



As of January 6, 2025



**While We Are Still Here, Inc.** (WWSH) is a not-for-profit heritage preservation organization founded in 2015. Initially, the organization focused on documenting the lives of notable residents at 409 and 555 Edgecombe Avenue. Over time, with input from the community, WWSH expanded its mission to encompass heritage preservation throughout the iconic Harlem neighborhood to broaden the scope of Harlem's historical narrative.

**The SIGNS OF THE TIMES™: Harlem Markers Project** is a key initiative to install twenty-five historic markers across Harlem, honoring the events, people, organizations, and sites that contribute to the neighborhood's unique character.

WWSH has hosted various programs to celebrate the Harlem Markers Project, including "Lift Ev'ry Black Voice of Fire: Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, Larry Neal, and J. Rosamond Johnson," a day-long bus tour visiting each honoree's marker site (2023); a New Orleans-style Second Line, following the marker unveiling for Black music innovator, Coleman Hawkins; a book giveaway, in partnership with the New York Public Library in honor of Renaissance librarian, Regina Anderson Andrews, at the Washington Heights branch of the New York Public Library, following the dedication of her marker (May 2024); and "Honoring the Ancestors: Celebrating the Harlem Markers Project," a daylong celebration at the Apollo Victoria Theater (June 2024). For more information [click here](#).



## **Regina Anderson Andrews** (5/21/1901 – 2/5/1993)

A prominent figure during the Harlem Renaissance, Andrews was a Renaissance Woman. The salons she co-hosted with her roommates at 580 St. Nicholas Avenue were popular with the Harlem cultural crowd, including W.E.B. Du Bois. It's been said that when Zora Neale Hurston arrived in New York City, she slept on the sofa at Andrews's flat. As a librarian, Andrews provided a creative space at the 135<sup>th</sup> Street branch for individuals who became key literary figures, such as Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen. She later became the first

African American woman to manage a branch of the New York Public Library—the Washington Heights Branch.

**Location:** *New York Public Library,  
1000 St. Nicholas Avenue and 160<sup>th</sup> Street*

## **Blumstein Department Store**

In the 1930s, the “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work Campaign,” was initiated by Sufi Hamed, who had organized a similar protest in Chicago. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., other clergy, and the publisher of the *New York Age* formed a formidable coalition whose work resulted in Black people being hired at Blumstein Department Store in jobs other than porter and elevator operator.

**Location:** *230 W. 125<sup>th</sup> Street  
off Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard*



## **Cotton Club**

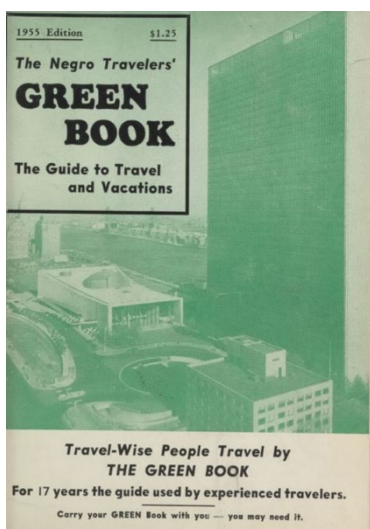
The famed Cotton Club helped to launch the fame and fortune of Black performers such as Duke Ellington and Lena Horne. However, it was a racially segregated environment, where the performers were not, initially, allowed to use the bathroom.

**Location:** *646 Malcolm X Boulevard and 143<sup>rd</sup> Street*

## **Althea Gibson** (8/25/1927 – 9/28/2003)

Althea Gibson was a trailblazing athlete, one of the first Black tennis players to break the color barrier on the international scene. She made history by winning the French Open in 1956, becoming the first Black player to claim a Grand Slam title. She continued her success by winning both Wimbledon and the U.S. Nationals in 1957. Beyond tennis, Gibson also became the first Black player to compete in the Women's Professional Golf Tour. Her groundbreaking achievements have inspired tennis greats like Venus and Serena Williams and remain a source of pride for African Americans and other people of this nation.

