

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY SERIES (*continued*)

**Making Race Visible: Literary Research for Cultural Understanding**

STUART GREENE & DAWN AUST-PERKINS, EDS.

**The Child as Critic: Developing Literacy through Literature, K-8, Fourth Edition**

GLENN A. SIOAN

**Room for Talk: Teaching and Learning in a Multilingual Kindergarten**

REBEKAH FASSLER

**Give Them Poetry! A Guide for Sharing Poetry with Children K-8**

GLENN A. SIOAN

**The Brothers and Sisters Learn to Write: Popular Literacies in Childhood and School Cultures**

ANNE HAAS DYSON

**"Just Playing the Part": Engaging Adolescents in Drama and Literacy**

CHRISTOPHER WORTHMAN

**The Testing Trap: How State Writing Assessments Control Learning**

GEORGE HILLOCKS, JR.

**School's Out! Bridging Out-of-School Literacies with Classroom Practice**

GLYNDA HILL & KATHERINE SCHULTZ, EDS.

**Reading Lives: Working-Class Children and Literacy Learning**

DEBORAH HICKS

**Inquiry Into Meaning: An Investigation of Learning to Read, Revised Edition**

EDWARD CHITTENDEN & TERRY SALINGER, WITH ANNE M. BUSSIS

**"Why Don't They Learn English?" Separating Fact from Fallacy in the U.S. Language Debate**

LUCY TSE

**Conversational Borderlands: Language and Identity in an Alternative Urban High School**

BETSY RYMIS

**Inquiry-Based English Instruction**

RICHARD BRACH & JAMIE MYERS

**The Best for Our Children: Critical Perspectives on Literacy for Latino Students**

MARIA DE LA LUZ REYES & JOHN J. HALCÓN, EDS.

**Language Crossings**

KAREN L. OGULNICK, ED.

**What Counts as Literacy?**

MARGARET GALEGO & SANDRA HOLLINGSWORTH, EDS.

**Beginning Reading and Writing**

DOROTHY S. STRICKLAND & LESLEY M. MORROW, EDS.

**Reading for Meaning**

BARBARA M. TAYLOR, MICHAEL E. GRAVES, & PAUL VAN DEN BROEK, EDS.

**Writing in the Real World**

ANNE BEAUFORT

**Young Adult Literature and the New Literary Theories**

ANNA O. SOTER

**Literacy Matters**

ROBERT P. YAGELSKI

**Children's Inquiry**

JUDITH WELLS LINDFORS

**Close to Home**

JUAN C. GUERRA

**Authorizing Readers**

PETER J. RABINOWITZ & MICHAEL W. SMITH

**On the Brink:**

SUSAN HYND

**Life at the Margins**

JULIE MERRIFIELD, ET AL.

**Literacy for Life**

HANNA ARLENE FINGERET & CASSANDRA DRENNON

**The Book Club Connection**

SUSAN I. MCMAHON & TAFFY E. RAPHAEL, EDS., WITH VIRGINIA J. GOATLEY & LAURA S. PARDO

**Until We Are Strong Together**

CAROLINE E. HELLER

**Restructuring Schools for Linguistic Diversity**

OFELIA B. MIRAMONTES, ADEL NADBAU, &

NANCY L. COMBES

**Writing Superheroes**

ANNE HAAS DYSON

**Opening Dialogue**

MARTIN NYSTRAND, ET AL.

**Just Girls**

MARGARET J. FINDERS

**The First R**

MICHAEL E. GRAVES, PAUL VAN DEN BROEK, & BARBARA M. TAYLOR, EDS.

**Exploring Blue Highways**

JOSEPH ALLEN, MARILYN CARY, & LISA DELGADO

**Envisioning Literature**

JUDITH A. LANGER

**Teaching Writing as Reflective Practice**

GEORGE HILLOCKS, JR.

**Talking Their Way into Science**

KAREN GALLAS

**Whole Language Across the Curriculum**

SHERLEY C. RAINES, ED.

