

**BEYOND BRICKS AND MORTAR**

**Rethinking Sites of Cultural History**

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on October 1, 2018*



HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL

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## **THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL**

The Historic Districts Council (HDC) is the citywide advocate for New York’s historic neighborhoods. We work to ensure the preservation of significant historic neighborhoods, buildings, and open spaces; to uphold the integrity of New York City’s Landmarks Law; and to further the preservation ethic. This mission is pursued through programs offering hands-on assistance to over 500 community-based Neighborhood Partners and through direct advocacy, policy initiatives, and educational programming.

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## **Beyond Bricks and Mortar - Rethinking Sites of Cultural History**

### **Section 1: INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL LANDMARKS**

Traditionally, preservation has focused mainly on architectural merit, but recently attention has been drawn to sites of cultural importance, which are often invisible to passers-by and left unprotected. Advocates across New York City are working to raise awareness of a diverse array of cultural sites, from the Bowery to Arthur Avenue, Tin Pan Alley to Yorkville, and Walt Whitman's house in Brooklyn to a recently rediscovered African burial ground in Queens.

In 2018, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission designated the Central Harlem - West 130th-132nd Streets Historic District, describing it as "not only representative of Central Harlem's residential architecture, but the rich social, cultural, and political life of its African-American population in the 20th century." In recent years, Greenwich Village's Caffe Cino and Julius' were listed on the National Register of Historic Places as significant and influential sites connected to the LGBT community; The New York Times profiled a historian giving tours of Muslim sites of significance in Harlem; and the City is commemorating some of our most storied and accomplished female citizens with the installation of statues in all five boroughs.

Furthering this momentum, the Historic Districts Council, the New York Preservation Archive Project and the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project were proud to host a day-long conference, uniting preservationists with historians, artists, planners, and place-makers for a discussion on how best to protect and celebrate cultural landmarks. Sessions included case studies, tools for documentation and protection, and action plans for preserving building and building public engagement.

The intent of the Symposium was to clarify what cultural significance is and how it can work, how to document and create compelling narratives around cultural sites, and how to identify the specific challenges of cultural sites from a preservationist perspective. The goals were to forge connections among different organizations throughout the city, enable mutual support for important causes, and examine different perspectives, methodologies, and case studies in order to create a basic toolkit of best practices for preserving sites of cultural significance.

This report is presented as notes from the conference panels, with speakers' backgrounds noted before each section.

## **Section 2: DETERMINING AND DEFINING CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

### **Section 2I: Introduction**

What makes a building architecturally, historically and culturally important? Can it be one without being the other? According to a building's historical status, its architectural merits often take precedence. However, architectural movements and styles have been a consequence and response to the prevailing social conditions and aspirations of the period. Given this reality, culture is really at the heart of any building that is deemed significant.

If culture is what lends heft to a building's importance, then can a building can be important even without grand historic architectural features? Which brings us to the question of how cultural significance can be determined. In this panel, three experts, with diverse experiences, constructed a cogent argument for the need to value and preserve sites of cultural importance, highlighted the challenges in doing so and lamented how true recognition sometimes slips through the gaps.

### **Section 2II: Criteria and Challenges**

Kerri Culhane is an independent architectural historian and planner. Ms. Culhane's professional practice focuses on the history and future of Manhattan's Lower East Side, including Two Bridges, Chinatown and the Bowery. Her research has brought to light Chinese American architect Poy Gum Lee's contributions to mid-century Chinatown; examined the impact of changing housing policies on immigrant communities; and highlighted the cultural significance of the Bowery, New York's oldest street and the cradle of American popular culture. Ms. Culhane has served on HDC's board since 2011.

#### **Section 2II(a): What Are the Criteria?**

Ms. Culhane, who is an expert on the history of Manhattan's Lower East Side, drew from her experiences of working in Chinatown, Little Italy and The Bowery<sup>1</sup> - three neighborhoods with a storied yet evolving history. She listed the four criteria for determining the significance of a resource, be it a district, a single building or a landscape that you are trying to place on the National Register of Historic Places. Listing on the National Register is the federal government's recognition of historic significance, which is used as basis for official governmental recognition in many municipalities, although not New York City<sup>2</sup>. The first criteria could be an association with an historic event or activity. "That one is really the catch-all for cultural significance," she said. The second could be an association with a great person's life and can also be a cultural reference. "The Walt Whitman house, for example, would be a very clear association with an important person. That building could be eligible for the National Register criteria," she said. The third is distinctive design or physical characteristics. This, Ms. Culhane said, is simply more about the architecture. "Criterion C is the architectural significance and that's where the aesthetic judgement, or in some ways, it could be a cultural judgement, if it is associated with a particular architect, and can have multiple criteria." The fourth criteria is a site that has the potential to illuminate history or pre-history. "That's typically an archaeology site," said Ms. Culhane.

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<sup>1</sup> To access the National Register forms for these neighborhoods, see <https://twobridges.org/programs-and-projects/neighborhood-preservation/>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed discussion of National Register Listing, see Jennifer Betsworth and Amanda Davis in Section 3.



The focus of this talk, Ms. Culhane said, would be on the first two criteria, to help people understand and research cultural significance more properly.

“So, the National Register is very straightforward. In addition to having these associations, it is actually important to have enough historic fabric of the building left so that it tells the story,” said Ms. Culhane. Taking the Walt Whitman house on Ryerson Street in Brooklyn as an example, she noted how there have been changes to the structure over time, but there are still some elements such as the scale and details that still exist. “That can help tell that story today,” she said. The bottom line is that the building should be recognizable.

“And then, in the case of association with a person, the criteria is typically, that, that person should be able to come back and recognize this place. Even if it has changed a little bit, it should not be completely unfamiliar. It should not have changed so much that it is unrecognizable,” said the architectural historian.

### **Section 2II(b): Challenges**

Determining cultural significance, however, is easier said than done. Though the New York City Landmarks Law calls for recognition of sites of cultural importance, she observed that a more aesthetic approach to landmark designation is typically seen, where buildings are the paragons of their style or of their era, or a district that is very visually cohesive.

That poses a challenge to those seeking landmark status based on cultural reasons for their buildings or districts, said Ms. Culhane, because some of the neighborhoods have changed over time. “The same scale and form are still there, but here have many alterations over the years,” she said. While the National Register still requires a degree of architectural integrity, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) have traditionally been much more judgmental about this. “They take a much more aesthetic approach,” she said.

What, then, is the fallout of this? Talking about Chinatown and Little Italy, where Ms. Culhane’s work is based, she said, they were listed in the Register in 2009 as it was culturally significant under the first criteria. “It is significant for its ethnic heritage and Chinese immigrant ethnic history as well as social history. LPC has not designated a single site of Chinese-American history related to this area at all, in spite of the fact that many people have tried, including myself, to do individual sites within this or to broach the idea of a district. LPC has not been interested in pursuing that,” she said.

### **Section 2II(c): History Is Not Always in the Past**

Where official recognition is elusive, ingenious thinking can come to the rescue. Taking a creative approach, Ms. Culhane has started to work with local community groups to raise awareness about issues of cultural heritage, cultural history and social history in order to highlight the culture of the neighborhood and the people who live and work there.

The idea is that culture is not arrested in time. “The period of history that we are looking at in order to get listed on the National Register has to be 50 years or older. This is because the regulations say that perspective is necessary to see whether or not it’s significant. For the Bowery, Chinatown and Little Italy districts, the period of significance came much closer to the present because there still are many histories going on in those areas. It is a continuing culture. I think that’s very important to continue to recognize them,” she said.

She contended that though Chinatown has changed considerably since the early 1900's, it is still eligible to be designated a National Register District because the essence, the cultural associations with this district, are so significant and natural. "The history and the heritage is still worthy of recognition," she said. Though there are Verizon marquees and signage everywhere, she noted how the bones and the scale of the buildings are still there. "History still took place there. There's still many places that help tell that history," she said.

The same is true of The Bowery, which has changed visually over the years. "The historic period of the Bowery can go up to 1975," she said. She highlighted, for instance, The Bowery's contribution to the cultural movement of punk in New York City and its larger impact on American culture.

### **Section 2II(d): Real Estate Versus Heritage Conservation**

In a city like New York, where real estate prices are soaring, it's a herculean task to make a case for preserving the historic characters of neighborhoods. The Bowery, Ms. Culhane said, is still pretty well-preserved in scale. "There are all these small two and two-and-a-half story buildings that have a lot of unused Floor Area Ratio [i.e. allowable buildable space]. That makes them extremely attractive to developers to amass multiple sites and put up giant out-of-scale buildings," she said. Talking about a block between Grand and Broome Streets, she said that the community tried multiple times, with the help of the HDC, to convince the LPC to designate it as a historic district. "Just to say that this is a really diverse street — architecturally diverse, culturally diverse, the birthplace of American punk culture and we have many reasons," she said. She added that there were many different boxes they could check for criterion A, but LPC still said it is not cohesive enough in their approach.

### **Section 2II(e): 'Deep, Deep Research'**

That is when the community took it into their own hands, and a group called Bowery Alliance of Neighbors<sup>3</sup> said they were going to celebrate the culture of the neighborhood. This, said Ms. Culhane, was done through deep research into archives. "The neighbors assembled stories about these different buildings and their histories and created a series of posters that are available," she said. You could see these in businesses around the neighborhood. This brought awareness not just among people residing there, but also people who were walking by. "They would say, 'I had no idea that the birthplace of American tattoo is actually in The Bowery.' Or Beat poetry, and all these other things," she said. "There's deep research that is needed to get to that story of culture," she added.

Their goal today, she said, is to recognize the idea that research is needed to bring the story to light.

### **Section 2III: Differing Standards in Recognition and Protection**

Sarah Bean Apmann has worked as an architectural historian in preservation for the past twenty years. She grew up in Staten Island, received her BA in History from Lehigh University and her MS in Historic Preservation from Columbia University. She worked as an architectural historian consultant since graduating with projects all over the Tri-State area. Sarah was one of the founders and a principal with the Long Island historic preservation firm, TKS Historic Resources, Inc.

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<sup>3</sup> For more information about the Bowery Alliance of Neighbors, see <https://www.boweryalliance.org>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

Additionally, she served as Chair of the Town of Huntington’s Historic Preservation Commission. Since 2015, she has been the Director of Research and Preservation at the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation (GVSHP) advocating for the architecture and cultural heritage of the East Village, Greenwich Village, South Village, NoHo and Gansevoort Market.

### **Section 2III(a): NYC Is Not Like New York State**

Architectural Historian Sarah Bean Apmann spoke about her time working with the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation<sup>4</sup> and how her recent experiences advocating for the preservation of cultural sites to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) was similar to Ms. Culhane’s. She faced the same challenges and while there have been success stories, much has been lost in terms of heritage.

For 15 years, Ms. Apmann had worked outside New York City, primarily doing State and National Register nominations, historic tax credits and cultural resource surveys. “Although I was schooled in preservation in New York City, I didn’t actually work here until 2015, when I was hired by the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation. One of the big differences was that I was used to communities relying on the State/National criteria for designation. While I read New York City designation reports back when I was a student, it hadn’t occurred to me that they were working with different criteria until I started working here. I think that New York City and the Landmarks Preservation Commission are struggling with working with cultural landmarks,” she said. To illustrate her point, she spoke about the specific instances of sites related to the Abstract Expressionist movement, Julius’ on West 10th Street and the St. Denis Hotel.

### **Section 2III(b): A Brush With Broadway**

A pair of cast-iron and stone structures at 827-831 Broadway designed by architect Griffith Thomas and built in 1866 was brought to GVSHP’s attention because a building permit had been applied for.

“When we first submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission, we identified the architectural merit and significance of this building. No permits have been taken out on the other building at this point, so we didn’t focus on it. LPC turned us down,” she said. The Commission did not find architectural significance in the building, she said. “So, then a demolition permit was taken out for these two buildings and actually a third building that is connected to it on the East 12th Street,” she said.

They broadened their research and found out that Willem de Kooning had a studio in 831 Broadway in the 1960’s. “We resubmitted along with all these other artistic figures from the Abstract Expressionist Movement that we found in here, including William Rubin, who was the curator at MoMA,” she said, adding that, by this time, the developer’s plans were underway. Landmarks then agreed to calendar it for its significance as a cultural landmark.

Though a success, there was still a glitch. The building was significant only as a cultural site and not important architecturally. “Actually when they designated it, the summary in the designation report<sup>5</sup> stated its significance as a cultural resource because of its association with Willem de Kooning and the other artists from the mid-century movement,” she said.

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<sup>4</sup> For more information about the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, see <https://www.gvshp.org>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

<sup>5</sup> For the LPC designation report, see <http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/lp/2594.pdf>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

The next question was if it was being designated due to cultural importance, how does the LPC regulate it? “What was interesting was, when the developer proposed a gigantic, four-story ice cube on top of this structure, which actually would have been beautiful in another setting stand-alone by itself, the landmarks commissioners started talking about the fact that this isn’t just significant for its culture; it’s also significant for its architecture. They evaluated the appropriateness of that proposed ice-cube on top of it, and there was a pull-back from it. We were thrilled that there was a recognition of both cultural and architectural merit,” she said.

### **Section 2III(c): Only One Per Customer**

While researching Willem de Kooning, GVSHP identified a building on East 10th Street which was built in the 1840’s. “This was where Willem de Kooning lived in the 1950’s, where he did some of his most important work, including the Woman I series, the urban landscape series, ‘Excavation,’” she said, adding that this was also the center of the 10th Street artist enclave, where there were artist-run galleries.

“This was in sharp contrast to the conservative galleries uptown. So this was very much the heart of the abstract expressionist movement,” she noted. GVSHP submitted that East 10th Street should also be designated as an individual landmark for its association with de Kooning and with the Abstract Expressionist Movement. However, the LPC did not agree. She noted how some would argue that this site was more culturally significant than 827-831 Broadway. “They declined us saying, we researched all the properties associated with de Kooning, and 827-831 Broadway was the most important and that’s what’s going to be designated.”

### **Section 2III(d): Not Just a Federal Rowhouse - Julius’**

Ms. Apmann then spoke about Julius’ at 159 West 10th Street, a bar which was originally a Federal rowhouse. Its story is similar to the building on 827-831 Broadway. The site was recognized for its importance as a federal rowhouse, and not for housing Julius’, which is an important site for the LGBT movement.

“It’s part of the Greenwich Village Historic District. It is not recognized in the Greenwich Village Historic District designation report for its association with the LGBT movement. And, for those who don’t know, Julius’ Sip-In was here, which was the first LGBT Civil Rights planned demonstration of the liquor laws which did not allow bars and restaurants to serve to gay people,” she noted. GVSHP wrote saying, this should be recognized for its LGBT history, and not just part of the designation of the Greenwich Village Historic District where it would be protected as a 1820’s federal rowhouse rather than as Julius’, which is its cultural significance. “And, today we’ve been turned down, but that is something that we will continue to pursue because it is very important to the LGBT Civil Rights Movement,” she said<sup>6</sup>.

### **Section 2III(e): Where the Public First Heard the Telephone**

The final example was the St. Denis Hotel at 799 Broadway at East 11th Street. Showing an original photo, Ms. Apmann said it was built in 1853. “The architect was James Renwick Jr. who also did the Grace Church, right across the street, and St. Patrick’s Cathedral. While it was a hotel

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<sup>6</sup> See also Amanda Davis’ comments in Section 3 for more information about Julius’.

during the 19th century, it had a lot of significance with historic events, historic people with it,” she said.

President Abraham Lincoln stayed there, and it was where Alexander Graham Bell demonstrated the telephone in New York City for the first time. “In 1920, it closed as a hotel. Eventually, all its beautiful ornament was shorn off, but it continued to have relevance, cultural significance during the 20th century. There were many left-wing and labor groups that moved in there and were publishing.”

It also had a prominent connection with the art world. “Marcel Duchamp did his last art installation there. He did it in secret. It was discovered afterwards,” Ms. Apmann added. This historic building, however, has had an untimely demise. “Unfortunately, why I am showing this to you is because, as we speak, it’s being demolished. We are losing what is really both a 19th and 20th century cultural landmark, even if it has been shorn of all its original architectural detail.”

## **Section 2IV: Preserving Intangible Culture**

Hai-Yin Kong is a community-based designer who lives and works in Manhattan’s Chinatown. As Co-founder and director of THINK!CHINATOWN<sup>7</sup>, she builds projects to connect city resources to the Chinatown community. Fluent in Mandarin, she designs and runs community workshops to amplify the diverse voices of Chinatown. Her work with TIC ranges from a tech innovation project to assist local business owners with their online and social media presence, to a community art space where Asian American artists have a platform to present their work related to Asian American identity, diasporic communities, and inter-generational learning.

She was project lead of the Dashilar Project<sup>8</sup>, a think-and-do-tank consulting a municipal agency of Beijing on urban revitalization strategies on Dashilar, a neighborhood in the city’s historic core. As urban curator of Dashilar’s Beijing Design Week exhibitions and festivities, Yin directed projects with long-term strategic impact in mind. She created Dashi(lab)-oratory, a space which hosted community workshops to facilitate reciprocal learning between new businesses and neighborhood residents.

