

A documentary by  
Natasha Florentino & Tamara Gubernat

Third World Newsreel  
545 8th Ave., 10th Fl, New York, NY 10018  
(212) 947-9277 ext. 17, [distribution@twm.org](mailto:distribution@twm.org), [www.twm.org](http://www.twm.org)

# Rezoning Harlem: The Battle over Harlem's Future

A documentary by  
Natasha Florentino &  
Tamara Gubernat  
2008, 40 min

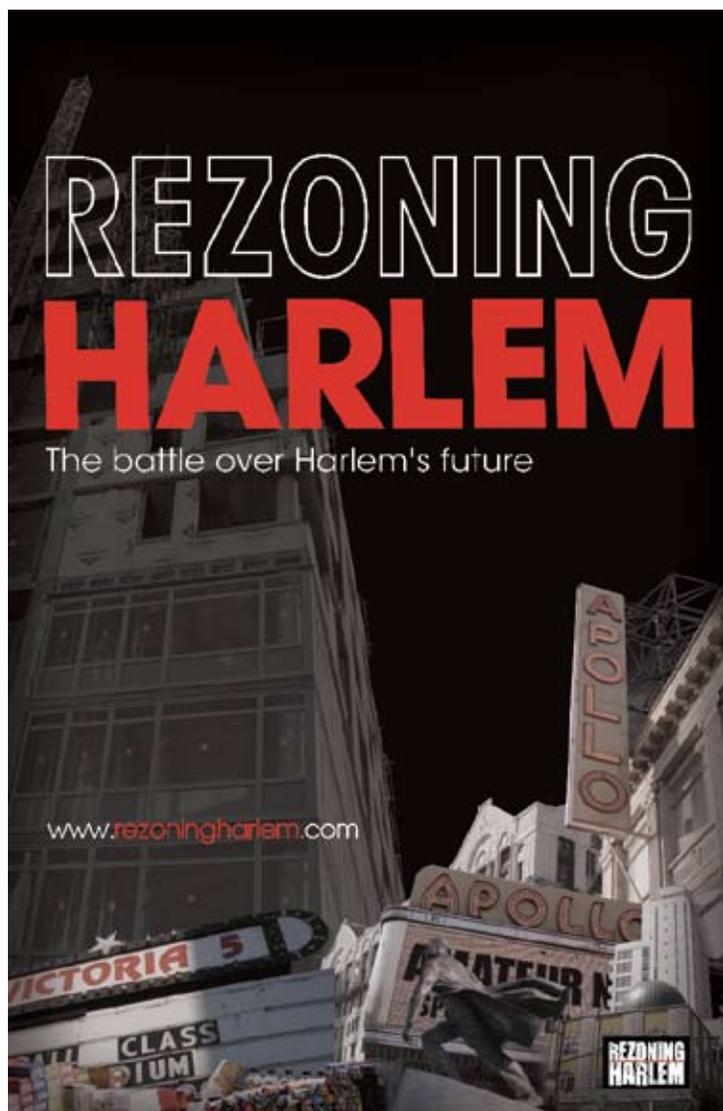
## SHORT SYNOPSIS

*Rezoning Harlem* follows longtime members of the Harlem community as they fight a 2008 rezoning that threatens to erase the history and culture of their legendary neighborhood and replace it with luxury housing, offices, and big-box retail. A shocking exposé of how a group of ordinary citizens, passionate about the future of their treasured community, are systematically shut out of the city's decision-making process, revealing New York City's broken public review system.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

Since 2002, more than 100 rezonings have been signed into law in New York City, including the rezoning of 125th Street in Harlem.

*Rezoning Harlem* follows longtime members of the Harlem community as they fight a 2008 rezoning that threatens to erase the history and culture of their legendary neighborhood and replace it with luxury housing, offices, and big-box retail. A shocking exposé of how a group of ordinary citizens, passionate about the future of their treasured community, are systematically shut out of the city's decision-making process, revealing New York City's broken public review system. This film provides a behind the scenes view of how policy affects gentrification, resulting in homogenous neighborhoods devoid of character.



Maysles Cinema, NY, 2008

Hitting the Streets Screening, Hunter College, NY, 2008

Is Gentrification a Dirty Word? Urban Studies Symposium, LaGuardia College, NY, 2008

Gentrification Film Series, Lehman College, NY, 2009

Brecht Forum, NY, 2009

Grassroots Justice Festival Film Series, Brooklyn Workers Center, NY



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## REVIEWS

"The film succeeds wonderfully in portraying the passion of grassroots activists from Harlem as well as revealing the machinations of local government and the power wielded by property developers over elected officials. I believe that *Rezoning Harlem* is especially useful in helping the students to think of themselves as potential social change activists."

