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BROOKLYN NEWS

"Good News You Can Use"

Vol. 32 No. 52

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Free



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PAT STEVENSON

In this week’s issue, we highlight the celebration of Kwanzaa, which begins on December 26th. As we close out a challenging 2025 and prepare to enter 2026 with clarity and hope, it is more important than ever for the African-American community to embrace the seven principles of Kwanzaa. (see page 11)

This year, Harlem mourned the loss of several towering figures: Dr. Hazel Dukes, longtime NAACP New York State Conference President; Congressman Charles Rangel, a political giant and champion for Harlem; and Lloyd Williams, the driving force behind the Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce and HARLEM WEEK. Their leadership, dedication, and love for the community were remembered with deep admiration at the Chamber’s End of Year Reception held last week. As we honor their legacy, we extend warm holiday wishes to all and look ahead with a shared hope for unity, understanding, and peace in 2026. (see page 10)

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Happy New Year!!!
Pat Stevenson
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Tax Refund Expected to Rise by About \$1,000 Next Year

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA

Black Press USA Senior National Correspondent

Federal tax refunds are positioned for a sharp rise next year, with new projections showing that the average payment could increase by about \$1,000 for millions of Americans.

Analysts expect the typical refund to reach roughly \$4,151 for the 2026 filing season, a major jump from the \$3,151 average refund taxpayers received during the 2025 season. CBS News reported that IRS filing data has revealed that the average direct deposit refund for 2025 stands at \$3,151, up from \$3,092 the prior year.

“When people go

to file, they’ll be surprised by really, really large refunds,” Don Schneider, deputy head of U.S. policy at Piper Sandler and one of the report’s authors, said in a recent podcast about the analysis. “In a typical year, we might have about \$270 billion in tax refunds, and it’ll be that plus another \$90 billion.”

Analysts expected a spike to come after the Trump administration’s sweeping tax and spending law was signed in July. The law eliminates federal taxes on some overtime and tipped income and lifts the state and local tax deduction cap from \$10,000 to \$40,000. All changes were made retroactive

to 2025, setting up larger refunds when taxpayers file in early 2026.

Because most Americans receive their refunds within about 21 days of filing, the size of those payments often carries significant weight in household budgets. Next year could bring one of the biggest refund seasons on record.

The benefits will not be evenly shared. Piper Sandler’s analysis shows middle and upper-middle income households, those earning between \$60,000 and \$400,000, stand to gain the most. That finding matches a Tax Policy Center review that estimated that people earning more than \$217,000 receive six of



every ten dollars in new tax breaks created by the July law.

High earners will see some limits. The expanded \$40,000 SALT deduction begins to phase out for households earning more than \$500,000. Lower-income filers are also unlikely to benefit

because the higher SALT cap only helps people whose state and local tax bills exceed the standard deduction. Filers must itemize to claim it, which tax experts note is less common among lower-income households.

Schneider said the impact falls primarily on

households in the middle of the income distribution rather than those at the lowest or highest ends.

“This isn’t going to the very bottom of the distribution. It isn’t going to the very top of the distribution either,” Schneider said.

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PONDER THIS! The Cane is More Than Christmas Candy



By Hazel Rosetta Smith

As far back as I can remember, there was always peppermint candy in my Granny's purse. Life Savers were rolls of hard candies that have remained after more than one hundred years as one of the leading

candy brands in America. Life Savers were sold at 5 cents a roll, a favorite treat for children with a tight allowance and mothers with more than one child could share the 12-piece roll.

The popular candy was first manufactured by Clarence Crane of Garrettsville, Ohio in 1912 as a "summer candy" that could withstand the heat of the summer season better than chocolate. He named the candy, life saver, to resemble the life preservers on boats that were purposed as life savers for passengers in emergency evacuation.

Crane registered the trademark and then sold the rights to his peppermint candy to Edward

John Noble. He expanded the market by installing Life Savers displays next to the cash registers of grocery stores and pharmacies. Noble suggested the owners try to give customers a nickel in their change to encourage sales of the candy.

As much as I looked forward to getting a life saver from my Granny's stash all year long, at any moment, even during Sunday church service, nothing could touch the excitement of the arrival of a candy cane to announce the coming of Christmas.

The cane has always meant more to me than just peppermint candy. I have shared the story of its history on numerous

occasions. The legend has it that in 1670, the choir-master at the Cologne Cathedral in Germany handed out candy sticks to keep them quiet during the long concert. In 1847, a German Swedish immigrant decorated a small blue spruce tree with paper ornaments and candies he bent into shepherds' crooks.

In Indiana, a candy maker wanted to make a candy that could be a reminder of Jesus Christ, so he made the Christmas candy cane. He started off with a stick of candy. The hard candy symbolized the solid rock which was the foundation of the church, and the

strength of the promises of God. The white color symbolized the virgin birth.

His use of the candy shape in the form of a J was to emphasize the name Jesus and not just the shepherd's crook. It was the shepherds who were the witnesses of His birth, but Jesus became the greatest shepherd of all time.

He then stained it with red stripes which showed the whipping Jesus received on the road to Calvary. The red stripes are the blood he shed as a sacrifice. The taste of peppermint is a reminder of the power in His blood.

The Christmas Candy Cane is more than a piece of candy to bring out for



the holiday season. The cane represents Jesus, the reason for the season. Make it Merry!