**Location:** 135 W. 143<sup>rd</sup> Street  
off Malcolm X Boulevard



## **The Green Book**

Published by husband-and-wife team Victor and Alma Green from 1936 to 1966, this guidebook served as an essential resource for African Americans during the rise of the Black leisure class, offering safe travel recommendations across the United States during the precarious years leading up to the civil rights era. The book listed hotels, restaurants, bars, gas stations, and other businesses where Black travelers would be welcome.

**Location:** 938 St. Nicholas Avenue and 157<sup>th</sup> Street

## **Coleman Hawkins** (11/21/1904 – 5/19/1969)

Not only was Coleman “the Hawk” Hawkins a music prodigy and a pioneer of the tenor saxophone, his musicality and improvisational mastery also revolutionized the jazz genre. Hawkins elevated the saxophone from a background instrument to a leading voice in jazz, a position it continues to hold today.

**Location:** 445 W. 153<sup>rd</sup> Street  
off St. Nicholas Avenue







## Hotel Theresa

The phrase "If these walls could talk" perfectly captures the desire to uncover the conversations shared by the luminaries, celebrities, heads of state, and everyday people who stayed at the Hotel Theresa. Through oral and written histories, stories of icons like Josephine Baker, Olatunji, Gladys Knight and the Pips, Malcolm X, and Fidel Castro reveal the hotel as a vibrant hub that attracted Black people from far and wide.

Future Installation due to construction at the site: 2082 Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard

## J. Rosamond Johnson (8/11/1873 – 11/11/1954)

Best known as the composer of the Black National Anthem, "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing," co-written with his brother James Weldon Johnson, J. Rosamond Johnson had a profound understanding that American music would be shaped by the songs of Africans who were held in bondage on this land. During the turn of the twentieth century, he was a prominent composer, arranger, and playwright.



**Location:** 437 W. 162<sup>nd</sup> Street  
off Edgecombe Avenue



## Jungle Alley

133rd Street, between Lenox and Seventh avenues, was once known as "Jungle Alley," a vibrant strip of nightclubs and speakeasies where the upper echelon of Black performers dazzled audiences. From one club to the next, entertainers like bandleader Duke Ellington, the Nicholas Brothers with their unmatched tap-dance routines, a young Lena Horne, and tuxedo-clad Gladys Bentley

singing ribald, double entendre blues, captivated crowds. Despite their popularity, some clubs were segregated, barring Black patrons from entry. Billie Holiday's first performances in New York took place at 148 W. 133<sup>rd</sup> Street, the current site of Bill's Place, which is owned by saxophonist Bill Saxton and his wife Theda Palmer Saxton, Ph.D., professor and author.

**Location:** 133<sup>rd</sup> St  
and Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard



## **Yuri Kochiyama** (5/19/1921 – 6/1/2014)

Yuri Kochiyama was a Japanese American civil rights activist whose family was interned in an American concentration camp after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Her friendship with Malcolm X and her active support of the Civil Rights Movement highlight her role as an ally to the cause. As an advocate for those subjected to concentration camps during World War II, Kochiyama was instrumental in securing financial reparations from the U.S. government for Japanese Americans.

**Location:** 545 W. 126th Street off Old Broadway



## **Lawrence Neal** (9/5/1937 – 1/6/1981)

Larry Neal was a key figure in the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s, influencing its direction through his work as a playwright, essayist, and theoretician. He argued that Black artists must create from a place that fosters liberation. Neal inspired many as a professor at City College of New York, Wesleyan University, and Yale University. He was also a Guggenheim Fellow for his work in African American Critical Studies.

**Location:** 12 Jumel Terrace off Sylvan Terrace

## **Lenape Land Acknowledgement**

The Algonquian nations of the Northeastern Woodlands refer to their ancestral homeland as Lenapehoking, or “Land of the Lenape,” which encompasses New York, Connecticut, Eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Northern Delaware, with New York City at its heart. This marker honors the Lenape people as the original inhabitants of this land and acknowledges their enduring connection to it.

