



**BROOKLYN**

**CONNECTIONS**

**BLACK BROOKLYN**  
PRIMARY SOURCE PACKET

Student Name



### CROW HILL.

**What It Was Twenty Years Ago, and What It Is Now—Its First Church—How the Negroes Lived—Buying Meat from Bone wagons—Sheepsheads at a cent a piece—Its Liquor Saloons and Gambling Houses.**

An EAGLE reporter went through Crow Hill recently and collected some facts about it of some interest. Every one knows where Crow Hill is—away up on the righthand side of Atlantic avenue, embracing acres of ground, which, however, is now cut through and gridironed by streets.

Twenty years ago all above Brooklyn avenue was a dense mass of woods, that is on the other side of Atlantic. From that place to East New York the ground was lilly, swampy and covered with trees. This was the appearance of things when the darkies first took up their abode and settled there, which they did in 1850.

The reporter was in conversation with an old retired policeman, who has seen much of Crow Hill, remembers it from the time it first became known as a settlement until to-day. Said he: "At that time—twenty years ago—the darkies were not like they are now by a good deal, in fact they were a great deal more civil and had less trouble among themselves. If you met them on the sidewalk they made way for you, and were not allowed to ride in a public vehicle. I was an old stage driver myself," said Mr. Hanft, "and drove the first car up from the ferry. We had four horses on it, and brought the Common Council up as far as we ran, that was up to Washington avenue. This was in 1854, and the stages went from there up as far as Crow Hill. Well, as I was saying, Montgomery Queen, who owned the stage route, gave orders to the drivers take pity on the poor fellows and give them a seat on the box alongside of themselves, but this was finally stopped by imperative orders from Queen's office, and so the colored people had to walk to and from the ferries, rain or shine; no matter if the ice paved the entire distance, they had to walk.

"How did their settlement get to be named Crow Hill?"

"Well, they had to live away from the white people, and they got up there in these woods. The woods were at that time full of crows, and it was called Crow Hill, partly because there were a great many crows there and partly on account of the people nicknaming the darkies 'crows,' too.

"Every colored person you met in Brooklyn in those days wouldn't say 'Do you know where such and such a street is?' but they'd say, 'Which is the way to Crow Hill?' If they had any colored friends living this side of the river that's where they'd find them."

#### HOW THEY LIVED.

"What did these darkies do for a living at this time?"

"They most all used to work in the fish, Fulton and Washington markets, in New York, and would trudge there night and morning. The 'hill' on which they lived consisted of a good many hills, and they used to inhabit little shanties that they'd put up themselves—regular huts—they weren't fit to be called shanties. Then they had pigs and geese, ducks, &c., and raised little things, and called the settlement their own. Among themselves they were peaceable enough. Sometimes they'd have a skirmish and cut each other with razors and knives; but, as a rule, they were pretty orderly. But you must remember they were not as much at liberty then as now, and that had a good deal to do with it.

#### THE FIRST CHURCH AND GIN MILL.

"About eighteen years ago the first colored church was built. It was made of logs and timber and would hold

about twenty or thirty comfortably. It was located where Schenectady avenue and Dean streets now intersect, for at that time the streets were not cut through, even Atlantic and Fulton avenues were not opened to East New York. The first minister they had was a man named Johnson, and he used to preach every Sunday to such as wanted to go to church.

"About the same time that the good men put up the church, the devil, not to be outdone, sent a few enterprising Dutchmen up in that direction to open gin mills. One man, the first almost who kept store there, was a Low Dutchman, and he was called Cheap John. He sold groceries of the commonest kind to the darkies, and also a soda water or sassa-parilla bottle full of liquor for three cents, bottle and all. He kept at the corner of Stuyvesant and Fulton avenues, and he made his money out of the colored folks. He's rich now.

"Whenever whites used to go into that settlement there was generally trouble. I remember one Sunday when some ten or eleven white folks went in the woods there and commenced to make fun at the darkies. In about five minutes the entire village was in arms, the women covered them with slops, and the men made them beat a hasty retreat. One of the whites pulled a pistol out and shot at a darkey; he missed his aim, but was knocked down with a stone before he could take another. The infuriated negroes set on him with razors then and nearly cut him to pieces. The police had to come out on them. The station house at that time was at the corner of Bedford avenue and Fulton street, or what was then called the Bedford old road, and used to be a Dutch Reformed church.

