

Complete Text of Ken Diamondstone's Endorsement Speech of Daniel Squadron

Before I begin, I want to thank The Working Families Party, The New York Hotel and Motel Trades Council and UNITE HERE! Local 23-25, UAW Region 9A, and all of the other truly independent, progressive organizations and individuals who have rallied behind Daniel Squadron's campaign for State Senate. I'm proud to join them with my own endorsement of Dan.

We have reached a time in our city's and in our country's history that all of us must stand up and insist upon change. We, New Yorkers, must insist upon change because our great state is in crisis.

Surely, all of you must feel what I mean in your homes and in your workplaces. We all see our economy tumbling by shocking degrees each day. We are all worried that affordable housing will soon vanish and that the next rent hike will force us to move out of our communities. We all feel the fear that our loved ones will get sick or injured and our insurance won't be enough to pay – if indeed we're lucky enough to have insurance at all.

If we ever want our City to provide schools that will enable our children to grow into the best men and women they can be, we must insist upon strong, innovative leadership. If we are ever going to treat our seniors with humanity and respect, we must insist upon strong, innovative leadership. If we are ever going to accept nothing less than equality for *all* our citizens, we must insist upon strong, innovative leadership *now*.

If we, as New Yorkers, want what's best for our parents, our grandparents, our children, and ourselves, then we must insist upon leaders like Daniel Squadron.

Principled, hard-working, and dynamic, Dan Squadron is a leader who will help guide our State into a brighter future.

At the beginning of this campaign, I sat down with Dan and posed him a tough challenge. I told him that his determination to take on a lumbering dinosaur like Marty Connor wasn't enough to win my endorsement. I challenged him to prove the substance of his words, to take up the mantle of the fight I began in 2006 against Connor, and to demonstrate to the people of our district that he wouldn't be yet another elected official who let us down.

Dan has risen to my challenge. He has shown a gift for uniting diverse people and opinions and honing these invaluable perspectives into a single powerful voice. In this way, he emulates a leader who has inspired me to continue my struggle to build a better society: Senator Barack Obama.

Like Senator Obama, Dan and I are fighting against tough odds. We are taking on a broken system of government that rewards cronyism and dishonesty to keep the same old special interests and politicians in power. In Dan's case, the culprit is Marty Connor.

You would think that since he's spent 30 years in Albany, all of us would know Marty and his record well. But as Dan has pointed out, Marty's model of leadership over these past three decades has been the Invisible Man. That's because Marty understands that lurking in the shadows is the best way to hide his record from voters who would be outraged if they knew what I know about him.

Let me shed some light on the dark side.

Who started the push to build housing for the rich in Brooklyn Bridge Park and joined Governor Pataki in betraying this community's dream of a world class park? Marty Connor.

Who banded together with Albany's Republicans to repeal the commuter tax and cost New York City residents 5.5 billion dollars in revenue? Marty Connor.

Who took money from the tobacco industry and, coincidentally, was one of just four Senate Democrats to vote against our City's model smoking ban? Marty Connor.

Who refused to take a position on Forest City Ratner's Atlantic Yards Project, saying that because it was three blocks out of his district it wasn't his concern? Marty Connor.

Who has been on the sidelines in calling for help for our 9/11 workers and health care for the thousands of his constituents affected, despite the fact that the heart of his district is Ground Zero? Marty Connor.

And who was such an embarrassment as Minority Leader that *his own party* led by then-Senator David Patterson kicked him out of the post?

You guessed it. Marty Connor.

Over the next couple of weeks, you will continue to hear longtime political insiders – like one of my City Council opponents – gush over Marty and argue that Senator Connor's not as bad as everyone says. Of course, they'll make this dubious case. They're all beholden to the same political machine.

Before Brooklyn boss Clarence Norman wound up behind bars, Marty was Norman's chosen lawyer to preside over his phony judicial conventions and act as his pit bull to knock reform candidates off the ballot. Now Marty's hard at work helping Vito Lopez maintain that same status quo. All in all, Marty's spent decades making sure that real reformers like Dan Squadron never get their chance to stand before voters and offer them substantive change.

I know all this, because Marty tried to pull the same dirty tricks with me when I ran against him, but I beat them down. Unfortunately, I didn't anticipate at the time just how many lies Marty would use to Swift Boat my candidacy in its final hour.

But Dan Squadron is ready.

We know what to expect now when the Invisible Man shows his face. We know that Marty will stop at nothing to make sure he keeps picking up his paycheck in Albany.

