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The Harlem Community Newspapers, Inc. Connecting Harlem, Queens, Brooklyn and The Bronx

HARLEM NEWS

COMMUNITY

"Good News You Can Use"

Vol. 32 No. 47

November 20 - November 26, 2025

Free



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2025 TCS**

**NYC Marathon
Runners Support
Scholarships**

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Production of
the Brooklyn
Nutcracker**

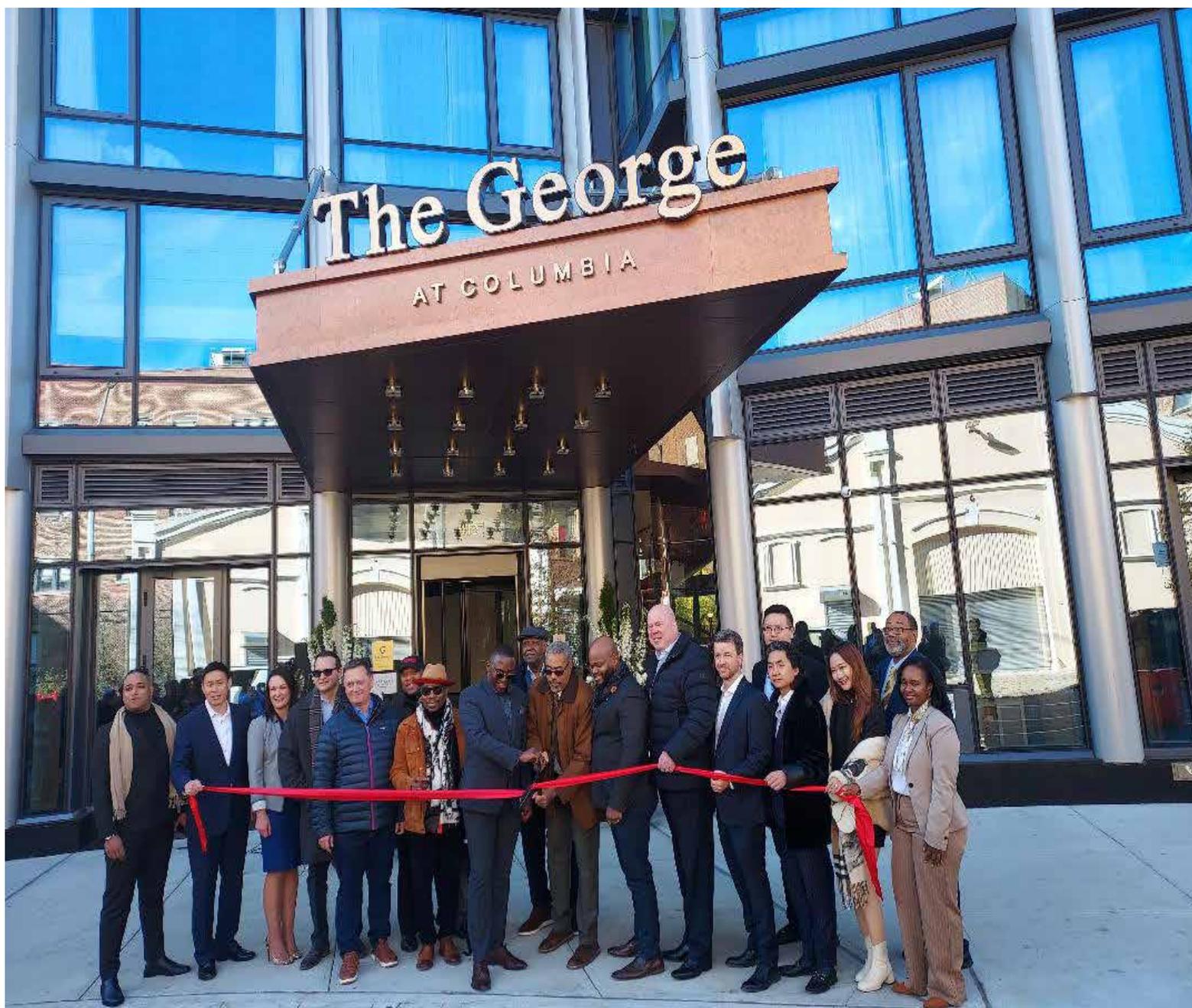
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OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Harlem Community Newspapers, Inc. will publish positive news and information. Our mission is to deliver “good” and informative news to our readers focusing on health, education, housing, business and employment opportunities. We look for and publish results, not problems. We promote businesses, opportunities and events happening in the communities we serve. We are dedicated to providing our readers with valuable information they can use to improve the quality of life for themselves, their families and our communities.

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BROOKLYN COMMUNITY NEWS
BRONX COMMUNITY NEWS
QUEENS COMMUNITY NEWS

Free copies distributed in your community weekly

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PAT STEVENSON

In this week’s issue, we proudly highlight the annual “Equal Opportunity” Awards Celebration hosted by the National Urban League. This year, the event was renamed the Vernon Jordan Awards Celebration in honor of the organization’s former president, whose leadership and vision continue to inspire.

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We also turn our attention to philanthropist Mackenzie Scott, who recently donated more than one billion dollars to HBCUs. Her generosity comes at a critical time, as the nation wrestles with diminishing emphasis on diversity and inclusion.

(see page 13)

As the holiday season approaches, we encourage you to experience the culturally rich and diverse Brooklyn Nutcracker, a performance that reimagines tradition through the lens of community and heritage

(see page 9)

With all the challenges of today’s world, gratitude can feel elusive. Yet, let us pause to be thankful that God has blessed us with another day to love, to live, and to uplift one another.

