

PROJECTING BLACK HARLEM

Gian Paul Cadillo and Neha Thorve



The Black Church As the Narrative

HARLEM



Volunteering

Education

Civic Engagement

Food and Clothing Drives

Shelter and Aid

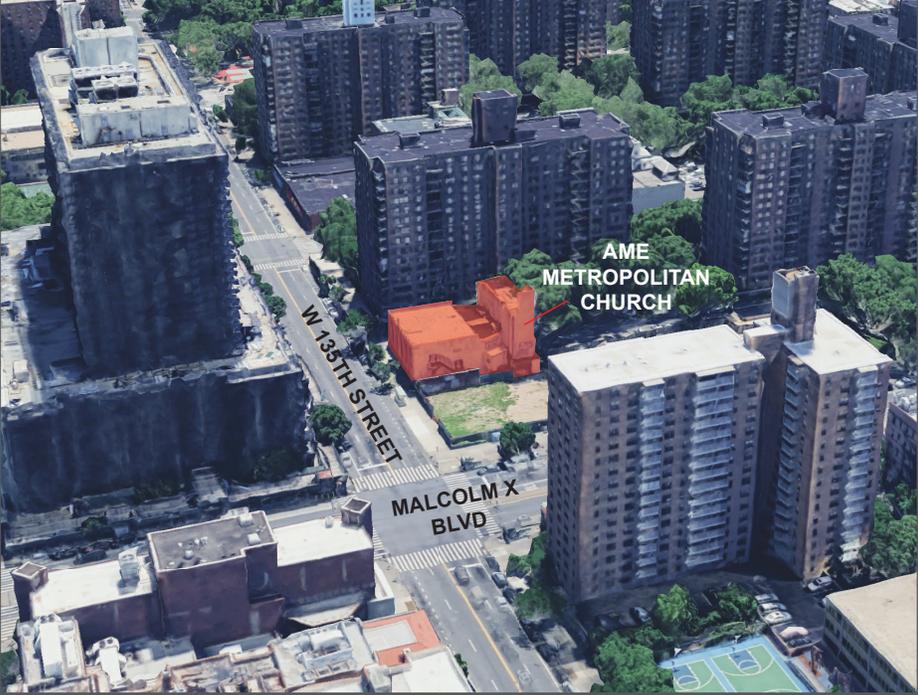
Community

Performance

Gathering

CHURCHES

The Root of The Narrative: AME Metropolitan Church



A Black church which was established in the 1960s after its congregation had been moving North up Manhattan. It was sold to developers in 2022 and closed soon after. Today it sits next to a vacant lot to be soon developed by Lenox Terrace.



