

Owner and public comment received regarding
the Christian Street Historic District

From: [Deborah Gary](#)
To: [preservation](#)
Cc: [Paul Steinke](#); [Jackie Wiggins](#)
Subject: Public Comment - Christian Street Historic District Nomination
Date: Thursday, April 28, 2022 5:25:45 PM
Attachments: [The Philadelphia Negro 296-297.pdf](#)

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Historic Commission Staff,

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on this nomination. I applaud the detailed history presented in the package that conveys the significant amount of "negros" that lived among the blocks in consideration during the period of significance. I know this nomination might not yet be taking public comment, however, since I was given a link by Paul Steinke, I took this opportunity to review it and have a few comments:

1. The added term "Black" to Doctors Row is my concern. My understanding from a recent meeting with the Preservation Alliance and SOSNA, is that the community referred to Christian Street as Doctors Row and only recently added the term "Black". As such, I suggest the term "Black" be removed. I understand the community called it Doctors Row, but not Black Doctors Row. In addition, the data in this package does not support naming the nomination and the sections "Black Doctors Row". It had a significant amount of well known professionals that were not doctors.
2. In my conversation with Paul and SOSNA, we got lost in the term "Main Street". I understand the nominators' view point and explanation given and the description in this nomination. However, my thoughts of Black main streets reflect on the Black Wall Streets that we had around the country (not just Tulsa) during this same period of significance. So, we Blacks relate to that term. That is why I had a problem. As a Black Wall Street, in addition to what was on Christian Street, there would have been other amenities, such as banks, insurance companies, funeral homes, restaurants, etc. Some of those residents owned or worked these things, but they were not on Christian Street.
3. I support keeping the nomination name as is "Christian Street Historic District". I also support reference to Doctors Row in the body of the nomination where it is explained on Page 398. At that point, I think you state that there was a concentration of medical practitioners along those blocks - but again, of the 17 that I found, 12 are labeled as Black (which perhaps was a lot at that time to be in a small area). The other 5 were White.
4. This package puts too much emphasis on describing the "middle class" of negros, I'm sure to support the proposed name. No doubt, I appreciate this history, but they were less than 10% of the population of these blocks during the period of significance. Since clearly there were more laborers, clerks and servants in these blocks, the nomination should give more details about why they were there. These were the average negros that lived in Philadelphia - most had migrated from the South after WWI for jobs and then more after WWII. Yes some of them had moved beyond the 7th Ward to other parts of the City. Maybe even highlight one or some of them and where they worked or who they served. Clearly, they are the reason why these properties are still standing. In Chapter XV, The Environment of the Negro (page 296-297) of The Philadelphia Negro, it explains more about why homes for "negros" converted to rooming and multifamily houses and why there was a concentration of "negros" in a particular area. This information would make this package more complete to be placed in permanent record as a explanation for the environment on Christian Street.
5. My comments are to give the correct story. Since there is a possibility that there are plans to market this historic district from a tourism perspective, I would hate to have this nomination used to give a slanted view of these blocks and of the majority of the Philadelphians - by diminishing the contributions of over 85% of their residents.

Thank you for your consideration.

Deborah Gary, Co-Founder, Society to Preserve Philadelphia African American Assets (SPPAAA)

President, DHEX Enterprises, LLC, 6353 Germantown Ave, Phila., PA 19144

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of a sort that makes it necessary for him to live near the best portions of the city; the mass of Negroes are in the economic world purveyors to the rich—working in private houses, in hotels, large stores, etc.⁶ In order to keep this work they must live near by; the laundress cannot bring her Spruce street family's clothes from the Thirtieth Ward, nor can the waiter at the Continental Hotel lodge in Germantown. With the mass of white workmen this same necessity of living near work, does not hinder them from getting cheap dwellings; the factory is surrounded by cheap cottages, the foundry by long rows of houses, and even the white clerk and shop girl can, on account of their hours of labor, afford to live further out in the suburbs than the black porter who opens the store. Thus it is clear that the nature of the Negro's work compels him to crowd into the centre of the city much more than is the case with the mass of white working people. At the same time this necessity is apt in some cases to be overestimated, and a few hours of sleep or convenience serve to persuade a good many families to endure poverty in the Seventh Ward when they might be comfortable in the Twenty-fourth Ward. Nevertheless much of the Negro problem in this city finds adequate explanation when we reflect that here is a people receiving a little lower wages than usual for less desirable work, and compelled, in order to do that work, to live in a little less pleasant quarters than most people, and pay for them somewhat higher rents.

The final reason of the concentration of Negroes in certain localities is a social one and one peculiarly strong: the life of the Negroes of the city has for years centred in the Seventh Ward; here are the old churches, St. Thomas, Bethel, Central, Shiloh and Wesley; here are the halls of the secret societies; here are the homesteads of old families. To a race socially ostracised it means far more to move to

⁶ At the same time, from long custom and from competition, their wages for this work are not high.

remote parts of a city, than to those who will in any part of the city easily form congenial acquaintances and new ties. The Negro who ventures away from the mass of his people and their organized life, finds himself alone, shunned and taunted, stared at and made uncomfortable; he can make few new friends, for his neighbors however well-disposed would shrink to add a Negro to their list of acquaintances. Thus he remains far from friends and the concentrated social life of the church, and feels in all its bitterness what it means to be a social outcast. Consequently emigration from the ward has gone in groups and centred itself about some church, and individual initiative is thus checked. At the same time color prejudice makes it difficult for groups to find suitable places to move to—one Negro family would be tolerated where six would be objected to; thus we have here a very decisive hindrance to emigration to the suburbs.

It is not surprising that this situation leads to considerable crowding in the homes, *i. e.*, to the endeavor to get as many people into the space hired as possible. It is this crowding that gives the casual observer many false notions as to the size of Negro families, since he often forgets that every other house has its sub-renters and lodgers. It is however difficult to measure this crowding on account of this very lodging system which makes it very often uncertain as to just the number of rooms a given group of people occupy. In the following table therefore it is likely that the number of rooms given is somewhat greater than is really the case and that consequently there is more crowding than is indicated. This error however could not be wholly eliminated under the circumstances; a study of the table (page 298) shows that in the Seventh Ward there are 9302 rooms occupied by 2401 families, an average of 3.8 rooms to a family, and 1.04 individuals to a room. A division by rooms will better show where the crowding comes in.

