



# *Women of* DISTINCTION

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## HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

*Winifred Armstrong*

Winifred Armstrong is the rare individual who has served her community on many levels – internationally to locally.

Ms. Armstrong worked in Africa with then-Senator John F. Kennedy, and was a member of Manhattan Community Board 7 and President of the Park West Village Tenants Association (PWVTA). The geographic range of her work is intentional. Her first-grade teacher impressed upon her a curiosity about and affinity with the people we share our world – a quality that has pervaded her life and labor.

Before becoming an advisor to Senator Kennedy, Ms. Armstrong spent two years in Africa compiling information that later helped develop the idea for the Peace Corps. The records of her work in Africa are stored at the Kennedy Library in Boston and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem.

A tenant activist, Ms. Armstrong worked with PWVTA from the 1980s on, winning victories that have benefited all New Yorkers. In 1984, PWVTA fought property owner Harry Helmsley to block condominiumization. Supported by the New York Attorney General and NYC Corporation Counsel, they argued that transitioning from rent stabilization to condominium status would detrimentally alter the socio-economic character of the neighborhood. While the Court of Appeals ultimately ruled that existing law only considered the commercial, industrial, and residential character of a neighborhood, PWVTA tenants succeeded in raising the prevailing issue of community diversity to the levels of law and policy.

As a local historian, Ms. Armstrong co-founded the Bloomingdale Neighborhood History Group ([upperwestsidehistory.org](http://upperwestsidehistory.org)) in 2000. The Group has amassed one of New York City's most extensive collections of neighborhood history, and organizes walking tours, presentations, and exhibits. Its open files are held at NYPL's Bloomingdale Library.

Ms. Armstrong also collected the PWVTA archives, held at NYU's Tamiment Library. Tamiment hosted an exhibit on tenants and housing policy that Ms. Armstrong helped organize. Through this work, she continually strives to show New Yorkers that they "inherit, interpret, and create history."

In all her roles, Ms. Armstrong is driven by the conviction that the individual wields profound influence. In her words, "Whether it's dealing with Kennedy on international policy or composting in your building, you matter."

***Winifred Armstrong was selected as a  
2023 Women of Distinction honoree by Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal***