#### BUYING SHEEPSHEADS AT A PENNY A PIECE.

"The darkies used to live in those days on the cheapest they could get. They'd bring scraps of fish home from the market, and when the bone wagons used to pass through their settlement to go to Schwaniweidel's bone factory, they used to go to the driver and buy sheep's heads for a penny apiece. The drivers were not allowed to sell any bones, but the darkies used to go to the bone factory and actually buy the meat, after it had been boiled off the bones there, to make soup with. Then, in the Hunterly Road, Henry and Chris. Steers kept a place where they used to sell liquor to the darkies. They made a fortune out of it, too, and are now well off.

#### THE NEGROES' SUNDAY OUT.

however, was invariably spent at Bob Williams's, who used to keep what was called a hotel. He fenced in a lot of the trees and made a sort of park out of them, and then on Sundays, when the Crow Hill folks would be all dressed up and receiving their friends from New York, they'd go over to Bob's place and that would be crowded. They used to have high old times there. Singing, dancing and banjo playing was going on all the time. Another man who made money out of this settlement was Fred Carman, who keeps at the corner of Wyckoff and Dean streets

#### THE DARKIES DRIVEN OUT.

"In time the city limits extended; the whites kept buying property and getting nearer and nearer to the darkies, who were thus driven further out, until at last Crow Hill assumed the appearance it has to-day, all intersected with streets and built up with houses. Now there is as many whites as blacks there; then there was not a single white person living among them, except those who kept stores and got rich off them by selling them liquor.

"When the war came on and when the darkey settlement was at the strongest, there were lots of gambling shops started there. Dirty dens were established and draw poker was indulged in for just such stakes

as the men could afford to play for. Then people used to get 'laid out' and robbed in that neighborhood, and Crow Hill got a deservedly bad name. There has been one or two murders committed there. The last was about four years ago when John Drake a colored man killed Fitzpatrick on a Sunday morning. The fights among the common white people, who gradually mixed in and settled with the darkies used to be of frequent occurrence and serious character. The darkies always fought with razors or clubs, and when they put the former weapon to scientific use they made trouble. Finally, policy shops were introduced into Weckesville, which adjoins Crow Hill, and the people got to be, (a great many of them) lazy and confirmed gamblers. At night they would go out looking for what they could steal, and with the proceeds of the theft they would gamble or play policy. As the population increased, mixed as it was, gin mills of the lowest character and houses of ill fame were started, where on Saturdays nights the Devil, himself, would be to pay. Capt. McLaughlin of the Ninth Precinct had a good deal of trouble when Crow Hill was in his district, and had to keep a strong force of men there all the time. He broke up lots of these "Amalgamation Houses" (so called because black and white would assemble together in disgusting orgies) and sent the proprietors to the Penitentiary. Now Crow Hill property is increasing in value daily, the darkies are being forced further away from the city—many of them live in East New York, at Jamaica, and in New Brooklyn, but for all that Crow Hill earned a bad name, which sticks to it now, and will damage it commercially for a long time to come."

## **CROW HILL**

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man, the first almost who kept store there, was a Low Dutchman, and he was called Cheap John.

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1. Read section 1 of **Document 1**: Describe the terrain of Crow Hill in the 1850s.

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2. Why might the African-American community (called “Darkies,” in the article) have settled in such an **inhospitable** place?

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3. Read section 2: Who was “Cheap John”? What was the author’s opinion of him?

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4. Read section 3: What foods does the article say the African-American community was eating? Why do you think the community ate those foods?

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5. Read section 4: What did the residents of Crow Hill do for fun?

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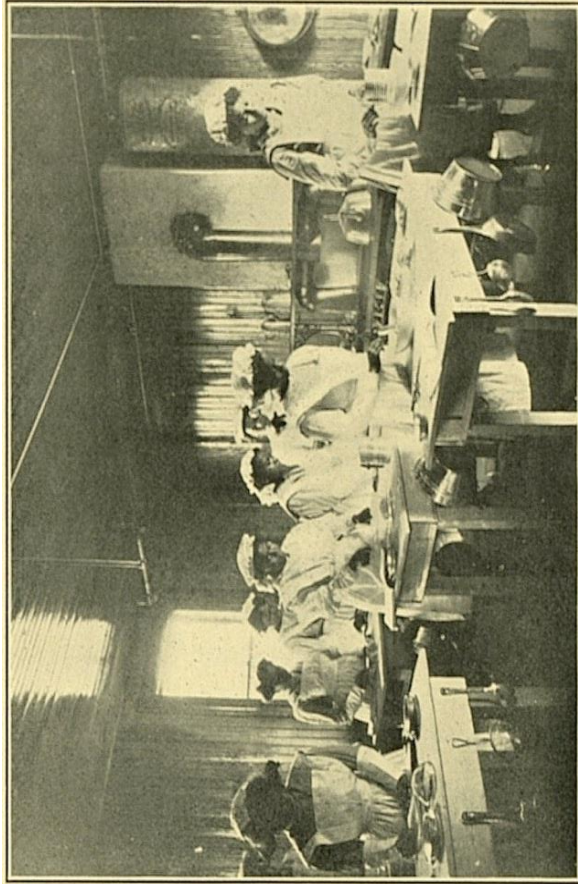