1520 Christian Street
Philadelphia, PA 19146

Robert Thomas, AIA, Chair
Philadelphia Historical Commission
1515 Arch Street, 13th floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

June 4, 2022

Dear Mr. Thomas,

I am writing in enthusiastic and strong support of the proposed Christian Street Historic District (AKA Black Doctors/Christian Street) historic district. I purchased the home at 1520 Christian Street, now considered a contributing property in the proposal, in March of 1992 I have lived here ever since. Previous to purchasing my home I rented and lived in this general neighborhood (south of South and north of Washington) since 1984. I have seen many changes, not all of them good.

I am also the President of Bainbridge House, non-profit organization whose status exists solely to support E. M. Stanton School, itself in the proposed designated District. We have provided continuous support to Stanton since 1992 in small but significant ways, through mentoring, literacy, and supporting a robust arts program. Over these thirty years, we were twice part of the community's organizing efforts to resist the School District's recommendation to close the school. We prevailed. It was the right decision.

I am supporting the proposed historic district for the following reasons:

- 1) The opportunity to preserve and continue to document the **rich cultural history** which not only include notable resident citizens but as importantly an overall character and fabric of a whole and real neighborhood and community and the deep meaning it had for Black Philadelphians and still has for those still living here, Black and otherwise who know and remember.
- 2) That it will **halt of the indiscriminate demolition** of Philadelphia single family rowhomes that can among other things, support families. The course of development of these thirty years, has led to only 8 single family homes on my block. Everything else is original rowhomes broken into three and four units, or the demolition and new construction of taller units with four, five and even six units. Some are rentals and some are condos. Whichever it is impacts neighbors knowing one another, (they don't) therefore affecting overall safety and security of the block. The reduction of single family homes, rented or owned, has unintended consequences on the enrollment of several neighborhood public elementary schools including Stanton. "Mixed use" development shouldn't refer only to income and economic status. Mixed use and occupancy should support children, families, young and old singles, the elderly. Policy begets community. Amenities follow according to who lives in a place. Good schools follow according to who lives in a place. Vibrancy follows. Where is the affordable housing for families with children of all income levels? Why not keep some on Christian Street.

Marian Anderson grew up here. When I moved into the neighborhood in the 80s, I met a long time resident, Susie Hodges, a resident on Fitzwater Street, who knew Marian Anderson, grew up with her, went to school with her. People who have lived in the neighborhood for decades (and there are still quite a few,) when asked where they live, usually say "South Philly." In the 80s, realtors dubbed this neighborhood, the "Graduate Hospital" area. Graduate Hospital was hoarding dozens and dozens of properties in the neighborhood. Then as telling, on city neighborhood maps, we began being called, "Southwest Center City." Who made that decision? Those whose identity is wrapped up in their real estate values associated with Center City? Certainly not those who value the rich cultural history that still can be found in the stories of those who know it and are still here. These residents still here and likely in

other neighborhoods, will not always be with us. Let's take this step and create a preservation district and then spend future years researching and documenting more about the history, culture, institutions, and life here. Let's turn the demolition tide.

Let's designate Black Doctors Row/Christian Street this year. Then let's pull back the lens, widen the frame and point the camera at the entire neighborhood south of South and north of Washington, and call it by a name that's worthy and that signals what we value. Let's lose the lame Southwest Center City designation and call it the Marian Anderson neighborhood soon and very soon.

Sincerely,
Vicki Ellis

cc Committee on Historic Designation, PHC
Patrick Grossi, Preservation Alliance
Linda Evans, Resident and Neighbor
Richard Gliniak, Neighbor and Committee Person
Kenyatta Johnson, Councilman, District 2

From: [Faye Anderson](#)
To: [preservation](#)
Cc: [FMA](#)
Subject: Christian Street Historic District Nomination
Date: Monday, June 13, 2022 2:14:48 PM

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To: Committee on Historic Designation

I am writing in opposition to the Christian Street Historic District nomination. As director of All That Philly Jazz, I have led walking tours in South Philadelphia for five years. No one has ever asked about Christian Street. Tellingly, the [Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia](#) does not offer a walking tour of Christian Street.

In a [2009 study](#), "Philadelphia's African American Heritage: A Brief Historic Context Statement for the Preservation Alliance's Inventory of African American Historic Sites," Dana Dorman wrote: "The large influx of southern blacks into Philadelphia helped spur a new flourishing of African American culture from the 1910s to 1940s." Dr. Nathan Mossell, founder of Frederick Douglass Memorial Hospital and Training School, is mentioned. The "elites" of so-called Black Doctors Row were employees of Dr. Mossell who lived at 1423 Lombard Street. Christian Street is not mentioned.

Dorman's suggested readings include *Philadelphia: 1639-2000* whose author, Dr. Charles L. Blockson, is the leading authority on Black history in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania. Dr. Blockson wrote on page 66: "In some quarters within the African American community and among certain white people, the terms of black society and black elite seemed ludicrous."

I have been vocal in my opposition to Black Doctors Row-*cum*-Christian Street Historic District. Still, I am conflicted about participating in the meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation. In an email dated January 19, 2021, Jon Farnham wrote that "the so-called Doctors' Row is undoubtedly eligible for designation." What was the basis for that declaration? The nomination was not considered correct and complete until April 6, 2022.

Clearly, there is one standard of review for insiders and a rigorous review standard for everyone else. So I submitted a report of wrongdoing to the Philadelphia Office of the Inspector General on January 31, 2022. I want to state for the record that the Office of the Inspector General is investigating my complaint.

The Great Depression, Great Migration, and two World Wars happened between 1910 and 1945. It is ludicrous to suggest the cultural life and identity of African Americans, half of whom were unemployed during the period of significance, was shaped by *poseurs* who held them in contempt. Indeed, it is next-level white privilege to claim that a small number of Negro professionals satisfies Criterion (a) or (j). Fact is, they exemplify the legacy of slavery, and the rape of Black women and girls. The

descendants of enslaved victims of sexual assault – the “light, bright, and damn near white” Christian Street “elite” – had access to educational opportunities that were denied Negroes with darker skin tones.