Only we can stop him.

That's why I ask you to today to join me in voting for Dan Squadron on September 9th. I know that if in 2009 I am given the privilege of serving this district as its Councilmember, Dan and I will combine our strengths as allies on behalf of the people of Brooklyn.

Together, we can keep this nationwide movement for change going strong. Together, we can create change right here at home. Together, we can return truth, compassion, and wisdom to Albany and City Hall.

Can we do it?

YES WE CAN!

KEN DIAMONDSTONE

A Life of Community Service

Ken has devoted his life to fulfilling his values through service to the community. Some of his notable accomplishments include:

In the Neighborhood:

Ken served on Community Board #2 for 12 years, several of those as Vice Chair. One year before Ken stepped down to run for office, Marty Markowitz tried to unseat him for his repeated public opposition to the proposed Atlantic Yards development, but the Borough President was forced to reinstate Ken following a public outcry.

Ken has also:

- Worked to prevent LICH from moving ambulances out of Brooklyn Heights
- Been arrested for civil disobedience protesting the City's shutdown of the Carroll Gardens firehouse
- Fought alongside the Brooklyn Bridge Park Defense Fund to oppose housing in the park and to create a park reflecting community needs and desires
- Created a funding stream to preserve the annual Atlantic Avenue street fair
- Despite its ultimate passage, single-handedly prevented Community Board #2 from supporting a self-serving, developer-driven zoning change that added 17 million square feet in Downtown Brooklyn without appropriate infrastructure
- Led the early effort for many years to relocate the poorly-run, poorly-staffed Bond Street Drop-In Center that long plagued Boerum Hill, while tirelessly advocating for *real* treatment programs for the homeless, not half-measures and band-aids
- Created a music scholarship for disadvantaged kids at Brooklyn Music School

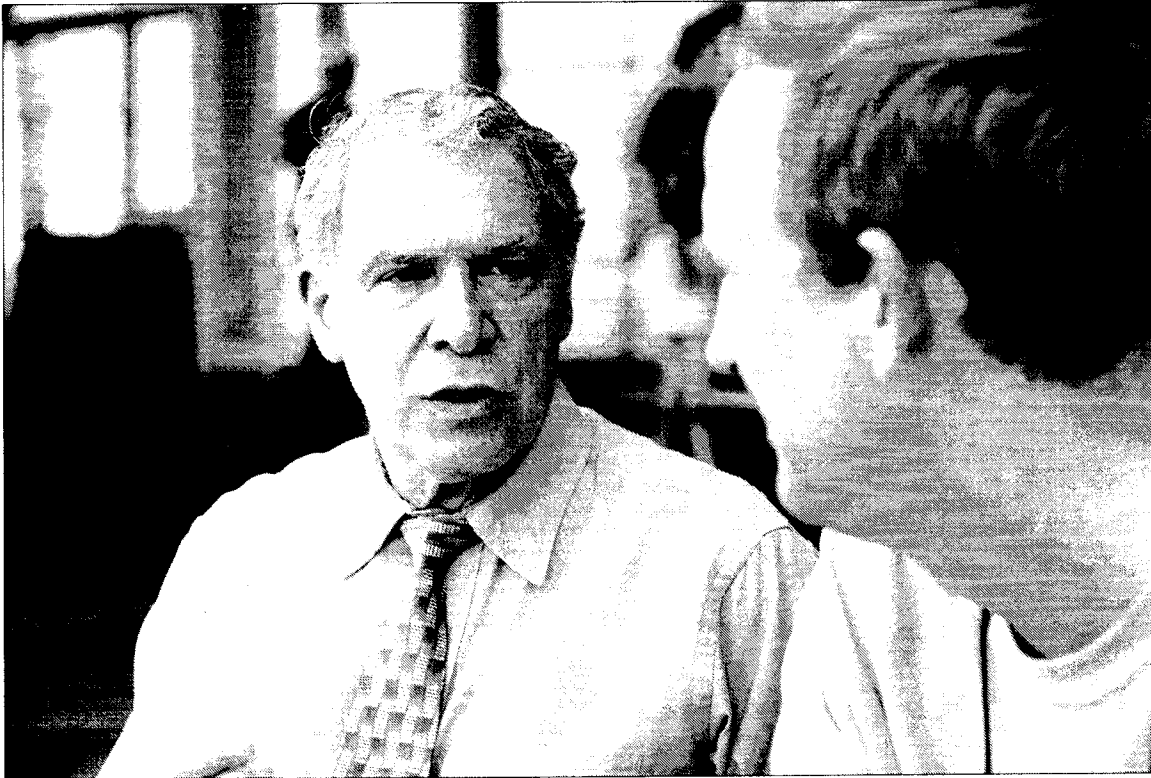
LGBT Issues:

- Twenty years ago, Ken co-founded and became the sustaining force behind Touch Community Dinners, an organization that has served over 60,000 lovingly-prepared meals to people with AIDS, who were abandoned by their families, lovers and friends out of fear and ignorance about how the disease was transmitted. The Dinners are still going strong, and on some Monday nights, Ken does the cooking himself.
- Ken and his life partner Joe Kopitz belong to The Griot Circle, a group of mostly LGBT seniors of color, many of whom felt pressured to hide their sexual orientation much of their lives. The GRIOT Circle has helped many to live more openly and with dignity. Over the years, Ken and Joe have supported GRIOT as it grew from 300 to 1200 members.
- Ken was designated by Lambda Independent Democrats to represent them in strategy sessions to pass SONDA (Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act). As a board member of Lambda, he continues to fight for the passage of marriage equality.

Peace and Social Justice:

- In contrast to his opponents, Ken alone joined Brooklyn for Peace in several silent vigils against Senator Schumer's support for the Iraq war and its funding.
- Ken testified passionately before the State Assembly against the death penalty and he organized two caravans of Brooklynites to protest Albany's proposed reversal of the ban.

Ken Diamondstone for Brooklyn



CANDIDATE BIO

Ken Diamondstone is a lifelong independent Democrat, dedicated to community service and progressive reform. Ken has made affordable housing, human rights, environmental protection, LGBT equality, and economic justice his life's work and mission. As a candidate for City Council for Brooklyn's 33rd district, Ken is now seeking to make history as Brooklyn's first openly-gay representative to any legislative body in New York State.

Born and raised in Flushing, Ken is proud to have received his education from New York City's public school system. Ken attended the prestigious High School of Music and Art in Manhattan as a pianist and French horn player, before going on to earn a B.A. in political science from Queens College. He also completed graduate studies in public administration at New York University.

His activism for progressive causes has taken him everywhere from the doorsteps of his neighborhood, where he campaigned for Adlai Stevenson at the age of 14, to Puerto Rico, where he protested the Navy bombing of Vieques in 1970. Ken worked with Fannie Lou Hammer and the Mississippi Freedom Democrats to integrate the Democratic National Convention in 1964 and later became the chair of the Nassau County Young Democrats.

As a community leader and activist, Ken has transformed his democratic ideals into concrete actions, directly benefiting the lives of those around him. A developer of socially responsible housing, he has provided hundreds of affordable apartments to working families and seniors. As Chair of the Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board, Ken worked to pressure Mayor Bloomberg into restoring recycling to the City and promoted plans to drastically reduce solid waste over the next 15 years. A staunch environmentalist, he also negotiated with a major car company to provide non-polluting electric vehicles to parks and not-for-profits free of charge.

Ken has been an active member of the LBGT community, speaking out for Marriage Equality and participating in the creation of legislation such as the Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act (SONDA). In 1986, he established The Touch Community Dinner, an outreach program that since its inception has served over 60,000 meals to people living with HIV/AIDS.

Over the course of his 38 years living in the 33rd district, Ken has served at the forefront of numerous community organizations, including Brooklyn Community Board 2, New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty, Brooklyn for Peace, The Brooklyn Solid Waste Advisory Board, the Brooklyn Ecumenical Council, the Atlantic Avenue Local Development Corporation, and the Citywide Recycling Advisory Board. He has also served as Vice Chair of the Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats, on the executive board of Lambda Independent Democrats, and a board member of Independent Neighborhood Democrats.

In 2006, Ken ran for New York State Senate, nearly upsetting 28-year incumbent Marty Connor. Ken's principal campaign issue was fighting irresponsible development like luxury housing in Brooklyn Bridge Park and Forest City Ratner's Atlantic Yards Project, and protecting the unique identities of our diverse neighborhoods.

Ken's long record of standing up to developers and bureaucrats who sacrifice our quality of life for their profit margins makes him an ideal candidate to represent Brooklyn in the City Council. In a time when self-serving career politicians, lobbyists, and special interests are shaping our City's agenda, Ken will be a leader in the fight to TAKE BACK BROOKLYN!

To Take Back Brooklyn and Join Ken's Campaign:

Email KenDiamondstone@gmail.com or Call 718.522.5437