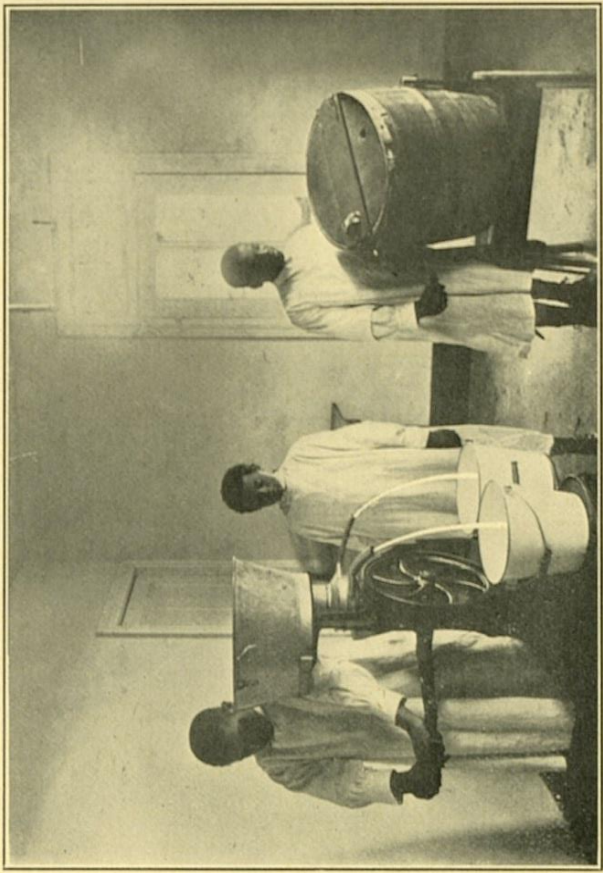
**Document 2a:** "Howard Colored Orphan's Asylum." 191-?. Brooklyn Daily Eagle Photograph Collection, Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.



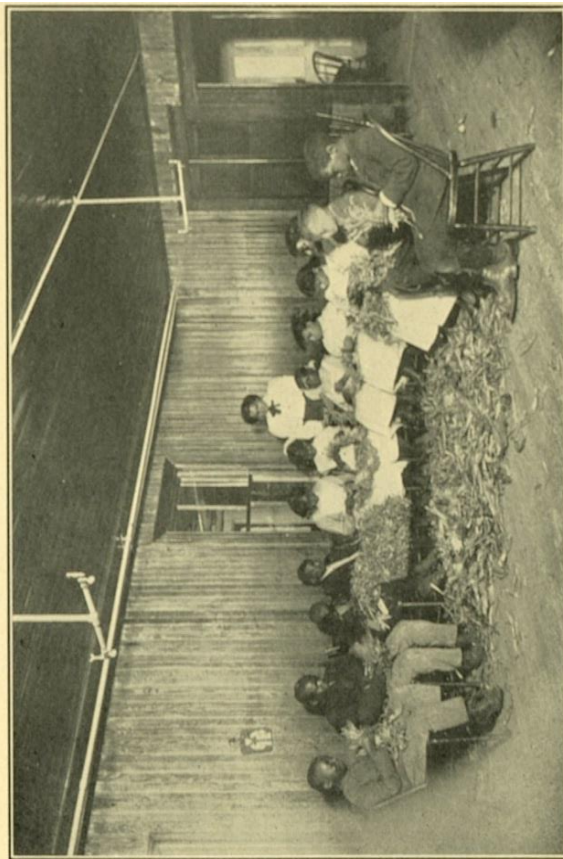
**Document 2b:** Excerpt. *Review Covering Forty-five Years of Work of Brooklyn Howard Colored Orphan Asylum.* 1912. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.