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Pat Stevenson
Celebrating
32 Years Publishing

Roads to Success 2025 TCS NYC Marathon Runners Support Scholarships and College Readiness Programs

Christopher Pearson of Harlem Crosses the Finish Line for Roads to Success

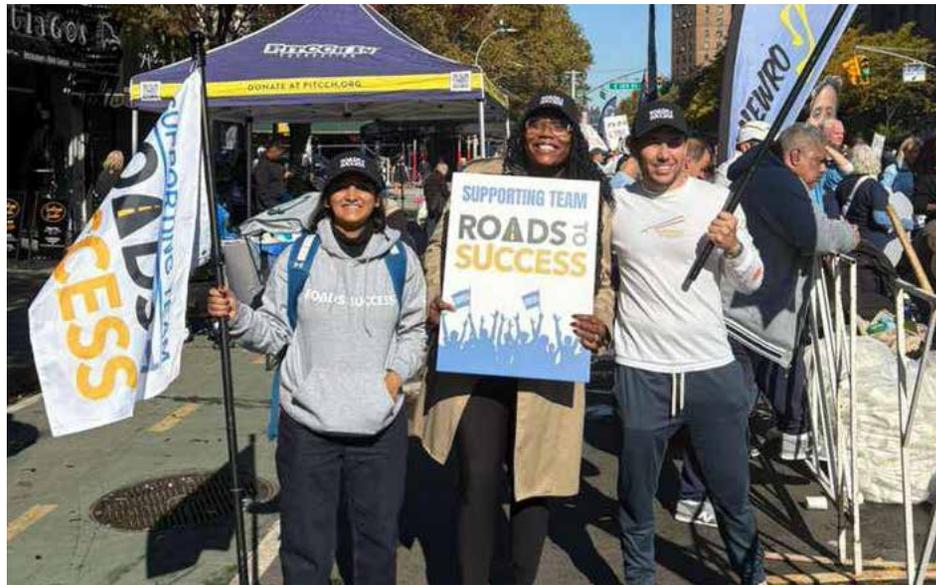
All 11 of the Roads to Success runners crossed the finish line at the 2025 TCS NYC Marathon, and they did much more than run 26.2 miles. Together they raised over \$50,000 for Roads to Success scholarships and college readiness programs, resources that open doors and change lives.

“Our runners carried our mission through the neighborhoods we serve,” said Sheila Duke, Chief Executive Officer, Roads to Success. “They trained through early mornings and long evenings and rallied friends, families and colleagues to support our youth. Their

achievement marks a promise of opportunity for our young people.”

Roads to Success 2025 TCS NYC Marathon runners include: Mustafa Ali Fermawi; Lauren Jones; Francisco Bernard; Juan Felipe Zuleta; Dan Buehler; Tim O’Shea; Masha Leonov; Christopher Pearson; Chris Breen; Cody Sheng, and Kimberly Leone.

“By running with Roads to Success and supporting our cause, volunteers ran through the communities we invest in and places that need our support,” said Gregorio Concha Toro, Roads to Success Chairman. “The marathon was the culmination of months of long runs in wind and rain, early-morning mileage and the mental work



of determination. Equally impressive was the fundraising journey: phone calls, emails, neighborhood meetups, social posts and countless personal asks. Each dollar raised supports a young person’s potential and turns their dreams into

reality.” Roads to Success, a non-profit organization, empowers our future leaders and changemakers by helping young people, ages 4 to 24, discover their potential, pursue their passions and open doors to brighter

futures. Founded in 2001, Roads to Success serves over 8,000 youth and young adults annually. The Road to Success comprehensive approach encompasses academic support, social-emotional learning, workforce skill development, finan-

cial literacy, wellness, and post-secondary orientation. For more information please visit: <https://www.roadstosuccess.org>

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PONDER THIS! Careful, Children are Listening



self into a conversation that adults were having, even when I was within hearing distance.

As I entered my teens, an understanding of what was mysterious and intriguing in what grown folk talk about became a reality. I did not understand what grown folk were talking about. My young mind could not make sense of most of it.

I discovered that grown folk have a history of experiences that they share in a conversation that does not need in-depth explanation between them. They lived what they talked about, and they vent it repeatedly with each other with laughter and pain often in language

that can be termed as unacceptable to young ears.

There are portions of grown folk talk that can mesmerize a young mind and at the same time cause confusion and misunderstanding. Words overheard in conversation without a proper explanation can be detrimental to the development of a child who tries to make sense of what they heard at the level of their understanding.

Too often words overheard by children are misconstrued and taken as truth, when they may be simply grown folk talking trash and enjoying pure nonsense for fun.

Popular vocalist, legend

Barbra Streisand recorded a song that was in the Broadway production "In the Woods." The lyrics speak profoundly about how impressionable children are.

"Careful the things you say, children will listen. Careful about the things you do, children will see and learn. Children will look to you, for which way to turn, to learn what to be. Careful before you say, listen to me.

It is a scientific fact that the brain develops at its highest level during the first six years of life. Infants become aware of their surroundings and influences around daily. Their first example of character and

personality is open to what they hear and see. Examples available to children at that early age come from those in charge of their care.

The early life of a child is so profound that many incidences they experience, hear, and see are not forgotten and continue to affect their growth and behavior throughout their entire life.

This message is not written as advice for young mothers, but for grandparents and childcare providers, as well. Remember, children listen and they remember what they hear.

In their innocence and naivete, they will repeat what they hear you say and often pick up a habit of us-

ing foul language because they feel it is justified language expression if they hear it from adults.

If we are puzzled by the language that we hear spewed boldly from our children, it would behoove us to check our use of language. Foul words are not necessary or mandatory expressions. Watching your mouth is good advice.

[Hazel Rosetta Smith is a journalist, playwright, and artistic director for Help Somebody Theatrical Ministries. Former, retired Managing Editor of the New York Beacon. Contact: www.hazelrosettasmith.com]

It is not unusual to hear an adult warn a child, "Grown folk are talking." I understood those words to mean that I was not to hear whatever adults were talking about and clearly never to ask any questions or interject my-

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Expanding These ACS Programs Will Help More Young People Living in Foster Care Build New Lives



By Mayor Eric Adams

Young people living in foster care in our city need help building a strong future where they are set up for success. As an administration committed to uplifting all our city's youth, we are here to make sure those young people connect to college and career opportunities more easily. That is why, last week, we expanded multiple programs through the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) that support children in foster care.

