

359

LINDA – Fieldnotes – Wednesday, November 14, 2007

Subject: Community Board 10 Public Hearing

Location: Oberia Dempsey Multi Service Center, 127 W. 127<sup>th</sup> St (Powell and Lenox Ave)

Time: 6:02pm – 8:45pm

I received a flyer for this meeting at the Hue-Man panel on gentrification. The flyer read, "PUBLIC HEARING 'HARLEM IS NOT FOR SALE.'" It goes on to say in all capitals, "Sale price 1 million @ 10% down. Can you afford to live here? NO! Stand up and fight! Save Harlem's history culture small businesses and housing. Attend Community Board 10 Public hearing... Let your voice be heard." It also cites the CB10 position on this rezoning proposal at <http://www.cb10.org/CB10125thStreetRezoningProposalFinal-combined.pdf>, which I did not have time to look at before going to the meeting.

537

51

A young woman gave me the eye while I was walking on Powell. I followed a family of a mom, a teenager, and two small children onto 127<sup>th</sup> street. They went into a medical center on 127<sup>th</sup>. I kept going, looking for 127 w. 127<sup>th</sup>, the Oberia Dempsey Multi Service Center.

I arrived just after 6pm, the stated time. A crowd of people stood outside. A few well-dressed white people holding clipboards were handing out dark blue t-shirts and caps to mostly black and Latino people. I hung around but couldn't get the gist of what was going on. A tall, thin white woman approached me, and I asked if we had to line up outside for the meeting, and if she was there for the meeting. She said that they were the hotel workers union and asked me if I was part of the union. I said no and she quickly explained that a lot of their members live in Harlem, that hotels will be built on 125<sup>th</sup>, and they are there to make sure those jobs will be union and not minimum wage, because it's better for the community. I nodded. She directed me inside, to the right.

565

From <http://www.idealists.org/en/org/130415-262>:

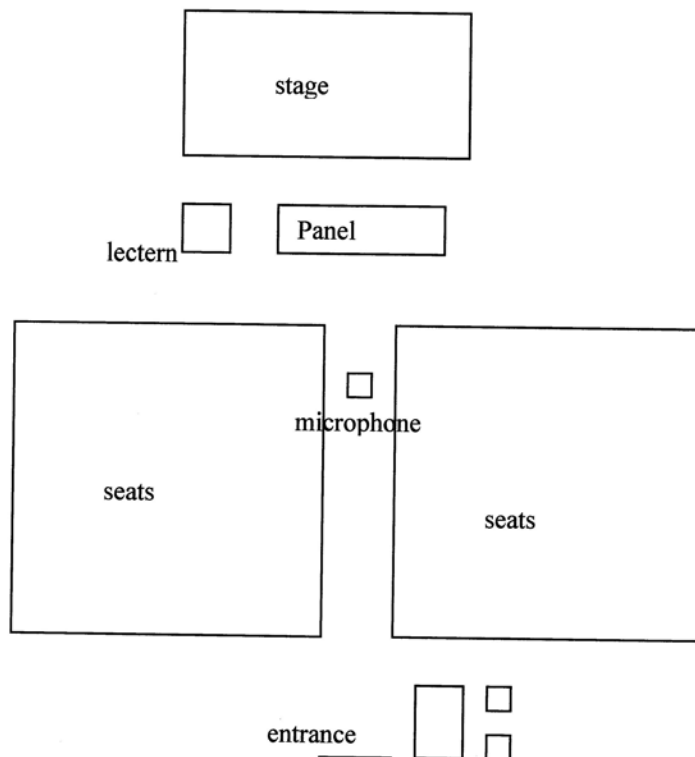
The New York Hotel and Motel Trades Council, AFL-CIO, is the union that represents approximately 26,000 hotel workers in New York City. The Council works closely with its nine affiliated local trade unions from the following International Unions: OPEU, SEIU, UNITE HERE, IUOE, IBEW, IUPAT and USWA. The Hotel Trades Council is the strongest union, with the best contract, for hotel workers in North America.

Upon entering the center, there was a guard sitting at a table, with a crowd of people milling around the lobby. Some were trying to figure out if they had to sign in. One woman insisted that they had to sign in inside, implying she wasn't going to sign in there. I walked past with no trouble. At the small table just inside the door a woman asked me to sign in. Two women were sitting there with multiple stacks of sign-in sheets. There was also a paper torn from a yellow legal pad that read, "Speakers." I did not think to

look on this list [partly because it was in front of other women signing in; it would have looked strange].