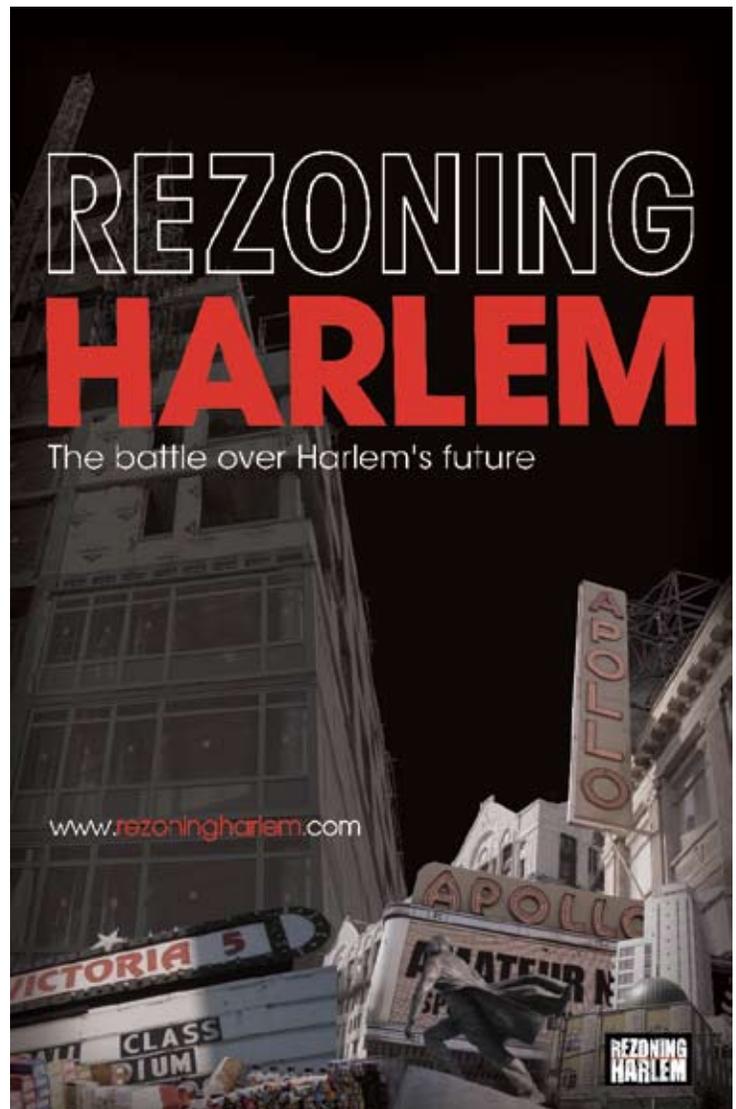
- Professor Abigail Schoneboom, LaGuardia Community College

"*Rezoning Harlem* is an excellent educational resource for academic, community and professional audiences. Too often zoning and urban planning issues are explained in a dull and boring format. This film deconstructs a complex zoning issue in a way that enlightens, clarifies and electrifies. It will be valuable to those who are far from Harlem and New York City because it sheds light on the critical debates that confront all urban communities."

- Professor Tom Angotti, Hunter College and Author of *New York For Sale*

"*Rezoning Harlem* is a rich visual text that explores the linkages between rezoning, gentrification and displacement."

- Professor Lily M. Hoffman, City College of New York, CUNY



## FILMMAKERS' STATEMENT

"The 125th Street rezoning was an intense time line; we were uptown in Harlem, we were downtown at City Planning and City Hall, talking to as many people as we could and filming as much as possible. We worked closely with community members and urban planners to unravel the often cryptic planning language and navigate through the various steps in the city's land use process. We focused on historic preservation, small businesses, housing and displacement, height limits, the connection between the real estate industry and politics, and the over-arching theme: the community of Harlem that was left out of the planning process."