As a designer and researcher with over 10 years of experience, Ms. Kong has worked at URBANUS Architecture, Approach Architecture, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD), Semester at Sea and as a Chinese culinary instructor at the Black Sesame Kitchen in Beijing. Her work has been presented at the 2016 Venice Biennale, (C)reative (C)ities 2013 in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, Beijing Design Week 2012 & 2013, ARCASIA Asian Congress of Architects 2012, and the Shenzhen Biennale of Architecture 2007 & 2009. She has a BA in Urban Studies from Columbia University and a Masters of Architecture, Urban Design from Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London.

### **Section 2IV(a): Cultural Preservation and the Architecture of Environments**

Ms. Kong discussed the rich history of Chinatown and demonstrated how a volunteer-led movement was trying to document and make accessible the cultural and social practices that make Chinatown what it is. Looking at aspects other than its built heritage, the project has an insider’s perspective that steers clear of clichés and listicles and gives both context and meaning to the streetscapes and the people who bring it alive.

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<sup>7</sup> For more information about THINK!CHINATOWN, see <https://www.thinkchinatown.org>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

<sup>8</sup> For more information, see <http://www.dashilar.org.cn/en/>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

Ms. Kong began by invoking the sights and smells of Chinatown. Showing a photo of egg waffles, often sold on little roadside stands, she said you knew you were in Chinatown when you saw and smelled something of this nature.

Her scenes from Chinatown included seniors playing music in the park. She spoke about how they do an amazing job of occupying the spaces, making those spaces alive, making those spaces theirs. “We talk about cultural preservation and architecture of those environments and it’s an interesting discussion about what you choose to preserve,” she noted.

Talking about the high-end restaurant Chinese Tuxedo, she said one could still see the remnants of its past as a Chinese opera theatre. Though it doesn’t cater very much to the community, it possessed architectural significance “because it holds these cultural practices.” She posed the question of whether preservationist resources were better used preserving the building, versus supporting a place that holds Chinese opera performances now.

She said though some buildings in the Lower East Side and Chinatown area carry amazing riches in terms of historical and architectural significance linked to a specific time period, there are also those buildings, which are characteristic to Chinatown, whose appearance and uses had altered over time as they were adapted to suit changing needs over the years.

“How do we highlight, how do we preserve, how do we celebrate these cultural practices if they are not, maybe, housed in an iconic landmark building,” Ms. Kong asked.

### **Section 2IV(b): Hidden in Plain Sight**

She said that one of the projects they worked on is called Everyday Chinatown. Citing the example of a money burner, she said it was common to see them in residential areas in Chinatown: “You’ll see on holidays, on significant days, people want to make offerings to their ancestors. They’ll have virtual mock money that they will burn in these containers, or other things that they want to send and burn to their ancestors. You will see them around all the time, but you might not really understand what they are or understand the cultural practices that are associated with them.”

The Everyday Chinatown team, she said, elevated these everyday objects into a museum setting. “We put it in a glass case, we brought it to a museum for a talk. We occupied a storefront, different storefronts around Chinatown to place the various objects, these everyday Chinatown objects. We also paired them with recordings in Mandarin, English and Cantonese,” she said.

### **Section 2IV(c): Not Just American, Chinese-American**

She pointed to objects and practices that were not just Chinese, but uniquely Chinese-American, like the wok ring. “What do you do with the wok stand? That’s really a very specific instrument to Chinese-Americans because in China you have stoves that accommodate woks, but in America we have flat stoves. If you put a wok on it, it just wobbles all over the place. That time period of adaptation of Chinese culture to American kitchen spaces was first an ad hoc making of these wok rings and then the manufacturing of these wok rings,” she explained.

These everyday objects that are found in most homes are in many ways intrinsic to the community’s culture. Though this particular money burner was not special, she said, they used it as an example to tell the story of all the money burners that you might see. The idea behind elevating everyday

objects into museum pieces is to familiarize people with these objects so that they know they are walking past a culturally significant object when they visit Chinatown. That is one way in which to highlight what we find culturally significant.

In their upcoming project, a digital narrative map-based platform called [howtochinatown.nyc](http://howtochinatown.nyc), the idea is to give a little bit of extra cultural context to places and practices to understand its full cultural value. “The idea is to connect volunteers, who partner with businesses and cultural groups, one-on-one, to write those stories and hand-hold them to upgrade their social media, their Yelp and Google Business presence, help them with cultural grants and things like that,” she elaborated.

### **Section 2IV(d): Blurring the Divide**

Ms. Kong said it is a great resource for those who want to learn more about Chinatown but do not live in Chinatown. What are the various things you can do when you are taking a casual stroll? Some suggestions might be: grab a cup of coffee at a Chinese bakery; get a pineapple bun, which actually gets its name from its looks and does not have any pineapple in it; or order some steamed dim sums.

“You can just hang out with your friends and sit and chat with aunties and use that public space in a way that you do in the neighborhood,” she said, adding that it was about deepening your understanding of the place and your connection with it. “How do you find your way and connect with us,” she said. The intent is to reach beyond suggesting the “10 best dumpling shops in Chinatown” and similar lists found on the internet.

### **Section 2IV(e): The Beijing Example**

Recalling her experience of working in Beijing, China on the Dashilar Project, just south-west of Tiananmen Square, Ms. Kong spoke about how they were confronted with the challenge of activating the historic core while grappling with poor internal infrastructure such as toilets and water. The question was, how can you elevate an area that has a lot of infrastructural needs, but also hosts the nation’s cultural assets?

“The term we used a lot for this project was ‘intangible culture’. Because these are practices, places that carve stamps,” she said. Noting that the lineage of many of these practices are fragile, she spoke about the Asian Design Week which tied new ways of thinking to the old traditional ways.

Soft infrastructure, programming, and thinking about ways of working within a city, is just as important as working on the buildings, the hard infrastructure, she said. This could possibly be replicated in New York City.

### **Section 2IV(f): Building Bridges**

“I think one important thing to understand, as we do this, as we are selecting, the question right now is, what should be preserved, and who gets to decide what is culturally significant,” Ms. Kong pondered.

“Through these decisions, you are basically building a bridge, a bridge from the past to now, maybe inter-culturally, from Chinatown to rest of New York City”, she noted. “As a bridge you need to have two points of understanding. One of the culture, understanding its cultural significance in your

own context, but two how to present it to an audience that will support it. It needs to resonate also beyond your own community, and needs some connect in a larger way, so the whole city can support it.”

## **Section 2V: Discussion**

Simeon Bankoff has been the Executive Director of the Historic Districts Council, the citywide advocate for New York’s historic neighborhoods, since 2000. Mr. Bankoff has more than 25 years of experience with preservation non-profits in New York, having worked in programming, development and property acquisition with the Historic House Trust, the Historic Landmarks Preservation Center and the New York Landmarks Preservation Foundation. He has been a guest lecturer at several universities and written on preservation for The New York Times. Mr. Bankoff holds a B.A. in Liberal Arts from Sarah Lawrence College and a M.S. in Historic Preservation from Pratt Institute.

### **Section 2V(a): ‘What Is Necessary to Be Preserved?’**

Mr. Bankoff, the moderator, asked what were the strategies of identifying what you think is necessary to be preserved. Throwing the question open to the panelists, he asked, “How do you look at something like the art history of East Village, Chinatown, The Bowery or Little Italy and say, this is what we should be focusing on. How do you approach that?”

Ms. Culhane said that what community members she speaks with talk about is how the Landmarks Preservation Commission constantly turning their requests down. “But the culture is still there, it’s still worthy of preservation and recognition and there are multiple modalities of how you document that. And while you document that, how do you determine what’s important. I think that is a great research question and it does require some empirical thinking about how these murals or how these practices resonate within the culture and also outside of it,” she said, agreeing with Ms. Kong’s bridge analogy. “I think is apt. It can certainly be something that is culturally relevant to one culture, that is valid, but to tell that story to a larger audience, then affirms it in a larger way, and gains a larger audience for it, and helps perpetuate it,” she said, adding that it helps ensure its longevity.

Ms. Kong said something as simple as a conversation could be a starting point. “I was in [a workshop] last week and we were trying to [discuss] what businesses we should highlight on our platform,” she recalled. That’s when someone suggested a business with no name and run by an elderly Chinese woman. Everyone has this collective memory of this woman who has a very distinctive voice and sells Chinese tamales that come in bamboo leaves and rice,” she said, adding, “It’s that excitement that is generated when people from a community get together and talk about it. That’s how we have been very unscientifically, selecting what to highlight. And we also do have the freedoms because of the way we set things up to be flexible in our definitions, because we are not going through the process of putting a plaque on anything.”

Dwelling on the aspect of longevity, Ms. Culhane felt that historic recognition is important to a degree, and that listing on the National Register is attractive because it effects some level of permanence. She said the National Register is a helpful place to start for organizations that are seeking to recognize cultural significance. “It also has levels of significance, there’s local significance, something that has a very hyper-local meaning and then to the state-levels, something that’s a little more broad, than national where everybody has been touched by something.”



## **Section 2V(b): On the Question of Permanence**

Mr. Bankoff asked the panelists about how one can create a level of permanence.

Ms. Apmann said she would turn to technology, especially mapping tools. She said that when people were not getting the designations they wanted, they could disseminate information about the site through mapping. People from Chinatown, for instance, could link old photos to the sites and link those to oral histories. She said there could be much more information than what one would find in a RFE (Request for Evaluation) for designation. "I'm stubbornly getting used to GIS (Geographic Information System). I like the GIS online. I'm embracing it, but I really think those tools are giving us that opportunity and it exists perpetually," she observed.

Ms. Culhane agreed, saying documentation was very important. "It's really hard in New York City, where fortunes are made on real estate, to be able to make an argument for why a two-story building is worthwhile to a developer who can put up a twelve-story building instead. That's been a real challenge. So many of the sites that we are commemorating on The Bowery, things are not there anymore, but the history persists. And the story persists. Our hope is that it does create this larger understanding of this place even though all the sites aren't still there, but the big picture is still visible."

## **Section 2V(c): How to Build New in Old Neighborhoods**

Mr. Bankoff then asked if the panelists had any thoughts about design interventions or some sort of physical place-making. Citing the example of two photos of Chinatown, one from the early 1900's and another of the present, he noted how there was a difference but also a similarity.

Ms. Kong responded with another fundamental question: what does it mean for it to look like it's Chinatown? Talking about an upcoming project to make a plaza on the corner of where Canal and Walker Streets meet, she pondered over the question of what would be representative of the community in terms of design. "What does that mean to the locals, to Chinatown," she asked, adding that asking people would lead to a million and one opinions because Chinatown was not singular. "There are so many layers," she said.

As someone from an architecture background, Ms. Kong said she would personally not want a pagoda or a dragon, because you don't really see that in Chinatown anymore. For her, Chinatown is about the tenement buildings, its layers of history from the Italians to the Jewish community that lived there before them. "It's visually very challenging," she said. When she was looking for visual cues, she found an answer in the shopping bags in Chinatown. She said Chinatown is in the design of these bags. "The typography, the design of the bags are very distinctly Chinese-American I think. But there are small cues like that that you can find. They may not be grand, they may not be very obvious," she noted. Giving the example of the group that did branding for THINK!CHINATOWN, she said they observed Chinatown, and gave them a vertical logo that were inspired by the signs. "They really took a look at us, at the neighborhood and gave us visual cues, rather than what they thought in their minds was Chinese or Chinese kitsch and went beyond that," she said.

Ms. Apmann felt it was quite subjective. "When I talk to people from the Greenwich Village, or the East Village of the 60's, it's very different from the conversation with people of the 80's and what they remember. I would like to start with something like that, because there would be so many people who would have different filters about what would be important to them."

Steering the conversation towards accommodating the old alongside the new, Mr. Bankoff asked the panelists what they thought about something like the Cube, as the 1967 sculpture “Alamo” by Tony Rosenthal is popularly known, in Astor Place. He said that it has become an iconic part of the visual experience of the neighborhood, but when something new comes up, should you be proactive about honoring the concept of the place?

Pointing to structures in the city where conceptual designs have gone horribly wrong, Ms. Culhane said that the desired result is best achieved through scale. She cited the example of a structure that was designed to resemble a fake tenement building that ended up with weirdly out of proportion windows and balconies. “It’s again through education and outreach, that has to happen to convince people to be more sensitive,” she said. Ms. Apmann said that they were losing many low-scale buildings in and around 14<sup>th</sup> Street as well.

### **Section 2V(d): ‘Important to Listen to the Needs of the People’**

Bringing in the community perspective, Ms. Kong voiced the apprehensions of business owners to new regulations. There are business owners in Chinatown that are very afraid of landmarks and are very wary of historic designation because they are worried it will hamper their ability to do business, to make changes to their storefront in case they need to,” she said, adding that in Chinatown, these small businesses are already facing a lot of pressure from non-Chinese businesses trying to enter the space, in addition to the difficulties of operating these businesses, which are very important to the culture of Chinatown. “It’s a hard line to balance, I think, but I think it is really important to listen to the needs of the people who are using this space, because I think it’s more important how people use the space and keep the culture alive rather than how the space looks like,” she said.

### **Section 2V(e): Can Proscriptive Rules Work?**

Mr. Bankoff asked the panelists if having the ability to say that Chinatown should have Chinese names, or The Bowery needs to be a certain kind of business would be an adequate strategy. He mentioned the debate in 2013 about Francophone-cultural identity- versus-government overreach when an ordinance in Quebec required that public signage be in French.

Ms. Kong said that something similar had happened in the United States as well. Asking the audience, if they had seen the signs in the Chinatown in Washington D.C., she noted how the shops there had their names written in Chinese. “Has it actually supported the Chinese community?” she asked. “No.” If there is a working and vibrant Chinese community, she said, they can use Chinese signs to talk to their customers. “You don’t need to legislate that. You need to support the community so that they can do what they need to keep their businesses and cultural practices alive. It will happen naturally,” she said.

When asked by an audience member if the LPC has gone back and re-designated a property for cultural reasons, Ms. Apmann said that Stonewall was the only one that she knew of.

### **Section 2V(f): ‘Conversation Between Culture and Architecture’**

An audience member asked what the response of the preservation community should be to the argument by the LPC that they are having issues with the regulation of designations that are of cultural or historical significance.

“I think that’s a really important issue, because I think if you look at the Landmarks Law, the idea of how they regulate and how they recognize significance, is that the building needs to have some recognizable continuity with the cultural past. I don’t think that it would be a useful touchpoint if it were completely stripped of all its ornament and devoid of any of that interior content,” Ms. Culhane said. Talking about The Bowery, she said there are plenty of buildings that are potential cultural landmarks that have been there from the 1820’s, but stripped of everything and made to look like 1960’s office buildings. “Behind that sometimes, there are theaters or there are some things that are not accessible, but it’s still in there,” she said, adding that LPC cannot regulate the interiors. “You can’t stop that, unfortunately. There has to be regulation of the interiors. There needs to be a conversation between the culture and the architecture so that the architecture still needs to be intact enough to reflect that cultural period or that cultural moment.”

An audience member asked the panelists about the impact of the Mayor’s rezoning on preservation efforts.

Speaking about The Bowery, Culhane said that the main problem there was the lack of rezoning. Neighborhood residents, she said, have advocated to correct and rebalance and requested a downzoning on the east side of the street. Under the current zoning, she said, The Bowery has become lopsided with tall buildings going up on the east side, while the west side has been protected.

Ms. Apmann spoke in favor of the rezoning efforts in the East Village saying that the contextual rezoning there has been beneficial - “the new building permits that I see coming in, in the East Village are for the lower-scale buildings.”

### **Section 2V(g): ‘The Citizen’s Arrest Approach to Landmarking’**

An audience member posed a question about the Landmarks Law, and how it anticipated and set out guidelines for identifying cultural landmarks.

“The preamble to the law, identified, I think, eight areas where landmarking was seen fit and cultural landmarks is one of them. They don’t define it further,” Ms. Culhane said, adding that it is really up to communities to define that and to make the case for it, and that is strongly subjective. “That’s a grassroots approach. I’ve always been an advocate for the citizen’s arrest approach to landmarking where people and the community; if you really want the landmark, you go and get it. Certainly, it hasn’t always worked out that way but it needs to be a community-based effort to make that case,” she said.

### **Section 3: CRAFTING A SUCCESSFUL HISTORIC REGISTER NOMINATION**

Jennifer Betsworth is a Historic Preservation Specialist in the National Register program at the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in Albany, NY. Her territory includes Long Island, New York City, and Dutchess and Ulster Counties. In this role, she has written and shepherded through numerous nominations for traditional and underrepresented resources and helped advance tax credit applications for both eligible and listed buildings. She also is active in preservation in the Adirondacks through her work as Camp Santanoni's Interpretive Coordinator and on the Board of Directors of Adirondack Architectural Heritage. Previous to her work at SHPO, she worked as an architectural historian both independently and within a consulting firm on Section 106 projects, surveys, and National Register nominations. She has a BA in History and Anthropology from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and a MA in Public History/Historic Preservation from the University of South Carolina.

