



184 BOWERY #4 NY, NY 10012
WWW.BOWERYALLIANCE.ORG
David Mulkins, President
631-901-5435 mulbd@yahoo.com

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October 7, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

It gives me great pleasure to write in praise and support of two extraordinary teachers and a visionary local history project that they have created in the Catherine Street/Chinatown neighborhood. At P.S. 126/MAT on Catherine Street, Alfonso Guerriero, Jr. (Social Studies) and Christopher Piccigallo (Special Education) have created the Lower East Side Young Historians project. Working with junior high school students from diverse backgrounds, they have engaged students in historical research, image collection and graphic design work, all of which have come together to create multiple historic signage placards that tell the unique story of the community that their homes and school are located in.

In order to save the project time, Christopher and Alfonso have very shrewdly involved the NYC Parks Commission, which has helped secure the signage permits. They have also helped raise funds for the project by going to the Brooks Brothers corporation which just happens to trace its origins to Catherine Street, a narrative that the students explore in one of their signage pieces.

The Lower East Side Young Historians project has been praised by NYC City Schools Chancellor Carmen Farina and local officials who are rightly impressed that students so young are doing sophisticated work that one would normally expect from much older historians. As an organization that has done historic signage on the Bowery, I know just how much work goes into such projects, and I am deeply impressed by the achievements of Chris, Alfonso and these young people.

By engaging students in this creative, exploratory project in their community, students are getting a profound experience in civic responsibility. Expanding their appreciation of their neighborhood instills a sense of pride in these young people and encourages them to love, respect and help preserve it for both the present and future generations.

Sincerely,
David Mulkins, President
Bowery Alliance of Neighbors