About 50 people were there, including a few Asian Americans sitting on the left side of the auditorium. A woman tells people to move forward; later I hear the back rows are for press. [People do not hold to this] I sat on the right side, deliberately picking a spot about 7 rows back in the behind a few people in union shirts and several African American men sitting alone. A cameraman stands behind a camera in the third row.

[I would have preferred to sit near an older woman, as in the CB9 meeting, who would be likely to speak with me or at least make entertaining educational comments, but there were very few older women present thus far.] I selected the third chair in from the far right side, to allow someone to sit next to me easily. There is a red-curtained stage up front with a screen at the back, and an aisle down the two sets of seats with a microphone near the front.



I spotted the pompous man from the panel on gentrification at Hue-Man Bookstore and went to speak with him after the man who greeted him walked away. He had chosen the first chair in the first row on the left side, almost directly in front of the table where the panel would sit. I told him I had been to the Hue-Man panel and asked if he was still giving tours. He said yes, and in a warning tone asked, is it just going to be you? I said yes and he replied that he charges \$100 per hour. I asked how big a group he needed to

355

get a lower rate, and he said up to ten people he still charges \$100 per hour. I said it was expensive, but he was a historian. He gave me his name, phone number, and email address: Michael Adams, 212-862-2556, [mrmhadams@aol.com](mailto:mrmhadams@aol.com). He was wearing a black turtleneck under a black suit, and wore his wire rim glasses.

147P



A google search:

New York Times, Nov 3 2002

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F04E3DA153FF930A35752C1A9649C8B63>

Picture from

<http://nymag.com/shopping/articles/02/homedesign2002/homedesign/historian/>

[http://www.harlemfur.com/2006/08/michael\\_henry\\_adams\\_prophesy\\_c.html](http://www.harlemfur.com/2006/08/michael_henry_adams_prophesy_c.html)

People kept filtering in, including two men speaking Spanish behind me, one wearing a leather jacket. Soon a young woman in a baby pink blazer and tight jeans sat with them. Someone asked her in English where her shirt was and said, "Oh, under there." Later I saw that she took off her cute jacket and was wearing the navy blue shirt, which had the union logo on the back:



Their website: <http://www.nyhtc.jobs/>

A very dark-skinned black woman [who sounded Caribbean] in a union t-shirt was sitting catty corner to me, in the second seat of the row. In front of her, in the third seat, sat a Latino-looking man in a union hat, white shirt and tie. To his left, with a seat in between, sat a very dark-skinned black man in a plain black cap and a t-shirt that read, "HARLEM IS NOT FOR SALE," with [harlemvillage.com](http://harlemvillage.com) on the back. [This domain name is not active, although a search turns up Harlem Vintage, which I think is the business owned by one of the panelists from Hue-Man.]

At about 6:20 a man in a bow tie and suit announced that the meeting would begin shortly. A middle-aged man asked gallantly if anyone was fighting to sit in the chair at the end of my row, and I and the men behind me said no. He added something like, "Because if anyone is, I'll let them have it!" He then took off his coat, elaborately laid it on the seat in front of him [a union member sat in the second seat], and sat down. Later I found out his name is Tariq. He had medium-brown skin, a solid build, and was wearing slacks and a shirt.

148P

Tariq said that he's sitting here, not on either side, in case it gets rowdy [not his word]. I told him, well, we're sitting with the union members. He told me, "I know this union, I

356

spoke on their behalf” at about some event where Mayor Bloomberg was present, some hotel event downtown. I asked if he was part of the union as he said “member,” and he clarified, “member of the community.” He said he’s from Mt. Shabazz on 116<sup>th</sup> St. I didn’t respond and he didn’t clarify. [A web search reveals that he was probably talking about Malcolm Shabazz Market, which I think is where the African sidewalk merchants were moved from 125<sup>th</sup> St.]

Tariq turned to me a few minutes later and asked what I was doing there. I told him I was interested in gentrification, had gone to a few Community Board 9 meetings, and was from Teachers College, Columbia. He picked up on Teachers College and told me his child [can’t remember gender, probably girl] went to Hollingsworth. He asked if I knew Connie, and I said no. He said that she is one of the 10 best private school educators in the country. I said I’ll have to meet her. He said his daughter is now at Trevor Day School, at 89<sup>th</sup> st, and all he had to do was mention Connie’s name to get his child in. He told me that Trevor Day school’s tuition is \$27,500 per year, for kindergarten. I expressed amazement. He said he’s expecting them to teach his daughter to levitate. He then told me that Hollingsworth was \$10,000 per year, and said something companionable like, “They’re not messing around.” A man was beginning to call the meeting to order, so I leaned over and said that I was also interested in education in Harlem. He told me he had another meeting, he was going to have to leave in about 20 minutes.