**Dramatizing Literature in Whole Language Classrooms, Second Edition**

JOHN WARREN STEWIG & CAROL BUEGE

**The Languages of Learning**

KAREN GALLAS

**Partners in Learning**

CAROL LYONS, GAY SU PINNELL, & DIANE DEFORD

**Social Worlds of Children Learning to Write in an Urban Primary School**

ANNE HAAS DYSON

**Inside/Outside**

MARILYN COCHRAN-SMITH & SUSAN L. LYTLE

**Whole Language Plus**

Courtney B. Cazden

**Learning to Read**

G. BRIAN THOMPSON & TOM NICHOLSON, EDS.

**Engaged Reading**

JOHN T. GUTHRIE & DONNA E. ALVERMANN

# Harlem on Our Minds

## PLACE, RACE, AND THE LITERACIES OF URBAN YOUTH

Valerie Kinloch

Foreword by Jabari Mahiri

Afterword by Edmund W. Gordon



Teachers College  
Columbia University  
New York and London

Published by Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027

Copyright © 2010 by Teachers College, Columbia University

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission from the publisher.

The author wishes to express gratitude for use from the following:

"Take A Stand," written in 1996 by Geoffrey Canada and originally published on the Harlem Children's Zone Web site (<http://www.hcz.org/what-is-hcz/about-geoffrey-canada>). Copyright © 1996. Used by permission of Geoffrey Canada and the Hcz.

Some of Chapter 4 appeared in different form in "The White-ification of the Hood: Power, Politics, and Youth Performing Narratives of Community" by Valerie Kinloch, *Language Arts*, 85(1), September 2007. Copyright © 2007. Used by permission of the National Council of Teachers of English.

Some of Chapter 5 appeared in different form in "Youth Representations of Community, Art, and Struggle in Harlem" by Valerie Kinloch, *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education Journal*, 116, 2007. Copyright © 2007. Used by permission of the author and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Kinloch, Valerie, 1974–

Harlem on our minds : place, race, and the literacies of urban youth / Valerie Kinloch ; foreword by Jabari Mahiri ; afterword by Edmund W. Gordon

p. cm. — (Language and literacy series)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8077-5023-0 (pbk. : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-0-8077-5024-7 (hardcover : alk. paper) 1. Literacy—Social aspects—New York (State)—New York—Case studies. 2. Urban youth—Education—New York (State)—New York—Case studies. 3. Urban youth—New York (State)—New York—Social conditions—Case studies. 4. Gentrification—New York (State)—New York—Case studies. 5. Blacks—Race identity—New York (State)—New York—Case studies. 6. Harlem (New York, N.Y.)—Social conditions—21st century. I. Title.

LC153.N48K56 2010

302.2'244097471—dc22

2009031105

ISBN 978-0-8077-5023-0 (paperback)

ISBN 978-0-8077-5024-7 (hardcover)

Printed on acid-free paper

Manufactured in the United States of America

17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*I dedicate this book to Phillip and Khaleeq, two young men whose literacy lives are reflected—however much partial and incomplete—throughout this book. Their stories, lived experiences, and search for answers have greatly enhanced my understanding of literacy, community, and struggle. May this work honor their literacy experiences as their experiences have enriched my own life.*

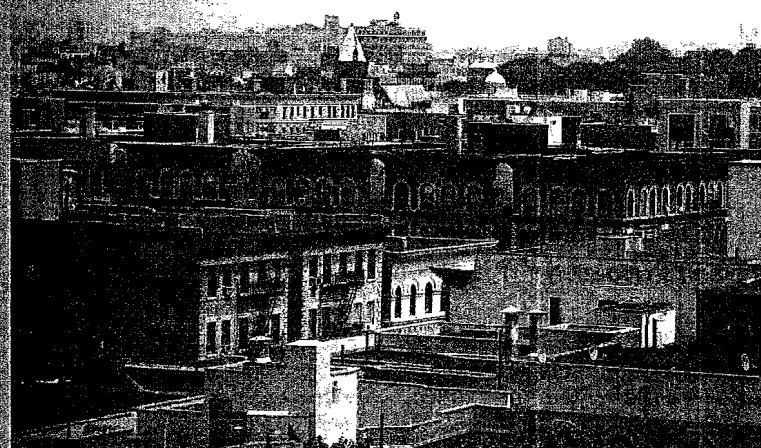
my aunts, uncles, cousins, and other family members and friends, I say thank you for the continued support and encouragement.

To Tom, thank you for your patience, love, and critical feedback. Thanks for encouraging the work that I do and the goals that I have, especially the ones yet to be accomplished. You are an amazing man.

And to the readers of this book, thank you in advance for your comments and suggestions. I hope the various youth and adult literacy narratives included here are as inspiring to you as they are to me.

