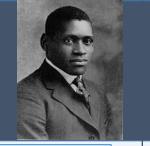
# The Preservation of Historic Sounds, Community Efforts to Restore and Maintain the Paul Robeson and John Coltrane Houses

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### Paul Robeson House Timeline of Preservation



Frances Aulston



1984 Frances Aulston former research librarian of The Free Library of Philadelphia, community leader, and activist, formally founded the West Philadelphia Cultural Alliance to stimulate community participation in the arts after the MOVE bombing tragedy.

1994 WPCA works with Professor Charles Blockson of Temple University, begins discussion concerning murals and celebrating Paul Robeson's 100th birthday in Philadelphia.

1998 City of Philadelphia prodaims Thursday April 9, 1998 as Paul Robeson Dav.

1999 WPCA stimulates community support for the Paul Robeson House-Board of Directors, friends of Paul Robeson House, and WPCA Advisory Board.

2000 Paul Robeson Dedared Historic Landmark

2000-2010 Development of Educational Programs such as Teen Writers Academy, Urban Scholar workshops, and History Summer camp, Relationships formed with local dvic organizations, churches, as well as Kimmel Center

2003 Board began development and assessment process. building up the organizational strength of WPCA. making connections with UPenn, Temple University, and Kelly/Maiello Architects. Other professionals began to help restructure a high interest rate mortgage on the property resulting in successfully refinancing of debts.

2006-2010 3 Strategic Feasibility Proposals for house created under planning committees. William Penn Foundation gives biggest grant of \$49,500 over 36 months.

2012-2013 Fundraising events including Restore America event with HGTV and Save America's Treasure and the tribute concert.

US Postal Service Dedication of a Paul Robeson stamp at a ceremony at the Paul Robeson House.

2015 Vernoca Michaels, former promoter of Blue Horizon Boxing and family-friend of Paul Robeson's family becomes new director of WPCA.

2017 Open house showcases new exhibits and plans for Development in Paul Robeson House.







## **Research Objective**

This project looks at the preservation of places of artistic significance, specifically the John Coltrane House and the Paul Robeson House. Both houses posses immense cultural and historic value and were designated as National Historic Landmarks. This study will discover why the Paul Robeson House has seen more success in historic preservation than the John Coltrane House and how the two houses affect the cultural state of the surrounding neighborhoods in which they reside. This study will also ask questions of how community organizations, city government, and city planners choose the cultural landmarks that they invest in.

**Research Ouestion:** How does preservation of the Paul Robeson and John Coltrane Houses indicate the cultural state of the neighborhoods in which they reside?

What institutions present in a neighborhood create the structural possibility for preservation to occur? How does the preservation of a site develop a community culturally and

### Important Factors

- Central Organizations operating out of house
- Maintaining Continuous Flow of Fundina
- Partnering with local and outside institutions

### Quantitative Information

- culture blocks (maps and tables)
- census data (race, income, arts establishments)

**Methods** 

- archival newspapers, letters, capital and feasibility proposals, websites
- community interviews

heads of central organizations

Decision Making and Power:

Who decides what get's preserved?

nonprofits, cultural societies, and city

government have agency in making

preservation of a site realized? What

are their incentives for preservation?

What individual leaders in non-

city planners, gov. officials

Important Individuals

Heads of foundations and partners

## and Neighborhood

**Revitalization** 

Agency in Preservation

What cultural resources and activity allow preservation to occur. If a grassroots community is present in aneighborhood, how do they influence preservation?

### Important Factors

- Grassroots Organizations
- Arts and cultural communities
- aggregating supportthrough

## events, concerts, programs, etc

## **Conclusions**

- Maintaining central organizations tied to the house is key, WPCA and WCCS are responsible for the success at the height of each
- Proximity of institutions affected development, but ability to partner with institutions outside community has led to growth WPCA and success of preservation of Paul Robeson House
- Power comes from how well the people in central organizations are networked in community and city government, WPCA more well-
- Ability to acquire funds is connected to success of cultural programs
- Decision-making comes from collective memory of not only Paul Robeson and John Coltrane, but also the spaces in which they existed Preservation of homes undoubtedly increased cultural participation in both areas
- Levels of cultural participation through artistic communities affects awareness of preservation

## **Moving Forward**

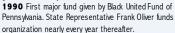
- conduct structured interviews with community members of WPCA and past members of John Coltrane House Organization
- review more literature on space ownership and
- Deeper analysis of Walnut Hill and Strawberry Mansion spaces, while looking more at race and class factors

### John Coltrane House Timeline of Preservation



1984 John W. Coltrane Cultural Society(JWCCS) Formed by Mary L. Alexander (Coltrane's first cousin) and group of Trane Stop Resource Institute Board of Directors.







1996 JWCCS works with local partners to develop year-long Coltrane Project, a long series of events, including concerts, commissioned works, residents, and workshops directed towards v continuing the legacy of John Coltrane.

1997 John W. Coltrane Society reviews \$10,000 grant from Crown Royal's "Monuments of African American Achievement" program.

1999 John Coltrane House obtains designation of National Historic Landmark

2004 Mary L. Alexander undergoes health problems, & drops out of JWCCS and group becomes defund. House sold to community member and friend of Mary, Norman Gadson, who is also deeply connected to Philadelphia jazz community.



2004-2005 Norman Gadson lives at Coltrane house, working on small repairs and begins holding meetings with supporters of house with incentives to transform house into arts center.

2011 Anita and Lenora Early Gadson greate non-profit group called John Coltrane House Organization.

2012 Philadelphia Jazz Day invites several Philly jazz artists and musicians to house in Strawberry Mansion to celebrate Coltrane's legacy. Mayor Michael Nu attends and gives official Jazz Appreciation Month prodamation to Philly Jazz legend Charlie Rice.

2012-2013 Flurry of cultural activity including Jazz Day Coltrane guided house tours, black music month celebrations. Youth Build volunteer work at house, and Coltrane Birthday Celebration.

2013 Capital campaign for house preservation continues, with \$50k acquired

2014 Pew Arts Heritage Grant Received of \$71, 825

2016 Lenora Early passes away, JCH Organization becomes defunct. House acquired by Hathor Fernandez (Early) Gadson.



Amnita Gadson

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