



**The Ethiopian World Federation, Incorporated**  
**105 West 125th st. #1095**  
**New York, NY 10027**

**March 28, 2025**

URLincoln/2025a

**RE: Urgent Request to Vote NO on Lincoln Correctional Facility Redevelopment**

**Dear Board Members of the Empire State Development Corporation and Commissioner Hope Knight,**

On behalf of The Ethiopian World Federation, Incorporated (EWF), we strongly urge the Board to vote **NO** on the proposed Lincoln Correctional Facility Redevelopment in its current form.

As an organization founded in 1937 to advocate for the rights and welfare of people of African descent in America, **EWF** has long been committed to ensuring the economic empowerment and housing security of Black communities. Harlem, a historic stronghold of the African diaspora and home to generations of our members, is facing an alarming trend of displacement. The proposed redevelopment of the Lincoln Correctional Facility continues this pattern, threatening to exclude the very people who have built and sustained Harlem's rich cultural legacy.

The current redevelopment proposal sets rental prices between \$3,000 and \$3,500 for a two-bedroom apartment. Yet, U.S. Census data indicates that the median household income in Central Harlem is approximately \$70,000, while the median Black household income is only \$53,000. This means a typical Black family in Harlem would be forced to spend nearly 68% of their income just to afford a unit in this development—rendering it completely unaffordable and out of reach for the community it claims to serve.

EWF urges the Board to **postpone this vote** until meaningful affordability measures are in place. We recognize that state elected officials representing Harlem are in ongoing discussions with ESDC to secure additional funding for the project. Moving forward with the vote before these negotiations are complete would be both premature and harmful to the lives these organizations are put in place to uplift. Furthermore, over 200 Harlem residents have submitted written testimony demanding a halt and reconsideration of this project. It would be a grave injustice to ignore the voices of those most impacted.

Additionally, we take issue with ESD's previous attempt to name this redevelopment "**The Seneca**" — referencing **Seneca Village, a historic Black community that was forcibly displaced** to create **Central Park**. Rather than honoring that history with a genuine commitment to affordability, the ESD has now removed the name in response to community backlash.

**This move makes it clear that the project is not truly aligned with the fight against Black displacement—clearly put in place to exploit the trauma of African American displacement.**

As an organization that has fought for land rights and economic self-determination for people of African descent globally, **EWF** stands in solidarity with Harlem residents in demanding a truly affordable redevelopment plan that prioritizes long-term Black homeownership and housing security.

By voting **NO** on this iteration of the project, the Board has an opportunity to ensure that this redevelopment truly serves the Historic Harlem community rather than abandoning it.

We urge you to act in alignment with accountability for principles of fairness, justice, and economic equity not only for the sake of fair business practices but for fear of modern day indentured servitude.

We appreciate your time and consideration and look forward to your commitment to protecting Harlem's historic Black community.

**Sincerely,**

**International Executive Council  
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