



# Who We Are

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In Memoriam

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Co-founder W.E.B. Du Bois Afro-American Studies Department, University of Massachusetts

# The Man Who Changed the Sound of Black Music:

Honoring Coleman Hawkins

Saturday, September 9, 2023 | 1PM-2PM | 445 W. 153rd St.

Sheila Anderson of WBGO, emcee



# Making Harlem's History Unavoidable

Time has passed since Camille Billops shared her pearl of wisdom, but the truth connects timelessly: It's comforting for the cultures and peoples that seek to be seen in the most truthful way. For While We Are Still Here (WWSH), Camille Billops's quote is our reason for being.

The SIGNS OF THE TIMES: Harlem Heritage Markers Project has been a long time coming, and because this community's history is so vast, the prospect of capturing some of it, for posterity, is intimidating and inspiring. When we met Marline A. Martin, a current member of our advisory board, she was then the executive director of Arts Horizons/ Leroy Neiman Gallery. She said, "We need plaques all around Harlem," and when I mentioned the idea of markers to William Seraile, Ph.D., he sent me a list of more than one hundred people who had lived here at some point.

Bill said, "Harlem lacks an identity. Not an identity of culture, but, rather, an identity of its history: Who did what where? Who lived there?" So WWSH sought to answer those questions through the SIGNS OF THE TIMES. Bill's list, combined with While We Are Still Here's mission, provided the impetus for WWSH to begin a pre-pandemic application process with New York City: After many meetings and revised submissions to various city agencies, we were granted final approval.

*"IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE  
WRITE OUR OWN HISTORIES,  
OTHERWISE THEY WILL  
SAY WE WERE NEVER HERE."*

**—CAMILLE BILLOPS, ARTIST  
AND ARCHIVIST**

## The African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, New York Life, and WWSH

In 2018, in Boston, two board members and I attended a training organized by the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund (AACHAF). The Fund is the brainchild of its executive director, Brent Leggs. His colleague, Robert Bull, a fundraising-development expert, with many years of experience, facilitated the workshop.

As the weekend came to a close, Brent asked us what we wanted to see in Harlem. We told him "twenty-five markers to start," and due to his commitment to heeding Camille Billops's call to action—because that's what it is—and his vast network of funders that support African American preservation

efforts, we are able to help make Harlem's history unavoidable. Without AACAHF's support, this idea would not have become a reality. New York Life also offered its financial and technical support for SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

## The Who, What, Why, When, and Where

In addition to Bill's list, we also learned of sites from other people who have an intimate familiarity with the distinctive history of this community. Most of them live or have lived in Harlem, and they shared vital memories of places that are long gone, but still important.

We held a community forum at the George Bruce library on 125th Street. People came together to share their ideas about who and what should be honored with a marker. The meeting was facilitated by Joyce Dudley of Dudley and Associates.

Researcher, Deborah Cowell, and I compiled people's choices onto

a spreadsheet that included brief narratives on site histories, GPS coordinates, street addresses, and photographs. We used this information to begin the application process with the city. Through this

*"HARLEM LACKS AN IDENTITY. NOT AN IDENTITY OF CULTURE, BUT, RATHER, AN IDENTITY OF ITS HISTORY: WHO DID WHAT WHERE? WHO LIVED THERE?"*

—WILLIAM SERAILE, PH.D.  
HISTORIAN

process, WWSH learned that there are many New York City regulations regarding what can go into the sidewalk and where. For example, if the street is too narrow, no marker can be installed. If there are gas and electric lines adjacent to where you would like the marker, no marker can be installed, and, of course fire hydrants, bus stops, and bus shelters have restrictions. This is why, for example, influential organizations such as Kamoinge and Weusi are

not represented in this iteration of SIGNS OF THE TIMES. The street they occupied was too narrow to accommodate a marker.

The markers say, *we are here and this is what we did*. The markers are a way to magnify the Black journey toward recognition for that which we have contributed, not only to Harlem, not only to New York City, but to the nation and the world. Through SIGNS OF THE TIMES, we seek to leave visual reminders of Harlem as a locus of the heart of the African Diaspora, as the Capital of the Black world. This is where the dynamic creativity, spirituality, politics, and intellectualism came together and created a village, and in this village one could find an array of exotic and mainstream religions, new ways of theorizing about liberation, and artistry tied to freedom dreams.

