



FORT GREENE ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

HISTORIC FORT GREENE BROOKLYN

FEBRUARY 2012

February is Black History Month BY LILLIAN JEAN-BAPTISTE

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The Fort Greene Association

is devoted to historic preservation, neighborhood and park enhancement, as well as cultural, economic and housing advancement throughout the neighborhood of Fort Greene, Brooklyn. To find out more, become a member, renew your membership or to volunteer, visit historicfortgreene.org.

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Save the Date!

FGA NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING

Monday, February 27, 2012
7:00–9:30 pm

Meeting Focus: Employment and Entrepreneurial Opportunities in and around Fort Greene

What is Black History Month? Why do you celebrate Black History Month? These were just a few of the questions I received in an email from an educator overseas from Africa. The power of technology not only levels the playing field to those who have access, it also connects us to others. An educator in Africa was doing research about Black History Month after one of his students had questions regarding the American celebration; he wanted to connect with a person who observed the annual month-long celebration. I was pleasantly surprised that last year's first annual Fort Greene Association (FGA) Black History Month tribute honoring the contributions of local Fort Greene residents came up in his search. The educator wanted to interview me about the celebration that I first learned about from my grandmother at three years old; fast forward many years later, I am now continuing my family's legacy in the preservation of history.

The legacy of Black History Month began September 9, 1915, with Dr. Carter G. Woodson, who founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH). The organization was dedicated to researching and promoting the achievements of black Americans and other peoples of African descent. Dr. Woodson stated: "African-American contributions were overlooked, ignored, and even suppressed by the writers of history textbooks and the teachers who use them. Race prejudice is merely the logical result of tradition, the inevitable outcome of thorough instruction to the effect that the Negro has never contributed anything to the progress of mankind." In February 1926, ASNLH sponsored national Negro History Week during the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. Negro History Week was commemorated through lectures, and performances in schools and communities nationwide. Negro History Week evolved into Black History Month in 1976 when President Ford recognized the celebration as an opportunity to "honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."

This February, please join the FGA as we salute our African- and Caribbean-American neighbors who have made significant contributions in and around Fort Greene, committed selfless acts to help others and were pioneers who paved the way. We are very pleased to announce that The New York Times Local Fort Greene/Clinton Hill (fort-greene.thelocal.nytimes.com) is our media partner for



DR. CARTER G. WOODSON
Founder, Association for the Study of Negro Life and History

the second annual Black History Month Celebration. We hope you enjoy the celebration as much as we have enjoyed learning about the accomplishments of our neighbors and friends.

We have a lot of great programming in store for the neighborhood during Black History Month this year. Greenlight Bookstore and FGA are cosponsoring the event, **Fort Greene's Black Writers: A Neighborhood History** with local writers Nelson George, Carl Hancock Rux, John Lee and Martha Southgate, to take place on February 15th at 7:30 pm. Throughout February, we will also be hosting a series, **Music Paired with Art** as part of our Black History Month art exhibition in multiple locations around Fort Greene.

Lastly, please save the date: June 18, 2012 (6:30–9:30 pm) for the FGA's second annual **Juneteenth Celebration** and special black history presentation. Please visit historicfortgreene.org for details about these and other events, and to subscribe to FGA updates via email.

The Spirit of Giving is Infectious

BY LILLIAN JEAN-BAPTISTE

Near the end of last year, the FGA's Communications and Community Engagement Committee sent out a call for help to the Fort Greene community, and we were overwhelmed with your outpouring of support. Your generosity allowed us to touch people in need in our community while inspiring others to join us in the spirit of giving.

The FGA was invited again by the Brooklyn Music School (BMS) to partner with them for their **100 Years of Holiday Cheer** event. This was the second year that BMS produced a program that gives back to the community by offering a free benefit performance for the families and children of local shelters. Not only did Santa make a guest appearance to bring holiday cheer and distribute toys donated by BMS staff and students, but community members, the NYPD and some angels from a neighboring community answered the call. The Park Slope Christian Tabernacle contacted the FGA after learning about our past outreach to Fort Greene's Auburn Family Shelter, and wanted help. They donated brand-new toys, books and baby clothes to be gifted to over 100 children in need. The overwhelming outpouring of kindness from the community allowed us to donate the remaining toys from the BMS event to Fort Greene's Cumberland Diagnostic & Treatment Center. They distributed the toys to their pediatric patients who otherwise may not have received a present, due to their families' financial hardships.

