

A Celebration of Life



Gloria Jeanne Bynoe Thomas (1948 – 2008)

The Harlem community and Harlem Commonwealth Council (HCC) lost a true friend and devoted supporter on Monday, April 7, 2008. Gloria Bynoe Thomas passed away suddenly, after a brief and unexpected illness, at the age of 59. She was a mother, daughter, mentor, chairperson, Harlem community activist, staunch supporter of youth and young adults and radio host – she brilliantly filled all of these roles and more.

Gloria worked for more than 25 years at City College of New York where she served as assistant to the Board Member of the Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean (IRADAC). She had a keen interest in the training and development of young people – often serving as a mentor to the many students who sought out her guidance and support on a regular basis.

As a member of Harlem Commonwealth Council's Educational Committee, she worked with Dr. Tait to facilitate a relationship with Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC). HCC now provides some scholarships to students in the BMCC Nursing Program as a result of this partnership.

On Monday, April 14, hundreds of community residents, including political, civic and business leaders, attended her funeral at Abyssinian Baptist Church to memorialize the passing of a beloved community leader. It was quite evident that Gloria Bynoe Thomas was an inspiring, much-loved and respected role model who touched the lives of so many with her charm, her humor and her dedication to bettering the circumstances of the people of Harlem. She will be sorely missed by her friends at Harlem Commonwealth Council.

Zora! Returns To Harlem

The spirit of Zora Neale Hurston was alive, well and brimming with energy in Harlem on Saturday, February 2, 2008. In honor of Black History Month, DovetailACTORS Studio and Windy Crest Media Group, in association with Harlem Commonwealth Council, presented *ZORA! Returns to Harlem*, a one-woman off-Broadway show chronicling the life journey of the revolutionary writer, folklorist, anthropologist and Harlem Renaissance icon from her childhood to her death.

Zora! Returns to Harlem, based on a play written by five-time AUDELCO award winner Laurence Holder, was directed by Gregory Freelon. Onstage, the NAACP-award winning actress Antonia Badom was the virtual embodiment of Zora. Ms. Badom portrayed Zora Neale Hurston's life from her early years as a child of nine living in Eatonville, Florida to her adulthood in Harlem through a series of poignant vignettes.

Over 200 Harlem seniors laughed, cried and reveled in the range of emotions Ms. Badom injected into the role. It was as if Ms. Hurston herself had been channeled right back to 125th Street!

"This was an outstanding event," reflected E. Randy Dupree, HCC's Board Chairman, "I am happy that HCC was able to provide such a high quality event for seniors in the Harlem community."



Antonia Badom strikes a pose as Zora Neale Hurston at the beginning of her illustrious career in the 1920's



Ms. Badom as Zora after the publication of her first major literary success, *Jonas Gourdvine*



Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration

On January 21, Harlem Commonwealth Council hosted its first public program for 2008 -- a celebration of the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. On this joyous occasion, the HCC auditorium was filled to capacity by people who wanted to pay homage to Dr. King's enduring legacy. This celebration included performances of music, dance and poetry that exhibited the artistry and creative talents of young people for the benefit of seniors in the Harlem community.

The performances were staged by Frank Miller, a talented 20-year-old freshman attending Medgar Evers College. When Dr. Joseph L. Tait, President of HCC, approached Frank about developing a MLK-themed celebration performance for the benefit of senior citizens,

Frank experienced a range of emotions. He was thrilled, nervous and excited as he eagerly embraced the opportunity to showcase the talents of high school friends whom he had molded into a team.

An audience of intergenerational Harlem residents was treated to an afternoon of varying dance forms-- salsa, meringue, hip-hop and African dance; blues and jazz instrumental arrangements; African drumming; and original works of poetry. Those presentations were complemented by a compelling performance by the professional group **The New Step Team for Social Justice Step Dancers**, a group of teenagers under the direction of choreographer Melvin John P. Miller. The resulting show was a highly polished production that was enthusiastically received by those in attendance. Reveling in the success of the performances, Frank confessed that he felt as if he were "flying"!

The senior citizens who attended the celebration were drawn from a broad array of Harlem-based senior centers that included the A. Philip Randolph

Senior Center, Alice Kornegay Senior Center, Central Harlem Senior Center and the Jackie Robinson Senior Center. Seniors also attended from American Legion Post No. 398, Harlem YMCA, Metropolitan AME Church, St. Luke Baptist Church, Thomas Memorial Wesleyan Church and Broadway Housing Communities.