Trevor Day School, <http://www.tds.org/>

Nursery - Kindergarten  
11 East 89th Street  
New York, NY 10128  
T 212.426.3300

Grades 1 - 5  
4 East 90th Street  
New York, NY 10128  
T 212.426.3350

Grades 6 - 12  
1 West 88th Street  
New York, NY 10024  
T 212.426.3360

He took a call, saying, “I just got here, I’ll be there in 20 minutes.” He apologized to me when he hung up. Meanwhile a man was calling the meeting to order, around 6:30. By this time the audience had swelled to somewhere between 150-200 people.

As a man in a bow-tie and suit droned on, Tariq said, “the decision’s already made, this is just to show [that they are going] through a process.” He points out to me two community board members in the front rows: a former president, an elderly male, and a current member in red, who used to be in the NAACP and left amid controversy over money. I didn’t catch their names, although he mentioned them. A young black lady in a suit walked by and warmly greeted him. He explained that she was from the borough president’s office [later I found literature from Scott Stringer’s office on the back table].

1397

I think regular-tie man, the other moderator, then talked about outreach, thanking the women sitting in the back for going to various locations to hand out flyers. [Where do they go? Would be useful knowledge.] He also recognizes Councilman Robert Jackson, saying he asked him to sit in the front and he refused. Jackson waves from the back, and I remark, I've met him! [in the community garden at 145<sup>th</sup> st] Tariq says, I know him.

Regular-tie man then introduces a flurry of CB10 members from various committees, some of whom are present and others who are not. He says to remember their names and contact them. Borrowing from the CB10 website:  
<http://www.cb10.org/browse.php?st=committees>

Intergenerational Aging – [didn't catch]

Education – Terry [who could be T. Gray or T. Anthony from website if current]

Arts and Culture

Health and Human Services – [didn't catch]

Housing and Land Use - [didn't catch]

Parks and Recreation – Deborah [could be D.Gilliard]

Moderators from CB10 – Katwy (?) and Beatrice (?) [probably Katwy Heru and Beatrice Sibblies]

Regular-tie mentions that there are representatives from City Planning Commission here, and that this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the 3 meetings that CB10 is holding – one last week, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting on Nov 29, for Community boards 9, 10, and 11, at 6pm here. Tariq leans over and says sotto voce, "I'll be away." I say, me too. He continues, "I'll be in Africa." I ask where, and he says Mali.

[Tariq later asks for notes so the following are for him, with portions to be excised in brackets and italics]

Meeting begins about 6:40, 150-200 people present [maybe up to 250 by 7pm]

Introducing CB10 members

Next meeting Nov 29 6pm same location

The moderator says, "I encourage you to come" to offer "official public testimony" [is today not official public testimony?]

Representatives from City Planning and EDC: Edwin Marshall

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/about/pr020706.shtml>

[http://www.nyc.gov/portal/site/nycgov/menuitem.c0935b9a57bb4ef3daf2f1c701c789a0/index.jsp?pageID=mayor\\_press\\_release&catID=1194&doc\\_name=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nyc.gov%2Fhtml%2Fom%2Fhtml%2F2006a%2Fpr040-06.html&cc=unused1978&rc=1194&ndi=1](http://www.nyc.gov/portal/site/nycgov/menuitem.c0935b9a57bb4ef3daf2f1c701c789a0/index.jsp?pageID=mayor_press_release&catID=1194&doc_name=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nyc.gov%2Fhtml%2Fom%2Fhtml%2F2006a%2Fpr040-06.html&cc=unused1978&rc=1194&ndi=1)

**Edwin Marshall** a native New Yorker, is the team leader for the Manhattan Office in the Department of City Planning. He has been an employee of the City for 26 years, 20 of which have been with City Planning. He has been in his current post since 1993 and is responsible for planning for all of upper Manhattan. In this capacity he has helped facilitate with HPD close to 15,000 affordable housing units through the development and implementation of the Bradhurst Urban Renewal Plan and other projects involving City-owned land. He also oversaw the Department-initiated East Harlem and Frederick Douglass Boulevard neighborhood rezonings - the first comprehensive neighborhood rezonings in Upper Manhattan in over 40 years. Throughout his career, one of his greatest strengths has been his commitment to consensus building and public outreach, critical ingredients for successful planning.

Edwin Marshall introduces himself as from the Department of City Planning. He lists a number of acronyms I don't know: EDC, SPS, HDC. He says that they have until Dec 10 to hold public forums for ULURP.