Coleman Hawkins, the man honored today, has a permanent place in the pantheon of prodigious innovators. The lush beauty of his tone on ballads, that interminable swing



on up-tempo numbers, and the facility with which he played blossomed from a bounty of musical gifts. He was well versed in the theoretical underpinnings of music and had the imagination to transform what was considered a lowly instrument into one that has come to define the music that we've come to call jazz.

While We Are Still Here is honored to have members of Coleman Hawkins's family here today.

In the Spirit of Heritage,

*Lauren D. Taylor*



*Coleman Hawkins blowing horn, Circa 1956.  
Courtesy Colette Hawkins.*



*Coleman Hawkins holding son Rene, W. 153rd and St.  
Nicholas Avenue, 1950. Courtesy Colette Hawkins.*

# Coleman Hawkins

*"I think a solo should tell a story... Romanticism and sorrow and greed—they can all be put into music."*

—Coleman Hawkins

Coleman Hawkins told quite a story with his flowing, lyrical style and his choice of instruments. Unflattering descriptions like "Mooing," "belching," "raucous," "crude," and "just a substitute for the trombone" in military marching bands summed up what people thought about the tenor saxophone before the "Hawk." Referred to as the "Father of the Tenor Saxophone," Hawkins elevated the once lowly background instrument. In his hands, the sax was placed center stage—a position it still holds in the jazz world today.

This biography continues on our website: [harlemnyc.org](http://harlemnyc.org)



*Baby Coleman Hawkins, 1905. Courtesy Colette Hawkins.*

# Program and Itinerary



**1:00-2:00**

**Coleman Hawkins Marker Unveiling, 453 W. 153rd St.**

This is the site of Coleman Hawkins's residence.

Hosted by Sheila Anderson of WBGO

**Remarks**

Colette Hawkins | Rene Hawkins | Sonny Rollins statement read by Sheila Anderson | George Coleman | Lewis Porter

Following the marker dedication, a Second Line will march to the Sugar Hill Luminaries Lawn for a concert that will include a tribute to "Hawk" at While We are Still Here's 7th Annual Sugar Hill Music Festival.

**2:00**

**Procession to Sugar Hill Luminaries Lawn at Edgecombe Ave. and W.155th St.**



# Presenters and Performers

**Sheila Anderson**, whose moniker, “Queen of Hang,” is a mover and shaker in the world of art, most notably in jazz. In addition to being an on-air host she is an author, a writer, emcee, and moderator. In 1995, she was hired by WBGO, Newark, 88.3FM to host *Sunday Morning Harmony*, where she now hosts *Weekend Jazz Overnight* and *Salon Sessions*. Not one to rest on her laurels and looking to immerse herself further into jazz culture, that year, award-winner, Ms. Anderson created *The Art of Jazz*, a weekly 30-minute TV program for Time Warner Cable in New York City. The show earned her a Manhattan Neighborhood Network (MNN) Award for Community Media. *The Art of Jazz* featured jazz luminaries like Ron Carter, Eric Reed, Russell Malone, Regina Carter, Javon Jackson, T. S. Monk, Monty Alexander, Benny Golson, the late Leon Thomas, Mark Murphy, and Attila Zoller. Ms. Anderson’s unique individual career path began in 1973 at the age of 16 when she was elected New York State Youth President of the NAACP, a position she held for four years under the regime of Roy Wilkins.



**Sheila Evans** is an independently contracted licensed New York City tourist guide. Evans founded Sheila’s Tours, an established local and international tour consultancy. She has led tours in twenty-two cities on five continents. Evans is the author of *Cathedral Parkway Towers at Harlem’s Gate* and several audiobooks. A lifetime member of the Actors Studio, Evans worked on stage, film, and television, including recording children’s books for Troll Books. Evans is a member of the Screen Actors Guild and Actors Equity. Sheila’s stage and union name is spelled SHELA Evans. She holds a master of science in education with honors from CCNY. She has taught Acting for Animators for fourteen years at the School of Visual Arts. She is on the board of directors of the CCNY Black Alumni Group and the chairperson of the United Tenants Association of Cathedral Parkway Towers Inc.



