

New York City Jewelry Connection Launches Inaugural Atlanta Juneteenth Design Competition

*Hosted by NYCJC and The APEX Museum:
A First-of-Its-Kind Contest Offering Artists
Cash Prizes and a Cultural Journey to
Ghana*

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, September 26, 2025 / EINPresswire.com/ -- [New York City Jewelry Connection](#) (NYCJC), founded by Harlem native and entrepreneur Gary Jones, who is a member of the Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce & The Harlem Tourism Board, proudly announces the launch of the inaugural Atlanta Juneteenth Design Competition. This groundbreaking nationwide contest invites jewelry designers to create original pieces that honor and commemorate the Black experience in America. The competition will run from October 1, 2025, through January 20, 2026, marking a historic milestone as the first jewelry design competition explicitly dedicated to celebrating Juneteenth. This federal holiday commemorates the end of slavery in the United States. Designers from across the country are encouraged to submit pendant designs that capture the spirit, resilience, and cultural significance of this pivotal moment in American history.



This unique competition reflects more than artistry; it is a call to engage with history through design. Each pendant submission must demonstrate not only creativity and technical skill but

also the ability to reflect the enduring narrative of freedom, remembrance, and cultural pride that Juneteenth symbolizes. “The jewelry we wear often becomes part of our identity and tells a story without words,” explained Gary Jones, founder of NYCJC. “Juneteenth is not only about looking back—it’s about honoring a legacy while inspiring future generations. We’re inviting designers to translate that meaning into wearable art that will live on as a cultural symbol.”

The Atlanta Juneteenth Design Competition will be judged by acclaimed designer [Lu Willard](#), an internationally recognized jewelry artist with a career spanning decades. Willard is renowned for creating custom pieces for some of music’s greatest icons, including Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston, and Aretha Franklin. Her expertise ensures that the winning design will meet the highest standards of craftsmanship while staying true to the emotional and cultural resonance that the competition demands. “Jewelry carries the weight of memory and meaning,” Willard said. “This competition allows us to uplift Juneteenth by transforming history into art that can be worn, shared, and remembered for generations.”



Gary Jones Founder of New York City Jewelry Collection

One grand prize winner of the competition will receive a seven-day, all-expense-paid trip to Ghana, Africa. This award underscores the competition’s mission to bridge African heritage with contemporary American celebration, creating a tangible connection between past and present. Two runners-up will each receive \$1,000 cash prizes, ensuring that multiple designers are recognized for their efforts. Each participant will contribute a \$15 entry fee per pendant design submission, keeping the contest accessible to both emerging and established designers. By offering both monetary rewards and the transformative experience of travel to Ghana, the competition provides artists with an opportunity that extends far beyond recognition.

For full competition details, rules, and submission guidelines, designers may visit the official website at <https://hbcuamazing.com/pages/atlanta-juneteenth-design-competition>. Submit Jewelry Designs at hbcuamazing@gmail.com

The competition is hosted by [The APEX Museum](#), Atlanta’s premier institution dedicated to preserving and sharing the African American story. Founded in 1978 by filmmaker Dan Moore, Sr., the African American Panoramic Experience Museum, widely known as The APEX Museum, has been a beacon of cultural preservation for nearly five decades. Located in Atlanta’s historic Sweet Auburn district, the museum chronicles African American history from its African origins through enslavement, emancipation, civil rights struggles, and contemporary achievements. Its

extensive exhibits and collections serve as vital educational resources for local, national, and international visitors. "The APEX Museum provides the perfect cultural foundation for this competition," said Jones. "Their commitment to preserving history makes them an ideal partner in celebrating Juneteenth through contemporary artistic expression."

By elevating Juneteenth through wearable art, NYCJC hopes to create lasting symbols of freedom, heritage, and resilience. "Juneteenth is about legacy, history, and the future we build together," Jones emphasized. "Through this competition, we honor our past while inspiring creativity and pride. The designs submitted will reflect not only artistry but also the ongoing journey of freedom, resilience, and cultural celebration." Winning designs will become emblems of this shared history—jewelry that speaks to both the struggles and triumphs of the African American journey.

About Gary Jones

Gary Jones himself brings a life story deeply intertwined with community empowerment and cultural preservation. Born and raised in Harlem, and is a member of The Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce and of The Harlem Tourism Board. Jones developed a passion for basketball and community programs from an early age. At just 12 years old, he and his twin brother played in the legendary Rucker Park Program, Each One Teach One. Decades later, that experience came full circle when NYCJC partnered with the program to design a commemorative basketball pendant supporting its mission. Jones graduated from Bedford Park Academy, where he earned the National Honor Society Award, before attending Old Westbury and Morehouse College. Alongside his studies, he worked in his family's business, cultivating the entrepreneurial drive that continues to define his career.

In 2021, a trip to Louisville, Kentucky, inspired Jones to launch New York City Jewelry Connection. He envisioned a company that not only honored Black history through fine jewelry but also reinvested in communities by supporting youth programs and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Since its founding, NYCJC has forged partnerships with major organizations, including the National Council of Negro Women, the Delta Research and Educational Foundation, and The APEX Museum. By blending expertise in business development, marketing, and cultural connection, Jones has positioned NYCJC as a brand that celebrates legacy, empowers communities, and creates opportunities for future generations.

The launch of the Atlanta Juneteenth Design Competition represents a unique opportunity to create a new tradition in commemorating Juneteenth. For designers, it is an open invitation to contribute to history through jewelry, ensuring that future generations have symbols of freedom and pride they can wear close to their hearts.

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