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Dear Friends,

Yesterday we learned that Suzanne Wasserman, longtime Director of The Gotham Center, has left us, after a very long and characteristically brave struggle with progressive supranuclear palsy. We are deeply saddened to hear of this news, and would like to formally express our profound grief, as well as our incredible gratitude, to have known this extraordinary woman.

For many, Suzanne was The Gotham Center. When the idea for the organization was first proposed, it was she that Mike Wallace immediately contacted to recruit as his aide-de-camp. The author of a pioneering study of the cultural memory of Jewish life on Manhattan's Lower East Side, then an instructor of museum studies and public history at New York University and director of programming at the Tenement Museum, she was magnificently efficient, ambitious, and outgoing, but "above all," Wallace said, "a total sweetheart." Suzanne was the indispensable organizational force behind so many of the Center's biggest early projects -- from the city-wide Gotham History Festival to an ever-growing website and the local history teaching program, which has run for so many years in NYC schools. As Director she was the imaginative spirit behind more than a hundred panels, lectures, screenings, commemorations, readings, and debates, which brought together representatives from all different walks of life in our great city to

discuss the latest research on the place she and we love, where she chose to make her home and brilliant career.

In addition to running the Center, Suzanne never ceased to pursue her own work, directing a number of documentaries -- from *Sweatshop Cinderella*, a story about the immigrant Jewish writer Anzia Yeziarska, to her last film, *Meat Hooked!*, about the rise and fall and return of butchering in NYC. Until the very end, she was collaborating with Women Make Movies on a documentary about the children of psychoanalysts. (She was one herself.) Ever consulting and lecturing around the city about New York's rich past, she published on topics as disparate as housing, restaurant culture, tourism and Jewish silent film, digging up and meditating on the history of everything from 19th century saloons to 21st century street fairs.

For nearly anyone who has met or known her, however, these accomplishments will probably mean little next to the woman herself. It seems not a day has gone by since Suzanne stepped down from her post here at CUNY's Graduate Center that someone has not stopped us in the hall, phoned, or written to ask, "How is Suzanne?" And when we had to tell them, the inevitable follow-up was "How can I reach her?" People seemed to fall instantly in love with the person, even if they had no idea about the public scholar.

To her wonderful son, Rafi, and steadfast husband, David, we would like to convey our intense sympathies, and our very fond memories. Suzanne's passion, kindness, and devotion helped make the Center all it became, and also brightened our lives for all the time we knew her. The world is less without her.

**Peter-Christian Aigner, Deputy Director**

**Mike Wallace, Advisory Board Chairman**

**Julie Maurer, Education Director**

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