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LINDA – Fieldnotes – Monday, January 28, 2008

Subject: Nellie Hestor Bailey's radio show

Location:

Time: 6:17-7:03 pm

I remember belatedly that Nellie Hestor Bailey's show is on Monday nights. While I am getting the recorder, around 6:15, I hear her giving some statistics on foreclosure and subprime mortgages. When I begin recording she is announcing her guest, Sikhulu Shange of the Record Shack, and then goes to station break, which includes a few commercials for local businesses and also another show.

172P

[I typed notes as I listened, then listened to the recording to fill in some blanks and correct mistakes. You can definitely hear my typing in the recording, but the voices are still audible.]

At 6:24 Bailey comes back on air with Sikhulu Shange and a report on the rally.  
SS: Thank you my sister.

NHB: Tell us about what happened on Sunday.

SS: Hi family, I just want to update you on as to what happened.

Rally in front of United House of Prayer

Because the United House of Prayer is my landlord and they've been trying to evict me and I'm running into a situation now where it's coming to the wire

Meaning that, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of march, that will be the final day for me here but we intend to appeal it

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The reason for the rally was we want to inform the community, to inform the parishioners  
The methods this church is using against the community-based businesses  
They are not talking to us they are stone-walling us  
We are pushing for a lease

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There is big changes in the community  
Gentrification is all over the place in Harlem  
And all over the black belt here in the United States  
But we still feel we have a chance to fight

NHB: ok and tell us about the next meeting of the coalition group, when will it meet next and where?

S: the Coalition to Save Harlem

that was the core movement that staged this protest

we intend to continue the teachings in the townhouse meetings

Continue teaching the community about our viability about being here in the community

566

1403

The next meeting is going to be the Harriet Tubman school at 127<sup>th</sup> street between Frederick Douglass and Adam Clayton Powell Blvd  
Evening, 6:00, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February  
So, it's enough time for everyone to prepare themselves and set aside that time  
So we can really get together as a community because we really don't have anyone to represent ourselves

Our politicians have failed us, *dismally*  
To the extent that only the Coalition to Save Harlem  
The Tenant Association which is headed by Nellie Bailey is saying something for the survival of our community

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We need this community  
We have worked it to this level where it is beautiful  
It is an attraction to the world  
It brings people to this city  
Which we're being evicted out of  
We should do everything possible to stay here even if it means we block 125<sup>th</sup> street and say no more business as usual until we are recognized that we are here and we are here to stay

NHB: ok thank you so much. Unity rally on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February  
But Sikhulu, is there not a meeting of the coalition itself other than the unity rally itself that is coming up?

SS: Tomorrow 127 W. 127<sup>th</sup> Street, and that will take place at 6:30  
Those who can come around, please come around  
Because we need everybody to get involved  
It takes people to move things forward, and our people are vital in keeping things going  
So before the roof caves in on you, come and participate be part of the Harlem in movement

We mean well, and we mean a life  
We don't want anybody to be left out  
We want the workers, we want the people, who are elderly  
We want everybody who is concerned  
We want young people also  
Because this is what we are fighting for  
We want young people to start fighting now

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NHB: Well Sikhulu thank you so much. The regular meeting of the Coalition to save Harlem will take place at the Oberie Dempsey Community Center  
127 W 127<sup>th</sup> street  
The time is 6 pm, Sikhulu?

SS: 6:30

1424

Well you can call 212-866-1600  
I'm the chairperson of the Coalition to Save Harlem

NHB: That was a report from Sikhulu Shange, a beloved brother and business person, globalist, activist, right here in the village of Harlem where he has had his business for 35 years

Be sure to go to that meeting tomorrow night

Thanks so much to Sikhulu Shange  
We are going to move on to our guest here in the studio  
And we are going to talk about a press conference that was held on Thursday of last week  
Held at the United Methodist Church  
Press conference of VOTE People—voices of the everyday people, VOTE People  
Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts – Communications director of VOTE People  
Craig Schley – Executive director

[discussion on name]

[reading press release?]