Architect Julian Abele is the most accomplished of this largely unknown colored “elite.” His significance is already memorialized in a historical marker at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. According to his biographer, [Dreck Spurlock Wilson](#), Abele did not consider himself Black. He would have followed in the footsteps of his brother Joseph Bolivar Abele who passed for white but his skin tone was too dark. So he chose an existence that was neither black nor white. He was “beige.”

Wilson notes that Abele “did not appreciate beauty in sepia skin women.” His French wife, Marguerite Bulle, cheated on him in their Christian Street home. She married Jozep Kowalewski while still married to Abele. In a 2018 [Free Library blog post](#), “A History Minute: 11 Things You Didn't Know About Julian Abele, Architect of the Parkway,” number 8 is Abele’s wife was a bigamist.

Respectfully submitted,

Faye M. Anderson

Director

All That Philly Jazz

<http://phillyjazz.us>

Tel: (267) 282-1342

Facebook.com/AllThatPhillyJazz

Twitter: @andersonatlarge | @PhillyJazzApp

Kim Chantry

From: richardgliniak@gmail.com
Sent: Tuesday, June 14, 2022 9:24 AM
To: preservation
Cc: Kim Chantry; Kenyatta Johnson; 'Patrick Grossi'; repharris@pahouse.net
Subject: Support Testimony for Christian Street Historic District - Historic Designation Committee Meeting/Hearing on 6/15/22

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RICHARD N. GLINIAC, JR.

1918 Carpenter Street
Philadelphia, PA 19146
215-617-3369
richardgliniak@gmail.com

June 15, 2022

Subject: Support Testimony for the Christian Street Historic District, a.k.a. Black Doctors Row - Historic Designation Committee Meeting on 6/15/22

Dear Chair Cooperman and Members of the Historic Designation Committee of the Philadelphia Historical Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to express my strong support for Christian Street Historic District, also known as Black Doctors nomination – presented by the Preservation Alliance for Greater financially supported by the South of South Neighborhood (SOSNA).

I am a Democratic Committeeperson representing the 10th includes parts of Christian Street, a SOSNA Preservation Task Zoning, Committee Member, a long-term 19146 homeowner Sanitation Division Streets Department Mechanical Engineer. I supporter of “development without displacement” that honors porches and cornice lines, and as stated in a recent *Inquirer* am quoted, an “activist and preservationist” working with a neighbors to preserve and protect our “historic” homes and from demolition and damage.

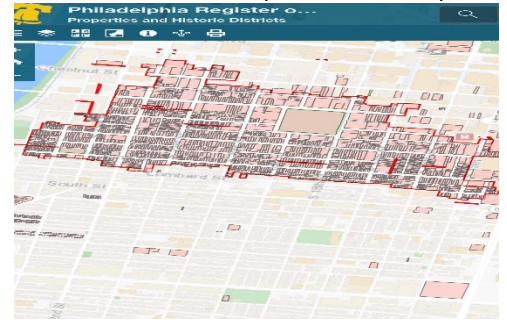


Councilmember Kenyatta Johnson (center, right) and Preservation Alliance director Paul Steinke (center, left) have joined forces to try to stop further demolition on Christian Street. From left: area resident James Morton, preservationist Richard Gliniak, Steinke, Johnson, and residents Linda Evans and Samara Johnson are photographed in front of a demolished property in the 1500 block of Christian. JOSE F. MORENO / Staff

approving the Row, Philadelphia and Association

Division that Force, and and past am also a strong facades, front article in which I Coalition of neighborhood

A recent *Inquirer* article titled, “Racing against time to save South Philadelphia’s ‘Black Main Street’” (see link below), where African-American greats once lived, such as the Rev. Dr. Charles Albert Tindley (1509 Christian Street, next to a 1507 demolition), Marian Anderson’s friend and architect Julian Francis Abele (1515 Christian Street, next to the 1513 demolition), and PA Representative and lawyer John Cornelius Asbury (1710 Christian Street, next to that 1712 demolition and 1714 collapsing wall), documented the rapid rate of demolition on this “historic” Black Doctors Row between Broad and 20th on Christian Street. This demolition is both astonishing and frightening. Astonishing, in that it is proceeding at a rate not seen before, or at least not in my twenty years living here in Graduate Hospital. Frightening because, if you look at the **Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Map** above, where pink signifies protected areas, the Christian Street Black Doctors Row and most of Graduate Hospital are currently unprotected from demolition, unlike the large pink areas just north of Lombard Street. Designating this part of Christian Street historic would help fix this horrifying situation. I strongly urge you to vote “yes” on the Black Doctors Row/Christian Street Historic District nomination as present by the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia.



I support approval of the designation because, unless the Philadelphia Historical Commission grants this nomination, we will continue to lose “African American Historical Places,” and/or see them severely damaged, like the following circumstances we witnessed in 2020/2021 (see also the demo pictures and map below):

- 1509 Christian Street, the Rev. Charles Tindley “significant,” threatened by demolition at 1507 Christian Street covered in another *Inquirer* article, “What a \$755,000 teardown in Graduate Hospital tells us about affordability and tax policy in Philadelphia” (link below);
- Demolished 1513 Christian Street, once an eight-room boarding house and covered in another *Inquirer* article titled, “Developer’s condos would destroy South Philly’s famed Black ‘Doctors’ Row” (link below), that is next to the 1515 “significant” once owned by Architect Julian Abele;
- 1623 Christian Street whose demolition has damaged adjacent “contributing” 1621 and 1625 homes as it was being demolished with an ax and then while underpinning was taking place – it should be noted that these three properties, along with seven other rowhomes on the same block, were respectfully renovated twenty-four years ago with City/HUD funding to provide affordable homeownership;
- 1712 Christian Street whose demolition, excavation and underpinning caused 1714 Christian Street to be deemed “imminently dangerous” when the main partition wall began separating and that is now threatening the “significant” John Cornelius Asbury House at 1710 Christian Street; and
- Demolished 1941 (1935-1945) Christian Street, once the location of the heavily used St. Charles Senior Center and in the distant past, a historic Black Elks Lodge.

