



A GUIDE TO HISTORIC NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

EAST HARLEM MANHATTAN





The Historic Districts Council is New York's citywide advocate for historic buildings and neighborhoods. The Six to Celebrate program annually identifies six historic New York City neighborhoods that merit preservation as priorities for HDC's advocacy and consultation over a yearlong period.

The six, chosen from applications submitted by community organizations, are selected on the basis of the architectural and historic merit of the area, the level of threat to the neighborhood, the strength and willingness of the local advocates, and the potential for HDC's preservation support to be meaningful. HDC works with these neighborhood partners to set and reach preservation goals through strategic planning, advocacy, outreach, programs and publicity.

The core belief of the Historic Districts Council is that preservation and enhancement of New York City's historic resources—its neighborhoods, buildings, parks and public spaces—are central to the continued success of the city. The Historic Districts Council works to ensure the preservation of these resources and uphold the New York City Landmarks Law and to further the preservation ethic. This mission is accomplished through ongoing programs of assistance to more than 500 community and neighborhood groups and through public-policy initiatives, publications, educational outreach and sponsorship of community events.



**Council on
the Arts**



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EAST HARLEM

East Harlem encompasses a large section of northeastern Manhattan bounded by 96th Street, 142nd Street, Fifth Avenue and the Harlem River. Also known as El Barrio, the area is famous as one of the largest predominantly Latino neighborhoods in the city.

Echoing the city's development patterns, the neighborhood was largely built in response to the availability of transportation. In the 1830s, tracks were laid along Park Avenue for horse-drawn streetcars and later, the tracks became the New York and Harlem Railroad line, with train stops in East Harlem (see site #5a). Several resorts were built to take advantage of the higher elevations with views toward the growing city to the south and residential estates were built near the waterfront. Development increased with the construction of the Second and Third Avenue elevated rail lines to 125th Street in 1879-80, and with the arrival of the subway in 1919. Rowhouses, tenements and flats buildings housed the area's largely working class population, while Third Avenue became its first commercial thoroughfare.

Early residents included German, Irish, Russian, Scandinavian, Jewish and Italian immigrants, the latter making up a particularly significant group. At its peak in 1930, East Harlem was home to roughly 100,000 Italian-Americans, many more than Little Italy. It was also the founding location of the Genovese crime family, one of five that formed in 1931 to make up the Italian American Mafia in New York City. One of East Harlem's most famous Italian-American residents was Vito Marcantonio, famed lawyer, American Labor party member and an early leader in the movements for civil rights and Puerto Rican independence. He was extremely popular, representing the neighborhood in the U.S. House of Representatives for six terms from 1939-51. Most tangible references to Italian East Harlem are gone, as the community began to leave after World War II, but a few are identified in this brochure (sites 8, 9 and 10) and some storied Italian businesses continue to thrive, including Patsy's Pizzeria and Rao's restaurant. Soon after World War I, a large community of Puerto Ricans and South and Central Americans had settled in East Harlem, with a second influx after World War II, leading to the lasting monikers "Spanish Harlem" and later "El Barrio." The first Puerto Rican elected to public office in the U.S., Oscar García Rivera, was a resident of East Harlem, and represented East and Central Harlem in the New York State Assembly from 1937-40. García Rivera was a strong advocate for child labor laws, workers' rights and anti-discrimination legislation. The Hellgate Post Office on East 110th Street was renamed in his honor in 2002.

In the mid-20th century, urban renewal resulted in the construction of subsidized housing projects by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). With funds from the 1949 Federal Housing Act, Robert Moses led an initiative to clear sections of the neighborhood to build 24 public housing developments, in which 30% of East Harlem's population resides. New York City's bankruptcy in the early 1970s and broader municipal disinvestment hit East Harlem particularly hard. Lots were cleared for investment that never came, leading to a fragmented landscape that exacerbated issues seen across the city: urban flight, race riots, drug abuse and poverty. However, East Harlem residents fought back with strong expressions of identity and political will, with inspiring murals that continue to be a neighborhood hallmark today. In 2015, the city announced that East Harlem would be rezoned for increased density as part of Mayor Bill de Blasio's *Housing New York* plan. Many expect the plan to mark a new era in the area's evolution, as new development has already destroyed historic buildings and shifted the neighborhood's socioeconomic makeup and prevailing culture.