*Marshall wears a dark gray suit and stripey tie in orange, green, and black, evoking kente cloth. He has a receding hairline with salt and pepper hair. He has light skin, milk chocolate in color, and wears wire-rimmed glasses. He speaks with no discernable AAVE inflection, i.e., "talks white." The Latino hotel union guy is holding up his cell phone, maybe taking a picture.*

Power point presentation on rezoning proposal

Bordered on west by Broadway  
on east by Second Ave  
on south by 124<sup>th</sup> St  
on north by 126<sup>th</sup> St

Process began in Dec 2003

"This is a balanced proposal not only to **incentivize**" business but also to preserve brownstones—"balance between growth and preservation."

*There is a man signing for a woman sitting in the front seat. He is signing right in her face. The man is in his thirties or forties, white. There are at least four videocameras and lots of people taking photographs.*

Marshall mentions affordable housing as a problem in 9, 10, and 11

The area's existing zoning has remained the same since 1961

[proposal] "to better control building height"

"We'll start with the area where development will be incentivized," between Frederick Douglass and Park Ave.

Building height limited to 160 ft, about 14-16 stories

C3-6 (?) nothing could be taller than the Theresa

Value of "street wall continuity," to have the front of buildings in line with one another

If a developer provides affordable housing they get additional – floor space?

Currently no height limits

C4-7 high density district

“Street wall” can be set back (this is a bad thing)

Break the street wall continuity (diagram on power point)

C4-4D medium density

R7A-C4-4A west of Morningside Ave

“Zoning does not incentivize residential displacement”

Shows picture of Marcus Garvey Park

“This is the existing condition,” “very low-scale brownstones with stoops”

R6A provides a better match between existing building condition and zoning regulations

Apollo Theater and Studio Museum on 125<sup>th</sup>

Also National Black Theatre, Harlem USA, Hip Hop Cultural Center

Marshall talks about “transparency,” which refers to the pull-down gates as blocking light to the street (what about the murals?)

Reduce bank’s frontage, to give more space for retail (put banks on second floor)

Shows photo of Bank of America

From the slide: “Establish sign regulations to allow for marquee signs that relate to the special character of the street” with photos of the Apollo and HCZ

“They get a floor area bonus” for creating more performance space

*[Tariq says that’s b/c they know nobody is going to build that if they can get commercial market rate. Tariq has to leave soon after. He introduces himself and holds out his hand, and asks me if I can email him my notes. I am writing his name and hand him my notebook before I add the Q. He writes his email address and reads it to me as he hands me back my notebook: TARIQ116th@aol. I see that he has added a Q to the Tari-.]*

Marshall talks about timeline

Comes back to the city council around Martin Luther King’s birthday for final approval

ULURP takes 7 months, should finish around April 2008

Website: [www.nyc.gov/125thStreet](http://www.nyc.gov/125thStreet)

The moderator [bow-tie] asks people who want to pass out flyers to please put them on the back table so people can get them when they leave. He then asks Beatrice to “provide a context.” “Without further ado, I’m going turn over the mike to our economic development director.”

*[At some point a woman comes to sit in the seat Tariq left. She is older, maybe in her fifties or sixties, with short light brown hair fried by heat under a tan hat.]*

360

Ms. Beatrice says graciously, "I've heard that presentation so many times and you give it each time like it's fresh."

*[She is wearing a light grey suit with a brown shirt and a white choker. She has press-and-curl black hair, dark chocolate skin, with no AAVE inflection. The sign-language interpreters have changed. Now it's a woman with milk chocolate skin and black hair pulled into a ponytail or bun. She is also in her 30s, who may be Latina.]*

She suggests that she has seen the audience with their eyes glazed over, and asks, "how many of you have heard a presentation like that?" A smattering of hands go up. She asks how many have not, and at least twice as many go up. *She mentions something about Seeker (?), and says maybe somebody can explain what Seeker is. She holds up a thick stack of papers (environmental impact?) and says, "This is just the socioeconomic chapter."* She says, "This is the most significant change in our lifetimes." She says, "I've lived here 7 years now," and "when those changes that have been building up avenue by avenue, block by block, when those changes hit 125<sup>th</sup> street, it will be—" The audience chimes in, "TOO LATE."

She mentions that she was worried that they (the board?) didn't have a camera, but was relieved to see 4-5 cameras here, people making documentaries.

