



**Fort Totten was:** <sup>1</sup> Jewish neighborhood with no diversity; <sup>2</sup> once considered Washington County, inhabited rural area in farms and undeveloped organized in 1871 to form D.C.; <sup>3</sup> the Fort Totten community was initially protected from black encroachment by racial restrictive covenants (overturned in May 1948) and <sup>4</sup> feeling unwelcomed.

However, memories of the F.A.N. club interviewees felt that the Fort Totten community was a very special place to grow-up. It's nestled between Fort Totten Park, Old Soldier's Home and the Rock Creek Cemetery. Many referred to it as "utopia, suburbia, a village and an island". 🌿

As a product of Fort Totten, Jules Johnson and I wanted to tell the truths of our childhood fun and the history of African Americans in the 1950s beginning to enjoy the equal opportunity of purchasing homes in the community developed by Morris Cafritz.

- 2011 ~ We met at the PG County Library on September 19<sup>th</sup> and the idea was born
- 2017 ~ I received an email from Marion Woodfork Simmons written on my birth date March 10 to AAHGS members about oral history training and funding opportunities for individuals with family in DC to partner with DCOHC to conduct interviews.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> interviewee – Arnetta Missy Barnes, DC native, 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin, 94 years young shares OH
  - Missy's father, Frank worked at Hotel Harrington when he passed in 1925 and in her possession was the original 1925 bereavement donation list on the hotel letterhead with the address 11<sup>th</sup> & E St NW which still is within of walking distance to the Foggy Bottom area.
- 2018 ~ After a 7 year hiatus and on a whim, I put in for a DCOHC grant detailing what was envisioned back in 2011 and the powers to be or serendipity itself 🤔 I was awarded the grant 🙌

Through the journey, we were able to create a network of friends and neighbors who wanted to share their untold life experiences of living in Fort Totten and to-date the collection totals 20 oral histories and still growing. Even more exciting was to end the project with a community celebration at The Modern at Art Place thanks to the Cafritz Foundation the owners and descendants of the developer, Morris Cafritz.

**Learned:** It's a given, you as family researchers have a story to tell 😊

Remember U ARE CHOSEN TO DO WHAT U DO 🙏 and genealogy is a life journey. It takes memories, a F.A.N. club and a team of resources to pull it off. 🤍

### Resources:

- 📍 NPS Fort Totten Then and Now  
<https://www.nps.gov/cwdw/learn/photosmultimedia/then-and-now-pictures-of-the-civil-war-defenses-of-washington.htm>
- 📺 Fitting Times <https://youtu.be/w9IMhK3Xafo>
- 📺 Keep the Story [https://youtu.be/\\_JWDc1FFRsk](https://youtu.be/_JWDc1FFRsk) (Held @ The Modern at Art Place owned by Cafritz Foundation)
- 📖 Chocolate City – A history of race and democracy in the nation's capital by Chris Myers Asch and George Derek Musgrove
- 📖 Lost Farms and Estates of Washington, D.C. by Kim Prothro Williams
- 📄 DigDC <http://digdc.dclibrary.org> (repository for DC oral history projects)
- Wikipedia [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_Department\\_of\\_State](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_State)

