



Marker is located on the southwest corner of Hummock Avenue and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.

Marker text:

1935-

An Atlantic City native, LaSane devoted her life to the Arts and was the first African-American

Woman appointed to the New Jersey State Council of the Arts. She served as Director of the Atlantic City Children's Theatre and Drama Consultant for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Complex, the Center for Early Childhood Education and the Atlantic City Board of Education.

Beginning a career as a high fashion model, Joanna was the first Atlantic County female to model internationally. She appeared in Vogue, Redbook, Look, Life, Ebony and Glamour, and was the first black model to do a prime time commercial seen coast to coast. Mrs. LaSane served on the Board of Directors of the Atlantic County Cultural and Heritage Commission and the Atlantic City Arts Commission. She received numerous awards such as being listed in the Who's Who Among Black Americans, the N.J. State Senate Cultural Arts Award and was inducted into the Atlantic County Women's Hall of Fame in 1996.

Additional information:

Joanna LaSane's performing and modeling career has brought her international acclaim, but not always without resistance. LaSane's mother was a graduate of Madame Sarah Spencer Washington's Apex Beauty School, an institution which promoted an increasingly-dated concept of African-American beauty which included many products to straighten and take out the natural crimping of black hair. Joanna, conversely, preferred to keep her hair looking natural. Her mother asserted that this would be a detriment to her career, but, as advertising agencies began to portray African-Americans in a truer and less stereotypical sense, Joanna's look was exactly what they wanted. Joanna's appearance in a Pepsi advertisement launched her modeling career, but the original passion which she later returned to as a theatre director was dance. LaSane attended the American School of Ballet in New York, and the International School of Dance at Carnegie Hall. She also received training from Lloyd Richards, the Dean of Yale University's School of Drama. LaSane has called dancing "The ultimate in physical fitness," and has stated that "the most important part of education is to tie everything in with the arts." Joanna is married to Karlos LaSane, the

first black man to be elected to a public office in Atlantic City.

For more information, see these resources in the Atlantic City Free Public Library, Atlantic City Heritage Collections:

Johnson, Nelson: *The Northside*

Atlantic City Press, article from May 9, 1989

"Black History Month 2008: A Title of Respect" Heston Coll. 305.874985