The Root of The Narrative: AME Metropolitan Church



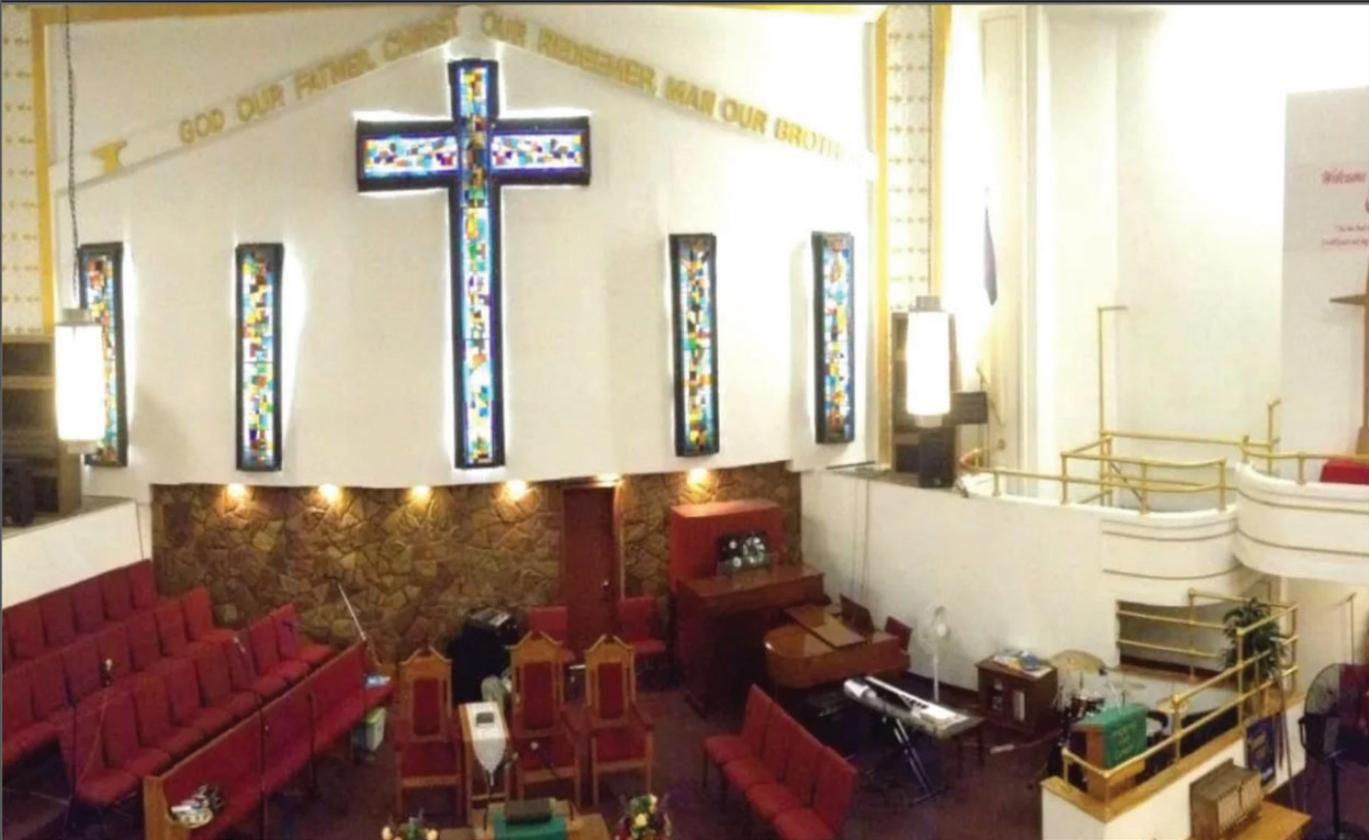
The facade of AME Church transformed through time, with its original architecture being from the time it was a theater and cinema.

Although there have been decorative changes, much of the structure remains intact... "A sturdy rectangular proscenium, richly brocaded in lovely floral patterns, dominates the front interior. Best of all, the theater's boxes were never removed, and their gentle, curving lines add delicacy to a space that appears larger than it really is".

- Cinema Treasures



The Root of The Narrative: AME Metropolitan Church



Interior Views From Before Closure

Historical Timeline



THE GREAT MIGRATION

1900

The Nikelette was the 1st theater in what was then a predominantly white neighborhood in Harlem to cater specifically to Black audiences

1909

Purchased by Maria C. Downs, who increased the seating and changed the name to Lincoln Theatre. She was known for putting on a mixed bill at the Lincoln

1920s (Peak)

Reached its peak of fame in the 1920s, when entertainers such as Bessie Smith, Florence Mills, and Fats Waller headlined.

Hosted famous African Black artists - The goal was raucous, vernacular entertainment that particularly appealed to working-class immigrants from the South.



Anita Bush & Co.

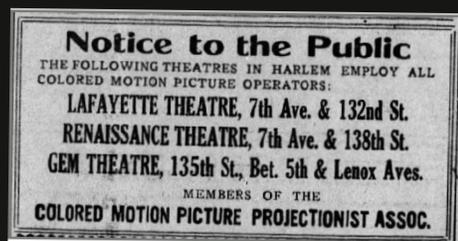


Bessie Smith



Ma Rainey

THE GREAT DEPRESSION



1929

Worsening economy and change of interest in neighborhood made it difficult for the Lincoln to remain open. Downs sold it to Frank Shiffman in 1929, when he turned it into a movie house.