## **The Apollo, the Cotton Club, and a Lot of Blues**

### *The Making of Harlem's New Literacies*



It was not by accident that my high school students and I discovered New York City's Harlem, or that it discovered us. The first time I actually visited this historic community was in the summer of 1996. I had just graduated with a degree in English from Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina, was preparing for graduate school in the fall, and was working as a youth program counselor for the Upward Bound and Bridge programs. That summer, the administrators of the Bridge Program in Charlotte had decided to take our graduating high school seniors to New York City. When the seniors were told the news, there was utter joy. Hearts pounded, smiles widened, and excitement filled the air. They were going to New York City and I was going to be a witness, an observer, and a

participant in this first experience for them and for me. We were all overjoyed that the community we had read about in the Black Literature course that I had facilitated the year before was going to welcome us with a warm embrace. Even more, we were curious to leave our Southern dwellings behind, however temporarily, to be bombarded with what we considered to be Harlem's famous entertainment venues. These included the world-renowned Apollo Theater on West 125th Street and its amateur night performances, and the popular Cotton Club, which was originally located at 142nd Street and Lenox Avenue and named the Club Deluxe, but which has since been re-created on West 125th Street. At each entertainment venue, countless African American artists entertained audiences with their music of love, pain, and survival.

We were also eager to be present in the same spaces that poet Langston Hughes, activist Malcolm X, author Ralph Ellison, political leader Adam Clayton Powell Jr., and legions of other Harlemites—artists, educators, leaders, and local residents—called their first or second home. For all of us, we had finally arrived at the birthplace of the Harlem Renaissance and one of the hotbeds of the Civil Rights and Black Arts movements in the United States. I can still hear my high school student Lamar whispering in my ear the famously popular line, "It's show time at the Apollo," as beautiful Black women, men, and children waited in line to enter this historic emblem of Black pride, talent, and dreams. As soon as Lamar said that line, he looked at me with starry eyes: "We are in Harlem." Indeed, we were in Harlem, standing in line to enter the Apollo Theater that we had come to know and love from our 17- and 24-inch television sets. My students and I were in Harlem, and Harlem was in us. We walked 125th Street wondering what life had been like when Malcolm X was a political force in this community. We wondered if Langston Hughes had fallen in love with Harlem as quickly as we had, and I wanted to know where Duke Ellington had walked on a Sunday afternoon or a Monday morning. Where in Harlem did Black jazz musicians perform? How did Louis Armstrong get his first Harlem debut? What and how were Paul Robeson's experiences with his White classmates at the Law School at Columbia University? We wanted to know about these experiences that had paved the way for us—young, Black Southerners wishing upon a star and falling into Harlem. We needed to know.

Years after this first visit to Harlem, I researched more deeply the many other lives that shaped this community into a mecca of Black life and culture: W. E. B. DuBois, James Weldon Johnson, Marcus Garvey, Charles Mingus, Lena Horne, Arturo Schomburg, and Zora Neale Hurston. There were also Nella Larson, Claude McKay, Josephine Baker, Fats Waller, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, A. Philip Randolph, June Jordan, and many, many

others. I can still recall entering, both as a high school student in Charleston, South Carolina, and later as a researcher in New York City's Harlem, various English language arts classes that had bulletin boards and walls decorated with pictures, quotes, and inspirational messages from Harlem greats: "the right to make my dreams come true" (Georgia Douglas Johnson); "hold fast to dreams" (Langston Hughes); "education is the passport to the future" (Malcolm X). I also became interested in the lives of local community members and activists with whom some of us may be unfamiliar: James H. Anderson, founder of *The New York Amsterdam News*; Benjamin J. Davis, editor of the *Negro Liberator* and city councilman who represented Harlem after Adam Clayton Powell Jr., successfully ran for a congressional seat; Geoffrey Canada, president and CEO of the Harlem Children's Zone; Valerie Orridge, president of a Harlem tenants' association; and Nellie Hester Bailey, cofounder of the Harlem Tenants Council. Who were these people and what were their Harlem stories? What could they teach the next generation of Black Americans, including Lamar and the students in my class?

I had no idea that in 7 years after I first visited Harlem I would become a professor at Teachers College, Columbia University; work with students in two different high schools in Harlem; live in Harlem; and conduct a multiyear research project on gentrification and Harlem youth. I had always thought of Harlem as a significant place, even in my own youth as I sat on the front porch of my parents' small house in South Carolina, and even as I sat in my middle and high school English classes. I dreamed then of becoming an educator, wishing to be a part of a larger community and so desperately wanting to walk the streets of 125th, Lenox, and Malcolm X avenues and Riverside Drive. I always wanted to know more; I needed my students to experience more.

