



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10

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New York Rens Court Street Co-Naming Resolution

Resolution: To support the Co-Naming at the **northeast corner of West 137th Street and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Boulevard to New York Rens Court.**

WHEREAS: The New York Rens basketball team was the first all-black fully professional African-American-owned basketball team and;

WHEREAS: In 1923, the New York Rens formed when basketball manager Robert “Bob” Douglas partnered with William Roach, the owner of the new Renaissance Ballroom and Casino and;

WHEREAS: At the time, Bob Douglas had owned and managed an all-black basketball team called the Spartan Braves, which had been a very successful team and a leading contender for the black national championship title, but had no official home court and;

WHEREAS: Bob Douglas asked William Roach if the Spartans could play their home games at his ballroom in return for changing the name of the team to the “New York Renaissance” and “New York Rens” to promote the dance hall and;

WHEREAS: The Renaissance Ballroom and Casino, with its perfect location in the center of Harlem, its spacious floors, and its balcony seating, was the ideal venue for Spartan games and;

WHEREAS: The “Rens,” whose colors were navy and gold, attracted the best African American talent in basketball. The team’s original lineup included Clarence “Fats” Jenkins and James “Pappy” Ricks, as well as Frank “Strangler” Forbes and Leon Monde. All four of these men also played professional baseball in the Negro Leagues. All four would also be enshrined collectively as part of the 1932-33 team that was inducted into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame as a unit in 1963 and;

WHEREAS: By 1924-25 the “Rens” had won the first of many Colored Basketball World Championships and thereafter proceeded to dominate not just black basketball, but all of basketball for the next 25 years and;

WHEREAS: During that period, the Rens routinely beat white national champion basketball teams like the Original Celtics, the Philadelphia SPHAS, the Oshkosh All Stars, and the Indianapolis Kautskys – all teams that would not allow blacks to play in their own teams and;

WHEREAS: In 1939, the New York Rens won the inaugural World Championship of Professional Basketball, an invitation-only tourney with a field made up of America's twelve best professional basketball teams. The title game saw the Rens defeating the Oshkosh All Stars. Oshkosh had been the champion of the National Basketball League, a whites-only league and;

WHEREAS: The legacy of the New York Rens is profound as a pioneer for so many black athletes in the Harlem community and beyond. Despite the segregationist policies in major professional sports leagues during their time, the New York Rens grew successfully and triumphed in the games and tournaments in which they participated. The New York Rens team has impacted so many members of the Harlem community – including over 100 Harlem residents signed petitions in support of this street co-naming and New York State Senator Inez Dickens, who has expressed her steadfast support of this street co-naming and;

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Manhattan Community Board 10's Transportation, Historic Preservation, and Landmarks Committee wishes to remember the New York Rens by formally requesting that the New York City Council and the Mayor of New York City enact legislation to support the Co-Naming at the northeast corner of West 137th Street and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Boulevard to New York Rens Court.

The Historic Preservation and Transportation Committee of CB 10 voted on this item May 9th 2017 with a vote of 6 in favor 0 opposed and 0 abstentions.