



THE COUNCIL OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

CITY HALL
NEW YORK, NY 10007

COREY JOHNSON
SPEAKER

TELEPHONE
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July 14, 2020

Sarah Carroll
Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street, Floor 9
New York, NY 10021

Dear Chair Carroll:

As the Speaker of the New York City Council and the Council representative for District 3, I write to express my strong support for the proposed landmark designation of 60 through 80 Fifth Avenue in Manhattan.

These eight buildings, designed by some of the 19th and early 20th century's most distinguished American architects, including Albert Wagner, Buchman and Fox, Cleverdon & Putzel, Maynicke & Frank, Charles Alonzo Rich, R.H. Robertson, Carrère & Hastings, and Shreve Lamb & Blake, are almost entirely intact and are illustrations of Beaux Arts, Romanesque Revival, and Renaissance Revival architectural style.

Moreover these buildings represent an important and comparatively underrepresented slice of New York and American history, especially as it relates to the African American and LGBTQ civil rights movements, the peace movement, international human rights efforts, and the arts. The connection to African American and LGBTQ civil rights, particularly to the oldest national organizations dedicated to both causes, is especially important.

As you know, 70 Fifth Avenue housed the headquarters of the NAACP, the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization, from just after its founding in 1914 to around 1925. W.E.B. DuBois also launched *The Crisis* magazine there which featured the early writings of Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes, among others, as well as *The Brownie Book*, the US' first magazine for Black children.

80 Fifth Avenue housed the first headquarters of the National Gay Task Force (now the National LGBTQ Task Force) from 1973 to 1985, the country's first national gay rights organization.

70 and 80 Fifth Avenue also was home to organizations which led American efforts to stop the Armenian Genocide, spearheaded the women's peace movement, and organized labor's fight to end Jim Crow and discrimination against immigrants and others in mid-20th century America.

Adding to the social and cultural significance of these buildings:

- 64-66 Fifth Avenue housed the Fifth Avenue Playhouse, one of the country's first art movie house, and the studios of dance pioneer Martha Graham;
- 72 Fifth Avenue was the home of several notable left-wing political magazines like *The Nation* and also the headquarters of the Philip Morris Co.; and
- 74 Fifth Avenue housed Adelphi Hall, a center for left-wing political causes frequently investigated by the House Un-American Activities Committee and frequented by the likes of Paul Robeson.

Furthermore, nearly all of these buildings had prominent connections to the publishing industry.

This is just the beginning of the critical story of this collection of buildings, which seems especially relevant at this time. I therefore strongly support moving ahead with the designation of these buildings.

Thank you for your attention to this request and for the LPC's ongoing commitment to preserving our city's history.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CJ', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

COREY JOHNSON
Speaker