As a teenager in South Carolina, I would get lost in the pictures of Harlem and of Harlem literary greats that filled the insides of books in the local library. I stayed indoors to read the books I borrowed on the lives of famous African American artists, writers, educators, and politicians, which served as my escape from the scorching summer heat in Charleston. I, like many others, fell so much in love with the poetry of Langston Hughes that I wanted to write my own version of "I, Too, Sing America." Many years later, after numerous failed attempts, I wrote a first draft at the age of 19. In my high school English classes, the Harlem Renaissance seemed far removed from the South Carolina that I called home. But, in fact, the two places are intertwined in important ways that speak to the lives, dreams, and ambitions of many African and African American people, among many other people of color, throughout the Diaspora.

In New York City's Harlem, much like in various communities in South Carolina, segregation, discrimination, and the fight for civil rights for people

of color serve as hallmarks of local history. In both places, parents and community members deem education to be monumental. The presence of African and African American educators, principals, leaders, and active community members indicates a rich heritage and focus on education. Phillip, one of the Harlem youth you will meet in this book, penned a handwritten message on the cover of one of his notebooks that spoke to the significance of remembering this heritage in light of struggles. The message read: "Never forgetting our past and struggles!! Strength, power, Black people, Harlem." In many ways, this message echoed the sentiments of some of the students, residents, leaders, educators, and even family members with whom I have talked about the historical struggles and educational pursuits of African, African American, and other people of color. This message from Phillip's notebook and the sentiments from people with whom I have talked of hope—"We've come a long way" (Ms. L)—and perseverance—"The struggle is not over for us, so we'll continue fighting" (Orridge)—are essential to this book. What I did not know in 1996, when I first visited Harlem, was that we (the Bridge Program high school seniors, administrators, and myself) could never leave our Southern dwellings behind. New York City, and Harlem in particular, is overwhelmingly filled with Southern tendencies: from the Harlem residents who were either born in a Southern state or whose families still live there to the insignias on the sides of churches that denote a Southern presence in the community. However, those signs, along with many others, are being forgotten in public attempts to remake Harlem in what some refer to as "a second renaissance" and others call "gentrification." The struggle is indeed not over.

This book explores Harlem and its history and future through literacy research and sociocultural perspectives. I draw on the wisdom, literacy lives, and experiences of Harlem youth and adults who regularly question the meanings of community, civil rights, equal opportunity, and activism as they make sense of a new Harlem. This new Harlem, according to Phillip, the longtime youth participant described in this work, "don't include what we young people think about community and all the changes happening. Our voices are not in the conversation and we ain't talking about gentrification and struggle in school. See, our voices always go unheard. What's up with that?" Khaleeq, another youth participant, agreed. He insisted that the absence of youth perspectives on community and gentrification speaks to a larger, ongoing concern, "a complete conflict over what was here, and what is already coming here, and what residents—youth included—scared of. That's the possibility of being displaced from the only home some of us know."

Phillip's sentiments and Khaleeq's beliefs speak to an even larger concern with which I, as a teacher researcher and a person who deeply cares

about Harlem, continue to grapple: how the lived experiences of youth—urban youth in particular—represent literacy stories, or narratives, about place, struggle, and identity. Many times, these stories are not part of the work that students do in schools. In fact, the lived experiences of youth are often absent from the conversations that we, adults, have with youth in and about the community. Phillip and Khaleeq's narratives also challenged my earlier memories of and encounters in Harlem. In 1996, I was not thinking about gentrification and community change. I was not considering the significance of creating "parallel universes," so to speak, between youth literacy experiences in schools and the surrounding communities. Even more, I was not questioning the meanings, representations, and misrepresentations of Harlem as a mecca of Black life and culture.

I was, without a doubt, blinded by the stars in my eyes. Since then, I have begun to see more clearly as a result of listening to and documenting the literacy and community narratives of people who actually have a direct, intricate connection to Harlem. They include youth and adult residents as well as longtime local business owners and educators. What is really going on in Harlem? Why are the voices, perspectives, and literacy narratives of local youths, to echo both Phillip and Khaleeq, absent from debates over the gentrification of community? In what ways, if any, can a focus on gentrification in Harlem stimulate additional concerns for the lives of youth in countless urban communities across the United States who walk through, in front of, and around visible changes on their way to school, work, recreational centers, or home? What about their literacy lives, lives that are all too familiar with the streets, buildings, and local events that represent a distinctively rich literary, artistic, and political history for many of us? Where shall this story really begin?

