

AABRA Update!

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www.aabra.org

Philadelphia, PA

We're Staying in North Philly!

The city government, Westrum Development, the media and others are preparing a North Philadelphia that will **not** include long-time residents, particularly those in Brewerytown. However, North Philadelphia remains overwhelmingly populated by people who grew up there, raised families there and won't be moved out by anyone. This is the story of one such family.

The year was 1953 and rumors about African-Americans being allowed to work and live in the heart of the historic, working class community of Brewerytown were taking root. Jobs were plentiful in the industrial corridor along 31st Street. Business districts were thriving along Girard Avenue and Columbia Avenue (later to become Cecil B. Moore Avenue). Only a year before *Brown v. Bd. of Education*, the promise of the dawning Civil Rights Era was already coming into focus.

On cue, a young and ambitious couple, Dolores and Harry Richardson, decided that they needed more room for their five children. They visited a house for sale on Oxford Street. Mrs. Richardson recalls, "We were a little nervous about buying that house – we were to be only the fourth black family to move onto the block. But, the house was just what we needed, an elementary school was right across the street (Sartain), and Fairmount Park was nearby. So, we moved in."



AABRA members (from left) Dolores Richardson, her daughter Peggy Martin and Judy Chapman at the 2007 Media Mobilizing Project Annual Dinner, Songhai City Cultural Center

In those early days, Mrs. Richardson notes, "There was a mixture of races: white and black. Everyone got along, they talked to each other. Everyone was friendly and worked together. It was typical of what a neighborhood should be."

Mrs. Richardson is simply too modest to point out that she was one of the reasons the community functioned so well. She was president of the Sartain Elementary School's Home & School Association. She served as a classroom mother – a parent who volunteered as a teacher's aide, while observing how her children were being taught. She was a judge of elections for 18

years. Some of her most memorable roles were as president, secretary and treasurer of a block committee.

She recounts, "It was a good committee. Many wonderful people were involved, such as Mrs. Matilda Terry (recently deceased). We kept the neighborhood clean, worked with committeemen, police captains, city councilmen to get things done. When there was a death in the area, we would go from house to house raising money for flowers. Whatever funds were left, we gave to the family."

New cycles of change

Gradually, the white neighbors moved away during the "white flight" periods of the 50's and 60's. But, Mrs. Richardson quickly adds, "Good neighbors moved in. They were looking for a nice house to raise their kids. They were easy to get along with. There were lots of kids in neighborhood. It was a family setting; people got along very well together."

*Continued on page 2, please see **The Richardsons***

Westrum Destroys B'town History

Westrum Development, with the full support of City Council, Mayor John Street, the Planning Commission and the Department of Licenses & Inspections, has been demolishing more historic buildings on 31st & 32nd Streets. They are preparing the way for 600 condos, to be priced at \$400,000 and above. AABRA and the broader community strongly oppose this construction because it does not include even one unit affordable to the long-time residents. For more information, please see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37sokGzkcT0>.

BINGO Expanded – \$\$ Prizes

AABRA CDC has doubled the seating space at its popular bingo afternoons. Please come by on Saturdays, from 3 PM to 6:30 PM, at 3117 Master St. Doors open at 1:30PM. Proceeds benefit AABRA CDC's community rebuilding efforts. For more information, please call 215-769-3333.

Low Interest Mortgages for YOU!

If you have up to \$25,000 in repairs to make to your home, you can apply for a Philadelphia Home Improvement Loan (PHIL Loan). The interest rate is 3% or 5%. Call PNC Bank (888-256-9378), B of A (215-561-5014) or Citizens (888-462-0900).

Songhai Center Hosts Events

Several outstanding musical & cultural events, community meetings and private affairs have been hosted by the Songhai City Cultural Center (3117 Master). You can rent the Center for weddings, birthdays, etc. Call 215-769-3333 for details.

The Richardsons (cont'd)

Slowly, the neighborhood began to change again. "There was a complete turnabout, a lot of new neighbors, lots of sick elderly passed on, friends or relatives took over." But, even in the worst of days, Mrs. Richardson says, "This was still a nice block. Today, we hear arguments on corners sometimes. We know there is some drug activity on the side streets. And, yes, the old block committee is gone. But, this cycle will end too."

Mrs. Richardson knows that one important improvement would be more positive role models for young men. She often recalls her husband as an excellent example. Mr. Richardson was self-employed for 40 years. He manufactured draperies and slipcovers at his store on Susquehanna Avenue. Later, he moved his business to their basement on Oxford Street. Mrs. Richardson says, "He always wanted to have something to call his own. He setup a huge bench in the basement, bought lots of materials and ran his business very successfully here. He was a great husband and father."

