

# **BILLIE HOLIDAY PLACE**

## **Street Co-Naming Resolution**

**Whereas:** *Billie Holiday (April 7, 1915 – July 17, 1959), born Eleanor Harris and later called Lady Day, was an American singer known equally for her difficult life and her emotive, poignant singing voice. She is generally considered one of the greatest jazz voices of all time.*

**Whereas:** *It was in Harlem in the early 1930s that she started singing for tips in various night clubs. According to legend, penniless and facing eviction, she sang "Body and Soul" in a local club and reduced the audience to tears.*

**Whereas:** *In the late 1930s she was introduced to a song entitled "Strange Fruit," which began as a poem about the lynching of a black man written by Abel Meeropol, a Jewish schoolteacher from the Bronx. The poem was set to music and performed at teachers' union meetings, where eventually it was heard by the manager of Cafe Society, an integrated nightclub in Greenwich Village. Holiday performed the song in 1939, a move that by her own admission left her fearful of retaliation. She later said that the imagery in "Strange Fruit" reminded her of her father's death, which was why she persisted in performing it.*

**Whereas:** *More than nearly any other singer, Holiday phrased her performances in the manner of a jazz instrumental soloist, and accordingly she has to be seen as a complete jazz musician and not merely a singer. Nevertheless, her voice, even in the light and lively numbers she often sang during her early period, carried a wounded poignancy ("God Bless the Child") that was part of her attraction for general audiences.*

**Whereas:** *Her impact on other artists was undeniable, in that even after her death she influenced such singers as Peggy Lee, Janis Joplin, and Nina Simone. In 1972, Diana Ross played her in a movie version of Holiday's autobiography, Lady Sings the Blues, earning her a Best Actress nomination. In 1988 U2 released "Angel of Harlem", a tribute to her.*

**Whereas:** *Like many artists, the importance of Holiday's music and her influence were only truly realized after her death. She struggled against Racism and Sexism her entire career, and achieved fame despite a turbulent life. She is also often cited as an example to the black and gay communities, both which admire her early efforts to stand up for equal rights, and to speak out against discrimination and racism. She is now considered a transcendent talent as well as being one of the truly important vocalists of the 20th century. It is our sad loss that her beautifully bright essence burned out much too soon.*

**Resolved:** *Even though she made this world a better place, by intensifying our understanding of Life, Blues, Jazz, and Soul, all too many of us have never known the importance of her Legacy and Contributions, which makes it is past time for our Community and our City, to remember, and honor our former Neighbor (108 W 139St.) and a Great Harlemitte - Billie Holiday*

*by CoNaming 139 Street between Malcolm X Blv. and Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard -  
BILLIE HOLIDAY PLACE*