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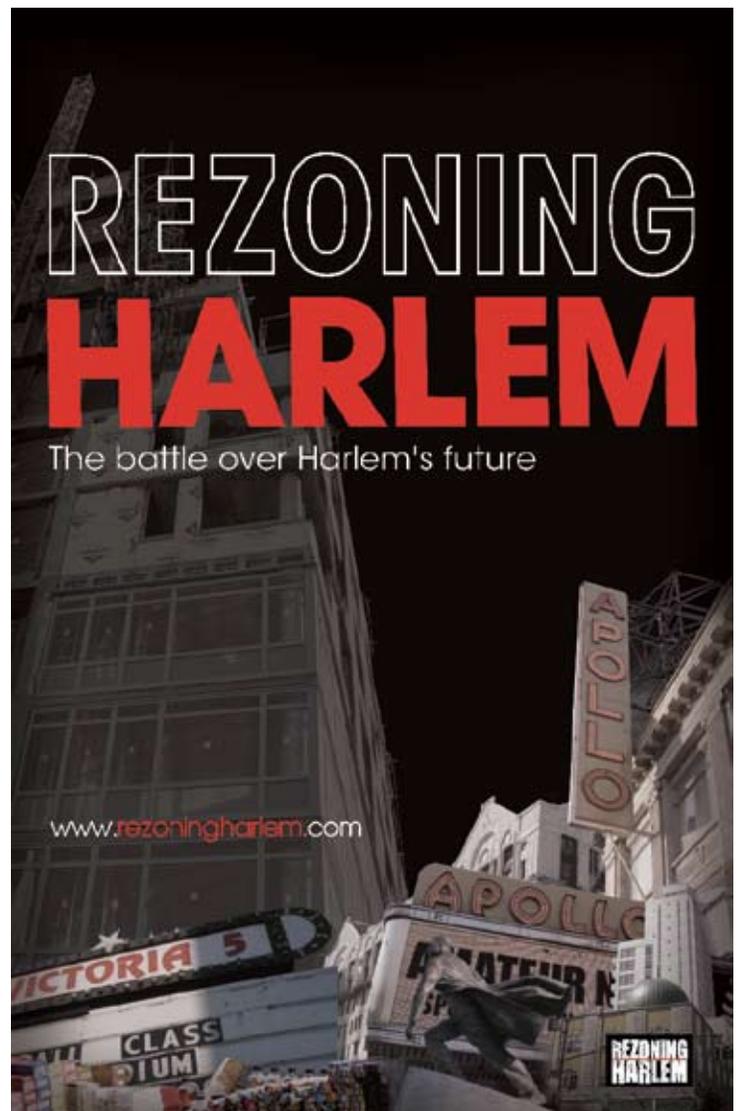
## BIOS

**Natasha Florentino** (Co-Director/Producer/D.P.) is an independent documentary filmmaker. Natasha's films strive to capture the strength and resiliency of communities who have come up against enormous odds. She has spent the last 4 years directing and producing documentaries about the struggle of Harlem activists fighting a threatening rezoning, Bronx residents negotiating with a powerful developer for a community benefits agreement and an NGO working with children in a slum area of Port Au Prince, Haiti. Her most recent project is about a native Hawaiian community's efforts to reverse the ecological damage inflicted on the island of Moloka'i by corporate agriculture. Natasha's work confronts community development issues and the often-conflicting intersection between private interests and community needs. Natasha graduated from the City of New York's Hunter College in 2003 with a degree in Film & Media Studies and is currently an MFA candidate in the Integrated Media Arts program at Hunter College.

**Tamara Gubernat** (Co-Director/Producer/Editor) is a documentary filmmaker, artist and activist born and raised in Brooklyn, NY. Tamara's creative process involves documenting personal geographies within the constantly changing social and physical landscapes of New York City. Experiencing the drastic shifts in her neighborhood brought on by the Greenpoint and Williamsburg Rezoning, Tamara set out to demystify urban planning and policy to empower individuals to take proactive roles in shaping their communities. Tamara's upcoming film, *Voice of the Community* examines the current state of community boards, New York City's existing framework for citizen participation in city government.

**Juliana Alzate** (Co-Producer) received a B.A. in Landscape Architecture and M.A. in Urban Design at the City College of New York. She currently works as a designer in a Landscape Architecture firm, where she creates outdoor spaces that are environmentally conscious and at the same time beautiful and enjoyable.

**Pamela Nichols** (Co-Producer) holds a Masters Degree in Urban Affairs from Hunter College. She has worked with the City of New York for 20 years, of which 14 were at the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and 6 at the Department for the Aging. Throughout the years, Pamela has assisted non-profit organizations with their contracts as well as countless tenants, homeowners, and senior citizens with their issues and inquiries.



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## CREDITS

Directors/Producers: Natasha Florentino, Tamara Gubernat

Co-Producers: Juliana Alzate, Pamela Nichols

Narrator: Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts

Editor: Tamara Gubernat

Director of Photography: Natasha Florentino

Production Assistants: Juliana Alzate, Pamela Nichols

Map/Graphics: Juliana Alzate

Special Thanks: Julius Tajiddin

Special Thanks: Coalition to Save Harlem, VOTE People, Harlem Tenants Council

Special Thanks: Kelly Anderson, Tom Angotti, Renato Tonelli, Hunter College Integrated Media Arts

Special Thanks: Michael Henry Adams, Stuart Ewen, Ava Farkas, Tomasz Gubernat, Andre Lambertson, Abdul Karen Mohamed, Beatrice Sibbles, Monique "Ndigo" Washington, Christopher Williams



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