1935

Now named "The Gem," Shiffman continued to use this theater as a center for Black culture, but had to eventually shut down due to economic reasons

1960

The theatre was converted into the AME Church, which had already been relocating further North up the city. The facade was resurfaced but the interior kept several original details

Market Driven Erasure and Gentrification

Lenox Terrace aims to redevelop the AME Church lot along with what is next to it, as part of new residential towers.

Expansions like these are driven strictly for profit and increasing density, not cultural continuity.



- Lenox Terrace plans to...
- Displace Communities
 - Replace living culture with commercial development aimed at new demographics
 - Use Black history as a branding tool (proposed development of church in first floor residences)

A Method Hypothesis Inspired Through AME Church



Carefully hiding AME Church's lot in its renders, Lenox Terrace aims to strategically have this cultural landmark fade from public memory for a new Harlem.



Current and Future Timeline



2022

The Church sold to Lenox Developments who proposes new residential towers. The existing congregation had to relocate to a new church



2025

The site is closed to the public and sits next to an empty lot awaiting development to begin. Demolition is imminent

Cap
m
c

Cont
culture
advoca
sacr

Protect and
maintain
Black culture

Spread to new
developments

Part of
everyday
living

2030

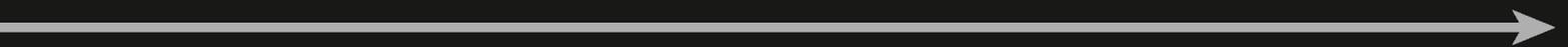
Continuation of Black
culture in Harlem through
art, music, dance, and
education

2035

Hybrid Forms of Living
(mixing art, performance,
faith into everyday living)

2075

Form the necessary
archival and engaging
moments that allow for
Black culture to be part of
everyday experiences



The Inspired Method Hypothesis

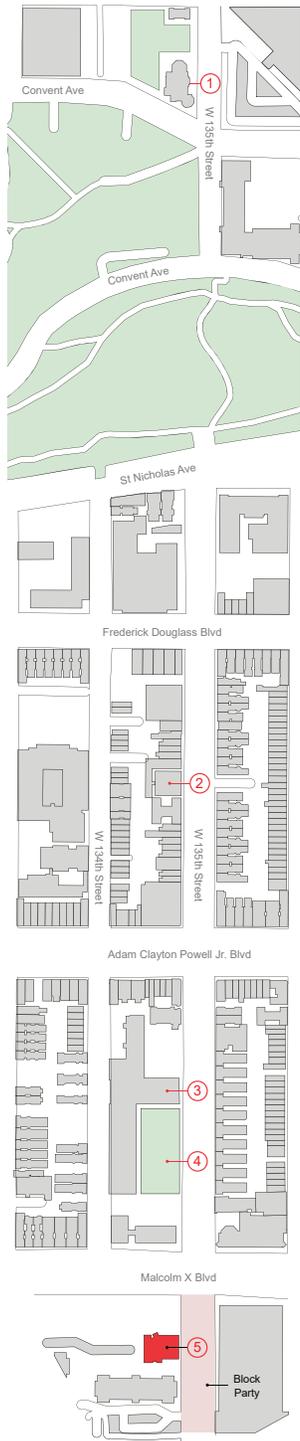
The AME Church serves as a living archive that bridges the past and future. As Harlem transforms through market driven erasure and gentrification, this church can serve as a reminder and reimagination of Black culture.

By retelling its historical significance, the church becomes a tool that encourages speculative gestures to imagine a future Harlem where Black culture is not displaced but integrated.

Our focus will be to create conversations and experiences with what the church offered Harlem in the past century. After this, future Harlem projects regarding the inclusion of Black culture can be considered.

The Inspired Method Hypothesis

Projected Heritage Film Along 135th Street



We aim to retell historical events from Harlem and AME Church through projections on facades, with the final historical marker being the church.

1 - Harlem Stage Gatehouse

2 - Double Mural of the American Jazz Legend John Birks "Dizzy" Gillespie

3 - The YMCA

4 - Success Academy Charter School Field

5 - AME Metropolitan Church

1 - Harlem Stage Gatehouse

An opportunity for Black Vaudeville to take the stage again in 2025.