**Allan Harris** is a Brooklyn-born, Harlem-based vocalist, guitarist, songwriter, and band leader. With an impressive discography boasting fourteen recordings as a leader, Harris has established himself as one of the jazz world's most acclaimed vocalists. Recognized for his outstanding contributions to jazz, he is a three-time winner of the New York Nightlife Award for "Outstanding Jazz Vocalist," a *DownBeat* "Rising Star Jazz Vocalist," and a winner of the prestigious 2022 "Sarah Vaughan International Vocal Competition." He has also been honored twice as the "Best Male Jazz Vocalist" by *Hot House* jazz magazine, received a Back Stage award for "Ongoing Achievement in Jazz," and was recognized with France's Palmares Award for the 3rd Best Jazz Vocal Album. *The New York Times* has hailed him as "a protean talent," while the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Atlantic*, *Glide magazine*, *Jazz Times*, *DownBeat*, *Vintage Guitar*, and other publications have also praised his extraordinary abilities.



**Colette Hawkins Whitlock**, daughter of Coleman Hawkins, grew up in 445 West 153rd Street. She worked in several areas, primarily in New York City. While attending college, she learned the business side of the funeral business working at Benta's Funeral Home. After receiving her bachelor's degree in business administration, she worked as comptroller of a mental health center serving the community in Greenwich Village that employed over one hundred licensed psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and psychiatric social workers. She moved into international banking while obtaining a master's degree from NYU. The latter part of her career was in education. She administered Columbia University's Real Estate MBA Program for two years before moving to the classroom in the New York City public school system. She is currently retired.



**Rene Hawkins** is the youngest of Coleman Hawkins's three children. He received a Catholic school education from first grade through college. He worked for more than thirteen years as an accountant in the domestic and foreign clothing industry. After meeting and marrying his wife Thelma, she persuaded him to join the funeral industry and together they opened their own funeral home, which they have successfully operated for almost forty years. Thelma manages the funeral home. Rene is semi-retired but remains close to the business. Four of our grandchildren have followed in our footsteps and also work in the business. Rene spends his time between New York and his beloved Cayman Islands, where he and Thelma hope to retire.



**Jenn Jade**, Bronxite polyglot, is an alumna of the New School Jazz Conservatory and Fiorello LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and Performing Arts. A Montreux Jazz Voice Competition finalist, Equity actress, and Betty Carter Jazz Ahead composer, Ms. Jade often performs at Aux Trois Mailletz in Paris, Jazz Na Avenida in Salvador da Bahia, and the legendary Minton's Playhouse in Harlem. She has performed at Carnegie Hall in Bobby McFerrin's *Instant Opera!*, in the world premiere tour of *Chapel/Chapter* with the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. GRAMMY board member, Ms. Jade, has performed with David Amram, Elew, Dave Valentin, Roy Hargrove, Wycliffe Gordon, Joatan Nascimento, Junior Mance, James Carter, Benny Powell, Candido Camero, Janis Siegel, Wynton Marsalis, and others. She recently starred as "*Tempest*, in the feature film *Since I Left You, Tinima*" in the opera-musical *Hatuey: Memory of Fire*, and has just returned home from touring France, Brazil, and Argentina.



**Lewis Porter, Ph.D.**, is a GRAMMY-nominated pianist and composer on thirty albums with Dave Liebman, John Patitucci, Terri Lyne Carrington, and many others, as well as a celebrated educator, author, and researcher. His best-known book is *John Coltrane: His Life and Music*. A long-time, former music professor at Rutgers in Newark and at Tufts U, he also taught at The New School, Manhattan School of Music, NYU, William Paterson, and Brandeis, as well as guest teaching throughout the U.S. and Europe. He was the first jazz



band director at both Tufts (from 1977-86) and Brandeis (simultaneous, from 1979-85), and also directed the concert band at Tufts, so he is experienced at working with every instrument. He has worked with singers as well, co-teaching workshops and classes with vocalists Janet Lawson, Sheila Jordan, Jazzmeia Horn, and others.

**Steven Oquendo Latin Jazz Orchestra** is a nineteen-piece ensemble. As the lead arranger and bandleader, Oquendo's powerful trumpet playing puts the "big" in Big Band that performs a highly danceable repertoire of Palladium era, Afro-Cuban salsa, and mambo classics. Oquendo has performed on stage and in the studio alongside Latin jazz legends like Celia Cruz, Rubén Blades, and Eddie Palmieri. In his role as a community leader and educator, he is also the music director for the Pelham Preparatory Academy in the Bronx, where his stellar work with our city's students have earned him acclaim from *Good Morning America* as a 2022 Class Act teacher.



