



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

Resolution Honoring the Harlem African Burial Ground

JOSÉ M. SERRANO February 28, 2011

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Senator Jose M. Serrano today co-sponsored a Senate Resolution (J629), introduced by Senator Bill Perkins, commemorating Harlem's Historic African Burial Ground in recognition of Black History Month.

The burial ground was located where the MTA's 126th Street Bus Depot in East Harlem now stands, and occupied a quarter acre lot on the original Elmendorf Dutch Reformed Church grounds on First Avenue between 126th and 127th Streets. Many community leaders fear the historic burial ground might be lost or defiled due to ongoing work expanding the Willilis

Avenue bridge and a plan to entirely rebuild a bus depot located at that location.

"The African Burial Ground in Harlem is a testament to the spirit and hard work of those who helped build this city," said Senator Serrano. "They deserve the respect of our elected officials, city agencies, and the public at large. Regardless of whether any remains are discovered, preserving this site is a chance to honor the men and women whose legacy has endured to this day. This is also a learning opportunity for every New Yorker to discover the history and heritage of the great state that we now call home. We will continue to work closely with the agencies involved and with the Burial Ground Task Force in order to protect this historical treasure."

In 1991 another burial ground was discovered by workers while excavating the foundation the foundation for the Ted Weiss Federal Building at 290 Broadway. It was finally memorialized as the African Burial Ground National Monument in 2005.

Senator Serrano and Senator Perkins are both members of the Elmendorf Reformed Church Harlem African Burial Ground Task Force—a group of concerned citizens united to help the Elmendorf Reformed Church to restore and memorialize its historically and culturally significant colonial African Burial ground. Among the Task Force's objectives are to reclaim, preserve and officially recognize the Burial Ground; to obtain its listing on the National Register of Historic Places and Landmark Status for the Burial Ground; and commemorating and honoring the memory of those who helped build New Harlem. **The Senators held a hearing** on Friday, February 19th to discuss the impact the pending construction projects will have on the Burial Ground.