

Monumental # Women

A Campaign of the Stanton and Anthony Statue Fund

Hearing On New York City Monuments City Council, City Hall

TESTIMONY FROM THE STANTON AND ANTHONY STATUE FUND AND OUR MONUMENTAL WOMEN CAMPAIGN

(given by Pam Elam, Brenda Berkman, and Judaline Cassidy)

NEW YORK – February 25, 2019

Good Morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify on proposals to make the City's process for creating monuments more transparent and fair. We approach those issues from a unique vantage point. I am Pam Elam, President of the Stanton and Anthony Statue Fund and our Monumental Women Campaign. Board Members Brenda Berkman and Judaline Cassidy and I are here today to offer a brief overview of our five-year experience, as an all-volunteer, tax-exempt charity, dealing with the City to break the bronze ceiling in Central Park to create the first statue of real women in the Park's 165-year history. We hope a very brief summary of that experience will be helpful to the City Council as it moves forward and we would be pleased to work with you to achieve the goals we all share for honoring all the people who helped make this City great.

Monumental Women, a campaign of the Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony Statue Fund Inc., is a three-part project to increase the awareness and appreciation of the vast and varied contributions women have made to history as well as to challenge municipalities across the country to re-imagine their public spaces to honor more women and people of color. Little did we know that we would have to challenge our own municipality to make that happen. Part One of the Monumental Women Campaign is breaking the bronze ceiling in Central Park, as I've said, to create the first statue of real women, New Yorkers Stanton and Anthony. We are pleased to have the highly respected firm of Beyer Blinder Belle as our statue's Project Manager. That statue is only the first of many we will propose throughout New York City and we will explain some of our plans at the end of this testimony.

Part Two includes a Women's History Education Campaign to focus on the complex, compelling, and complete story of how Women Won The Vote by including information on the many women who made the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution possible. By joining in partnership with the

New-York Historical Society to create new curriculum and online resources for students and teachers, as well as programs, conferences, and exhibits for the public along with partnerships with others such as Fordham University's Wikipedia project, we are finally making progress toward a full and fair historical record. Part Three of our Monumental Women Campaign challenges all municipalities, as was mentioned, to re-think the past and re-shape the future by including tributes of all kinds to the women and people of color who helped create and inspire those cities.

The timing is right as we get ready to celebrate the National Woman Suffrage Centennial of the Ratification of the 19th Amendment and the 200th anniversary of the birth of Susan B. Anthony, both in 2020. New York City could be at the center of the Nation's celebration of those two "monumental" events in 2020. We would be pleased to work with the City Council to make that happen. We are also pleased to announce today that The Statue Fund has successfully reached our \$1.5 million budget goal for the first phase of our efforts. We thank the over 1,000 individual donors who have supported us as well as foundations and companies like the Ford Foundation, the American Express Foundation, the Jane Walker Campaign, and Old Navy, who see the vital importance of our work. We especially want to extend our thanks to New York Life for both the extraordinary \$500,000 challenge grant and for believing in us. The only City money we have received came from a \$100,000 capital fund grant from Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, who has been our steadfast supporter, and from a member item from Council Member Helen Rosenthal for which we are very grateful. We also thank all the members of the Council's Women's Caucus for the two wonderful letters of support we have received over the last several years.

As we know, women were not "granted" the vote, they fought like hell for it. Together, we must move history forward to both tell that story and then learn from it. In order to move history forward however, we found that we first had to challenge New York City's governmental bureaucracy and the often unwritten "rules" its agencies, departments, and other entities follow. It is not easy to donate a work of art to the City of New York especially when that work of art is of real women. We want to give you several quick examples of the many challenges we have had to overcome. First, the Parks Department and the Central Park Conservancy said "absolutely not" to adding a statue of real women to Central Park, arguing that the statues in Central Park represent a historical collection and there will be no new ones. We persisted. Then they said why don't you pick another park or are you sure you want a statue, how about a nice garden. We persisted. Then they said something that the advocates of past Central Park statues never were told: we should find evidence of Anthony and Stanton actually being in Central Park. We found that evidence. Then, thanks to Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver, the statue was approved but was given a location on the outskirts of the Park. We persisted and a beautiful site on The Mall was dedicated on Nov. 6, 2017. In addition, we then had to adhere to "rules" requiring our statue to match the 19th Century aesthetic of the other statues on The Mall. Finally, the many, very strict requirements for placement of the statue on The Mall were also ironed out.

Then came our interaction with the Public Design Commission which started last October. From the very beginning, our intent with the Statue Design Competition was to find a compelling way of including many contributing voices from the Suffrage Movement, in addition to those of Stanton and Anthony. The Jury was selected to bring a diverse set of viewpoints to the process and those Jury members unanimously selected the design of nationally known artist Meredith Bergmann. Parks, Central Park Conservancy, and Public Design Commission representatives were involved during the entire time. Only late last year, did we hear any reservations about the current design and it appears that if we want to have PDC approval, we need to remove some of the aspects of the design we believe to be most inclusive, especially the 22 additional quotes on the scroll and the ballot box. We, of course, want PDC approval.

Recently, we were pleased that PDC Commissioners stated most emphatically that they believed Anthony and Stanton were certainly deserving of being honored in their own right with a statue in Central Park as abolitionists, suffragists, and women's rights pioneers. PDC Commissioners said that no number of individuals, no matter how worthy, could truly represent a whole movement. Thus, in an effort to complete our original goal of honoring all women, we now offer another idea to the City Council.

We propose that New York City create a "Women's Rights Trail" encompassing all five boroughs. This Trail would consist of statues, gardens, plaques, street signs, historic homes, museum exhibitions, and other tributes to honor the diversity of women, especially those who fought for suffrage and for women's rights. We look forward to working with many partners – including the City Council and the newly created She Built NYC – to make the New York City "Women's Rights Trail" a reality.