**Location:** 601 W. 125th Street and Broadway



## Lenox Lounge

An iconic example of Art Deco design, the Lenox Lounge opened in 1939 and served as a neighborhood hub and jazz venue for nearly eight decades. Legendary artists such as Miles Davis and John Coltrane performed there. In its



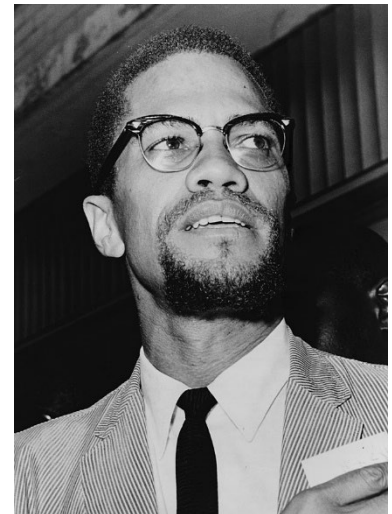
later years, Monday-night jam sessions drew top performers like George Benson and Bono. One of the booths in the Zebra Room was named after Billie Holiday, a frequent patron of the club.

**Location:** 288 Lenox Avenue / Malcolm X Boulevard  
@125<sup>th</sup> Street



## Malcolm X (5/19/1925 – 2/21/1965)

Malcolm X was an American revolutionary, Muslim minister, and human rights activist who played a pivotal role in the Civil Rights Movement. His work, focused on addressing injustices faced by the Black community, resonated across different faiths. After his assassination in 1965, Bishop Willie Quick of the Faith Temple Church of God In Christ courageously hosted Malcolm X's funeral, where Ossie Davis famously eulogized him as "our Black, shining prince."



Future Installation due to construction at the site: 1763  
Amsterdam Avenue



## Dorothy Maynor (9/3/1910 – 2/19/1996)

Dorothy Maynor, a celebrated concert soprano and founder of the Harlem School of the Arts, left an enduring legacy by providing outstanding arts education to thousands of Harlem children. Beyond

her success as a vocalist and educator, Maynor was the first African American to serve on the Metropolitan Opera's board of directors.

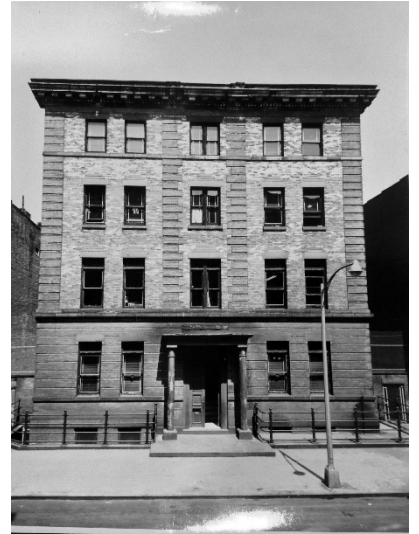
**Location:** 645 St. Nicholas Avenue  
off 141<sup>st</sup> Street



## Modern School

Founded in 1934 by Mildred Johnson, the daughter of J. Rosamond Johnson and niece of James Weldon Johnson, the Modern School was an independent Black institution born out of necessity. Mildred, unable to student teach in private schools due to her race, started the school at the age of 20 with eight five-year-old children from Harlem. The institution thrived for six decades, providing education to generations of Black children. According to a Modern School alum, Deidre Flowers, who is also a WWSH board member and professor of History, "[Johnson's] private school was the first in the city owned and operated by an African American woman."

**Location:** 539 W. 152<sup>nd</sup> Street off of Broadway



## Queen Mother Audley Moore

(7/27/1898 – 5/2/1997)

A Louisiana native who relocated to Harlem after hearing Marcus Garvey speak, Queen Mother Audley Moore became an activist during the 1930s. She was active in the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), the organization Garvey founded. Moore was a driving force in international campaigns advocating for reparations for the enslavement of African peoples. She earned the title "Queen Mother" after receiving a chieftaincy from the Ashanti people in Ghana.

