

Harlem Center, Child of a Dream

By CLAUDIA JONES

Up in the Harlem community, at 124 W. 124 St., stand an unattractive twin set of four-story buildings. But 1,400 fraternalists in Solidarity Lodge 691 of the International Workers Order are planning to make a fighting dream come true.

The dream is this: to convert these buildings into an attractive streamlined progressive community center; to provide the community with an inter-racial center that will help to service its youth, its educational needs—and above all its cultural needs.

It is the "sort of dream that fights." That's what Miss Beryl Banfield told me when I went up to the IWO center to find out how they were doing.

I learned that the dream's been a-borning for over a year. It began when the members of lodge, which is the second largest in New York State's IWO set-up, and the second largest in the Negro communities of the nation began to swell its ranks.

"Rather than move from room to room," said Miss Banfield, "we thought if we purchased a center, which would in itself be an answer to the undemocratic forces who are

propelling lynch terror on our people, we could contribute to our community and its unity."

She quickly searched her desk for the architects' plan. Edwin Robbins, the architect, has worked out a streamlined center which will begin to take shape next week now that the contractors' bids have been settled.

Enthusiastically, she told me that part of the pride of the lodge members was the assistance that 16 national groups of the National IWO order has pledged. They have set a goal of \$10,000 to help equip the new center. This spirit is matched by numerous fraternal groups, and especially the activity of Negro women, who, Miss Banfield told me, are conducting a drive in the Harlem community to help equip the center.

While the aim is to become a center of progressive activity in the community, the center already services the community. In the building are housed the American Youth for Democracy, the United Veterans for Equality and a teen age workshop group. Forums and participation on such issues as the Ferguson case have marked their activities.

At Pythian Temple, on May 5,



they are planning an affair, which Councilman Ben Davis, and Rubin Saltzman, national secretary of the Jewish Peoples Fraternal Order, will be honored as the Negro and Jew whose contributions have been outstanding in creating unity between the two peoples.

It's a fighting dream, this center, and it will come true.