## A SECOND BEGINNING

The chapters in this book take into account various factors that have made and continue to make Harlem a place of Black cultural practices. These factors, which I refer to as institutions, range from museums, storefronts and local theaters, community businesses, corner bodegas, churches, schools, and research libraries and centers to salons, barbershops, and afterschool and community daycare centers. They have always been and continue to be important markers in the community. Primarily occupied by people of African descent whose cultural and spiritual lives have transformed otherwise undesirable locations into cultural institutions, these spaces are invaluable aspects of the lived experiences and literacy lives of many people. By literacy lives, I am specifically referring to the ways in

True?

\*

Res  
Arc



which Black people's lives are heavily connected to cultural practices, activism, and rights movements, as well as community forms of education that value the power of written and oral words.

With these things in mind, the chapters included here attempt to engage in a number of interrelated tasks, including the following:

- An examination of a longstanding social, political, and geographic concern—that of urban gentrification in a community of color and its impact on youth literacies. This examination has implications for youth literacy across settings that include not only urban communities, but also rural and suburban communities in both local and global contexts.
- A discussion of how a focus on place connects youth struggles and identities in schools with activism in communities. This connection supports Cushman's (1996) research on visible distances between schools/universities and surrounding local communities.
- An inquiry into how youth literacy practices are influenced by a politics of place that is connected to local histories, discourses, and lived experiences. This inquiry can lead to innovative approaches for pre- and in-service teachers as they explore youth literacies across spaces and within school curricula. Specific approaches will be highlighted to demonstrate ways for teachers and researchers to work with youth around topics of place, race, identity, and writing in school and nonschool contexts.

The chapters, collectively, investigate how the lives and literacies of African American youth in Harlem are affected by public attempts to gentrify the community. They also examine connections between race and place by discussing how Harlem youth, teachers, longtime Black residents, and new White residents in the area view their role within the gentrification process. Such goals take me back to my own familial background in South Carolina and to tensions that I often confronted as a researcher in New York City and as a professor at Teachers College witnessing the beginnings of Columbia University's expansion efforts into Harlem. This political situation raised many concerns for my work with Harlem youth and teachers. These included debates over spatial ownership/sense of belonging, racial and economic implications of power and privilege, and meanings of displacement for poor and working-class Harlem residents.

As a young, uncertified teacher long before my venture to Harlem in the summer of 1996, I was caught in a struggle to define literacy, to put a name to it, to assign specific practices to it, and to locate it within various cultural practices of people of color. The problem with this struggle, as I

\*Struggled at defining literacy

chpt focus

political approach for kids

now see it, had everything to do with my limited approach to literacy, even in light of the multiple literacy experiences that were right in front of me. Living in South Carolina as the daughter of working-class parents—a retired truck driver (father) and a retired nurse (mother)—I was surrounded with multiple literacies. I sat with my father on the front porch as he read *The News and Courier* newspaper, examined local news pamphlets, and rewired a 12-inch-high and 10-inch-wide portable AM-FM radio that did not need to be rewired. I translated, when needed, his Southern Gullah-influenced talk to friends and strangers. I studied his expressive interactions with my mother, who methodically wrote her "to do lists" in the same 5- by 7-inch journal where she wrote out the household bills and grocery lists:

Prepare for meeting and read the daily message and scriptures  
Pay bills: Sears and JCPenney's accounts  
Buy bread, eggs, vegetables, milk, juice, and detergent  
Call Ruth, Catherine, Annie, and check on Dorothy [her sisters]

Along with reading her lists, my mother read magazines, novels, and catalogs, paying attention to how ideas were phrased and how the images told stories. It was obvious, at least to me if to no one else, that she wanted to be a teacher—an unfulfilled dream that she rarely talks about today. At the time, I did not realize I was observing literacies—acts, practices, and events in context. In our community, I listened to conversations that my mother had with relatives that were filled with patterns of code-switching; she easily moved, or shifted, between mainstream English and African American Language. I noticed my mother and father's interactions, often unnamed and not discussed, in segregated public spaces. And I listened to their stories of being denied access to particular "public" spaces because of their skin color and low socioeconomic status: "That building your cousin's getting married in," according to my mother, "Black people could never go inside. If we did, it was at night through the back door to clean up." Their engagements in the world of South Carolina have always paralleled the struggle for access to safety, equity, and opportunity of other people of color throughout the United States. Thus, my familial community in general, and my parents' lives in particular, critically inform my interest in location, community change, and literacies.