Last year also marked the second annual **FGA Toiletry Drive**, and the Brooklyn Music School once again graciously opened their doors to allow donations to be dropped off by members of the community. Students from the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program at St. Joseph's College answered our call for donations, and did an amazing job of gathering toiletry donations from their fellow classmates. Additionally, BSN club president, Ketsia Glemaud arranged for the donation of over 1,500 toiletry product samples from a local company. We received enough donations to distribute gift bags to residents of Fort Greene's Auburn Family Shelter, and were also able to expand the program this year by donating gift bags to Fort Greene's Tillary Street Women's Shelter. Thanks to everyone's help, the FGA was able to fill 300 gift bags to the brim with donations. On the behalf of the FGA, we thank everyone who helped make this tradition a rapidly growing

success. Thank you for your donations, for spreading the word about our call for donations, and for working together to help brighten the holiday season for our community members in need.

We also thank the FGA members who donated their time and the shoppers who tipped at our **Wrapping for a Cause** event at Greenlight Bookstore in December. The tips received for wrapping gifts purchased at Greenlight enabled the FGA to purchase the gift bags used to distribute the donated toiletries. Special thanks to volunteer gift wrappers Roslyn, Pinky, Cynthia and Diana. Also, special thanks to the staff at Brooklyn Music School, Margaret and Richard Norton, the staff of Fort Greene SNAP, the Park Slope Christian Tabernacle congregation and St. Joseph's BSN nursing students. Thanks to all of you, we were able to bring smiles to our neighbors in need during the holiday season.

The Communications and Community Engagement Committee looks forward to growing these initiatives with your support. Let's continue to make giving back in our community infectious throughout the year. Please visit our neighborhood partner **Fort Greene SNAP's** [Strategic Neighborhood Action Partnership] website, fortgreenesnap.org to learn how you can support their efforts. The **Hanson Place Seventh Day Adventist Church** is always in need of food pantry donations. Several other neighborhood pantries have closed, thus significantly increasing the demand for food at the pantry. To learn how you can help, please contact church administrator Ms. Adolphus at 718-230-0229. Fort Greene's **Cumberland Diagnostic & Treatment Center** is actively recruiting the Fort Greene community to join their Cumberland Auxiliary Board and their Community Advisory Board. A background in healthcare is not needed to participate. For more information, please call 718- 260-7755. Lastly, if you are interested in working on projects like this, or have an idea you would like to work on with the FGA, please e-mail: lillian@historicfortgreene.org.

For more about the FGA's giving back initiatives, please visit historicfortgreene.org. While there, please take a moment to become a member of the FGA, or renew your membership. Your financial support is needed—we can't do it without you!

FGA Joins the Brooklyn Neighborhood Congress

BY ENID BRAUN

The January 10th meeting of the Brooklyn Neighborhood Congress (BNC) provided a long-needed focus on various land use concerns. This relatively new group is working to address overdevelopment by banding together Brooklyn neighborhoods that, despite differences in neighborhood character, all share the problems of being heard by City agencies that decide land use questions. The first result of their work will be a City Council five-borough public hearing on the operations of the Board of Standards and Appeals (BSA), the agency that decides variance applications by developers.

The BNC meeting offered open discussion between BNC members and invited guests Councilmember Gale Brewer (Manhattan), Chair of the City Council Governmental Operations Committee, and Councilmember Leroy Comrie, Jr. (Queens), Chair of the Land Use Committee. Additional attendees included Councilmember Tish James, District Leader Chris Owens and a representative from Councilmember Brad Lander's office.

Ms. Brewer outlined the scope of her committee's jurisdiction, which includes oversight of various City Commissions and Boards, including the Board of Standards and Appeals. Mr. Comrie's committee oversees City Planning and Landmarks, among other departments related to land use. Ms. Brewer expressed her belief that one way to help people counter development dollars is to look at who gets on the BSA. Among her suggestions is a City Charter change to give the Council an "advise and consent" role in appointments to the BSA, commissioner positions and other agencies that currently are solely a mayoral power.