Spoken words and archival monologues can be presented or played through speakers in an exhibit.

Already an architectural center for performance.

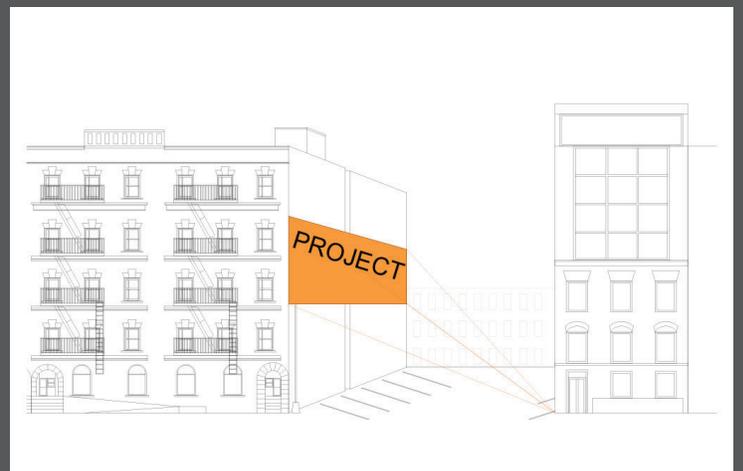


Stage Collage

2 - Double Jazz Mural



A site that already embodies jazz history and musical rhythm. It can be activated as a live jazz performance center with a stage and projected film of historical Black musicians.

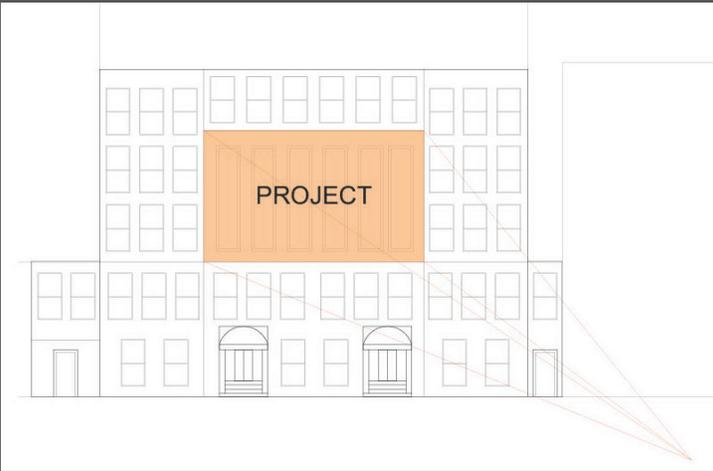


Performance Collage

3 - The YMCA

More than just a recreational center, the YMCA has represented Harlem's spirit through community and mentorship. It has provided lodging and support for several artists and activists.

Historical community moments can be projected on the front facade, with a community center continuing to be the core use of the building.

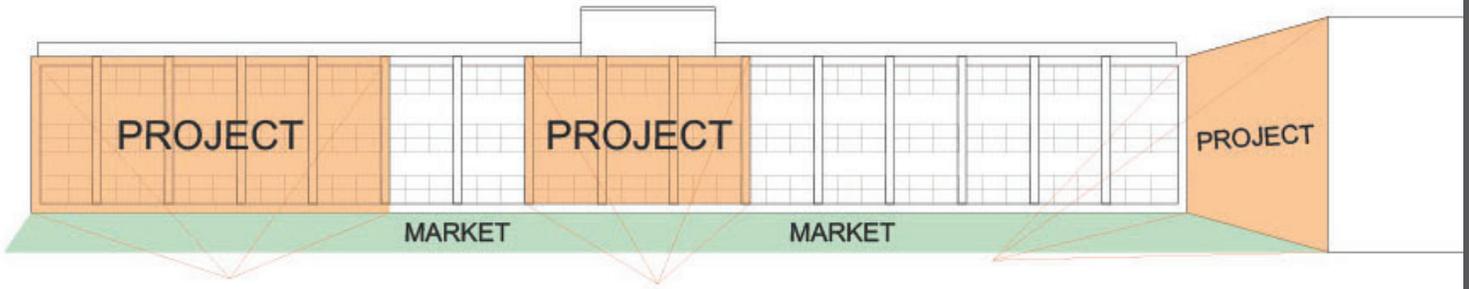


4 - Success Academy Field

Allowing local vendors and artists to display work in a free open to public event could reinforce community notions in Harlem while remaining true to its Black history.