**Location:** 1901 Amsterdam Avenue and 155th Street

## Pauli Murray (11/20/1910 – 7/1/1985)

Pauli Murray was a civil rights activist, lawyer, women's rights advocate, Episcopal priest, poet, and author. Their groundbreaking work in legal theory and their book *States' Laws on Race and Color*, which was hailed as the "bible" of the Civil Rights Movement by Thurgood Marshall elevates Murray as a theoretician of the highest order. Additionally, they also influenced Ruth Bader Ginsburg's legal perspectives on issues of gender equality. Murray was the first Black person to earn a Doctor of the Science of Law degree from Yale. They were a co-founder of the National Organization for Women, and the first Black woman to be ordained as an Episcopal priest.



**Location:** 225 W. 110th Street off Frederick Douglass Boulevard





## National Memorial African Bookstore

Also known as The House of Common Sense and Proper Propaganda, the store was opened by Lewis H. Michaux in 1934 to ensure that literature about the African diaspora was accessible to all. Over time, Michaux amassed approximately 200,000 titles in various languages. The store became a cultural hub, frequented by luminaries such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Shirley

Graham, Malcolm X, and Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah.

Future Installation due to construction at the site: 2107 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Blvd & 7th Avenue

## Nelson Mandela's Welcome to Harlem

On June 21, 1990, a committee of Harlemites organized a statesman's welcome for Nelson Mandela following his release from Robben Island. The event closed 125th Street between Adam Clayton Powell and Frederick Douglass boulevards to accommodate the massive crowds that gathered to honor the future South African president.



**Location:** 125th Street and Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard



## The Renaissance Casino and Ballroom

Known as "The Rennie," this venue was a social hub and event space for Harlem, hosting everything from weddings and cotillions to basketball games and performances. With a 900-seat theater, six retail stores, and a basketball arena, it spanned an entire block and was

considered the heart and soul of Harlem. From 1924 to 1979, it was the community's event venue of choice, designed and managed by a group of Caribbean businessmen.

**Location:** 2341 Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard and 138th Street

## The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)

Founded by Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey in 1911, the UNIA was a mass movement that promoted Black nationalism, racial pride, and pan-African identity. The organization's motto was "One God! One Aim! One Destiny!" The UNIA held its first international convention in Madison Square Garden, attracting 20,000 attendees.

**Location:** 2395 Frederick Douglass Boulevard off 128<sup>th</sup> Street



### Ethel Waters (10/31/1896 – 9/1/1977)

Ethel Waters was an American singer and actress whose career began at Harlem's Edmond's Cellar. In 1921, she made her first record and, by 1924, she was the highest-paid Black recording artist. Waters broke barriers as the first Black woman to integrate Broadway in the 1930s. In 1939, she became the first African American to star in her own television variety show, *The Ethel Waters Show*, and the first to star in a television series, *Beulah*, which aired on ABC from 1950 to 1952.

**Location:** 580 St. Nicholas Avenue  
off of 139<sup>th</sup> Street

## Colonial Parkway Apartments

Sister building to 555 Edgecombe Avenue, 409 Edgecombe was considered one of Sugar Hill's most prestigious address throughout the 1930s to the 1950s. It was home to numerous African American luminaries, including Thurgood Marshall, W.E.B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, Walter White, and Roy Wilkins. William L. Patterson, another prominent resident, authored the paper "We Charge Genocide," accusing the U.S. government under the UN Genocide Convention. Union organizer and journalist Marvel Cooke was also a resident. For a partial list of 409 Edgecombe residents [click here](#).



Future Installation due to construction at the site:  
409 Edgecombe Avenue off 155<sup>th</sup> Street



## 555 Edgecombe Avenue

Sister building to 409 Edgecombe Avenue, this dwelling was home to notable figures such as Paul Robeson, the renowned singer, actor, attorney, polyglot, and All-American football player. Other prominent residents included Jane Bolin, the first African American female judge, and research psychologists Drs. Mamie and Kenneth Clark. World heavyweight champion Joe Louis and his wife, entrepreneur

Rose Morgan, also resided here. Artist Charles Alston and his wife Myra Logan, MD, lived at 555 as well. For a partial list of 555 Edgecombe residents [click here](#).

**Location:** Edgecombe Avenue and 160th Street

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### **The SIGNS OF THE TIMES: Harlem Heritage Markers Project**

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