

Harlem African Burial Ground and 126th Street Mixed Use Project



The historic footprint of the Harlem African Burial Ground is located in East Harlem at East 126th Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues, within the site where the decommissioned 126th Street Bus Depot stands today.

History

The village of Nieuw Haarlem was established in 1660. The Low Dutch Reformed Church (predecessor of today's Elmendorf Reformed Church) was its founding place of worship. The church maintained two cemeteries: one for people of European descent and another for people of African descent.

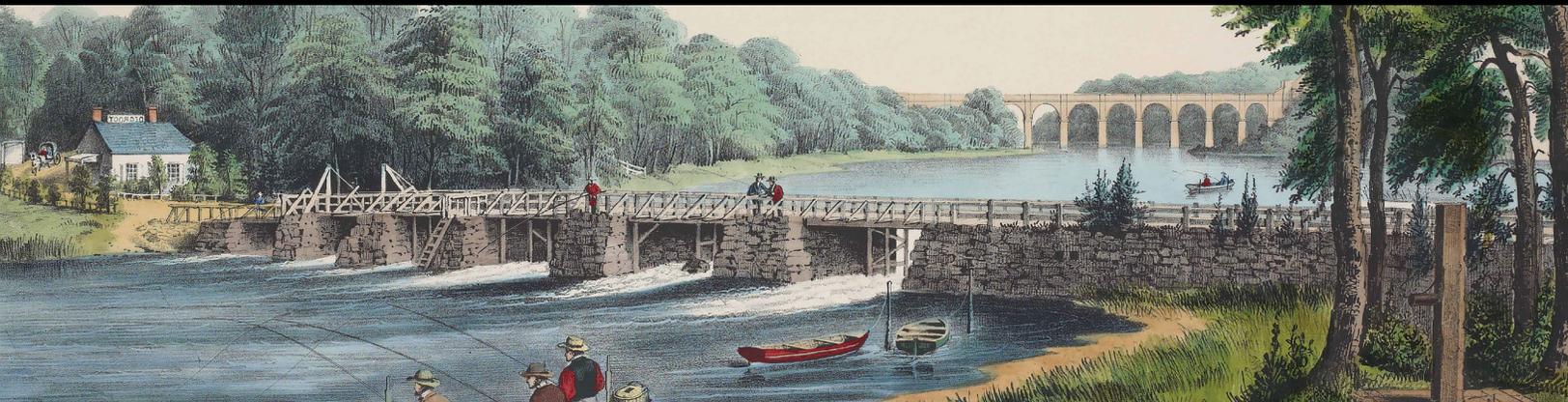
For more than two centuries, New Yorkers of African descent were buried at the Harlem African Burial Ground. They played a crucial role in the early history of the city, and their history is New York City and Harlem's history.

The burial ground land was sold in the mid-1800s. Those buried in the European cemetery were relocated to new plots while those at the Harlem African Burial Ground were left behind. Increasing urbanization caused severe displacement and desecration to the burial ground. The bus depot that stands on the site today was built in 1947.



The Harlem African Burial Ground Initiative

The Harlem African Burial Ground Task Force (now called the Harlem African Burial Ground Initiative) was founded in 2009 to advocate for the creation of a memorial that would restore honor, dignity, and respect to those buried at the site. It is co-chaired by Rev. Dr. Patricia A. Singletary, former pastor of the Elmendorf Reformed Church, and Melissa Mark-Viverito, former NYC Council Member for District 8 and former NYC Council Speaker.



Rediscovery

In 2015, archaeologists commissioned by NYCEDC uncovered disarticulated human remains of at least two people, likely of African descent, at the bus depot site—conclusively establishing the burial ground’s location within it. The next phase of archaeological work will establish the complete distribution of the human remains across the site.

Moving Forward

This archaeological work is an early step toward realizing the HABGI and NYCEDC’s vision for redeveloping the bus depot site to honor and memorialize the Harlem African Burial Ground through a new outdoor memorial and indoor cultural education center; while addressing affordable housing and job creation needs in East Harlem.

To complement the archaeological work, NYCEDC released a request for proposals (RFP) for an education and engagement team to raise awareness about the Harlem African Burial Ground, its history, and the archaeological process to the East Harlem and Harlem communities and beyond.

To learn more about the history of the Harlem African Burial Ground and the next phase of archaeological work and stay informed about education and engagement events, follow [@harlemafricanburialground](https://www.instagram.com/harlemafricanburialground) on Instagram and visit edc.nyc/habg.



For more information, contact:
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