Ok, so Harlem group fights 125<sup>th</sup> street rezoning  
Harlem advocacy group VOTE people announces its plan to defeat the rezoning of 125<sup>th</sup> street

Launching a concerted effort to oppose the River to River Plan

The city's *brazen* attempt to take over the most legendary street in Harlem

And that's Harlem's main street, 125<sup>th</sup> street

The drastic rezoning plan threatens Harlem's historic character and unique cultural landscape

Allowing reckless development of luxury hi-rise condominiums in a community facing a severe shortage of housing for the middle class and the working poor.

Ok folks, welcome to the program. Tell us about the press conference and what was the idea of the press conference

Sharifa: the main intention was to get this story out, unfortunately the mainstream media hasn't given much attention at all to the 125<sup>th</sup> street rezoning since the plan was first unveiled in late October. This issue needs to be discussed not just in Harlem all over New York City. And, all over the nation

This is a threat that is facing Black communities all over America

We want to take this story to the front page of major media outlets

AM New York, WNYC, WBAI, Channel 7, Amsterdam News, New York Observer, the Nation is doing the story

It's just the beginning, putting this story on everyone's agenda

If you walk down 125<sup>th</sup> street today unfortunately there's people who still don't know what's in the pipeline for our community

During the press conference VOTE people was also unveiled, Craig can talk a little bit about that process.

6/6

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Craig: We wanted to demonstrate to the public that there is a way that this can be stopped. On three levels: legally, politically, and action in the street.

The proposal we believe was ill-conceived

Politicians were present

Some community board members

We want to flush out who was actually there and why we did not hear about this

We have to reject it because we were not a part of its formation [the proposal]

The second part, Feb 9<sup>th</sup> we will be launching the first of three rallies

Describing and organizing the people how we're actually going to go about registering at least 10,000 voters between now and March

You can find out that information on the web

[www.votepeople.net](http://www.votepeople.net)

917-720-8341

NHB: the legal strategy, the political strategy is becoming involved in the political arena, registering 10,000 voters, action in the street, rallies .But let me just get the question out here. Let's examine these 3 components one by one so we can target our actions

Let's look at the legal component of our program. Norm Siegal, the civil rights attorney was there, although he did not detail any specific plans, but he spoke about it in the general sense.

CS: Norman Siegal will most definitely challenge the attempt to invoke eminent domain  
The community was not involved in [development of plan]

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NHB: We all know about the Supreme Court decision, Hilo vs. the city of New London in which the Supreme Court expanded the abuse of eminent domain. Now we have the confiscation of private property by private developers as opposed to the city or state.

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Communities of color are under siege, that is being taken over. One of these ways that these communities are being taken over is the use of eminent domain. So how does Mr. Siegal challenge eminent domain?

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SRP: city planning commissioners, some of them have gone on the record against eminent domain. Climate in this city right now where people are up in arms against it, ops

Eminent domain has not been threatened in the case of 125<sup>th</sup> street

Putting people on notice

The process is under scrutiny, and in any legal case it's not easy for us to talk about all the details as it's happening, but it's important that the community know []

Doesn't just mean just going with the ULURP.

The ULURP, which is the Uniform Land Use Review Process, is flawed

The city planning department claims to consult the people

And as we all know, the people have not been consulted for this case

So our objective is to stop this process

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NHB: It's not that I'm a doubting Thomas  
But we know about the almost heroic, legal opposition to the Rattner project in Brooklyn  
destroy Brooklyn  
taking Rattner and the Atlantic Yards project to court  
and having lost one court decision after another with respect to what many see as a  
flawed, and rigged process which allows for the approval of these very large-scale  
developments at every stage  
at the city planning department  
eventually before the city planning Commission

just to correct something you said earlier in Columbia Univ expansion  
Only one member who voted against and that was Terry Phillips appointed by  
And one abstention, and that was Cantor, who is known to be pro-mega development but  
felt some unease about this particular use of eminent domain

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So in a sense the decks are stacked against the community in the public review process  
That are terribly terribly flawed  
And tilted in favor of the developers  
So my question isn't one that should not, that this strategy should not move forward, but  
my strategy is about the likelihood of the success of the strategy given the corruptness of  
the system

CS: basically if you look at the players, this amounts to a conflict of interest  
Empowerment Zone to City Council individuals, our elected officials  
They all seem to be in line with one another  
And we cannot get a solid answer from any of them  
We called Congressman's Rangel office, he doesn't want to take a position  
Inez Dickens does not take a position  
Robert Jackson does not take a position

NHB: Exactly what are they saying?