I

FORMER PUBLIC SCHOOL 109
215 East 99th Street
(Charles B. J. Snyder, 1899;
conversion: Hamilton Houston
Lownie Architects and Victor Morales
Architects, 2015)
— NR-P



Public School 109 was designed by C. B. J. Snyder, superintendent of school buildings for the Board of Education from 1891 to 1923. Roughly 400 schools were constructed during his tenure, when the city's population was growing and new laws mandated children's education. Snyder was a great innovator, incorporating advances in fireproofing and air circulation, as well as laying out buildings in an H-plan, like P.S. 109, to increase light and air to classrooms and provide opportunities for recreation. With its many decorative details, the Collegiate Gothic style building is a great example of Snyder's emphasis on the power of aesthetics in architecture. The school was decommissioned in 1995 and sat neglected for about 15 years until its restoration and conversion to artists' housing. It reopened in 2015 as El Barrio's Artspace/PS109, holding 89 units of affordable live/work space and 10,000 square feet for arts organizations. Artspace is a nonprofit that operates 35 arts facilities in 15 states.

LEGEND OF DESIGNATIONS

National Historic Landmark:	NHL
National Register of Historic Places—District:	NR-D
National Register of Historic Places—Property:	NR-P
New York City Historic District:	NYC HD
New York City Individual Landmark:	NYC IL
New York City Interior Landmark:	NYC INL

2a

FORMER FIRE ENGINE COMPANY No. 53
175 East 104th Street
(Napoleon LeBrun & Sons, 1883-84) — NYC IL

2b

FORMER 28TH POLICE PRECINCT STATION HOUSE
177-179 East 104th Street
(Nathaniel D. Bush, 1892-93) — NYC IL



These two structures, built roughly a decade apart, once functioned side-by-side as a fire station and a police station. The architects of both buildings were employed by their respective departments and were tasked with establishing a strong architectural presence and identity for each. The fire station was designed by the firm of Napoleon LeBrun & Sons, which served the Fire Department from 1879 to 1895. During this time, the firm designed more than 40 buildings that defined the department's architectural presence in the city. This Queen Anne/Romanesque Revival style structure is considered a fine example of their work. The police station was designed by Nathaniel D. Bush, the Police Department's architect from 1862 to 1895. It features elements of the Rundbogenstil, Renaissance Revival and neo-Grec styles. Both buildings were decommissioned in 1974.



3

**JULIA DE BURGOS LATINO
CULTURAL CENTER**
1674 Lexington Avenue
(David I. Stagg, 1879-82;
annex: Charles B. J. Snyder,
1911-13;
conversion: Lee Barrero and
Raymond Plumey with Miguel
Angel Baltierra, 1994-95)
— NYC IL

Originally constructed as Public School 72, this neo-Grec structure is one of the oldest intact school buildings in Manhattan, built to accommodate the growing immigrant population of East Harlem. Its architect, David I. Stagg, was Superintendent of Public School Buildings from 1872 to 1886. For about 20 years after the Board of Education closed the school in 1975, it provided classroom and office space for various institutions. In 1994-95, the building was converted to a cultural center.