And while approving the Christian Street Historic District designation would prevent further losses like these here on Christian Street, please let me say to those “high-density planners and theorists” who oppose designation and who think all this demolition is acceptable, “Walk our historic streets and talk as Councilman Johnson and I have with my Christian Street neighbors and friends,” some pictured above. “Listen to the upsetting reality of the destruction, disruption and displacement brought on by the demolitions from these “theoretical plans and theories.”” “And please, read **Preserving African American Places: Growing Preservation’s Potential as a Path for Equity** (link below) and see that it is **not okay**, as some have suggested on social media, **that white historical buildings and communities get preserved, like those above Lombard Street, while Black historical blocks like Black Doctors Row only get markers!**”

Respectfully yours,

Richard Gliniak
Democratic Committeeperson, Ward 3010
Preservation Task Force Committee Member

SOSNA Zoning Committee Member
1918 Carpenter Street
Philadelphia, PA 19146
215-617-3369

Attachments/Links

“Racing against time to save South Philadelphia’s ‘Black Main Street’” | Inga Saffron

<https://www.inquirer.com/columnists/black-doctors-row-christian-street-south-philadelphia-main-preservation-architecture-julian-abele-frederick-massiah-20210530.html#loaded>.

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Map

<https://phl.maps.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=0a0b23447b6b4f7097d59c580b9045fe>

“What a \$755,000 teardown in Graduate Hospital tells us about affordability and tax policy in Philadelphia” | Inga Saffron

Published Feb 27, 2021

<https://www.inquirer.com/real-estate/inga-saffron/graduate-hospital-teardown-demolition-architecture-history-preservation-zatos-stamm-gnome-south-philadelphia-density-yimby-20210227.html>

Exploring Neighborhood Change Interactive May – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

<https://savingplaces.github.io/equitymapPHI/>

Developer’s condos would destroy South Philly’s famed Black ‘Doctors’ Row’ | Inga Saffron

Posted: December 23, 2020

<https://www.inquirer.com/real-estate/inga-saffron/julian-abele-black-architect-philadelphia-graduate-hospital-tear-down-historic-stamm-christian-street-20201223.html>

Preserving African American Places: Growing Preservation's Potential as a Path for Equity

<https://forum.savingplaces.org/viewdocument/preserving-african-american-places>

1513 Christian Street Demolition

<https://atlas.phila.gov/1513%20CHRISTIAN%20ST>

https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/1513-Christian-St-Philadelphia-PA-19146/165607192_zpid/





1623 Christian Street Demolition/Excavation Causing 1625 Patio/Walkway Collapse

<https://atlas.phila.gov/1623%20CHRISTIAN%20ST/li>

https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/1623-Christian-St-Philadelphia-PA-19146/2078443751_zpid/

"Stop work" order given after failed 5/27/21 inspection and subsequent violation.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/SouthwestCenterCityPhila/permalink/10159849796158203>

(Facebook posting by Samara, adjacent homeowner)



1625 Christian Street Walkway/Patio, Drain Lines and Chain Link Collapse



Just Before Walkway Collapse – Drains Lines Still Intact, but separation has begun



1712 Christian Street Demolition – 1714 Now “Imminently Dangerous”

(1714 Homeowner’s Insurance Denied Claim)

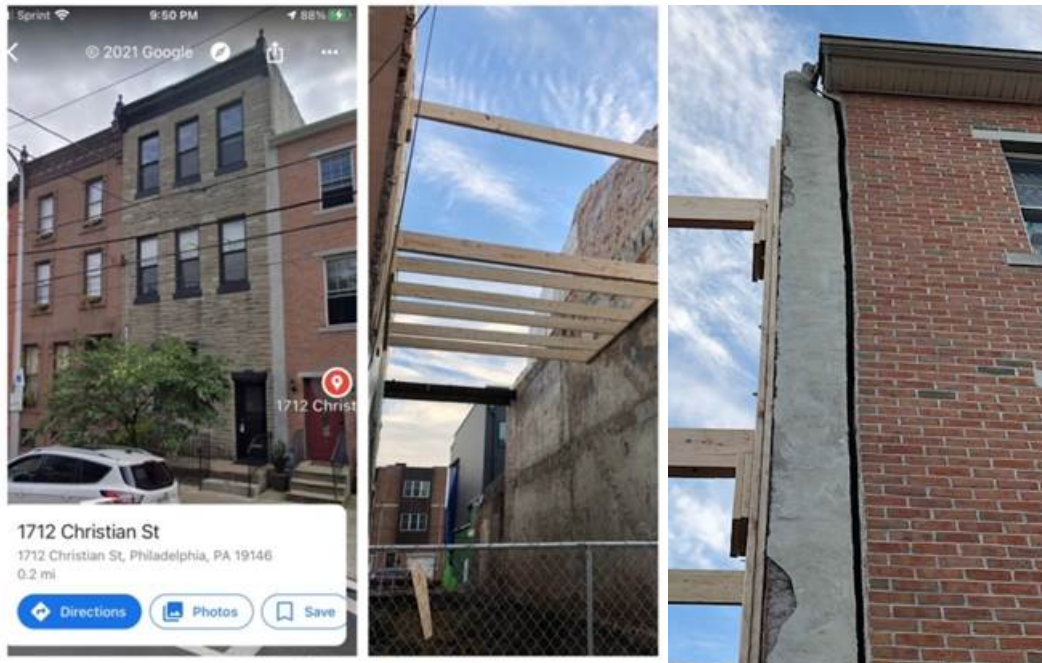
<https://atlas.phila.gov/1712%20CHRISTIAN%20ST/property>

https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/1712-Christian-St-Philadelphia-PA-19146/10319220_zpid/

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/SouthwestCenterCityPhila/permalink/10159813243043203>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/SouthwestCenterCityPhila/permalink/10159669714698203>

(Facebook postings by Sara, adjacent homeowner)



What is so shocking to me is that the 1712 developer/contractor can have 3/12, 4/1 and 4/13, cause an adjacent homeowner and her family to be their home because it is “imminently dangerous” of collapse, a situation that but yet the same developer/contractor can get a fire suppression permit on moreover, this same developer/contractor can continue working, creating threatening adjacent homes at their 2043 Fitzwater Street demolition/excavation site just mentioned above. Something is tragically