Such a change would give the Council the ability to reject an appointment and could take the form of expanding the size of each body.

Ms. Brewer brought up a proposed law, Open Data Bill, Intro 29, which would allow public access to all data programs used by City Planning and other agencies, including the BSA, in the approval process. Instances of incorrect zoning calculations for size and bulk of new buildings have been ignored by the BSA, and without a professional planner, communities currently lack the means to counter proposals brought by both developers and City Planning. Ms. Brewer said that "local planning is not taken into account," referring especially to 197A plans developed by communities. And she believes that an ongoing problem with lack of notice for many public hearings might be addressed by expanding currently-existing webcasts to include every meeting held in the City, to allow citizens to participate in real time.

Mr. Comrie expressed some disagreement with Amanda Burden, City Planning Commissioner for her focus on building frontage issues that reduce street parking and allow for more bike lanes. I raised a question regarding the Council's ability to consider public policy implications as an aggregate outcome of each land use proposal coming to the Council only for final consideration as distinct and separate, an example being a decision

Continued on back ▶

Livable Streets: The Case for a Lafayette Ave. Bike Lane

BY HILDA COHEN

A mild Tuesday evening in October 2011 was brutally interrupted when two cars collided on Lafayette Ave. at Vanderbilt Ave., jumped the curb and plowed into the sidewalk. Three bikes were crushed under the front wheels of one of the cars, just inches away from a building's façade. There were dozens of bystanders, but thankfully no one was injured.

Media coverage of this incident, along with numerous personal near-miss experiences on Lafayette Ave., spurred Alexandra Loxton and me to launch a campaign for traffic calming and bike lanes along Lafayette Ave. We are two local moms who use Lafayette for getting around our neighborhood by bike, foot and car. We love our neighborhood, but we think that our streets, and Lafayette Avenue in particular, are geared more towards cars than people.

Our goal is to convince the NYC Department of Transportation and our Community Board 2 to install traffic calming and bike lanes along Lafayette Avenue. We want to slow down cars, give bicyclists a designated place on the road and improve street safety for everyone. We are writing this article to let you, FGA members, know about our campaign and explain why we think traffic calming and bikes lanes on Lafayette Ave. are necessary. We also invite your support in making Lafayette Ave. safer by signing the FGA's petition.

Cars routinely speed along Lafayette Ave., making it a daunting street to bike along or walk across, especially with young children or seniors. I bike up Lafayette Ave. from Downtown Brooklyn daily in my commute home after I pick my kids up from school. But many are afraid to do the same—as I have been collecting petition signatures I frequently hear, "I would bike more if it was safer." Many cyclists currently use Lafayette Ave., even without a bike lane, because it is an ideal bicycle route: it's the fastest, most direct way from Downtown Brooklyn to Fort Greene. The full length of the avenue connects Bed-Stuy, Clinton Hill, and Fort Greene to Downtown Brooklyn. There is currently a bike lane along a portion of Lafayette Ave. that links to a bike lane on Schermerhorn, but it ends at Fulton Street. People want to bike safely along the rest of Lafayette Ave., and we feel it's necessary to create an official bike lane on Lafayette to provide a safe lane for these cyclists. Cars also use Lafayette for the same direct route, but they frequently speed, and this is dangerous for everyone.

Bike lanes have been proven to slow traffic. In providing a place for bikes to ride safely on the street, lanes for cars are slightly narrowed, which forces drivers to slow down. Reducing vehicle speeds is the key element in improving safety. Studies have shown that the likelihood of a pedestrian dying from being hit by a car traveling at 20 miles per hour is about 5%. At 30 mph, the likelihood of a fatal injury jumps to about 45%, and at 40 mph, the chance of death is about 85%. The speed limit on NYC residential streets is 30 mph, but cars on Lafayette Ave. typically drive faster than that. The statistics aren't good for anyone at these higher speeds.

