

McKissack and McKissack Remarks

Statement to New York City Planning, Dispositions and Concessions; Zoning and Franchises City Council Subcommittees Joint Public Hearing Columbia University “Manhattanville Expansion Project” Wednesday, December 12, 2007

I am Cheryl McKissack, President of McKissack & McKissack-New York and Philadelphia-also based in Washington, DC and Chicago headed by my twin sister, Deryl. We represent a 100 percent Family-, African-American-, and Woman-Owned construction business, which has been in my family for five generations founded in 1796 fostered by Moses McKissack the first, originally a slave captured in West African, only 42-years after Columbia University was founded in 1754. It is my privilege to stand before you today to state my support for the expansion of Columbia University as it applies to the contributions my company will make and the opportunities we will create.

McKissack & McKissack will continue its 102-years of uninterrupted commitment to economic development and job creation; and preservation of historic and architectural integrity in this current expansion initiative. We are at a place in consciousness and challenge, no different than where we were years ago as the first African American construction company to have been competitively selected to build the Carnegie Library at Fisk University; the 99th Squadron Air Based in Tuskegee, Alabama, the historic home of the Tuskegee Airmen, the largest US contract ever given to a black firm until that time; or more contemporary structures throughout the country, including Medgar Edgars in Brooklyn.

We are pleased to become one of the firms along with Bovis selected in the construction expansion in Harlem. The mere location and heritage of both Columbia University and Harlem is a basis of pride to us and one with which we will not compromise anything less than desirable outcomes in our work.

There are quite a few issues that we can not appropriately address regarding the Columbia University Expansion; however in my industry of construction I can state quite firmly that:

- β McKissack & McKissack is fully qualified in quality craftsmanship; in ensuring the highest integral negotiations; and **seeking and employing a skilled minority and female workforce**. This is complimented by ancestral sensitivities both in our own family, and in due respect to those Harlem-ites whose contributions can not go un-recognized.
- β **McKissack & McKissack is committed to working with and maximize the utilization of Minority and Women-Owned Businesses, as well as Local Businesses. We are working with Columbia to create innovative and creative programs to achieve our diversity goals.**

- β McKissack & McKissack understands resistance. It is grounded in sensibilities and sensitivities. Like Henry Ford once said, *“when everything (seems to be) going wrong, remember the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it.”*

To Columbia University, McKissack & McKissack will stand firmly on its historic principles and commit to you the best quality in our work. All things considered, it is our best intention to go the distance as you advance your mission through 2030, just 23 years from now. **Just think about it, in 23 years people who are not yet born will have an opportunity to benefit from this project. We have a rare opportunity to develop a workforce pipeline from apprenticeship to management to ownership.**

To Community Board 9, we will not lose sight of your concerns and vision within the parameters of our construction activities. We will make every effort to leave no one behind by bringing with us opportunities for a trained workforce.

To City Council who work diligently on both sides of the issues, I encourage you to support the Columbia Expansion. It is the best investment for the future of New York City.

And foremost, we would like to say To The Community...

We want your support, appreciate your vote of confidence and will work to deserve it in everything we do. We want you to know that our opportunity to even be in the running as the African American construction firm of choice comes as a result of your voice of reason and staying the course of equity and fairness in opportunity, a stance we do not take for granted. We will not fail in living up to your advocacy.

I appreciate this opportunity to share my perspectives at today's hearing and to move forward grounded on principles set 102 years ago by my ancestors and propelled by those whose visions I bear witness to today. I remain convinced that there is more we share, than not.

Thank you.
Cheryl McKissack