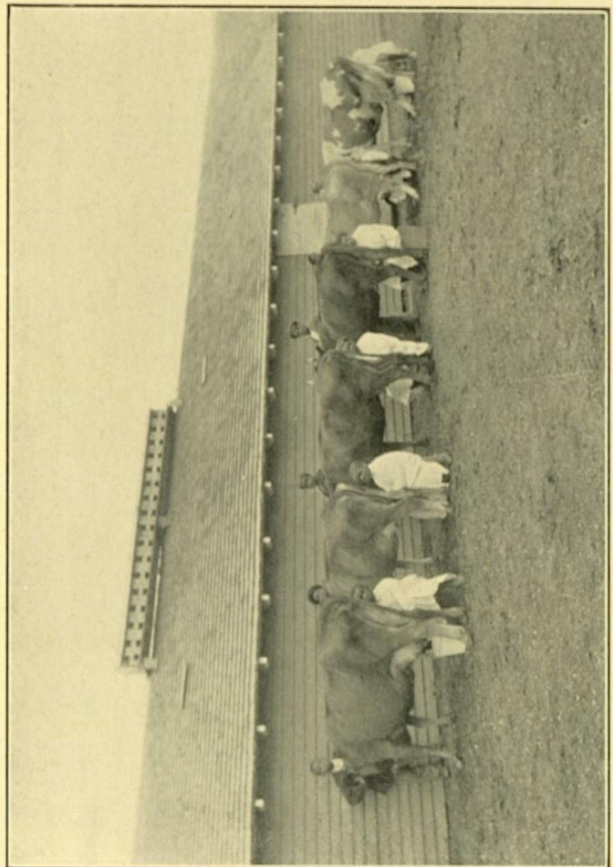
Cooking Class



Boys Separating Cream and Churning



Making Mats of Corn Shucks. Directed by Domestic Science Teacher



Boys Milking in Barn Yard

1. Describe the building in **Document 2a**.

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2. The building is the Howard Colored Orphan Asylum and it was located in Weeksville, a free black community in Brooklyn. What do you think the building was for and what types of rooms were inside the structure?

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3. Why do you think it was important to have the Howard Colored Orphan Asylum in Weeksville and not another neighborhood?

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4. What skills are the children practicing in **Document 2b**? Why do you think the children were practicing these specific skills?

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## FASHION

**Document 3a:** “Weeksville Bash at BAM.” 9 Sept 1973. Print. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.

*There are not many surviving images of the people who lived in Weeksville. The date that this photograph was taken is unknown, but it was most likely sometime in the 1840s.*



**Document 3b:** *Black History, A Celebration at the Brooklyn Museum.* 192-? Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.



1. Describe the person in **Document 3a**:

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2. Describe the people in **Document 3b**:

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3. **Document 3a** and **Document 3b** are pictures of previous Weeksville residents. What does their clothing tell you about the people who lived in this neighborhood?

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4. During this time in history there was not much difference between fashion for whites and fashion for blacks (though there was quite a difference between fashion for the rich and poor). Do you think African-Americans have a personal style today? Explain your answer.

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**Document 4:** Shabazz, Jamel. *Friends*. 1997. Print. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.





1. How would you describe the clothing worn by the young women in **Document 4**?

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2. Do you think people use clothes to express their personality more today than in the 1920s, less today than in the past, or the same today as in the past? Refer to **Document 3b** to compare and contrast.

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3. What aspects of the young women's outfits do people still wear today?

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4. What aspects of the young women's outfits do people no longer wear today?