In many ways, the lives of my parents speak to the lives of the youth with whom I worked as a young teacher in North Carolina and a researcher in New York. The youth you will meet in the following pages are outspoken, witty, and committed to protecting their New York City communities. They oppose gentrification if it means displacement of community

residents, resources, and rituals. They curiously question gentrification if it means safer neighborhoods and more opportunities for local residents. As Phillip asked, "Why we have to have gentrification give us things we should already have based on the fact that we're human, we're people? Now come on, the answer for Harlem's gentrification? At whose expense?" Their conflict pointed to my own conflict with the gentrification of historically Black spaces—one that supports diverse public areas just as much as it supports the safeguarding of Black communities.

This conflict is often evident in my academic/professional lives. During my tenure as a professor at Teachers College, I felt caught between the local community's fight against gentrification and Columbia University's efforts to expand into Harlem, thus participating in its gentrification process. Often, I took the #1 train along Broadway Avenue from an uptown stop at either 207th or 145th Street. Every time the train left the underground tunnel at 135th Street and headed toward the outside platform at 125th Street, I would stare out the windows. Hanging from the Tuck-It-Away self-storage business on the westside of Broadway Avenue at 131st and 132nd Streets, and written in both English and Spanish, a large banner read, "Stop Columbia! We Won't Be Pushed Out!"

The president of Tuck-It-Away, Nicholas Sprayregen, has said that the storage business is the largest property in this West Harlem area known as Manhattanville, which is primarily occupied by Black and Hispanic residents. After a 4-year battle—and counting—against Columbia University, local businesses and residents have refused to move out in order for the university to expand further into Harlem, particularly into a 17-acre section of Manhattanville. Their refusal, in light of a past threat of eminent domain by the university, has caught the attention of local media (e.g., *The New York Daily News*, *The Post*, *The New York Times*, and *The New York Amsterdam News*). From banners that hang on the sides of businesses to organized rallies, marches, and demonstrations, local residents and business owners continue to voice their concerns about gentrification and the tensions between neighbors: Harlem and Manhattanville on the one hand with Morningside Heights and Columbia University on the other hand.

Together, these experiences—the train ride that exposed a message of "Stop Columbia," the voices of youth who questioned "the answer for Harlem's gentrification?", my parents' literacy practices, and my own conflicts over safeguarding Black communities—fuel the direction of this book. They speak to a need to account for the intersections of place, race, literacies, and community activism. They also speak to the ways in which I define literacy which has moved from a quite narrow to a much more expansive conception: as acts of, practices in, and activities around reading, writing, and speaking. In my post-1996 experiences, I now believe

implies  
on  
leads  
implies



that literacies, in addition to the aforementioned acts and practices, include a variety of media. These media—from oral language, multimodalities, to computer and visual literacies, and, among other things, performances—help us acquire voices and critical agencies. The recently released report from the James R. Squire Office of Policy Research (2007) titled "21st-Century Literacies: A Policy Research Brief" from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) elaborates on this way of seeing literacy. The report is attentive to how literacy occurs in and is influenced by diverse contexts. It opens with the following:

Global economies, new technologies, and exponential growth in information are transforming our society. . . . English/language arts teachers need to prepare students for this world with problem solving, collaboration, and analysis—as well as skills with word processing, hypertext, LCDs, Web cams, digital streaming podcasts, smartboards, and social networking software—central to individual and community success. New literacies are already becoming part of the educational landscape. (p. 1)

Although the increasing demands faced by English language arts teachers appear overwhelming, NCTE's report is significant. It insists that literacies, particularly in 21st-century contexts, can encourage people to have experiences with technology and multimedia texts, be connected to local and/or global communities, and work collaboratively with others to address defined problems. Twenty-first-century literacies can also encourage people to critically analyze, synthesize, and question information, and read, write, and critique words and the world (Freire, 1970/1997; Freire & Macedo, 1987).

This understanding of *literacies* is a wide and encompassing one. It relates well to the literacies of "old" and "new" Harlem that will be discussed in the youth stories of community presented in this book. With this definition, I am able to better understand the literacies that were always in front of me in South Carolina, that I observed while working with youth in the Harlem community and schools, and the literacies that contributed to the historical significance of Harlem and its cultural institutions.

### A THIRD BEGINNING

As with any project, especially ones filled with stories and narratives, there are always possibilities for multiple introductions, varied beginnings. In my third attempt at an introduction for this book, I offer an outline of the chapters to follow as a way to invite you, my readers, into an exploration of youth literacies and urban gentrification. The stories to be told, the