Dance Theatre of Harlem and the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone:

A Case Study in Cultural Economics

Rebecca Bass

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Dance thesis director: Professor L. Garafola
Economics thesis director: Professor R. Reback

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Introduction

Cultural economics, the study of how culture affects a region's economy, goes beyond the typical economic quandaries of high unemployment rates or increasing trade deficits. This genre of economics focuses on maximizing cultural capital, a term that assigns value to the day-to-day lifestyles of a certain community and the community's artistic expression of common values. American policymakers often overlook cultural capital and its economic relevance, which is what makes President Bill Clinton's 1994 Empowerment Zone legislation unique. A federal economic program designed to revitalize struggling urban areas across the United States, Empowerment Zones provided millions of dollars in federal grant money to specific urban neighborhoods. The policy gave communities the power to revive not only their businesses, but also their cultural institutions. One of the first districts to gain Empowerment Zone designation was Harlem, a neighborhood simultaneously synonymous with vibrant cultural history and disastrous economic downfall. The neighborhood's prized ballet company and a beacon of African American advancement in the ballet world, Dance Theatre of Harlem experienced an identical fall from grace as the neighborhood deteriorated. Grant money from the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone helped both Harlem and Dance Theatre of Harlem regain stability, proving that both economic and cultural revival can and should go hand-in-hand. Using the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone's support of Dance Theatre of Harlem as a case study, I will argue that the flexibility of grant awards in urban economic policies can strengthen a community's cultural capital, which is equally as important as its quantifiable economic health.

Part I: Culture and Economics

Defining Cultural Economics

When it comes to culture and economics, scholars of one may struggle to understand the other, even though the two disciplines should work in tandem. The study of economics emphasizes rational decision-making and relies on universal mathematical functions, while culture focuses on collective identities and customs that distinguish communities from a universal norm. To understand their interaction, compare cultural economics to environmental economics—a parallel drawn from the work of cultural economist David Throsby.[1] If a farmer wants a productive harvest, he will do all he can to understand weather patterns unique to his location and to optimize field conditions accordingly. He will also advocate policies that promote preservation or even improvement of the environment, so that his business can continue to thrive. Similarly, if an economist wants to construct effective local policy, she must understand the cultural environment of the community, including the social priorities and customs of the residents. Economic agents are people, and those people are inherently attached to their culture and will make economic choices within their cultural boundaries. With this knowledge, she can construct policy that agrees with or even enhances the cultural environment of the area while having the intended economic impact.

By its most intuitive definition, the culture of a community is its common traditions and ideologies. William A. Jackson, in *Economics, Culture and Social Theory,* describes two stances on how these intangible characteristics define culture: 1) as a process, and 2) as a way of life.[2] To think of culture as a process, consider the term "cultivation": individuals in a society interact as a

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[1] David Throsby, "On Conflicts and Synergies: Problems and Possibilities in the Relationship Between Economics and Culture," in *Cultures of Economy--Economics of Culture*, ed. Jackson Lears and Jens van Scherpenberg, vol. 4, Publications of the Bavarian American Academy (Heidelberg: Universitatsverlag, 2004), 10.

[2] William A. Jackson, *Economics, Culture and Social Theory*, New Horizons in Institutional and Evolutionary Economics (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2009), 16-18.

"means of preserving common attitudes," thus enforcing a unifying ideology.[3] This definition suggests that culture is an active, dynamic process that happens specifically "within a given social context."[4] Defining culture as a way of life suggests the opposite, meaning culture is the static end state of "socialized behaviour and customary practices at any given time."[5] This approach argues that culture is an omnipresent "informing spirit" or the established "ideas and beliefs around which a society's institutions and activities are organized."[6] Economists may prefer this second approach where culture is simply a set of rules that influences how communities act on a macro scale, with little room for individual agency and deviation. How or when the culture came to be is irrelevant. However, in *Culture in Economics: History, Methodological Reflections, and Contemporary Applications*, Beugelsdijk and Maseland argue that thinking of culture as an "inherited, unquestioned given" may be at odds with the economic emphasis on rationality: "Culture is typically turned into a factor influencing rational behavior, while not being subject to rational design itself."[7] In other words, one cannot predict how a culture will affect behavior if one does not understand why the culture exists in the first place. Thinking of culture as a process instead of a way of life is more realistic, because priorities and customs can change over time, perhaps contradicting previously rational behavior.

Culture can also refer to a community's artistic expression of this continuing process. Jackson argues that economic literature often does not consider how art can affect economic behavior, and he sees this exclusion as a "side-effect of dichotomizing cultural and economic

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[3] Ibid., 16.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 18.
[6] Ibid., 17.
[7] Sjoerd Beugelsdijk and Robbert Maseland, *Culture in Economics: History, Methodological Reflections, and Contemporary Applications* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9.

matters."[8] He goes on to describe the futility of keeping art and economics separate because artists (though their products are sometimes ephemeral, as is the case with performance) function in a material world governed by economic realities.[9] Further, Throsby notes that art of all forms can be considered cultural products or goods, "no different from any other sorts of goods, and [one would] expect that individual demand and supply decisions and normal market processes…could be relied upon to lead an optimal social outcome."[10] Art as a cultural good thus fits in nicely with neoclassical economic theory because economists can simply plug it into existing models and functions.

For a basic example of a cultural product in a neoclassical economic model, consider dance companies producing performances as economic goods. When a dance company receives increased funding, the supply curve for performances will shift outward because the company will be able to afford to put on more shows (see Figure 1). At the same time, the price to attend a performance will decrease. If tickets to dance performances are less expensive, more people in the community will be able to attend them, and, as Throsby writes, they will engage in a "form of collective communication."[11] Consuming art contributes to the "cultural processes" previously mentioned because it strengthens "the traditions, customs, beliefs, artworks and modes of cultural expression that make [communities] unique."[12] Something as simple as making dance more available can have a wider, yet intangible, effect outside of the theater.

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[8] Jackson, *Economics, Culture and Social Theory*, 18.
[9] Ibid., 19.
[10] Ibid., 7.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 12.