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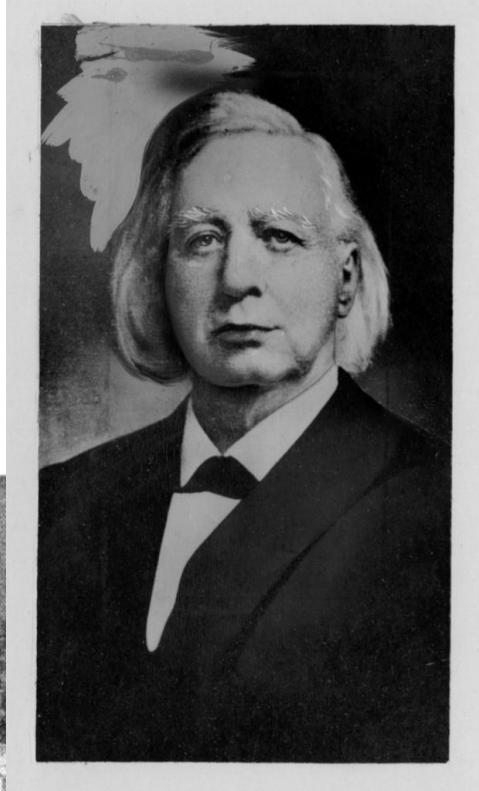
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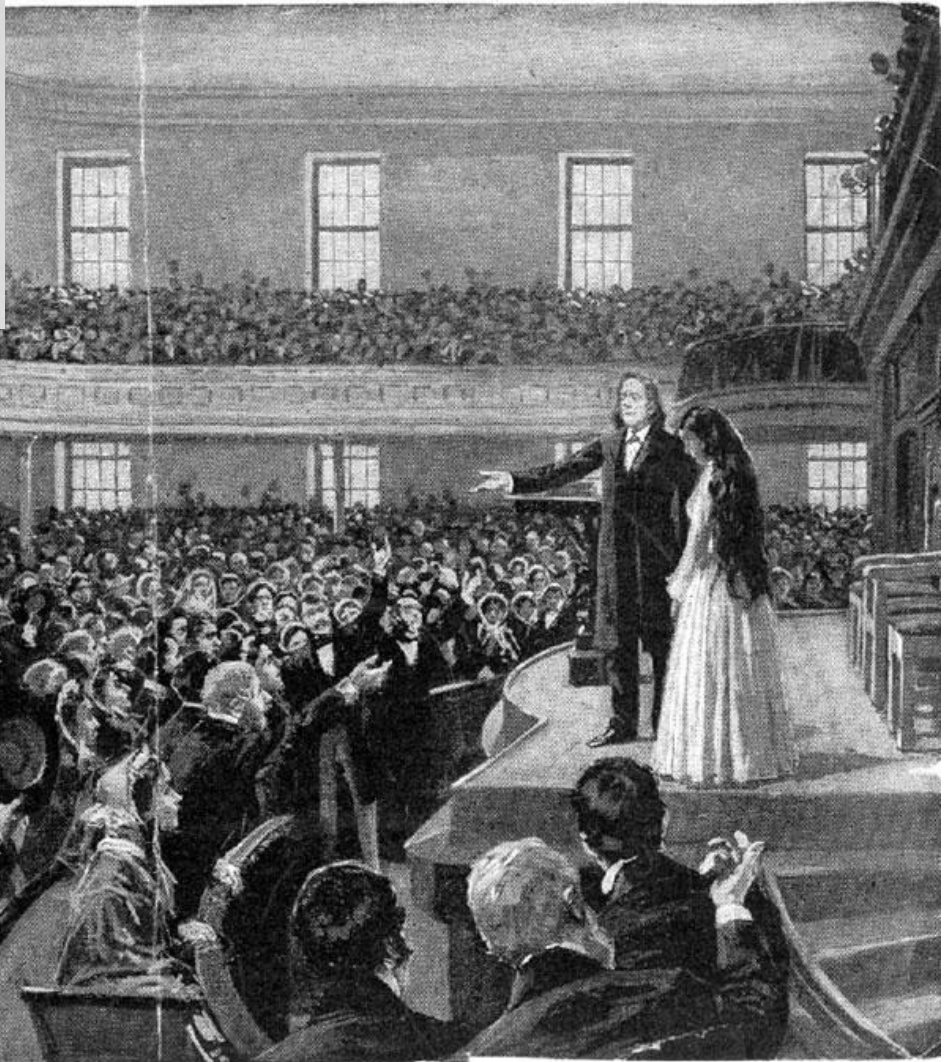
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## ADVOCACY

**Document 5a:** “Henry Ward Beecher.” 186-?. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.



**Document 5b:** “Mr. Beecher Selling a Beautiful Slave Girl In His Pulpit.” 1856. Print. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.



MR. BEECHER SELLING A BEAUTIFUL SLAVE GIRL IN HIS PULPIT.

1. Look at **Document 5b**. Make five observations about the scene depicted.

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2. The man on stage is Henry Ward Beecher, a **prominent** abolitionist and minister. Knowing that, what type of building do you think that these people are in and why do you think that?

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3. Mr. Beecher is “selling” a young enslaved woman to a northern audience. In fact, he is hosting an auction to raise money to support his abolitionist cause. The young woman was an ex-slave from the south. What specifically do you think Mr. Beecher might have used the money for?

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4. What are two questions you have about Henry Ward Beecher or his auctions?

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# Mrs. Chisholm Defeats Farmer, Is First Negro Woman in House

BY RICHARD L. MADDEN

Democrats won two nominally Republican House seats in New York City yesterday and also elected Mrs. Shirley Chisholm the first Negro woman member of Congress.

Mrs. Chisholm, the Democratic National Committeewoman from New York, defeated James L. Farmer, a former head of the Congress of Racial Equality and the Liberal-Republican candidate. She won by about a 2-to-1 margin in the newly drawn 12th Congressional District in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn.

For the first time since 1936, a Democrat—City Councilman Edward I. Koch—won in the 17th Congressional District on



The New York Times  
Mrs. Shirley Chisholm waiting for the tally yesterday.

