



## CITY OF NEW YORK MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10

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**Hon. Marquis A. Harrison**  
*Chairperson*

### Resolution To Support the Rucker Park Walk of Fame Promenade and Holcombe Rucker Statue in Rucker Park

WHEREAS Holcombe Rucker Park (Park ID M216) is a 3.05-acre park located on West 155th Street and Frederick Douglass Boulevard in the Borough of Manhattan in Community Board 10; and

WHEREAS In addition to the basketball court, the park has a baseball field, handball courts, children's playground, spray shower and restroom; and

WHEREAS The park, which houses the "reigning hallowed ground of streetball courts", is named after Holcombe Rucker, a local teacher and a playground director for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Mr. Rucker started a basketball tournament in 1950 in order to help less fortunate youth stay off the streets and aim for college careers; and

WHEREAS Since 1969, Holcombe Rucker Park has been a source of incalculable pride and entertainment for Harlemites as well as basketball enthusiasts the world over. What began in 1956 with Holcombe Rucker's youth tournament, which would lead to 700 Harlem youth receiving college scholarships, was carried on and expanded with each passing generation. Bob McCullough continued this legacy with the Rucker Pro Am tournament and Each One Teach One program, providing young people a source of pride and inspiration over the decades. Greg Marius would take up the mantle with the Entertainer's Basketball Classic, inspiring countless youth from NYC and beyond to achieve greatness. Both of these tournaments inspired basketball players throughout the world and drew the respect and participation of some of the world's greatest athletes and cultural icons; and

WHEREAS Many who played at the iconic park in the Rucker Tournament achieved a level of fame for their abilities, with several having gone on to play in the National Basketball Association (NBA); and

WHEREAS Mr. Rucker gave Black players an opportunity to play at a time when the NBA, founded in 1949, first started. At the time there were only 1 or 2 Blacks per team. There were few avenues like the Harlem Globe Trotters where teams of Blacks played together. In addition, players who were not able to go to college had the option to go to the Rucker to play; and

WHEREAS Many professional basketball players have played at the court even after gaining prominence. Many others developed their basketball skills at Rucker prior to becoming notable in the sport, including: Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Kenny Anderson, Nate Archibald, Metta Sandiford-Artest, Sylvester Blye, Conney Hawkins, Roger Brown, Julius Erving, Bill Bradley, Joe Hammond, Earl Manigault, Jackie Jackson, Richard "Pee Wee" Kirkland, Larry "Bone Collector" Williams, Rafer "Skip to My Lou" Alston, Herman "Helicopter" Knowlings, Conrad "McNasty" Macrae, Charlie Scott and Wilt Chamberlain; and

WHEREAS Greg Marius founded the Entertainers Basketball Classic in 1982, when he was a young rapper with the Disco Four. Initially organized as a tournament between rival hip-hop crews, Marius's basketball showcase ingeniously connected the worlds of basketball and hip-hop. Expanding on Rucker Park's history as a place where neighborhood talent could play sports celebrities, Marius invited basketball stars to the weeks-long tournament. The growing number of players from the NBA drew enormous crowds, and in 1984 the tournament moved from Fred Samuel Playground (formerly Readers Digest Park) to Holcombe Rucker Park. Since its founding, NBA superstars like Kobe Bryant, Allen Iverson, Stephon Marbury, LeBron James, and Shaquille O'Neal have held court at the Classic. In the 1990s, Marius expanded his vision and integrated entertainers like Michael Bivins, Fat Joe, Jay Z, P. Diddy, Alicia Keys, Beyoncé, Rihanna, and Mary J. Blige into the program. Political and business leaders such as United States President Bill Clinton and NBA Commissioner David Stern have also joined the jubilant crowds at the Entertainers Basketball Classic; and

WHEREAS The Greg Marius Court was refurbished to include: (1) custom-made basketball goals, styled after the backboards and hoops in the 30 NBA arenas and practice facilities; making it the only outdoor court in the world with these high-quality goals, (2) a new surface for the court, eliminating the cracks and other defects in the current pavement, (3) new bleachers and team benches, (4) new scoreboard, (5) new gates and (6) repairs to the fence; and

WHEREAS Rucker Park has been featured in films and documentaries; "Above The Rim" (1994), TNT's : "On Hallowed Ground: Streetball Champions of Rucker Park" which aired in 2000 and won a Sports Emmy Award, "The Real: Rucker Park Legends---True Harlem Story" (2006), "Undefeated The Roger Brown Story" - PBS (2013), #Rucker50 Documentary (2016), and the 2018 film: "Uncle Drew"; and

WHEREAS The proposed Rucker Park Walk of Fame Promenade and Holcombe Rucker statue will have the potential to educate and pay tribute to esteemed players during events outside of basketball tournaments such as concerts; and

WHEREAS In 2022, Rucker Park became the first outdoor venue for The Basketball Tournament - a single-elimination winner-take-all tournament with a \$1million prize, acting as one of eight regional venues for the competition; and

WHEREAS a Coalition of the Holcombe Rucker Family, The Greg Marius Family, Each One Teach One and HCCI presented at the Wednesday, November 8th Manhattan Community Board 10 Parks and Recreation Committee meeting to introduce a proposal to capture the essence of the Rucker Park story in a compelling visual format, around the park itself, for local residents, players and visiting fans to enjoy. The goal is to enshrine the historic legacy of the Rucker Park; its community power and transformation, while telling the story of the historical figures for generations to come; and

WHEREAS In absence of quorum the sentiment of the Committee was to move the proposed Resolution to the November 29th Executive Committee meeting, where it was voted on to unanimously support the project; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT during the December 5, 2023 General Board Meeting, the board voted unanimously 36 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstention, and 0 Recusal to support the community-initiated request to upgrade the Holcombe Rucker Park, while preserving its renowned character, through the installation of the Rucker Park Walk of Fame Promenade and statue of Holcombe Rucker.