[Hazel Rosetta Smith is a journalist, playwright, and artistic director for Help Somebody Theatrical Ministries. Contact: misshazel@twc.com and online hazelrosettasmith.com]

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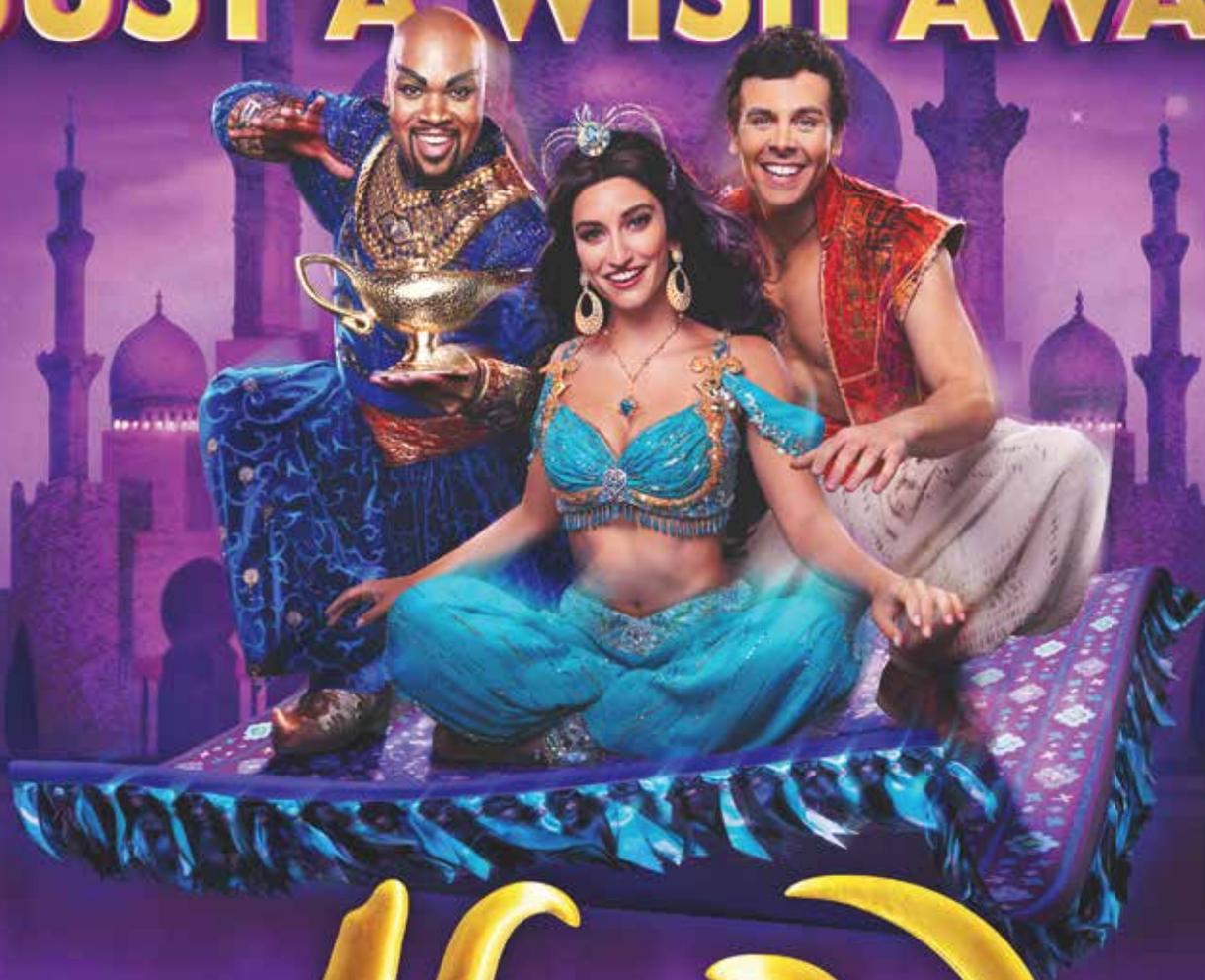
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Record Accomplishments, Historic Achievements



By Mayor Eric Adams

Last week, our administration's senior leadership came together to celebrate our historic achievements and enduring accomplishments over the past four years. Assembling this diverse and experienced team of dedicated public servants from all backgrounds and all boroughs was an accomplishment in itself. This was the first administration to have five women deputy mayors, the first woman police commissioner — and the second woman police commissioner. We had the first Dominican deputy mayor, the first Filipino deputy mayor, the first East Indian deputy mayor, and the first Persian deputy mayor — an administration that looks like the city it serves and that has delivered for our city every single day.

I want to thank everyone who took on the task of building a better city and succeeded by every

possible metric. Four years after we took office during a pandemic and a crime wave, we can say with confidence: New York City has never stood stronger than it does right now. Record jobs, record homes, record small businesses, record early childhood education enrollment, record investments in homelessness, record safety, and so much more.

The last four years have been a testament to what we can achieve when dedicated public servants work together to put sound policy into practice. These wins were the result of smart, focused leadership, common-sense thinking, and reasonable, responsible solutions. This “radically pragmatic” approach is how you get four years of declining crime and four years of record-breaking economic expansion. It's how you clear the way for a new generation of housing and change the conversation on homelessness and mental health. It's how you cut the cost of childcare and increase the average New Yorker's lifespan. It's how you boost student test scores and keep our streets and parks clean, green, and rat-free. It's how we Got Stuff Done and how we will leave New York safer, stronger, and more resilient than ever before.

America's safest big city is now even safer. I am proud we

leave this city with the fewest number of shootings in recorded history under our administration. Public safety was the prerequisite for prosperity, and we broke the record for the most jobs and the most small businesses in our city's history. And then we did that again...and again...and again.

Housing had become a generational issue, holding working people back — so we took action and laid the foundation for a fairer, more affordable future. After 60 years of diversions and delay, we passed the most pro-housing legislation in the city's history. We turned New York City into a “City of Yes,” and in the years to come, thousands of New Yorkers will move into new housing that is safe and affordable thanks to the work we did together.

We centered the needs of working people at every turn, putting \$30 billion back in the pockets of working-class people with smart policies designed to have immediate impact. These included lowering the cost of subsidized childcare by more than 90 percent, wiping out medical debt, cutting taxes for low-income New Yorkers, giving 330,000 NYCHA residents free broadband internet, and more. And we did it all with sound fiscal management, leaving our city with the highest budget

reserves in the history of the city.

I want to thank every public servant who worked so hard to keep New York the greatest city in the world, a city that can live up to our ideals and lift up those in need — people like my mother, Dorothy Mae Adams, a single mom who worked multiple jobs to raise her six kids. She never stopped fighting to provide her family with a better life, and, for the last four years, we have never stopped fighting to do the same for New Yorkers and their families.

Thank you to our senior leadership, the entire City Hall team, and the hundreds of thousands of city employees across all the agencies who helped make all these record achievements a reality for working-class New Yorkers. You rewrote the playbook on public safety and public spaces, education and the economy, health care, homelessness, and housing. Your work has changed our city for the better, and it will stand the test of time.