Manhattan's East Side, which was represented by John V. Lindsay before his election as

Continued on Page 25, Column 6

A new House seat was at stake in the race between Mrs. Chisholm and Mr. Farmer. The new district, the 12th Congressional District in Brooklyn, was drawn by the Legislature last year and takes in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section, one of the nation's largest Negro slums.

Mrs. Chisholm, who campaigned as an "unbought and unbossed" candidate, spent four years in the state Assembly and last August was elected as the Democratic National Committeewoman from New York State.

1. Read **Document 6**. Summarize the main event of the article in two or three sentences, using your own words.

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2. Why was the election of Shirley Chisholm significant?

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3. What section of Brooklyn did Shirley Chisholm represent?

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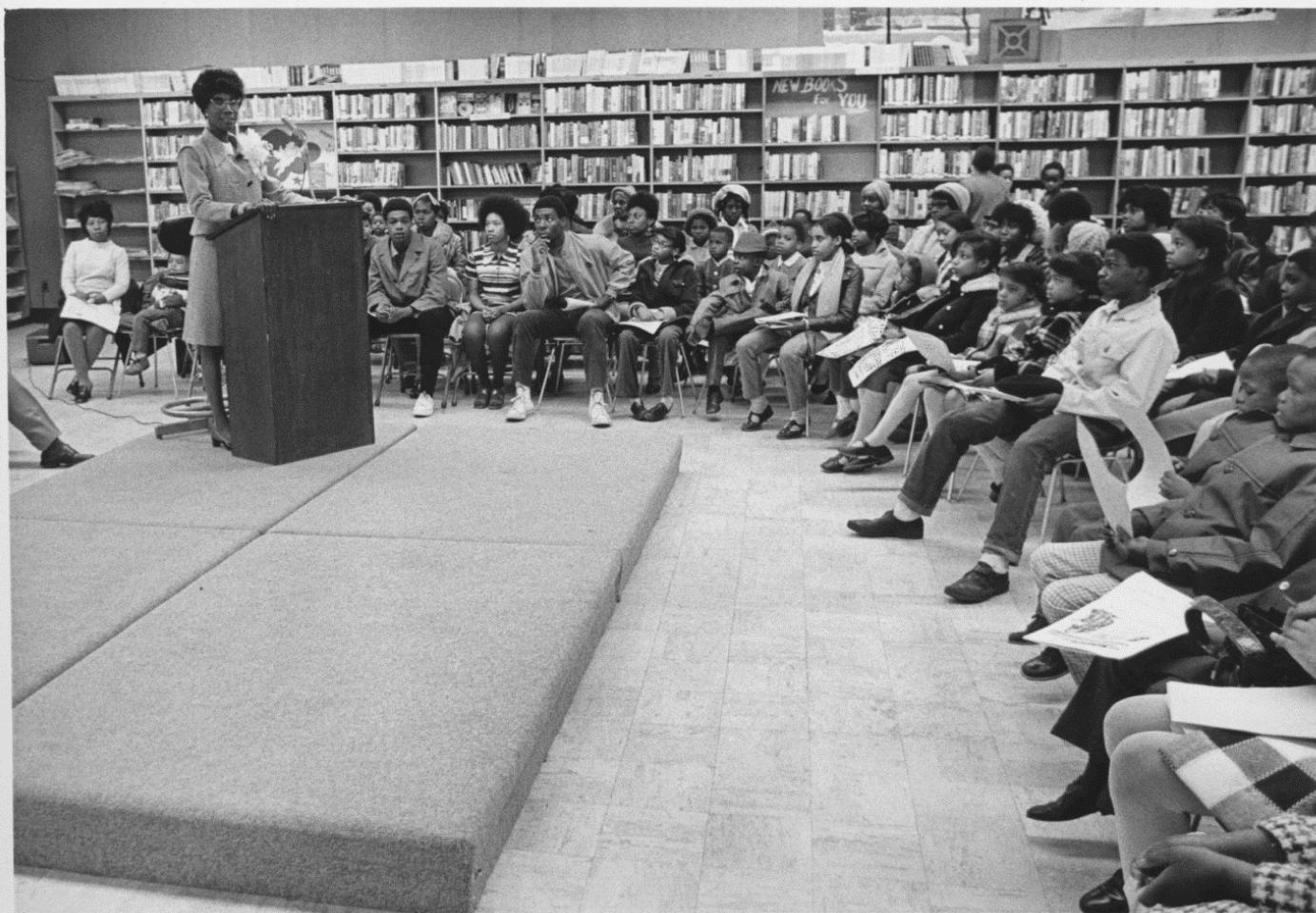
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**Document 7:** *Brower Park Branch*. 1970. Brooklyn Public Library, Brooklyn Collection.