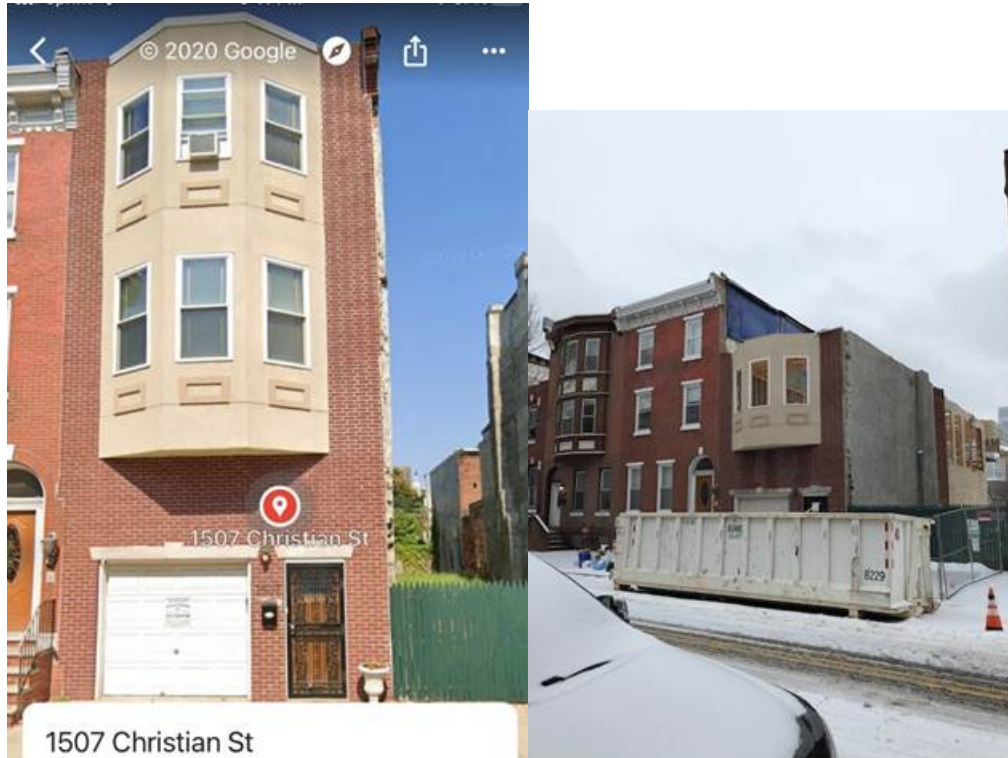
L/I violations on unable to live in continues today, 5/10! And violations and wrong here!

1507 Christian Street

<https://atlas.phila.gov/1507%20CHRISTIAN%20ST/property>

https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/1507-Christian-St-Philadelphia-PA-19146/117450090_zpid/

(10-year property tax abatement just ends)



2043 Fitzwater Street – Currently No Underpinning Permit

Same 1712 Christian Street “Imminently Dangerous” Developer”

<https://atlas.phila.gov/2043%20FITZWATER%20ST/li>

https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/2043-Fitzwater-St-Philadelphia-PA-19146/10318798_zpid/

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/SouthwestCenterCityPhila/permalink/10159741691018203>

(Facebook posting by the Angela, adjacent homeowner)

Recently, adjacent property owner informed me that 2043 developer/contractor may have begun excavating/underpinning work and **does not have an underpinning permit!** Previous violations have occurred here at this 2043 site. This is the same Philadelphia developer (Made Construction, LLC) that caused an adjacent house, located at 1714 Christian Street, to be deemed “imminently dangerous” during their 1712 Christian Street demo/excavation work!



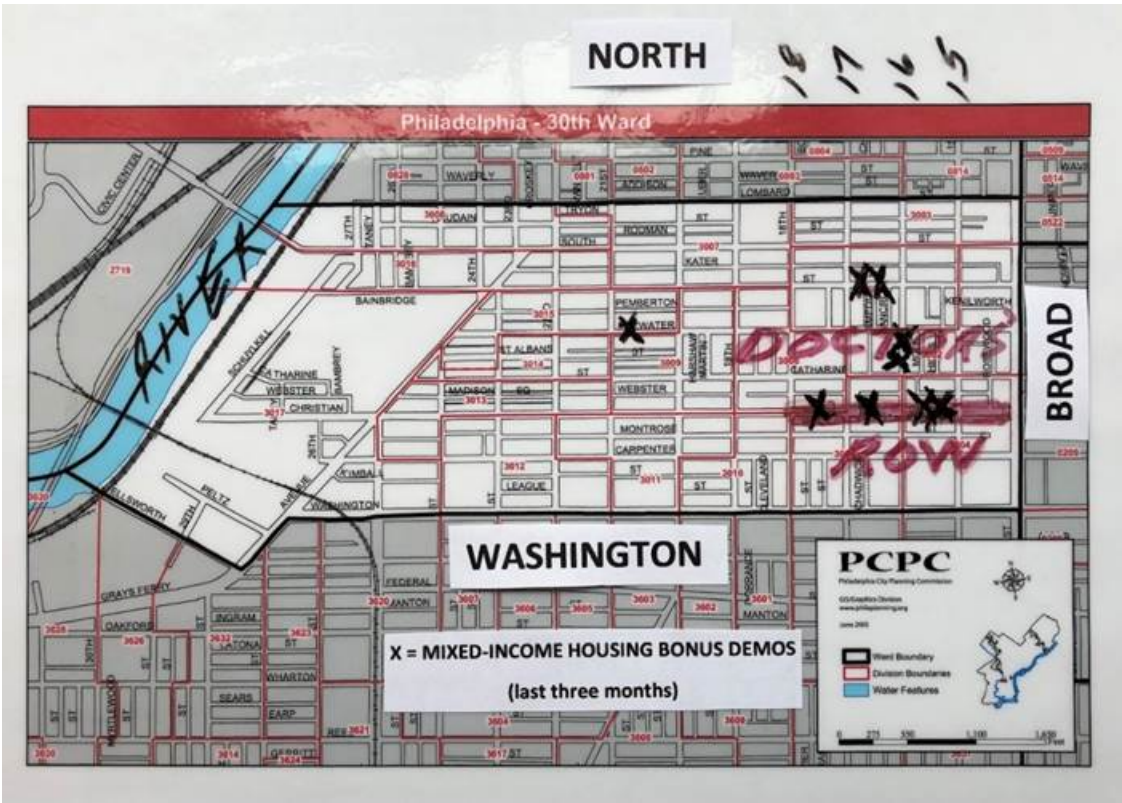
2043 Fitzwater St



During 2042 Fitzwater Street Demolition, Debris and a Metal Rod Rained Down on Adjacent Back Patios



