

Town of Greenburgh
**ASSISTANT
TOWN HISTORIANS**



— felicia barber + riley wentzler —

*Entertainers for Justice: The Story of
Moms Mabley and Hazel Scott
By: Riley Wentzler & Felicia Barber*



Today there is much controversy over whether it is or is not acceptable for entertainers and professional athletes to use their fame to advance social agendas and political causes. This is ironic given that today we praise those entertainers and athletes who advocated for Civil Rights in the 1950s and 1960s. This article will highlight two courageous African American women in Greenburgh who used their positions as highly skilled entertainers to advance Civil Rights. These women are the comedian Moms Mabley and the jazz musician Hazel Scott.

Moms Mabley (1894–1975):

As previously stated in our article, “Greenburgh & The Arts”, Moms Mabley was a famous African American comedian. Her real name is Loretta Mary Aiken. She was born in Brevard, North Carolina. Her father was a firefighter; he died in the line of duty when she was eleven. She began her career as a comedian with the African-American Vaudeville Circuit at the age of fourteen. In the 1920s, she became a regular performer at Harlem’s Cotton Club. She used her standup comedy routines as a way to reveal and undermine the systemic racism that existed all over the United States at that time. Her subtle yet hilarious routines resonated with African Americans throughout the country. Her most successful comedy albums include: *The Funniest Woman Alive*, *Moms Mabley at the Playboy Club*, and *Moms Mabley at the UN*. In addition to her primary career as a comedian, she also was an actress. She performed in the Broadway show *Fast and Furious: A Colored Revue in 37 Scenes* (1931). Her acting career was so successful that she performed at The Apollo Theater more than any other performer in the 1930’s. She also acted in all of the following movies: *The Big Timers* (1945), *Boarding House Blues* (1948), and the musical revue *Killer Diller* (1948). Sometime in the 1950s, Mabley moved to the Town of Greenburgh where she stayed until her death in 1975(<http://www.greenburghny.com/Cit-e-Access/news/index.cfm?NID=47278&TID=10&jump2=0>) While humor is a powerful way to move people to action, music has the potential to be equally, if not even more, powerful. This is something Hazel Scott understood very well.

Hazel Scott (1920–1981):

Hazel Scott was a jazz musician, actress, political activist; and the first black woman to host her own television show. She was born on June 11, 1920 in the city of Port of Spain, on the Caribbean island of Trinidad. She began playing piano in Port of Spain at the age of three. In 1924, she immigrated with her family to Harlem, New York (<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/scott-hazel-1920-1981/>).

Sometime before her eighth birthday, she traveled to New York City to perform at Lincoln Center. At age eight, she won a scholarship to the Juilliard School of Music (Balfour in MICROSOFT ENCARTA, Reference Library 1993-2003). In the 1930s, she starred in many Broadway Shows and in several movies, she also continued to perform as a concert pianist. As a strong advocate of racial equality, she refused to perform in segregated theaters as an actress or segregated music halls as a concert jazz pianist. She frequently used her fame as an opportunity to

speaking out against racial discrimination in hiring and pay as well as to campaign vigorously against segregation in all institutions. In the next decade, she made history as the first black woman to host her own television show. Unfortunately for her, by 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy and the Republican Party had managed to convince many Americans that the cause of racial equality was tied to communism. Therefore in 1950, she was falsely accused of being a communist sympathizer which led to her television show being canceled. She was shocked and outraged by this development, and therefore left the United States for five years. Then in 1960, she returned to America and was able to resume her television and musical career both of which lasted until her death on October 2, 1981. She died in New York City. (Balfour in MICROSOFT ENCARTA, Reference Library 1993-2003).



We were unable to find when Hazel Scott moved to Greenburgh. Anyone who has any **written documentation** of this fact is asked to please contact us at assistanthistorian@greenburghny.com



Previous Slices of History include:

Hidden History: The Story of Fairview Fairgrounds Part I (7/27/19)
<http://greenburghny.com/Documents/Fairview%20Fairgrounds.pdf>

Beyond Heritage Versus Hate Toward Hope and Reconciliation: The story of Mount Hope Cemetery and its Confederate Monument (7/13/19)
<http://greenburghny.com/Documents/Mt%20Hope%20Cemetery.pdf>

Abandon Ship!!! The Story of United Nuclear Corporation and their Short-lived Elmsford Facility (6/28/19)
http://greenburghny.com/Documents/Microsoft%20Outlook%20-%20Memo%20Style_Redacted.pdf

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<http://greenburghny.com/Documents/Slice%20of%20History%20-%20Recreation%20Part%201.pdf>

From Farmland to Shopping District: The Rise of Central Avenue (5/25/2019) <http://greenburghny.com/Documents/Microsoft%20Outlook%20-%20Memo%20Style.pdf>

Irvington in Chains and our Process A History of Slavery in Irvington and A look at how Slices of History are made (and our interview with historian Robert Marchant) (5/11/2019)
<http://greenburghny.com/Documents/Mail%20-%20jlucasey@greenburghny.com6.pdf>

There is no church here, but “the brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated” this ground: The Story of The Little White Church Cemetery (4/27/19)
http://greenburghny.com/Documents/Memo%20Style_Redacted.pdf

From Fixing Cars to building Infrastructure: How Massaro Park Got its name (4/13/2019) <http://greenburghny.com/Documents/History.pdf>

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Oh, The Places Your Mail has Gone: A History of The Hartsdale Post Office

(3/9/2019) http://greenburghny.com/Documents/Mail%20-%20jlucasey@greenburghny.com_Redacted.pdf

