



**EMPOWERING HARLEMITES  
REBUILDING COMMUNITIES**

*established  
1986*

## **HARLEM CONGREGATIONS FOR COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT, INC.**

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **HCCI CELEBRATES 31 YEARS OF SERVICE WITH WE' MCDONALD (ABC's The Voice), HONORABLE INEZ E. DICKENS AND OTHERS AT THE 15<sup>th</sup> Annual "LET US BREAK BREAD TOGETHER" AWARDS GALA**

New York, NY – On Thursday April 27, 2017, Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement, Inc. (HCCI) celebrated 31 years of service at its 15<sup>th</sup> Annual "Let Us Break Bread Together" Awards Gala, held at Marina del Rey in Throgs Neck, NY. The elegant ballroom played host to an array of powerful guests including business owners, real estate insiders, as-well-as civic and community leaders, such as former **Mayor David N. Dinkins**, the **Honorable Charles B. Rangel**, **Deputy Commissioner of HPD Anne-Marie Hendrickson** and others.

Hosted by ABC news correspondant and author **Mara Schiavacampo**, the awards recipients included: **The Honorable Assemblywoman Inez E. Dickens**, New York State Assembly District 70, recipient of HCCI's most prestigious *Canon Frederick Boyd Williams Community Service Award*, which is endowed by the Rockefeller Foundation; **Leah Abraham**, Co-owner of Settepani received the Business Leadership Award; **Barbara Askins**, President & CEO, 125<sup>th</sup> Street BID received the Trailblazer Award; **Parag R. Mehta, RA, AIA, LEED, AP**, principal of PM Architecture received the Community Builder Award; and the Honorable **Patricia Anne Williams**, the retired Supreme Court Justice who presided over the Amadou Diallo case, was presented the *Distinguished Service Award*. This year HCCI also presented Special Appreciation awards to founding board members: **Rev. Dr. John E. Carrington** and **Rev. Dr. Adolph Roberts**. Dr. Roberts' award was accepted on his behalf by his son, **Min. Anthony Roberts**.

HCCI President & CEO Malcolm A. Punter proudly greeted guests and announced HCCI's recent accomplishments which include preserving affordability of more than 600 units of housing, beginning the rehab of 10 limited equity coops in East Harlem and the agency's role in the Victoria Theater project on 125<sup>th</sup> Street.

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*(In Memoriam)*

Rev. Dr. Edward E. Johnson

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“Last week the Victoria Theater development broke ground and, as we celebrate 31 years of community service, we are proud to have helped secure \$10 million in tax credits for this development that will yield 206 units of affordable housing and create 400 permanent jobs,” said Punter. “In July we completed the 153<sup>rd</sup> service corridor, which in one short block provides: a childcare center for up to 150 children, a technology program, a free afterschool program, 21 units of housing for youth who have aged out of foster care, more than 130 units of affordable housing, and HCCI’s new social service headquarters.” He added, “We look forward to continued success and expanding our programs to serve the Harlem community.”

This elegant affair was bursting at the seams with supporters. “We are at capacity,” said Carlisa Brown Simons, HCCI’s VP of Corporate Relations and Producer of the gala. “In fact, we had to add two tables, to accommodate our guests! It’s great to see our partners and community come out in droves to support HCCI.”

**John Stanley** – musical director for the legendary singer Patti Labelle performed along with two Harlem School of the Arts (HSA) students: **We’ McDonald** (finalist on ABC’s the Voice) delivered a moving rendition of Nina Simone’s “Feeling Good”; and **Aiyana Smash** played electric guitar, while belting out Alicia Keys’ “Girl on Fire”.

Spirits were high at this community fete and the HCCI Board of Directors affirmed its commitment to Harlem through this festive affair. Two board members, Second Vice Chair George H. Weldon, Jr. and the Chairman of the Board, Rev. Dr. Charles A. Curtis sponsored \$1000 scholarships for local students.

“Thanks to our supporters and staff, the gala is always a glorious affair,” said Dr. Curtis. “And, George and I wanted to use this platform to support our college-bound youth, and amplify the fact that the gala is also an investment in Harlem’s future.”

