New Yorkers, and their responsibility to respond. Their answers will be posted on our website (www.NYCCGC.org).

COMMUNITY GARDENS

1. Do you support the permanent preservation of all community gardens in NYC?
How will you achieve this as mayor (zoning, public-private partnership, municipal land trust, local law etc.)?
2. A number of longstanding community gardens are being threatened with destruction; will you protect these gardens by transferring them into the Parks Department? How will you balance the transfer of the gardens to the Parks Department while still encouraging city agencies to allow communities to start new gardens?
3. Do you agree that all community gardens transferred to Parks Department under the 2002-2010 Community Garden Agreement are permanently preserved?
4. How would you ensure that community gardeners become the majority decision-makers over community garden policy?
How would you increase the transparency of and public participation in community garden policy?
5. What actions would you take to create more community gardens and urban farms?

PARKS

6. As Mayor, will you increase funding for the Parks Department? Will municipal funds be used to support the Green-Thumb program of the Parks Department, which currently operates on funding from Federal Community Development Block Grants?
7. How will you increase safety, long-term employment, and maintenance in public parks?
8. How will you increase public green open spaces in under-served neighborhoods, which are many times below the City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) open space recommendation of 2.5 acre per 1000 persons?

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY OPEN SPACE

9. How do you envision new housing incorporating accessible community green open spaces and encouraging green initiatives? How would you make policy to integrate community gardens, urban farms, green roofs and other green initiatives in all housing, especially in low-income neighborhoods where it is most needed?
10. The Bloomberg administration has sold and still is selling off parks and key public spaces to developers (Yankees, Ratner, Private Restaurants, NYU, USTA) during his reign. What would your policy be towards selling or alienating city-owned land that is currently being used as parks, community gardens, NYCHA public open spaces and other passive and active open spaces?

FOOD ACCESS

11. How would you use public open space for both economically developing our food sector and providing healthy food access for our people? What policies would you pursue that would advance this idea, especially in areas that lack healthy food access?

SCHOOL GARDENS

12. How will you encourage partnership between schools and community gardens, as well as the establishment of new school gardens, for use in public curriculum and in school lunches?

... for 12 Candidates

Please note that many candidates' statements are from their websites of press kits and do not reflect the opinions of NYCCGC

Democratic Party Candidates

Sal F. Albanese

Former NYC Council Member Sal Albanese immigrated to Brooklyn from Italy at the age of 8. He grew up in a working class neighborhood in Brooklyn, where his mother raised him and his sisters on a garment worker's salary. He spent 11 years as a NYC public school teacher, 15 years as a NYC Councilman with an unblemished record of independence, and has spent the last 15 years in the private sector.

Randy Credico

For twelve years Randy Credico was director of the William Moses Kuntsler Fund for Radical Justice. During those years, he received many awards for his work. Prior to running the Kunstler Fund, Randy worked as a political satirist and directed *Humorists Against War*, in which he organized and hosted a series of progressive comedy shows throughout Nicaragua during the inhumane Contra War.

Bill deBlasio

Bill de Blasio, NYC's current Public Advocate, is an outer-borough, working dad who cares deeply about neighborhood issues - the kitchen-table, everyday concerns that aren't top of mind for the elite in our city, but are front-and-center to families: early childhood education, after-school programs, child care, paid sick leave, living wages, effective and respectful policing, and decent, affordable housing. As someone who will be the first NYC mayor in history to serve while having a child attending our public schools, improving education is personal to him. Bill is a lifelong progressive reformer, grassroots organizer, and populist fighter who will take on the elite who profit from the status quo at the expense of taxpayers, families, and everyday New Yorkers.

John Liu

John Liu, NYC's current Comptroller, immigrated to New York from Taiwan with his parents and two brothers when he was five years old. John's parents believed in the opportunities that this City affords and her sacred promise of a fair shot if you dream big and work hard. John's parents believed in that promise: that an immigrant family named Liu could work their way up to become like a family named Kennedy. So much so that his father, Joseph, named his sons John, Robert and Edward.

Christine C. Quinn

"A progressive leader with an unrivaled and unmatched record of results, City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn delivers for New Yorkers in all five boroughs. As a community organizer, anti-violence advocate and now as the second most powerful elected official in the City, Chris has created thousands of new jobs, passed a living wage law to increase salaries on city funded projects, balanced the budget while protecting vital services, cracked down on bad landlords, increased access to health care, improved early childhood education, stopped teacher layoffs, and helped keep our streets safe while fighting for one system of justice in all communities."

Erick Salgado

Minister Erick Salgado is a community leader with a 24 year record of working in NYC's diverse communities and a businessman who has personally created jobs for New Yorkers. Working with Coney Island Sandy victims and

watching survivors look through garbage bins for food while the City was planning the Marathon, he realized the disconnect between City Hall and the people. That's when he knew he had to do more; he had to run for Mayor. Erick Salgado understands the importance of green space and sustainability for the health and economic viability of this City, as well as for pleasure.