Figure 1: Supply and Demand of Dance Performances After an Increase in Funding

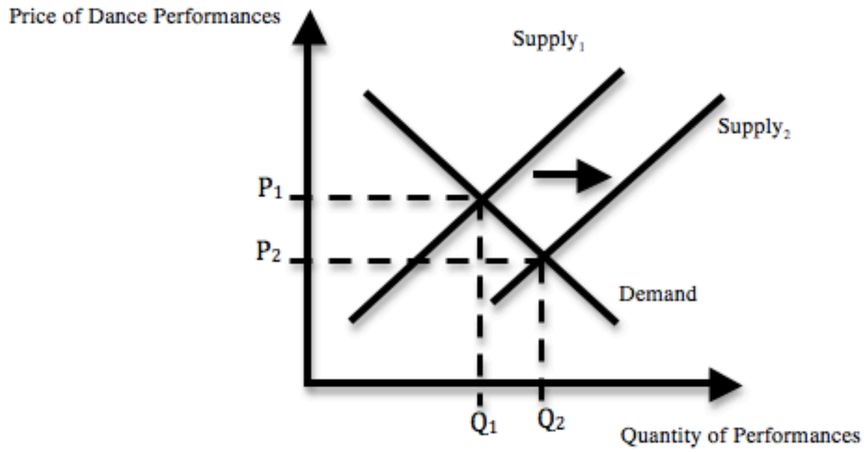

Fig. 1: Supply and demand for dance performances if funding for dance increased.

Investing in culture not only unites a community around common values, but it also distinguishes it from other communities. Consider the farming example again: the crops of Vermont will be vastly different and have different values from those of Oklahoma. One might call the value of those agricultural products agricultural capital, which the government would try to protect and enhance. Similarly, cultural capital "identifies the embodiment or generation of cultural value" and will vary according to locality.[13] This approach, Throsby argues, allows culture "to be appraised using the sorts of economic evaluation methods used to value other forms of investment that give rise to intangible benefits (such as preservation of the environment), but also opens way to a cultural value assessment in whatever terms are appropriate to the asset in question."[14] Throsby is thus a proponent of treating culture just as

[13] Ibid., 10.
[14] Ibid.

seriously as any more tangible economic investment, because each locality will have a real stake in its development.

Culture in Economic Policy

American economists and policymakers have a distinct outlook on how culture fits into economic policy, especially when it comes to culture defined as art. Throsby uses the different approaches to funding the arts in the United States and Germany to demonstrate this inextricable link between culture and economics. In the United States, the federal government offers limited financial support for the arts, or at least is reluctant to make support for the arts a priority. For instance, the budget for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in 2013 was $146 million, which was just .012% of federal discretionary spending for that year.[15] The NEA's allocation from the federal budget had also decreased by 13% in the past three budgets.[16] As the federal government leaves the arts behind, Throsby argues that this constant desperation for funding cultivates "a voluntary sense of obligation to support cultural activity within the broader community."[17] This "support" generally takes the form of conspicuous individual and corporate philanthropy, on which cultural and arts organizations rely in the United States. In addition, local institutions like churches, libraries, and schools may contribute to cultural offerings in an effort to fill the void left by the government.

Throsby finds the opposite approach to arts funding in Germany. Nationwide, Germany's "cultural funding" amounted to $1.76 billion in 2014, a 7% increase from the 2013

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[15] *National Endowment for the Arts Fact Sheet* (National Endowment for the Arts, Spring 2013), http://www.nasaa-arts.org/Research/Grant-Making/NEAFactSheetSpring2013.pdf.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Throsby, "On Conflicts and Synergies: Problems and Possibilities in the Relationship Between Economics and Culture," 12.

value, and much higher than similar funding in the United States.[18] Throsby argues there is a German "tradition of acceptance of an important public responsibility for supporting artistic activity, especially at a local level."[19] Even beyond the magnitude of the funding, Germany's focus on municipal and state administration of this money also diminishes the "tension between universalistic [economic theory] and particularistic [cultural theory]."[20] In other words, economic theory affords little room for the idiosyncrasies of each community, while those idiosyncrasies constitute cultural theory. Culture is often geographically specific in terms of nations, regions, and even neighborhoods, with art as its clearest expression and identifier. Economic policy should not only adequately support such cultural expression in terms of money, but also in terms of the structure of the policy itself, which is why Germany's focus on localities makes it an attractive model to cultural economists.

Culture in Economic Policy at the Neighborhood Level

While the United States may never spend as much as Germany on promoting arts and culture, it can tether economic policy to a community's culture by developing cultural capital at the neighborhood level. Gary Bridge, in his article "Perspectives on Cultural Capital and the Neighbourhood," presents two approaches to investing in cultural capital as it relates to cities: the participatory approach and the quality of life approach. The "participatory approach" sees cultural capital "as a way of enhancing the prospects of social and human capital as a device in

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[18] "Germany Approves €1.3 Billion in Cultural Funding," *Artnet News*, June 10, 2014, https://news.artnet.com/in-brief/germany-approves-eur13-billion-in-cultural-funding-37138.
[19] Throsby, "On Conflicts and Synergies: Problems and Possibilities in the Relationship Between Economics and Culture," 12.
[20] Beugelsdijk and Maseland, *Culture in Economics,* 120.

neighborhood regeneration."[21] Alternatively, Bridge's "quality of life approach" considers "the intrinsic value of creative assets in terms of their convertability to economic capital."[22] These approaches run parallel to the two definitions of culture discussed previously: culture as common traditions/values and culture as art/commodities. The participatory approach addresses the atmosphere of a community and the relationships among its residents. The quality of life approach assumes art is a good—visual artwork, concert tickets, and dance lessons can all be bought and sold. These approaches relate especially to neighborhoods (rather than, say, entire cities) because neighborhoods typically have more demographically uniform populations with solidified cultural atmospheres and products.

Economist Carl Grodach observed both of Bridge's approaches to cultural capital in practice, beginning with the participatory approach. Again, this approach treats cultural capital as a resource that, when bolstered with government funds, can develop positive relationships, creativity, and prosperity in the community. Grodach examined the economic impact of a range of private, public, and nonprofit art spaces that included artist cooperatives, arts incubators, ethnic-specific art spaces, and community arts or cultural centers in the Dallas-Fort Worth area of Texas.[23] By conducting in-depth interviews with and surveys of artists and administrators, Grodach found that "artistic and cultural activity rooted in specific communities [is] a means of empowerment and improvement for existing places and populations, not simply [an] amenity or industrial sector."[24] While certainly a positive review of these institutions, this finding also points again to the idea of culture being highly specific. Three of the art spaces Grodach observed

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[21] Gary Bridge, "Perspectives on Cultural Capital and the Neighbourhood," *Urban Studies* 43, no. 4 (April 2006): 722.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Carl Grodach, "Art Spaces in Community and Economic Development: Connections to Neighborhoods, Artists, and the Cultural Economy," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 31, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 77.
[24] Ibid., 76.

struggled with the disparity between their cultural missions and the surrounding community: "the inward nature of art space activities [may] create a sense of distance or inaccessibility between an art space and its immediate community."[25] Efforts to develop cultural capital in terms of community building must address whom these cultural institutions represent and how they interact with other communities.