4

ST. CECILIA'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
120 East 106th Street
(*Napoleon LeBrun & Sons, 1883-87*)

REGINA ANGELORUM
116 East 106th Street
(*Neville & Bagge, 1907*)
— NYC IL
— NR-P (both)



This beautiful Romanesque Revival style church was built for the parish of St. Cecilia's

Roman Catholic Church, which, beginning in the 1870s, worshipped in the former Old Red House, a hotel on East 105th Street. In 1881, the church purchased this property and hired Napoleon LeBrun & Sons to design proper church facilities. The result is a richly ornate brick and terra cotta church featuring a large relief of St. Cecilia, patron saint of music, embedded into an arched panel on the building's central gable. The adjacent "Regina Angelorum" was originally two separate buildings, a four-story tenement built in 1883-84 and a school built in 1885-87. The two buildings were combined in 1906-07 with a façade by Neville & Bagge, but still had two separate functions: a home for working women and a convent. In the late 1930s, the convent took over the entire building until 2004, when the building was converted to the Cristo Rey New York High School.

5a

PARK AVENUE VIADUCT
98th to 111th Streets
(1874)

5b

LA MARQUETA
111th to 116th Streets
main entrance:
1590 Park Avenue
(1936)



In 1837, the New York and Harlem Railroad extended its Fourth Avenue (now Park Avenue) tracks to Harlem. In 1872, the tracks south of 98th Street were sunk below ground to reduce their street-level impact, and in 1874, a brownstone viaduct was built where the tracks emerged above ground (later the line continued northward with the construction of a steel viaduct). The viaduct, which, from 102nd to 110th Streets, allows vehicular and pedestrian crossing via rounded archways, had a lasting impact on the neighborhood. While the grand rowhouses west of Mount

Morris Park (now Marcus Garvey Park) thrived, those to the east were replaced with subsidized housing. Beneath the tracks from 111th to 116th Streets is La Marqueta, a marketplace that originally served as an informal gathering place for pushcart vendors until the city officially sanctioned it in 1936. Around that time, Mayor Fiorella LaGuardia waged war against the city's pushcarts, which were widely believed to be a traffic menace and sanitation hazard. La Marqueta became one of several enclosed markets operated by the city, with merchants renting stalls. It reached its apex in the 1950s and 1960s with over 500 vendors, and was an important cultural hub for the neighborhood's Hispanic population. After decades of decline, the City Council allocated \$3 million to revitalize the market in 2014.

6

EAST HARLEM HEALTH CENTER
158 East 115th Street
(*Henry C. Pelton, 1937*)



This grand brick, limestone and granite structure was the first city-owned and city-built health facility in Manhattan, authorized by Mayor LaGuardia and funded by the Public Works Administration. It was built to provide health clinics, hygiene services and health education for students and the broader public. The structure resembles a classical temple rendered in the streamlined Art Deco style, its vertical brick panels standing in for columns and its wide brick band inscribed with the words "DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CITY OF NEW YORK" standing in as its pediment. The two-story rooftop and western annex additions likely date to the 1950s.

7

OUR LADY QUEEN OF ANGELS CHURCH
232 East 113th Street
(*William Schickel & Co., 1886*)



Though it was built when East Harlem was largely rural, Our Lady Queen of Angels is located on a hidden cul-de-sac within NYCHA's Jefferson Houses. The charming neo-Romanesque structure, flanked on either side by a convent and rectory, was constructed at the request of New York Archbishop Corrigan for East Harlem's German immigrant population. It is known for its association with Father Bonaventure Frey, co-founder of the Capuchin Franciscan Catholic Order in the United States. Frey, an important figure in the Catholic Church, was given the task of building the church and its congregation, acting as Superior in the church's infancy. Due to a lack of priests and declining attendance, and despite opposition from parishioners and elected officials, the Archdiocese closed dozens of churches in the region, including this one, in 2007. Its school remains open, but despite popular support for preservation, the future of the church itself is uncertain.

This Romanesque Revival style church was built for an Italian immigrant congregation, and remains a tangible link to the neighborhood's Italian heritage. The church is named for the Madonna del Carmine, Protectress of Polla, a town in the province of Salerno that was the hometown of many East Harlem immigrants at the end of the 19th century. Beginning in 1882, the church hosted an annual festival in honor of the Madonna on the street outside the church, with many Italians returning to the neighborhood to celebrate. The event, revived in 2000 after a 29-year hiatus, takes place on the second weekend in August and is held by the Giglio Society of East Harlem, which performs the "Dancing Giglio," a tradition begun here roughly 125 years ago. The celebration serves an important reminder of East Harlem's Italian heritage.