Greenburgh Under the Hollywood Lights: The TV shows and movies Filmed in Greenburgh Part I (2/23/19)

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The Power of Wealth and Humility: A Reflection on Two Highly Influential African Americans (2/18/19)

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An Unspoken Promise of Redemption: How Hartsdale Got its Name (1/31/19)

<http://www.greenburghny.com/Documents/Greenburgh%20is%20one%20of%20the%20few%20communities%20anywhere%20that%20provides%20residents%20with%20frequent%20history%20bytes%20about%20their%20community.pdf>

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The Guardians of History: Greenburgh's Historical Societies (1/6/19)

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How a Flat Tire led to a Happy Escape: The Story of Carvel in Greenburgh

(12/11/18) <http://www.greenburghny.com/Documents/Carvel%20History.pdf>

A Thousand Words Which You Never Knew: The Forgotten Story of the Seal of Greenburgh. (11/17/18)

<http://www.greenburghny.com/Documents/Slice%20of%20History%20-%20A%20Thousand%20Words.pdf>

"The Disappearing Railroad Blues" in Greenburgh: The Fate of the Putnam Railroad Line and the old Putnam Trail ((11/6/18)

<http://www.greenburghny.com/Documents/Slice%20of%20History%20-%20%20Railroad%20Blues.pdf>

A Different Kind of Rebel: Greenburgh's Contributions to the Underground Railroad (10/27/18)

<http://www.greenburghny.com/Documents/GREENBURGH.pdf>

Greenburgh at The Great American Crossroads: Greenburgh's Civil War Story (10/19/18)

<http://www.greenburghny.com/Cit-e-Access/news/index.cfm?NID=47461&TID=10&jump2=0>

Greenburgh's Hall of Heroes: Ferncliff Cemetery Where Memories Live Forever (10/12/18)

<http://www.greenburghny.com/Cit-e-Access/news/index.cfm?NID=47403&TID=10&jump2=0>

A Final Resting Place for "Man's Best Friend": The Peaceable Kingdom (9/29/18)

<http://www.greenburghny.com/Cit-e-Access/news/index.cfm?NID=47331&TID=10&jump2=0>

Greenburgh and The Arts (9/22/18)

<http://www.greenburghny.com/Cit-e-Access/news/index.cfm?NID=47278&TID=10&jump2=0>

Greenburgh's BROTHERLY LOVE, RELIEF AND TRUTH: A History of The Freemasons in Greenburgh (9/12/18)

<http://www.greenburghny.com/Cit-e-Access/news/archnews.cfm?NID=47212&TID=10&jump2=0>

About the Authors:

We are both Assistant Town Historians at Greenburgh Town Hall and we are engaged to be married and are currently looking for permanent employment.

Riley Wentzler:

I was born and raised in a small rural town in central Pennsylvania. In high school, I took every honors course available including four years of Spanish. I received A's in all of them. I graduated third in my class of 146 students. This brought me to Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. Once there, I continued my trend of academic excellence. I graduated summa cum laude in Political Science with a minor in Spanish and a Master's in Communication Studies, with a G.P.A of 3.94. It was also there that I met my lovely fiancée, Felicia Barber. My Master's in Communication has promoted public speaking, teamwork, and customer service. My Political Science degree has developed my research skills using computer-based tools and provided me with experience using the Microsoft Office products. My minor in Spanish has facilitated my bilingual capabilities. During my internship at Greenburgh, I created the petition for the State Roads project using website tools. My diverse education and areas of interest have provided me with a wide range of skills. I look forward to finding a career opportunity in business or government. **To suggest a topic for next week's article, you can contact me at assistanthistorian@greenburghny.com, or to help me find employment, you can contact me at rjwentzler413@gmail.com**

Felicia Barber:

I was born in New York City and raised in Hartsdale, New York. I graduated from Ardsley High School. I recently earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Graphic Design at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. It was here that I met my fiancé, Riley Wentzler. As a result of my academic excellence, I won a scholarship every year. I learned and applied many graphic design skills to projects during my summer internships and at school. I am proficient in using Adobe graphic design applications including Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign. For my Identity/branding course at Edinboro, I created logos to appear on the tee-shirts of Physical Education majors. For a veteran's upcoming event, I used a typeface to focus the reader to the soldier in the poster. For the State Roads Legislative Campaign project, I created the embedded graphic-photo that accompanied the petition I am looking for a job to utilize my skills as a Graphic Designer in an agency, print shop, company or government **To suggest a topic for next week's article, you can contact me at assistanthistorian@greenburghny.com. To learn more about my artwork or to help me find employment you can contact me at feliciadbarber@gmail.com.**

Two Interviews with the authors:

<https://riverjournalonline.com/around-town/a-love-of-history-and-each-other/13708/>

<https://wcbs880.radio.com/articles/news/stories-main-street-couple-cerebral-palsy-brings-manytalents-town-greenburgh>

References

Balfour, L. (1993-2003, (NOT GIVEN) (NOT GIVEN)). Scott, Hazel in MICROSOFT ENCARTA, Reference Library . Redmond , Washington , United States of America .

Mack, D. (2007, January 19). *Hazel Scott (1920-1981)*. Retrieved from Black Past: <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/scott-hazel-1920-1981/>

Town of Greenburgh . (2018, September 22). *News and Information* . Retrieved from Greenburghny.com : <http://www.greenburghny.com/Cit-e-Access/news/index.cfm?NID=47278&TID=10&jump2=0>