Grodach's later paper demonstrated the quality of life approach, which suggests that cultural products can have not only a social impact on a community but also an economic one. Grodach gathered data on United States companies that fell into the category of "arts-based industries," according to the North American Industry Classification System (e.g., art dealers, music publishers, dance companies, etc.).[26] He analyzed this data at the metropolitan level using 366 "metropolitan statistical areas" and at the neighborhood level using zip codes.[27] Grodach then explored the location patterns of artistic clusters (conglomerations of the 22 arts-based industries) on these two geographic levels. His three neighborhood-level regressions show a statistically significant association between the presence of arts districts, arts education districts, or cultural products services in neighborhoods of all sizes, and the presence of "innovation districts," which he defines as "composite[s] of knowledge-driven industries and amenities."[28] To some degree, this is probably because arts industries find support in educated, wealthy demographics that make up innovation districts. Even though Grodach finds "evidence of a relationship between arts clusters and indicators of economic health [at the] metro level, he does admit that arts industries "do not necessarily drive neighbourhood-level growth."[29] Further,

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[25] Ibid., 79.
[26] Carl Grodach et al., "The Location Patterns of Artistic Clusters: A Metro- and Neighborhood-Level Analysis," *Urban Studies* 51, no. 13 (October 1, 2014): 2825.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., 2835.
[29] Ibid., 2830.

Grodach's study says little about how arts industries affect an urban neighborhood over time, because he only observes one 2010 data set. Without knowing what causes this correlation between arts and economic prosperity, it is nearly impossible to draw policy suggestions from Grodach's regressions.

Grodach's study of artistic clusters is one of many published reports that rely on expectable correlations to assert the importance of arts to the economy. For example, Dance/NYC, an organization that aims to inform and educate dance makers and dance supporters, regularly publishes reports that analyze the dance industry in a larger economic context. The institution's 2004 report titled *The Economic Activity of Dance in New York City* addresses how the purchases of dance organizations plus the purchases of dance patrons ripple throughout the economy, supposedly generating millions of dollars for the city.[30] The report suggests the city would lose all of this money if the dance industry were to be eliminated, without considering the possibility of any substitute activity. In reality, all of those dance-makers and dance-watchers counted in the report would still spend their money within the NYC community in some way. Dance/NYC has fallen victim to the common belief that an economic impact analysis is the only way to convince policy makers that dance is worthy of funding. While it is frustrating that the dance industry, even in a city like New York, frequently finds itself having to prove why it should exist, economic impact analyses such as this one may not be the strongest approach. Further, the struggle to quantify cultural institutions' impact on a community discounts the legitimacy of cultural capital. Statistics and dollar amounts only describe part of the story.

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[30] *The Economic Activity of Dance in New York City* (New York: Dance/NYC, March 2004).

Part Two: Case Study

Empowerment Zones and Culture

President Clinton's administration (1993-2001) followed the presidencies of Ronald Reagan (1981-1989) and George H. W. Bush (1989-1993), whose administrations left urban neighborhoods devastated. Reagan cut nearly all federal funding to cities in the 1980's, focusing more on supply-side recovery efforts like tax cuts than on social programs to stimulate urban economies.[31] In 1983, Reagan proposed the Urban Enterprise Zone Act—not to be confused with President Clinton's Empowerment Zones—in order "to remove government barriers, bring individuals to create, produce and earn their own wages and profits."[32] This legislation "featured only tax incentives and regulatory relief," encouraging businesses to prosper, but not necessarily involving the rest of the community.[33] Reagan, who pursued conservative, business-based economic reform, largely ignored social programs, focusing instead on encouraging business investment in struggling neighborhoods. After Reagan, President George H. W. Bush also did little in terms of urban economic policy, as he was "not motivated by its electoral base or its ideology" to do so.[34] Bush's neglect of America's urban population arguably contributed to the unrest that peaked in 1992 with the Los Angeles riots.

President Clinton, on the other hand, prioritized economic development and recognized the key role that cities play in the economy. The Clinton administration aimed to revitalize struggling urban areas economically and socially. In 1993, Clinton signed the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, which mandated the designation of six Empowerment Zones that

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[31] Dennis R. Judd, *City Politics: The Political Economy of Urban America*, 7th ed (New York: Longman, 2010).
[32] Ibid., 201.
[33] M. J. Rich and R. P. Stoker, "Rethinking Empowerment: Evidence from Local Empowerment Zone Programs," *Urban Affairs Review* 45, no. 6 (July 1, 2010): 777.
[34] Judd, *City Politics*, 202.

demonstrated a need for comprehensive federal assistance.[35] Congressman Charles Rangel, Jr., who has represented Harlem in Congress since 1970, crafted the Empowerment Zone program, and it enjoyed the enthusiastic support of former New York City Mayor David Dinkins, Mayor Rudy Giuliani, and New York Governor Mario Cuomo, among others.[36] Empowerment Zones (EZs), unlike enterprise zones, combined tax incentives with grants of "at least $100 million in federal Social Service Block Grant funds" to be used at the EZs' discretion.[37] This combination of demand-side policy in the form of direct transfers of funds and supply-side policy in the form of tax cuts provided each EZ the flexibility to custom-tailor its revitalization efforts. While the tax incentives, including "a tax credit of up to $3,000 annually per employee," were designed to spur business activity in the EZs, the large grants were "essential human capital and community building investments."[38] As John McCarthy of the University of Dundee put it, one of the main principles of the EZ legislation was "to ensure an integrated, coordinated and holistic approach to the economic, social and environmental regeneration of localities."[39] The policy emphasized that the revival of distressed neighborhoods did not only depend purely on economic parameters, but also on less quantifiable improvements in the community.

