



Community Board 12 - Manhattan Washington Heights & Inwood

530 West 166th St. 6th Floor, New York, NY 10032

Phone: (212) 568-8500, Fax: (212) 740-8197

Website: www.nyc.gov/mcb12

Eleazar Bueno, Chairperson
Ebenezer Smith, District Manager

March 31, 2021

Hon. Mitchell J. Silver
Commissioner of NYC Department of Parks & Recreation
830 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10065

Re: To Name Parks Areas to Honor African-Americans in CD12M

Dear Commissioner Silver:

At General Meeting on Tuesday, March 23, 2021, Community Board 12 Manhattan passed a resolution with a vote of 34 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions, and 1, not voting ratifying the resolution passed by Community Board 12 Manhattan, Executive Committee on Monday, March 15, 2021, with a vote of 13 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstention, strongly recommending that the NYC Parks Department consider the name of four African-American listed below in the following namings in its current round to be announced on June 19, 2021. Provisional approval hereby given subject to passage at the March 23, 2021 General Meeting.

Whereas: The New York City Parks Department, as part of an ongoing effort to correct the dearth of parks, playgrounds, and other public spaces named for African-Americans has taken an important step in evaluating public spaces for Black New Yorkers. NYC Parks announced this last year, on Juneteenth when it also dedicated a new Juneteenth Grove in Cadman Plaza Park. On November 2nd NYC Parks named two parks in each Borough, including a lawn & a playground in St. Nicholas Park after James Baldwin & Langston Hughes, respectively. NYC Parks has a second round of namings which will be announced on June 19th of this year; the deadline for proposals is March 16th; and

Whereas: Community Board 12, Manhattan ("CB12M")'s Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee ("PCA") has been engaged in an ongoing community dialogue regarding the naming of possible of renaming of various parks, and playgrounds, rests, overlooks, and lawns within parks, after overlooked members of our community, and at its March 9, 2021 meeting engaged in a substantial conversation around the contributions of many African-Americans to the cultural and civic life of Community District 12, Manhattan (CD12M) in the context of the aforementioned NYC Parks initiative; and

Whereas: CB12M wishes to memorialize in this remembrance the life and contributions of Isaiah "Obie" Bing and hereby recognizes his many other public service and professional commitments, contributions and accomplishments as a positive force in the community given his service with distinction not only on CB12M, but also as an environmental adviser to elected officials, founding member and former President of the Barack Obama

Democratic Club of Upper Manhattan, founding member and Co-President of Uptown Community Democrats, licensed engineer for the NYC Department of Buildings and Consolidated Edison who will be remembered for his testimony before the New York State Assembly Committee on Environmental Conservation regarding pollution from the North River Sewage Treatment Plant, his continued warnings on environmental impacts on brownfields and northern Manhattan's aging infrastructure, as the gracious host of the most popular holiday party in New York City's uptown political scene, and as a hardworking steward of a public triangle in the intersection outside of his home; and

Whereas: CB12M wishes to memorialize in this remembrance the life and contributions of Constance Baker Motley and hereby recognizes her importance in American history and political life as an African-American civil rights activist, lawyer, State Senator, Manhattan Borough President and Federal judge who was also our neighbor, having lived at 409 Edgecombe Avenue for many years. Motley's legal career began as a law clerk in the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF), where she worked with Thurgood Marshall. The LDF's first female attorney, she became its Associate Counsel, making her the NAACP's lead trial attorney. In 1950 she wrote the original complaint in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, and was the first black woman ever to argue a case before the U.S. Supreme Court; in *Meredith v. Fair* she successfully won James Meredith's effort to be the first black student to attend the University of Mississippi. Motley was successful in nine of the ten cases she argued before the Supreme Court. She was a key legal strategist in the civil rights movement, helping to desegregate Southern schools, buses and lunch counters. In 1964, Motley became the first African-American woman elected to the New York State Senate. In 1965, she was chosen Manhattan Borough President – the first African-American woman in that position. In 1966, President Lyndon Johnson named her a Federal Court Judge – the first black woman so named – where she continued (including a term as Chief Judge) until her death; and

Whereas: CB12M wishes to memorialize in this remembrance the life and contributions of Lawrence Paul ("Larry") Neal and hereby recognizes his contributions to arts, education, and social justice as an author, playwright, essayist, poet, and theatre critic, writing frequently on issues of social justice, literary theory, mythology, history, and language; as a member of the Revolutionary Action Movement and education director of the Black Panther Party; as a teacher at City College, and Wesleyan & Yale Universities (where he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship) and a major catalyst in the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s/70s; and as cofounder (with Amiri Baraka) of the Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School; and a longtime resident of the Jumel Terrace area until his death in 1981 and where his widow still resides; and

Whereas: CB12M wishes to memorialize in this remembrance the life and contributions of Jean-Michel Basquiat and his profound contribution to and influence on the international art scene, rooted initially in the New York street- and graffiti-art scene of the 1970s which eventually developed into Hip Hop culture. His work spoke to issues of class struggle,

Hon. Mitchell J. Silver
Re: Resolution in Support of Harlem Heritage Markers Project
March 31, 2021
Page 3

power structures, and systemic racism, and remain as relevant today as when he died prematurely at 27 in 1988. Basquiat was the youngest artist to be featured in the Whitney Biennial, and was the subject of a Whitney retrospective in 1992. His 1982 "Untitled," is one of the most expensive pieces ever sold at auction, for \$110 million. Although Basquiat did not live within CD12M, his art influenced a generation of New Yorkers and citizens of the world, and he is honored in Brooklyn, Paris, and beyond; now, therefore, be it

Resolved: Community Board 12, Manhattan recommends that the NYC Parks Department consider the following namings in its current round to be announced on June 19, 2021:

- The Highbridge Recreation Center as "The Constance Baker Motley Recreation Center"
- The lawn south of the Highbridge Recreation Center as "The Isaiah "Obie" Bing Lawn"
- The small lawn in Highbridge Park opposite Roger Morris Park as "The Larry Neal Lawn"
- The Highbridge Park Skate Park as "The Jean-Michel Basquiat Skate Park"

Sincerely,



Eleazar Bueno
Chairperson

cc: Hon. William Castro, Borough Commissioner NYC Parks
Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate
Hon. Scott M. Stringer, Comptroller
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, Congressman
Ms. Jennifer Hoppa, Northern Manhattan Parks Administrator

Hon. Robert Jackson, State Senator
Hon. Brian Benjamin, State Senator
Hon. Carmen De La Rosa, Assembly Member
Hon. Al Taylor, Assembly Member
Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member
Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member
Hon. Signe Nielsen, Commissioner NYC PDC