



Women of DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Robbie Garrison

Robbie Garrison considers herself a native of Queens even though she was born in South Carolina and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

After marrying jazz musician James Garrison in 1954, they moved to New York City, eventually settling in Queens with their three daughters in 1964. Ms. Garrison encountered workplace discrimination at Merrill Lynch, prompting her to join Seabury Press, the publishing house for the Episcopal Church.

Later, Ms. Garrison co-founded a successful book remainder business specializing in works by and about Black people. Despite eventual industry changes, Ms. Garrison remained dedicated to promoting literacy within her community. She became involved in various local organizations, including forming the Queens Community Civic Corporation in 1977, which still mediates landlord-tenant disputes and assists seniors and disabled individuals today.

Ms. Garrison's passion for history led her to co-chair and support initiatives such as reclaiming the Colored Cemetery of the Olde Towne of Flushing. The grounds are referred to today as the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground. Her advocacy garnered recognition from elected officials and community organizations. She was honored with numerous awards from organizations including Concerned African Americans of Flushing, NE Queens branch of the NAACP, and the Mid Queens Community Council.

For her advocacy and determination, Ms. Garrison received an Essence of Justice and Equality Award in 2014 and continued to be honored for her community service, including recognition from Queens Civic Congress in 2022. Her dedication extended to preserving the memory of Wilson Rantus, a 19th-century African American businessman, resulting in the establishment of the "Rantus Rock Garden" on the Queens College Campus in 2023.

Approaching her 89th birthday this year, Ms. Garrison remains actively involved with the Olde Towne of Flushing Burial Ground Conservancy and the Queens Historical Society to secure national historic site status for the burial ground, demonstrating her enduring commitment to community service and historical preservation.

***Robbie Garrison was selected as a
2024 Women of Distinction honoree by Senator John C. Liu***