First, we are expanding 'Fair Futures,' which provides one-on-one coaching and tutoring for our young people in foster care — ages 11 to 26 — helping them plan for the future and giving them a head start in life. In Fiscal Year 2024, our coaches, working in partnership with New York City Public Schools, helped a majority of 9th graders in foster care enroll in high schools

with above average graduation rates. They also helped 116 high school-age youth who dropped out of high school successfully re-engage and re-enroll in a best-fit academic setting. And while the numbers are important here, they do not tell the full story: the story of those individual lives that are changed when they get support, guidance, and the first and second chances they need to succeed.

Fair Futures began in 2019 and, thanks to the courageous and effective advocacy of youth in our care, was later expanded by our administration to include young people involved in the juvenile justice system. Over 4,000 young people who have been in foster care or the juvenile justice system now have dedicated coaches, a number that will expand to approximately 6,000 young people by Fiscal Year 2027 — a 50 percent increase.

In addition to coaching, Fair Futures provides a range of academic, career development, housing, and independent living support systems for young people in foster care or in the juvenile justice system. This is a program that does more than just open doors — it transforms lives.

We are also expanding the 'College Choice' program, which we launched in 2022, and that provides kids in foster care with robust support systems, including financial support, as they head off to college. The program covers the tuition, room and board costs of a two-year or four-year college, in addition to providing young people with a daily stipend. The program is expanding from serving 400 young people to 500 youth, a 25 percent increase.

Building off the success of College Choice, we are launching our new 'Career Choice' program that will connect young people in foster care who are in vocational, trade, or workforce development programs with financial and social support because college may not always be the right path for every young person. Overall, the Career Choice program will serve approximately 400 youth.

These expansions and innovations are part of a \$163-million investment we announced at this year's State of the City address that will help us reach 8,000 total participants across five popular ACS programs — including the three mentioned above, as well as GirlsJustUs and Assertive Community Engagement &

Success — that serve youth in foster care and those involved in the criminal justice system. Together, these programs will help connect more New York City youth with counseling, college opportunities, careers, and more.

This is a city of opportunity, and we are committed to helping young New Yorkers fulfill their potential. We are all invested in the success of our young people because as I often say, 'if we don't educate, we will incarcerate.' And education doesn't simply stop the day you graduate from high school, as every young person needs some help choosing the right path to take, whether that is enrolling in college or learning a trade.

Since we launched the Fair Futures and College Choice programs, more young people in foster care have had the opportunity to finish high school and attend college. By expanding these programs and adding in support for those attending vocational and trade schools, we are proud to support the next generation of New Yorkers while ensuring they have every opportunity to afford to live and thrive right here in our city.



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Home Buying in Harlem Be Prepared to Buy Now



By Rev. Dr. Charles Butler

Can anyone afford to buy a home in Harlem? Perhaps, one of the first steps in the home buying process is to become 'mortgage ready.' This means you must have an adequate amount of money saved for the down payment and closing costs in either savings or assets that can be liquidated.

In addition to having a solid credit history most lenders require at least 24 months of clean credit and a minimum of 3-4 active credit accounts. This means no late payments on any credit account for the past two years. Your accounts could be major credit cards, retail store credit card, auto loan or lease payment, or student loan payments. Some lenders have become more lenient and will accept one maybe two late payments, but it will have to be at least over 18 months ago.

If you do not have 3-4 active lines of credit, some lenders will use some non-traditional credit accounts such as rent receipts, cell phone or utility bills showing at least 12-month on time payment history. However usually the lenders will still require at least one major credit card when considering your pre-approval application.

Your monthly household budget is the primary tool to help you with this calculation. Your budget will tell you how much you can save, how much you can afford, and how soon you will be ready to buy. The bank will determine your pre-approval amount based on your gross monthly income, but your budget is based on net income. Your other monthly living expenses will also have to be factored into the equation. These are crucial steps in the home buying process, because you want to make sure that you will be able to meet your monthly mortgage obligation and these other expenses

Then you must decide on a mortgage lender. Remember not all lenders will offer the same types

of mortgage products. The next step in the process is to determine how much you can afford to spend on the home (monthly mortgage payments). Then select the location and the type of property to purchase.

In today's market, most lenders are only lending about 3 - 4 times your annual income. This is why it is so difficult to purchase a home in Harlem. New banking regulations will not allow a borrower's debt to income (DTI) ratio to exceed 43% of your monthly gross income. Even if the bank wanted to lend you more money it would be prohibited under these new guidelines.

This means you must have more money for a larger down payment to offset the purchase price and the amount of money you will be qualified to borrow. This point again emphasizes the importance of aggressively saving as much money as possible to successfully buy a home in Harlem.

For more information on the home buying process contact Rev. Dr. Charles Butler at (212) 281-4887 ext. 231 or email cbutler@hcci.org.

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HARLEM EVENTS

Nov 20-Dec 14, Sat 7pm, Sat 2pm. Wed 3pm, Sun 3pm
"The Wash" by Kelundra Smith

Woodie King Jr.'s New Federal Theatre to present a return engagement of "The Wash" by Kelundra, a play inspired by the Atlanta Washer women's Strike of 1881. Incredible, if little-known interracial labor uprising takes center stage. Being held at WP Theater - 2162 Broadway @ 76th St. Presented by Woodie King, Jr.'s New Federal Theatre, Elizabeth Van Dyke, Producing Artistic. Tickets \$30-\$45

Nov 28-Dec 28 7-10PM
Make It a Night to Remember at the Holiday Train Show at Bronx Botanical Gardens

Let roving train conductors welcome you to experience the Holiday Train Show® in a whole new light as we illuminate the exhibition for Holiday Train Nights—lively after-dark celebrations where you can sip seasonal cocktails and mocktails under the glass of the warm and twinkling Haupt Conservatory. Find card-worthy photo ops at every turn as you explore a miniature cityscape of familiar landmarks brought to life by model trains zipping to and fro. Bop along to holiday classics and Christmas pop favorites sung by performers, enjoy sweet and savory bites for purchase, or hop over to the "Bar Car"—back this year with a 21+ bar at the Hudson Garden Grill Patio. You can even get your holiday shopping done at NYBG Shop. It's the perfect night out, whether you're planning a memorable date or a wintertime gathering with friends! Tickets Non-Members – starting at \$43

