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City Limits WEEKLY

Week of: [March 14, 2005](#)

Number: 476

ACTIVISTS BACK IN

Bronx tenant organizers win first round in struggle to stay in buildings. >
D. Bell

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On March 3, after a 15-month lockout, Bronx housing advocates were allowed to go back to work. Lawrence Gottlieb, an attorney acting on behalf of Stephen Tobia, a landlord allegedly connected to the Palazzolo Group, withdrew a petition for an injunction against the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC) after Bronx judge Sallie Manzanet said she was unlikely to rule in the landlord's favor. The injunction had been sought in order to bar the NWBCCC from entering the landlord's buildings and organizing tenants to pressure for repairs. The Westchester-based Palazzolo Group controls 101 buildings in the Bronx that have been the subject of thousands of housing code violations. Attorneys for the tenant organizers see the withdrawal as a landmark victory for both tenants' rights and the First Amendment. "If the court had upheld the bar, it would have created a huge new weapon for unscrupulous landlords to use against tenant associations," said Wendy Stryker, a First Amendment attorney with Frankfurt Kurnit Klein & Selz, a firm representing the tenant organizers. Although the group has withdrawn its injunction petition, the case is far from over. "We're eager to finally get a chance to talk to those tenants," said Mary Dailey, executive director of NWBCCC. "But we still have to defend ourselves in the coming months, and we believe this lawsuit presents a serious threat to tenants attempting to enforce their civil rights." Gottlieb did not respond to calls seeking comment.

-D. Bell

[03/14/05]

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