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HCCI celebrates 30 glorious years at 'Let Us Break Bread Together' dinner

BEACON, April 28 - May 4, 2016 newyorkbeacon.net



Malcolm A. Punter

By Audrey J. Bernard
Society Editor

Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement, Inc. (HCCI) celebrated its 30th Anniversary "Let Us Break Bread Together" Awards Dinner on Thursday, April 21, 2016 at the scenic Marina del Rey in Throgs Neck, NY where an array of powerful people gathered together to break bread and honor a cache of deserving civic and community leaders. The gala was hosted by **Dr. Bob Lee of WBSL** and featured a lovely reception followed by dinner and a distinguished program.

During the awards program, **Assemblyman Herman Denny Farrell, Jr.**, New York State Assembly District 71 was presented with HCCI's most prestigious **Canon Frederick Boyd Williams** Community Service Award endowed by the Rockefeller Foundation. **Anthony M. Harmon**, President of New York Branch NAACP and Director of Community & Parent Outreach, United Federation of Teachers (UFT) received the Humanitarian Award. **Bishop Gregory G. M. Ingram**, Presiding Prelate, First Episcopal District, African Methodist Episcopal received the Distinguished Service Award. **Ron Moelis**, Chief Executive Officer and Founding Co-Partner, L&M Development Partners was presented the Community Builder Award. **Preston D. Pinkett, III**, Chairman and CEO, City National Bank of New Jersey received the Corporate Leadership Award. **Vivian A. Taylor, Ed.D.**, Associate Dean of Diversity & Cultural Affairs, Columbia University School of Nursing was honored with the Community Partner Award.

HCCI's new interim President & CEO **Malcolm A. Punter** announced the upcoming completion of the 153rd Street Corridor which will provide a



HCCI Board Members: Imam Talib Abdur Muhammad, Corporate Secretary; HCCI Chairman Rev. Charles A. Curtis, Ed.D.; First Vice Chair Joan O. Dawson, Ph. D.; Second Vice Chair, George H. Weldon, Jr.; Treasurer, Rev. Keith W. Roberson



HCCI honoree Bishop Gregory G.M. Ingram is surrounded by church members



Honoree Assemblyman Herman Denny Farrell, Jr., HCCI board member, George H. Weldon, Jr.



Honoree Vivian A. Taylor, Ed. D.



Honoree Anthony M. Harmon



Honoree Ron Moelis



Honoree Preston D. Pinkett, III



Rangel Presentation: Assemblyman Herman Denny Farrell, Jr., former Mayor David N. Dinkins, HCCI Chair Rev. Charles A. Curtis, Ed. D., Congressman Charles B. Rangel, Council Member Inez E. Dickens and Assemblyman Farrell's daughter Sophia



Scholarship Winners (l-r) Ramier Williams, VJ Ghaness, Ryan Brown, AJ Ghaness

new child care center for up to 120 children, headquarters for HCCI and additional social services for the neighborhood. "We are celebrating 30 years of tremendous impact on the Harlem community," said Punter. "We are also nearing completion of the 153rd service corridor. HCCI's founding members envisioned this, so bringing this project to fruition, 30 years later, is a major milestone. And of course, it was my first public event serving as Interim President and CEO, a role that – as a lifelong member of this community – I will pursue with passionate dedication."

Congressman **Charles B. Rangel** also had a surprise

up his natty sleeve when he enlisted former Mayor **David N. Dinkins** and Council Member **Inez E. Dickens** to present citations to Farrell and HCCI Chairman, Dr. **Charles A. Curtis**. "This evening was incredibly special. Rangel, Dinkins and Farrell have each stood by HCCI since our inception 30 years ago," said Dr. Curtis. "The citations were a wonderful accent on the importance of the impact HCCI has made in Harlem. And, our honorees are symbolic of HCCI's strength and vision for a future marked by improved social services and an increasingly stimulated local economy."

The evening closed with

the presentment of three scholarships to local high school seniors presented by **AJ and VJ Ghaness**, **Ramier Williams** and **Ryan Brown** who each received the HCCI/H&N Insurance Agency & Financial Group Scholarship Award of \$1000, which is funded by the Ghaness family. **Anu Osibajo** received the Canon Frederick Boyd Williams Community Service Scholarship Award of \$1000, which is funded each year by the Rockefeller Foundation.

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. Jazzy-soul duo **Acute Inflections** and **John Stanley** – musical director for the legendary singer Patti Labelle – and opera singer **Martine Bruno** punctuated the festive affair with lively music. (Photos by Hubert Williams)