"The seniors really enjoyed the show," commented Rita Carrington, Executive Board Member of the Central Harlem Senior Center, "It was educational, entertaining and reflective of the importance of the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. They appreciated the intergenerational aspects of the day and were wowed by the talents of the young people in the show. All in all, it was a lovely way to spend the day."

HCC's 2008 Summer Internship Program

Summer 2008 marks the third anniversary of the Harlem Commonwealth Council Internship Program. The HCC Internship Program is designed to create opportunities for Harlem youth, exposing the program participants to career paths and opportunities that are often not afforded to high school students in the Harlem community. The experience gained from an internship placement enhances a student's resume, as well as provides monetary gain.

On Saturday, April 26th the seven high school sophomores and juniors selected to participate in the program were interviewed by the HCC Internship Program Selection Committee. They began the first in a series of workshops that will address meeting the program expectations, business etiquette, learning the difference between appropriate personal and

professional behaviors, learning the vernacular and culture of the business world, and managing your money. These young people will act as Harlem Commonwealth Council ambassadors while learning about the 'world of work' in businesses that have partnered with HCC since the inception of the program in 2006.

The firms that will host the 2008 summer interns are Grid Properties, Inc. (management/owner of Harlem USA), the Gotham Organization (real estate development and construction/owner of Harlem USA), the Cogswell Realty Group (real estate development and management), Van Wagner Communications, LLC (Advertising), City National Bank (retail banking), and AA Truck Renting Corp. (transportation).

We anticipate that the participants will grow in maturity, self-esteem and self-confidence as a result of their work experience, while they learn about the realities of working in the 'real world'.

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Publisher's Note

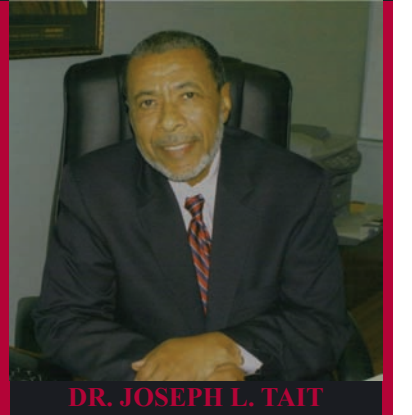
Harlem Commonwealth Council has a 41-year tradition in protecting the legacy of central Harlem through its real estate investment strategies and the creation of jobs through its businesses. Our motto was "A Piece of the Block" i.e. every citizen of Harlem should be a stakeholder.

We realized that people who have no effective voice in the community they inhabit nor have control over its resources are only tenants on someone else's land. For this reason the decision was made to invest, not only in land, but in the potential of our people—a potential that is as dynamic as can be found anywhere else.

The past three years have shown that focused investment in people does, indeed, pay incredible dividends; from the 3rd and 4th graders at PS 154 to high school juniors and seniors; from health care professionals to those wishing to better their futures through improving their English language skills; from Harlem residents seeking to sharpen their business acumen to our community's honored seniors, HCC now provides programs and activities that span the generations.

This issue commemorates our 41 years of existence and a successful Fund Raiser for our Educational efforts. We thank all who came out to support us on April 17, 2008 at the Jumeirah Essex House function. In addition we have garnered the support of the **Taproot Foundation** and **Capital One Bank**.

We look forward to a future of partnerships with people of our community and our supporters that will be fruitful and that will make us all realize the potential that lies deep within us for the "Betterment of Harlem."



DR. JOSEPH L. TAIT

Harlem Commonwealth Council Awards Annual Scholarships

This February HCC announced the recipients of its annual scholarship awards to deserving students pursuing careers in the healthcare profession. Five Harlem residents received scholarship grants ranging in amounts from one thousand dollars to two thousand dollars that will assist them in covering the costs of tuition and books at their respective institutions. The 2008 scholarship recipients are **LeTonya Tenorio**, a 15-year licensed practical nurse who is pursuing a degree as a registered nurse at the Helene Fuld College of



Tanya Russell



Gwendolyn Raymond



Mariama Amar



LeTonya Tenorio



Lisa Reese

Nursing; **Tanya Russell** and **Gwendolyn Raymond** who are both pursuing registered nurse associate degree at the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC); **Lisa Reese**, a college graduate returning to school who is pursuing a registered nurse associate degree at BMCC with the goal of becoming a nurse practitioner specializing in pediatrics; and **Mariama Amar**, an African immigrant and widowed single mother of two teenaged boys, who is also pursuing a registered

nurse associate degree at BMCC.

