

Harlem legend faces eviction

By HERB BOYD

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One of Harlem's most venerated elders is threatened with eviction from his office on 125th Street.

Harlem legend Preston Wilcox told the Amsterdam News last week that he has been served papers to vacate the premises he has occupied for more than a decade.

Wilcox received a notice of termination of his lease in

March and must be out of the building, which is near the Apollo, by the end of May.

"You are hereby notified that the owner elects to terminate your tenancy as of April 30, 2005," said the court order from Civil Court and brought by Bishop S.C. Madison, a trustee for the United House of Prayer for All People of the Church on the Rock of the Apostolic Faith. Wilcox was told that if he remained in the premises

beyond the specified date for his departure he could be forced to pay "the fair market value in lieu of the payment that you have been making for use and occupancy."

"I don't owe them any money," Wilcox declared during an interview last week outside his office. "They want me to pay what the previous occupants owe." He said that when he moved into the building he signed a lease with two others, both of whom are no longer in the office.

The irony of all this, Wilcox laughed, is that he helped the church to purchase the building some 12 years ago. "I was on the board of the Harlem Commonwealth and cast one of the deciding votes in their favor," he said. "Now they want to evict me."

Attempts to reach attorney Edwin Eisen, who is representing the petitioner, were unsuccessful. Bishop Madison could not be reached at his office in Washington D.C. either.

Wilcox, who is best known for his long association with Malcolm X and the publication of Afram Newservice, said that another court date is slated for May 25.

"Many of the tenants in the building are preparing letters to support me," Wilcox said. "I think they believe if they can successfully evict me, it will be easier to get rid of others in the building."