3/2021 Graduate Hospital Demo Map



1513 & 1623 Christian St. Saved Corbels (cornice) - 22 Dumpsters to the Landfill



JORDAN A. HARRIS, MEMBER
DEMOCRATIC WHIP
186th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT
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FAX: (215) 952-1141
SATELLITE OFFICE:
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PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19145
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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

June 9, 2022

Robert Thomas, AIA, Chair
Philadelphia Historical Commission
1515 Arch Street, 13th floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Dear Mr. Thomas,

I'm writing to you today to voice my complete support of the proposed Christian Street Historic District (Black Doctors Row). As you know, the Christian Street Historic District has a rich cultural history dating back to the 1860s. This includes a period of approximately 40 years when the neighborhood was known for being home to a wide array of Black professionals, including Black pastors, doctors, teachers, architects, contractors, pharmacists, politicians, and business owners. This community holds a special place for many Black Philadelphians, especially those who still live there.

Designating this area as a historic district will help preserve much of the history that is unfortunately being lost. It will stop the destruction of family rowhomes that are much needed in our current housing market. It will allow more history to be discovered and the community to be properly recognized for the importance it played to not only Black Philadelphians, but our entire city.

Our history and culture deserve this designation, and I strongly urge your utmost consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact to contact me to further discuss this matter.

With kind regards, I am:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jordan A. Harris'.

Jordan A. Harris
Democratic Whip
186th Legislative District

Robert Thomas, AIA
Chair, Philadelphia Historical Commission
1515 Arch Street, 13th floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

June 13, 2022

Dear Mr. Thomas,

I am writing in support of the proposed Christian Street Historic District. If designated, this district would help assure the survival of a contiguous collection of nineteenth century rowhouses and important institutional buildings. These structures form a vibrant streetscape that possesses cultural and historical significance for the neighborhood and the city. The nomination provides a compelling narrative of the proposed district's rich heritage and highlights the lives of noteworthy African Americans associated with Christian Street.

The rowhouses within the proposed district are homes to a diversity of owners and tenants at various economic levels. As shown by recent events, development forces threaten these homes and the history held within their walls. The diversity of the neighborhood is under threat as the buildings that replace the demolished structures are targeted to a more narrowly defined economic and social bracket.

As a neighborhood resident, Chair of the SOSNA Architectural Review Committee, and member of the SOSNA Historic Preservation Committee, I have been involved in various initiatives to maintain and improve the quality of our urban surroundings. The Christian Street/Black Doctors Row Historic District would preserve essential urban fabric and the unique African American history tied to that fabric. I look forward to the discussions of the Historic Designation Committee and the Historical Commission on this proposed district and am hopeful for their support of its designation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Tim Kerner", with a stylized, flowing script.

Timothy Kerner, AIA
2205 Bainbridge Street

Cc: Committee on Historic Designation, PHC
Paul Steinke and Patrick Grossi, Preservation Alliance
Linda Evans, SOSNA Preservation Committee
Kenyatta Johnson, Councilman

Lynn Johnson
1625 Christian Street, Unit 1
Philadelphia, PA 19146

Robert Thomas, AIA, Chair
Philadelphia Historical Commission
1515 Arch Street 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

June 13, 2022

I am writing in strong support and commitment to the proposal of Christian Street as Historic District (Black Doctor Row). I have resided in South Philadelphia since 1999. There have been various changes during my residency such as demolitions of historical houses to build new townhouses, new condominiums and new apartment building. I am supporting the proposal of historic district within my community and on Christian Street from 15th Street to 22nd Street.

Sincerely,
Lynn Johnson

Samara Johnson

1625 Christian Street, Unit 2

Philadelphia, PA 19146

Robert Thomas, AIA, Chair

Philadelphia Historical Commission

1515 Arch Street 13th Floor

Philadelphia, PA 19102

June 13, 2022

I had the horrible experience of view the demolition of renovated 19 years historical property at 1623 Christian Street. The historical property was demolished to construct new five unit condominium building within row houses. As I walk along Christian Street I have encounter different historical landmarks such as Y.M.C.A, Marian Anderson Recreation Center, Jack and Jill of America Foundation and First African Baptist Church. If Christian Street could talk from the voices of our ancestors and the whispers in the houses of the stories of past times which are slowly fading away. I am writing in strong support of the proposal for Christian Street as historic district to retain the rich Neo' Grec Architect of the row houses and the history of Christian Street/Black Doctor Row Historic District.

Sincerely

Samara Johnson



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

June 15, 2022

Philadelphia Historical Commission
1515 Arch St.
13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my support of the request to name the proposed historic district of a six-block stretch of Christian Street, running from 1412 Christian St on the south side and 1419 Christian St on the north side to 20th Street as **"Black Doctors Row/Christian Street Historic District."** The district has significant character, interest and value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the city, commonwealth or nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past and it reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style.

I support the proposed request because, this area has so much rich cultural significance to our city and our country. Marian Anderson was raised in this area. To the extent that we can preserve the history of this proposed blocks and save the remaining edifices from succumbing to new development or demolition that is occurring in neighborhoods across the city but specifically in this area, is a way of ensuring the stories of those who lived and worked on the Christian Street Historic District don't go unnoticed.

I respectfully request you give this application all due fair and full consideration.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Evans', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA CITY COUNCIL

KENYATTA JOHNSON
ROOM 580, CITY HALL
Phila., PA 19107
(215) 686-3412 or 3413
Email: Kenyatta.Johnson@Phila.Gov

2ND DISTRICT COUNCILMEMBER

June 15, 2022

Mr. Bob Thomas
Chairman, Philadelphia Historical Commission
1515 Arch St., 13th Fl.
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Sent via email to preservation@phila.gov

Re: Nomination of Christian Street/Black Doctors Row Historic District

Dear Mr. Thomas,

I write to express my enthusiastic support for the nomination of the Christian Street Historic District, also known as Black Doctors Row, which is on the Commission's meeting agenda for today.