The common thread of each HCC scholarship recipient involved overcoming daunting hardships and challenges enroute to their stated goals. Each recipient has made admirable progress in her studies and holds tenaciously to a dream of serving the Harlem community as a nursing professional. HCC applauds the spirit of **LeTonya Tenorio**, **Tanya Russell**, **Gwendolyn Raymond**, **Lisa Reese** and

Mariama Amar, and is proud to support our scholarship recipients!

For more information about our Nursing Scholarships, interested students at BMCC should contact Susan Gyamfi, Director of the Scholarship Department and at Helene Fuld, questions may be directed to Sandra Senior.

The Harlem Entrepreneurial Fund

We are pleased to announce that the Harlem Entrepreneurial Fund is accepting applications for small business loans. The **Harlem Entrepreneurial Fund (HEF)** is Harlem Commonwealth Council's latest economic development initiative and is designed to assist small businesses in the Harlem community by providing loan capital and technical assistance.

HEF anticipates making business loans in amounts ranging up to \$25,000. While the circumstances of each particular borrower and loan will certainly vary, loans from HEF will generally be at reasonable market rates with repayment terms ranging from 3-5 years.

HEF looks to primarily serve eligible minority and women-run small business owners and entrepreneurs operating Harlem-based businesses in the area between 110th Street and 155th Street, river to river. HEF is presently focusing on eligible borrowers seeking loans for purposes of business expansion, machinery and equipment purchases, inventory and working capital needs.

Job creation is an important part of the HEF financing initiative. Studies have shown that small businesses are a major source of generating jobs in the U.S.A. Each eligible borrower who accepts a loan from the HEF program must commit to creating at least one job and employing a recipient of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or a low-income person.

We invite you to learn more about the Harlem Entrepreneurial Fund at our website at www.harlemcommonwealth.org or by contacting us at (212) 749-0900 X 122.

Harlem Commonwealth Council Celebrates its 41st Anniversary

S In this time of rapid changes, when numerous community-based organizations have just disappeared or been reduced to ineffectiveness, it is a source of great pride and sense of accomplishment to be around long enough to celebrate a 41st anniversary.

That pride and sense of accomplishment is quadrupled when the celebrating organization has an extraordinarily productive and impressive track record as does the Harlem Commonwealth Council (HCC). Located on 125th Street in Harlem, HCC recently celebrated its 41st anniversary with a reception and dinner at Jumeirah Essex House on New York City's Central Park South. Over two hundred guests from throughout the city's metropolitan area joined HCC's president, Dr. Joseph L. Tait, for a memorable evening that provided an opportunity to see and hear first-hand how HCC is living up to the theme of "Building for the Future."

The celebrants' presence on a brisk Spring evening demonstrated their deep appreciation for the significant contributions HCC has made to bettering the quality of life uptown. First, under the leadership of James Dowdy, then Barbara Norris and, most notably, under the skillful management of the visionary Dr. Tait, HCC has made its mark as a pivotal and positive force in the Harlem community. Dr. Tait expanded the organization from primarily focusing on economic development to being a multi-service organization with strong, solutions-oriented programs focusing on education, scholarships in the health related arena, the arts, and developing young entrepreneurs. For more details about these programs please visit HCC's website www.harlemcommonwealth.org.

According to Dr. Tait, who has been on HCC's board for over 30 years, and its president for 3 1/2 years, "We strongly believe that the enduring success of our economic development efforts requires an informed constituency. For that reason we expanded our outreach into the education and cultural arenas. We are very pleased with the response to this expansion, and we thank those corporations and individuals whose support has facilitated our outreach."

Among the highlights of the evening was the showing of a video produced by Greg Freelon's Windy Crest Media Group, LLC that showed HCC's programs in action. The faces of program participants said to all present that "we are taking care of serious business." Another highlight of the memorable evening included the presenting of awards to Congressman Charles B. Rangel, Chairman of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee; Joel I. Picket, Chairman and CEO of Gotham Organization and Gotham Construction Company; Robert C. Fauser, President, Eastern Division of Van Wagner Communication; Elizabeth Jarrett, principal of the innovative Harriett Tubman Learning Center; and Assemblyman Keith L. T. Wright. All have made significant contributions that have enabled HCC to advance its efforts to "create independence and stability in Harlem through economic development, academic empowerment and entrepreneurial support."

Also helping to make the affair a great success were exciting performances by the drummers and dancers from Lion of Judah, a teenage group led by Frank Miller; The New Step Team for Social Justice under the tutelage of Melvin P. Miller; and a silent auction of historical sports memorabilia donated by Larry Haber and Ascent Youth Alliance to Battle Autism and 4Boyz Autographs to Battle Autism.

The celebrants departed The Essex House steeped in the knowledge that Dr. Tait and HCC are both talking the talk and walking the walk.