Dec 6
Harlem Fashion Week Pop-Up being held at Aloft Harlem

Vendor showcase featuring local fashion, accessories, and beauty brands being held at 2296 Frederick Douglass Blvd., Free entry

Dec 6, 11:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Sana Sana Holiday Traditions Market

Sana Sana Holiday Traditions Market Brings Culture, Creativity, and Community Healing to East Harlem being held at El Barrio's Artspace PS109, 215 E 99th St, New York, NY
 This event will warm the season with joy, ancestral memory, and community healing. Featuring over 20 BIPOC and women-owned small businesses, the market is a festive celebration of culture, care, and creativity. Rooted in the traditions of our abuelas and the bold innovation of modern healers and makers, this event offers more than shopping — it's a space to connect, create, and celebrate. Local vendors offering handmade goods, spiritual tools, cultural foods, skincare, art & more. Low-cost wellness workshops including: Tincture blending, Wreath making with sustainable materials, Affirmation card making, Music to keep the energy high. A warm, welcoming space for all ages, backgrounds, and identities



Botanical Garden Bronx Holiday Train Show Nov-Dec

HARLEM LEGIONNAIRES' TOWN HALL MEETING

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HOLIDAY

HARLEM COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

Culturally Inclusive Production of the Brooklyn Nutcracker Dec 6-14

Brooklyn Ballet, the interdisciplinary dance company known for convention and celebrating collaboration, proudly presents its annual production of “The Brooklyn Nutcracker” at the Theater at City Tech in Downtown Brooklyn, December 6-14, 2025. Following last year’s sold-out run the production returns for five performances across two weekends with four additional community matinees welcoming nearly 4,000 local students from public schools and senior centers across the borough.

A beloved Brooklyn tradition, The Brooklyn Nutcracker is New York’s only culturally inclusive interpretation of Tchaikovsky’s holiday masterpiece. The production weaves ballet, street dance, and a vibrant mosaic of world dance

forms into a magical retelling of the holiday classic reflective of the borough’s boundless diversity and energy.

Conceived and choreographed by Artistic Director Lynn Parkerson, The Brooklyn Nutcracker transforms familiar scenes into a dazzling journey through time and place, from Victorian Flatbush to modern-day Brooklyn with detours through beloved landmarks including the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and the Flatbush Avenue subway platform. Audiences meet a pop-and-locking Herr Drosselmeyer performed by Michael “Big Mike” Fields, a Krumping Rat King embodied by Brian “Hallowdreamz” Henry, and a voguing Mother Ginger, set against the sweeping grandeur of the Snow Scene, Waltz of the Flowers, and Grand Pas de Deux.

This year’s production unites an extraordinary range of global traditions on one stage — from classical dancers from China and a spirited Ukrainian Hopak, to Native American Hoop Dance, African Dance, Flamenco, and Belly Dance. In Act II, Aliesha Bryan, first-place winner of Flamenco Certamen 2016, returns with fiery precision in Spanish Hot Chocolate, while Sira Melikian brings passion and authenticity to the sultry Arabian Coffee. Shandien Sonwai LaRance, who spent nearly a decade under the big top of Cirque du Soleil’s TOTEM, continues the legacy of her late brother Nakotah in her breathtaking hoop dance — a hallmark of the production since its inception.

Each tableau pays homage to the original choreography of Petipa and Ivanov while

embracing the sounds, styles, and spirit of contemporary Brooklyn, creating a holiday experience as vibrant and diverse as the borough itself.

This year’s production features an exceptional lineup of guest artists, including Kamala Saara, Derek Brockington, and Kouadio Davis of Dance Theatre of Harlem; Crystal Serrano, formerly of Dance Theatre of Harlem and Pacific Northwest Ballet; and George Sanders, whose career spans Broadway, The National Ballet of China, and collaborations with Twyla Tharp. Together, they bring unparalleled artistry and range to this year’s performances, embodying Brooklyn Ballet’s vision of diversity and excellence on stage.

“The Brooklyn Nutcracker has always been about more than a performance, it’s a reflection of the city we love,”



says Artistic Director Lynn Parkerson. “This year, as dancers from so many cultures and traditions share the same stage, audiences see Brooklyn’s beauty and diversity come to life in movement, music, and joy. It’s a celebration for families, for communities, and for everyone who believes in the power of dance to unite us.”

Blending tradition and innovation, The Brooklyn Nut-

cracker creates a world where cultures meet, styles collide, and the timeless story of The Nutcracker is reborn for a new generation.

PERFORMANCE

SCHEDULE

The Brooklyn Nutcracker runs for five performances at The Theater at City Tech:

Dec 6 at 7:00 PM

Dec 7 at 3:00 PM

Dec 13 at 3:00 & 7:00 PM



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The George Hotel at Columbia Opens Its Doors in Harlem

On November 18, Harlem welcomed a new landmark in hospitality with the grand opening of The George Hotel at Columbia, a Hilton property located at 412 West 126th Street. The event marked not only the debut of a modern hotel in the heart of Harlem but also a celebration of community, culture, and collaboration.

The ribbon cutting ceremony drew an impressive gathering of local leaders and organizations who have long championed Harlem's growth and vibrancy. Representatives from the Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce, the Harlem Commonwealth Council, the Harlem Tourism Board, and the

Women Chamber of Commerce were all present to lend their support. Their attendance underscored the significance of the hotel's arrival, not just as a business venture but as a symbol of Harlem's continued renaissance.

At the helm of The George Hotel is a general manager who proudly hails from Harlem, Sam Martinez. His appointment reflects Hilton's commitment to ensuring that the hotel is deeply rooted in the neighborhood it serves. By placing leadership in the hands of someone who understands Harlem's history, culture, and aspirations, the hotel aims to create an authentic experience for visitors while fostering meaningful ties



GM of The George Sam Martinez is a Harlem Native

with the local community.