#### **Section 3I: New York State Historic Preservation Office**

Ms. Betsworth spoke about the process of nominating a site to the State and National Registers of Historic Places ("Register"). State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), which are part of each state's Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, were created in the 1960's after the National Historic Preservation Act passed in 1966. New York State's Parks System is the oldest in the country, and its first state park was Niagara Falls. The SHPO not only works to get sites listed on the Register, but their staff also works with communities to do surveys of historically significant places, provide technical assistance, grant programs, and perform outreach to further the efforts of local communities to achieve their goals. Ms. Betsworth pointed out that while some people may understand that historic preservation is a vital force for healthy communities and that historic architecture is a non-renewable resource, the SHPO works to educate the public about historic preservation as a tool for preserving places that make communities significant. While not every state has a State Register, New York State has four individual units covering different geographical boundaries within the state, making it a robust office in the context of the country.

#### **Section 3I(a): State and National Registers of Historic Places**

The Register is a mechanism designed to help protect historic resources from development projects that might threaten them. Unlike New York City's local Landmarks Law, the designation of a site to the Register does not protect that site from its owner, but rather from state and/or federally funded projects. The program was created largely in response to widespread urban renewal projects in the mid-20th century that were reshaping communities without considering the loss of historic resources. In 1980, New York State passed the New York State Historic Preservation Act, which gave those protections to state-funded projects and created a State Register, modeled on the National Register. The New York SHPO has over 6,000 sites listed on the Register, more than 1,000 of which are in New York City, but Ms. Betsworth pointed out that the number of buildings is much higher, since an individual site is counted the same as a historic district encompassing many buildings. The SHPO has an online Geographic Information System (GIS) database called the Cultural Resource Information System (CRIS) that the public may access to find sites that are listed or determined eligible for listing on the Register.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> CRIS may be accessed here: [https://cris.parks.ny.gov/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f\\_Last](https://cris.parks.ny.gov/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f_Last) accessed 1/7/2020.

### **Section 3I(b): Determining Eligibility**

Eligibility for listing on the Register affords the same protections as an official listing. In the SHPO's review of sites as eligible for the Register, each must meet the description of at least one of the four following criteria:

A: Patterns of History (association with an event or an on-going event). Examples of compelling stories include industry, engineering, invention, education and agriculture.

B: Significant Association with an Individual. Ms. Betsworth explained that the National Park Service (NPS) can be very particular about this criterion, as they want to see a building associated with a person at the height of their career and for a duration of time (in an attempt to avoid the popular "George Washington slept here" argument for significance).

C: Architecture. This is the most obvious and easy to prove, since architectural integrity and style are more easily quantified and determined than other criteria.

D: Archaeology. Ms. Betsworth explained that the SHPO is seeing a growing number of nominations for archaeological sites, which is an encouraging sign for broadening preservation efforts.

The types of resources that can be listed on the Register include buildings, structures (e.g. boats, bridges), objects (e.g. art, monuments), sites (e.g. archaeological, farmsteads, gardens) and historic districts.

Finally, sites must be at least 50 years old to be eligible, or if a site has a period of significance, that period must have ended at least 50 years before the listing. Sites may have significance on a local, statewide or national level, but the vast majority of sites listed on the Register are determined to be locally significant.

### **Section 3I(c): Eligibility for Sites of Cultural Significance**

Ms. Betsworth showcased four case studies of sites listed on the Register for their cultural significance, all located in the Lower Hudson Valley and Long Island.

- Main School in Hilburn, Rockland County: This was the site of an important de-segregation battle in the 1940's that Thurgood Marshall was involved in, but mainly it was led by women in the town.
- Pine Hollow Cemetery in Oyster Bay: This cemetery started as a free Black cemetery in the late 19th century and continues to be important to the community today.
- Cemetery in Southold, Long Island: this cemetery's markers, located along the side of the road, are very well preserved.
- Bethel Christian Avenue Historic District, Setauket: Ms. Betsworth explained that listing a historic district whose significance is not derived from its architecture, like this one, can be a real challenge.

Ms. Betsworth explained that architectural significance has traditionally been a default for the agency. "The National Register has had that reputation, that architectural significance is paramount, but that really is slowly changing, and we are trying to do better and to go back and fix our work," she said. "In every case, I insist that whoever's working on that project, look at the Criterion A argument. Look for the story behind the resource, not just the façade. Look beyond the façade." She explained that the SHPO itself is also working to go back to older nominations to include stories that were previously left out.

### Section 3I(d): Criteria for Eligibility

Ms. Betsworth outlined the main questions she considers when a new project comes in.

1. Why is it significant?
2. When was it significant?
3. Would the people who knew it then recognize it today?

#### *Why is it significant?*

As a case study, she introduced the audience to the Holy Cross African Orthodox Pro-Cathedral in Harlem. While this site was listed under Criterion A, it could be reopened to look at other criteria it may fall under, particularly Criterion B in honor of the church's founder, George McGuire. The church was founded in the late 1910's. McGuire came from the West Indies and worked in the Episcopal Church, but he found that as an African American, his career as a leader within the church could only go so far due to the color of his skin. McGuire was friends with Marcus Garvey and became a leader of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL). He founded this church in 1919 and purchased a rowhouse in the late 1920's to serve as its home. "Pro-Cathedral basically means the pre-cathedral before they were able to build the cathedral, but they were never able to build the cathedral, so this is still the central church for this denomination that did ultimately spread all across the world," said Ms. Betsworth. "It is very prominent in Africa. There are still denominational outposts throughout the country. It is a very interesting story."

#### *When was it significant?*

To the question of when it was significant, the building's significance has little to do with its physical home, which was constructed circa 1865, but, rather, with its association with significant events and people, so its period of significance was determined to be from 1931, when the pro-cathedral started worshipping here, to 1967. It was listed in 2017, having just made the 50-year cutoff. "If you pull your date up to the end of that 50-year cutoff, you're really suggesting a continuing significance because the church continues to use that building," said Ms. Betsworth.

#### *Would the people who knew it then recognize it today? Defining Integrity.*

Another important factor in determining eligibility for listing on the Register is a site's integrity. Does it still have physical parts of it that speak to its history? In other words, would a person who knew the site during its period of significance recognize it today? Integrity is defined by these seven criteria:

- Location. It should be in the same place as where it was historically, though it is also possible to list something that has been relocated, but it is very difficult. A higher and very specific argument must be made. "Hopefully that move was very intentional," said Ms. Betsworth.
- Design. Even if it is a modest structure, someone gave some thought into building it.
- Setting. The site has to retain its setting. "If you took a schoolhouse and moved it from the four corners in the middle of the community out into a country park, it's not in its original location and it's not really the right setting. It's not where children would have been walking on those streets," she said.
- Materials. If it was a brick house and is now covered in stucco, this could be a problem.
- Workmanship. This criterion prioritizes architectural significance, but something could be architecturally insignificant and have some interesting workmanship to it.
- Feeling. This is very "squishy," according to Ms. Betsworth, as is the next criterion.
- Association. Even if there is no physical fabric on the ground from an event that happened there. For example, Max Yasgur's Farm in Bethel, NY, where the Woodstock festival took place in 1969.

In thinking about aspects of integrity, not every resource will have all seven, but it is important to think about character-defining features to make your case. While there is room for flexibility, the NPS places high importance on integrity.

Ms. Betsworth offered a few other cases, which, when looking at them, may not possess the highest integrity or where architectural merit does not matter so much:

- “The Skinny House”, Mamaroneck, NY. At 10 feet wide and three stories tall, it is an architectural oddity. While not architecturally significant, its design was clearly very well considered and it is still in its original location and setting. Additionally, it was built in the early 1930’s by an African-American builder and carpenter, who had established his own business in 1928, then lost everything in the Depression. He was able to keep this ten-foot slice of land and build this house out of materials he had left over. It was an important place for his family and for the community.
- Bakery in Bohemia on Long Island. While not particularly interesting on the outside, the bakery’s storefront and original materials are extant, and its interior boasts fine details.
- Bethel Christian Avenue Historic District, Setauket, New York. This historic district was listed under Criterion A for its social and ethnic history for its African-American and Native American history. Its period of significance started in 1815, when the cemetery was started, and extended to 1973, when the community finished their American Legion Hall. While one may not think much of it on first glance, its cultural significance was unearthed with the help of a grant from the Preservation League of New York State, which funded a survey of the area. The consultants pulled building and census records to show that an argument could be made, even without architectural significance.

Ms. Betsworth pointed out that the Register nomination form has two sections - one for an architectural description and one for a statement of significance, including the history of the resource. She stated that it requires a different approach and way of thinking to prove the importance of cultural history. While the building description may be short, the description of its history and cultural relevance is much longer. “It takes that thoughtfulness and meeting the community where they are,” said Ms. Betsworth.

### **Section 3I(e): How to Get Started**

Ms. Betsworth outlined several steps for determining the eligibility of a site to the Register:

- Determine whether or not the site is already eligible by checking the online database (CRIS). If your site is not found online, call the office to check.
- If the owner is sympathetic to listing on the Register, fill out a Preliminary Information Form. If the owner is not sympathetic, the SHPO has a different process called a Third Party Determination of Eligibility, which is another way to determine a resource eligible. It would receive the same protection as a resource that is listed.
- For sites of cultural significance, Ms. Betsworth recommends including more of the narrative history than one might include for an architecturally significant site. She also recommends that those nominating culturally significant sites to the Register expect more questions of the SHPO staff once the nomination is submitted, especially if the history is complicated.
- SHPO staff will likely schedule a site visit and help you get the necessary nomination materials together for the actual listing.

Ms. Betsworth stated that the SHPO has created a packet of information for those nominating sites to the Register, which also includes a copy of the Preliminary Information Form<sup>10</sup>.

### **Section 3II: New York City Case Studies**

Amanda Davis is the project manager of the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project, where she oversees survey and research efforts, manages its interactive website (which she helped conceive), gives educational talks, and engages with various stakeholders to broaden the public's knowledge of LGBT history. She has also helped prepare guidelines for recognizing and preserving LGBT historic sites for the New York State Historic Preservation Office and authored the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Caffè Cino (listed in 2017), the pioneering 1960's Off-Off-Broadway and gay theater venue in Greenwich Village. In 2018, she was named to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's inaugural "40 Under 40: People Saving Places" list. Amanda previously served as the Director of Preservation and Research at the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation and gained experience conducting cultural resource surveys at Architectural Resources Group in Los Angeles and the Landmarks Preservation Commission in New York. She holds a BA in Architectural History from the University of Virginia and an MS in Historic Preservation from Columbia University.

#### **Section 3II(a): NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project**

Ms. Davis introduced the audience to the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project and showed their online interactive map<sup>11</sup> where the public may learn about sites associated with LGBT history across the five boroughs, and how the community has influenced New York City more generally. She explained that the organization was founded in 2015 after receiving funding from the Underrepresented Communities Program of the NPS largely to nominate these sites to the Register. So far, they have nominated four sites and amended one existing site. Under another grant, they will be nominating two more soon. Her presentation outlined some of the accomplishments of the LGBT community and the organization thus far.

#### **Section 3II(b): Bayard Rustin Residence, Chelsea**

This site was nominated before the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project was founded, but is an interesting case study due to the fact that the residence is an apartment within a large building, which itself is within the Penn South complex of buildings. It was, therefore, difficult to convince the NPS to list it. The apartment showcases an intersectional history for Rustin's association with civil rights, but also as a man who faced a lot of challenges being both a black man and a gay man. Rustin lived here from 1963 until his death, and his partner, who still lives in the apartment, preserved the residence exactly as it was when Rustin lived there. Rustin was a chief organizer of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, for which he collaborated with Martin Luther King, Jr. In order to prove the integrity of the apartment, photos of Rustin inside the apartment were found and provided with the nomination.

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<sup>10</sup> This information may be accessed at <https://parks.ny.gov/shpo/national-register/>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

<sup>11</sup> Accessible at <https://www.nyclgbtsites.org/>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.



### **Section 3II(c): Julius', Greenwich Village**

This bar, which is still open, was the site of the 1966 Sip-In to raise awareness of the discrimination that gay men and lesbians faced in bars. At that time, bars could lose their liquor license if they served gay men and lesbians, and just the presence of such an individual could shut down the establishment. Organized by the Mattachine Society, a gay rights group, the Sip-In sought to bring attention to this discrimination. In the 1980's, the building was renovated, but the bar itself is as it was in 1966, so its integrity remains intact. It was listed on the Register in 2016, 50 years to the day after the Sip-In took place.

### **Section 3II(d): Alice Austen House, Staten Island**

Now a house museum<sup>12</sup>, the building was the home of female photographer Alice Austen and her partner of 53 years, Gertrude Tate. According to Ms. Davis, Ms. Tate was for many decades written out of the narrative of the house and its interpretation. "I love this building as a case study for house museums in general, but also in historic preservation," said Ms. Davis. "When we go into a house of a historic person, usually a well-known man, we talk about his wife and children...and with same sex couples we often say 'well, it doesn't matter, that's private.' So there's an interesting double-standard in how we can look at history, in particular with the LGBT community in that case." She added that the not-for-profit charitable organization that manages the house is working to interpret Gertrude Tate's role in the house.

### **Section 3II(e): Earl Hall, Columbia University**

Significant architecturally as part of the Columbia University campus by McKim, Mead & White, this nomination was not focused on its architectural merit, but on its cultural history and significance. The building was home to the Student Homophile League, the first gay student group in the United States for a university when it was formed in 1967. The League held dances here in the late 1960's through the 1990's, providing a place for gay students to be themselves and cultivated a culture of activism.

### **Section 3II(f): Caffè Cino, Greenwich Village**

Listed on the Register in November 2017, this was a café theater from 1958-1968 considered to be the birthplace of "off-off-Broadway" theater and instrumental in the development of gay theater, especially at a time when depicting gay relationships on stage was illegal, including writing about gay subject matter. The space was owned by Joe Cino, an openly gay man, who envisioned a café where artists could exhibit their work. His gay friends would come and put together plays, and the space eventually became a theater showing experimental works. While some milestones for the gay community occurred here, including the premiere of the first play to deal specifically with gay themes, "Madness of Lady Bright," many of its performances did not include gay subject matter. By 1960, its importance as a theater was on the rise since it offered playwrights an inexpensive way to showcase original works and patrons need only spend a minimum of \$1 off the café menu to experience it, thereby lifting the burden of financial success. There was a lot of conflict with police in those days, because of prejudicial policing, but people worked for free to keep a place where they could express their art and worked around the constant official harassment.

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<sup>12</sup> For more information, see <https://aliceausten.org/>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

In assessing the building's integrity as part of the nomination, Ms. Davis found a 1965 quote by Joe Cino, the café's founder, in which he described the space as being modest, open and a place where his café could thrive, rather than architecturally distinguished. So, in the nomination, Ms. Davis and SHPO staff emphasized this interpretation and included photos of the interior taken when it was between tenants in order to show that it was little changed from how it looked during its period of significance. Ms. Davis included oral histories and recorded remembrances with the nomination, including Magie Dominic, the unofficial historian of the Caffè Cino, who was a performer and stage manager there. Ms. Dominic whose extensive archives were extremely helpful to the nomination, also crucially stated that she absolutely recognized the space as the same as it was in the late 1960's. In making a case for the site's cultural significance, Ms. Davis provided a thorough history of the café, its continuing impact on the world of theater, and its context with other theaters of its kind. The latter especially helped to prove the importance of Caffè Cino on the development of gay theater, and why it was different from other theaters of its kind.

### **Section 3III: Discussion**

In response to a question from an audience member, Ms. Betsworth explained that the SHPO has made some efforts towards amending older nominations to include other criteria than architectural merit. She stated that the staff often looks for stories that have been left out of previous nominations, but emphasized that while the staff encourages those nominating sites to the Register to look beyond a building's façade, it would take a great deal of work to amend all of the state's listings. However, she emphasized that it is of immense importance, and posited that a new (possibly volunteer) program could be instituted to amend existing listings to broaden their scope to include cultural significance (criteria A and B).

She said SHPO staff continue to educate the public, as well as historic preservation professionals and consultants to encourage nominations for cultural significance

An audience member asked how the law handles a situation where a place isn't significant originally, but over time, becomes significant to people. For example, the Walt Whitman House in Brooklyn, where Whitman only lived for a year but many consider now to be an important touchstone to Whitman's life and work. Ms. Betsworth offered that in determining periods of significance, it is possible to nominate a site with a "split" period that includes layers of history and associations with different events and people. She explained that there is no room within how the program works for sites that were forgotten and then rediscovered, and now it has another layer of significance as a result.

The audience member stated that the problem with this is that so much of its significance has to do with how people relate to a historic building or neighborhood in the immediate present, and Ms. Betsworth stated that this is true of almost any site. "It wouldn't happen if it didn't matter to people right now," she said. "We're responsive to people coming to us and asking for something." Another audience member offered that the significance of the Gettysburg battleground site is unquestioned, even though the event that took place there only lasted three days. She asked how time can be quantified in that case, and Ms. Betsworth responded that a site with a long period of significance is not more or less significant than a site with a short period of significance. "A period of significance is not a value judgment," she said.