The flexibility of the EZ program meant that each city would develop highly specific measures that would produce unique results, making broad evaluations of the legislation difficult (or even impossible). It would be irresponsible to attribute all improvements in the neighborhoods to the EZ designation or to a specific aspect of the program. Rich and Stoker, in

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[35] *Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act*, 1993, http://www.legisworks.org/GPO/STATUTE-107-Pg312.pdf, 107 STAT 543.
[36] William Egyir, "Harlem's Christmas Gift: President Announces $100M Empowerment Zone Funds For The City," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 24, 1994, 85.52 edition, 1.
[37] Douglas J. Krupka and Douglas S. Noonan, "Empowerment Zones, Neighborhood Change and Owner-Occupied Housing," *Regional Science and Urban Economics* 39, no. 4 (July 2009): 386.
[38] US Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Empowerment: A New Covenant With America's Communities*, President Clinton's National Urban Policy Report (US Department of Housing and Urban Development, July 1995), 44.
[39] John McCarthy, "US Urban Empowerment Zones," *Land Use Policy* 15, no. 4 (1998): 321.

their paper "Rethinking Empowerment: Evidence from Local Empowerment Zone Programs," note that, "in theory, local interventions [are] expected to be synergistic," suggesting that increased investment, job growth, and rising housing values may be results of the legislation; however, separating their causes and effects is nearly impossible. The true causes of these improvements could be related to any number of changes in the neighborhood.[40] The authors also warn that due to the highly targeted nature of the EZ program, "the matched-pair sample sizes in the EZ cities are simply too small to achieve statistical significance."[41] The EZs have only been established for roughly 20 years, with only three rounds of a handful of designations to study and compare.

Additionally, there is little consensus on what should be used as a control group when observing the EZs. Krupka and Noonan "take the experiences of the Round 3 EZ neighborhoods [designated in 2001] as representing the counterfactual of what would have happened to the Round 1 EZ neighborhoods had the policy intervention not occurred."[42] Similarly, Busso and Kline use "rejected and future zones" with similar census statistics as their control group.[43] This approach, however, neglects the key aspect of EZs—the policy plan for each city is custom-built. Whether or not policies achieve the desired effect depends entirely on how they are executed and how they affect the businesses and people in the area. Local politics and attitudes toward economic and social development determine the success of EZ actions, making comparisons tricky.

Despite the difficulty in making comparisons and measurements across the EZs, studies suggest that they have had a generally positive effect on the communities. Krupka and Noonan

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[40] Rich and Stoker, "Rethinking Empowerment," 782.
[41] Ibid., 790.
[42] Krupka and Noonan, "Empowerment Zones, Neighborhood Change and Owner-Occupied Housing," 390.
[43] Matias Busso and Patrick Kline, "Do Local Economic Development Programs Work?: Evidence from the Federal Empowerment Zone Program" (Yale University, February 2008), 4.

found “a sizeable and significant positive effect on home values,” which they interpreted as a sign of improving amenities in the Round 1 EZs compared to the pre-designation Round 3 EZs.[44] Rich and Stoker concluded that between 1996 and 2004 the New York EZ experienced growth in the number of jobs (but increased unemployment) and greater housing and business investment compared to “the control census tracts.”[45] Busso and Kline believed their research “strongly suggests that EZ designation substantially improved local labor and housing market conditions in EZ neighborhoods” over the time period 1994-2000.[46] The studies agree that an influx of federal funding, which was often combined with state and city funding and a series of federal tax incentives, can help a distressed population rebuild the local economy, but they fail to address the social implications of the policy directly.

The Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone

Since its settlement in the seventeenth century by the Dutch, Harlem (roughly defined as the section of Manhattan north of Central Park and south of 155th Street) has been characterized by waves of change. The neighborhood is frequently associated with the “Harlem Renaissance” of the 1920’s, when its African American population was bursting with musical and literary creativity, from the moving poetry of Langston Hughes to the swinging tunes of Duke Ellington. Unfortunately, the following decade would cripple Harlem, as the Great Depression turned the neighborhood “into a black ghetto, 80 percent of whose businesses were owned by whites.”[47] In the 1940’s, racial tensions came to a head, especially in the riot of 1943, the most violent in Harlem’s history, after a white police officer shot a black man who was helping an arrested

[44] Krupka and Noonan, “Empowerment Zones, Neighborhood Change and Owner-Occupied Housing,” 395.
[45] Rich and Stoker, “Rethinking Empowerment,” 789.
[46] Busso and Kline, “Do Local Economic Development Programs Work?: Evidence from the Federal Empowerment Zone Program,” 29.
[47] Jonathan Gill, *Harlem* (New York: Grove Press, 2011), 332.

prostitute. The years after World War II were no better, as manufacturing jobs virtually disappeared from the city so that "[t]he best business opportunity was dealing heroin" for Harlemites.[48] As safer housing options outside Harlem became more available to middle- and upper-class black families in the decades to come, Harlem emptied out: "in the 1960's and '70s, central Harlem lost a third of its residents…and two-thirds of the residents of lower Harlem vanished."[49] By the 1970's, "[m]ore than a third of the country's [drug] addicts lived uptown," and by the 1980's, the city owned most of the housing in central Harlem due to foreclosures. Reverend Calvin Butts, prominent pastor and one of the founders of the Abyssinian Development Corporation that raises money for housing and commercial development in Harlem, stated that "drugs, despair, abounding vice, idleness, no strong family life" now characterized the once thriving neighborhood.[50] At the end of the twentieth century, Harlem was far from its glory days, but the EZ legislation was a beacon of hope.

There was fierce competition for EZ designation when the policy was signed into effect in 1993, and the chosen EZs were very carefully organized. For the first round of designations (there would eventually be a total of three rounds), the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) chose districts in Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Philadelphia/Camden out of the 290 proposals received.[51] Each city determined the administrative structure of its own EZ, meaning it could be placed under the jurisdiction of the city's government or under an entirely new organization. In New York, the entire EZ was divided into the South Bronx EZ, overseen by the existing Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation (BOEDC), and the Harlem EZ, for which the Upper Manhattan

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[48] Ibid., 355.
[49] Ibid., 409.
[50] Peter Hellman, "Coming Up Harlem," *Smithsonian*, November 2002, 74-86.
[51] McCarthy, "US Urban Empowerment Zones," 323.

Empowerment Zone Development Corporation (UMEZ) was established.[52] The designation was intended to last for ten years, but most were extended beyond this time span. UMEZ continues to operate as an independent non-profit organization for the betterment of Upper Manhattan today, even though the official federal EZ designation expired as of December 2014.[53] The establishment of UMEZ as a nonprofit mitigated any political associations that might affect private support and minimized time-consuming bureaucracy, while also securing longevity in the community.