CS: "I reserve the right" [not to say anything yet]

NHB: Really!

CS: conflict of interest

Individuals supposedly on the side of the community and yet on the side of developers,  
on the side of the city, all collaborating on a proposal that is allegedly for the benefit of  
the community. The proposal itself, the written text of it, almost 1000 pages,  
environmental impact, the actual proposal, about 15 pages, it actually says it was written  
and proposed in the presence of elected officials and community board members. We  
seek to find out who those individuals are.

NHB:

CS: in the ULURP, in the bottom of one of its paragraphs in it, it says that elected  
officials and community board members. We want to know who they are.

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NHB: Amanda Burton, socialite and chair of public planning commission will eventually vote on  
Draft environmental impact study  
December of 2003

□

So why is it difficult for you to ascertain [who?]

CS: constructing a veneer of the public, to  
Empowerment Zone is where it's all going  
They did not receive this, it was money outside of the community  
Who benefits from this? we're going to follow the money

CS: We're not going to wait around until they sign Harlem's death warrant on April 23.  
What I'd like to let the community know is that this fall there's gonna be an election  
We'd like to demonstrate that these people are going to vote with the intention of retribution against what has been done to them.

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NHB: movement on the ground as a result of the Obama candidacy  
As everyone knows there is an energy emanating from the Obama campaign

Rangel, Ways and Means  
In his 15<sup>th</sup> Congressional district  
Some have described as an anti-Rangel, anti-Harlem  
Around lack of accountability  
And that this backlash is being fueled by the Obama campaign and the energy around it

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[do you think this is relevant]

SRP: that alone gives weight to our moment  
This isn't just manufactured  
There is 37% people that don't have a place to live

My passion is because this is so real  
And this a moment—and the Obama campaign speaks to this

About to be evicted by the Abyssinian Development Corporation on January 31  
I think the word in the street  
They're not building that for us  
They see the writing on the wall  
We want to act now  
To show people that something *can* be done

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GS: We will succeed

NHB: oh wow! I forgot to tell you that you can call in! at 212-419-4865

~~488~~  
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GS: Nellie, may I say something? We want the community to see that this is a situation where we have everything to gain. Nothing to lose. We don't have any representation This is happening in Queens, this is happening in Brooklyn, down in Katrina

NHB:

Caller: my comment it, you know, we as a community need to be concerned about elected officials

When you make decent salaries and you don't want to invest in the community that says something in itself, right?

Rental prices. Lower than they are in Harlem. That says they're squeezing us out

NHB: thank you so much for your comments. So Craig, you were saying, we need to put this in context, we do want to remind everyone, that January 31, the NYC Planning Department

On Wednesday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, three-zero, the NYC Planning Department will hold a public hearing on the 125<sup>th</sup> street rezoning

City college at New York

Aaron Davis Hall

It will start at 9:30 am

And they will take testimony for as long as people come to the hearing.

The real test will be for the community.

It can be seen as stacked against the community

If you don't have a constant stream of people until the evening

You do't have to be a rocket scientist to testify at this hearing

You just have to speak from the heart

And say you are against this rezoning

It might help you in your testimony if you took down a couple of notes

Because 3 minutes goes by very quickly

We have about 8 minutes

Because the other producer is not here yet

And on the hour we are going to take a station ID

[]

We are going to take this until the producer of the next show comes in?

Craig, I want to get to the next component, action in the street

CS: yes I would urge the community to get specifics from our website,

We will inform you of the specific location of the February 9<sup>th</sup> rallies

We are going to organize the people there

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Show how to register entire areas of Harlem  
Our phone number is 917-720  
So it'll be the weekend of Feb 9<sup>th</sup>  
We want everyone to stand tall  
Have the guts and fortitude  
We're gonna win this one

NHB: be sure to come out tomorrow night to the meeting of Coalition to Save Harlem  
127 W. 127<sup>th</sup> street  
Don't forget the hearing of the New York City planning commission, rather, the New  
York City planning department