The schools wide facade could fit multiple projections of cultural dishes, jewelry being made, etc.

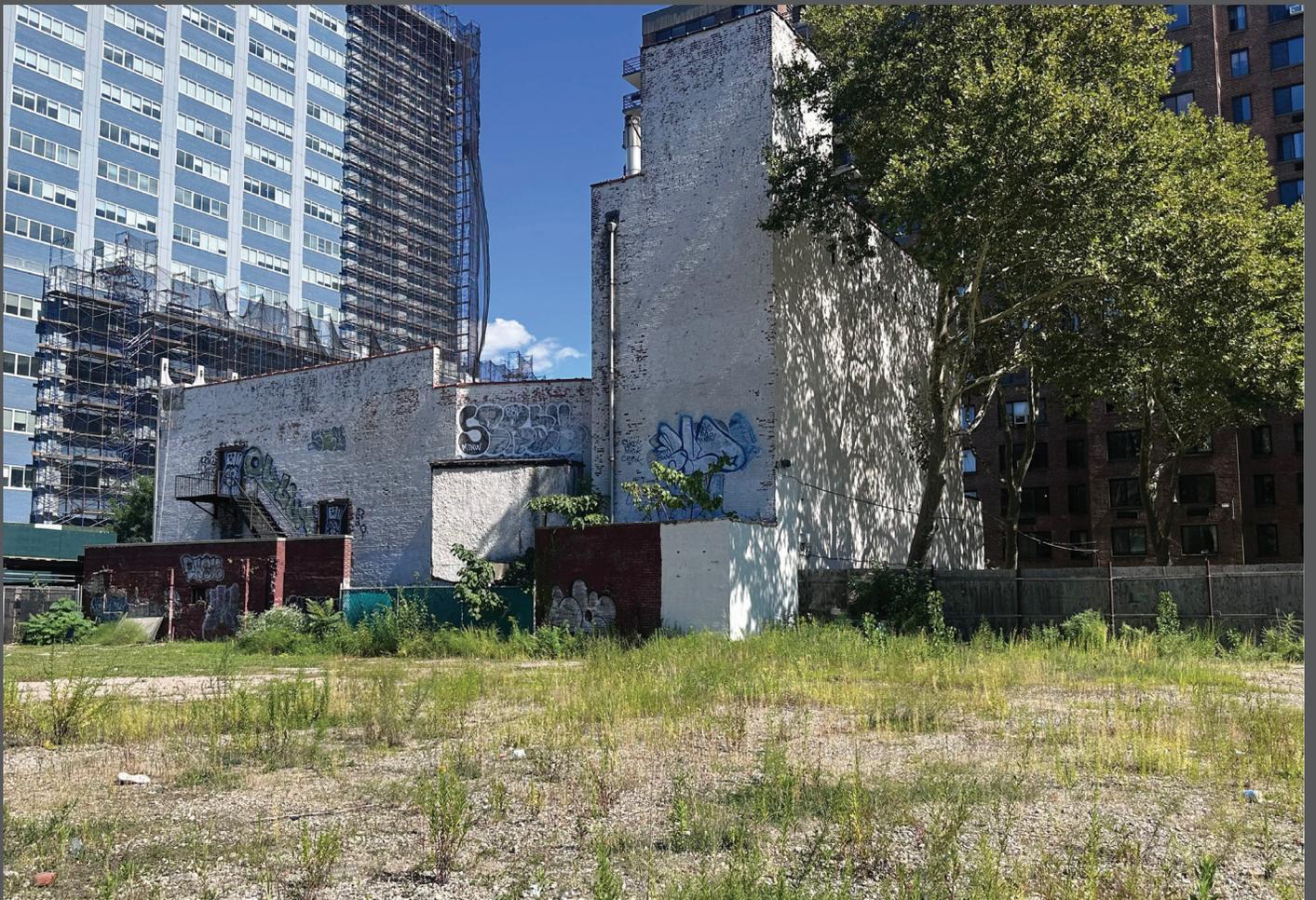
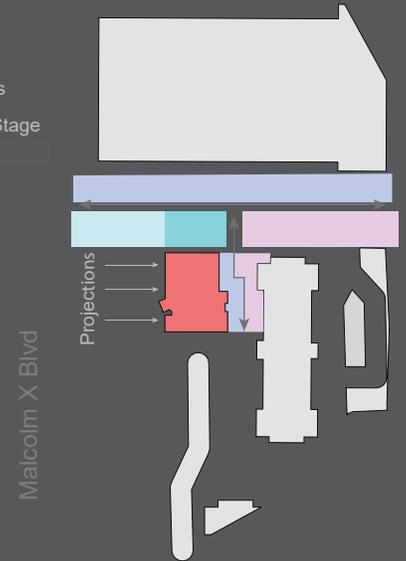