Ms. Davis was asked whether there was any pushback from the NPS about integrity issues for the LGBT sites. She responded that for Caffè Cino, she had to document the upper floors of the building even though they were not connected to the café, but there were always apartments on the upper floors, which she proved in building plans and showed that the upper floors remain residential today. She added that the NPS, unlike the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission,

considers the integrity of a site's interior, as well as its exterior, before listing. For the Bayard Residence, there was a lot of back and forth with the NPS, but they eventually approved the nomination.

An audience member asked the panelists to consider a hypothetical situation where there are two houses that are essentially the same, but one has been re-sided with an appearance very different from its historic one but the other one looks just as it did, but has been reconstructed, and the majority of its historic fabric has been lost. He asked, then, whether the NPS would look at these two houses differently in terms of integrity. Ms. Betsworth responded that there is an expectation of repair over time, but the issue of integrity would depend on what the significance of the houses is based on. "If one is basically a reconstruction and the other one has just been re-sided, it doesn't sound good for either one," said Ms. Betsworth. "But, it depends on why we're looking at them in the first place." She added that a restored building may be eligible and that these days, the SHPO is not discounting buildings that have been re-sided and that the agency is always refining its approach and making sure to treat resources appropriately.

## **Section 4: ENGAGING THE PUBLIC WITH SITES OF CULTURAL MEMORY**

Any heritage, whether tangible or intangible, is almost rendered lifeless without support, acknowledgement and celebration from the community. In this panel, experts addressed the crucial aspect of how organizations can engage the public and build momentum to celebrate a shared heritage. They discussed the power of programming, identified the inhibitions most people faced and demonstrated how an inclusive narrative contributes to a vibrant and multi-ethnic society.

### **Section 4I: Teaching the Rich Musical History of The Bronx**

Elena Martínez has been a Folklorist at City Lore<sup>13</sup> since 1997 and is also currently the Co-Artistic Director of The Bronx Music Heritage Center<sup>14</sup>. She co-produced the documentary, ‘From Mambo to Hip Hop: A South Bronx Tale’, which aired on PBS in 2006 and won the National Council of La Raza’s 2007 ALMA Award for Best TV Documentary. She is also a producer for the documentary, ‘We Like It Like That: The Story of Latin Boogaloo’ which premiered at the SXSW Festival. Elena curated the traveling exhibitions, “¡Que bonita bandera!: The Puerto Rican Flag as Folk Art” and “Las Tres Hermanas: Art & Activism.” She was the Assistant Curator for the exhibit, “Nueva York: 1613-1945” at El Museo del Barrio. She has contributed to *Latinas in the United States: An Historical Encyclopedia* (Indiana University Press 2006); *Women’s Folklore & Folklife: An Encyclopedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music, and Art* (ABC-CLIO, 2008); the *New York State Folklife Reader: Diverse Voices* (2013); and *The Dictionary of Caribbean & Afro-Latin Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2016). Her articles have appeared in the peer-reviewed journals *CENTRO* by the Center for Puerto Rican Studies and *VOICES* by the New York Folklore Society. She is currently on the Advisory Boards for Casita Maria/Dancing in the Streets’ South Bronx Culture Trail, the Center for Puerto Rican Studies Archive at Hunter College, and Los Pleneros de la 21.

#### **Section 4I(a): Organizational Background**

Ms. Martinez, who has worked extensively in The Bronx over the past two decades, refuted misconception about The Bronx as a dangerous or culturally poor neighborhood by sharing nuggets about its immensely rich musical history.

Talking broadly about the South Bronx Latin Music Project, a project of the City Lore Group, she started by introducing another initiative called Place Matters. “Some of you might have heard of Place Matters, it started off a long time ago... in City Lore, called Dangerous Spaces Project,” she said. They looked at various places throughout the city that might have been in danger of being closed down. That’s when Place Matters came into being to preserve, document, and advocate for different sites and places around the city<sup>15</sup>. “In 1999, or in the late 90’s, there was an oral history project in East Harlem that came out with programs and maps,” she continued.

Like many Bronx stories, Ms. Martinez said, theirs began in East Harlem. The East Harlem project was based on research by David Carp, a classical musician and a librarian who conducted interviews with musicians in East Harlem and The Bronx. The project led to programming and the creation of a map. It was when they were working with other people in The Bronx such as The

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<sup>13</sup> For more information, see <http://citylore.org/>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

<sup>14</sup> For more information, see <https://www.thisisbronxmusic.org/>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

<sup>15</sup> See also Anthony Wood’s comments in Section 6.

Bronx Council on the Arts<sup>16</sup> that they discovered there was a rich music history in The Bronx to be documented.

“In 1999 we started doing oral histories in The Bronx. We spoke to people who danced, performed the music, owned the clubs and owned/ran the theatres in different places throughout The Bronx,” she said. “Since that time, my work has been focused on programming through the City Lore Project,” based on themes that came up in the oral histories she said. Her work is now almost exclusively focused in The Bronx.

They had community partners like the Point Community Development Corporation<sup>17</sup> in Hunts Point, which is a hub for community development, student programs and cultural programming. “We worked with them to put on these programs, and some of them were to begin conversations,” she said. She added that they brought people from the community to tell their stories and there would be panels with famous musicians such as Johnny Pacheco. She emphasized that to have a cultural program, you need to have a map for community, so that they can visit places of interest and also talk about their stories.

### **Section 4I(b): Capturing the Heyday of Bronx Theaters**

“Then we also started doing some programming that led to thematic programs,” she said. One of them was a tribute to the theaters of The Bronx such as Teatro Puerto Rico. “Through oral histories we learnt that there was this incredible infrastructure of theaters everywhere throughout the city,” she added, and this was especially true of The Bronx. “It was very important to the generation of people who grew up in the 40’s, 50’s and 60’s,” she said.

The story, essentially, is about the Latino community in general, but specifically about Puerto Ricans and the Puerto Rican experience, she said, adding that with immigration, Bronx’s sounds keep changing as well. Talking further about the theaters, she said they were at the center for Spanish-language vaudeville, Mexican theater and Mexican movies catering to the Spanish-language community at that time. Kids growing up in that era in The Bronx, she said, saw John Wayne westerns, but also Mexican movies. “These theaters were like the hub for the community,” she said.

Talking about the theaters, especially, Teatro Puerto Rico, which is one of the most famous, she pointed to how there would be a line around the block for this theater and others like it.

They did similar programs and also recreated one of the variety shows - vaudeville. “After we started doing all these public programs for the community that they could actually go to, there were other ways to get the word out about our work,” she said. City Lore, she said, put out a book in New York about places that matter and a lot of the work from the South Bronx and the music project was incorporated into that. Some of them include, Casa Amadeo, the longest running Spanish music shop in New York City and The Bronx workshop of Cali Rivera, who was one of the only cowbell makers in New York City (cowbells are an important instrument in Cuban music). “His handmade cowbells were in demand from musicians from all over the world and they would go to his shop in The Bronx to get them. The book was one way to talk about that history to a different audience,” she said.

They also created a physical map that had details about the musicians, places that were important to the story, with descriptions of venues.

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<sup>16</sup> For more information, see <https://www.bronxarts.org/>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

<sup>17</sup> For more information, see <https://thepoint.org/>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

She said that even though we live in a digital world where there are digital maps, apps and everything is online, tangible items are still important. "I'm kind of torn," she said, "I want to save trees, but we also work in communities like The Bronx where people want physical flyers, people want physical things to pick up." There might be young people in the community, a 20-year-old who might be on social media all the time, but there is also a need for tangible ways to put the history out and the map was one of them. They made and disseminate the East Harlem map, and now the South Bronx Music Map.

Along with the maps, she said, they also started doing walking tours to reach out to the local community as well as to those who wanted to come in and learn about the topic. "We worked with the Point to train tour guides," she said. They were trained in the history, in the research that was being done, the oral histories, so that they could give their own tours. "They tried it for a while," she adding that after a point it became hard to maintain and get the resources. For instance, having someone at all times to reserve tours for people was a challenge. However, they still do walking tours. Walking tours, she felt, were important because people wanted to get out and see the spaces. The Bronx, she said, is in vogue right now for many reasons: "people want to hear these stories."

### **Section 4I(c): The School at the Center of It All**

Another initiative steeped in the musical history of The Bronx, led them to a very special school in the year 2000 - P.S. 52, which is now M.S. 52. "The people we interviewed, all the musicians from the Mambo era from the 1940's and 50's went to this junior high school," she said. The park right in front of the school played a pivotal role in the initiative. She said the school was important because many iconic musicians from the Mambo era studied there. The list, she said, includes Ray Barretto, Manny Oquendo, Joe Quijano, Eddie Palmieri and the great poet Orlando Marin. "These were the greatest names in that music," she noted.

"There's a park in front of that school, run by a community organization, 52 People for Progress. When the city was going bankrupt in the 70's, this park was just a mess. There was garbage and needles all over the place. This community organization cleaned up the park and made sure that kids can get into it and get basketballs to play," she said. They kept it open for kids from the neighborhood. Not incidentally, they were from the community and were aware of the musical history and legacy of the school and the neighborhood.

"They urged the Parks Department to create a stage and an amphitheater about 30 years ago. And, for the past 30 years, except for the past two years, when the park has been undergoing renovation for the new stage, they have been organizing free concerts for the community every summer from July through September," she said.

Costing a dollar, they were as good as free: "they wanted to make sure people from the community valued it. So for a dollar, people from the community could come out to these concerts of the best Latin music at this park." In addition to that, they put together the history of the park and the school. They also organized a concert that brought together famous alumni of the school, including Ray Barreto and Orlando Marin.

#### **Section 4I(d): From Mambo to Hip-Hop: A South Bronx Tale**

“We had performers from Puerto Rico who were part of this concert,” she said. Knowing this was going to be a great event, they wanted to film it, she explained. The concert drew a good response. Once they filmed it, they realized it could be a great film with good visual components. “That’s the beginning of the film “From Mambo to Hip-Hop<sup>18</sup>”, which led to more interviews,” adding that composer and bandleader Eddie Palmieri was among the people interviewed.

Since the oral histories and interviews were an integral part of the project, they went through the film archives and referred to work done by David Carp of The Bronx Historical Society<sup>19</sup>. This project became important, she said, because many of the people who were participants in the Mambo era had passed away.

“So, it was a really important record and documentation to have for this,” she said. They continued doing interviews and about 10 years later, completed the film. “We were able to produce a film that was screened on PBS in 2004 and it won awards. It was filmed all over The Bronx and New York City, it was screened in a lot of countries, in international film festivals...it’s got a cult following. To this day we are still screening it in The Bronx, we still get requests. It’s sort of become a classic,” she said, adding that they also incorporated the history of the hip-hop generation into the documentary.

#### **Section 4I(e): Latin Boogaloo**

Music for the Mambo generation, she explained, was really a form of resistance and resilience for the community. “This also led to us being contacted by a young film director called Mathew Ramirez Warren who worked on a film called “We Like it Like That<sup>20</sup>”. It told the story of Latin Boogaloo. Latin Boogaloo is another form of Latin music that, really, is from East Harlem and part of The Bronx and that was part of the story,” she said. It came out in 2015.

“We saw that as a bookend and it was a really important way to keep talking about these stories, these stories about these musicians,” she said.

“We realized that a lot of people say, ‘Oh, this is a great story. Why don’t people know about this?’ “People in the community, she said, did know about this story. “If you grew up there, you knew about these places, you lived next door to the musicians, but how do you get the story out to a larger audience? Now it’s part of the work and these programs,” she said.

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<sup>18</sup> According to the plot summary provided by the Internet Movie Database (IMDB): “From Mambo to Hip Hop: A Bronx Tale (2006 TV Movie) tells a story about the creative life of the South Bronx and the creation of the New York salsa sound. Featuring: Angel Rodríguez, Benny Bonilla, Bobby Sanabria, Bom 5, Carlos “Charlie Chase” Mandes, Clemente “Kid Freeze” Moreno, Curtis “Caz” Brown, David Gonzalez, Mr. and Mrs. Salsa, Eddie Palmieri, Emma Rodríguez, Ray Barretto, Willie Colón and more. [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1169817/plotsummary?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_pl](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1169817/plotsummary?ref_=tt_ov_pl), last accessed 11/28/2018.

Film available for viewing online: <https://youtu.be/qpGYD11-scw>, last accessed 11/28/2018.

<sup>19</sup> For more information, see <http://bronxhistoricalsociety.org/>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

<sup>20</sup> Summary from IMDB: “We Like It Like That (2015). Latin boogaloo is New York City. It is a product of the melting pot, a colorful expression of 1960s Latino soul, straight from the streets of El Barrio, the South Bronx and Brooklyn. Starring Latin boogaloo legends like Joe Bataan, Johnny Colon and Pete Rodriguez, ‘We Like It Like That’ explores this fascinating moment in Latin music history, through original interviews, music recordings, live performances, dancing and rare archival footage and images. From its origins to its recent resurgence in popularity, ‘We Like It Like That’ tells the story of a sound that redefined a generation and was too funky to keep down” [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4079232/plotsummary?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_pl](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4079232/plotsummary?ref_=tt_ov_pl), last accessed 11/28/2018. Trailer available online at <https://youtu.be/Wyd7VbeifTM>, last accessed 11/28/2018.

On the official recognition front, Place Matters<sup>21</sup>, worked to get some sites on the National Register for Historic Places for cultural significance. They began with the Cuyler Church in Brooklyn, Bohemian Hall in Queens and the building that housed Casa Amadeo in The Bronx.

### **Section 4I(f): Casa Amadeo and the South Bronx Culture Trail**

The National Register at that time, she recalled, was a kind of struggle because, these places did not have a lot of grand architectural significance as venues but culturally, they were extremely important sites. “Casa Amadeo in The Bronx is still there on the corner of Prospect and Longwood Avenue. It’s the longest continuing Latin music store in New York City,” she said. It was founded in 1941 by Victoria Hernandez, the sister of a very famous musician. Now it’s run by Mike Amadeo. It’s the first site on the National Register to recognize Puerto Rican history on the mainland. “It’s a really important site. It was first put on the New York State Register of Historic Places in 2000 and then on the National Register in 2001,” she noted.

She said when walking tours are done, they always stop at places like Casa Amadeo and the park where the group 52 People for Progress is involved, among other places, because people can hear from people in the community.

Another legacy of the South Bronx Music Project, she said, is the South Bronx Culture Trail which is now sponsored by Casita Maria in The Bronx. “Aviva Davidson and Dancing on the Streets was at that time partnering with Casita Maria in The Bronx and decided to create a project around our story. She thought that the story was really important for The Bronx,” she said. That led to the creation of the long-term project, the South Bronx Culture Trail, which was to bring together performances and the Marking Project.

The Marking Project, she explained, wanted to put artistic markers around the neighborhood in places like the school, Casita Maria in Longwood and the Hunts Point Palace in Hunts Point, which was the biggest dance hall in the 1940’s through 60’s in The Bronx. The community, she noted, was also involved in the process to create these markings. The community was able to vote on the design, she said. Unfortunately, the project was stalled because of issues like liability, she said. “I hope that can be revisited.”

Addressing the issue of the “dual history” of The Bronx, she said that there were all these interesting things going on, but the neighborhood also had this history of arson and urban decay. “I still get people asking me if it is safe to go to The Bronx for an event. So there’s still this story and reputation of The Bronx. It’s very important for us to make sure that there is also this other history that needs to be told, and the people who lived in these places, they should be proud of their neighborhood,”

Currently, she said, her work pertains a lot on programming at The Bronx Music Heritage Centre and keeping the legacy of The Bronx alive.

### **Section 4I(g): The Garifuna and the Quechua**

Another community they work with a lot is the Garifuna, an ethnic and linguistic group with roots in Central America and the Caribbean. The Garifuna community in The Bronx is the largest such community outside of Central America,” she said, adding that they were not always recognized and

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<sup>21</sup> For more information, see <https://placematters.net/>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.



were almost like an invisible community. “They were in the Happy Land fire in 1990. Of the 87 people that perished in that, two-thirds of them were from the Garifuna,” she recalled.

The Garifuna, she said, have had a big presence for a long time in The Bronx and they work closely with them for a lot of programming. A lot of new communities, she observed are also making The Bronx their home such as an indigenous Quechua Ecuadorian community. Their programming revolves around working and forming relationships with a lot of the community organizations such as the Garifuna Coalition and also getting the Quechua community on board. She noted that the only Quechua-language radio station in the United States is based in The Bronx.