William C. Thompson Jr.

"I get asked a lot about the last election and how close we came to making history. But for me, the 2009 race is in the past. I'm running because I care about the future of this city. That's what I want this race to be about. It's clear that we need compelling and innovative approaches to our most pressing concerns: jobs, education, public safety, affordability, transportation and more." – William C. Thompson, Jr., former NYC Comptroller.

Republican Party Candidates

John A. Catsimatdis

"I'm running for mayor to give back to the city that I love. New York has been very good to me and my family. I came here as a poor infant of immigrant parents with limited English language skills and today am the head of a multifaceted business with close to 10,000 employees." Mr. Catsimatdis is the owner of Gristede's food stores.

Joseph J. Lhota

Joe Lhota, former chief of Metropolitan Transit Authority, has held a unique balance of leadership positions in both the private and public sectors. He has successfully led large complex organizations while consistently exceeding the delivery of mission critical results. Joe was an integral part of Mayor Rudy Giuliani's core management team.

George T. McDonald

"My wife, Harriet, and I built The Doe Fund – a nonprofit that helps homeless and formerly incarcerated New Yorkers change their lives through the power of work – from nothing except our bedrock belief in America and that anyone can climb the economic ladder if given an opportunity and a paying job. Today, The Doe Fund is a \$50 million-a-year business.

Green Party Candidate

Tony Gronowicz

New York City native and history professor Anthony Gronowicz graduated from Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania where he received a Ph.D. in New York City political history. He is the author of "Race and Class Politics in New York City Before the Civil War"

Independent

Adolfo Carrion Jr.

"There can be little doubt that New York is home to one of the most corrupt political environments in the nation. Our crisis of confidence in our system is real. During the last decade, dozens of our elected leaders and political party officials have been arrested, indicted, resigned in disgrace or carted off to jail. Every time someone betrays the public's trust they damage our democratic process and alienate voters from our system." Mr. Carrion is a former Bronx Borough President.

Workshops

Boycott Fresh Direct! Privatizing Public Land

This **South Bronx Unite** workshop will provide participants with an overview of the community's ongoing fight against Fresh Direct, the online grocer. The workshop will explore the city's land use policies that have subsidized massive food distributors and the local health consequences of such policies.

Workshop Facilitator: A. Mychal Johnson

Vacant Buildings, Vacant Land, and Human Rights

This **Picture the Homeless**-led workshop will address the city's policy of warehousing vacant properties – a practice that unnecessarily perpetuates the problem of homelessness to the benefit of wealthy and politically well-connected economic interests.

Workshop Facilitator: Kendall Jackman

Fracking in New York

We'll approach fracking with the recognition of the spiritual connections between New York communities both upstate and downstate, rural and urban, and explore how we can be further united by a deep appreciation of life and the ways that the earth nourishes us.

Workshop Facilitators: Rob Jeresky, JK Canepa

Defending Publicly Owned Open Space: How the NYU Expansion Plan Threatens Gardens, Parks, and Playgrounds

Using the current lawsuit against the NYU expansion plan as an example, an attorney who specializes in this type of case, along with gardeners and representatives from other community groups, will discuss how to use legal action and community organizing to defend publicly owned spaces from privatization.

Participants: Jim Walden, Enid Braun, Ellen Horan

Introduction to Grassroots Legislative Organizing

In this workshop, we will cover the nuts and bolts of grassroots legislative organizing and lobbying. Questions we will explore include how to: plan a legislative campaign from the ground up; engage your local elected officials; get a bill introduced; get electeds to sign on to your bill; raise awareness about your issue; build momentum; and keep up grassroots pressure until your bill becomes a law.

Workshop Facilitator: Maggie Russell-Ciardi

Procuring Materials, Resources and Funding for Your Garden

Botanic gardens, city and state agencies provide resources that can be accessed by community gardeners to enhance the quality of their gardens.

Attend this workshop and learn how you can bring more resources (seeds, plants, lumber, finances, technical assistance) to your garden.

The workshop will also provide information on how to be considered for funding by establishing working partnerships with Federal, State, City and local Community Based Organizations.

Workshop Facilitator: Howard Hemmings

How Safe Is Our Soil? Dealing with the Aftermath of Sandy

This workshop will discuss the environmental impact that Hurricane Sandy has had on people and community gardens. Soil testing, health risks and legal ramifications.

Participants: Sarah Ferguson, Warren Riznychok

The Chicken Magnet: Building Community & Youth Empowerment Through Community Chicken Tending

Intended for young children. Through storytelling, art making, and games children will learn and recognize how they help to build strong communities through community gardens. (Children under 7 years of age must be accompanied by an adult.)

Participants: Amina Begum, Feng Chen, Kate Temple-West

Stand for Our Land 101: Preservation, Self-Governance and Transparency

Topics: Preserving All Community Gardens, Making sure Community Gardeners are in Control of their Governance and Creating More Community Gardens. Goal: How to grow a united front as we create policies and legislations that will empower all community gardens.