Before the designation expired, the New York Empowerment Zone (NYEZ) had three levels of governance to clarify its relationship with the city, state, and federal levels of government: 1) the NYEZ oversight board, 2) the UMEZ board, and 3) the BOEDC board. The NYEZ board was "limited to federal, state and local government representatives from HUD, the Governor, the Mayor, the Bronx Borough President, the UMEZDC board, Congressman Rangel and Congressman [Jose] Serrano [who represented the Bronx]."[54] In effect, the NYEZ board served as a liaison between the actual districts receiving funding and the federal government. For instance, the UMEZ board and staff members made all actual funding decisions as a non-partisan, non-profit entity, but the government still had a large degree of control over board structure and governance. Regarding the first UMEZ board of 24 members, Congressman Rangel said the oversight board aimed to choose "a diverse group that brings together vast experience in finance, education, health, public affairs, urban planning, the arts, entrepreneurship and the

[52] Rich and Stoker, "Rethinking Empowerment," 780.
[53] "Welcome to the Community Renewal Initiative," *US Department of Housing and Urban Development*, 2015, http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/economicdevelopment/programs/rc.
[54] Marilyn Gittell, *Empowerment Zone Implementation*, Second Year Report (City University of New York, January 1998), 43.

law."[55] Harlem institutions would thus need to court UMEZ board members chosen by distant government officials in order to garner funds, rather than those most familiar with the institutions' work.

The Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation (UMEZ) had (and still has) its own board. When the NYEZ was established, the UMEZ board was the only one on which members of the community served.[56] Prominent and highly educated Harlemites like physician Muriel Petioni, who watched the heroin epidemic ravage Harlem firsthand, and urban policy expert David R. Jones, who is now president of the Community Service Society, were elected to the UMEZ board by four community planning boards.[57,58] Marilyn Gittell, who directed a research group at City University of New York on Empowerment Zones and community, noted that those elected to the UMEZ board "comprise[d] elite leadership [rather than] local community leaders," a discrepancy that detracted from genuine community involvement in decision-making.[59] In addition, Gittell wrote in her January 1998 report that the "rapid turnover of UMEZDC leadership, with the fourth administrator in three years now in place" may have contributed to a rift between the EZ officials and the community members.[60] In fact, a year after Gittell published her report, UMEZ hired a new president and yet another CEO.[61] Gittell argues that even when the non-profit executives on the UMEZ board "attempt to represent community interests," tension still exists between the non-profit and corporate board

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[55] "Harlem Empowerment Zone Board Announced by Rangel, Parsons," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 1, 1995, 3.
[56] Gittell, *Empowerment Zone Implementation,* 43.
[57] Paul Vitello, "Muriel Petioni, 97, Prominent Harlem Physician, Dies," *New York Times*, December 10, 2011, B8.
[58] "David R. Jones," *Community Service Society of New York*, 2015, http://www.cssny.org/staff/entry/david-r.-jones.
[59] Gittell, *Empowerment Zone Implementation*, 43.
[60] Ibid.
[61] "Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation Announces Appointment of New President and CEO," *Business Wire*, August 16, 1999, 1.

members.[62] When UMEZ began, it was imperative for nonprofits, which are often cultural institutions, to be well-represented in order for them to receive funding. The precarious state of UMEZ leadership was unsettling.

Regardless of leadership issues, the newly established NYEZ was in a strong position to highlight the rich history within its borders, especially in Upper Manhattan. UMEZ aimed to rejuvenate the "flourishing cultural life" long associated with Harlem.[63] To achieve this, the organization encouraged nonprofits to apply for capital funding grants, provided the nonprofits could contribute and sustain a positive effect on the community's economy.[64] The Harlem business community criticized this initial focus on social programs and cultural institutions that would reap the benefits for nonprofits. Bennie Hadnott, managing partner of a national accounting firm and a member of the Harlem Business Alliance, said in 1995, "The nonprofits are running the show at this time…But the driving force needs to be the business sector."[65] Congresman Rangel defended the tactic: "We cannot make an offer to business until the community has set the priorities….I don't believe the tax incentives alone will cause someone to move into a district that's high in crime, with computer-illiterate and nonfunctional residents."[66] According to Rangel, investing in the residents of Harlem and changing the cultural milieu would also be investing in the business environment. Recalling Gary Bridge's two approaches to cultural capital, Rangel believed taking the participatory approach of "enhancing the prospects of social and human capital" was essential before considering the quality of life approach that focuses on economic improvement.[67]

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62 Gittell, *Empowerment Zone Implementation*, 43.
63 "New York Empowerment Zone," 2.
64 Ibid., 4.
65 Alice Lipowicz, "NY Empowerment Zone Loser," *Crain's New York Business*, January 23, 1995, 11.4 edition, 1.
66 Ibid.
67 Bridge, "Perspectives on Cultural Capital and the Neighbourhood," 722.

Dance Theatre of Harlem

Ballet blossomed in mid-twentieth century New York, and one lucky Harlemite would come along for the ride. In 1955, just seven years after the company's founding, Harlem-raised Arthur Mitchell joined the prestigious New York City Ballet (NYCB), making him "the first African-American male to become a permanent member of a major ballet company."[68] As a soloist and a principal dancer, he originated iconic roles in many works by George Balanchine, including *Agon* (1957) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1962).[69] After 14 years with the company, Mitchell decided to shift course, a decision he credited to a pivotal moment in American history: "The reason Dance Theatre of Harlem was started was because Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated."[70] With Balanchine's blessing, Mitchell left New York City Ballet and headed back uptown to start a ballet school that would inspire and develop a generation of black professional dancers in Harlem.[71]

Founded in 1969 by Mitchell and renowned ballet teacher Karel Shook, Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH) had humble beginnings but noble goals, which the company quickly achieved. Mitchell remembers starting "in a garage with two dancers and 30 children," but soon they moved into a church basement, and then to their current home at 466 West 152nd Street.[72] After two years of building momentum and finding dancers, DTH would make its "formal New York City debut" on Saturday, January 8, 1971 in the main gallery of the Guggenheim Museum. At

[68] "Directors," *Dance Theatre of Harlem*, 2012, http://www.dancetheatreofharlem.org/directors.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Thomas Grimm, *Dance Theatre of Harlem*, DVD (RM ARTS/Danmarks Radio, 1989).
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.

this point, the company only had 20 dancers and performed ballets by Mitchell.[73] Soon after, in 1974, the dance critic Robert Greskovic would write in *Ballet Review*: "Dance Theatre of Harlem is proof that ballet dancing is not a matter of race, but a matter of training, selection and direction…I would hope that any choreographer in the audience would jump at the chance to work with these dancers."[74] The company grew in number and in popularity, impressing New York and international audiences alike.

