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## HARLEM RALLIES BEHIND "RAGING ROOKS"

### STUDENT CHESS TEAM ENTERS NATIONAL COMPETITION APRIL 12

NEW YORK, NY -- April 4, 1991 -- Making all the right moves, eight inner city junior high school students are building a name for themselves in the world of chess. Called The Raging Rooks, the student chess team is considered one of the tops in the country, and is now aiming for checkmate in a national competition.

The Harlem-based team will be entering the National Junior High School Championship, organized by the U.S. Chess Federation in Dearborn, MI on April 12th-14th.

Their trip is being supported by the magazine publishing company General Media International (GMI) and the law firm Lefrak, Newman and Myerson Esq., both New York-based organizations.

The Raging Rooks attend the Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Junior High School #43 (509 W. 129th Street, between Broadway & Amsterdam), part of Community School District #5.

According to science teacher Richard Gudonsky, who has encouraged the boys to play chess in his homeroom each morning, "Most are from single parent homes or living with aunts or grandmothers. One boy was burnt out of his building by drug dealers. Too often people believe kids from impoverished backgrounds can't be successful, but these inner city kids are beating the odds. They are competing against upper middle class students and doing very well. They are great kids and the entire community is proud of them."

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The boys, who range in age from 13 to 16, are from African American, Asian American and Hispanic families. They are trained by Maurice Ashley, 25, the highest rated professional black chess player and teacher in the country. He predicts that The Raging Rooks will place in the top five percent in the nationals this year. Last year with only a partial team competing, they finished in the top 10 percent.

"The kids are broadening their cultural experiences and skills through the game of chess," says Gudonsky. "They are meeting other talented students, chess masters, community leaders and visiting new areas. Like all youngsters who take up chess at an early age, they are gaining the discipline to analyze, focus and plan which will help them in all areas of life."

GMI has been a leader in supporting disadvantaged students and their families in Central Harlem, home of The Raging Rooks. Among its efforts, GMI has developed introductory career programs to expose students to opportunities in private industry, and an Emergency Assistance Fund for disadvantaged children and their families. The company is also helping to launch the district's first preparatory school, The Frederick Douglass Academy for College and Professional Careers in September, 1991. Kathy Keeton, Vice Chairman of GMI, recently received a Unity of the City Award from Mayor David M. Dinkins for her support of the community.

Working with GMI to support The Raging Rooks, Joseph S. Lefrak, Senior Partner of the law firm Lefrak, Newman and Myerson is pursuing the establishment of a charitable foundation to expand the cultural and social experiences of the students of Community School District #5 outside the community, among other related projects.

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For interviews with Teacher Richard Gudonsky,  
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**HARLEM'S RAGING ROOKS ROCKET TO NATIONAL CHESS STARDOM**

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**Student Team To Be Honored at Victory Party**

NEW YORK, NY -- April 24, 1991 -- The Raging Rooks, an inner city student chess team, made all the right moves recently against the country's top players, tying for first place in the National Junior High School Championship (Dearborn, MI, April 12th-14th).

Heroes to their classmates at the Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Junior High School #43 in Central Harlem, the Raging Rooks took home seven glistening trophies which are now proudly displayed in the school's office.

A victory celebration is being held in their honor by Kathy Keeton and Bob Guccione, Vice Chairman and Chairman of the New York-based General Media International (GMI), publishers of OMNI magazine, on Wednesday, April 24th at their townhouse (16 East 67th Street, 7:00-9:00 p.m.).

GMI, along with their law firms Lefrak, Newman and Myerson of New York, The Samuel Pizar Law Firm of Paris and Northwest Airlines, helped support the team's trip to Michigan, where they successfully challenged chess whizzes from 60 schools.

The team members, who range in age from 13 to 16, are from African American, Asian American and Hispanic families. They are: Kasaun Henry, Brian Watson, Charu Robinson, Sammy Padilla, Michael Johnson, Steven Yow, Jonathan Nock and Francis Idehen.

The Rooks rocketed to national champ status with the encouragement of their science teacher Richard Gudonsky, who started the team, and their coach Maurice Ashley, the highest rated professional black chess player and teacher in the country.

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"Their success is especially noteworthy since a lot of times these kids get counted out," said Ashley. "I have been able to serve them as an example of a black male pursuing an intellectual field, which is important since there is generally an overemphasis on sports and musical entertainment stars which can distract students from the need to complete higher education."

Gudonsky, who notes most of the players are from "single parent homes or living with aunts or grandmothers," says the game has "broadened their cultural experiences and life skills."

GMI has been a leader in supporting disadvantaged students and their families in Central Harlem, home of the Raging Rooks. Among its efforts, GMI has developed introductory career programs to expose students to opportunities in private industry, and an Emergency Assistance Fund for disadvantaged children and their families. The company is also helping to launch the district's first preparatory school, The Frederick Douglass Academy for College and Professional Careers in September, 1991. Kathy Keeton, Vice Chairman of GMI, recently received a Unity of the City Award from Mayor David M. Dinkins for her support of the community.

"I really believe that all businesses have to get involved with enhancing the quality of our public schools and not just in New York, or we will not be serving the best interests of our communities," said Ms. Keeton.

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