

## 1 Neighborhood Women Living and Learning Center (249 Manhattan Ave)

The NW LLC provides support for neighborhood women committed to community building. It is designed to illustrate how the community can be a learning campus, how wealth can be created through pooling resources, and how intergenerational mentoring and support can sustain long-term leadership and organizing. The Center is owned by the NCNW and co-managed by the two global networks, Huairou Commission and GROOTS International, whose New York offices are at the same location.

**Inside Plaques:** Sandy Schilen Public Living Room, Juanita Rodriguez-Orengo Dining Room (see also 4), Caroline Pezullo Kitchen.

**Outside Plaque:** Gerladine Miller Conversation Corner



Geraldine Miller (see also 12) founded the Household Technicians Union to ensure equal rights for women working as maids, nannies and cooks. She was president of the NCNW and ran a program for Project Open Doors that brought to light similarities and shared concerns of homemakers and household workers, breaking down the barriers of class and race.

## 2 Leonard Library (81 Devoe St)

Ann Giordano graduated from the NW College Program. In 1978 she became the coordinator of the same program, helping grassroots women attend college in the neighborhood and become community leaders. Ann led the fight against the closing of Leonard Library by organizing a petition to preserve the library, which resulted in the Brooklyn Public Library reversing its decision.

## 3 Swinging Sixties Community Center & Small World Day Care Center (211 Ainslie St)

In 1969, under the guidance of Jan Peterson (see also 10), the Conselyea Street Block Association founded the center to bring services to children, parents and seniors in the community. Tillie Tarantino (see also 7) was its Executive Director for over 30 years.

## 4 Former Eastern District High School (850 Grand St)

In 1992 after a student got stabbed in the head, Juanita Orengo-Rodriguez organized a boycott at the school. Parents and students gathered for

three days outside to demand better conditions. Juanita and the PTA achieved to relieve overcrowding, and to increase security, number of teachers and counseling programs. She also worked for a decade as Director of the NCNW "You Can Community School." With Juanita's guidance it became the number one Offsite Education Services School. Juanita graduated from the NW College Program.



Since 1974, the **National Congress of Neighborhood Women (NCNW)** has been working to build a social change movement of grassroots women living in poor and working class urban and rural communities. At the heart of all NCNW efforts is the belief that a critical and usually overlooked way to improve life in neighborhoods is to enhance and expand participation by women in local development, connect them with allies from outside the neighborhood, and build an effective force for their visions and values in local, state, national, and international policy formation.

**NCNW** achieved consultative status at the United Nations in 1985 and helped initiate **GROOTS International**, a global network to support grassroots women's organizations to collectively forge and consolidate grassroots women's presence and perspective. In 1995 Neighborhood Women members participated in the founding of the **Huairou Commission**, a global membership and partnership coalition that empowers grassroots women's organizations to enhance their community development practice and to exercise collective political power at the global level. The NCNW, GROOTS International and the global secretariat of the Huairou Commission are all located at the NW House in Williamsburg-Greenpoint.

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Photographs courtesy of the NCNW. All black and white photographs by Janie Eisenberg. All color photographs by Rafael Gamo.

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## Neighborhood Women Walking Tour



Neighborhood Women Legacy Project



The **National Congress of Neighborhood Women (NCNW)** has been dedicated for more than 30 years to empowering poor and working class women to become community leaders. The NCNW works to give grassroots women a voice, and to raise their consciousness of their own power so they can better define and solve problems facing their communities. In 1974 Neighborhood Women members decided that the office for the NCNW would be located in **Williamsburg-Greenpoint**, where it has remained until present. This neighborhood became their testing ground to develop programs that would later be replicated at a national and international level.

The **Neighborhood Women Walking Tour** highlights the role of grassroots women's leadership in the historical development, growth and vitality of their communities. It also honors at an individual level the work of NW activists and attracts and inspires Williamsburg-Greenpoint residents to actively participate in the transformation of their community. Though the work of Neighborhood Women is visible in the built environment of Williamsburg-Greenpoint, their biggest impact has been in the perception the women had of themselves and the many lives they continue to transform in the community through their leadership.

The Neighborhood Women (NW) **Walking Tour** will help you discover how these grassroots women leaders and activists transformed Williamsburg-Greenpoint! Some of their accomplishments include a day care and senior center, a living and learning center and affordable women's housing.

Approximate duration: 1hr  
Distance: 1.6 miles

Find the NW Plaques at the different sites to find more about each women's experience and accomplishments.