She said that one of the other things they did at The Bronx Music Heritage Centre is work closely with Nos Quedamos<sup>22</sup> in the Melrose section of The Bronx, which worked closely with the casitas, community gardens in The Bronx. The Melrose laborers, she noted, are a high concentration of the casitas, houses that a lot of people from the Puerto Rican community use. “We work closely with Nos Quedamos to form a paranda,” she said. A paranda, she explained, is a Christmas carol procession. “Sometimes, we jump in a car and go from place to place. We actually walk the paranda with a band of musicians with different kind of drums throughout the neighborhood, and each stop is a casita. It’s a really good way to connect with the community because sometimes it’s hard to find ways to bring the gardeners together for this. But since the Paranda is about the cultural connection, it really brought the gardeners together. They were a big part of this, decorating the casitas, making sure there is food and snacks for the musicians. They would come to each house and take part in it,” she said. She said they organized the Christmas carol procession around the Puerto Rican casitas every winter solstice.

#### **Section 4I(h): Streets That Tell the Story**

Another thing, they’ve done at The Bronx Music Heritage Centre, is working on street naming, she said. People in the community, she noted, are really active, and wanted to get street signs named after some of the people who lived in the neighborhood. Taking the example of Arsenio Rodriguez, who was a Cuban-born musician who came to New York in the 40’s and changed the way we look at Latin music. “If you like Salsa it is because of him. He changed the music at that time and he’s lived in that neighborhood,” she said. Community focus, she said, really brought together family in Cuba and here, they wrote letters and held meetings. Another example was Maxine Sullivan in the Morrisania neighborhood, where there was a large jazz community and Sullivan’s house still stands. She said that when people thought about jazz, they thought about Queens or Harlem, but there was a large community of musicians in The Bronx as well.

“We’ve worked a lot with community members to make sure there are street signs. Some people are hoping they can form a trail of some sort to bring people into the community to recognize that history,” she said, adding that there are now signs for Maxine Sullivan, Donald Byrd, Henry Red Allen and more.

#### **Section 4I(i): The 369th Armory’s Bronx Connection**

Ms. Martinez also detailed The Bronx connection of the 369th Armory in Harlem. “A lot of you might have heard of the huge Armory, the 369th Armory, and it was the regimental band in World War I led by James Reese Europe. The army was segregated at that time. It was an all-black

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<sup>22</sup> For more information, see <https://www.nosquedamos.org/>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

regiment, but what a lot of people don't know is that one-third of the band were also Puerto Ricans, and so Latinos tend to get left out on a lot of histories," she observed.

"If you look at the Landmarks Commission's write-up online about the 369th<sup>23</sup>," she continued, "they don't talk about how they went to Puerto Rico to bring musicians or how some of the musicians on that band were some of the most famous musicians on the island. One of them who was part of that band, Rafael Hernandez, was the most famous musician in the western hemisphere," she said. His compositions, she noted, have been recorded by marching bands across the nation and recorded by and listened to by people from all over South and North America. Interestingly, it was his sister who opened Casa Amadeo in 1941, she said. "So there's a connection there."

They have also been working with the Regimental Historical Society. They found a lot of the old music, sheet music "crumbling in a cardboard box in the basement," that they are helping to preserve and scan.

She said there were different ways of getting the word out and reaching audiences, whether it is through concerts, writings or preservation. "That's the ongoing work."

## **Section 4II: Bringing Early American History Up to Date**

Nadezhda Allen has been involved in preserving and interpreting New York City history for over 20 years. Currently the Executive Director of King Manor Museum<sup>24</sup> in Jamaica, Queens, she has worked at a number of institutions including Ellis Island, the Mount Vernon Hotel Museum, the Morris-Jumel Mansion, and Fraunces Tavern. Allen was also the Preservation Associate and later Deputy Director of the Historic Districts Council from 2006-2015. She holds a BA in historic preservation from Mary Washington College and an MA in museum studies from the Fashion Institute of Technology.

### **Section 4II(a): What Is King Manor?**

Ms. Allen started by asking a fundamental question — what kind of a landmark is the King Manor?

"Actually, we thought of it as a cultural landmark," she said, given that it was preserved because it was the oldest thing around in the neighborhoods and the home of an "important dead rich white guy." Though not an architectural gem, she said, it was a nice big house, but vernacular compared to other houses associated with the Founding Fathers. "It was preserved for cultural reasons, and we still today make those connections to that culture," she said.

Giving a background on the history of the site and its preservation, she said that Rufus King doesn't get the credit he really deserves. He is one of the framers of the United States Constitution and was one of the five men in the Committee of Style and Arrangement. She said he was also an ambassador to Great Britain under Presidents Washington, Adams and Jefferson. "So, he tried to keep peace with England," Ms. Allen said. He was also a senator representing New York State and was well known for his anti-slavery stance.

He passed away in 1827 and the house then went to his eldest son John. John inherited his father's political leanings and anti-slavery stance, which he pursued in Congress and as a Governor of New

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<sup>23</sup> LPC Designation Report accessible at <http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/lp/1390.pdf>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

<sup>24</sup> For more information, see <https://www.kingmanor.org/>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

York State. When he passed in 1867, his daughter Cornelia continued to live there, and was the last family member to live in the house. She died in November of 1896. By then, most of the farmland had been sold off and developed and only about 11 acres of the original land were left. “In 1897, after Cornelia’s death, the village of Jamaica, in one of its last independent acts, purchased the house and the land. The village leaders named the land Jamaica Park,” she said.

Townpeople feared that “the name Jamaica would be forgotten as they were about to be subsumed by New York City the following year.” This impending loss of identity due to consolidation is also the driving force in the creation of the museum.” She said that in January of 1900, a group of civic-minded women from Queens, Brooklyn and Long Island organized to get an article published in The New York Times to perpetuate King Manor as a colonial landmark. “A petition was made to the Parks Commissioner for the use of the house and by the end of the year, a certificate of incorporation was granted to the King Manor Association of Long Island Incorporated. That’s still our name today. They were preserving our culture for people who knew it — the residents of pre-consolidation Jamaica in particular and Long Island in general.” 118 years later, she said, they were preserving and interpreting this 18th and 19th-century culture for a very diverse population.

### **Section 4II(b): ‘Please Come Inside!’**

One of the challenges of the site is reaching out to people. “Getting people to come and visit can sometimes be a challenge. We get about 10,000 visitors a year, which for a small institution is pretty good, but we always want more. Half of those visitors are kids coming with their classes on school trips. So, they kind of have to come. Otherwise, I’m always hearing from people, ‘Oh, I walked by that place, but I’ve never come inside.’ Please come inside!”

“One of the saddest things I hear sometimes from people”, she said, “is that, they assume, because of the architecture and the columns that it was a plantation house and that there were slaves there. And that was the opposite of our story.”

Increasing visitation beyond school groups is an institutional goal, so Ms. Allen is creative with the site’s programming. “One of the things we do is go outside. We hold a lot of historic-minded events on our lawn. Sounds kind of simple, but it works. It draws people from the park. It’s friendly, it’s fun, they want to see what’s going on. They are always free and once people get involved with us, we get a quarter of the visitors from the event to the house on a tour,” she said. She said they get about 200 visitors for the Fall Harvest Festival, where there is music, dance and games.

Then, she said, there was the City Council’s Cultural Immigrant Initiative, for which she thanked Council Members Lancman and Grodenchik. The Manor Museum has begun hosting an Annual Traditions Festival, a weekend-long event with demonstrations of early-American crafts, music and food, and representatives of some of the immigrant cultures that make Queens so famously diverse.

“I find it interesting to see how people are often first drawn to the presenter or demonstrator who is from their culture, but then very easily move on and interact [with] and enjoy all the other stations,” she said.

She’s also amazed at how interested people are in broom-making. “A lot of visitors come forward and say, ‘In my culture, we use this material or we use this technique’ and we may do a broom-making festival. It’s great to see how cultures really do come together in this event,” she said.

One of their biggest events, she said, was the Annual Naturalization Ceremony. “It marks the anniversary of the signing of the Constitution. This year we had 98 people from 26 countries take

the Oath of Citizenship on the lawn of the museum. Afterwards, they are invited to come inside to visit the house and add their signature to the reproduction of the Constitution. So it's a nice integration of history. They could make some new friends there too."

Sharing one of her favorite stories, she narrated how she once heard a little boy and his mother who were walking in front of her, talk about the museum. The boy pointed to the house and said in Spanish that Rufus was a friend of George Washington and there's a big farm there. "But I can see he really got the point. History isn't just something in the past."

### **Section 4III: Highlighting the History of Specific Communities**

Sarah Aponte is the Chief Librarian of the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute<sup>25</sup> and Associate Professor at the City College Libraries, teaching courses on Dominican Studies and bibliographical instruction. She founded the Dominican Library in 1994 with donations of books and other materials by the Council of Dominican Educators. Prof. Aponte holds an M.L.S. in Library and Information Sciences from Queens College; an M.S.Ed. in Higher Education Administration from Baruch College; a BA in International Studies from the City College of New York; and an AA in Liberal Arts from Hostos Community College.

#### **Section 4III(a): History of Dominican Culture in NYC and the Dominican Institute**

Ms. Aponte discussed Dominican culture and beginnings of the Dominican Institute. It began in 1992 as a product of the Dominican community's efforts to have an institution dedicated to producing research and scholarship about people of Dominican descent in the United States and elsewhere. The institute is the only such body in the United States that is dedicated to Dominican Studies and is university-based. As part of the project, there is a research area which includes a library and archives.

"When you talk about Ellis Island, usually nobody mentions Dominicans. It's not on your mind, right? Because you see and read the books, and usually they talk about people coming from Europe. Because a majority of people who came through Ellis Island were Europeans," she said.

She said the Director of the Institute, sociologist Dr. Ramona Hernandez, has found more than 5,000 Dominicans who came through Ellis Island. "I know that 5,000 is not the same as thousands and thousands of others, but for us, it's important, this number. We are trying to understand this migration and trying to recreate history a little bit."

She said that as Elena Martinez, an earlier speaker, had stated, they wanted to be included in the narratives surrounding the city and the nation. "Sometimes the Latino communities are not included in the discourse and in the history of the city" she said, adding that it was important for them that people know about these migrants who came through the islands, and who were Dominican.

The first immigrants, she said, had some wealth. "There were no poor Dominicans." She noted how they were also single, and usually intermarried here. "Now we are trying to follow-up with these Dominicans who are the third or fourth generation."

The institute is currently engaged in a project about the mass migration of Dominicans in the 1960's. After the assassination of Dictator Rafael Trujillo in 1961, Dominicans were able to leave

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<sup>25</sup> For more information, see <https://www.cuny.edu/dsi>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

the country. More were able to leave in the country in 1965 after the second intervention by the U.S. and a political turnover in the Dominican Republic. The Dominicans often came in search of better conditions and opportunities.

“Now, we are almost two million Dominicans living in the United States,” she said. The majority of Dominicans, she noted, live in New York City. Dominicans first settled in numbers in Washington Heights, and later established communities in The Bronx, New Jersey and Florida due to gentrification.

So, what do they do at the Dominican Institute? “We collect information and research about Dominican past,” she said, adding that they bring children to the Institute to get an early exposure to Dominican culture and learn about Dominicans from a different perspective.

“We bring them for seven weeks, eight weeks, every Friday. We have classes with them and they are very practical. When we talk about music, we bring musical instruments. When we talk about food, we bring food. When we talk about Dominicans going through asylum, it manifests as resources for them to touch. We want them to be exposed to this information from a very young age.” She added that they also hold workshops for teachers, some of who are a part of City College, but also for those from other parts of the city.

“We also have seniors coming to us, many of them Dominicans,” she said. The beauty of talking to these seniors, she said, was that they remember life under Trujillo, and have an opportunity to discuss Dominican politics and share memories.

Speaking about the Institute’s archives, she said the oldest material from their archival collection is about Rafael Petiton Guzman, who was a pianist and composer. “He was famous here in the United States, especially here in New York,” she said.

About public monuments, she pointed to the statue of Juan Pablo Duarte, one of the founding members of the Dominican Republic, on Canal Street and Avenue of the Americas. “It’s [there] because Juan Paulino and many others put together efforts to have the statue of the founding member of the Dominican Republic.”

### **Section 4III(b): Hidden Histories**

Ms. Aponte spoke about an upcoming project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Institute will be creating a website about Dominicans and their contributions to the United States. She said they would be consulting with Elena Martinez about the project because Dominicans were also part of many of the movements in the city. “We have collected information from the 1950’s showing Dominicans who were involved in music: cha-cha-cha and salsa.”

She also spoke about another digital archive project, ‘First Blacks in Americas’, which is a bilingual digital resource<sup>26</sup>. “We talk about the early arrival of the Africans, to what is today the Dominican Republic and Haiti, and they were the first ones in the Americas. So you need to understand that history to understand the present.”

She added that they also had 71 documents from the 16th century. A team has transcribed and translated all these documents which, she said, talk about the first Africans in the New World.

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<sup>26</sup> Accessible at <http://firstblacks.org/en/>, last accessed 11/27/2018.

This is done using a Spanish paleography tool, because they were attempting to democratize their page. “If you go to the website, you can hover over the writing and it tells you what it means,” making it easy to decipher the 16<sup>th</sup> century. She said that those interested in Mexican colonial history, and perhaps not Dominican history, could use the paleography tool because the written language of Spanish colonial administrators was the same throughout the Americas.

#### **Section 4IV: The Power of Inclusion**

Anthony Stevens-Acevedo is Assistant Director and founding member of the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute at The City College of New York. Stevens-Acevedo is a historian and focuses his research on the early colonial history of the Dominican Republic. He is the lead investigator in CUNY DSI’s Dominican colonial research projects. Stevens-Acevedo is a Foreign Corresponding Member of the Dominican Academy of History (Dominican Republic). He holds an MA in History from The City College of New York, CUNY, and a BA in History of the Americas from the University of Seville, Spain.

Mr. Stevens-Acevedo spoke about the power of inclusion. “This is probably the first time, we at the Dominican Institute have had a chance to participate in a public collective conversation about this whole issue of historic memory, landmarks preservation, and what it means. For us this is very significant that we were invited.”

Tracing back the history of Dominican presence, he said that, though an isolated case, some of their early ancestors like Juan Rodriguez arrived in what we today call the New York City area in 1613. For the vast majority of Dominican Americans, the migration experience is relatively recent. Therefore, few building or physical landmarks were constructed by Dominicans, or to specifically serve the needs of the Dominican population. However, he said, that in the past half century of immigration experience there have been places that are connected to Dominican activities and events. This approach to connect places with historical memory, he felt, would be more potentially fruitful given the Dominican experience.

“By mandate, we are an entity focused on the Dominican experience, both in terms of the immigrant experience and formation of the community here in the United States as well as the broader history of Dominicans connected to the country,” he said the Institute.

#### **Section 4IV(a): Juan Rodriguez Project**

He started by talking about the Juan Rodriguez project. “It was a very interesting experience.” Around, 10 years ago, a fellow Dominican who happens to be a journalist came to the Institute for a meeting.

In passing, the journalist mentioned he had just travelled to Portugal from New York and on the plane to Lisbon the airline magazine made a mention of New York City. A page of the magazine mentioned that there was a very early Portuguese or Portuguese-origin immigrant, a black man called Juan Rodriguez who had arrived in New York City, recalled Mr. Stevens-Acevedo. “But then he passed.” The article also said that he was from Santo Domingo, but he was a Portuguese coming from Santo Domingo, he said.

“For us that was a challenge and we began to research into the matter, and we could see how, since the spelling for the name Rodriguez at that time was with an ‘s’, there was the assumption, quite

directly that he was of Portuguese origin,” he said. Since he came from Santo Domingo and had a Dominican connection, the Institute decided to research about him as an individual from the same territory that the Dominicans came from, he added.

“Because the Institute has been promoting this long-term notion of Dominican-ness, in terms of a people that began developing or forming as a multi-ethnic entity literally since Columbus arrived in the Caribbean, which is something that some Dominicans have an issue with because, they tend to argue that Dominican-ness only exists from the moment the Dominican Republic was proclaimed, a new nation-state in 1844,” he said, adding that for them, being Dominican was about the historical experience that goes back 1,300 years. “When you look at it from that point of view, it happens that the colonial experience of Dominicans is longer than the modern contemporary experience,” he said.

While researching about Juan Rodriguez, they discovered there was a Dutch-American historian in the late 1950’s, who had gone to study about the early presence of Dutch merchants, seen as part of the early wave of people from the Netherlands that traveled to the Hudson River area and what is now the northeast U.S. In passing, said Anthony, while collecting documents about these early Dutch merchants, the historian came across Juan Rodriguez and he was thorough enough to include summaries of the brief documents that mention Juan Rodriguez there. “The story of Juan Rodriguez had been subsumed after that, and kind of forgotten. Because again, this was a tiny detail in a book about early Dutch settlers,” he said.

Anthony said that in the 1950’s, 60’s and 70’s, when the Civil Rights Movement was in full swing, scholars who were trying to vindicate the history of African-Americans came across him and began to highlight his historical significance as the first black person to arrive in New York Area.

“So far as the record goes, it was indeed the case,” he said. But for the Dominicans, he was significant also because he was documented as coming from a particular territory, early colonial society, that is today, at least in terms of the continuity of the culture, what we called Dominican Republic, said Mr. Stevens-Acevedo.