1. Describe the image in **Document 7**. What kinds of people do you see in this photo? What are they doing?

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2. **Document 7** depicts Shirley Chisholm speaking at the Brower Park Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library. What evidence proves that the photo was taken in a library?

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3. The Brower Park Branch is in Crown Heights close to the boarder of Bed-Stuy. Why do you think Shirley Chisholm thought it appropriate to speak at that branch?

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4. What do you think Shirley Chisholm was talking about in this photograph?

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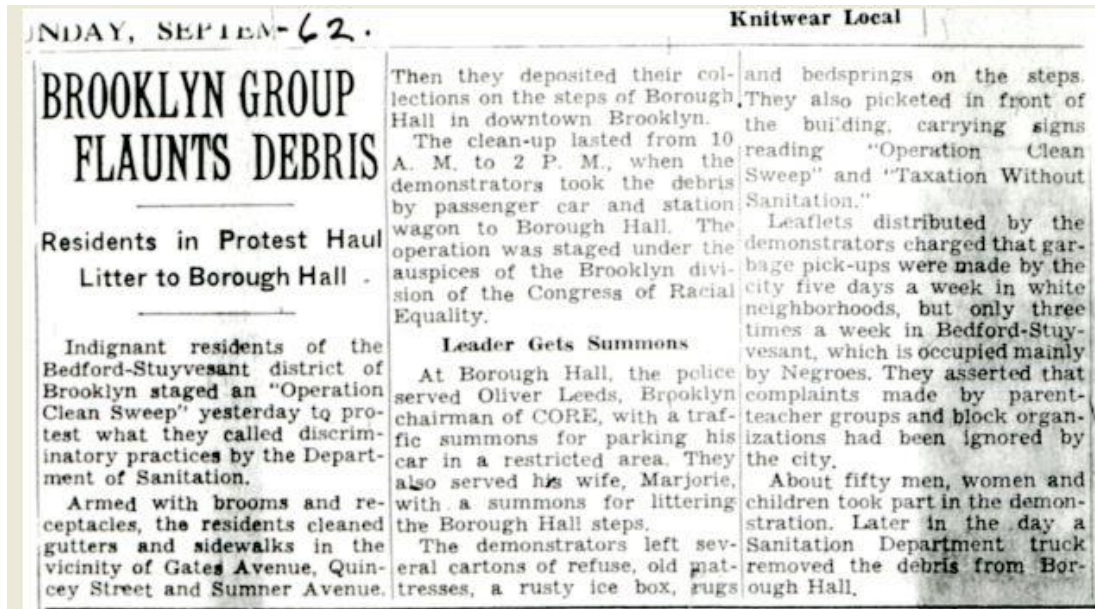
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**Document 8a:** "Operation Clean Sweep." 1962. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.





## BROOKLYN GROUP FLAUNTS DEBRIS

### Residents in Protest Haul Litter to Borough Hall

Indignant residents of the Bedford-Stuyvesant district of Brooklyn staged an "Operation Clean Sweep" yesterday to protest what they called discriminatory practices by the Department of Sanitation.

Armed with brooms and receptacles, the residents cleaned gutters and sidewalks in the vicinity of Gates Avenue, Quincy Street and Sumner Avenue. Then they deposited their collections on the steps of Borough Hall in downtown Brooklyn.

The clean-up lasted from 10 A.M. to 2 P. M., when the demonstrators took the debris by passenger car and station wagon to Borough Hall. The operation was staged under the auspices of the Brooklyn division of the Congress of Racial Equality.

### Leader Gets Summons

At Borough Hall, the police served Oliver Leeds, Brooklyn chairman of CORE, with a traffic summons for parking his car in a restricted area. They also served his wife, Marjorie, with a summons for littering the Borough Hall steps.

The demonstrators left several cartons of refuse, old mattresses, a rusty ice box, rugs, and bedsprings on the steps. They also picketed in front of the building carrying signs reading "Operation Clean Sweep" and "Taxation Without Sanitation."

Leaflets distributed by the demonstrators charged that garbage pickups were made by the city five days a week in white neighborhoods, but only three times a week in Bedford-Stuyvesant, which is occupied mainly by Negroes. They asserted that complaints made by parent-teacher groups and block organizations had been ignored by the city.

About fifty men, women, and children took part in the demonstration. Later in the day a Sanitation Department truck removed the debris from Borough Hall.

1. Describe the images depicted in **Document 8a**. Be specific.

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2. According to **Document 8b**, who organized Operation Clean Sweep?

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3. What was Operation Clean Sweep?

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4. Why did the people who organized Operation Clean Sweep feel it was necessary?