Above all, thank you to the people of New York City, for electing me to serve as your mayor. It has been the honor of a lifetime, and the work we have done together has laid the foundation for a better, safer, more affordable city going forward. ###



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Home Buying in Harlem Be Prepared to Buy Now



By Rev. Dr. Charles Butler

Why is it becoming so challenging for anyone to buy a home in Harlem? The answer is obvious home values are way too high, and they are not coming down. You might as well accept this reality. Yes, buying a home in today's housing market will be very difficult to say the least. You must have adequate income, good credit, and a decent amount of savings. That's just to apply for a mortgage pre-approval and start the home buying process.

But meeting these criteria for many low-to-moderate prospective first-time buyers seems to be an overwhelming obstacle. Although this challenge is not impossible, the reality is that it will be very difficult to complete the home buying process. The market value of homes in Harlem will alone bear out this fact and coupled with

the current interest rates we are experiencing the task of homeownership becomes almost unattainable.

For those of you who have been trying to purchase a home this year but could not complete the process, now you realize just how difficult it can be to buy a home in Harlem. The home buying process is nerve racking. It can be extremely emotionally as well as financially draining and very time-consuming. But I encourage you despite these challenges, do not to give up, do not throw in the towel and quit. Make it your New Year's resolution that in 2026 you shall achieve your dream of homeownership.

Now that you have a better understanding of the amount of money required to successfully complete the home buying process, your primary goal is to increase your income and your monthly savings. Start now by making changes in your spending habits. Create a monthly household budget to identify any wasteful spending. Each month you want to aggressively save as much money as possible. Save your change at the end of each day. Push yourself to

increase your savings goal.

At the same time, you must maintain a healthy credit history. Keep your account balances at or below 30% of the credit limit. Pay your bills on time to avoid late fees. Open new accounts only as needed. Never close any existing accounts because that will have an adverse impact on your credit history. Most mortgage lenders will want to see 3-4 active credit accounts with at least 24 months' clean credit history. However, a State of New York Mortgage Agency (SONYMA) loan will require only a 12 month credit history and one year employment history.

The important thing is to stay focused on completing the home buying process. Buying a home in Harlem can be accomplished, but it will take a great deal of hard work. However, if you have the desire, discipline, determination, and dedication; you can do it.

If you are interested in attending the workshop or have questions regarding the home buying process, contact Rev. Dr. Charles Butler at (212) 281 4887 ext. 231 or email at cbutler@hcci.org.

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HARLEM EVENTS

Dec 25-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 25– Jan 2

ANNUAL WREATH INTERPRETATIONS EXHIBIT RETURNS TO NYC PARKS’ ARSENAL GALLERY

NYC Parks is decking the halls for the 43rd year of Wreath Interpretations, featuring nearly 40 handcrafted, imaginative wreaths at the Arsenal Gallery. This year’s unique wreaths are crafted using unexpected materials and motifs to add a touch of novelty to the holiday season. Made of inventive materials like Legos, aluminum, and packing peanuts and covering subjects like the subway system’s switch to OMNY, these wreaths as diverse as the group of artists who crafted them, including many Parks employees. The Arsenal Gallery is located on Fifth Avenue & 64th Street, 3rd Floor This event is FREE and open to the public. For more information, visit nyc.gov/parks/art Groups of five or more people can call 212-360-8143 or email artandantiquities@parks.nyc.gov to pre-register

Dec 25–31

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Season

Alvin Ailey’s celebrated company performs at New York City Center, featuring iconic works and new choreography. Being held at New York City Center , 131 W 55th St, New York, NY Cost: Ticketed, prices vary

Dec 26-31

Kwanzaa Celebrations in Harlem

Cultural performances, storytelling, and community gatherings marking the seven principles of Kwanzaa. Various Harlem cultural centers. Mostly free or donation-



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Dec 27 Pre- New Years Eve at Co-op City Ballroom



Holcombe Rucker Park Conservancy, Inc. Hosts Its 1st Annual Tree Lighting and Toy Giveaway

The Holcombe Rucker Park Conservancy, Inc. (HRPCINC), founded in 2025 to honor and preserve the legacy of the iconic Rucker Park, celebrated a major milestone on December 15, 2025, with its 1st Annual Tree Lighting and Toy Giveaway. The inaugural event brought warmth, joy, and community pride to Harlem as families from the Polo Grounds Towers and Rangel Houses gathered for an evening filled with holiday cheer.

In its first year hosting the celebration, HRPCINC made a powerful statement about its commitment to uplifting local families.

More than 500 toys were distributed to children, ensuring that hundreds of young people experienced the magic of the season. From dolls and action figures to board games and sports equipment, the giveaway reflected the Conservancy's mission to invest in the well-being and happiness of neighborhood youth.

The festivities extended far beyond the toy distribution. The park came alive with music and traditional caroling, creating a festive soundtrack that echoed through the winter air. Volunteers and partners served hot chocolate, offering a comforting treat that

brought neighbors together and added to the warmth of the evening.

The event was made possible through a strong network of community partnerships. HRPCINC collaborated with HCCI (Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement), whose support helped ensure the success of the celebration. Representatives from local community organizations, elected officials, the NYPD, and the NYC Parks Department were also in attendance, demonstrating a shared commitment to strengthening community ties and supporting Harlem families.

The tree lighting itself served as the symbolic centerpiece of the night. As the lights illuminated the park, they also highlighted the Conservancy's broader vision: to preserve the cultural significance of Rucker Park while creating new opportunities for engagement, unity, and joy.

HRPCINC's first annual celebration set a powerful precedent for years to come. With its blend of generosity, partnership, and community spirit, the event marked the beginning of a new holiday tradition—one rooted in service, togetherness, and the enduring legacy of Holcombe Rucker.



The Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce & HARLEM WEEK End of the Year Reception

by Keith Forrest

The Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce (GHCC) and HARLEM WEEK concluded a landmark year with their annual Holiday Reception, held at the elegant Renaissance New York Harlem Hotel. In partnership with Silk Hospitality, the festive affair served as a heartfelt “thank you” to the members, sponsors, volunteers, partners, and the Harlem community whose unwavering support fueled two organizations numerous successes in 2025.