5 - Metropolitan Church Block Party

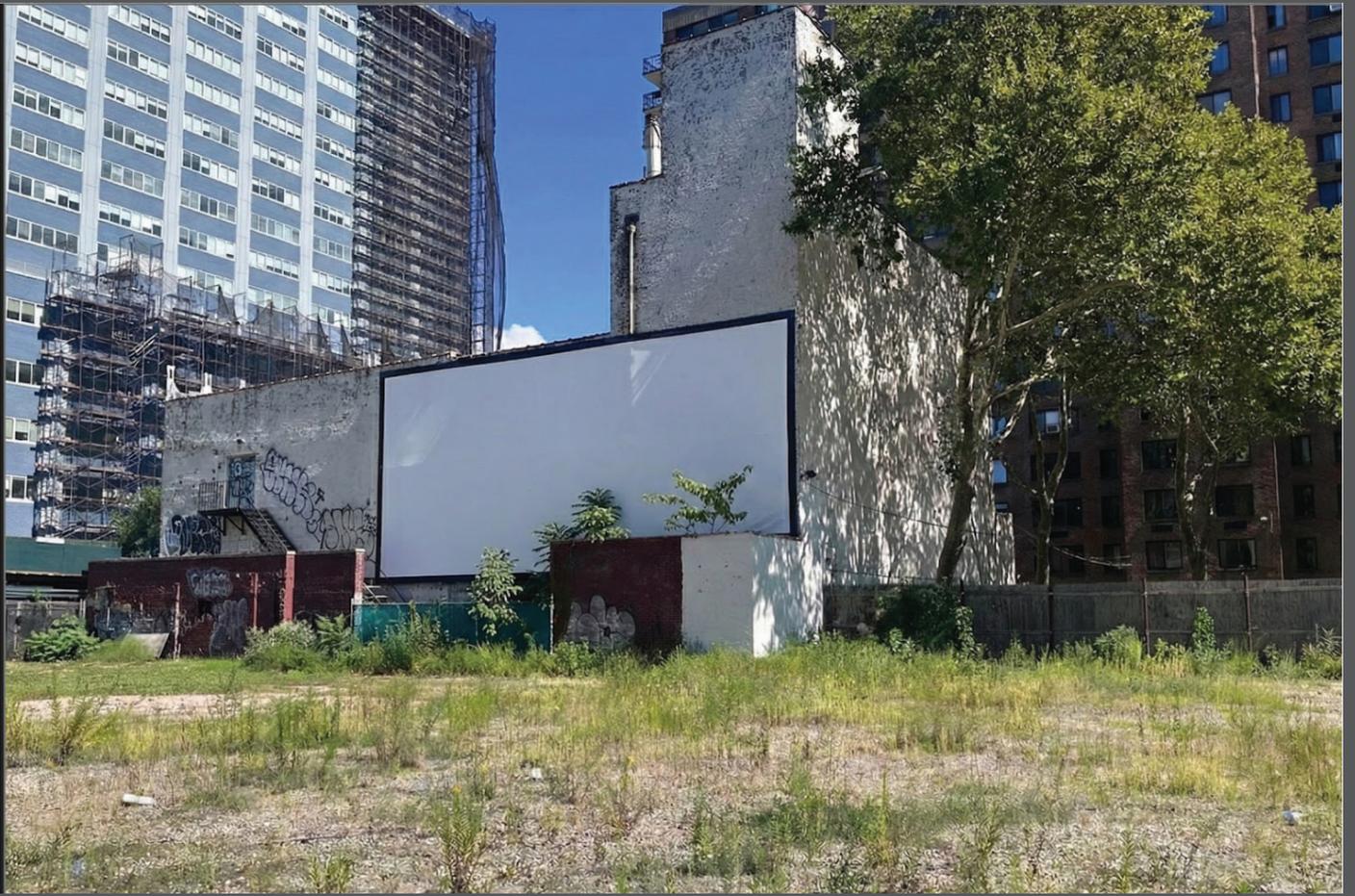
Projected Memory Wall

This would be the culmination of the 135th St projections. A block party celebration could be an opportunity to project onto a cultural landmark that has been taken away from the neighborhood. Furthermore, being able to hold an event where performances, storytelling, and community interactions takes place can be a valuable way for Harlem to highlight what Lenox Terrace will displace.

- Key
- AME Church
 - Food Market
 - Local Vendors
 - Performance Stage
 - Activity Area



Current state of lot and church



Proposed projector screen



Proposed block party

5 - Metropolitan Church Block Party Future Projected Memory Wall



Future adaptation of projections on proposed developments

Carrying the practice of projections into a new Harlem will continue to keep conversations alive regarding the cultural richness that once existed. It will be a reminder to keep the community's history in mind as the area continues to develop.

Opposing Gentrification Through Projection

Next Steps

We must keep the projections as a
PERMANENT cultural infrastructure, NOT
TEMPORARY.

Future glass towers or other blank moments
on newly developed facades can be used as
screening areas.

Project archival footage where historical
buildings existed and events took place.

Project the “news” and what Harlem is
becoming (ex: rent prices increasing or
numbers covering the demographic change in
the neighborhood).

HOLD DEVELOPERS ACCOUNTABLE BY USING FILM

Archives to Project

Music - Gospel / Choir / Live performances