Designated bike lanes also help keep cyclists off sidewalks. And through this initiative we hope to decrease wrong-way riding on DeKalb Ave., where there is currently a bike lane heading west towards Downtown Brooklyn that is often used by cyclists riding in the opposite direction, as there is no safe alternative.

Safe places to cycle and walk encourage us to get around by bicycle and foot, which keeps us healthier and our environment healthier. Many

neighbors, including myself, choose to commute by bike: it saves money on gas, saves money on gym memberships and helps improve our air quality. It is the short trip where the healthy choice is often the fastest and most efficient. With experts recommending at least 30 minutes of moderate activity each day, a quick errand on a bike is a great way to meet the recommended daily activity level—especially where there's infrastructure to make it a safer option.

Together, let's make Lafayette Avenue safer.



Stephen Rex Brown / Fort Greene-Clinton Hill Patch

Help Make Lafayette Avenue Safer

Visit makelafayettesafer.org for maps, statistics and more.

- **Learn how reducing speeds increases pedestrian safety:**
www.walkinginfo.org/pedsafe/crashstats.cfm
- **Learn how bike lanes help slow traffic:**
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22095351
- **Learn how biking can save billions in health expenses:**
www.good.is/post/how-biking-can-save-cities-billions-of-dollars-in-health-expenses
- **Learn how biking benefits your health:**
www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/adults.html
- **Sign On:** Add your signature to the petition at www.HistoricFortGreene.org.
- **Volunteer:** Get involved with this and other Livable Streets issues by contacting the FGA's Livable Streets Committee at streets@HistoricFortGreene.org.

SAVE THE DATE!

FGA Neighborhood Meeting

Monday, February 27, 2012 • 7:00–9:30 pm
Bishop Loughlin Memorial High School Auditorium
Enter on Lafayette between Clermont & Vanderbilt
Meeting Focus: Employment and Entrepreneurial
Opportunities in and around Fort Greene

Interested in opening a business in the neighborhood, or in learning about services available to your existing business? Want to have a say about the businesses you'd like to see come to our neighborhood? Interested in learning about employment and job training opportunities in our community? Come to the FGA Neighborhood Meeting on February 27th.

Participating organizations will include Brooklyn Navy Yard, Brooklyn Business Library PowerUp! Competition, Community Board 2, Fulton Area Business Alliance, Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn Partnership, Pratt Area Community Council, Red Apple Supermarket, Workforce1 and NYC Business Solutions. Arrive early to join us for our Neighborhood Mixer; meet your neighbors and members of the community, and speak with your local elected officials.

Visit historicfortgreene.org for more info, and to take our Resident Business Survey (survey results to be shared at the meeting). We look forward to seeing you!



FORT GREENE ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER DESIGN BY DIANA MORROW ► dianamorrow.com

New Scenes

MY BROOKLYN BABY • 692 Fulton Street at South Portland Baby boutique. Will have new mom mixers, breast-feeding classes and a toy lending library. Owner Darcy Le Fleming (former general manager of Habana Outpost) has created a friendly refuge for both kids and parents, including a changing table and breast-feeding lounge. mybrooklynbaby.com • 347-889-6026 • 10am–7pm, seven days.

THE ANNEX • 684 Fulton Street at South Portland Café. Serving Blue Bottle coffee and pastries; makes prepared foods for owner Amy Bennett's Provisions across the street. greengrape.com • 347-799-2968 • Mon–Fri 7am–8 pm; Sat 8am–6pm; Sun 9am–6pm.

ROLEX DELI • 700 Fulton Street at South Oxford Deli. Providing hot and cold sandwiches (100% Boar's head), sodas, Columbian coffee, beer, candy and some groceries. According to manager, Isaac, everything is completely fresh. 718-243-0910.

BIJA KIDS • 900 Fulton Street at Washington Avenue Yoga center for kids. Lauren Maples, owner/director believes in yoga as a framework for valuable life skills. Focus is on being green, using toys of recycled materials, learning how to eat healthy. The space is also available for parties. bijakids.com • 718 483-4795.

