



COMMUNITY BOARD ELEVEN

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN
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Nilsa Orama
Chair

Angel D. Mescain
District Manager

March 4, 2021

Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP
Commissioner
Department of Parks & Recreation
830 Fifth Ave
New York, NY, 10065

Re: Support for the naming of “Richard Toussaint Park” and “Richard Toussaint Way”

Dear Commissioner Silver,

Community Board 11 hopes to reconfirm support for the naming of both 1) the park at the Harlem Greenway Link between East 125th Street and East 132nd Street as “Richard Toussaint Park” and 2) the renaming of the pathway on the Harlem River Esplanade leading from 142nd Street to the entrance of the proposed new park at 132nd Street as “Richard Toussaint Way”.

Richard Patrice Toussaint was a lifelong East Harlem parks advocate. He worked tirelessly to provide access to parks for the disenfranchised in the community. He walked the East River Esplanade daily where he turned dreams into action as he advocated for a better pathway and park that brought dignity to the community he so dearly loved.

His passion for civic engagement began at a young age when as a teenager he volunteered with the Jazzmobile and was a member of the Associated Community Teams where he did writing and production for young people. This passion would carry over into his adult life as he would continue to champion the causes of the people of his local community. He would become a cast member of the CBS television show “The Learning Experience” where he would share his passions for the arts and learning with the youth. He would later become more involved in the affairs of the community being an active member of Community Board 11, where he served as chair of the Public Safety committee for 10 years and was a vocal and effective advocate for the people of his community. Through his engagement, he presented the idea for the Harlem River Park in 1990 to the Department of Parks and Recreation; the park officially opened in 2002.

Later his advocacy for the Harlem River Park Gateway project helped to secure important traffic safety improvements that would benefit pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles at the key approaches to that park including the intersection of 135th Street and Madison Avenue which had long posed safety challenges for crossing motorists and pedestrians.

Advocates, such as Mr. Toussaint, whose life touched so many people, should always be remembered. A generation of East Harlemites and visitors to our community will continue to benefit from his passion and works. Community Board 11 maintains that Mr. Toussaint should be honored for his contributions and request that you consider renaming both the park and pathway in honor of Mr. Toussaint.

If you have any questions, please contact Carly Wine, our Assistant District Manager, at cwine@cb11m.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nilsa Orama". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nilsa Orama
Chair
Community Board 11

cc: Hon. Diana Ayala, New York City Council (via email)
Hon. Bill Perkins, New York City Council (via email)
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President (via email)
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, U.S House of Representatives (via email)
Hon. Brian Benjamin, New York State Senate (via email)
Hon. Robert Rodriguez, New York State Assembly (via email)
Steve Simon, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (via email)
Jessica Elliott, Community Board 11 (via email)
Judith Febbraro, Community Board 11 (via email)