1. Harlem Gospel Choir - official YouTube channel (videos & live performances). Great energetic choir footage for projection. youtube.com
<https://www.youtube.com/user/HarlemGospelChoir>
2. Harlem Gospel Choir - "You Are Good" (Live @ Blue Note Milano). High-quality concert clip with strong visuals. youtube.com
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIRB6WNOzc4>
3. Harlem Gospel Choir - "Amazing Grace" (Exclusive video). Powerful, close-up choir shots very suitable for projection. youtube.com
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaKf6P2nhKg>
4. The Harlem Gospel Travelers - full live performance (KEXP). Contemporary gospel group with tight staging and camera shots. Good for shorter projection loops. youtube.com
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GxP8-ixjDY>
5. "Live at the Luke!" - Saint Luke A.M.E. Church (series of live recordings and services). Use for contextual church-service visuals and interior choir footage. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UssLHfEWL7o>

Archives to Project

Dance, Festival & Historic Concerts

6. Summer of Soul / Harlem Cultural Festival (1969) - Playlist and documentary materials (clips & sets). The 1969 festival footage and Questlove's Summer of Soul are rich, high-impact visuals (Nina Simone, Stevie Wonder, Sly & The Family Stone, etc.). Must license for public projection.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPz6hTijR9K0TosYMDihBXEGqA8yWQTT5>

7. Harlem Cultural Festival / "Black Woodstock" articles & contextual clips - background for projection narratives. Useful to introduce the cultural context.

