



Image. Dr Enid Pinkney. (Source: The Miami Herald).

“Dr. Pinkney challenged us and it didn’t matter if you were an A student or an F student, she challenged you. By the time you left her class, I guarantee you, you weren’t just average, you were above average or an A student. She didn’t accept anything less than she gave of herself. She didn’t just preach it, but she walked the walk with us.”

Vickers, Milton, Oral History Interview with Zion Sealy, Florida International University, 2020. Transcript on file with Plusurbia Design.

Dr. Enid Pinkney

Preservation leader Enid C. Pinkney has made it her life’s work to ensure that the role of African Americans in Miami’s history is acknowledged and preserved. She was born in 1931 in Overtown to Lenora and Henry Curtis.¹ In the 1950s, her parents decided to move to Brownsville in order to get ahead of the Expressway construction planned for Overtown. Her father worked for Mr. and Mrs. Albert Pick, a wealthy Miami Beach family, and he convinced them to donate money for the construction of Christian Hospital at 4700 NW 32 Avenue in 1960.²

Pinkney graduated from the all-black Booker T. Washington High School in Miami in 1949, receiving a B.A. from Talladega College in 1953 and an M.S. from Barry University in 1967. She worked as a social worker from 1953 to 1955, after which she worked in the Dade County Public School System until she retired as Assistant Principal at South Miami Middle School in 1991. Her students credit her for her support in navigating the challenges of school integration.³

She joined the Dade Heritage Trust historic preservation organization in the mid-1980s while Assistant Principal at South Miami Middle School. She was elected the first black president of the Trust in 1998. Pinkney is the founder of the African American Committee, which focuses on the contributions of blacks to the community. She has worked to preserve such historical sites as the landmark Hampton House, the Lemon City Cemetery, and the Miami Circle. Dr. Pinkney has tirelessly advocated for the documentation and acknowledgement of Brownsville’s historic significance.

Enid Pinkney continually encourages her neighbors and friends to appreciate their history and share it with others. Dr. Pinkney brought attention to Brownsville’s history through a twelve-part series of televised interviews on Miami local channel 17, titled “Historical Perspectives on Brownsville,” which is still available today on YouTube. In one interview she stated, “Unless we can harness some of this information that we are walking around with in our heads and unless we can record it somewhere, unless we can preserve it, how are we going to know? How can we pass the information down, if we don’t share it?”⁴

1 “Enid C. Pinkney” The History Makers Website, c.2023 <https://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/enid-c-pinkney-39> Accessed July 11, 2023.

2 Historical Perspectives of Brownsville, Enid Pinkney interviews, 1993 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bhso8_b_ARg Accessed April 3, 2022

3 Conversation with Enid Pinkney and Jacquetta Colyer, Brownsville Community Leaders Meeting, October 2021, Historic Hampton House.

4 Historical Perspectives of Brownsville, Enid Pinkney interviews, 1993, 1:18:30, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bhso8_b_ARg Accessed April 3, 2022



Image. Photograph of Dr Enid Pinkney with Mayor Suarez. (Source: The Miami Times).

In 2001, Dr. Pinkney began her legacy project, advocating for the restoration of Brownsville's Hampton House Hotel, the only remaining Green Book hotel in Miami-Dade County. She served as the Founding President/CEO of The Historic Hampton House Community Trust, Inc. Today, the Historic Hampton House is a thriving museum, cultural center, event space, and a destination for learning about Black history and culture in Miami-Dade County.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Restoring black community's landmarks

*MIAMI-DADE, FROM 3

PERRINE
BAHAMIAN-BUILT
BETHEL HOUSE

During the late 1800s, scores of black Bahamians began pouring into the Keys and Miami-Dade seeking work in farms, railroads and newborn towns.

Tucked away near the intersection of South Dixie Highway and Southwest 184th Street in Perrine sits the last known Bahamian-built house in Miami-Dade's southern region, dating to 1937. Last summer, local historians, activists and Bahamian dignitaries celebrated the house's restoration and reopening as a museum.

"The children around here do not know about their heritage. Now they can come here and see what the Bahamas are all about," said restoration leader Helen Gage, a Perrine activist, during the opening festivities in July.

Over the course of 11 years, Gage enlisted the help of the county's historic preservation office, architect Thorn Grafton and the non-profit Treemendous of Miami to refurbish the tiny cottage and landscape the grounds.

Tours are given by appointment by calling 305-251-2458.

ALLAPATTAH
RAILROAD SHOP
COLORED ADDITION

Georgia Jones Ayers has no qualms about sternly informing anyone: "That's not Allapattah. That is the Railroad Shop Colored Addition," she said about an area once occupied by black families working for the Florida East Coast Railway.

On Aug. 1, 1947, police ejected the families from their homes to make way for a school and park for whites living in surrounding neighborhoods. White officers literally dragged Ayers' grandmother, Eliza Pierce, from her house. Within a few hours, 35 families were on the street.

Ayers carries around a small piece of that historic community everywhere she goes: the original deed to her grandmother's home. She has led a successful effort to rename Allapattah Elementary after Lenora Braynon Smith, a Railroad Shop resident and Florida's first black Teacher of the Year.

Now she's trying to get Allapattah Middle renamed after Emmy-winning actress Esther Rolle of *Good Times*, who also lived in Railroad Shop.

"She achieved so much and kept her humility; she's a great example of someone who worked hard and made it," Ayers said.

BROWNSVILLE AREA
HISTORIC HOTEL
HAMPTON HOUSE

All great speeches have to be rehearsed somewhere before becoming part of our collective history.

Martin Luther King Jr. tried out his *I Have a Dream*, the most famous speech of America's civil rights movement, at the Hampton House hotel and nightclub in northwest Miami-Dade's Brownsville area. Months later, he delivered that speech on Aug. 28, 1963, at the Lincoln Memorial during the epic March on Washington.

After years of deterioration following its closing in 1972, activists and preservationists pushed for historic designation, which the county historic preservation board granted in 2002. That saved the old hotel from the wrecking ball.

The Building Better Communities Bond Program is funding a projected four-year, \$6 million renovation of the hotel into a multiuse center and classroom for Florida Memorial University, a predominantly black college.

"If we don't preserve our landmarks, we'll be a lost people standing on air, with no foundation, with no idea who we really are," said Enid Pinkney, president of the Historic Hampton House Preservation Trust.

PETER ANDREW BOSCH/MIAMI HERALD FILE, 2003

PRESERVATION LEADERS: 'If we don't preserve our landmarks, we'll be a lost people standing on air... with no idea who we really are,' says Enid Pinkney, an advocate for the historic Hampton House, above. Georgia Jones Ayers, below, shows a picture of her grandparents who used lived in the Railroad Shop Colored Addition.

BARBARA P. FERNANDEZ/MIAMI HERALD FILE, 2006

HISTORIC HOUSE: A view of the Bethel House's kitchen, a house built by Bahamian immigrants dating to 1937.

Image. 2009 article featuring Dr. Enid Pinkney. (Source: The Miami Herald).