Farewells

DR. JOSEPHINE ENGLISH, pioneer, trailblazing doctor, business woman and community activist passed away on December 18th at the Susan Smith McKinney Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Brooklyn, at 91 years old. The family wishes to honor Dr. English's mission and passion through renovating the Paul Robeson Theater (40 Greene Ave.), to enrich the community through art, culture and education.

FGA Joins Brooklyn Neighborhood Congress, continued from inside:

to sell the Brooklyn MTA building to NYU; privatization of public property means that a later need for a public school or affordable housing becomes a trade-off or concession with a private developer. Mr. Comrie said that the City wants to sell these public properties, that consolidation of agencies may produce more, and that these are often turned over to the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) to dispose of, removing Council approval.

While the term "Manhattanization" is used by some to describe the imposition of overly-large buildings and consolidation of storefronts for big-box commercial use, Ms. Brewer suggests the term "mallization" as more inclusive to describe the main outcome of development that is destructive to neighborhood character. The problems extend to lack of protections for Mom and Pop stores as well as the need to preserve and expand affordable housing-rental apartments.

It was noted that while the last Charter reform committee had considered land use, the final proposal was limited to the term limits question and changes to administrative trials (OATH). The BNC meeting produced agreement that changes to the process for land use decisions is needed, and Mr. Comrie and Ms. Brewer plan to co-sponsor a public hearing on the BSA as a first step towards Charter reform. Ms. Brewer said that BNC bringing out support and participation from the many neighborhood groups will help make that possible.

The FGA will continue to attend and contribute to the workings of the BNC. To comment or get involved contact: enid@historicfortgreene.org.



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BROWN HARRIS STEVENS

Yes, I want to support the efforts of the Fort Greene Association.

Please complete this form and mail with check payable to Fort Greene Association, Inc. to: Fort Greene Association · P.O. Box 170563 · Brooklyn, NY 11217-0563

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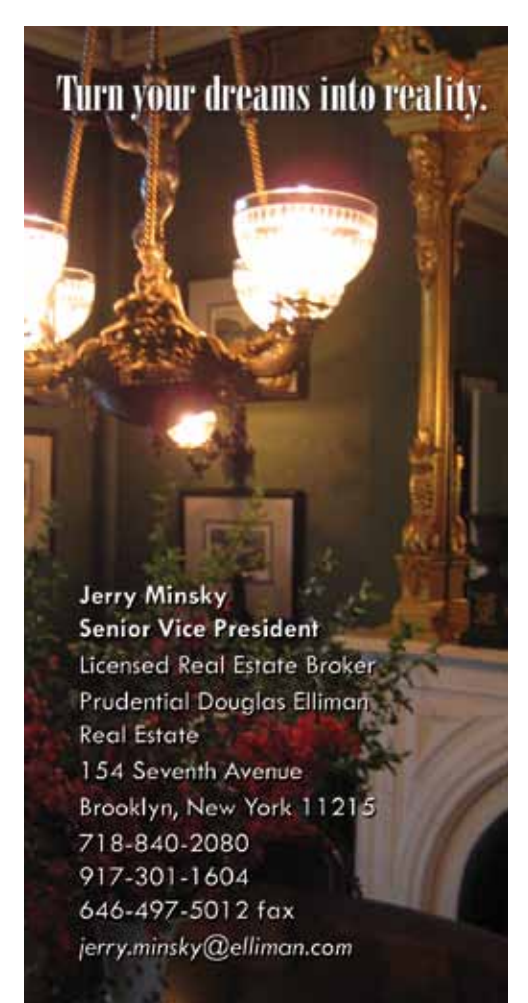
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You may also become a member, renew your membership and make PayPal or credit card donations at historicfortgreene.org. For corporate and small business memberships, and advertising inquiries please email: thefga@historicfortgreene.org.

An ornate, multi-tiered chandelier with several glowing light bulbs hangs from the ceiling in a room with classical architectural details. The background shows a doorway and a wall with a framed picture.

Turn your dreams into reality.

Jerry Minsky

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A photograph of the front entrance of a brick building. The entrance features a set of stone steps leading up to a double door with glass panels. The door is flanked by two columns. Green vines are climbing the wall above the door.

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