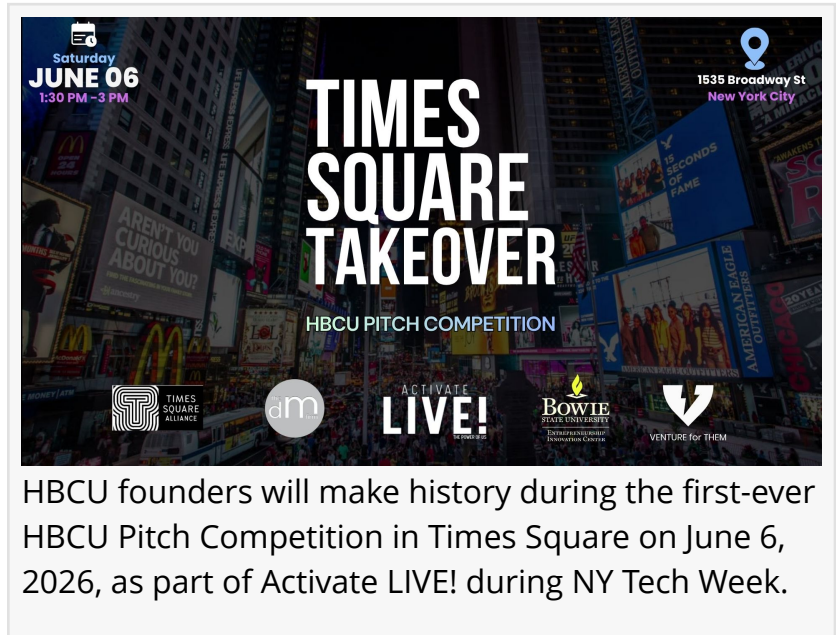


Historic First-Ever HBCU Pitch Competition Comes to Times Square During NY Tech Week

Five HBCU founders will pitch live in Times Square before leaders from the NBA Foundation, Milken Institute, Moët Hennessy and more.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, June 1, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On Saturday, June 6, 2026, history will be made in the heart of New York City as [Venture for T.H.E.M.](#) and The DM Firm, in partnership with Times Square Alliance, host the first-ever HBCU Pitch Competition in Times Square during [Activate LIVE!](#) as part of NY Tech Week.



HBCU founders will make history during the first-ever HBCU Pitch Competition in Times Square on June 6, 2026, as part of Activate LIVE! during NY Tech Week.

More than 300,000 people pass through Times Square on a summer weekend. On June 6, they will witness something unprecedented: HBCU founders taking center stage on one of the world's most iconic platforms to pitch innovative businesses, compete for recognition, and represent the future of entrepreneurship.

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This is more than a pitch competition. It is a historic moment that places HBCU founders and innovation at the center of one of the world's most visible stages.”

Kiante Bush, CEO, Venture for T.H.E.M.

The event marks the first known HBCU-focused startup pitch competition ever hosted in Times Square, creating a historic platform for Black innovation during one of the nation's largest technology gatherings.

[Times Square Takeover: HBCU Pitch at Activate LIVE!](#) places HBCU innovators at the center of New York City's most important innovation week—a defining moment for visibility, opportunity, and the next generation of founders

emerging from Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Five founders, each a previous pitch competition winner selected from universities across the HBCU ecosystem, will compete live before an audience of entrepreneurs, investors, ecosystem

builders, and thousands of visitors from around the world.

The competing founders include:

- Rachel Ransom (Hampton University), founder of Krave, a premium canned cocktail brand blending classic recipes, refreshing seltzer, and quality spirits.
- Peter Iwuh (Morgan State University), founder of Tykoon AI, an all-in-one platform helping student-athletes grow their brands, manage NIL opportunities, and develop partnerships through artificial intelligence.
- Daryl Riley Jr. (North Carolina A&T State University), founder of Tendaji, a fashion technology company merging sustainability and innovation to create connected apparel.
- Taylor Davis (Howard University), founder of Troodie, a platform combining social discovery, creator monetization, and sales attribution for restaurants.
- Carolyn Alston (Bowie State University), creator of Communic8 It!, an interactive card game designed to spark meaningful, engaging, and memorable conversations.

The founders will pitch before a distinguished panel of judges representing leading organizations across entrepreneurship, technology, consumer brands, and philanthropy, including:

- Luis Freitas, Senior Director, Digital Route to Consumer and Marketing Capabilities, Moët Hennessy
- Teniel Jones, President and CEO, Base 11
- Johnetta Hardy, Director, Entrepreneurship Innovation Center, Bowie State University
- Genisha Metcalf, Head of Partnerships, NBA Foundation
- Blair Carl Smith, Senior Director, Milken Institute

"This is more than a pitch competition. It is a historic moment that places HBCU founders and innovation at the center of one of the world's most visible stages," said Kiante Bush, CEO of Venture for T.H.E.M.

The event is hosted by Venture for T.H.E.M. and The DM Firm in partnership with Times Square Alliance and is sponsored by the Bowie State University Entrepreneurship Innovation Center and Venture for T.H.E.M.

Event Details

Date: Saturday, June 6, 2026

Location: Times Square, New York City

RSVP: <https://events.eventnoire.com/e/activate-live>

About Venture for T.H.E.M.

Venture for T.H.E.M. is a Maryland-based accelerator dedicated to expanding equitable access to capital, resources, mentorship, and entrepreneurial opportunities for founders from underrepresented communities. Through programs, events, and strategic partnerships, the organization works to empower the next generation of innovators and business leaders.

For more information, visit <https://venture4them.com>.

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