



# VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

## THEODORE DIXON

Theodore Dixon served in the United States Navy and achieved the rank of Seaman First Class.

Born in Manhattan in 1926, Mr. Dixon spent his childhood in Williamsburg, Virginia. At the age of 18, he was drafted to fight in World War II. Having rarely left the leafy confines of Williamsburg, he was excited to finally see “what was going on.” Despite his excellent education, Mr. Dixon found himself in a segregated, racist military with few opportunities for Black men like himself. While many Black soldiers were driven to be cooks, Mr. Dixon’s knowledge and intellect landed him in the Navy and immersed him in combat for the Mariana Islands. The brutality of the fighting inculcated Mr. Dixon with a deep humanism and lasting drive for peaceful reconciliation. In his words, “All that killing just isn’t natural.”

Settling in Sugar Hill, Manhattan after the War, Mr. Dixon found his aspirations once again stifled by a pervasive prejudice. Unable to pursue law, he used his knowledge to sell whatever goods he could get his hands on. As an older man on the Upper West Side, he threw himself into community life on the West 71st Street Block Association. He frequented meetings at the 20th Precinct and built relationships with local politicians. In this role, Mr. Dixon sees himself as a protector. By keeping watch over his community and organizing his neighbors, he keeps the Upper West Side safe for children and families. Of all his accomplishments, he is most proud of these efforts.

Ninety-eight-year-old Mr. Dixon has dedicated his life to community service, defeating fascism in World War II, and building a community on West 71st Street. Though initially known simply as “Theo,” his neighbors have since anointed him the “Mayor of the Upper West Side.” In this role, Mr. Dixon greets passersby from his established bench on Columbus Avenue, learning about their lives, offering advice, and “keeping love alive.”

While Mr. Dixon is quick to condemn the bitter racism and brutality he encountered, both at war and in New York, he also professes a hope for the country he served. Carrying around a pocket Constitution, he frequently proclaims its opening words, “We the people!” In these moments, he pauses before emphasizing the final words, “In order to form a more perfect union.”



THEODORE DIXON WAS SELECTED AS A  
2024 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY  
SENATOR BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL.

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