8

**CHURCH OF OUR LADY
OF MOUNT CARMEL**
438 East 116th Street
(L. J. O'Connor, 1884)



9

**FORMER BENJAMIN FRANKLIN HIGH SCHOOL
NOW MANHATTAN CENTER FOR SCIENCE
AND MATHEMATICS**
280 Pleasant Avenue
(Eric Kebbon, 1940)



This stately building was originally constructed by the NYC Board of Education after designs by Eric Kebbon, architect and superintendent of school buildings from 1938-51. The school was founded by educational theorist Leonard Covello, the nation's first Italian-American high school principal, who believed in a community-centered approach to learning and the importance of integration and bilingual education. Covello devoted his career to improving the lives of immigrant children, and the school, which hosted a large number of Italian immigrants and subsequently Puerto Ricans, became an important touchstone for his theories. In 1945, Frank Sinatra famously visited the school after a race-related incident broke out between groups of African American and Italian-American students. To ease tensions, Sinatra, one of the country's most famous Italian-Americans, performed the reconciliatory song *Aren't You Glad You're You?* The school closed in 1982 due to poor performance, and was transformed into the Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics, which offers a rigorous curriculum and high graduation rate.

10

FORMER ITALIAN SAVINGS BANK
204 East 116th Street
(C. P. H. Gilbert, 1923)



Presently the R. G. Ortiz Funeral Home, this handsome structure was originally the Italian Savings Bank, whose name was engraved in the limestone façade where the funeral home's name is now located. The building, which has undergone some alterations, was designed by noted architect Cass Gilbert, whose many commissions include the Woolworth Building in Lower Manhattan. The former bank, resembling a triumphal Roman arch, stands as one of many reminders of East Harlem's formerly sizable Italian immigrant population.

11

CASA LATINA
151 East 116th Street
(Henry Devoe, 1870)



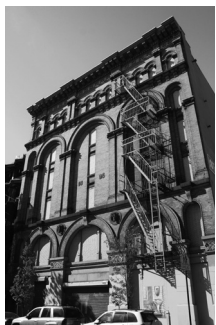
Since 1948, Casa Latina has sold sheet music and instruments to patrons from all over the city. In addition to being the longest-running music store in East Harlem, it also bears the distinction of being the nation's first Spanish-language music store. Its founder, Bartolo Alvarez, was a Puerto Rican musician and record executive. The business moved to this location in 1962 and its colorful storefront has been a neighborhood icon and an important meeting place ever since. The building in which the store resides was built in 1870 as one in a row of brownstones, and has been heavily altered over the years.

12

**ST. PAUL CATHOLIC CHURCH
AND SCHOOL**
113 East 117th Street
(Neville & Bagge, 1906-08)



This grand church and school were designed by the noted firm of Neville & Bagge in the Romanesque Revival style of brick clad in Indiana limestone. In addition to commanding a strong presence on East 117th Street, the complex provides an important spiritual and cultural link to East Harlem's past. The parish of St. Paul's was established in 1834 to serve the northern reaches of the city, when Harlem was sparsely populated and rural, and bears the distinction of being one of the city's first Roman Catholic churches. The present structures replaced the earlier church and school buildings, which were located roughly on the same site.



13

**FORMER WEBBER
MEAT MARKET**
207 East
119th Street
(*Bartholomew &
John Walther, 1895*)

This six-story, brick and stone building was constructed for the Webber Meat Market. Richard Webber, an English immigrant, opened his butcher business in 1877 on East 120th Street, expanding with the construction of this imposing building in 1895. Upon his death in 1908, *The New York Times* described Webber as “one of the largest retail butchers in this city if not in the United States.” The tripartite façade features grand arches,

monumental pilasters with Corinthian capitals and a bracketed cornice. Perhaps its most charming feature is a pair of cow head reliefs, evidence of the building’s use, peering down to the street from the second floor.