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5. What would it feel like to live in a neighborhood where trash piled up outside of your home?

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## CULTURE

**Document 9:** Sulcas, Roslyn. “Traditional and Modern Moves and the Links Between Them.” *New York Times* 30 May 2010.

### **Traditional and Modern Moves and the Links Between Them**

Was I the only one, I wondered, as I raced up the aisle at the end of DanceAfrica, who did not want to greet three people I didn’t know; who did not want to hold hands with aforementioned strangers; and who now had to flee in order to avoid repeating “I am fabulous” after the show’s founder, Chuck Davis?

Everyone except me was fabulous on Friday night at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, where Mr. Davis was winding the delighted crowd around his little finger. Mr. Davis’s showmanship is a time-honored part of DanceAfrica, a festival that for 33 years has drawn thousands of people each Memorial Day weekend to its dance performances, films, exhibitions and a popular outdoor bazaar.

Appearing at various **junctions** to welcome the audience and introduce the show’s rituals (the procession of the Elders, the moving memorial to those “who have made the transition to the ancestral grounds,” the necessary thank yous), the tall, robed Mr. Davis displayed effortless charisma and a relaxed, intimate manner that made the audience feel like part of a charmed inner circle.

They know the drill. Mr. Davis can’t get through a sentence without repeating, “Ago!” (“Can I have your attention” in a Ghanaian language), to which the crowd readily responds “Ameel!” (“You have my attention”).

That the dancing was good came as a marvelous bonus to the we-are-one experience. Mr. Davis is adept at composing programs that balance traditional dance with a more contemporary use of traditions. This time the Pamodzi Dance Troupe from Zambia and the hip-hop group Illstyle & Peace Productions from Philadelphia stood at opposite ends of the spectrum, with the Dallas Black Dance Theater and the BAM/Restoration DanceAfrica Ensemble somewhere in the middle.

Both the Dallas company, in Mr. Davis’s “Renewed Legacy: A Simple Prayer,” and the DanceAfrica Ensemble, in two pieces by Karen Thornton-Daniels (based on dances from Guinea), offered appealing, high-energy performances. But both felt more **generic** than the intriguing set of dances by the Pamodzi troupe. These showed coming-of-age and courtship rituals, as well as healing and social dances, and were accompanied by 11 drummers (including the director, Prince Flevian Menya Lamba), who gave performances of rhythmic intensity that were at least as gripping as the full-bodied dance.

You could also see the way hip-hop draws on these African dance elements — the high energy, through-the-body movement, the shimmering undulations of hips and torso — in the work of Illstyle, directed by Brandon (Peace) Albright, the show-stopping final group.

The ensemble’s 11 men displayed some of the most dazzling breaking techniques I’ve ever seen, while Mr. Albright’s choreography possessed a sly humor and an adept sense of spatial composition. Watching these dancers was like watching the greatest ballet virtuosos, each fighting gravity and the appearance of effort, and demanding and getting the impossible from the human body. They were fabulous.

1. According to **Document 9**, what is DanceAfrica?

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2. What type of dances and activities might you find at DanceAfrica?

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3. In what ways does the article state that hip-hop draw from African dance?

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4. Do you think it is important that people explore their cultural roots? Why or why not?

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**Document 10:** *Dance Africa Festival*. 2014. Brooklyn Academy of Music.





1. Describe the advertisement shown in **Document 10**.

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2. What types of activities and events are publicized on the advertisement?

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3. What changes would you make the advertisement if you had designed it? Or, if you would make no changes, explain why not.

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4. Describe a cultural celebration you've attended. What did it feel like to be there? If you have not attended an event, describe an event that you might be interesting to attend.

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**Document 11a:** Shabazz, Jamel. *West Indian Day Parade*. 1998.  
**Document 11b:** Shabazz, Jamel. *Prospect Park*. No date.



1. Describe the outfits worn by the women in **Document 11a**.

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2. Describe the outfit worn by the woman in **Document 11b**.

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3. These images are from the West Indian Day Parade. Do you think cultural parades are important? Why or why not?

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4. The West Indian Day Parade is one of New York's most popular parades. Why do you think that might be?

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## GLOSSARY

**Asylum** - An institution offering shelter and support to people

**Bias** - Prejudice in favor of or against one thing

**Discrimination** – Treating someone different based on a characteristic like race or religion

**Generic** – Not specific

**Inhospitable** – Unable to sustain life, not quality land

**Juncture** – A point in time

**Prominent** – Prominent, famous

**Sasaparilla** – A plant used to make root beer or tea

**Shanty** – A poorly constructed house

**Summons** – A ticket

**Terrain** – The physical features of a stretch of land