The evening program kicked off with a warm, reflective welcome from Winston Majette, Executive Director of The Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce, whose remarks echoed community resilience and the power of collaboration. He was followed by Jean Philippe, General Manager of The Renaissance New York Harlem Hotel, who shared an emotional tribute to the Harlem community. Mr. Philippe requested a moment of silence in honor of the late Lloyd A. Williams, former President and CEO of The Chamber and found-

ing member of HARLEM WEEK — a mentor, father figure, and friend to many — posthumously thanking Lloyd for “setting him up for success” within the neighborhood’s hospitality landscape.

The reception drew a distinguished crowd of civic leaders, including New York State Senator Cordell Cleare, New York State Assemblymen Al Taylor and Jordan Wright, and New York City Council members Gale Brewer and Yusef Salaam. Throughout the evening, invited guests mixed, mingled, and danced the night away to the grooving sounds of DJ Mitch. The festive energy was further heightened by a business card raffle, which featured premium prizes including a set of tickets to the hit Off-Broadway production, 44 The Musical, and an autographed copy of Champions for the Arts, the latest book by HARLEM WEEK Board Member Donna Walkers-Kuhne.

The spirit of celebration over sorrow was further emphasized by Judge Mil-

ton Tingling, who moved the audience by noting the importance of joy alongside remembrance. “This year we’ve lost so many giants in our community — Lloyd Williams, Charles Rangel, Dr. Hazel Dukes, and Geoff Eaton — and had too much sadness,” Judge Tingling remarked. “Let’s take a moment of celebration to honor their legacy that is kept alive in us all”. Marko Nobles, HARLEM WEEK Second Vice Chair, closed the evening by asking for a moment of silence in honor of the passing of HARLEM WEEK Treasurer Barbara Burwell, a beloved “mother, sister, and auntie who will be deeply missed.”

The reception highlighted the Chamber’s ongoing mission to foster economic development while maintaining Harlem’s world-renowned status as a hub for arts, culture, and tourism. As 2025 draws to a close, The Chamber and HARLEM WEEK look forward to a new year of growth, health initiatives, and community empowerment.

The Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce (The Chamber), established in 1896 as the Har-



GHCC Board member Skip Dillard; NY State Assemblyman Al Taylor; HARLEM WEEK Board Member Linda Wood-Guy; HARLEM WEEK Board Member Dietrice Bolden; Renaissance New York Harlem Hotel General Manager Jon Pierre; Silk Hospitality Michael Garlic; HARLEM WEEK Vice Chair Marko Nobles

lem Board of Commerce, is one of the longest-operating Chambers of Commerce in the United States. Its mission is to improve the quality of life for all its residents, as well as to develop, attract, and retain quality businesses and professional services. Dedicated to promoting Harlem’s

world-renowned vitality in tourism, arts, culture, and economic development, The Chamber is best known as the founder and organizer of HARLEM WEEK, an annual celebration of the community’s rich legacy. The National Urban Health Conference is a continuation of The Chamber’s

commitment to prioritizing health and wellness with the motto: “The Business of Business Is People.”

Most HARLEM WEEK 2025 performances, discussions and community forums are available to view via www.HARLEM-WEEK.COM.



Publisher Pat Stevenson; National Urban League’s Teresa Liles-Holmes; am/NY Tanya Philips



NYC Councilman Yusef Salaam; NY State Assemblyman Jordan Wright & Al Taylor



Betty Parks & Matthew Trebek; along with GHCC Winston Majette

Kwanzaa: Honoring Tradition, Community and Legacy

by Pat Stevenson

As the calendar turns to December 26th, homes across New York, begin to glow with the warmth of a celebration deeply rooted in African American heritage and culture: Kwanzaa. Born out of the civil rights movement, Kwanzaa is a weeklong observance from December 26 to January 1 that invites families, friends, and communities to reflect on seven core principles, honor ancestral legacy, and celebrate the beauty of African traditions.

Kwanzaa was founded in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, a scholar and activist, during a period when Black Americans sought to reclaim their cultural heritage and affirm their identity. The holiday's name derives from the Swahili phrase *matunda ya kwanza*, meaning "first fruits," a nod to traditional African harvest festivals. Dr. Karenga created Kwanzaa as a cultural, rather than religious, celebration, ensuring it could be embraced by people of all faiths within the African diaspora.

At its heart, Kwanzaa emphasizes the *Nguzo Saba*, or Seven Principles, which

guide reflection and action throughout the week. These principles—Unity (*Umoja*), Self-Determination (*Kujichagulia*), Collective Work and Responsibility (*Ujima*), Cooperative Economics (*Ujamaa*), Purpose (*Nia*), Creativity (*Kuumba*), and Faith (*Imani*)—serve as a moral compass, offering lessons and inspiration for strengthening both individuals and communities.

In Harlem, the observance of Kwanzaa feels like a homecoming. The neighborhood has long been a bastion of Black excellence and cultural innovation, from the Harlem Renaissance to the civil rights movement. The celebration of Kwanzaa here ties together the threads of history, community, and hope. Kwanzaa gained traction in Harlem during the 1970s, when cultural institutions such as the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and local community groups began hosting public events. These gatherings brought families together to light the *Kinara* (a seven-candle holder symbolizing the Seven Principles), share stories of ancestral

triumphs, and commit to building a brighter future. Over the decades, Harlem's Kwanzaa celebrations have grown into vibrant displays of unity, creativity, and purpose, blending the old with the new.

Kwanzaa is a joyful mix of cultural pride, family traditions, and communal gatherings. While each family may celebrate differently, several beloved customs remain universal.

Lighting the Kinara: Each evening, families light one of the seven candles on the *Kinara*. The black candle represents Unity, the red candles signify the struggle, and the green candles represent the hope and future of the African diaspora.

Community Events: Local institutions like the Apollo Theater and the Schomburg Center often host Kwanzaa performances featuring spoken word poetry, African drumming, and dance troupes. These events draw audiences from across New York City and remind attendees of the enduring power of cultural expression.