The George Hotel is designed to welcome tourists eager to explore both New York City and Harlem's unique cultural landscape. With Columbia University just steps away, the location offers guests easy access to academic, cultural, and historical attractions. From the Apollo Theater to the Studio Museum in Harlem, visitors will find themselves immersed in a neighborhood that has shaped American music, art, and literature for generations.

Community leaders emphasized that the hotel's opening represents more than just new accommodations—it is an opportunity to showcase Harlem as a destination in its own right. Tourism boards and chambers of commerce have long advocated for Harlem's inclusion in the broader narrative of New York travel, and The George Hotel provides a gateway for visitors to experience the neighborhood's rich heritage.

The grand opening ceremony was filled with optimism and pride. Speeches high-

lighted Harlem's resilience and its ability to attract investment while maintaining its cultural authenticity. The presence of Hilton, a global hospitality brand, signals confidence in Harlem's future as a thriving hub for tourism and business.

Guests at The George Hotel can expect Hilton's signature blend of comfort and sophistication, paired with a distinctly Harlem flavor. The property promises modern amenities, stylish design, and a welcoming atmosphere that reflects the neighborhood's warmth and creativity. By com-

binning world class service with local character, the hotel is poised to become a preferred destination for travelers seeking both convenience and cultural immersion.

As the doors officially opened, the message was clear: Harlem is ready to welcome the world. The George Hotel at Columbia stands as a beacon of hospitality, community pride, and opportunity. For tourists arriving in New York, it offers not just a place to stay, but an invitation to discover Harlem's enduring spirit.

National Urban League Renames “Equal Opportunity Dinner” to Honor the late Vernon Jordan

The National Urban League’s prestigious annual awards gala has been officially renamed to honor the late Vernon E. Jordan, who served as the organization’s transformative Executive Director from 1971 to 1981, President and CEO Marc H. Morial announced during the event last night at the New York Marriott Marquis.

“For more than six decades, this dinner has been a celebration of equality, opportunity, and achievement — a gathering that has honored leaders who shattered barriers and advanced justice across our nation,” Morial said. “This evening, we embrace a new chapter. A

chapter that pays tribute to a towering figure in civil rights, a statesman, a counselor, and a champion for progress. Now, we proudly rename this occasion the Vernon E. Jordan Equal Opportunity Dinner — ensuring that his legacy of leadership, courage, and service endures in this room for generations to come.”

The Equal Opportunity Dinner is among the National Urban League’s top fund-raisers for the year. Each year, the National Urban League marks the anniversary of the Gettysburg Address by honoring stellar corporations, individuals and organizations that have championed the principles of equal opportunity, civil rights, and social justice. Proceeds from the dinner allow the Urban League Movement to serve nearly four million people annually through its network of 93 affiliates nationwide.

This year’s awardees include NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell, who received the President’s Award; BET Co-Founder Sheila Johnson, who received the Corporate Leadership Award; and hip-hop pioneer Doug E. Fresh, who received the Arts Award.

Google General Counsel Halimah DeLaine Prado received the Charles Collins Distinguished Trustee Award.

“More than 160 years ago, following the bloodiest battle of a bitter civil war, Abraham Lincoln asked whether a nation



Halimah and Murphy Honored



Honoree Shelia co-founder BET



Honoree Doug E Fresh



Shanice Performed



Gov Kathy Hochul.

dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal can long endure,” Morial said. “As we gather to commemorate the Gettysburg Address and honor those who remain committed to that proposition, that question has seldom been more urgent. Our honorees truly embody the spirit of Lincoln’s call for a new birth of freedom.”

The celebration featured a performance by Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter Shanice; R&B artist Tru Osborne led the traditional Black anthem “Lift

Every Voice and Sing.” CBS News anchors Errol Barnett and Jericka Duncan served as masters of ceremony.

“The Equal Opportunity Awards Gala is an opportunity to reflect on the strides the National Urban League and the broader civil rights community have made in the face of unprecedented challenges over the past year,” National Urban League Board of Trustees Chair Tim Murphy said. “It is a declaration that champions of economic inclusion and social equity will not be deterred.”



NYUL CEO Mark C. Morial (right)

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“It’s

Master Builder, Master Designer: Bianca Keith's Architectural Edge in Interior Design



By Tonya Sims

This article is in a 5-part series focusing on women in STEAM fields. For this installment, we sit down with interior designer Bianca Keith for

a one-on-one conversation, as she shares the foundational experiences that have shaped her to become a design expert.

Architectural Discipline Meets Interior Art

Bianca's interior design is rooted in the rigorous discipline of her Master's of Architecture (M.Arch), focusing on scale, proportion, and balance. "In architectural design, each element is related to and sometimes depends on the previous element," Bianca explains. "I view interior design in a similar way." This process treats the interior as an extension of the building's blueprint. By first understanding the room's structural pur-

pose, she meticulously creates the design, guided by the client's unique style.

For instance, a rug's dimensions dictate the scale of the furniture placed upon it. Bianca uses this precise control to introduce drama and balance—much like drawing the eye up from the seating area to the cabinet, window treatments, and finally to the ceiling. She applies this structure to materials: "If the material palette is vastly cream tones on the sofa and accent chairs, I'll add patterned fabrics which might have a cream base but incorporate blues or gold and have texture."

The Art of Composition: Family's Influence

Bianca champions the Art component of STEAM. Her understanding of composition stems from a cherished childhood pastime: designing dollhouses using discarded ends of wallpaper and fabric.

She credits her creative parents for this essential foundation. Her father is a professional photographer who also enjoys architecture. Her mother was excellent at sewing and would rearrange the furniture layouts with ease. Bianca stated, "Seeing her create with her hands and always improving our home and making it beautiful and functional was laying the groundwork for my future."

