

LINDA – Fieldnotes – Saturday, August 18, 2007 – INCOMPLETE

Subject: Harlem Garden Tour
 Location: Various community gardens
 Time: 10:20am – 5:00pm

Tom Goodridge gave me a flyer about the Harlem Garden tour. His friend, Haja Worley, organized this tour. Tom's garden would be the first.

Tom was quite considerate and made sure he introduced me to each of his friends who are gardeners. They act quite affectionately towards him. The gardens are quite different, ranging from purely ornamental flowers and trees to mostly vegetables, and in various states of weediness. All but two gardens were run by "community people," that is, African Americans with the last gardeners being at least part "Spanish" (not sure if this is Puerto Rican or Dominican) who know a lot of people who walk by. Everyone except for the white woman (rose garden) greeted lots and lots of people going by, although I suspect that the white woman also knows lots of people simply from being in the neighborhood. The chats I had with gardeners confirmed my sense that they all felt this strong sense of political education happening through fighting for their gardens, whether in the Giuliani days or currently facing development.

By the time I arrived 20 minutes late, at least 10 people were already in and around Tom's garden next to P.S. 76, including two people standing outside with bikes. [Technically this is no longer Tom's garden; Adrian, the teacher he worked with previously, at PS 76, was now the caretaker recognized by the school. I believe Tom stopped in order to work on his dissertation.] As I walked into the garden, surrounded by a chain link fence, I could hear Tom talking enthusiastically about eliciting children's reactions and see him pass around some leaves to smell and touch.

My first impression was that almost all the people on the tour so far were white. Some struck me as greenie activist/bike messenger, while others seemed the more garden-variety liberal white. I wondered if any lived in Harlem or were Brooklyn hipsters. More importantly, I wondered if this were the audience that Tom and Haja expected.

Tom brightened when he saw me. I also caught the eye of Haja Worley, the only African American male in the group, and nodded greetings. Tom finished what he was saying and came to hug me hello. Someone asked him a question about his garden(ing) and I turned to say hello to Haja. I told him I was really looking forward to meeting with him from Tom's description. Tom broke away to introduce me to Haja, saying something that referred to a previous conversation involving me. Soon afterwards, Haja started moving people to the next garden.

Tom's garden was not so "wild" as I expected, with several raised beds growing collards and other herbs or vegetables (I didn't look closely, as there was no time.)

82P
 84P
 114P

442
 85

Classy Parker
Canning workshop at 1pm

Haja and Cindy Worley
Wilson Garden