

Comeback

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the positive influences in a neighborhood which offers both good and bad." The couple believes that living in Morrisania, "gives their kids backbone and prepares them for the reality of life."

Eric says drugs are a prevalent problem in the streets of Morrisania. "These young people seem to have no hope. All they do is hang out on the street corner," he adds. Indeed, the city's publication "Community District Needs" lists drug dealings, assaults, and burglaries among the top crime problems in the 42nd Precinct, which covers much of Morrisania. It also notes that the young people of this community suffer from an extremely high rate of sexually transmitted diseases, due in part to lack of adequate health information and education, poor hygiene, sexual promiscuity, and substance abuse.

Pamela, nonetheless, is optimistic. "My mother has lived nearby in Mott Haven since 1961 and she always told me how beautiful it was here. She says that J.F. K. once stayed in a hotel that was on the Concourse." Because of that, Pamela says she always "thought of looking up the history of the place," but never got around to it.

The Sanchezes would find that history abounds in Morrisania. In the case of the Bronx Museum of the Arts, it straddles the past. The museum's current home on the Grand Concourse and 161st Street was once

a synagogue. At the same time, the institution, established in 1971, is very prominent in the community. It houses over 700 works of art in its permanent collection and tries to feature 'Arts of Color' to reflect the diverse community it serves. It is currently undergoing renovations to house more gallery

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space, an auditorium, bigger classrooms, a café and a gift shop.

"I never knew this neighborhood had so many interesting things in its past," says

Jamil Brown, 33, a local resident. "I've only lived here for two years and really don't like it very much but it's affordable for me and my family right now," he says. Brown now realizes that his new community was once much more well to do. "It makes sense. Why else would so many landmarked buildings be in this area?"

Morrisania is also home to other famous structures. Among these is the resting place of Lewis Morris and Gouverneur Morris, St. Ann's Episcopal Church. Founded in 1841 by members of the Morris family, the church stands on St. Ann's Avenue and 140th Street. It was named after Ann Morris, who also happened to be a descendant of Pocahontas. The church still houses 19th century stained glass. Today, it remains an important center of community activities.

Also standing strong is the H.W. Wilson company. A publisher of periodical literature such as magazine articles and catalogs of new books, the company has called University Avenue, alongside the Major Deegan Expressway home since 1917. Its most renowned feature is a 30 foot lighthouse resting on a book, which as the company's logo, also symbolizes its mission: "To give guidance to those seeking their way through the maze of books and periodicals, without which they would be lost."

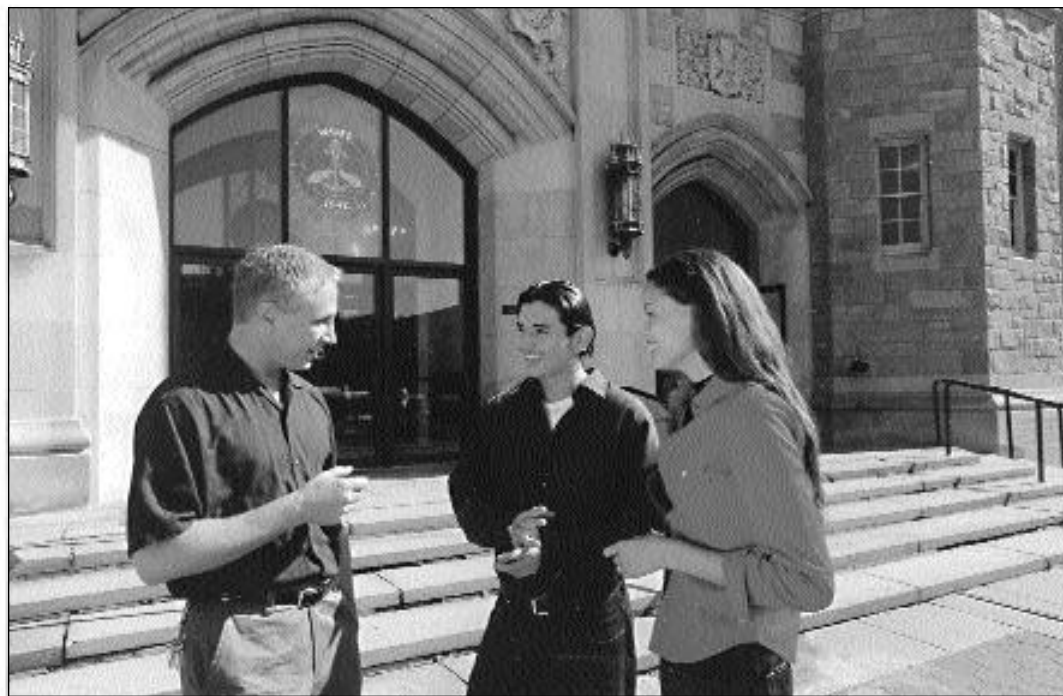
Another stronghold in the community is the Morrisania Branch of the New York

Public Library, which has been located on 169th Street since being opened in 1908. It was the 28th of 65 libraries built from funds given to New York City by Andrew Carnegie in 1901. The first high school to be built in the Bronx, Morris High School, opened in 1897. Today, the entire neighborhood surrounding it has been named the Morris High School Historical District. It counts as one of its graduates General Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Presidents Bush and Clinton.

Thanks to a solid foundation, Morrisania is undergoing renewal. Today, there are signs of rebuilding. Now, in addition to the Hub, Morrisania's principal shopping area located on 3rd Avenue around 149th Street, there is a complex on 161st Street which houses a large supermarket, retail stores and a movie theater. The Family Court and Criminal Court systems, located between Sherman and Sheridan Avenues are now undergoing an expansion, which will occupy another two square blocks in the vicinity. In addition, the Department of City Planning has Capital Budget Priorities slated for reconstruction efforts on many of the major streets in the community. Hopefully, with the efforts of the local residents working together with both public and private agencies, this community and its diverse cultures can once again find the dignity and prosperity once so inherent in its founders and the early settlers here.

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