<https://origins.osu.edu/read/black-woodstock-1969-harlem-cultural-festival>

8. Live performances from Lincoln Center / Jazz at Lincoln Center (e.g., Wynton Marsalis / Echoes of Harlem) - Cinematic jazz footage to pair with archival Harlem images. youtube.com

<https://wyntonmarsalis.org/videos/view/jazz-at-lincoln-center-orchestra-recording-echoes-of-harlem>

Archives to Project

Interviews, Talks & Oral History

9. Lincoln Theatre Conversation Series: “The Heralds of the Harlem Renaissance” – community conversation video (relevant to Lincoln Theatre history and cultural context). Good for projection excerpts or audio-underlay. youtube.com
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YiEJtZ-MJfY>

10. Talks at the Schomburg: “The New Negro Renaissance” and other Schomburg Center lectures – historian panels and interviews (directly relevant to Harlem cultural narratives). Good for short interview clips. youtube.com+1
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHJU3o3UZoI>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RI-_Ypgtw9Y

11. Schomburg Center centennial & oral-history launch events – archived speeches, curators, and footage you can excerpt. Useful for authoritative narration clips. youtube.com
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etA-IHK8CQU>

12. “Once Upon a Time in Harlem” (William Greaves material) – feature/interview coverage about a major Harlem documentary (good for historic voiceovers). The New Yorker

Archives to Project

Archival Footage & Historic Street Scenes (visual b-roll)

13. 1960s Harlem street scenes (Kinolibrary / YouTube archival clips) - black & white street footage (1950s-1960s). Excellent ambient/historical projection loops.

youtube.com+1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtGw0vtt080>

14. Footage Farm / "1964 - Harlem, New York City" reels - raw archival clips of everyday life. Useful for atmospheric montage. youtube.com+1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epwbbH3cVcE>

15. Getty / Shutterstock / Producers Library - paid archival stock collections for Harlem footage (high-quality licensed clips for projection if you need clear rights & high-res). Use for licensed B-roll or to avoid copyright issues. Getty

Images+2shutterstock.com+2

<https://www.gettyimages.com/videos/1960s-harlem>

16. Footage of the 1964 Harlem unrest and aftermath (documentary clips & PBS resources) - for historical context sequences (use carefully and sensitively). PBS LearningMedia+1

<https://ca.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/amex26-soc-64ntharlem/1964-anger-in-harlem/>

Local Church / Community Clips & Smaller Performances

17. St. Luke A.M.E. Church - choir videos, youth choir and service clips (local AME church footage from Harlem parishes). Useful for parish-level community content.

youtube.com+1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=soo7hVyFG34>

18. Emanuel AME / Mother AME Zion Church clips - short service and choir videos from other Harlem AME congregations; good supplementary community content.

youtube.com+1

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkIGv4RCG_Q

Cultural Observances that Have Faded From Memory

New York Abolition Day (New York State Emancipation)

New York officially abolished slavery on July 5, 1827. This date, which signifies a pivotal moment in the state's history, predates the federal holiday Juneteenth by several decades and is generally not widely recognized by the public.

Harlem Renaissance Birth Year Marker - Often celebrated vaguely, but the exact start is rarely remembered. This marks the rise of Black arts, theatre, music, and literature in Harlem.

Lincoln Theatre Opening (Our Site!) - One of the first major Black performance venues in Harlem — yet almost no one remembers the original date today.

Frederick Douglass Day 14 February - This represented as a act of Self-definition, Liberation, Reclaiming identity denied under slavery

Malcolm X Assassination Anniversary - February 21, 1965 - A major moment in Harlem's history, but widely under-recognized today.

Seneca Village Destruction (Central Park) 1857 - NYC's historic Black community displaced for Central Park. Who owned lands and once lived there where now we go for a walk or picnic and is just a center of attraction now.

Black Cultural Dates to Celebrate the Block Party

Black History Month - Entire month of February, Nationwide celebration of Black history.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day - Third Monday of January - National day of service and reflection.

Kwanzaa- December 26 – January 1 - Celebrated widely through community events, music, and candle-light traditions.

African American Day Parade (Harlem) - Third Sunday in September - Largest celebration of African American culture in NYC.

Harlem Week Festival - Late July to August - A major cultural festival that brings music, dance, and art back into Harlem's streets.

Malcolm X Birthday Celebrations (Harlem / Shabazz Center)- May 19 - Events, museum programs, and walks happen every year.