Storytelling and Reflection: Elders share stories of the African Ameri-



can experience, weaving in history, resilience, and the ongoing fight for justice. Families use these stories as teaching moments for younger generations, ensuring the legacy of their ancestors is never forgotten.

Feasts and Festivities: The *Karamu* (feast) on December 31 is a highlight of Kwanzaa in Harlem. Households and community groups come together to prepare dishes inspired by African and African American culinary traditions, such as collard greens, jollof rice, and fried plantains.

Marketplaces and Cooperative Economics: Kwanzaa markets, such as those held at Harlem's Malcolm Shabazz Harlem Market, showcase Black

artisans and entrepreneurs, offering handmade crafts, art, and books. These gatherings embody the principle of *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics), encouraging the support of Black-owned businesses.

Kwanzaa continues to thrive, not only as a celebration of African American culture but also as a call to action. In the face of modern challenges, from racial inequities to climate change, Harlem's Kwanzaa gatherings emphasize the importance of unity, self-determination, and community responsibility. For many, the holiday serves as a time to pause, reconnect with their roots, and draw strength from a shared history.

As Kwanzaa's candles burn brightly in windows across America, they illuminate a timeless message: that through unity, creativity, and faith, a community can overcome obstacles and build a future worthy of its ancestors' dreams.

Whether you're a lifelong participant or curious to learn more, Kwanzaa invites everyone to reflect on its principles and contribute to the collective work of uplifting the community. Remember the words of Dr. Karenga: "Kwanzaa is a celebration of family, community, and culture." And in Harlem, that celebration shines with a unique brilliance, uniting the past, present, and future in a shared vision of dignity and joy.



Pat Stevenson family celebrating Kwanzaa in Savannah, Ga.



Dr. Maulana Karenga

Riverside Hawks Celebrate Hoop Dreams at ‘The Power of the Game’ Gala

By Audrey Bernard,
Society Editor

The vastly celebrated Riverside Hawks welcomed friends, supporters, players and their families, board members and honorees to their 2025 Gala on Wednesday evening, October 29, 2025, at the fabulous The Grill and The Pool in New York’s iconic Seagram Building on East 52nd Street in busy mid-town Manhattan. The evening was themed “The Power of the Game,” the transformative way in which basketball has been an impressive influence on the lives of the student athletes with whom the organization works. The event was hosted by news anchor and national correspondent Michelle Miller and Comedian Chuck Nice who returned as the evening’s auctioneer to raise funds and awareness of the importance of The Riverside Hawks organization.

The live auction raised additional funds which will help the organization continue making a differ-

ence in the lives of young people from Harlem, Washington Heights, and the Bronx, where at least 71% of the student athletes come from; while guaranteeing that the organization continues to positively impact many more lives.

One of the highlights of the elegant evening was the signature panel discussion moderated by board member and honoree, Erika Irish Brown, Head of Talent Management and Engagement at Citi. Brown was joined by panelists that included the evening’s other honorees: Rashad Bilal & Troy Millings, founders of Earn Your Leisure, transforming financial literacy and empowerment in the Black community; Jose Minaya, a former college athlete turned top financial leader and Global Head of BNY Investments and Wealth. Joining them were award-winning writer, filmmaker, and co-founder of “Game-Up” youth sports tech

platform, Crystal McCrary McGuire, and Coach Keydren Clark, former two-time NCAA Division I scoring champion and current NCAA assistant coach at St. Peter’s University. The discussion was framed around the value of the sport of basketball as a foundational tool that helps in the development of character, creating academic and career opportunities, and in driving lasting social impact.

Game On! The evening was a testament of what happens when young people are provided a tool – in this case, basketball -- and are mentored and guided by people who care and share their vast views of the world resulting in doors opening to new possibilities that they never thought would be part of their reality – something far from their imagination. Many of the student athletes, who are part of the Riverside Hawks program, are first in their families to have



Honorees Jermel Thomas, Troy Millings and Rashad Bilal (Photo by Johnny Nunez (WireImage))

an opportunity to complete high school with a shot at a four-year college education. The organization has seen thousands of young people, over the 64-years they have been operational, go on to achieve academic, life and career goals and success.

Hoop Dreams! In the last five years 100% of Riverside Hawks’ student athletes have graduated high school and 100% have been accepted at leading colleges or post-graduate prep schools. The Riverside Hawks students have received over \$16 mil-

lion in college scholarships and grants and \$1.2 million in prep school scholarships. These are achievements worth celebrating. (Gala photo credit: Nkosi Hamilton for Riverside Hawks)



BET President Scott Mills presents award to honoree Erika Irish Brown (Photo by Jonny Nunez-Wire Image)



Honoree, Coach of the Year, Zach Kuba



-Executive Director Aswan Morris with head of Riverside Hawks Development Team, Paul Coty.



Honoree Rashad Bilal with his father and his son

Oliver Scholars Gala was a Classic Celebration of Joy and Community with Music, Laughter and Connection

By Audrey Bernard,
Society Editor

On the evening of October 30, 2025, the esteemed community of Oliver Scholars gathered together at New York’s magnificent The Pierre Hotel, to celebrate opportunity and excellence. Some 300 guests — scholars, alumni, parents, staff, board members, and longtime supporters — filled the ballroom for a celebration rooted in hope, commitment, and shared purpose. It was an epic evening of unapologetic elegance!

The stellar soiree honored the 2025 Champions of Excellence, Dorothea Schlosser and Thomas M. Kopczynski. Their sustained generosity and leadership have helped sustain Oliver Scholars’ mission, providing thousands of young people with access to high-quality education and long-term support. The Gala also recognized the 2025 Alumni Awardees, Dr. Benjeil Edghill, Barry Bhola, and Diana Caba. Their professional successes and commitment to giving back illustrate the impact of Oliver Scholars’ long-term nurturing and mentorship. Alumni gathered to celebrate and toast with their peers and connect with current scholars — building networks, sharing wisdom, and offering encouragement for the journeys ahead.

One of the evening’s most powerful moments was the fireside chat titled “Excellence Unleashed” and featured thought-leaders Dr. Basil Smikle Jr. and Dr. Khalil Gibran Muhammad. In a compelling and heartfelt conversation, they discussed identity, opportunity, perseverance, and the vital role of educational access in shaping future leaders — reminding everyone why programs like Oliver Scholars are essential to the fabric of New York City.

