

June 4, 2019

STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION REGARDING THE PROPOSED DESIGNATION OF THE CAFFE CINO - 31 CORNELIA STREET, GAY ACTIVISTS ALLIANCE FIREHOUSE - 99 WOOSTER STREET, WOMEN'S LIBERATION CENTER - 243 WEST 20TH STREET, THE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY CENTER - 208 WEST 13TH STREET, AND JAMES BALDWIN RESIDENCE - 137 WEST 71ST STREET IN MANHATTAN, AND THE AUDRE LORDE RESIDENCE - 207 ST. PAUL'S AVENUE, STATEN ISLAND AS INDIVIDUAL LANDMARKS

Good morning Chair Carroll and Commissioners. I am Andrea Goldwyn, speaking on behalf of The New York Landmarks Conservancy. The Conservancy is pleased to support individual landmark designation of these six buildings associated with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender history. We applaud the work of the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project and thank the Commission for bringing these designations forward.

The buildings before you today represent the tangible heritage of New York's LGBT community. The Caffe Cino, Gay Activists Alliance Firehouse, and Women's Liberation Center were anchors of the early gay rights movement. They no longer serve those purposes and without this recognition, that history could be lost entirely. The James Baldwin and Audre Lorde Residences were homes of two of the most significant individuals of 20th century New York, with connections to literary, LGBT, and African-American culture. And the LGBT Community Center continues to thrive as a focal point for the gay community.

The buildings are largely in good condition, and resemble their appearance from the period of significance within LGBT history. Like the Stonewall Inn, designated in 2015, five of the six are within historic districts, yet designation as individual landmarks will commemorate the specific role that each played in New York's culture, and honor the many layers of history within each structure.

The Landmarks Law speaks of the need to "safeguard the city's historic, aesthetic and cultural heritage, as embodied and reflected" in the city's buildings. These designations are a fine example of meeting that imperative. We look forward to seeing the designation of more landmarks that highlight underserved histories and reflect the multi-faceted past of New York.

The Conservancy is happy to offer these building owners support from our financial and technical assistance programs. Thank you for the opportunity to express the Conservancy's views.