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MAYOR DE BLASIO DEDICATES MARKER COMMEMORATING WALL STREET SLAVE MARKET

Plaque at Wall Street and Pearl Street Marks Site of Colonial-Era Slave Market

NEW YORK—Today, Mayor Bill de Blasio, Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP, and Council Member Jumaane Williams dedicated a plaque marking the site of the colonial-era Wall Street slave market. Standing in Manhattan Park, the plaque is the first official acknowledgement of this slave market.

People of African descent were sold into bondage at the slave market, which operated from 1711 to 1762 by order of the Common Council. Under consecutive Dutch, British and American rule, slave labor was used in New York City homes and industries, including farming and public works. Although the transatlantic slave trade was outlawed by the U.S. Congress in 1807, not all slaves were freed in New York until 1841.

“To build a just future, we must understand the injustices of the past. Although it is not a proud moment in our city’s history, slave labor played a role in New York City’s development, and it must be acknowledged,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “This plaque commemorates the suffering and the contributions of those who passed through the Wall Street slave market.”

“The stain of slavery stretches across time and borders. Every American community must grapple with the gruesome history of slavery, and New York is no exception. This marker reminds us that while slavery was abolished long ago, its roots have fueled many of the thorny concerns that continue to plague us, including racism, segregation and income inequality,” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**.

“Caring for our city means understanding its history – including its darkest periods,” said **Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver**. “This marker will educate New Yorkers and visitors alike about the historic role of slave labor in New York, one of many tragic early moments in the long and painful struggle for equality.”

“Like most cities across the nation, New York was built on the backs of slaves. Wall Street was the location of the first slave trade in New York, where men, women and children of color from the East Indies, Africa, Cuba, Haiti and Jamaica were bought, sold and traded. As we discuss cultural issues our city, state and nation face today, we must put things into perspective by remembering that many of these communities still feel the crippling effects of our past. It’s been more than 250 years since this market was active, but it’s important we never forget this part of our country’s history and its impact. I would like to thank Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Mark-Viverito, Majority Leader Van Bramer and the entire Council for supporting this very important landmark, as well as the New York City Parks Department, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, historian Chris Cobb, and my former Legislative and Budget Director K Bain for working with me to get it done,” said **Council Member Jumaane D. Williams**.

“Today, I join my colleague Council Member Williams and Mayor de Blasio to install this important plaque to mark where our society once engaged in the ugly practice of buying and selling human beings,” said **Council Member Margaret Chin**. “I am glad our city today is recognizing some of the darkest moments in the city’s

history, not just the bright ones. I hope visitors will remember as they stop here that our great nation is the product of struggle upon struggle for a better society, and it began right here.”

“Slavery in America still haunts our souls and its wounds are slow to heal. It’s a shameful part of New York City’s history and a topic that is almost non-existent – except in February. The fact that New York City is officially acknowledging that a slave market had existed for decades in the Wall Street area is a milestone. I commend Council Member Williams and Mayor de Blasio for bringing about this historic marker to recognize our history and, in some way, honor the lives and deaths of those enslaved in New York City,” said **Council Member Andy King, Co-Chair of the Black, Latino and Asian Caucus.**

“We don’t truly know the story of New York without understanding the history of those enslaved individuals who played such a critical role in building this city. Only by confronting and recognizing this difficult chapter in our past can we truly appreciate the enormous civil rights advances we have achieved since. Installation of this plaque at the site of Lower Manhattan’s former slave market will help give New Yorkers the complete view of our history that we need and deserve,” said **Council Member Mark Levine, Chair of Committee on Parks.**

Brooklyn-based artist and writer Chris Cobb first called for the creation of a plaque marking the slave market, and prepared the image on the plaque – a historic map rendering of Lower Manhattan. The language on the plaque was prepared by the Parks Department and Landmarks Preservation Commission, in collaboration with Christopher Moore, former Director of Research at the Schomburg Center for Black Culture.

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