HCC Honorees: Joel Picket, Elizabeth Jarrett, Robert Fauser.



Steve Williams, Rev. Jacques Andre Degraffe, Michael T. Johnson, HCC Board Member.



Phillip Morrow, President SoBro, and his wife Ann Morrow



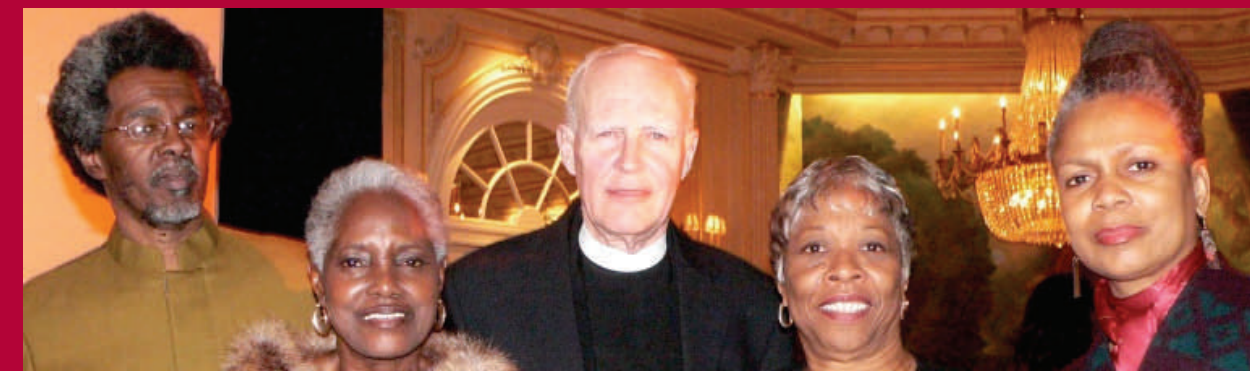
Joel Picket, David Picket, Rona Picket, Drew Greenwald, President, Grid Properties



James Speight donating \$5,000 dollars.



Dr. Joseph L. Tait, HCC President/CEO, Yasmin Cornelius, accepting Assemblyman Keith Wright's award.



Dr. Jama Adams, Jonnie Marshall, HCC Board Member, Father Tom Fenlon, Gloria Hartley, HCC Board Member, Taur Orange, Director of EOP Program, FIT.



Joel Picket donating additional \$10,000, Dr. Tait, E. Randy Dupree.



Lion of Judah African Drummers lead attendees into the main hall



Audrey Bernard, The New York Beacon, A. Peter Bailey, Journalist/Lecturer.



Jeffrey Eaton, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of Congressman Charles B. Rangel, Dr. Tait, Willie Walker, Leslie Wyche.



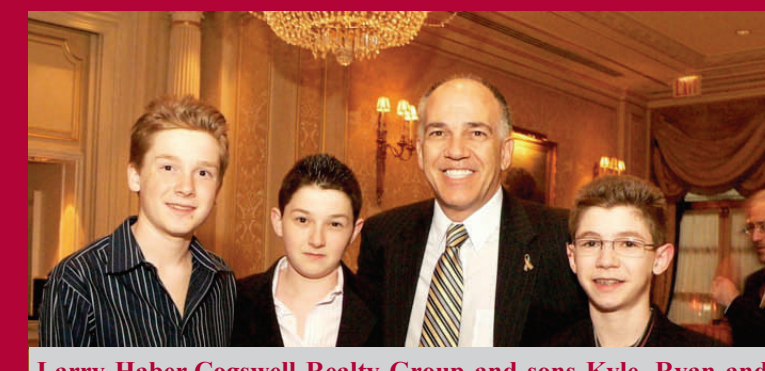
Susan Gyamfi, Lesley Leppert, Angela Sales



Lion of Judah African Drummers and Dancers perform during dinner.



James H. Dowdy, President, East Coast Development Corp. John Bess, CHC Board Member



Larry Haber, Cogswell Realty Group and sons Kyle, Ryan and Sean— 4 Boyz Autographs to Battle Autism



Corby Ellis-Mare, Marketing Manager, City National City National Bank, with her husband Adama Mare



Karl Rodney, Judge Debra James, Comptroller William Thompson



Ponzella Johnson, Honoree Elizabeth Jarrett, Principal P.S. 154, Tiawana King.



Princess Jenkins, The Brownstone, Mistress of Ceremonies, Vera Moore.



HCC Chairman E. Randy Dupree, James Speight, East Coast Development Corp.



John Bess, HCC Board Member, Greg Freelon, Windy Crest Media Group.