Originally built to house one of the city’s Municipal and Magistrates Courts, this building once contained roughly 40 jail cells. The court was decommissioned in 1961, and the building was transferred to other city agencies. In 2002, it became the Harlem Community Justice Center, where family, housing and small claim civil cases are heard in its third floor courtrooms. The magnificent structure was designed in the Romanesque Revival style with Victorian Gothic details, abounding in colored brick, bluestone and terra-cotta ornament and arched windows. The most striking feature is the bronze spire-capped corner tower, whose octagonal belfry contains gabled arches enframing clock faces on some and circular windows on others. The interior contains two murals painted in 1938 by Works Progress Administration artist David Karfunkle. The murals were covered by drapery and severely damaged until their restoration in 2014.

14

HARLEM COURTHOUSE
170 East 121st Street
(*Thom & Wilson,
1891-93*)
– NYC IL, NR-P



Like Fire Engine Company No. 53 (site #2a), this fire station was designed by Napoleon LeBrun & Sons during their tenure as architects for the New York City Fire Department. In 1975, the Romanesque Revival style building became home to Fire Engine Company No. 36 until it was decommissioned in 2003. As a



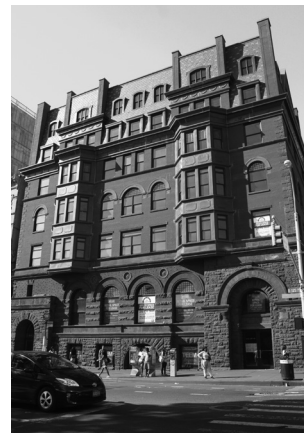
15

**FORMER FIRE HOOK &
LADDER COMPANY No. 14**
120 East 125th Street (*Napoleon
LeBrun & Sons, 1888-89*)
– NYC IL, NR-P

result of its designation as an Individual Landmark by the city in 1997, the building has continued to thrive, having undergone a restoration and conversion to the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute in 2014-15.

16

**FORMER MOUNT MORRIS BANK
BUILDING, LATER THE CORN EXCHANGE
BANK MOUNT MORRIS BRANCH**
81-85 East 125th Street
(*Lamb & Rich, 1883-84; enlarged 1889-90
reinterpreted: Danois Architects, 2013-15*)
– NYC IL, NR-P



Described in the Landmarks Preservation Commission’s (LPC) designation report as “one of the most impressive buildings in Harlem”, the former Mount Morris Bank Building enjoys prominent visibility thanks to its location immediately adjacent to Metro-North’s 125th Street station. The original Queen Anne and Romanesque Revival style building, constructed of brick and sandstone with terra-cotta and iron details, originally housed a bank at the ground level with French flats (later offices) in the upper stories. In 1913, the Mount Morris Bank became part of the Corn Exchange Bank, which operated here until the mid-1960s. The building became vacant in the late 1970s and fell into disrepair, but was designated an individual landmark in 1993. In 2013, the LPC approved plans to reconstruct the building with a design that interprets, rather than recreates, the original structure.

17

17 EAST 128TH STREET
(*c. 1864*) – NYC IL



This charming building is one of the few surviving wood frame houses in Harlem, built when Harlem was still a rural village separate from New York City. Designed with Second Empire and Italianate elements by an unknown architect, the house is clad in wood clapboard and features a full-width porch and a slate mansard roof. The house stands as a reminder of Harlem’s early history before being annexed to the city in 1873.

MURALS OF EAST HARLEM

East Harlem/El Barrio is home to a great number of murals that build on a long tradition in Latin American art, wherein residents may express themselves and tell their stories. Protecting these significant cultural symbols has become a great challenge, but an important endeavor, in a rapidly changing neighborhood.