Participants: Aresh Javadi, Haja Worley, Ray Figuerra, George Evans (NYCCGC Legislative Committee)

Campaign Organizing

Come learn how to identify key issues and winning strategies for your campaign. Community Voices Heard (CVH) is a membership organization of low income people in NYC. CVH has been fighting for fifteen years to stop the Work Experience Program (WEP) which requires people to work cleaning parks, subways, senior centers and city offices without a paycheck.

Workshop Facilitator: Wanda Fossett

Musical Guests

Pete Seeger

See "Introductions"

Morley

From Nice Jazz Festival to the Nomad Women's Festival in the Sahara Desert, Morley has brought her unique blend of jazz, folk and soul to the world's stage. Be it solo with her acoustic guitar or electric with her band, her message is consistent and clear; love and justice.

www.morleymusic.org

Stephan Said

Stephan Said aka Stephan Smith is a singer-song-writer, rapper, writer, and global activist of Iraqi and Austrian descent. Stephan's musical style bridges pop, hip-hop, rock and world folk music in a border-breaking sound of unity. His lyrics advocate global equality, social justice and reconciliation and he is often cited for having reinvented music for social change for the internet generation. www.stephansaid.com

Pierce Turner

There is no one in the whole world of music quite like Pierce Turner; a unique visionary, the owner of a voice that drips emotion, a consummate lyricist and the creator of tunes which are both complex and accessible.

Born and raised in Wexford town, Pierce's musical journey began as a boy soprano in his school choir; then spells in various beat groups, and folk rock groups ensued before he and long-time friend, (and future Black 47 singer/guitarist) Larry Kirwan set off for New York.

www.pierceturner.com

Fula Flute

Fula Flute (Bailo Bah & Sylvain Leroux) integrates the tambin, traditional Fulani flute of the Fouta Djallon highlands of Guinea. A little-known instrument outside West Africa where it is revered for the profound effect it has on listeners, often bringing them to tears with its haunting sounds and melodies that reach deep inside one's soul. It can be encountered sometimes as one travels through the back country, emanating from the forests, fields and mountains as if the song of a spirit.

www.fulaflute.net

Rude Mechanical Orchestra

The Rude Mechanical Orchestra is a New York City-based radical 30-odd piece marching band and dance troupe. Through music and performance, they strive to support people and communities working for social justice. They paly protests, demonstrations, direct actions, picket lines, marches, benefits and events for good causes.

www.rudemechanicalorchestra.org

Thanks

At Cooper Union:

Jamshed Barucha (President), David Greenstein, Christine Sarkissian, Amy Westpfahl, and The Cooper Union Great Hall team

Food Donations:

Fantastic Gardens of Long Island, Common Good, Cristals Garden, Plantworks, Inc., Green New Yorkers, Hawthorne Valley Farm Organic Bakery

Volunteers:

Jon Crow, Keith Jacobsen, Shelley Einbinder, Annabelle Meunier, Allison Hart, Dannelle Johnson, Muhammad Rahman, Maimuna Bojang, Anna Portela, Robert Pollard, David Walker, Alex Brown, Kimberly Brown, Kristin Pederson, Tanya Joyner, Sylvia Lewis, Joanne Dittersdorf, Diana Zavala, Zachary Arcidiaccono, Onika Abraham, Nando Rodriguez, Wayne Fleshman, Doungrat Eamtrakul, Sara Holden, Jill Rosenbloom, Sharai Lewis-Gruss, Sarita Daftary, Aundrea Fares

Forum Planners:

Aresh Javadi, Mayoral Forum coordinator
Mara Gittleman, Social media outreach, workshop coordinator
Magali Regis, music, moderator coordinator, and co-sponsor outreach
Cindy Nibbelink Worley & Haja Worley, press and special guest coordinators
Kate Temple-West, venue and caterer coordinator
Chelsey McCaw, outreach, donations, volunteers and general support
Barbara Cahn, press coordinator
Ray Figueroa, Master of Ceremonies
Sean-Michael Fleming, Program design
Vandra Thorburn, Hospitality
Emily Walker, New Yorkers for Parks
Tanzania Roach
Nancy Romer, Brooklyn Food Coalition
Charles Krezell, Venue manager, program

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Emily Walker, New Yorkers for Parks
Tanzania Roach
Nancy Romer, Brooklyn Food Coalition
Sean-Michael Fleming, Program & poster design
Barbara Cahn, media coordinator
Tinya Seeger
Council Member Melissa Mark Viverito
Scott Stringer, Manhattan Borough President
Our workshop leaders and mayoral candidates

...and to all the community gardeners city-wide who strive to make New York greener every day!

NYCCGC Forum 2013 Community Partners

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COMMITTEE
FOR NEW
YORK CITY**



596 ACRES



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Reminder: Don't forget to VOTE!