As a South Philadelphia native, and now a district councilperson, I have made it a priority to seek to preserve the neighborhood's long and notable Black history. Those efforts are particularly important as the area has rapidly transitioned from majority-Black to majority-White and has seen a development boom that has included a number of demolitions.

To that end, I have taken a number of actions, ranging from re-naming streets and establishing historical markers to securing City funds to support world-class cultural institutions and events such as the Marian Anderson Historical Society & Museum and the annual Odunde Festival.

Accordingly, I was glad to partner with the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia and the South of South Neighborhood Association to take decisive action in the face of a rash of demolitions on Christian Street. Working with a diverse group of concerned neighbors, we immediately began to explore the viability of a first-of-its-kind designation for a historically Black neighborhood.

At the same time, I pursued a set of complementary legislative remedies. First, I identified technical changes to the City's zoning code that would reduce the strong incentive to demolish structures regardless of their condition or historical significance. Preliminary changes were enacted in March 2021 (Bill No. 210075) and a broader set of changes were enacted in October 2021 (Bill No. 210474-AA). At the same time, I introduced legislation to establish a one-year demolition moratorium on Christian Street, which became law on July 1, 2021 (Bill No. 210473). That moratorium expires on July 1, 2022,



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA CITY COUNCIL

only a couple of weeks from today's meeting, which makes this nomination particularly urgent.

I regard this nomination as a landmark opportunity. An opportunity to rectify the City's broad failure to properly recognize and preserve its Black history, from the internationally celebrated to the mundane. There are many other Black historical assets across this city, but this one is both particularly vulnerable and eminently deserving of designation. Therefore, I urge you to approve the nomination before you today. Many thanks for your careful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kenyatta Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Kenyatta Johnson

cc: Jon Farnham, Executive Director, Historical Commission

Kim Chantry

From: Jacqueline Andrews <jandrews@umich.edu>
Sent: Monday, June 20, 2022 5:28 PM
To: preservation
Cc: Kim Chantry; Kenyatta Johnson; patric@preservationalliance.com; repharris@pahouse.net
Subject: Support for the establishment of the Christian Street Historic District, aka Black Doctors' Row

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

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Dear Sir or Madam:

As four-year residents of the Graduate Hospital neighborhood, members of the Christian Street YMCA and inveterate walkers and caretakers of the neighborhood, we strongly urge your support for the establishment of the Christian Street Historic District, also known as Black Doctor's Row.

This action coincides with the spirit of Philadelphia, a rough and tumble town that has endured and succeeded through the centuries. This spirit revels in hard work and grittiness, traits exemplified by the past, present and surely future residents of Christian Street from Broad to 20th.

This stretch of Christian Street exemplifies the 'city of homes', as Philadelphia has been known. Philadelphia built homes for working people, and people who succeeded by dint of persistence, creativity, intelligence and willingness to do what needed to be done.

Establishing this stretch of Christian as an historic district protects it, as any great city must protect its history. What is not protected is lost.

Thank you and we look forward to seeing this stretch of Christian Street add to its distinguished characteristics that of **Historic District**.

Jacqueline Andrews
Kenneth Andrews
1913 Carpenter Street
Philadelphia, PA 19146

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Jacqueline Andrews, Ph.D. ('83, The University of Michigan)
1913 Carpenter Street
Philadelphia, PA 19146-2614
215.341.9675

AA Park Place Solutions, LLC: Add. Value@AAParkPlaceSolutions.com

"Look closely at the present you are constructing:
it should look like the future you are dreaming." Alice Walker

From: [Barbara Candia](#)
To: [preservation](#)
Cc: [linda d evans](#)
Subject: Designation of Christian st as Historic district.
Date: Monday, July 4, 2022 11:12:09 AM

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I Barbara Candia have been a resident of Christian street all of my life. Born and raised at 20th and Christian and the owner of several properties in the 1500 block of Christian st. I own 1515 Christian which was the home of Julian Abele the famous architect, it is a registered historic site Plaque #722. He along with so many other prominent black professional men and women resided and owned businesses on Christian street. Won't you please allow the world to be informed and educated regarding the architectural, cultural and rich historical heritage and value to this district.

June 27, 2022

Mr. Jon Farnham,
Executive Director
Philadelphia Historical Commission

To whom it may concern: A response letter

Here lies the problem. You have a race of people who have been displaced but still thrive and flourish in a space that was “thrown at them”. These people educate and patronize their own to a degree of wealth and recognition that sets a standard for generations to come. Doctors, lawyers, architects, educators, etc. in every degreed level, our own hospital, churches, historians, musicians, entrepreneurs great and small and the like were created. We transformed an unwanted and forgotten space where many professionals were “only” granted a space to live into land mark historical properties of affluence and memories that can never be replaced ie. Doctors and nurses at Mercy hospital (the first African American hospital in PA), who practiced at Mercy hospital on Fitzwater street and had offices on Christian street because most weren’t allowed to live where they wanted.

From Mercy Hospital to Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, from Marion Anderson and the Marion Anderson recreation center to Chew funeral home and Chew playground to Julian Abele and Julian Abele park, from W.E.B. Dubois to Billy Holiday to the Nicholas Brothers, from Tindley Temple United Methodist Church to the First African Baptist Church, from the YMCA, YWCA, to the Jack and Jill club and the 4H club.

THIS WAS MY HISTORY LIVING ON BLACK DOCTORS ROW

Now here we are; having to “ask” a nonlearned and not interested enough to research people; what we “can” name our space. These same people call our named historical marker a “nick name”. They sit in position to deny our history so

they can build on top of it as if we did not exist or worst, to create a history for us to accept.

This is a story that is so familiar and so redundant that it reminds us of the fabric from which the Americas' were created. The cruel part is how relaxed these "colonizers" are in the formation and calculating actions in word and deed. This is an agenda of the continual demise of Black/ African American history; in this case of Black Doctor's Row of Christian street in South Philadelphia.

As I grew up on the renowned Black Doctor's Row, I had a white marble fire place in my living room, a second in my parent's room, and one on the third floor. I grew up in a world of all African American entrepreneurs, real estate company owners, architects, nursery school (where my mother was a head teacher), and elementary school teachers with the occasional white teacher that could not understand why we were so accelerated in our classes. I did not see a majority of white teachers until I arrived at J.R. Masterman Junior High School. My whole world consisted of progressive African Americans from the theater, music, business, politics, sports, science, education, theology, etc.