She asks rhetorically if the audience knows about 8<sup>th</sup> avenue. She says that if they are going to build buildings up to 150 ft, 12 stories, that means buildings are gonna get ripped down, and new buildings put up. She tells us she's a real estate developer, and they are going to add over 2000 new units and 1.1 – 1.8 million square feet, doubling commercial use and increasing residential units eightfold. She refers to Marshall's claim to balance, saying that 125<sup>th</sup> will become mainly residential.

"We need to preserve 125<sup>th</sup> as our core commercial corridor." She mentions 116<sup>th</sup>, 125<sup>th</sup>, and 135<sup>th</sup> streets zoned as commercial. "When you lose 125<sup>th</sup> as a commercial corridor we lose the commercial heart of our community." With the new luxury condos, she asks, "What is to distinguish the Upper East Side" from UWS, Harlem? She says, "We lose our small business space." "When we lose our commercial heart to luxury apartments, what do we become?" A man from the audience states emphatically, "White." There is laughter. Mr. Jabari Osaze (?), also from land use, shows up late. He is shaking hands with people behind the panel table as Ms. Beatrice speaks. Ms. Beatrice gets warm applause and cheers from the audience.

The moderator wants to ask speakers from the audience to come up, but warns that only people who signed the list can come up. He tells the audience, "Let's observe some degree of decorum." He also tells the audience that they will be held to a 3 minute timer. There is no timer, so a woman near the microphone becomes the timer.

Jabari inserts his two cents: "Some folks might say, it's not being fully used. However, let's be clear, 125<sup>th</sup> St is not being optimally used in its current zoning."

The moderator says he forgot to introduce the other panelists. Before he does that, he reads the names of the first five speakers.

- Abdul ? Muhammed



361

- Pedro Llano
- Peter Anderson
- Michael Henry Adams
- Has trouble reading last name, says, J. Hoover?

I miss most of the panelists: Gabriella Something from Housing Preservation, Somebody Ortiz, and William Kelly, from the City Economic Development Corporation, who mentions that people from the city department of Small Businesses Services are here to listen.

Mr. Mohammed is from the Coalition to Save Harlem, which he says is a “newly formed coalition dedicated to preserving Harlem for those who have lived here for generations.” He thanks the speaker (I assume Marshall) and refers to their “flowery terms,” but “my reading... is that it would allow for luxury hi-rise condominiums, which I don’t think will serve the people in the community.” He says this “represents a major change to the character of 125<sup>th</sup> street.” He declares, “In this plan you have winners and losers, the winners appear to be wealthy landowners—” Someone in the audience responds with “That’s right.” He continues, “property owners, and nothing for the benefit of those who live here, tenants—” Audience responds with applause. He continues, “landlords,” and talks about people getting kicked out.

566

*[Mr. Mohammed is thin, tall, and balding, with a heavy beard. He is wearing a blue shirt, shiny gray tie, and black slacks and belt. He also wears wire rim glasses. He looks to be in his forties. The next speaker, Pedro Llanos, is the man wearing the black t-shirt with Harlem is not for sale printed on the front.]*

Pedro Llanos goes next. There is some trouble with the microphone. He introduces himself as a “Harlem resident for 10 years” and a member of the hotel union. He asks about the status of hotels and are they going to be union. “So I’m curious, what’s the status of the hotel developments?” Marshall responds. A man from the back shouts, “Talk louder!” Llanos continues by listing Malcolm X, MLK, Marcus Garvey, Adam Clayton Powell, and one other person (who has a public space named after him in Harlem), and says, “Out of those 5 gentlemen, only one could live here today. And that’s Adam Clayton Powell. And he’d say, Hell no, I won’t go!” the audience cheers.

The next speaker, Peter Anderson asks, who is this development for? One of the panelists asks, “Who wants to take a stab at that?” A person in the audience declares, “Nobody.” Marshall talks, and several people in the audience ask, “Who’s ‘we’?” He answers, “The we that’s working on this project.”

The moderator asks people to stay within 3 minutes. The timer woman from the audience adds, and, if you want a response, keep it within those 3 minutes. The audience loudly expresses its disapproval. Ms. Beatrice says people understand, let’s move on. She says in an angry tone that the report says 77 small businesses will be displaced, and that this is acceptable because they are not important to the city, not important to the region, and they in no way impact the character of the neighborhood. The audience applauds.

362

Michael Henry Adams gets up next. “Ladies and Gentlemen, I’m here to tell you, that the city has become *genius* at seeming that they solicit [our perspectives] while ignoring us completely.” He gets a tremendous response from the audience. He mentions two sites that he wanted to get landmarked, that are now a “closed out fire station” and something else.