So, they went after the documents in the Netherlands and recruited an early modern history Dutch specialist. “He was able to track the documents in the archives of the city of Amsterdam,” he said. They collected the documents and asked him to help them review the translations of the writings of Simon Hart, who was the historian in the late 50’s who wrote a book. “Then we got the manuscripts and a Spanish specialist in Dutch 17th century history, who happened to be working in the Netherlands, to do the translation in Spanish for the first time ever. We came up with this publication which has the original manuscripts in Dutch, the English translation and the first ever Spanish translation,” he said.

“We are not claiming we discovered Juan Rodriguez, we are claiming that we brought him back to public awareness in New York City,” noted Mr. Stevens-Acevedo.

City Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, who represents the heavily Dominican Upper Manhattan communities of Washington Heights and Inwood, proposed to the City Council to name a segment of Broadway in Upper Manhattan after Juan Rodriguez. He clarified that though Juan Rodriguez did not have a specific relationship with that place, the idea was to commemorate him. Ultimately, a segment of Broadway was officially co-named Juan Rodriguez Way.

He noted how it was an interesting experience for them, because for most people who do historical research, their writing gets confined to the shelves. However, in this case, in a matter of six months, something that they had been researching for just five years became an issue of interest for the

public, elected officials, and ended up on Broadway in Manhattan. He added how a reporter who authored an article in the New York Times on the subject, pondered whether the official date of the foundation of the city, not in terms of indigenous presence in New York, should be dated to 1613, when Rodriguez arrived. Rodriguez arrived in New York before Dutch settlement and lived closely with the indigenous Lenape people.

What began with a conversation, ended up having this very public impact; “it was an exceptional occasion.” He added that it’s meant a lot to educators, because now they can tell kids in New York City about it. He said about 10 percent of the children studying in public schools are of Dominican ancestry.

### **Section 4IV(b): Dominicans In World War II**

“A while ago, the Institute was again trying to identify testimonies, elements, memories, documents of earlier generations of Dominicans and one of our researchers, Edward De Jesus, had an interest in the history of Dominicans that fought, or tried to fight against the dictatorship of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, which went on from the 1930’s to the early 1960’s, 30 years of cruel dictatorship in the Dominican Republic,” said Mr. Stevens-Acevedo.

By looking at Dominicans who were fighting or supporting the fight against the dictatorship from New York, he came across Dominicans that went to the war. “When he began digging, all of a sudden, he discovered, more than 300 individuals, perfectly recorded in the Register of American Ancestry, who participated in World War II on behalf of the US forces, and obviously, on behalf of the democratic world that was fighting Nazism at that time.”

That was not all. They also stumbled upon another exciting discovery: a Dominican officer was member of the Tuskegee Airmen. Mr. Stevens-Acevedo narrated how this Dominican officer was a key element in a rebellion that took place against discrimination when black officers were prohibited from entering an Officers’ Club. “The protest of the black officers, which included this Dominican officer whose last name was Hotesse, became a precedent for the Civil Rights Movement in many ways,” he said.

“Participation in World War II by African-Americans is considered one of the factors that galvanized the Civil Rights Movement,” he said. Despite the sacrifice by African-Americans in the war on behalf of the United States, the country did not acknowledge them as full citizens or human beings when they returned home. “For us, it was an incredibly astonishing thing to discover that more than 300 Dominicans had participated in World War II,” and that one of them was a participant in a landmark civil rights protest.

### **Section 4IV(c): Dominican Landmarks Project**

Speaking about the Institute’s Dominican Landmarks Project, Mr. Stevens-Acevedo explained that they identified landmarks associated with Dominicans not just in the U.S., but also abroad, and plotted them on a Google Map with brief descriptions for each site. He said these places included sites such as public schools, street names, plazas and clocks.



#### **Section 4V: Discussion - Encouraging Inclusion**

Mr. Bankoff began the discussion by saying “I think you all addressed one of the chief questions, which is how to be inclusive but what are some of the challenges in being as inclusive as possible? Specifically in reaching out to people who are not used to being heard or not used to seeing that the history you’re speaking about is theirs.”

Ms. Allen said that one of their biggest problems is the language barrier. She said when visitors hear tours in their native language, they are both shocked and pleased.

Ms. Martinez suggested the answer was through outreach and access. Though social media helps, she said there was also a lot of walking in the neighborhood, putting flyers out there and having different kinds of forums that engage people. Recalling her experience of how people would walk by The Bronx Music Heritage Center storefront and not come in despite it being free, she said, people mistook the place for something else. People, she said, had different experiences of the same place. “People aren’t normally going to just walk in to a museum or a space like that. You have to figure out how to woo them, whether it is [using] different languages, different sorts of programming outside, or something that can make people more interactive. I think it just takes a little bit more innovation in thinking about how to get people in, and hear their voices and into the story,” she said.

As a former political community activist in the Washington Heights neighborhood, Mr. Stevens-Acevedo felt it was important to connect with opinion-makers or trendsetters in the community and elected officials. Imagine New York Mayor Bill de Blasio becoming a champion of a cause. “It will make a difference,” he said.

Giving an example of one of their projects, Ms. Aponte suggested open source resources for the public.

A member from the audience asked how one can create this sense of history, when at the same time it was disappearing through our fingers. There are low-income communities of color in New York and before the panelists had an earlier discussion about how the Village was saved, but that’s not the case for East Harlem, Inwood, The Bronx, and other communities, she said.

Mr. Stevens-Acevedo responded by observing how Dominicans in New York were a population in flux and gentrification, especially, has pushed many Dominicans to The Bronx and other areas. The Bronx now has the largest Dominican community outside the Dominican Republic. This he said, was a challenge, because Dominicans as a population were constantly on the move when compared to other communities that were stable, and were there much earlier. These communities had constructed places or have places associated with their historic memory as a result of that. This is accepted by the larger society, he said. Since it was difficult to create landmarks, Mr. Stevens-Acevedo suggested having plaques in places that we know are significant to the story of the Dominicans, and said “the education system could do a lot.”

“I was a school teacher for 10 years. The education system could do a lot to enforce and stimulate a vigorous, energetic and healthy historical memory for our younger generations.” He advocated for knocking on the doors of places like the Department of Education, and to try to raise “awareness among young people of the need to include a little bit more of the historical memory.” This would help create a healthier memory of their community’s connection with the larger society among the younger generation.

Ms. Allen agreed it's often the kids who can get their parents interested too, just like that little boy outside the King Manor Museum.

## **Section 5: CONDUCTING ORAL HISTORIES**

Liz Strong is the Oral History Program Manager for the New York Preservation Archive Project (NYPAP)<sup>27</sup>. In her time with NYPAP she has run two oral history initiatives with preservationists in New York City, Saving Preservation Stories and Through the Legal Lens. She also wrote NYPAP's introductory guide on Oral History & Preservation. Since 2017, she has also served as Project Coordinator for the Brooklyn Historical Society's Muslims in Brooklyn public history project. She earned an MA in Oral History from Columbia University in 2015.

Ms. Strong introduced the overarching goal to showing how oral history provides useful tools for historic preservation of cultural sites and introducing the audience to the first steps in collecting and sharing oral histories. She explained that there is one inherent challenge to recording preservation history: advocates and those working on the ground to preserve their neighborhoods are often concerned first and foremost with their work to achieve landmark or National Register status, which typically spans a long period of time, that they do not take the time to record their work. Thus, the efforts themselves are kept in people's memories and are never written down.

"Oral history is a very strong tool for filling the gaps in the written record and integrating personal narratives with established sources of public knowledge," said Ms. Strong. The goal of oral histories for preservation campaigns is to help others learn from past efforts and, therefore, to provide and share resources amongst like-minded individuals and groups.

### **Section 5I: The Power of Oral History**

Leyla Vural, an oral historian, is currently interviewing LGBTQ New Yorkers for the Stonewall Oral History Project<sup>28</sup> and conducting an oral history project with scientists for The Rockefeller University. In 2017, she interviewed neighborhood activists in working-class communities and communities of color for the New York Preservation Archive Project and spent three weeks in Ireland, interviewing folklorists, musicians, craftspeople, and historians for a series of cultural audio tours. The Hannah Arendt Center for Politics and Humanities at Bard College selected Leyla's 2016 piece on ethical listening as a "favorite essay." She holds a Ph.D. in geography from Rutgers University and an MA in oral history from Columbia University.

#### **Section 5I(a): What Is Oral History?**

Ms. Vural explained that sharing stories is probably the oldest tradition in the world, so in a sense, oral history is the oldest way of sharing knowledge. When done professionally, oral historians record interviews to share and save for posterity. The formal field began in 1948 with the founding of the Columbia Center for Oral History at Columbia University. However, in the 1930's, the Works Progress Administration was funding interviews, particularly in the American south. For instance, author Zora Neale Hurston was an interviewer for the WPA, and a book titled 'Barracoon' was just published in 2018 documenting Hurston's work to record the life story of the last living slave in Mississippi at the time.

Oral histories are about listening, starting from the assumption that every person has knowledge that is valuable and that only they possess. An interviewer must speak with their subject without judgment. "There's lots of stuff that you can learn about a place by looking it up," said Ms. Vural. "But it's often only people inside their own lived experience who can tell you what a place means,

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<sup>27</sup> For more information, see <https://www.nypap.org/>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

<sup>28</sup> For more information, see <https://gaycenter.org/stonewall-histories/>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

and that's what oral history has to bring to any number of subjects." She explained that interesting things arise from listening to others, and often there is more than one meaning inherent to a place.

### **Section 5I(b): Seeing the Whole Picture**

To illustrate this, Ms. Vural showcased her work on an oral history project documenting the significance of the Stonewall Inn after its designation as a National Monument in 2016. Part of the National Park Service effort around the site is to include the collection of interpretive materials, so they have funded an oral history project. A team of oral historians is interviewing dozens of LGBT New Yorkers as part of the effort. The interviewee group is defined broadly; it includes not just people present at the uprising in 1969 and the liberation march one year later (America's first Gay Pride March), but also those who can help to capture what LGBT life was like in the 1960's and 1970's before and after those events. Once the project is complete, the interviews will be available to the public at the LGBT Community Center<sup>29</sup>.

For this project, Ms. Vural interviewed a black transgender woman who spoke with resentment about how Stonewall is remembered. "She talked about it as 'white ink' because she felt like the story that people tend to know is about white gay men and she felt that she and her closest friends and tightest community are left out of that story," said Ms. Vural. This illustrates how people can perceive historic sites differently, highlighting how complicated the history field is and raising the question of what to do with stories that are contested or whose complexities are little known. These complexities are brought to light through oral history. Ms. Vural shared a quote from Alessandro Portelli, a guru of oral history who has done a lot of work in Italy and the United States: "The essential art of the oral historian is the art of listening."

When doing oral histories, one has to work under the assumption that people are the experts on their own lives and the interviewer is asking them to share that expertise. The question is what to do with the information retrieved. Sharing the transcripts and audio with the interviewee is important, but it is also important to make the information available to others for the future. "I think oral history is a really beautiful practice," said Ms. Vural. "And part of that is because they're often really intimate. You sit quietly in a room and ask people to tell you what they know and in my experience, most people, if you give them the time and space and they don't feel judged, are really poetic about what they know."

She then played two clips of interviews she had conducted. The first was with one of the current owners of the Stonewall Inn, who was not the owner during the uprising and was not present for that event. Her account of what Stonewall means to people captures beautifully what the place represents, however, and this could not be captured another way, partially because most people do not write with the same passion and ease with which they speak. The other clip was from another interview she performed as part of an oral history project for Hart Island, where roughly one million New Yorkers have been buried since the Civil War era. The interviewee was a man who had been present for a memorial on the island that was led by Picture the Homeless. The man describes what it was like to witness this memorial, which was extremely moving for him. Ms. Vural explained that the emotion in his account is very powerful, and famously described by author Louis "Studs" Terkel as "the feeling tone."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> For more information, see <https://gaycenter.org/arts-culture/collection/>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

<sup>30</sup> Louis "Studs" Terkel (1912-2008) was, according to NPR's obituary, a "legendary oral historian, author and radio personality." The obituary states: "For nearly half a century, Terkel crisscrossed the country interviewing people from all walks of life about war, their jobs and a variety of other subjects. His conversations with the prominent and the uncelebrated became books that chronicled much of the history of the 20th century. Terkel often said that America suffers from what he described as a sort of 'national Alzheimer's disease', so he wrote books such as *Working, Hard*

## Section 5I(c): Stories Can Unlock History

Ms. Strong asked the audience if any of them had tried to document the history of sites they have fought for in some way or to access oral histories to learn more about the history of their sites. One audience member stated that he worked on preserving Sterling Forest, a 22,000-acre tract of land in Warwick, NY (Orange County), and as part of that effort, interviewed and recorded an older man whose family had managed a manor house on the property for many generations. He told him a story that George Washington had come to the house on the day the American Revolution ended, March 19, 1783. He thought this would be an important story to tell in the effort to raise \$100 million to preserve the property, so he went to the chief historian at West Point, who refuted that claim since Washington was known to be 40 miles away on that day. So, they brought the old man to West Point and the historian there brought out a bunch of old documents and found that he was actually correct, that Washington had in fact gone to Sterling Forest to meet with General Benjamin Lincoln to work on prisoner of war exchanges. So, the group conveyed this story to then-Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, who made the funding possible.

“This was meant to be a conservation project, but the history really delivered tremendous results,” he said. Ms. Strong agreed that this was a great example and “shows the relationship oral histories have to written records, and that these things don’t exist separately; they have to be in conversation with each other. Often oral histories will bring something to the fore that has been overlooked or can fill a gap that existed where it hadn’t been documented completely.”

## Section 5II: How to Start a Project and Share Interviews

Ms. Strong encouraged the audience to get involved in doing oral history projects. She handed out copies of a resource guide created by the New York Preservation Archive Project (NYPAP). The guide is also available to download for free from NYPAP’s website.<sup>31</sup> A few key concepts from the guide include:

- Determine project goals - with limited resources, focus on people whose voices have not already been recorded and how to capture these stories and disseminate them.
- Determine the ideal audience and how best to reach them – this will inform how to allocate resources, who to conduct interviews with and how to capture them (video, audio, transcripts, etc.)
- Don’t be overwhelmed - when starting out in the field, experience is the best teacher and you can start with small projects. Set priorities and learn from your own mistakes and the mistakes of others.
- Perform preliminary research - have the grounding so that you know what the holes in the story might be beforehand. Review existing records. Meet as many people as you can who are connected to the site in question, especially people who would be good sources of information. Community outreach is just as important as archival research.
- Find potential narrators - the best way to do this is through references.
- Always have a legal release - find out the necessary permissions. Under copyright law, the interviewee has the rights to their story and to any transcript made of that story. Permission is also required for publishing stories online, the use of audio clips, etc. Sample release

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*Times* and his Pulitzer Prize winner, *The Good War* - oral histories of labor, the Great Depression and World War II, respectively - to help jog the nation’s memory.” (<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=94573985>). Last accessed 1/7/2020.

<sup>31</sup> The manual is available in PDF format by following this link: <http://www.nypap.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/nypapOralHistoryAndPreservation1.pdf>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

forms can be found in the book ‘Oral History and the Law’ by John A. Neuenschwander. It is very important to get the narrator’s signature in person.

Ms. Strong suggested that having a plan for how to share the stories you have collected will inform how you allocate resources and how you conduct the interview. Will it be filed in an archive or used for a community event? What is the role that this oral history plays? To illustrate this point, she shared two video clips showing how those goals inform the interviews that NYPAP has done. The first was conducted by Ms. Vural, a professional oral historian who has professional recording equipment, understands how to get a quality recording and how to ask questions eliciting the most information. The other was conducted by a volunteer with expertise in the subject matter of the interview, so he was able to share with the narrator some experience in what they were talking about.

After the clips were played, Ms. Strong explained the difference between them. “The volunteer asked a beautiful follow-up question that helps the audience understand something very important. He’s imagining the audience is going to be preservationists, he knows well the person he’s speaking to is a lawyer,” she said. “However, the recording is pretty bad. He says “uh-huh” a lot, he’s coughing and sniffing a lot, he’s shuffling through papers a lot, so...this causes a lot of distractions.” She explained that these distractions do not leave enough silence for the interviewee to open up. Such social cues indicate that the interviewer is waiting for the interviewee to wrap up what they are saying so that they may have a turn to speak. Instead, it is best to create a space for the interviewee’s ideas to take shape.

As a case study, Ms. Strong shared about how NYPAP makes their resources available to the public. The organization has an extensive online collection of oral histories and a database of major preservation battles, sites and individuals in New York City. The goal is to have preservationists and researchers make use of this online tool to learn from the past and inform their work in the future. The website also includes other resources and walks visitors through the steps for conducting oral histories. She explained that while it is important to have oral histories be as accessible as possible, it is also important to plan for how to bring them out of the archives, such as pulling excerpts and planning public programs to showcase them.