I swam the butterfly on the swim team and was one of the top divers on the dive team at the YMCA and was a member of the 4H science club both right across the street from my house on Christian street. These places and spaces and people were apart of the Blessings that allowed me to achieve a degree in Physics and like W.E.B. Dubois who lived and studied on nearby South street and wrote about the talented tenth; I came back to my home to teach Physics to elevate the masses.

Now I sat on zoom before people who questioned our history and lineage and call our prominence a nickname. They agree with similar minded residents that didn't grow up here; that "Black Doctor" will make the property not sell and that our houses are and were not historical structurally.

This is disrespectful on so many levels! It is truly Racism at its most arrogant!

I therefore recommend the following:

The official marker be named Black Doctors' Row with all of its including historical designation and historical connection to various people, places and events.

The panel do the work of research.

The panel not "piggy back" off of the negative remarks of people who have no historical interest in the area and see it only as venture property.

The panel cease all demeaning remarks against the history of or people of any and all spaces of color ie. "Black Doctor" being called a nickname.

Officially include minority members to the panel.

After listening to the zoom meeting it was with sadness and very deep emotion that led me to create this heavy hearted letter.

Sincerely,

Stacey Redmond,
Physicist/Instructor
Retired
Belovedandbles@aol.com

Cc

From: [linda d evans](#)
To: [preservation](#)
Cc: [Kim Chantry](#); [Kenyatta Johnson](#); [Vincent Thompson](#); [Patrick Grossi](#)
Subject: Letter in support of the title Christian Street Black Doctors Row Historic District
Date: Wednesday, July 6, 2022 9:57:41 AM

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Good morning Commissioners':

In preparation for the Historical Commission Friday, July 8 meeting you will be reviewing the advisory committee on Historic Designation report from Wednesday, June 15 on establishing the Christian Street Historic District.

Moreover, I hope you will also consider my opinion. I am a 25-year resident of the 1600 Block of Christian Street who has worked with other neighbors, SOSNA representative, Preservation Alliance and Councilmember Kenyatta Johnson for more than a year for the purpose of preserving the buildings and history of this predominately African-American neighborhood.

Although advisory committee on Historic Designation on Wednesday, June 15 heard residents, property owners, family members and others who have connections to the Christian Street community passionately advocate for the inclusion of Black Doctors Row, the chairperson recommended not to include Black Doctors Row. Honestly, I don't understand the chairperson's rationale; she heard the public's outcry but opposed their wishes.

In 1997, I moved to this South Philadelphia neighborhood because SOSNA was marketing affordable housing for moderate-income first-time home buyers. The house was priced at \$67,000 with a 30-year mortgage, \$3,000 down payment and private mortgage insurance backed by the federal government. The SOSNA executive director

Angela Richardson described the ten houses in the 1600 block of Christian Street as "Doctors Row", where I was told African-Americans who were doctors, lawyers and other professionals had lived in these grand three-story row houses. No two houses were alike. I was told by the housing counselor Luz Harper that the house I had selected was the largest of the 10, but had a very small yard whereas some of the other houses had a large yard that travel the length of Webster Street, a small street behind Christian Street.

I strongly disagree with the Historical Commission's advisory Committee on Historic Designation **not to** include the **Black Doctors Row** when referencing the Christian Street Historic District.

I direct your attention to the cover page of the Preservation Alliance document at <https://www.phila.gov/media/20220602113405/Historic-District-Christian-Street.pdf> which indicates **Christian Street/Black Doctors Row Historic District**. This is the intended title to reference this district. As you are aware of this movement (over a year) to establish this historic district has involved many conversations with neighbors, SOSNA, Councilmember Kenyatta Johnson and Preservation Alliance. It was intentional to include Black Doctors Row. We know the rationale behind this decision. More importantly, we want to "educate" the audience, in this case, the general public about Black History.

Therefore, I am respectfully requesting this advisory committee on Historic Designation utilize Christian Street/Black Doctors Row Historic District.

As I indicated in my comments about Christian Street between 1860 to 1945 this neighborhood was a bustling African-American community and even though the African-American population has declined since 2000 this community's existence was based on the

African-Americans that moved to this neighborhood and despite the Jim Crows Laws build this neighborhood a long time ago and contributes today to the existence of Christian St.

Due to the time constraints of the public comments by the chairperson, Murray Spencer, 45-year resident of 1700 Block Christian Street, didn't have the opportunity to tell the committee members the oldest Black Community in Philadelphia or this country was based on Christian Street. If you review the advisory committee's agenda, Christian Street was the last topic of the 7 subjects. The meeting started at 9: 30 a.m. but Christian Street was not discussed until 11:30 a.m.

After I listened to the discussion from the advisory committee as a result I realized that many of the members as well as the general public don't have knowledge and value Black History. In advance, if I have offended you I apology. Black History is a part of Philadelphia History Story. Also, I have realized that many people don't value Black History the way that my neighbors and I who spoke passionately about including "Black Doctors Row" a part of the title when naming this historic district. We stand on the shoulders of our ancestors.

As residents, tourists and the general public take their walking tour in the near future of Christian Street, all persons must be educated that respected Black working people (days' work, laundry, cooking, retail, etc.) and some better class Black persons (doctors, lawyers, legislators, architects, etc.) help to establish this community with home ownership, funeral homes, churches, small businesses, social activities and employment opportunities.

I am including the list of names of community members who spoke at the advisory committee meeting and support **Black Doctors Row Historic District** following **Christian Street**. The community

members included Murray Spencer, Claudia Sherrod, Brandon Washington, Cheryl Mobley-Stimpson, Stacey Redmond and Keisha Usher-Martin. Also, my Christian Street neighbors that were not in attendance (due to work) at the meeting but support **Black Doctors Row Historic District following Christian Street** include Lynn Johnson, Barbara Candia and Takisha Jones. Finally, I will be asking Philadelphia City Councilmember Kenyatta Johnson to also support this request.

Please acknowledge receipt of this email. I am available for further discussion on this subject if it is required. I can be reached by email or cell, 215-760-8684. Thank-you.

We are not only protecting historical buildings on Christian Street but also preserving Black History on Christian Street.

Yours truly,

Linda D. Evans