**The Sugar Hill Quartet** is the longest-running house band in New York City, having performed for more than two decades at St. Nick's Pub, Minton's, Lenox Lounge, and Smoke. The members of the quartet kept the Harlem jam-session tradition alive, and have laid down the musical foundation for the likes of Stevie Wonder, Wynton Marsalis, and Bono. As of this writing the bass chair is rotating.



# The Community It Took

## ADVISORS

Patricia Allen  
Sam Anderson  
Playthell Benjamin  
Alexa Birdsong  
Basir Mchawi  
Ademola Olugbefola  
In Memoriam, Bob Gumbs

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Deborah Cowell, researcher  
Yvonne Wakim Dennis, researcher, writer  
William Seraile, Ph.D., researcher  
Candacy Taylor, writer  
Karen D. Taylor, researcher, writer

## ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNER

Keren Dillard

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Keren Dillard  
Siyaka Taylor-Lewis

## MARKER PLACEMENT SURVEYING

Chenzira Taylor-Lewis

## COLEMAN HAWKINS AND SUGAR HILL MUSIC FESTIVAL EVENTS

### *Technical*

Bill Toles for The Black Atlantic  
Creative Collective—Sound

### *Production Manager*

Michael "Spiderman" Clarke

### *Mover*

Rich Burrell

Enormous appreciation is due to Nicholas Pettinati and Christina Yoo, of the Department of Transportation; Community Boards 9, 10, and 12; the Public Design Commission; and the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Thanks are also due to Victor Edwards, Marie Dutton Brown, and Melanie Edwards. Gratitude to E. Maurice Robinson-Cook (EMDG LLC) for his outsized creativity in graphic design.



Saturday, September 30 | 2:00

## Harlem Renaissance Librarian: Regina Anderson Andrews

### Washington Heights Branch, 1000 St. Nicholas Ave.

This SIGNS OF THE TIMES: Harlem Heritage Markers Project Unveiling Honors Regina Anderson Andrews.

On September 11, on our website, we will share information about the **Children's Book Giveaway** that will take place, sponsored by New York Life, as part of the Andrews's celebration.

Regina Anderson Andrews began her career with the New York Public Library in 1923 at the 135th Street branch, bringing her to the center of the Harlem Renaissance. Later in her career, she was the first African American woman to head a branch, and retired from the Washington Heights library. During the Renaissance, Andrews brought prominent speakers to 135th Street and created writing spaces for writers such as Langston Hughes.



*Regina Anderson Andrews*

Her apartment, at 580 St. Nicholas Avenue, was a hub for the Harlem Renaissance crowd. She was also a playwright. She shared the flat with Louella Tucker and Ethel Ray, who worked with publisher, Charles Johnson, at the Urban League's *Opportunity Magazine* as a researcher. Their home was the site of a literary salon, where people such as W.E.B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson attended. In her earliest days in Harlem, Zora Neale Hurston slept on the sofa.

**Sunday, November 5 | 3:00**  
**Lenape Land Acknowledgement, 601 W. 125th St.**  
**with Chief Reggie Ceasar of the Matinecock Nation**

**Lenapehoking: Algonquian Artists Today Exhibit**  
**Spitzer School of Architecture, Convent Ave. and W. 135th St.**

The dedication of the Lenape Land Acknowledgement marker will be followed by the opening reception of *Lenapehoking: Algonquian Artists Today*, at the Spitzer School of Architecture. Curated by Nadema Agard, a Powhatan/Cherokee/Sioux visual artist, the exhibit brings together the work of many Algonquian artists. The Algonquian nations of the Northeastern Woodlands call their ancestral homeland Lenapehoking or "Land of the Lenape," which includes New York, Connecticut, Eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Northern Delaware, with New York City at its heart.

The contemporary works in this show range from historic references to cutting-edge statements by Algonquian nation artists who are originally from Lenapehoking and those who are also culturally and linguistically related to the Lenape.

The works of these artists represent a Land Acknowledgement on this Island known as Manahatta or Menatay and are a symbol of the ongoing Indigenous presence in Lenapehoking, Turtle Island (Native North America) and the world at large. We are the past, present, and will be future contributors to a global civilization.

### **Artists**

Jeremy Dennis (Shinnecock), Tecumseh Ceasar (Matinecock), Paul Deo (Powhatan), and Phoebe Farris (Powhatan/Lenape)



*Nadema Agard*