## **Section 5II(a): Strategies for Capturing Oral Histories**

Obden Mondesir, Oral History Project Manager at the Weeksville Heritage Center<sup>32</sup>, is currently interviewing residents from the Kingsborough Public housing Community. In 2017 he conducted interviews with long-time Crown Heights residents for the Voices of Crown Heights Oral History Project<sup>33</sup>. He holds a dual MA in Library Sciences and History from Queens College.

## **Section 5II(b): The Interview Process**

Mr. Mondesir explained the proper, professional process for recording oral histories. Each one requires roughly four hours of research before conducting the actual interview. The parts of this work include:

1. Defining the project goal, within which are categories of inquiry—knowing which issues are best to cover and to formulate the questions accordingly. The final list of questions should be sent to the interviewee ahead of the interview.

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<sup>32</sup> For more information, see <https://www.weeksvillesociety.org/>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

<sup>33</sup> For more information, see <https://oralhistory.brooklynhistory.org/collections/voices-of-crown-heights-oral-histories/>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

2. Pre-interview phone call with the “narrator” to develop a connection. The interview process is an inexact science, so if interviewer and interviewee meet on the day of the interview and do not get along, it can change the outcome of the interview. In this pre-interview conversation, the interviewer should ask if there are things the interviewer should know beforehand, if there are any topics the interviewee would rather avoid, and should explain the process itself and why the interviewee is being interviewed.

### **Section 5II(c): Tips for the Interview**

- Choose a quiet place. The interviewee’s place of residence is a good choice, as they will be most comfortable there.
- Test the sound in the room and the recording device before you record. Sound quality is very important, so make sure there are no distracting sounds in the space.
- Always bring two recording devices, just in case. When ready to record, put the recorder as close to the interviewee as possible.
- At the start of the interview, make small talk before hitting record, then begin the recording with the “slate” (date, time, and location). Announcing when the recording is beginning tends to make people nervous, so beginning the interview by referencing topics that you have spoken with them about already is a good strategy.
- The best interviews are chronological in their story arc.
- Ask open-ended, personal questions that invite a story. Ask follow-up questions and make sure to get specifics about details of the conversation (locations, dates) so that those listening years from now will understand.
- Try not to react and not to ask a lot of questions. Silence is golden, as it gives people time to think and reflect. As an interviewer, you may hear something you disagree with, but it is important to let the interviewee speak their ideology no matter how untrue you think it is.
- Only ask one question at a time. Avoid asking multiple questions at once, even if they are related, since people will inevitably forget the questions.
- Schedule interviews for no more than two to three hours. Most interviews do not take this long, but it allows for a buffer. It is best not to go over two hours since being an active listener takes a lot of concentration and you as an interviewer will be tired.
- Do not turn off the recorder until the last minute. Sometimes the best stories come in the “chit-chat” or follow-up after the interview is over.
- Make sure to take a picture of the interviewee at the end of the interview.
- Make sure the interviewee signs a legal release form at the time of the interview. It can be difficult to track them down later.
- Transcribe the interview as quickly as possible and send to the interviewee for them to review. It is important for them to approve the interview, especially if it included sensitive topics.
- Afterwards, send the interviewee a thank-you letter along with the interview in multiple formats (transcription and recording) and any relevant information pertaining to the interview, like a link to the website where the interview will be published.

### **Section 5III: Discussion**

The members of the audience were asked to do a “mock interview” with the person sitting next to them. They were asked to tell their neighbor about a cultural site with which they had experiences or memories. The point of the exercise was to practice listening. After the group engaged in this exercise, Mr. Mondesir invited people to share what they had learned from their neighbor. He then asked those neighbors to share how it felt having their words summarized for the group and whether

they learned anything new about their own story. One participant offered that “it was interesting to hear someone’s response — what details they may pick up from it and how their perspective may inform the narrative. It helps you figure out what to focus on or what to emphasize for future projects, as well.” Ms. Strong added that oral history interviews are unique in interviewing. “We really focus on understanding as much as we can who the person is, so [getting a person’s biography beforehand] really helps future researchers understand this person as a historical source material, not as a piece of paper.” She emphasized that the richest resources for the future come from an understanding of who a person is and then grounding the information they give you about a site in that biographical information.

One audience member offered that social media is a really important aspect of today’s world, and asked if there are any good examples of how to get information out on social media. Ms. Vural responded that the best way is by publishing short clips. She gave an example of a recent clip posted on social media of President Obama talking about the 2008 election. It was only a few minutes from a much longer interview, but he spoke of his experience of winning the election while sitting next to his mother-in-law, and what it meant to see his victory through her eyes. She explained that oral history should never be boiled down to a Tweet, but making choices about what is important to convey over social media can make it a powerful platform for showcasing compelling stories.



## Section 6: EXAMINING CASE STUDIES

Anthony C. Wood is a preservationist, author, teacher, historian, and grant maker. Currently the Executive Director of the Ittleson Foundation, he has worked for the J. M. Kaplan Fund, the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, and the Municipal Art Society. For over 20 years, he was a member of the Adjunct Faculty of the Historic Preservation Program at the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture Planning and Preservation. He is the author of *Preserving New York: Winning the Right to Protect a City's Landmarks*.

Mr. Wood began the session with a bit of background about the preservation field, stating that preservation efforts tend to sponsor other preservation efforts. Even the title of this conference, “Beyond Bricks and Mortar: Rethinking Sites of Cultural History,” shows how preservationists have been “rethinking” and considering the meaning and power of sites of cultural significance for generations. In fact, a conference very similar to this one in 1996, entitled “History Happened Here” followed a series of cultural preservation issues and battles in the 1980’s and 1990’s, including efforts to save the Dvořák House, Audubon Ballroom, Pier 54, Ellis Island’s hospital complex, Lüchow’s Restaurant and the African Burial Ground. Following that conference, a new organization called Place Matters<sup>34</sup> was founded to continue the work of identifying and celebrating culturally significant places in New York City. The purpose was to have a conversation on how this issue has evolved; what has not changed, what needs to change and what the future might hold.

### Section 6I: The African Burial Ground Monument

Peggy King Jorde is a cultural projects consultant, commemorative justice strategist and formerly among the lead project executives to the U.S. General Services Administration on the preservation and memorialization of the New York African Burial Ground. Having served in the City’s Mayor’s Office of Construction providing oversight of capital construction projects for New York’s premiere cultural institutions, King Jorde was the first to meet with Mayor David N. Dinkins making him aware of the threat against the sacred site which would ultimately be preserved due to its national historic significance. During a City Hall press conference, Mayor Dinkins named her his Special Adviser to the African Burial Ground. Subsequently King Jorde served as Executive Director for the Federal Steering Committee appointed by Congress to draft a plan for memorialization. Later King Jorde was appointed Project Executive leading federal memorialization efforts to implement a national design competition for the memorial and interpretive center. A former Loeb Fellow at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design, King Jorde is currently working with a British-based film documentary company and community organizer(s) to rebury more than 300 unearthened remains stored in a prison facility for the past 10 years while protecting the site against further development

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<sup>34</sup> According to the Place Matters website, “The idea for Place Matters evolved from City Lore’s Endangered Spaces project and a Municipal Art Society (MAS) taskforce on encouraging protection for places that are vital to New York City’s history and traditions but not necessarily architecturally distinguished. City Lore took part in the taskforce, and teamed up with MAS to hold the History Happened Here conference in 1996. The excitement created by that day of discussion led to the ongoing City Lore-MAS collaboration on the Place Matters Project, and its focus on a multiplicity of ways to promote and advocate for special places. Place Matter’s founders and codirectors were Laura Hansen, Ned Kaufman, Marci Reaven, and Steve Zeitlin. Place Matters draws its staff from its two sponsoring organizations, and works with many consultants, interns, and collaborating organizations.”

The organization’s mission is stated as such: “The Place Matters mission is to foster the conservation of New York City’s historically and culturally significant places. These are places that hold memories and anchor traditions for individuals and communities, and that help tell the history of the city as a whole. We are convinced that such places promote the well-being of New York’s many communities in ways that too often go unrecognized. Our process begins with surveying New Yorkers to learn about the places they care about. We follow up with educational programs and advocacy to promote and protect these places and others like them.” Visit <https://www.placematters.net/> for more information.

threatening an estimated 8000 burials of once enslaved Africans on the remote island of St. Helena, a British Territory in the South Atlantic.

### **Section 6I(a): Project Background**

Ms. King Jorde explained how she got involved with the monument, the steps taken to preserve the site, the challenges in protecting it, engaging the public and lessons learned. Ironically, at the time she worked within Mayor Dinkins' Office of Construction, whose mission to promote construction and create jobs, is seemingly at odds with the preservation of a historically and culturally significant site.

In June 1989, Manhattan Community Board 1 approved a resolution requiring the federal government to go through ULURP (Uniform Land Use Review Procedure) in any construction at 290 Broadway (between Duane and Reade Streets) and the Five Points Court Annex project. The federal government, which began planning the project two years prior, wanted to avoid the public review process for fear of delays. It was considered the largest civic building project in Manhattan at a cost of \$500 million. "Part of the strategy on the part of the federal government was to engage in a 'friendly condemnation' of the site," said Ms. King Jorde. This "friendly condemnation," an agreement made between the City of New York and the federal government, was in place of a transfer, which would have required public review. This agreement "would allow them to avoid any public review for the most part, so that meant you didn't get reviewed by a Community Board, you didn't get reviewed by City Planning or by the Board of Estimate," according to Ms. King Jorde.

She explained that there would have been an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared for the site, which would reveal the site's history and what it had been used for in the past.

Then, New York City elected its first African-American mayor, David N. Dinkins. By around 1990, Ms. King Jorde was working in the Mayor's Office of Construction, and was contacted by a friend who worked for the Parks Department, who alerted her to the presence of the African Burial Ground as evidenced in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared for 290 Broadway. The map in the EIS showed how the site was to be developed and the report pointed out that the area was home to an African burial site. He suggested that since Ms. King Jorde was working for an African-American mayor, she could convey that this building project must be stopped. He left her with the EIS to borrow and nudged her for weeks about following up. Ms. King Jorde was apprehensive about it since it was not within her purview, so she tried to pass the issue off to the Office of African-American Affairs, but the City was downsizing its staff and there were few people to ask. She began to do some research and reached out to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to speak to their archaeologist. "At the time, it was something that was not being pushed in government and not very many people in the community knew about it, but it was intriguing," said Ms. King Jorde.

### **Section 6I(b): Lessons Learned: Reflect on and Never Discount the Power of Your Own Perspective and Personal Story**

The archaeologists contracted by the government were asked not to talk about the site's history and not to refer to the site as a burial ground. Empowered by her research and information from the LPC, Ms. King Jorde became insulted by the federal government's orders to dismiss the existence of history or the potential for history on the site due, in part, to her own upbringing. "I'm from southwest Georgia. My story is that I grew up in a segregated south. My father was a Civil Rights attorney and my mother was an educator. So, I brought to that moment, my personal experience to

that denial of history and I imagined what it would be like if everything that I knew that my parents had done through the Civil Rights Movement had been a waste...because it was about keeping a project on schedule, on time, within budget,” relayed Ms. King Jorde. “What propelled me was my personal story, so I would say to anybody to use their personal story on sites that are very important to you.”

### **Section 6I(c): Lessons Learned: Become Literate and Incorporate All the Facets of a Site’s Significance into Your Research**

According to Ms. King Jorde, “meaningful sites have various facets of significance, and what is meaningful to you may not have the same resonance to others.” Learn as much as possible about the project: who, what, when, and where. Ms. King Jorde stated that as she learned more about who was involved in the development project and attended meetings, she asked more and more questions. One question she posed was why there were no professionals of color involved on the site, and insisted that the handling of the site involve members of the descendant community.

- Generate memos and release pictures to the press.
- Organize community members and meet with elected officials to share information and prepare them for meetings with the community to rally others. To keep others focused, show them what success would look like if the site is preserved.
- Once the community is on board, seeking protections under preservation laws becomes a lot easier.

Mr. Wood informed the audience that there was a fascinating four-part documentary produced in 1994 entitled “The African Burial Ground: An American Discovery,” and encouraged the audience to view it to learn more.<sup>35</sup>

### **Section 6II: The Stonewall Inn**

Jay Shockley is a founder and co-director of the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project. He retired in 2015 as senior historian at the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission where since 1979 he researched and wrote over 100 designation reports covering all aspects of the city’s architectural, social, and cultural history. In 1993, he helped pioneer the concept of recognizing LGBT place-based history by incorporating it into the Commission’s reports, and co-created the 1994 map “A Guide to Lesbian & Gay New York Historical Landmarks” as part of the Organization of Lesbian and Gay Architects + Designers. He is also a widely published author on architecture, LGBT history and cultural heritage.

### **Section 6II(a): Significance of the Site**

Today it is one of the most officially recognized buildings in the United States, but it was not so easy to get to this point. In April 1969, the City’s LPC designated the Greenwich Village Historic

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<sup>35</sup> Summary from IMDB: “Part One, The Search, explores the search and discovery of the African Burial Ground in Lower Manhattan. It examines the archaeological dig that resulted in unearthing the remains of some 400 African men, women and children. Part Two, a History, presents the never-before-told-story of the history of Africans and African Americans in New York City from 1613 until July 4th, 1827—NYC’s Emancipation Day. Part Three, Politics and the People, documents the impact of local citizens upon the African Burial Ground. Witnessing the conflict between the “the people” and an agency of the United States Government, this segment highlights an essential and important civics lesson: how citizens can change the course of history. Part Four, An Open Window, presents the long-range impact of the African Burial Ground and its greater cultural effect on art, literature, history, science and education in the United States.” ([https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4676560/plotsummary?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_pl](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4676560/plotsummary?ref_=tt_ov_pl)). Last accessed 1/7/2020.

District<sup>36</sup>, then Manhattan's biggest historic district. So, two months before the uprising at the Stonewall, the building in which the Stonewall Inn existed was protected as part of that district, which marks its first level of protection based purely on architectural merit. The district's designation report describes the building as two 19th century stable buildings combined in 1930 with a stucco façade.

The Stonewall Inn was a bar that allowed same-sex couples to dance together. Police raids were common, but over six nights in June of 1969, people fought back. "This became an iconic piece of the Gay Rights struggle for several reasons: there had been several other episodes in several other cities around the United States that were one-time-only that only lasted for a few hours — this occurred over the course of six days. It was widely noticed not only in New York, but elsewhere," said Mr. Shockley. "Whereas the Gay Rights struggle before that had only entailed activism by several hundred people nationally, after this, immediately new organizations, young people got involved and hundreds of Gay Rights groups were founded across the United States." One year later, on the anniversary of the uprising, a march was held that would become the first Gay Pride March, making the Stonewall Inn one of the most central locations to the struggle.

### **Section 6II(b): The Long Road to Recognition**

Greenwich Village, which included the Stonewall site, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in June 1979, ten years after the uprising and also ten years after the city designated the building as part of the Greenwich Village Historic District, marking its second level of protection.

In 1994, a short-lived group called the Organization of Lesbian and Gay Architects and Designers (OLGAD) put together a map of landmarks associated with LGBT people. As a side effort, for the 25th anniversary of Stonewall in 1994, Gale Harris of the LPC reached out to the National Park Service (NPS) to inquire about listing the site as a National Historic Landmark. The listing did not occur for two reasons: to be listed, the family that owned the building had to approve the listing, which they did not, and the NPS response was quite negative. There were bureaucratic requirements that a site had to be listed on the National Register before being listed as a National Historic Landmark, and there were delays in lining up such a nomination to the National Register with the 25th anniversary, namely, that no one in the history of the United States had ever tried to have a LGBT site recognized in this way, so there was no written gay history and no historical background that could be referenced or determined in time. The NPS also stated that the successes of the Gay Rights Movement were limited and too recent to be recognized in this way.

Five years later, for the 30th anniversary, a new organization at the Department of the Interior had been formed called GLOBE (Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual Employees), which wanted to initiate an effort to have the Stonewall Inn listed on the National Register. Crucially, John Barry, the openly gay Assistant Secretary of the Interior under President Clinton, was supportive of the effort. GLOBE contacted Andrew Scott Dolkart, preservationist and architectural historian, the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, which became the sponsor of the nomination, and hired David Carter, who was in the process of writing a book about Stonewall.

Mr. Dolkart, with assistance from Mr. Shockley and research from Mr. Carter, wrote the nomination to the National Register. "The nomination still faced three major hurdles. It was the first attempt to get an LGBT site listed, which had a very negative prior response from the federal government for the vernacular nature of the building itself," said Mr. Shockley. At the time, most

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<sup>36</sup> The LPC designation report is accessible at <http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/lp/0489.pdf>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

buildings were listed for their architectural importance and integrity. “Then the other crucial hurdle was still the ownership consent that was needed, and very specifically, that anything that’s listed on the National Register has to have a period of significance that is 50 years or prior, and this was only 30 years for significance of the Stonewall events.”

“Exceptions are sometimes made for exceptional significance,” said Mr. Shockley. “Luckily, the New York State Historic Preservation Office was very amenable and extraordinarily creative. They determined that the nomination was focused solely on the significance of Stonewall to LGBT history, proving exceptional significance within the history of broader American and International Civil Rights Movements, and the merits of the building itself did not have to be addressed since it was already listed in the historic district on the National Register.”