The exquisite evening was a blissful celebration of gratitude and community. Hosted by comedian Wali Collins, the event blended humor and warmth with purpose. Live music by the Melodie Ray Band brought energy to the night, and when DJ Wiz of Kid ’N Play took over, the ballroom turned into a virtual “Don Cornelius Soul Train!” Scholars, dressed to impress, celebrated with alumni, friends, and supporters — relishing a moment that affirmed their worth, ambition, and belonging. During a lavish dinner with sterling service, guests indulged in lively live and silent auctions, adding momentum to Oliver Scholars’ mission of supporting academic enrichment, college preparation, mentorship, and long-term student success.

The 2025 Gala showcased what Oliver Scholars is all about -- people, purpose, and possibility. It was a powerful reminder that success isn’t only about fundraising — it’s about community, dedication, and shared belief in potential. For those who were unable to attend, the school recommends several ways to engage, such as nominating a deserving young person. Do you know a motivated 7th grader ready for long-term support and opportunity? Now’s the time to recommend them. oliverscholars.org/admissions. Support a student — Gifts and recurring donations fuel scholarships, mentoring, enrichment, and access. oliverscholars.org/donate

The 2025 Gala demonstrated that Oliver Scholars is more than a program — it’s a movement. As the organization builds toward future gatherings, new classes, and expanding impact, one thing remains clear: when community, generosity, and vision align, lives are transformed — and futures are redefined. For more information or to get involved, visit oliverscholars.org. (Photos courtesy of Oliver Scholars)

tion or to get involved, visit the Oliver Scholars website. oliverscholars.org. (Photos courtesy of Oliver Scholars)



(L-R) Alumni Awardees Diana Caba, Barry Bhola, Dr. Benjeil Edghill, Dr. Danielle Cox



Honorees -- Thomas M. Kopczynski, Dr. Danielle Cox, Dorothea Schlosser



Honorees -- Dorothea Schlosser, Thomas M. Kopczynski



Scholars and Parents



Scholars and Parents



-Fireside Chat (L-R) Dr. Danielle Cox Moderator, Dr. Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Dr. Basil Smikle Jr., Wali Collins



Oliver Scholars Alumni Toast



(L-R) Wali Collins, Dr. Danielle Cox Moderator, Dr. Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Dr. Basil Smikle Jr

The Enskinment of William “Tony” Rogers as a Call to Purpose, Identity, and Action



History is shaped by moments when identity, purpose, and destiny align. The recent enstoolment of William “Tony” Rogers as Manwule Wura (Chief of Manwule Village) in the Savannah Region of Northern Ghana is one of those moments—not just for Manwule, not just for Ghana, but for the global African diaspora.

Tony Rogers is not new to leadership, culture, or community-building. He is a Co-Founder of HARLEM WEEK Inc., the largest urban cultural and economic development festival on the East Coast of the United States. He is the President of the Harlem Tourism Board and the Founder and CEO of ARTWAR Travel and Tours Inc.—institutions that have, for decades, elevated Black culture, driven economic opportunity, and created global visibility for African-descended people. Yet,

5 Advances in Alzheimer's Care and Treatment in 2025

(StatePoint)

For the millions of Americans touched by Alzheimer's disease, 2025 brought major advances in understanding of brain health and progress in diagnosis and treatment. Here are the year's biggest advances, along with how you can take action with this knowledge in 2026:

1) A structured plan can sharpen brain health.

In a major U.S. clinical trial of older adults at risk for cognitive decline, two healthy lifestyle plans in the Alzheimer's Association's U.S. POINTER study improved memory and thinking skills over two years. Both interventions included exercise, brain-healthy nutrition, cognitive training and heart health monitoring. However, participants in a highly structured program that also included regular coaching and peer sup-

port showed significantly greater brain health gains, demonstrating that when brain-healthy habits are organized and supported, people stick with them and thinking skills benefit.

Next steps for families: Start small but structured: aim for 150 minutes of weekly exercise of at least moderate intensity, Mediterranean-style meals, 7-8 hours of sleep per night, and 2-3 short brain-training sessions each week. Put goals on a shared calendar, find an exercise or brain-health buddy, and schedule regular check-ins with your clinician or healthcare professional.

2) Simple blood tests can help spot changes earlier.

In 2025, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) cleared two blood tests that detect Alzheimer's-related brain changes, offering a less invasive, less expensive option for those experiencing memory changes

to support diagnosis and potentially reduce the need for PET scans or spinal taps. Blood tests are not stand-alone diagnostic tools, but their use can help guide next steps for testing, treatment and planning. The Alzheimer's Association has developed clinical guidelines to help specialists determine when to use blood tests alongside established "gold standard" tests and clinical judgment.

Next step for families: Ask your health care team whether an Alzheimer's blood test makes sense for you or a loved one, and how your results would affect lifestyle and health care plans. If they recommend testing, ask them to refer you to a specialist who can explain the results and next steps.

3) Americans want to know and act sooner.

A recent Alzheimer's Association national survey of adults 45 and older found most

want to learn early if they have Alzheimer's before symptoms impact their lives, and 9 out of 10 would take a simple test, if available, to clarify next steps. Nearly 3 in 5 respondents said they would accept a moderate or high level of risk to take medication that could slow the disease's progression.

Early awareness unlocks time to live healthfully, organize support, consider treatment options, and plan finances and care preferences.

Next step for families: Bring your top concerns, what's changed (memory, mood, function), and goals for the next three months to your next appointment.

4) Treatment can be easier to take.

The August 2025 FDA approval of Leqembi for delivery via weekly subcutaneous injections may ease treatment for some patients. Those who com-

plete initial infusion treatments as directed for 18 months can now receive their subsequent weekly treatment using at-home autoinjectors.

Fewer infusion clinic visits can mean less travel and lower caregiver burden, making it easier to stick to treatments for eligible patients. Decisions depend on eligibility, monitoring requirements, side-effect profile, and your clinician's judgment.