In total, five \$1000 scholarships were presented to local youth. **Bazavier Griset** received the *Canon Frederick Boyd Williams Community Service Scholarship*, which is funded through an endowment from the Rockefeller Foundation. *H&N Insurance Agency & Financial Group Scholarship Awards* were presented to **Ms. Kiara Molina** and **Ms. La’ Shanta Smith**; the *George H. and Lottie K. Weldon Scholarship Fund* awarded **Mr. Collins Kwame Owusu** and the *Rev. Dr. Charles A. Curtis Scholarship Award* was awarded to **Mr. Alpha Diallo**.

Proceeds from this event benefit the ongoing work of HCCI, a diverse, interfaith consortium of congregations established to revitalize the physical, economic, cultural, and spirit of the Harlem community. HCCI has made a substantial impact on the social and living conditions prevalent in Harlem by developing low to moderate income housing; creating supportive health and human service facilities and programs; providing commercial development opportunities to local businesses; and expanding cultural programs. To learn more about HCCI and to view testimonials by residents who have been impacted by HCCI’s programs, please visit [www.hcci.org](http://www.hcci.org).

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## **PHOTO CAPTIONS**

Photo Credits: Isseu Diouf Campbell and Hubert Williams

**HCCI Board** - Back L to R: Rev. Nigel Pierce, Rev. Wendy J. Kelly Carter, Rev. Shepherd Lee, Sr., Joan O. Dawson, PhD (1st Vice Chair), Mr. George H. Weldon, Jr. (2nd Vice Chair), Rev. Keith W. Roberson (Treasurer), Imam Talib Abdur Rashid (Corporate Secretary), Mr. Malcolm A. Punter (President & CEO); Front L to R: Ms. Virginia Montague (Gala Co-Chair), Rev. Dr. Charles A. Curtis (Chairman), and Rev. Eva G. Duzant (Gala Chair).

**Charlie & Charles** - Honorable Charles B. Rangel and Rev. Dr. Charles A. Curtis, Chairman of HCCI.

**Leah & George** - Leah Abraham, Co-owner of HCCI and recipient of HCCI's Business Leadership Award and George H. Weldon, Jr., HCCI, Second Vice Chair.

**Ginny, Barbara & Curtis** - HCCI Board Member Virginia Montague, Barbara Askins, President & CEO of the 125th Street BID and Curtis Archer, President of Harlem Community Development Corporation.

**Hendrickson, Mehta and Punter** - Anne-Marie Hendrickson, Deputy Commissioner of HPD, Parag Mehta, Principal of PM Architecture and recipient of HCCI's Community Builder Award, and HCCI President & CEO of HCCI Malcolm A. Punter.

**Joan, Griset, Inez & Lee** - Joan O. Dawson, PhD and First Vice Chair of HCCI, Bazavier Griset (recipient of HCCI's Canon Frederick B. Williams Community Service Scholarship), Honorable Inez E. Dickens (NYS Assembly, 70th District) recipient of HCCI's coveted Canon Frederick B. Williams Community Service Award, and Rev. Shepherd Lee, Sr. (HCCI Board Member).

**Patricia & Pettus** - Honorable Patricia Anne Williams, retired NYS Supreme Court Justice and Marvin Pettus, Esq.

**Dr. Carrington** - Dr. John E. Carrington, retired founding board member of HCCI and recipient of HCCI's Special Appreciation Award.

**Weldon & Owusu** - Kendra Weldon and her father George H. Weldon, Jr. flank Collins Kwame Owusu, recipient of the George H. and Lottie K. Weldon Scholarship award recipient.

**H&N Scholarships** – VJ Ghaness of the H&N Insurance Company & Financial Group is flanked by Kiara Molina and La'Shanta Smith, recipients of the H&N Insurance Agency & Financial Group Scholarship Awards.

**We' McDonald, HSA & HCCI** - Yolanda Wyns, Musical Director at Harlem School of the Arts strikes a pose with her students who performed at the gala, Aiyana Smash and We' McDonald (Finalist on ABC's the Voice) along with HCCI's Communications Director Moikgantsi Kgama.

**Punters & Schiavocampo** – HCCI President & CEO Malcolm A. Punter, his wife Aarian Punter, Owner of A&A Entertainment Global, Inc., and the mistress of ceremonies author and ABC News correspondent Mara Schiavocampo.