Bianca views art as a vital mental approach. "Art speaks to the heart and soul," she states. "Art forces you to look at things from a different lens. You have to observe and interpret various elements and think sort of outside the box." This holistic approach ensures she delivers a truly personalized space.

Impactful Changes & Client-Focused Touches

To instantly transform a space, Bianca's top tip is to add lighting. She recommends using multiple sources—such as a chandelier, recessed lighting in the ceiling, and even a floor lamp. Lighting is key to adding "vibrancy and is also a very functional component to the space. Her advice: "Whenever you can add a dimmer, do it!"

For creating a polished look without a significant investment, Bianca suggests incorporating highly personal and unique items from travel or thrift stores and adding fresh flowers and greenery. Ultimately, Interiors by Bianca applies the precision of architecture to ensure results are structurally sound, perfectly balanced, and meticulously customized.

Ready for a refresh? Contact Bianca today to transform your space by visiting www.interiorsbybianca.com or calling 646-389-9887.



Bianca Keith

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Mackenzie Scott's Billion-Dollar Defiance of America's War on Diversity

By Stacy M. Brown,
Black Press USA

There are moments in American life when truth steps forward and refuses to be convenient. MacKenzie Scott has chosen such a moment. As political forces move to strip diversity from classrooms, silence Black scholarship and erase equity from public life, she has gone in the opposite direction. She has invested her wealth in the communities this country has spent centuries trying to marginalize.

Her most recent gifts to historically Black colleges and universities surpass \$400 million this year alone. These are not gestures. They are declarations. They say that the education of Black students is not optional, not expendable and not dependent on the approval of those who fear what an educated Black

citizenry represents.

And she is not the only woman doing what America's institutions have refused to do. Melinda French Gates has poured billions into women and girls across the globe, ensuring that the people whose rights are most fragile receive the most support. At a time when this nation tries to erase Black history and restrict the rights of women, two white women once married to two of the richest white men in the world have made clear where they stand. They have said, through their giving, that marginalized people deserve not just acknowledgment but investment.

At Prairie View A and M University, Scott's \$63 million gift became the largest in the institution's 149-year history. "This gift is more than generous. It is defining and affirming," President Tomikia P. LeGrande said. "MacK-

enzie Scott's investment amplifies the power and promise of Prairie View A and M University." The university said it plans to strengthen scholarships, expand faculty research and support critical programs in artificial intelligence, public health, agricultural sustainability and cybersecurity.

Howard University received an \$80 million donation that leaders described as transformative. "On behalf of the entire Howard University community, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to Ms. MacKenzie Scott for her extraordinary generosity and steadfast belief in Howard University's mission," Wayne A. I. Frederick said. The gift will support student aid, infrastructure and key expansions in academic and medical research.

Elsewhere, the impact ripples outward. Voorhees University re-

ceived the largest gift in its 128-year history. Norfolk State, Morgan State, Spelman, Winston-Salem State, Virginia State, Alcorn State and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore all confirmed contributions that will reshape their futures. Bowie State University received \$50 million, also a historic mark. "We are profoundly grateful to MacKenzie Scott for her visionary commitment to education and equity," President Aminta Breaux said. "The gift empowers us to expand access and uplift generations of students who will lead, serve and innovate."

These gifts arrive at a moment when America attempts to revise its own memory. Curriculum bans seek to remove Black history from classrooms. Political movements claim that diversity is dangerous. Women's contributions are minimized. And institutions that have



MacKenzie Scott

served Black communities for more than a century must withstand both political hostility and financial neglect.

Scott's philanthropy does not simply counter these forces. It exposes them. It announces that Black students, Black institutions and Black futures deserve resources worthy of their brilliance. It declares that women's leadership

is not marginal but central to the fight for justice.

Scott's giving suggests an understanding of this. She has aligned herself with institutions that protect truth, expand opportunity and preserve the stories this country tries to erase. She has chosen the side of history that refuses silence.

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The United States Needs More Afterschool Programs, New Study Finds

(StatePoint)

Ninety-five percent of parents with a child enrolled in an afterschool program are satisfied with that program, and there is overwhelming support for more government funding for afterschool, according to a new study. But unmet demand for these programs is high in all 50 states, and majorities of middle- and low-income families who want afterschool programs are being shut out.

The parents of 29.6 million children, more than half the school-age students in the United States, want afterschool programs for their children – but just 7 million children are cur-

rently enrolled. Another 22.6 million children would attend afterschool programs if they were available. That means three in four of the children (77%) whose parents want to enroll them in an afterschool program are being left behind. Cost, availability, and accessibility are the barriers families cannot overcome.

Those are among the findings of “America After 3PM 2025,” a report released in October by the Afterschool Alliance. The survey of 30,515 U.S. parents of school-age children finds a wide, and widening, opportunity gap, with children in low- and middle-income families more likely to be without the afterschool pro-

grams their parents want for them than children in high-income families. Families in the highest income bracket now spend approximately nine times as much on out-of-school time activities as families in the lowest income bracket, up sharply from five years ago.

“Afterschool programs give students a safe place to go after the school day ends, boost their academic achievement, help address the youth mental health and chronic absenteeism crises, provide alternatives to screen time, give working parents peace of mind that their children are safe and supervised, and more,” said Afterschool Alliance executive director Jodi Grant.

“But there aren’t nearly enough afterschool programs to meet the need.”

More than 8 in 10 parents agree that afterschool programs provide opportunities for children to learn life skills like interacting with peers and responsible decision making, and help them develop teamwork, critical thinking, and leadership skills. Eighty-four percent say afterschool programs allow working parents to keep their jobs or work more hours, and 92% of parents with a child in a program say they are less stressed knowing their child is safe. To learn more about the study, visit afterschoolalliance.org.



“Our country will be stronger and more successful when all children can take advantage of what afterschool programs offer – but, sadly, this study shows we’re nowhere near reaching that goal,” Grant added.

“We need greater support from federal, state and local governments, businesses, and philanthropy. Every child deserves access to a quality afterschool program.”