They were married for 59 years. After his passing, one of her daughters, Peggy, moved back home to help look after mom. Peggy tells us, "When my kids were growing up, they always referred to this house as 'the big house' and couldn't wait to come here to visit their grandparents. Our home has been so full of love and priceless memories that I just had to come back to continue this nearly 60 year tradition."

Mrs. Richardson isn't surprised that Brewerytown is becoming a hot destination again. Four years ago, she, Mrs. Terry and other neighbors joined AABRA to help keep the community informed about proposed housing, zoning and other changes. Peggy joined AABRA's Board. They have helped to ensure that AABRA is a significant contributor to Brewerytown's grass roots, self-improvement campaign. "My husband and I made the right choice," Mrs. Richardson concludes. "And, there isn't anywhere else I would want to be."

Though she has had health problems of late, Mrs. Richardson remains physically and mentally strong. Her children graciously help her when necessary. "I am very blessed," she says.

Brewerytown is a place where many families like the Richardsons have called home for decades. They have every intention of calling it home for decades to come, irrespective of the plans others have for our community. To tell your North Philly story, please email us at aabra@thenile.com or telephone us at 215-769-3333.

Next Community Meeting

There will be a meeting to tell you how to prevent losing your home to foreclosure on January 5, 2008, 12:00 noon, at the Cultural Center (3117 Master Street). If your home is safe from foreclosure, come to get info for family and friends.

Important Phone Numbers

<u>Streets Department</u> (cleaning, recycling, reporting illegal dumping, traffic/street lights)	215-685-9010/6749
<u>Report animal bites, strays</u>	215-686-5560
<u>Free child car seats (\$10 deposit)</u>	215-685-7485
<u>Free/low-cost health insurance</u>	800-464-5437
<u>Drug abuse & mental health help</u>	888-545-2600
<u>Help mentally ill relatives</u>	800-950-6264
<u>Mental health information packets</u>	215-599-5176


Classifieds

Private Mailboxes. Keep nosy neighbors out of your business. \$10.00/mo 29 th & Girard. 215-236-7682	Apts. for Rent – Renovated Studio/Efficiency, new kitchen - \$450, 2 BR for \$800, 28 th & Girard. 215-769-3333
Soul Food Catering. Mouth-watering fish, chicken, beef, greens & vegetarian dishes. Great prices. Butter's Soul Food To Go! , 2821 W. Girard Avenue. 215-235-4724	
Color Copies. 50 cent special! B&W copies – 15 cents! Restrictions apply. Limited time only. 215-769-3333	
BINGO. Cash prizes! Every Sat. at 3PM. 3117 Master St. Benefits community. 215-765-9737	

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AABRA AND AABRA CDC
2838 W. Girard Ave.
215-769-3333
aabrapc@thenile.com

Proceeds benefit the African-American Business & Residents Association (AABRA) and AABRA CDC. Seniors welcome!
Membership only \$2/yr or \$10/yr for families

"Either we improve our neighborhood for ourselves and our families or others will improve it for themselves and their families."



(Classes start on January 28, 2008)



Learn how to keep
your home!



Stop foreclosure NOW!

Are you a home owner?

Late on mortgage payments?

Afraid the bank will take your home?

Sponsored by: AABRA and AABRA CDC Phone: 215-769-3333 Fax: 215-769-0806

Come to an important meeting to learn:

- ❖ Your rights when a bank demands your home
- ❖ How to prevent foreclosure
- ❖ How to stop foreclosure once it starts

Special guest will be a licensed real estate agent.

Meeting Time: Sat., January 5, 2008, 12:00 noon – 1:30 PM

Meeting Place: Songhai City Cultural Center, 3117 Master

Tired of dogs polluting your sidewalk?



Come to an important meeting to learn:

- ❖ The responsibilities of every dog owner
- ❖ How to ensure that violaters are cited



Special guest will be a Philadelphia Police Officer.

Meeting Time: Mon., January 21, 2008, 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Meeting Place: Contract Post Office, 2836 W. Girard Ave.

BREWERYTOWN



Songhai City Cultural Center

3117 Master Street • 215-769-3333

Proceeds benefit community development efforts of the African-American Business & Residents Association (AABRA) and AABRA CDC - A. Alston, Secretary

We just **DOUBLED** our seating capacity!

Bring your friends.



More players mean greater 💰 prizes...

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