The Alzheimer's Association encourages clinician participation in ALZ-NET, a nationwide program collecting real-world data on Alzheimer's treatments.

Next step for families: If treatment is on the table, ask whether at-home injections might be an option after the initial phase, and what monitoring you'd still need.

5) A new clinician hub helps care teams stay current.

When clinicians have fast

access to evidence-based resources, patients get clearer answers and more consistent care. The new centralized professional portal, ALZPro, launched by the Alzheimer's Association, now curates practice guidelines, professional training, and point-of-care tools for earlier detection, appropriate test use, treatment eligibility and safety monitoring.

Next step for families: Let your health care professional know that the Alzheimer's Association has new research, training and support materials for professionals.

For information, support, research and public policy, visit The Alzheimer's Association at alz.org or call 800.272.3900.

From new diagnostic tools and treatments to proven lifestyle plans, major advances in Alzheimer's in 2025 can change how you manage the disease in 2026.



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URBANOLOGY: Pan-Africanism



By William A. Rogers

ment took root.

Figures like Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston and Alain Locke contributed to ideas about Black pride, internationalism, and transnational connections. Harlem hosted and incubated conversations on colonialism, imperialism, and anti-racist solidarity based on African, Caribbean, and African American experiences.

Harlem's dense Black cultural and political networks facilitated communication between activists across the Americas and Africa. A proliferation of Pan-Africanist groups and publications during the First Harlem Renaissance. Journals, newsletters, and

organizations often enlisted Harlem-based writers and thinkers to articulate a global Black agenda.

Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association {UNIA} though primarily active in Jamaica had a significant footprint in Harlem. His back to Africa, and Black empowerment message influenced Pan-African ideas about unity, self-reliance and transnational solidarity.

The red, black and green flag still is a lasting symbol of the Garvey Pan-African concept. Another Harlem based Pan-African thinker was W.E.B. Du Bois. Du Bois helped organize the Pan-African Congress and used Harlem as a base to

advocate for global Black solidarity, civil rights, and anti-colonialism.

Du Bois was a major influence in the Pan-African philosophy of Kwame Nkrumah the first president of Ghana after the country won its independence from Britain in 1957. Nkrumah studied under Du Bois while living in Harlem. When Du Bois became ill, Nkrumah invited him to spend his last years in Ghana. After his death Nkrumah turned the home of Du Bois into a museum.

The theme for the first HARLEM DAY in 1974 was the beginning of the second Harlem Renaissance. Like the first Harlem Renaissance, Harlem remained the focal point

for Pan Africanism. In 1980 When Robert Gabriel Mugabe became the first Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, he was invited to New York to address the United Nations He chose first to speak on the stage of the Harlem State Office building during HARLEM DAY.

Mugabe wanted to show his gratitude to the African diaspora for supporting the independence of his country and considered Harlem and HARLEM DAY to be the best place to do this, he was correct. Every newspaper and news outlet in the world covered his speech. This also made HARLEM WEEK an international event.

I was given the title of Chief of the village of Manwule in Northern Ghana at the Cultural Tourism summit during HARLEM WEEK 2025 by his Royal Majesty Jinapor II. I was officially enskinned during the Harlem Tourism Boards annual trip to the Cultural Oneness Festival in Northern Ghana.

HTB is a co-sponsor of the Cultural Oneness festival every year One of my duties as Chief Manwule Wura is to continue promoting Harlem as a foundation for the Pan-African movement by creating opportunities for economic, education and cultural development for Africa and the Diaspora in the spirit of Pan-Africanism.

Harlem played a pivotal and multifaceted role in the early Pan-African movement, especially during the early to mid-20th century. The Harlem Renaissance was a major factor in the reframing of Black identity and dignity. Harlem was where the ideological groundwork for Pan-Africanism move-



By Zakiyyah

HERBS ARE NATURE'S MEDICINE

Healing Foods in the Kitchen - Part 3

Herbs also have specific energies, tastes and directions that affect a healing change, and act very similarly to our foods, in that they provide our body with nutrients and other components that enhance organ functions.

The way you prepare the formula (as a tea, tincture, capsule, etc.) and the strength of the formula, which is determined by the proportions of each herb to others within the formula, will determine its healing power.

There are many foods and condiments in your kitchen that are healing. If

you have cold extremities in the dead of winter, ginger may be your remedy, as it disperses its healing properties out to the extremities; or if you can't really get warm in your core, cayenne capsules will resolve that dilemma, as it contracts the warming energy to your center.

To relieve bloating and indigestion, chew a few fennel seeds fifteen to twenty minutes before meals. A simple remedy to prevent infection for minor cuts, bruises or rashes, boil a couple of peach pits (after cleaning the pits of all clinging meat, air dried and stored in a jar) in water for

twenty to thirty minutes, covered, let sit covered for another twenty minutes. When cooled, use the water as a rinse on the affected area.

MAKE NATURE'S MEDICINE YOUR OWN

This information is to help balance your body's natural healing energies, and is not intended as diagnosis, treatment or cure. Email: theherbalist1750@gmail.com; phone: 347-407-4312; blog: www.herbsarenaturesmedicine.blogspot.com.

Answers to Crossword on page 17

S	P	A	S			M	A	S			M	B	A								
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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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Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.

HARLEM COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

STATEPOINT

THEME:
BODY LANGUAGE

ACROSS

1. Hot Springs and such
5. ___ Bell and ___ Barker
8. Wharton degree, acr.
11. Artist's inspiration
12. *Move head to show attention
13. Angry growl
15. Shamu, e.g.
16. Diva's number
17. Put on fancy dress (2 words)
18. *Making facial expression showing pain
20. Mine passage
21. Single-handedly
22. Assistance
23. Made according to specifications
26. Economizes
30. Biochemistry acr.
31. Aerie baby
34. Genesis skipper
35. Leaves out
37. *Some look up and to the right when telling

one

38. Watcher
39. "The Forsyte ___" by John Galsworthy
40. Forty winks
42. Fraternity letter T
43. *Said "easy peasy" with fingers
45. Like a weight lifter, usually
47. Weasel-related onomatopoeia
48. Undo laces
50. Helicopter sound
52. *Showing low self-esteem or boredom
56. 100 centimes
57. Purl partner
58. From square one
59. Frustration, in a comic book
60. "At ___, soldier!"
61. Don't go
62. Dashboard acr.
63. Like Willie Winkie
64. Frustrated driver's recourse