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What to Know During Respiratory Virus Season

(StatePoint)

As temperatures drop and people spend more time indoors, the flu and other respiratory viruses can spread easily. Fortunately, you can take precautions to protect yourself, your family and your community.

The American Medical Association (AMA) recommends that all eligible Americans -- everyone 6 months and older (with rare exceptions) -- get vaccinated against flu as soon as possible. While the timing, intensity and severity of each flu season is difficult to predict, vaccination is always the best way to reduce your risk of severe illness from flu -- and the best way to protect your loved ones and community by slowing its spread. Flu vaccination also reduces missed days of work and school, prevents added medical costs, and has even been associated with lower rates of cardiac events among people with heart disease.

Based on preliminary data, the CDC estimates that getting vaccinated against flu reduced the risk of hospitalization due to flu by about 40% in adults and 50-60% in children during last year's flu season. However, fewer than half of all people nationwide received a flu vaccine last season.

"Last year's flu season was one of the worst in the United States in 15 years, and the statistics speak volumes. The low vaccination numbers resulted in more than 620,000 hospitalizations and 27,000 deaths related to flu illness," said AMA president, Bobby Mukkamala, M.D. "We



cannot afford to repeat this pattern. We strongly urge everyone who is eligible to get a flu vaccine as soon as possible, ideally before illness begins spreading widely."

In addition to flu, other respiratory viruses with potentially serious complications are expected to circulate again this year, including respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and SARS-CoV-2.

The AMA encourages all adults age 75 and older to get vaccinated against RSV, as well as adults ages 50-74 with certain medical conditions who are at increased risk for severe RSV. The RSV vaccine is not an annual vaccine, so those who have already received it do not need another dose. Families should also familiarize themselves with the options to protect infants during RSV season, including vaccination during pregnancy or an RSV monoclonal antibody for infants and young children. Most infants will not need both options.

Anyone 6 months and older who wants a COVID-19 vaccine should be able to get one. Certain

populations are at increased risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19, including adults age 65 and older, those with underlying medical conditions, patients who are pregnant, and children 6 to 23 months of age.

The AMA encourages you to speak with your physician or other health care professional to determine which vaccines are best for you, and to call your doctor or pharmacy to make an appointment for flu and other shots. AMA recently launched infographics to help patients and physicians cut through vaccine confusion and have open, honest conversations with each other. The infographics can be found at <https://ama-assn.org>.

Additional health precautions, such as covering coughs and sneezes, frequently washing your hands, improving indoor air quality, and staying home when you're sick, can also help reduce the spread of viruses. This respiratory virus season, take these steps and get up to date on vaccinations to stay healthy and protect those around you.

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URBANOLOGY: To Be Thankful



By William A. Rogers

morning after getting up. Living in a socially programed society we often focus on limitations. It is easier for many to develop a list of what they need or would like to have; then a list of what they have and don't need.

Every day given to us, provides the opportunity for growth and development. Learning to be thankful and showing gratitude for each day takes time, but can be very beneficial. Try to consciously say "thank you for another day" a few mornings before getting out of bed and see how you feel. I am sure some will question to whom or what

they are saying thanks to each morning. It doesn't really matter; just give thanks for another day.

Life is too often taken for granted; I believe as we grow older many of us learn to appreciate life a little more. The gift of life is truly something to be thankful for, yet how often do we reflect on this fact. As the saying goes life is what you make it. Some might find it difficult to understand that they can make their life whatever they want it to be.

We are in the holiday season; many will be given the opportunity to be thankful. This time of year, is

also a time of depression for many individuals. Some might think there is not much to be thankful for, if you feel that way this dialog is focused on you.

Nothing or no one outside of yourself can create absolute happiness for you. Happiness is internal learning, to understand this allows for a greater application of life something we all should be thankful for. There is a high frequency vibration in the energy of thankfulness. This holiday season I invite you to focus on the things that you can be thankful for.

Starting today un-

til the end of the year, look for something each day that you can be thankful about and acknowledge it. Keep in mind there is a benefit that can be found in all things. No matter how bad your day might seem find something you can be thankful for.

I suggest you not only do this around the holiday season practice being thankful as often as you can. Life is a wonderful gift, something we all should be thankful for every day; try not to take it for granted.

I wish a Happy Thanksgiving Day to all those who celebrate it.

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If you are reading this dialog, you have something to be thankful for; your eyes opened this morning. If you were able to get out of bed without a great deal of pain, you should be thankful about that also. Not many people give thanks each



By Zakiyyah

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Answers to Crossword on page 17

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GAMES

See answers on pages 16

CROSSWORD

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See answers to Suduko on page 18

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STATEPOINT THEME: NURSERY RHYMES

ACROSS

1. Type of haircut, pl.
5. Tiny helper
8. *What rain does in famous nursery rhyme
12. What accomplices do
13. Ring like a bell
14. Sign of life
15. Lascivious look
16. Pretentiously artistic
17. Tiny island
18. *Bring her back! (2 words)
20. Nicholas II of Russia, e.g.
21. Inmate with life sentence
22. *One for Sorrow (Two for ___)
23. Melville's "Pequod," e.g.
26. More fancy
30. Request for tailor
31. Encoded message
34. Land measure

DOWN

35. Omit
37. *Hush-a-bye, baby. ___ still"
38. Take a base
39. Hokkaido native
40. Veal serving
42. Beehive State native
43. What Cupid did (2 words)
45. *Tip me over!
47. Lt.'s inferior
48. Plant louse
50. "Pay as you earn" tax system
52. *How do your ears wobble? (3 words)
56. Sacha Cohen's middle name
57. Render speechless
58. Medley
59. Apathetic
60. Not tanned
61. Nearly
62. Bird's groomer
63. It's open to interpretation
64. #57 Down, pl.