While the company was thriving, so was the DTH school, which was the company's anchor to Harlem while it performed mostly in midtown or outside of New York. DTH set out to involve the Harlem community with regular "informal studio performances" that were open to the public as well as with "lecture-demonstrations and small performances at public schools, colleges and universities."[75] These outreach efforts would later become an established educational program called *Dancing Through Barriers*, which still exists today and whose mission is to offer "a range of activities that include in-class residencies, school-time performances, after school programs and interactive tours of the DTH facility."[76] The school continues to pride itself on its diverse and welcoming atmosphere. 65 percent of DTH students are on financial aid in order to attend, and the high school graduation rate of DTH students is 98 percent—compare this rate to the 66 percent New York City average and the 42 percent Harlem average.[77] The school is an invaluable training ground, especially because it is virtually the only serious ballet school in Upper Manhattan, but also because it is a shining educational center for the youth of Harlem.

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[73] "A Dance Debut Set by Harlem Troupe," *New York Times*, January 5, 1971, 40.
[74] Robert Greskovic, "Dance Theater of Harlem: A Work in Progress," *Ballet Review* 4, no. 6 (1974): 43–60.
[75] "Legacy," *Dance Theatre of Harlem*, 2012, http://www.dancetheatreofharlem.org/legacy.
[76] Ibid.
[77] "School," *Dance Theatre of Harlem*, 2015, http://www.dancetheatreofharlem.org/school/index.html.

Despite a decade of enthusiastic public support for both the company and the school, the 1980's were not kind to DTH—or to the New York City dance world in general. New York dance makers were scrambling, perhaps as a result of the Reagan administration's disinvestment in cities (ironically, Reagan's youngest son was a ballet dancer).[78] In 1983, Robert Joffrey chased funding by creating a bicoastal relationship with the Los Angeles Music Center (the company would later move to Chicago in 1995).[79] In 1988, Twyla Tharp disbanded her own company and merged with American Ballet Theatre to stay afloat.[80] Similarly, Arthur Mitchell—though a revered leader—was an artist, not a businessman. DTH could not escape the economic reality of operating a ballet company in the late twentieth century, especially in Harlem. While the neighborhood was becoming more perilous, so were the finances of its resident ballet company. Virginia Johnson, a dancer with the company since its inception and eventually Mitchell's successor as artistic director, wrote in her journal on March 10, 1989: "We seem to be surrounded by problems….The continual shortfall of income is tearing us apart. We need our leader, but our leader is tired."[81] The company went on a six-month hiatus in 1990 and continued to limp along. It faced another financial crisis in the mid-1990's when the National Endowment for the Arts cut its funding of the company, but DTH "was bailed out with emergency grants from corporate, government or individual funders" both times.[82] The future of DTH was tragically uncertain.

First UMEZ Grant to DTH

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[78] Sasha Anawalt, *The Joffrey Ballet: Robert Joffrey and the Making of an American Dance Company* (New York: Scribner, 1996), 328.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Marcia Siegel, *Howling Near Heaven* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006), 218.
[81] Virginia Johnson, "Today, I Dance 'Firebird.' Tomorrow, Layoffs," *New York Times*, March 6, 1994, A35.
[82] Miriam Kreinin Souccar, "Dance Theatre May Bow Out in Fiscal Crisis," *Crain's New York Business*, April 19, 2004, 3.

At the same time, Harlem itself was in desperate need of a bail-out. In 1993, there were 56 murders in the 32nd precinct in central Harlem—more than a murder a week—and drug dealers occupied abandoned housing.[83] The lack of social and financial support in the community hurt not only DTH but also the neighborhood's residents at large. On December 24, 1994, the *New York Amsterdam News* proclaimed that "Harlem's Christmas gift" had arrived—and it was a big one.[84] President Clinton had just approved $100 million to establish the New York Empowerment Zone, "the largest economic development program in the history of Upper Manhattan" and the brainchild of Harlem's own Congressman Rangel.[85] Matching support from the state and city governments made for a total "public investment pool of $300 million."[86] Rangel had and has long advocated for federal support of the area; in fact, Rangel was the one to suggest 125th Street for the relocation of President Clinton's offices in July 2001.[87] Finally, things were looking up for Harlem.

Rangel's efforts to rebuild the community did not go unnoticed. By the early 2000's, journalists claimed that Harlem was experiencing a "second renaissance" thanks to increasing capital investment in the area, largely due to the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone.[88] Travel writer Tatsha Robertson from *The Boston Globe* wrote in 2001 that even though the neighborhood is "still rough at the edges…the word is out that Harlem is a hot spot again."[89] Terry C. Lane, UMEZ president and CEO at the time, told reporters "the Harlem rebirth story is becoming known nationally and internationally."[90] UMEZ released a study in December of 2000 claiming "Harlem is the most popular stop [in New York City] for European and Japanese

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[83] Hellman, "Coming Up Harlem," 74-86.
[84] Egyir, "Harlem's Christmas Gift," 1.
[85] Ibid.
[86] "New York Empowerment Zone" (New York Empowerment Zone Corporation, n.d.), 1.
[87] Hellman, "Coming Up Harlem," 74-86.
[88] Charisse Jones, "Latest Harlem Renaissance Delights Visitors, Residents," *USA Today*, April 6, 2001, D.04.
[89] Tatsha Robertson, "Harlem's Hot Again," *Boston Globe*, May 19, 2002, M.1.
[90] Jones, "Latest Harlem Renaissance Delights Visitors, Residents," D.04.

tourists."[91] Neighborhood improvements were not just for visitors, though. The New York City Police Department reported that between 1993 and 2001, crime went down by 64% in Harlem.[92] UMEZ also funded "more than fifteen development projects…to increase the number of rental and ownership units for middle-income residents in Harlem."[93] Through these housing initiatives, many Harlemites became first-time homeowners, and many homeowners became new Harlemites, diversifying the community and filling empty buildings.