Ia

PEDRO PIETRI
northeast corner of
Lexington Avenue and East
104th Street
(James De La Vêga, 2004)



An East Harlem native, James de la Vêga has painted a number of murals in the neighborhood and is known throughout the city for his simple chalk cartoons with aphorisms, such as “Become Your Dream.” The *Pedro Pietri* mural depicts Puerto Rican poet and playwright Pedro Pietri (1944-2004), who moved to New York City as a

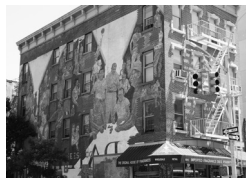
child. Pietri, whose poetry focused on the struggles of Puerto Ricans in the U.S., helped to found the Nuyorican Poets Café and led cultural collectives such as the Latin Insomniacs, the Puerto Rican Embassy and the Church of the Mother of Tomatoes. Calling himself “The Reverend,” Pietri often dressed in black and carried a collapsible cross. *Homage to Picasso* is an adaptation of Picasso’s *Guernica*, reinterpreted with imagery relevant to El Barrio: rather than bombs, the figures are oppressed by violence, crime and poverty, set against the red backdrop of the neighborhood’s brick-clad environment. The mural was commissioned by Hope Community, Inc., a community-based not-for-profit affordable housing organization that also works to enrich the lives of East Harlem residents through the arts, economic development and social service alliances.

Ib

HOMAGE TO PICASSO
southeast corner of
Lexington Avenue and East
111th Street
(James de la Vêga, 1996)

2

THE SPIRIT OF EAST HARLEM
southeast corner of Lexington
Avenue and East 104th Street
(Hank Prussing/Manny Vega, 1973-78)



One of El Barrio’s most famous murals, *The Spirit of East Harlem* was commissioned by Hope Community. The four-story painting, featuring characters from the neighborhood, has significant historical roots in El Barrio and serves as a local cultural attraction. Manny Vega, who had served as Prussing’s apprentice, restored the badly

weathered painting in the mid-1990s, making minor changes, including the “El Barrio Tours” advertisement and the inclusion of an indigenous Taíno figure on the bottom right. Hope Community works continuously to raise funds to repair damage from such issues as vandalism and brick repointing.

3

SOLDADERAS, MODESTO FLORES
COMMUNITY GARDEN
Lexington Avenue between
East 104th and 105th Streets
(Yasmin Hernandez, 2011)

Photo courtesy Marina Ortiz, East Harlem Preservation, Inc.



Commissioned by Art for Change, an organization that encourages progressive social change through the arts, this mural, in the artist’s words, “pays tribute to the common histories and struggles of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans and is a call for continued and increased political solidarity between the two communities.” Hernandez was inspired by Frida Kahlo’s painting, *Las dos Fridas*, and substituted the Puerto Rican poet Julia de Burgos for the second Frida. She also took elements from photographs of the *soldaderas* (women soldiers) who fought in the Mexican Revolution. The words in the mural are from a poem by de Burgos, “El regalo de los Reyes”.

4

DOS ALAS
East 105th Street between
Second and Third Avenues
(Ricanstruction Networks and Puerto
Rico Collective, 1999)



Dos Alas, or “two wings,” was intentionally created without permission to honor Cuban independence fighter Ernesto “Che” Guevara and Puerto Rican nationalist Don Pedro Albizu Campos. The “Dos Alas” stanza, which appears on the mural, is from a poem by “Lola” Rodríguez de Tío. The painting is the only remaining piece in a series of ten radical al fresco artworks that celebrated Puerto Rican/Nuyorican and Latin American political identity and served as statements against gentrification. The others have fallen victim to new development. Due to weathering and vandalism, the mural was restored in 2011 with the property owner’s permission as part of a community-based effort that drew well-known Puerto Rican artists from all over the city. The mural has become iconic due to its heavily trafficked location.



