



Manhattan Community Board 9

Chair Report General Board Meeting February 21, 2019

Black History Month

We recognize Black History Month. February encourages us to remember our heroes, to re-live and learn history as well as to acknowledge deeds known and unknown that has shaped the times we live in. As we remember I turn attention to Hulan Jack, recognized as the first Manhattan Borough President of African-American descent. While, as stated by the below excerpt from a NYTimes article, his political career ended in infamy and quietly, his legacy and impact is felt today.

When Hulan Jack won the Manhattan borough president's race in 1953, newspapers across the country carried the news. It was the most powerful municipal office in the United States held by a black man — 10 years before Martin Luther King Jr.'s March on Washington.

While most white news outlets ran the news as a brief item, the black press celebrated it as a watershed moment — an unquestionable sign of the African-American emergence on the political stage in the North, amid the rapid demographic change of the Great Migration and the first gains of the postwar civil rights movement.

Front pages across the country were effusive: "First in Big City History," from The Baltimore Afro-American; "N.Y. Negro Wins Top Post," in The Pittsburgh Courier; "It Happened in New York," read The Philadelphia Tribune. And "Meet Hulan E. Jack, President of the 'Capital of the World,'" exclaimed The Chicago Defender, calling him the "boss of Manhattan."

It was a job that wielded serious clout at the time — not to mention a \$25,000 salary (10 percent more than that of a United States congressman), a staff of some 1,300 and a voice in all major decisions in the city.

"He was a big shot," said Charles B. Rangel, the 88-year-old former congressman from Harlem. Though Mr. Rangel, an uptown political fixture for more than 50 years, added that Mr. Jack "has a complex legacy."

And that's why Mr. Jack rarely gets mentioned today, even during Black History Month. While his election was a landmark, many of his higher achievements were eclipsed by the elections of subsequent black mayors and the waning power of the borough president's office. In his lifetime, he was undone by remnants of old-line political machinery, a cynical version of identity politics, and the changing landscape of urban power — in addition to his own failures of judgment and the scandals that followed.

In 1953, New York City politics were in a flux. The Irish and Italian heavies of the Tammany Hall machine — who had run much of city politics for decades — still held considerable sway. At the same time, Tammany and the other halls of power in the city realized the black vote was ascendant. Between the 1920 and 1950 censuses, the black population of Manhattan went from 5 percent to 20 percent. And Mr. Jack found himself one of five candidates in a field of all black men.

Among his opponents were Elmer Carter, a Republican member of the state's new Commission Against Discrimination, and Andronicus Jacobs, a longshoreman who'd fought to secure equal pay and benefits for black dock workers and ran on the American Labor Party ticket.

The Complex Story of Hulan Jack, the First Black 'Boss of Manhattan'

NY Times Feb. 22nd

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/20/nyregion/the-complex-story-of-hulan-jack-the-first-black-boss-of-manhattan.html>

Upper Manhattan Collaborative for Justice

There are a myriad of challenges that are facing the residents of Harlem. Some of us are struggling to cover our rent, others are dealing with health issues, while others still are struggling to get healthy and nutritious meals on the table. But there is a segment of the population that is facing all this issues and more. Reentering citizens, besides acclimating to life back in public, also have to work to get their lives back on track, resolve the stigma of being formerly incarcerated and navigate systems to receive basic services that most individuals take for granted.

This burden is especially heavy in our neighborhood 10027 – the zip code that sends the most individuals to state prisons. Beyond this general burden, we are facing with the return of 103 individuals that were summarily rounded up and label as “gang-bangers” from the Manhattanville and Grant in 2013 that is set for release over the next months to years. While it is easy to shun and ostracize these young men and women, we within the West Harlem community want to provide help and assistance to our returning brothers and sisters. We believe it is important to provide every attempt to remove barriers to services; and to ensure that the assistance necessary to reach their best is the least we can offer. This is why we at the Board and other concerned individuals and CBOs got together to address the situation.

We initiated round-table discussions involving the District Attorney's office, the Tayshana Chicken Murphy Foundation (TCMF), the Fortune Society and concerned citizens. We sought to get an idea of what is available and what more was needed. We engaged with Columbia University's Center for Justice, the Brooklyn Bail Fund, the Bronx Defenders, GOSO/SAVE, Legal Aid Society and spoke to countless individuals including the TA Presidents of both Manhattanville and Grant. These discussions spurred us into a line of action.

Over the Summer of 2018, under the auspices of TCMF, we engaged with credible messengers to provide alternative pathways for youth in Grant and Manhattanville. Engage with them, talk to the them, offer alternatives and encouraged skill building while allowing them to see that there is another way. While this program occurred over 2 months in the summer, it was limited and scope and capacity because of funding limitations.

While this is ongoing, we have another opportunity to again address the larger problems of criminal justice in our community. Towards the end of 2018, CB 9, West Harlem Development Corp., Legal Aid Society, TCMF, Project Liberation and The Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement (CAIC) joined together to form the Upper Manhattan Collaboration for Justice (UMCJ). While the specific activities and projects is still being defined, the mission of this program is to ensure that anyone who has been affected by the criminal justice system will be eligible to receive support and ensure that their social service needs are met. Furthermore, it is the coming together of a variety of organizations with the intent of formalizing greater collaboration, greater communication and coordination of services to persons in need.

This work, amongst others, has culminated in 2 outcomes. First, the creation of the Upper Manhattan Collaborative for Justice, with a mission of ensuring all individuals that are involved in the justice system and have returned to Harlem that their social service needs are met. The District Attorney of Manhattan, have also recognized the need to invest in West Harlem and has dedicated \$3.5M through an RFP. The Board is committed to supporting this initiative and recipients of the funding.

Sims Statue Replacement

Following years of community activism, in April 2018 the City removed the statue of Dr. J. Marion Sims from Central Park East. Sims was a physician who gained fame in Western medicine for his experiments on enslaved African-American women. The Committee to Empower Voices for Healing and Equity was formed to move forward the process of commissioning a new artwork for the site by the end of 2020.

Join the Committee for the artist selection panel to narrow down our pool of applicants to a select few artists and/or artist collectives who will be invited to submit proposals. This is an opportunity to meet members of the Steering Committee and to make your voice heard in the artist selection process. Feedback from the community throughout the selection process is essential as we collaborate on commissioning a new monument that helps us to heal and move beyond this painful legacy. Join us at The Negro Theater in the Schomburg Research Center at 515 Malcolm X Boulevard (135th St and Malcolm X Blvd)

Public Hearing on FY 2020 Preliminary Expense and Capital Budget

The BP's office is collecting information from Manhattanites pertaining budget priorities. Please take a moment to complete the BP's survey. The deadline to complete the survey is March 8th, 2019. You can access the survey via the following link:

<https://goo.gl/forms/2y0bchbUgi77OnB83>. Written testimony can also be submitted via budget@manhattanbp.nyc.gov.