In addition to housing and job programs, UMEZ awarded grants to Harlem cultural institutions. Even in its first few rounds of grants, which started in 1996, UMEZ supported cultural landmarks such as the Studio Museum, the Julia de Burgos Cultural Center, and the National Jazz Museum.[94] In 1999, however, UMEZ announced "the approval of a $25 million fund to strengthen Upper Manhattan's art and cultural institutions."[95] Dance Theatre of Harlem benefited from this additional funding, embarking on a five-year development plan spanning 1999-2004. The benchmarks of this plan, which included specific hiring and programming requirements, are listed in Figure 2 below. After securing approval from both the NYEZ board and the UMEZ board, DTH received $766,666 from UMEZ.[96] Both the New York State and City governments matched this award, for a total of $2.3 million[97] (on the condition that DTH raise $5.7 million from other sources).[98] It should be noted that DTH "was forced to wait two months

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[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Sabiyha Robin Prince, "Changing Places: Race, Class, and Belonging in the 'New' Harlem," *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 16.
[94] "History," *Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone*, 2015, http://umez.org/index.cfm?e=inner2&itemcategory=59431; *New York, New York Empowerment Zone Annual Report*, RC/EZ/EC Performance Measurement System (Office of Community Planning and Development, 1998), http://www5.hud.gov/urban/perms/printReport.asp?report=81.
[95] *New York, New York Empowerment Zone Annual Report*, RC/EZ/EC Performance Measurement System (Office of Community Planning and Development, 1999), http://www5.hud.gov/urban/perms/printReport.asp?report=194.
[96] *New York, New York Empowerment Zone Annual Report*, RC/EZ/EC Performance Measurement System (Office of Community Planning and Development, 2004), http://www5.hud.gov/urban/perms/printReport.asp?report=674.
[97] *New York, New York Empowerment Zone Annual Report*, 2004.
[98] Terry Pristin, "Dance Group Gets Grant," *New York Times*, September 8, 2000, B11.

for an overdue payment of $150,000 due to the state's delay in releasing funds"—evidence that funding is not a smooth process for dance companies or for community development agencies such as UMEZ.[99]

Milestones	Projected Start Date	Projected End Date	% Complete as of 06/30/2004
NYEZ Corporation Approval	07/23/1999	07/23/1999	100
UMEZ Board Approval	11/03/1999	11/03/1999	100
Execute Grant Agreement	04/25/2000	4/25/2000	100
Hire CEO & Strategic Planning Consultant	06/15/2000	01/15/2001	100
Hire Core Project Staff	06/15/2000	01/15/2001	100
Develop Strategic Plan	06/15/2000	01/15/2001	100
Board Development & Implementation	06/15/2000	06/15/2003	100
Secure matching fund for grant	06/15/2000	12/15/2003	100
Implement community arts and cultural programming	02/01/2001	12/01/2003	100
Submission of Final Report and Audited Financials	07/08/2003	07/08/2003	100

Figure 2: Data taken from *New York, New York Empowerment Zone Annual Report*, RC/EZ/EC Performance Measurement System (Office of Community Planning and Development, 2004), http://www5.hud.gov/urban/perms/printReport.asp?report=674.

DTH followed the 1999-2004 plan accordingly, but it was hardly a lasting panacea. DTH hired consultant Emma Dunch from Dunch Arts, LLC to help navigate UMEZ's requirements and to garner additional funding.[100] The company also hired Ernest Littles in 2001 as the company's first chief executive officer.[101] Before this, Arthur Mitchell had taken both artistic and executive leadership roles. Littles hired 15 new staff members and had high hopes for the company.[102] Two years later, however, Littles resigned, and "many observers trace[d] the

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[99] Neil Scott Kleiman, *The Creative Engine: How Arts & Culture Is Fueling Economic Growth in New York City Neighborhoods* (New York: Center for an Urban Future, November 2002), https://nycfuture.org/pdf/The_Creative_Engine.pdf, 32.
[100] Lisa van Putten, "UMEZ Research," February 17, 2015.
[101] Miriam Kreinin Souccar, "Harlem Troupe Raises Barre with Fiscal Gains, New CEO," *Crain's New York Business*, September 3, 2001, 4.
[102] Ibid.

company's problems to Mr. Mitchell," who was desperate to save his company at any cost.[103] Mitchell's personal dream of a Harlem-based classical ballet company often eclipsed any logical managerial strategy. During the year of Littles's resignation, Mitchell had "mortgaged his own apartment to bring in funds," and DTH sold two of the buildings that the company had been long planning to use for additional storage and to start a charter school.[104] Then in February 2004, still reeling from the additional resignation of the company's chairman Reginald Van Lee, DTH suffered 11 layoffs and the resignation of several directors from its board.[105] Later that year, DTH's debt amounted to $2.3 million, but there was still a company of 44 dancers to pay.[106] DTH had no choice but to shut down.

Second UMEZ Grant

Unfortunately, things would worsen before they improved. Even though the company had folded, DTH's school remained in operation.[107] In 2009, however, the entire organization was "faced with the very real possibility of having to close down its operations."[108] DTH realized that it needed to make another serious plea for funds if it was to continue fostering ballet in Harlem. The company successfully appealed to the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone. Part of the plan for DTH's revival was "a three-year implementation grant of up to $646,000," which would come from UMEZ's Cultural Industry Investment Fund (CIIF).[109] Formally established in 2004, the CIIF aims to "provide a diverse mix of artistic expression and training to develop functional

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[103] Souccar, "Dance Theatre May Bow Out in Fiscal Crisis," 3.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Gia Kourlas, "Harlem Troupe Prepares for Act II," *New York Times*, October 29, 2010, AR10.
[107] Ibid.
[108] "Dance Theater of Harlem," *Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone*, 2014, http://umez.org/index.cfm?e=inner2&itemcategory=61704.
[109] Ibid.

skills needed for a fast growing and changing community."[110] The implementation grant spanned fiscal years 2010, 2011, and 2012.[111] Despite the company's financial history, UMEZ must have found DTH's mission and role in the Harlem arts community worthy of salvation. By October 2010, Executive Director and former DTH dancer Laveen Naidu had reduced DTH's debt to under $1 million.[112] The funding enabled him "to hire a marketing associate and a major gifts officer."[113] UMEZ's support also enabled him to re-hire Emma Dunch who helped DTH develop another five-year business plan spanning 2010 to 2015 that required specific performance markers, so the company could begin again.[114] Sure enough, the implementation grants, along with the expanded staff and fundraising, brought DTH back on stage for a week in 2013 at the Rose Theater at Lincoln Center, with Virginia Johnson as the new artistic director. [115] On its website, UMEZ touts Dance Theatre of Harlem as one of the CIIF's success stories.