DOWN

1. Urban haze
2. Make like a cat

3. Ascus, pl.
4. Same as sea moss (2 words)
5. Rice wine
6. Dress with a flare
7. Rudolph, when older
8. Famous Christmas guests
9. Like some champagnes
10. High mountain
12. Toyota truck model
13. Part of flight
14. *Showing agreement
19. Healing plants
22. Be in a cast
23. *Show anger with arms
24. Unnerve
25. Eurasian antelope
26. "___ but not heard"
27. Much, in Italy
28. Song of praise
29. *"I don't know" move
32. *One's smiling because one's ___
33. Intoxicated
36. *Showing impatience with fingers
38. Like retina and brain

- connecting nerve
40. Large edible mushroom
41. Keen
44. Nice place for a rocking chair
46. Reuse ideas
48. Forearm bones
49. Hustle and bustle sound
50. Sandwich alternative
51. Stay out of its way!
52. Place at angle
53. Gung-ho about something
54. Close by
55. Gwyneth, for short
56. Opposite of #54
- Down 63. Lira, pl.
64. Land parcels
67. *Gary Oldman received this honorific in 2025



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"Stitching Freedom: A True Story of Injustice, Defiance, and Hope in Angola Prison" by Gary Tyler

Review by Terri Schlichenmeyer, Harlem News contributor

The seams are textbook straight. You made sure of it.

There'll be no need for a thread-ripper for you. No, you planned before you picked up a needle, and you were careful with each poke of the thread. A few snips here, a quick tack there, and you'll be done. As in the new book "Stitching Freedom" by Gary Tyler (with Ellen Bravo), this project almost took a lifetime.

Growing up in St. Rose, Louisiana, Gary Tyler tried to avoid major trouble. He says he was often the victim of racism in school, though, and he didn't put up with it so he ran afoul of authority now and then. On the

day he was suspended for "causing problems in the classroom," he wasn't worried; he considered it another day off.

He didn't know that it would be his last day of freedom for more than forty-one years.

After wandering around awhile, visiting with friends and a cousin, Tyler went back to the school that day, where an altercation on a bus ended in the death of a white teenager. Tyler was there, but he wasn't involved; witnesses confirmed it, before telling different stories at trial, then recanting. Still, he was arrested for the murder, taken to jail, tried, and sent to Angola Prison,

sentenced to die by electric chair.

Still a teenager, Tyler was careful who he befriended in Angola, keeping away from trouble and finding mentors in the OGs who'd been there awhile. With their guidance, he learned things he hadn't known, legal terms, how to find the right lawyer, how to raise money and get by. They corrected his grammar and his thinking. They taught him how to present himself. He learned the value in service, and he became a prison seamster.

Tyler says he knew prison would be bad, but despite that he knew other young men who'd been there, he underestimated how bad it would get. And he never would've believed he'd find men who'd become his family and who'd save his life.

Crime features big in the news lately, doesn't it? You could be forgiven if you're feeling fatigue from it, but check out "Stitching Freedom." Here, the crime is racism.

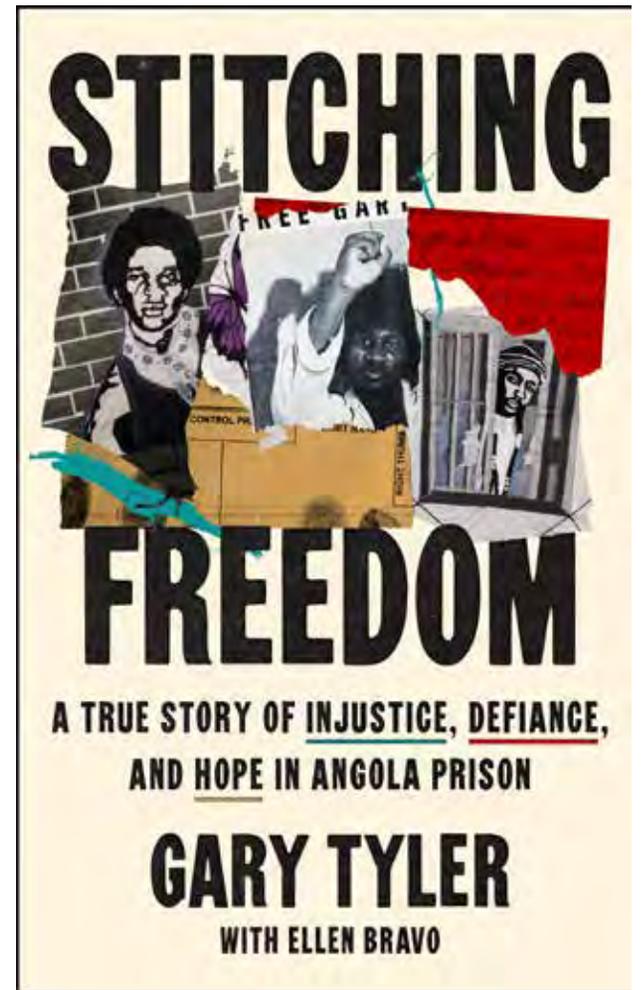
Surprise: you won't get the sense that author Gary Tyler needed a halo; no, he admits to being a bit of a rascal sometimes, with rather typical teen behavior before his incarceration. This honesty stretches: he also presents believable, abundant evidence that despite his proximity to where the crime occurred, he didn't do what he was accused of doing. Through that account and beyond, he shows readers how rac-

ism kept him down, and how he kept his hopes up and his head high.

"Stitching Freedom" isn't scary or particularly scared-straight-ish, and there's a bit of humor at the end in Tyler's post-prison memories of learning about modern life. That means you can read his story yourself, and feel comfortable giving it to a teenager who needs it. Find this book, and then watch your time get all sewn up.

"Stitching Freedom: A True Story of Injustice, Defiance, and Hope in Angola Prison" by Gary Tyler with Ellen Bravo

c.2025,
One Signal Publishers
\$29.00



SUDOKU ANSWERS

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

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