



## THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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**\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\***

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# CM CHIN & COMMUNITY LEADERS HONOR BELOVED BASKETBALL COACH WITH ‘MICHAEL C. WILLIAMS’ COURT RENAMING

**LOWER EAST SIDE** – Last Saturday, community leaders and elected officials gathered to unveil the renaming of the Smith Houses basketball Court to honor Michael C. Williams, a dearly beloved coach and role model in the Lower Manhattan Community.

“The dedicated efforts made by our local leaders to achieve this weekend’s basketball court renaming are testament to the pivotal role Coach Williams played in building our community and empowering our City’s youth,” said **Council Member Chin**. “I thank Community Board 3, Smith Houses Tenant President Aixa Torres, and local activists Karlin Chan and Tony Harris for their persistent commitment these past 3 years to honor such an inspirational



leader. Through this basketball court, Coach Williams' legacy can continue to live on and inspire the next generation of leaders to make a difference for our city's youth."

The basketball court renaming was the result of joint efforts by Council Member Chin, Community Board 3, and local leaders like Karlin Chan and Tony Harris, a close friend of Williams. Council Member Chin actively worked with the Parks Department to expedite the renaming process. Meanwhile, Community Board 3 passed a resolution, while Harris and Chan built widespread community support by garnering more than 900 petition signatures from residents.

After three years of continued advocacy, their hard work and persistence finally paid off. The Michael C. Williams Courts were unveiled on Saturday at Alfred E. Smith Houses' annual Smith Day Reunion.

"We are proud to have been part of this opportunity to name the court after a local hero like Michael Williams who has shaped the lives of so many young people in our community," said **Jamie Rogers, Chair of Community Board 3.**

"The Alfred E. Smith Resident Association and Randy Santiago Smith Reunion Committee are grateful to Council Member Chin for her support and all the work she has done to upgrade our courts and to advocate for the Michael C. Williams court renaming," said **Aixa Torres, President of the Alfred E. Smith Houses Resident Association.**

"The naming of the basketball court for Coach Michael C. Williams is a befitting honor for a man who not only was a great coach and mentor, but was a role model to many," said **Tony Harris**, a close friend and mentee of Williams. "He exhibited class, dignity and was willing to teach and educate at all costs. He embraced the role of surrogate father for many single parent boys and girls within the community, constantly reminding them that they do not need to be products of their environment, and can always reach higher. Coach Williams not only shared his basketball knowledge, he encouraged students to thrive, chase their dreams and to become life learners all while instilling self-worth and pride, information that would become invaluable for many to this very day."

"We must preserve the history and community heroes of the Lower East Side before gentrification wipes it out," said local activist **Karlin Chan**. "Mr. Williams was a local icon who so deservedly merits this distinction and honor. I am honored to have played a role in this basketball court's renaming

and hope it inspires others to follow his example of giving back to the neighborhood.”

Michael C. Williams was born in 1950 and grew up at Alfred E. Smith Houses, where he first cultivated his love for basketball. After a successful run as an All-Star basketball player at Ithaca College, Williams then went on to launch a fruitful career as a basketball coach for Harlem Prep High School, Fordham University, Columbia University and the University of Colorado. He also co-founded the prestigious West 4<sup>th</sup> Basketball League, a globally recognized stage where rising basketball stars can hone their skills and jumpstart professional careers.

Williams was a firm believer in the power of basketball as a vessel for youth development and leadership. In 1990, he became the Athletic Director and Health of Educator at Bishop Loughlin Memorial High School. He continued to be active in the community as a coach for local youth basketball tournaments before passing away in 2014.

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