DTH's Return

DTH and its board, however, remain in a state of flux in terms of leadership and identity. In December 2014, Naidu stepped down after ten years as Executive Director.[116] Michael D. Armstrong, chairman of DTH's board of directors, said, "We began talking about [Naidu's] role, and all the things he's done over the last 10 years, including getting the company performing again, and his feeling was that the time was right to make a move—for us to find new leadership, and for him to figure out how he wants to go forward."[117] While Naidu will stay on as an advisor

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[110] *New York, New York Empowerment Zone Annual Report*, 2004.
[111] van Putten, "UMEZ Research."
[112] "Directors."
[113] Kourlas, "Harlem Troupe Prepares for Act II," AR10.
[114] "Dance Theater of Harlem," *Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone*.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Allan Kozinn, "Dance Theater of Harlem's Executive Director to Step Down," *ArtsBeat*, December 8, 2014, http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/12/08/dance-theater-of-harlems-executive-director-to-step-down/?_r=1.
[117] Ibid.

through June 2015, Sharon Gersten Luckman, former Executive Director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, was appointed Interim Executive Director in his stead.[118] A few months after Luckman was appointed, though, the titles shifted yet again. As of April 2015, DTH has two "Executive Consultants": Luckman and Anna Glass, who was Managing Director for eight years at 651Arts, a Brooklyn-based organization that promotes "contemporary performing arts and culture of the African Diaspora."[119] The company is still looking for the right Executive Director, which is concerning given DTH's history of problematic administrators.

DTH's board has also restructured recently, arguably creating a new image for the company. Armstrong, formerly vice chairman of the DTH board, replaced Kendrick Ashton, Jr. as chairman in July 2014.[120] Ashton was an investment banker and founder of a financial services firm, while Armstrong is the Senior Vice President and General Manager of Black Entertainment Television International (BET) and Paramount Channel.[121] Between Luckman and Armstrong, this shift in administrative personnel brings two very popular African American brands to Dance Theatre of Harlem: Alvin Ailey and BET. The new management at DTH mirrors the company's transition from an old-fashioned full-scale ballet company, capable of putting on large classic ballets like *Creole Giselle* (1988) or *Firebird* (1982), to a slick chamber ballet troupe performing new mixed bills with small casts. Instead of prioritizing Mitchell's initial vision for DTH as a major classical ballet company, DTH must assert its relevance as an innovative, African American cultural institution in Harlem first.

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[118] Ibid.
[119] "Mission," *651 Arts*, accessed April 19, 2015, http://www.651arts.org/about-us/mission/.
[120] "Michael D. Armstrong Named New Board Chairman of Dance Theatre of Harlem," *The Hamilton Heights-West Harlem Community Preservation Organization*, July 16, 2014, http://westharlemcpo.org/news/michael-d-armstrong-named-new-board-chairman-of-dance-theatre-of-harlem/.
[121] "Kendrick F. Ashton, Jr.," accessed March 4, 2015, http://www.wm.edu/about/administration/bov/members/ashton/index.php; "BET Press | Corporate Information | Executives," *BET Press Room*, accessed January 19, 2015, http://betpressroom.com/corporate/executives/michael_armstrong.

This new identity may be related to the fact that grant money comes with strings attached, especially when it comes from the federal government. When applying for UMEZ funds, DTH needed to prove that it significantly contributed to Harlem's culture, even though the company more often performed downtown or abroad than in Harlem. The school and its *Dancing Through Barriers* (*DTB*) outreach program played a major role in this. *DTB* does not aim to create ballet-admirers; instead, it has a "goal of developing visionaries, leaders and citizen artists who are equipped to make important contributions to our society."[122] The school also offers a Professional Training Program to qualified advanced students, who (in addition to rigorous class schedules and other performance opportunities) present 55-minute school performances that use "dance and dialogue to trace the African American experience from slavery to the present."[123] DTH also offers Sunday Matinee performances that take place in its Harlem studios, and the bill includes "music, dance and drama"—not just ballet.[124] Apart from lecture-demonstrations on classical ballet technique, the company seems to avoid publicly capitalizing on its status as a ballet company, rather than as a diversity- and leadership-building organization.

Most of the outreach efforts come from the DTH school, but the company is crucial to the school's success. As artistic director Virginia Johnson stated in a television interview, "There still aren't that many dancers of color in ballet. And if you don't see yourself on the stage, you don't think there's a place for you."[125] Throughout the centuries ballet has existed, it has always been a predominately white art. Even by 2015, it is huge news that a black ballet dancer, Misty Copeland, is a soloist at American Ballet Theatre—so much that she was named one of *Time*'s

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[122] "Residencies," *Dance Theatre of Harlem*, accessed March 5, 2015, http://www.dancetheatreofharlem.org/outreach/residencies.
[123] "Assemblies," *Dance Theatre of Harlem*, accessed March 5, 2015, http://www.dancetheatreofharlem.org/outreach/assemblies.
[124] "Sunday Matinee," *Dance Theatre of Harlem*, accessed March 5, 2015, http://www.dancetheatreofharlem.org/sundaymatinees.
[125] "Art Loft," Online (Miami: WPBT2, July 9, 2013).

100 Most Influential People this year. Decades after Arthur Mitchell broke a racial barrier when he joined New York City Ballet, there are still few role models for aspiring black ballet dancers, especially women. DTH gives black dancers who are training professionally a tangible goal, ensuring space for them in the ballet world. Perhaps unintentionally, UMEZ revived not only a great dance company, but also the opportunities for black ballet dancers in general.

Conclusion

At Dance Theatre of Harlem's April 2015 season at New York City Center, the audience's enthusiasm was palpable. The show opened with George Balanchine's *Agon*, a particularly important ballet to DTH because Arthur Mitchell originated the principal male role. The dancer in this role performs an acrobatic and sensual pas de deux with the female principal. Mitchell's original partner was the elegant, fair-skinned Diana Adams, and the pairing was undoubtedly a politically and racially charged choice on Balanchine's part. In 2015, the interracial aspect of the pas de deux is not shocking—but there were still audible gasps from the house. To a jaded audience member who has seen *Agon* at New York City Ballet countless times, the extreme flexibility and physics-defying partnering of the central pas de deux comes as no surprise. But to fresh eyes, it looks like magic, and there were many fresh eyes in the audience this spring.

Dance Theatre of Harlem's may be a small story in the greater scheme of federal efforts to enhance cultural capital, but it demonstrates the power of grant programs to subsidize important cultural institutions that reach more than geographic communities. The Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone helped the businesses and residents of Harlem get back on their feet, but it also helped a larger community by ensuring stability for important cultural institutions that speak to more than Harlem. Without the Empowerment Zone grant money, Dance Theatre of Harlem and Harlem's countless other museums and historical landmarks would have fallen into disrepair, diminishing any other improvements in the neighborhood. To make meaningful change in struggling urban areas, policymakers cannot leave cultural institutions behind, or even at the mercy of private donors. Grant programs like Empowerment Zones are crucial to these urban neighborhoods and their community members.

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