5

REMEMBERING JULIA
East 106th Street between
Lexington and Third Avenues
(Manny Vega, 2006)

This mosaic homage to Julia de Burgos was created in connection with the naming of East 106th Street, Fifth Avenue to First Avenue, in her honor. The project, which adorns the walls of a Hope Community building, was envisioned by local activists Marina Ortiz and Deborah

Quiñones. De Burgos, an advocate for Puerto Rican independence from the U.S., was working as a journalist in East Harlem when she collapsed on Fifth Avenue and 106th Street in 1953. She later died in Harlem Hospital and was eventually buried in Puerto Rico, where she was named poet laureate. The mosaic has sustained some water damage, which East Harlem Preservation, Inc. hopes to repair as part of its mural and mosaic restoration initiative.

6

GRAFFITI HALL OF FAME
East 106th Street between
Madison and Park Avenues
and Park Avenue between
106th and 107th Streets
(established 1980)



The Graffiti Hall of Fame encompasses two walls: one in the playground of the Jackie

Robinson Educational Complex and one on Park Avenue facing the Park Avenue viaduct. The Hall was established by community activist Ray Rodriguez

(“Sting Ray”) as both a place for graffiti artists to display their skills and to provide neighborhood youth with a constructive medium to showcase their talent. Due to space constraints, a loosely knit group of painters has annually competed for a place on the walls since the 1990s. The walls are currently maintained by TATS CRU, a group of Bronx-based artists turned professional muralists.

7

HONORING OSCAR LÓPEZ RIVERA
East 107th Street between
Lexington and Third Avenues (Natalie
del Villar, Maribalcía Matarrita and
Xen Medina, 2015)

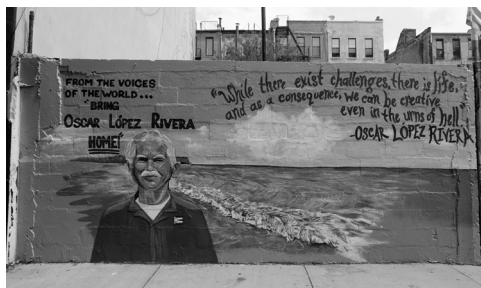


Photo courtesy Marina Ortiz, East Harlem Preservation, Inc.

The original mural on this site paid tribute to two Puerto Rican political prisoners, Oscar López Rivera and Avelino Gonzalez Claudio. The project was conceived in 2010 by members of the National Boricua Human Rights Network along with local

8

MEXICAN DIASPORA (“ZAPATISTA”)
northeast corner of East 117th
Street and Second Avenue
(Ricardo France, 2001)



Ricardo France (“Guerro”), Mexican truck driver turned tattoo artist and muralist, painted this grand salute to the Zapatista movement of southern Mexico along the wall of a former Mexican restaurant and dance club.

One of the first murals painted by a Mexican artist in East Harlem, the work is in the great tradition of Mexican political muralists like Diego Rivera. At the center of the mural is the sun and to the left is the Virgin of Guadalupe, the face of Subcomandante Marcos, the Zapatista ship and Don Durito of the Lacandona. The masked Zapatista and revolutionary slogans are iconic references to a struggle familiar to Mexicans and a reification of Mexican identity, “Todos somos Marcos.” In 2009, volunteers restored the mural’s fading paint, but it was defaced with graffiti in 2015. The property was sold in 2016, and it is likely that the building – and the mural – will be demolished.

9

CRACK IS WACK
East 128th Street and Harlem River Drive
Handball Court
(Keith Haring, 1986)



Photo courtesy Marina Ortiz, East Harlem Preservation, Inc.

Famed graffiti artist Keith Haring (1958-90) painted two colorful murals on both sides of a concrete handball court in 1986. The design is composed of Haring’s signature kinetic figures and abstract forms in bold outlines, cautioning youth against crack, an addictive and dangerous form of cocaine whose use had reached epidemic proportions. The *Crack is Wack* mural is a lasting reminder of Keith Haring’s talent and legacy. A foundation in his memory was established, which continues to support the preservation of the mural.

