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SOUTH END

### Jones taps memories to bring 'Numbers Queen' back to life

Katherine Butler Jones is a founder of METCO, a professor, a writer, a historian and a grandmother. Now she's adding one more title to her resume: playwright. Her first work, "409 Edgecombe Avenue: The House on Sugar Hill," telling the story of Madame Stephanie St. Clair, the legendary "Numbers Queen" of Harlem, will debut at the Boston Center for the Arts next month.

Jones grew up in the building where St. Clair lived, along with other black leaders, including Thurgood Marshall, W.E.B. DuBois, Walter White and Eunice Carter. She learned about St. Clair, who had gold coins embedded in her furniture, from the mother of a friend who collected the building's rents.

St. Clair "was a revolutionary woman when women didn't have that kind of power," Jones said.

In recent years, Jones had begun writing about her life, and in particular about the building where she lived from her birth in 1936 until 1957, when she married and moved to Boston. After part of her memoir was published in *The Harlem Reader*, a friend told her the story would make a good play. Jones began studying playwriting at the ACT Roxbury Consortium, and developed the story into a play chosen by a Boston theater company, *Up You Mighty Race*.

These days, she is watching rehearsals as the actors bring her words to the stage.

"This presented an opportunity to make that experience live and to pay tribute to all of these people who lived through this time," she said.

*"409 Edgecombe Avenue: The House on Sugar Hill" will be performed April 5-21 at the Boston Center for the Arts Plaza Theatre, 539 Tremont St., 617-426-2787.*

KATHLEEN BURGE

WEST END

### New showroom celebrates disabled-friendly designs

More than 100 people gathered Monday at a first-floor office complex on Portland Street for the opening of the Institute for Human Centered Design.

Its gadget-laden showroom and library is a work of monument of sorts to the idea that we're all aging, many of us are disabled, and an awful lot of people need things made easier for them to use.

Valerie Fletcher, 55, executive director since

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