## 5 Margaret Carnegie Playground

This playground, located in Cooper Park, honors public housing leader Margaret Carnegie (see also 6 and 8). She succeeded in bridging differences between ethnic groups in Williamsburg-Greenpoint by being involved in several neighborhood organizations throughout her life. Carnegie dedicated over forty years to address the basic necessities of a strong neighborhood: public housing, the strengthening of family relations and better quality of life for seniors. Grandparents Avenue, located along a section of Kingsland Avenue, earned its name in recognition of her work.

## 6 Cooper Park Houses

Margaret Carnegie (see also 5 and 8), Mildred Johnson (see also 8) and Mildred Tudy (see also 10) moved to Cooper Park Houses in 1952. They were the founders of the Cooper Park Houses Tenant Association.

## 7-12 Neighborhood Women Houses

In 1982, the NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) closed the 67-year-old Greenpoint Hospital (GH). The Department of Housing and Preservation converted the GH into a men's homeless shelter, ignoring plans that the community board had presented for redevelopment of a nursing home and senior housing. The HHC moved in 1200 homeless men without consulting the community. The result was neglect of the men, along with a profound disturbance to the quality of life in the neighborhood. A coalition of five neighborhood groups formed The Greenpoint Renaissance Enterprise Corporation (GREC), the majority of those involved were women, members of NW. After protesting the hospital closing, and trying to limit the numbers in the homeless shelter, GREC presented its vision for a positive reuse of the eight abandoned buildings to the Community Board. They voted in favor and Neighborhood Women received three hospital buildings to convert into thirty-three units of housing. These are the Neighborhood Women Houses.

## 7 Marie Leanza and Tillie Tarantino Bldg (29 Debevoise Ave)

Marie Leanza and Tillie Tarantino (see also 3) are grassroots women activists who have demonstrated an abiding commitment to the

betterment of Williamsburg-Greenpoint. Marie and Tillie, lifelong Williamsburg residents, became involved in 1975 with the NCNW through the Neighborhood Women College Program. Marie worked for over three decades at St Nicks Alliance specializing in senior housing. She led the fight against redlining in Williamsburg and was key to the establishment of the Building Survival Fund. Tillie co-founded the Conselyea Street Block Association to bring services to parents and seniors in the community. She was a founder of Small World Day Care Center and served as Executive Director of the Swinging Sixties Senior Center for over three decades.

## 8 Margaret Carnegie and Mildred Johnson Bldg (302 Jackson St)

Margaret Carnegie (see also 5 and 6) and Mildred Johnson (see also 6) represented Cooper Park Houses at GREC. As founding members of the Cooper Park Tenants Association, they achieved improvements in safety and the creation of new community spaces. Mildred, a devout worshiper, channeled her faith into the community by establishing youth and head start programs. When the Greenpoint Hospital was converted into a homeless shelter, she fought to assure the homeless were treated with justice and respect.

## 9 Tish and Guido Cianciotta Bldg (284 Jackson St)

Theresa 'Tish' and Guido Cianciotta formed in 1978 the Concerned Citizens of Withers Street and Area Block Association. When the empty buildings of the GH were converted by the city into

a homeless shelter they protested the city's intrusion by picketing, along with other neighborhood allies, for 140 nights for the release of the main building. They followed up by going to the courts and City Hall, which resulted in the release of four buildings for housing the GREC plan and the reduction of the homeless shelter.

## 10 Jan Peterson and Mildred Tudy Bldg (28 Kingsland Ave)

Jan Peterson founded the NCNW. As a founding member of GREC she had a key role in the transformation of the empty Greenpoint Hospital buildings into the NW Houses. Her experience spans from local and national to global work, playing a founding role in GROOTS and the Huairou Commission. Jan has committed more than four decades to the improvement of grassroots women's lives globally. Mildred Tudy Johnston (see also 6) was a founding member of the Cooper Park Houses Tenant Association. She was a principle founder of Crispus

Attucks Community Council of Williamsburg where she served as Executive Director until the age of 73. She advocated for racial equality, better jobs for teens, improved public housing, voter registration, the building of Woodhull hospital and holding elected officials accountable to the community.

## 11-12 Elizabeth "Betty" Marrero Garden and Mary Alice Richardson and Geraldine Miller Community Room

The NW Houses garden honors woman leader Betty Marrero for acting as a social link that brought together the community, and for the energy and passion she demonstrated through her volunteer work. The community room honors Geraldine Miller (see also 1) and Mary Alice Richardson, who was president of NWWG and pioneered work in economic development as the first director of a Community Action Program in the 1960s.

