

Good morning to Chair Riley and the esteemed members of the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings, and Dispositions. My name is Keith Taylor, and I am president of the Dorrance Brooks Property Owners and Residents Association. I come before you this morning to ask that you approve the proposed Dorrance Brooks Square Historic District, the first in New York City's history to be named after an African-American, Harlem Hellfighter Private First Class Dorrance Brooks. In the proposed district is the Dorrance Brooks Square, which was dedicated in 1925 as the first public park in New York City to be named after an African-American. Private First Class Brooks was a patriot World War I soldier who lost his life fighting for America in France- despite the bitter reality of Jim Crow segregation back home. A decade ago the local community board recognized the dangers of development destroying the architectural and cultural history of Central Harlem, and created its Historic Preservation Plan recommending nine historic areas worthy of landmarking. Two of those historic study areas would be landmarked by this proposal. Our block association, with assistance from local historic advocacy organizations as well as strong community support, have been able to get state and federal historic designation for some of the proposed district, but your approval is the most significant by far. As Frederick Douglass stated, "Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will. Find out what any people will quietly

submit to, and you will find out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which can and will be imposed upon them." For the Harlem African-American community which has lost so much for so long, what little historical legacy remains deserves special consideration to preserve and cherish. Examples include the plan to demolish historic Mt. Calvary United Methodist Church and two connected brownstones, as well as the destruction of Harlem Renaissance artist Augusta Savage's art studio—despite local community board resolutions advocating for their preservation. There is no question about the proposed district's architectural, cultural, or historic value to Harlem and the greater NYC community. It was only through strong neighborhood support that this block association was able to apply for state, federal, and city historic designation, and we now ask that you approve this important landmarking designation.

Thank you.