



Congress of Racial Equality

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February 16, 2010

Hon. David Patterson
Governor, State of New York
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Patterson:

It is with great concern that we have recently learned that your proposed 2010-2011 State budget includes the possible closing of John Brown's Farm in North Elba, New York among other State parks and historical landmarks.

While we understand the magnitude of the States' fiscal crisis and the need for cut-backs and other cost-saving measures, we strongly disagree with the office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's recommendation that John Brown's Farm be among those state parks slated for closure.

As you know, John Brown was a leader in the anti-slavery abolitionist's movement of the 1800s. He was an ally of Harriet Tubman. His farm was one of the "safe houses" used by her "Underground Railroad" to rescue fleeing slaves. He and his followers were men of action who opposed southern pro-slavery aggression with force when called for. His anti-slavery activities have been credited with sparking circumstances that eventually led to the American Civil War and the abolition of slavery in our country. He is truly an American hero and one of the early leaders of the struggle for human rights for all people.

Each year for the past several years, I and the Chairman of our Advisory Committee, Mr. Joseph Lovece, Jr., have visited John Brown's farm in North Elba to pay our respects to this remarkable man. In December 2009, both of us and the organization participated in several events commemorating the 150th anniversary of his death and subsequent interment on the farm. The turn-out was tremendous and included civil rights, human rights and other activists from a broad spectrum of opinions. We laid wreaths on his grave and the graves of his sons and followers who were buried beside him in a special plot on the farm. It would be a great tragedy if this historical site and the significant role it played in the American Civil Rights Movement were closed to the public.

I urge you to reconsider the suggested closing of John Brown's Farm in North Elba, and do all in your power to keep this important part of history open and accessible to the public. Closing John Brown's farm would be an insult to all those, like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who have given their lives in the struggle for civil rights in America and a slap in the face to those of us who continue the struggle today. As Governor of the State of New York you cannot and must not allow this to happen.

Sincerely,

Roy Innis

Roy Innis
National Chairman & C.E.O.
CORE- Congress of Racial Equality