DOWN

1. It's soothing

2. Do as directed

3. British Broadcasting Corporation, colloquially
4. Take a leisurely walk
5. Chill-inducing
6. Procrastinator's word
7. *What the old lady swallowed
8. *She's been to London to visit the Queen
9. Paella pot
10. ___-friendly
11. Expose to moisture
13. One way to cook fish
14. Mountain climber's spike
19. Brother's daughter
22. *Who stole the cookie from the cookie ___?
23. Semolina source
24. Sunny prefix
25. Kind of acid
26. Perceive by touch
27. Frost over (2 words)
28. One of the Muses
29. Find new tenant
32. *What Jack Horner pulled out
33. Not miss
36. * ___ of ___, he had ten thousand men
38. Beer garden mug
40. Post-Soviet Union alliance, acr.
41. C2H6, flammable gas
44. With regard to, archaic
46. Software plug-ins
48. Rose oil
49. Young chicken
50. Window glass
51. Geometric calculation
53. Buy and resell
54. Baltic capital
55. Sounds of amazement
56. Baby's apron
57. Self-care resort
64. "You're it" game
66. Rest in state



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"Black Arms to Hold You Up: A History of Black Resistance" by Ben Passmore

Review by Terri Schlichenmeyer, Harlem News contributor

This week, you plan on acting up.

In a good way, of course. You'll make a cardboard sign and march with others for your beliefs. You'll shout and dance, walk and make noise. You'll get into "good trouble" and yes, you might get arrested for it. You do what you need to do to make politicians and others know how you feel and that you mean business. As in the new book, "Black Arms to Hold You Up" by Ben Passmore, you have history at your back.

There was violence just down the street when Ben's father showed up on his doorstep with two bags of books. He hadn't been much of a father, so when

he started pushing Ben to pay attention to history, Ben wasn't having any of it.

They argued. Ben's father hit him in the head with a book – and the next thing he knew, Ben was standing on a street corner somewhere, and there were policemen; nearby was a man named Robert Charles, and the year was 1900. Ben was about to witness a deadly gunfight over Jim Crow laws, Black Code, "Christian Black identity," and inequality in New Orleans.

He ran for safety and landed at the foot of a stage, where activist Marcus Garvey was giving a speech at a Universal Negro Improvement Associ-

ation (UNIA) rally. Ben ran, and found himself in a church, at Emmett Till's funeral. He sat in a movie theater and learned about Robert E. Williams, a man whom "both the whites and the NAACP made... out to be an angry and violent brute." Ben received a new name to reflect the Republic of New Afrika, and he hid upstairs in a house in Philadelphia, as MOVE fought with police in 1985.

The journey was wild and terrifying, and his eyes were opened. Yes, he wanted liberation, but it could kill him. So could just walking around his neighborhood.

Were these things inevitable? He wondered - until his father told him what "Black liberation is really about."

Your young adult needs to know their history. You might need the same. And you both might find it inside "Black Arms to Hold You Up," but there are a few things you need to know first, before you pick it up.

Deeply researched, very thought-provoking, and including a bibliography for more information, this book hits a lot of major points in Black history, many of which today's schoolbooks don't tell. Author Ben Passmore proves that Black activism didn't just start during the Civil Rights Movement, or five years ago, or last year. Such reminders make this book relevant.

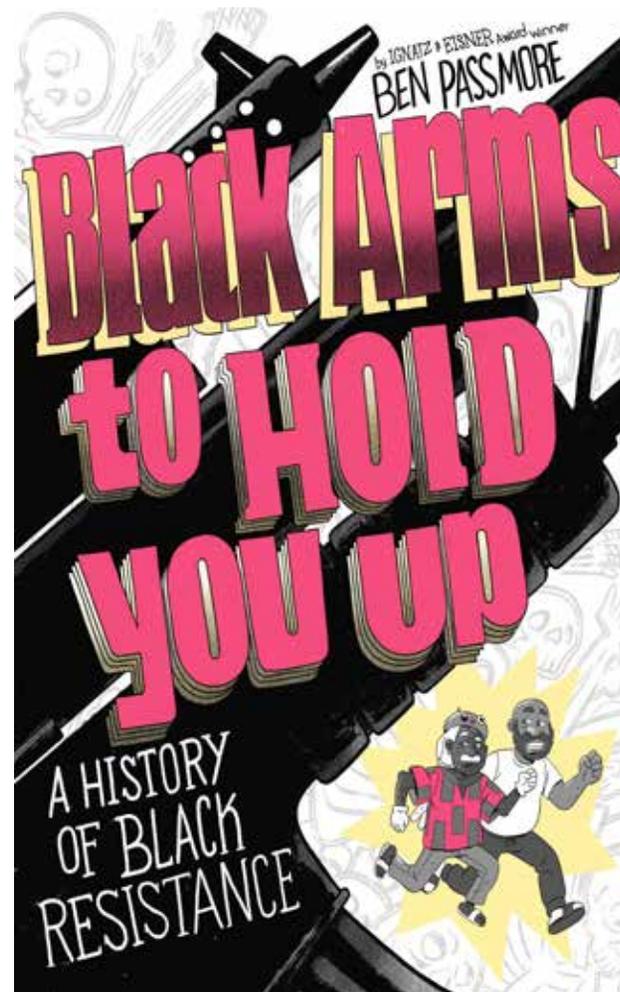
Just know this: violence literally colors every page of this book. It's relent-

less. It's loud and shocking, with illustrations tinted blood-red throughout, which will properly and righteously shock anyone who's unaware.

That may trigger a sensitive reader, but it may wake up folks ages 16-to-adults, too. Just be mindful and know who's doing the reading. Having "Black Arms to Hold You Up" around might be a good action.

"Black Arms to Hold You Up: A History of Black Resistance"

by Ben Passmore
c.2005, Pantheon
\$22.00
223 pages



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6	8	5	4	9	3	1	2	7
1	4	7	2	8	5	3	9	6
9	3	2	7	6	1	8	4	5
4	5	1	6	2	9	7	3	8
8	2	6	3	4	7	9	5	1
3	7	9	1	5	8	4	6	2
2	1	8	9	3	6	5	7	4
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5	6	3	8	7	4	2	1	9

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Jacob Lawrence, *Subway* (detail), 1938 © 2025 The Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Seattle / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

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