The SHPO devised a brilliant strategy to get around the ownership consent issue. Based on a model used for the listing of Civil War battlefields, the surrounding streets where the rebellion took place would also be included within the National Register boundaries in order to broaden the story, but also to ensure more owner support. In this way, 50 percent of the property (Christopher Park and the streets themselves) was owned by the City of New York, so owner consent was not an issue. In 1999, the nomination yielded a successful listing on the State and National Registers, and was then fast-tracked to be made a National Historic Landmark in 2000, which was largely because of political support in Washington, D.C., at the time. Stonewall remained the only LGBT-related site listed on the National Register for 12 years until the Franklin Kameny House in Washington, D.C. was listed, and the only LGBT-related National Historic Landmark in the United States until 2015, when the Henry Gerber House in Chicago received the recognition. Today, there are over 93,500 sites listed on the National Register, but only 19 sites are listed for their LGBT associations, and only four National Historic Landmarks.

### **Section 6II(c): Becoming NYC’s First LGBT Landmark**

In 2009, Mr. Shockley became the first person to publicly advocate that Stonewall be designated an Individual Landmark by the LPC, where he was then working as an architectural historian. Internally, the LPC staff was wholeheartedly on board and many community groups were in favor, but the LPC’s management did not act, stating that it was already protected as part of the Greenwich Village Historic District. Off the record, however, the LPC’s real reason for not wanting to designate the Stonewall Inn was their reticence in regulating architecturally undistinguished buildings. In the meantime, other American cities were surpassing New York in their protection of LGBT landmarks.

A strong movement got underway by community and advocacy groups to protect Stonewall, which was coupled with national advances in gay marriage rights. These events finally pushed the LPC to act, and Stonewall was designated a NYC Individual Landmark in June 2015<sup>37</sup>. It is the city’s first official LGBT-associated landmark. “This is particularly crucial, because of all the statuses that I’ve described, the NYC designation as an Individual Landmark is the only protection this building has at all. All of its federal status does not regulate the building,” said Mr. Shockley. The local designation is technically the only protection this building has from being irreparably damaged, altered or demolished, as its Federal status is purely honorific and its inclusion in the historic district provides less protection than an Individual Landmark (in 1989, for instance, the LPC allowed the now-famous vertical neon sign that read “Stonewall” to be removed).

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<sup>37</sup> The LPC designation report is accessible at <http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/lp/2574.pdf>. Last accessed 1/7/2020.

Between 2010 and 2016, the National Parks Conservation Association (a private not-for-profit organization that advocates on behalf of the NPS) launched a campaign to have Stonewall named a National Monument. In June of 2016, President Obama signed off on the same boundaries established by the National Register listing in 1999. However, this was also honorific, since the Federal government has to own the sites of National Monuments, which they do not. The City ceded the ownership of the triangle in front of the Stonewall Inn (Christopher Park) to the Federal government, so the actual monument is Christopher Park, not the building itself, which remains privately owned. One final designation came in 2016, when New York's Governor, Andrew Cuomo, declared Stonewall a State Historic Site. "That's purely symbolic because all other State Historic Sites are owned by the State," according to Mr. Shockley.

### **Section 6III: Discussion**

Anthony Wood: Jay, what made the designation of Stonewall happen after so much time? Was it the political events, the political climate we're now in, is that really what you think may have finally happened at the LPC, which had been reluctant to go down this path?

Jay Shockley: Many things came together, including political support and robust community advocacy. I left the LPC staff before it was designated an Individual Landmark, and it had become almost embarrassing for the LPC not to do something. It was almost coming across as homophobic, avoiding it. Here it was, about to be declared a National Monument, and it wasn't a City landmark. So, it was the combination of political will and advocacy from different groups.

AW: Peggy, would it be easier today to protect the African Burial Ground? Do you think there would be a more responsive attitude and quicker recognition of its importance or not?

Peggy King Jorde: The needle might be a little farther ahead today, but it set the stage for the protection of other burial grounds around the country. New York City is a hard nut to crack since there are so many distractions to create a groundswell. Our experience was that the LPC was behind it; they just needed political fuel behind it.

AW: There was a comment earlier that in order for these things to happen, the people have to do a citizen's arrest. That seems to be a shared narrative from both of these case studies: a demand coming from distinct groups of people wanting their history recognized. There was a conference in 1996, referenced earlier today, in which the concept of cultural landmarks was discussed. I wonder if those of us who have been thinking about this for a long time have been thinking of this as a category of sites, but each one needs a constituency to perform the citizen's arrest. I'm wondering if we elevate the conversation of cultural landmarks, does that make it easier for these distinct buildings and places to be advanced.

PKJ: Amen! Absolutely. That's exactly what it requires: vigilance. I didn't mean to weigh people down with my history, but people come from a very personal place, no matter what hat you happen to be wearing. In my role as the Mayor's special adviser, when people woke up to this issue, they pointed to me. It's really not a lack of interest, it's getting people to focus on something you consider important and fostering political will.

AW: Jay, one thing you mentioned that I found fascinating was the creativity displayed by staff people in various governmental agencies to go around traditional obstacles.

JS: There is a common misperception by many people in the preservation community in New York about how the LPC functions. Really, the agency is comprised of three different bodies: the mayoral

appointees, the administrative staff and the rest of the staff. When Commission-bashing happens, people need to make the distinction between the administrative narrative and what the staff is actually doing. It is not the staff of the LPC that resists any of these decisions. During the 35 years I was there, the staff members were the leading advocates, but didn't have the power to designate or push anything forward.

AW: I don't want to bash the LPC, but encourage the LPC to move forward.

PKJ: Thank you for clarifying that. The LPC staff was amazing at the time I was working to protect the African Burial Ground. When you talk about creativity, there was activism within internal government.

JS: When they discovered the boundaries of the burial ground, they were much bigger than what was ultimately protected. The LPC did speak up about that, and that was a proud moment for the agency to create the first-ever archaeological historic district in the city.

AW: There has always been that regulatory red herring: how do we designate sites without an architectural mandate behind them? We don't know how to regulate them.

JS: There is a very simple answer to that, which is not discussed in New York enough. When the National Historic Preservation Act passed in 1966, the government unveiled the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, which were very straightforward. If a site is not architecturally distinguished, it is designated for its intactness and regulated according to that. An early designation I wrote was for the Apollo Theater in Harlem, which almost did not happen because the administration of the LPC determined that it was not a high style theater, even though it was 100% intact as a 1914 theater and preeminent culturally. The administration considered it a "no-style" building, and there was this feeling that no one would care because it is in Harlem. They thought that a plaque would be sufficient to honor it. The LPC staff finally won the day — we got both the interior and the exterior designated, which is extraordinary looking back on it — but that was when the staff had a bigger voice. The simple answer is to go to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. You don't need to reinvent the wheel.

One audience member asked about the controversy regarding the flagpole outside of the Stonewall Inn, and whether the flagpole is part of the National Monument. Mr. Shockley responded that he was not completely sure and that this would be a question for New York City's Parks Department, but offered that last year, advocates in Greenwich Village wanted the rainbow flag to fly on a pre-existing flagpole in Christopher Park, across the street from the Stonewall. The NPS agreed to accommodate that, but right before the official dedication ceremony, the Trump administration prohibited it from happening. The Parks Department determined that the federal government's ownership of the monument was limited to within the cast-iron fence and the flagpole was just outside of that. "Whether that's real or a very clever political decision, I still don't really know, but the ceremony happened and the rainbow flag is there today, and all of the NPS regional employees showed up at the ceremony, but they were absolutely forbidden to say a word," said Mr. Shockley.

Mr. Wood asked if the panelists have any advice for audience members working to protect undesignated cultural landmarks. Mr. Shockley suggested strong advocacy. He stated that he founded the LGBT Historic Sites Project three years ago, and through that process, is convinced more and more that thus far, designations have been geographically based and, therefore, advocacy for their designation comes from surrounding community members. He stated that he feels strongly that cultural, rather than geographic, communities must form to protect cultural landmarks, such as, for instance, sites associated with women. He added that the Research Department at the LPC is great, but that the staff is trained in architectural history, not social or cultural history, so they have

the research skills, but any resources that can be provided to them to prove cultural significance would be extremely helpful.

Ms. King Jorde responded to this same question by saying that what she found critical with the African Burial Ground was the lack of inclusion in terms of interpretation. The site was only physical underground, not something people could see and also was not located in a black community, so it was especially hard to rally people around its protection. But, during a meeting with the General Services Administration in which she was representing the Mayor's office, around the table were archaeologists talking about the site, one of whom was quoted in *The New York Times* as saying that the 17th century description of the site, including drumming and everything else, was probably the beginning of jazz. "It was such a naïve statement and the only reason why something like that can get away from you is because you haven't included the people and professionals or authorities who might correct something like that or put something like that in check. And in that meeting, I looked around the table and I was the only person of color, and I said 'where are your archaeologists and historians of color, of African-American descent?' and they said 'Well, we couldn't find any,'" said Ms. King Jorde.

She explained that the archaeologists justified this by saying that archaeology is an interpretive science and while they may have their own findings, someone else could come along and find their own story for the site. "Well, my message to them was people have always written our stories. This time we're going to get it right. And so I then vowed to the federal government, I said 'if you can't find them, I will.' And then we found a lot of the black authorities that joined the project," said Ms. King Jorde. She stated that this was a huge push and advised the audience to keep her story in mind when considering efforts to protect sites of cultural heritage.

An audience member asked about Ms. King Jorde's outreach to elected officials, and she recalled many behind-the-scenes meetings to get elected officials on board with the effort. She stated that not everything is as it seems. "I remember being on the radio debating Senator Patterson, as I was representing the Mayor's office, and he was dogging the Mayor's office for not doing anything, and meanwhile I had fed him everything," said Ms. King Jorde. "What mattered was getting everybody out...we rallied and got information out to everyone and told them what success looks like to get behind the project." Mr. Wood added that sometimes the public history and then there's the backstory, which is so important to capture, even years after the fact. Ms. King Jorde stated that ultimately you have to work within the confines of the law and find strategies that work.

An audience member asked if either panelist had recorded their work in oral histories. Mr. Shockley stated that he had recently been videotaped as part of a large oral history project called *Stonewall Forever*<sup>38</sup>, funded by Google and performed by the LGBT Center to mark next year's 50th anniversary of Stonewall, but that virtually no one knew the story he just told at the conference about how Stonewall was officially recognized. "Our project meets people all the time who literally think that all that had to happen was that Obama got up and waved his magic wand and it happened, but there was virtually a 25-year back history to that," said Mr. Shockley. "Stonewall never would have been able to become a National Monument had we not listed it on the National Register and it became a National Historic Landmark. It never would have happened. It is still the only National Monument for LGBT and there are only four National Historic Landmarks for LGBT."

He advised that the entire National Register process must be radically reinterpreted, as there are hundreds, if not thousands, of sites already listed that include LGBT histories, but their nominations have not been amended. It is the same story for sites with ties to the African-American experience and history. However, luckily, a few years ago the Department of the Interior allowed a cultural

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<sup>38</sup> Visit <https://stonewallforever.org/> for more information. Last accessed 1/7/2020.



overlay on a pre-existing listing, an effort pioneered by the NPS and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. He stated that the LGBT Historic Sites Project “got its first funding from the Underrepresented Communities Fund, which reaches out to communities who don’t have representation on the National Register to enable projects to make listings.” Ms. King Jorde responded that she hopes to do an oral history, as she is revisiting her stories now. She stated that she was recently contacted by a London-based documentary company, which is producing a documentary film about an island in the South Atlantic called St. Helena, a small refueling island for the middle passage where there is an African burial ground of about 8,000 or more individuals. These individuals had been taken off of ships when Britain outlawed the Trans-Atlantic trade, and were the unfortunate ones who had not survived the passage. The documentary will include coverage of the African Burial Ground in New York.

## Section 7: CONCLUSION

Throughout this report detailing the proceedings of the Cultural Landmarks Symposium, *Beyond Bricks and Mortar – Rethinking of Cultural History*, it is made clear that preservation advocates across New York City, both professionals and community members, are working to raise awareness of and protect a vast array of sites that are often invisible to passersby but are culturally significant and undoubtedly worthy of the protections awarded by landmark designation. This report detailed best practices for facilitating the preservation of cultural sites, formulating a plan of action for advocates:

- Engage the public with sites of cultural memory through programming and inclusive narratives to build momentum and to celebrate cultural sites as tangible links to heritage.
- Explore recent examples of successful National Historic Register nominations of cultural sites to help strategically inform the process of crafting and submitting nominations.
- Become literate and incorporate all facets of a site's significance into research endeavors. Reflect on and value the power of perspective and personal stories throughout the process of fighting for landmark protections.
- Conduct, collect, and share oral history interviews related to a cultural site as a means of learning more about the significance of a place from the lived experiences of others.
- Do not overlook the immense power of political will, community support and advocacy from various groups in the process of getting cultural sites designated.

In the panels presented throughout the symposium, we heard from experts with diverse experiences construct a compelling argument for the overwhelming need to value, preserve, and protect sites of cultural importance in New York City. These experts discussed the challenges in pursuing such a task and the unfortunate reality that sites of cultural significance often slip through the cracks of landmarks processes, continuing to exist as unprotected and undervalued structures. Experts also addressed the crucial aspect of how preservation-focused organizations can better engage the public and successfully build momentum to celebrate a shared heritage. They discussed the power of programming and public inclusion, identified the inhibitions most people faced and demonstrated how an inclusive narrative contributes to a vibrant and multi-ethnic society that celebrates cultural sites.

In addition to taking symposium attendees through the process of crafting and submitting a successful National Historic Register nomination, representatives from the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) demonstrated that they are making efforts towards amending older nominations to acknowledge cultural history and include criteria other than architectural merit. They emphasized that it is of immense importance to rethink and to recognize sites of cultural significance, and posited that the SHPO could institute a new program to amend existing listings to broaden their scope to include cultural significance. The SHPO representatives expressed that their staff continues to educate the public, as well as historic preservation professionals and consultants, to encourage nominations for culturally significant sites.

Through discussion and exercises, attendees explored how oral history provides a useful toolkit for the preservation of cultural sites. Oral historians such as Liz Strong and Leyla Vural introduced the audience to methodologies and strategies for conducting and documenting oral histories, going over the first steps in collecting and sharing oral stories. Attendees learned that through oral histories, one can learn more about the cultural significance of a place from the lived experiences of others and what that place means to them. This allows advocates and researchers to gain a personal and more comprehensive understanding of why a specific site should be preserved.

Ms. Strong suggested that having a plan for how to share the stories you have collected will inform how you allocate resources and how you conduct the interview. To illustrate this point, she shared two video clips showing how those goals inform the interviews that NYPAP conducts. It was also explained that there is one inherent challenge to recording preservation history, which is that advocates and those working on the ground to preserve their neighborhoods are often concerned first and foremost with their work to achieve landmark or National Historic Register status, which typically spans a long period of time, that they do not take the time to record their work. Thus, the efforts themselves are kept in people's memories and are never written down.

Case studies of recently preserved cultural sites were highlighted to show examples of how more consideration has been made for the importance of sites associated with culturally significant events, rather than just for their architectural or historical value, as well as how best practices for preservation can be implemented. The first case study examined how the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission eventually moved to designate the Stonewall Inn as an Individual Landmark solely for its association with the Stonewall Uprising of 1969. The second case study examined the project background of the preservation of the New York African Burial Ground in an effort to inform attendees of the critical strategies and lessons learned in the process of attempting to protect a cultural site. Peggy King Jorde urged preservation advocates to become literate and incorporate all facets of a site's significance into research endeavors and to reflect on and never discount the power of perspective and personal stories throughout the process of fighting for landmark protections.

Experts agreed that it is the combination of political will and community support and advocacy from different groups that helps to get cultural sites designated as Individual Landmarks. In recent years, Greenwich Village's Julius' Bar was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a significant and influential site connected to the LGBT community and the city is commemorating some of our most storied and accomplished female citizens with the installation of statues in all five boroughs. Indeed, grassroots preservation activism around the city is continuously swelling around sites of cultural significance: Tin Pan Alley and Little Syria in Manhattan, Walt Whitman's house in Brooklyn, Arthur Avenue in The Bronx, and a recently-discovered African burial ground in Queens, to name a few sites in need of further attention from advocates and preservation professionals alike.

The overarching goal of the Cultural Landmarks Symposium was to explore various methodologies, perspectives, and examples to determine a toolkit of best practices for preserving sites of cultural significance. Through examining how one can document and create compelling narratives around these sites, how successful National Historic Register nominations can be crafted, how to engage the public with sites of cultural memory and how the recent designations of specific cultural sites can help strategically inform future preservation endeavors, attendees were able to obtain the tools necessary for protecting and celebrating cultural sites. By forging connections and creating networks amongst different preservation-focused organizations throughout New York City, we aimed to enable mutual support for a varied pool of important preservation causes and prompt preservationists to rethink the importance of cultural landmarks.