Alumni

# Ben Vinson, Ana Almanzar, and Other Columbians in the News

Fall 2023



Ben Vinson (Howard University)

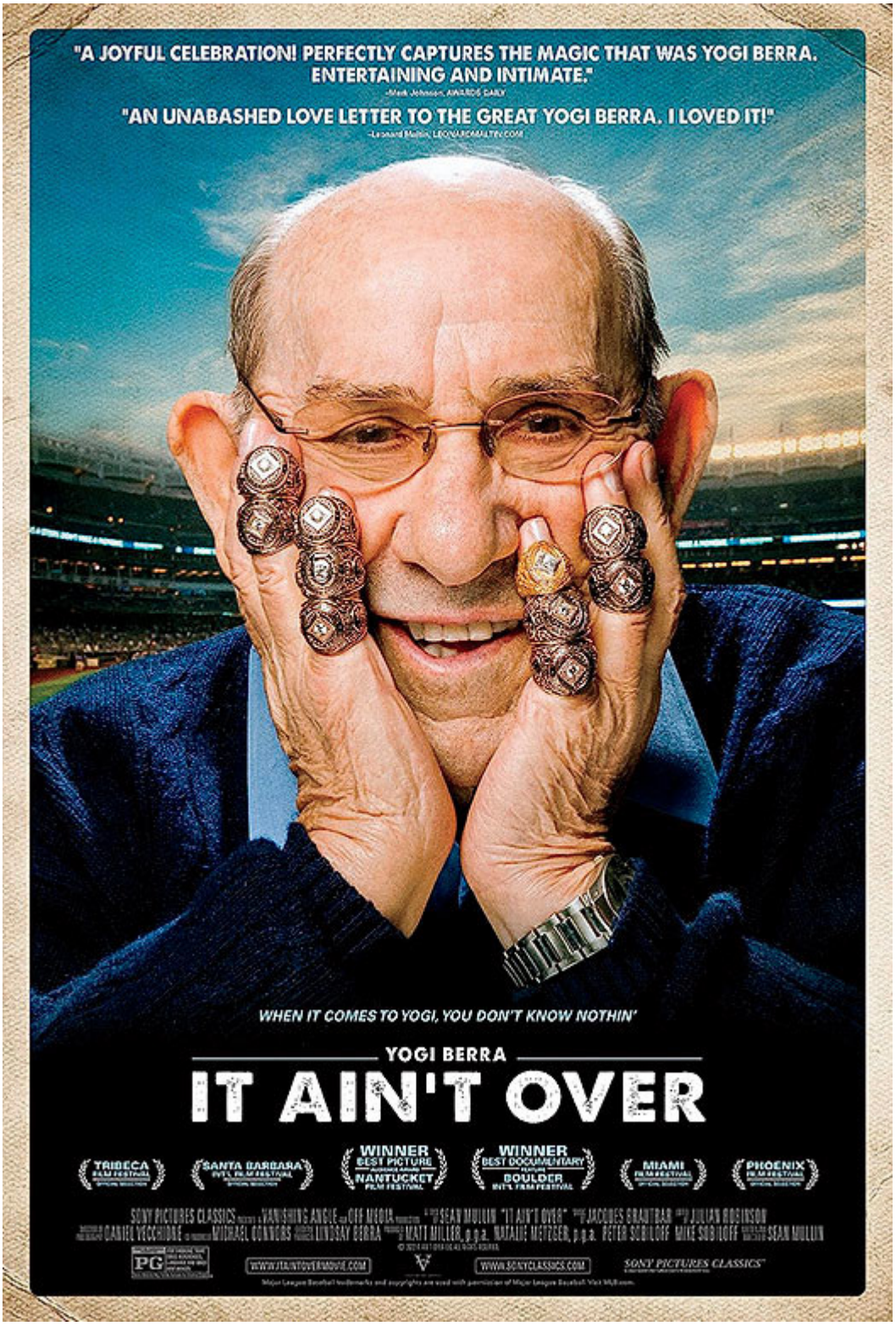
**Ben Vinson ’98GSAS,** an eminent historian known for his studies of the African diaspora in Latin America, was named president of Howard University after serving as provost and executive vice president at Case Western Reserve University since 2018.

**New York City mayor Eric Adams** appointed Ana Almanzar ’07GS, ’09SIPA, a longtime nonprofit and community-relations professional, as deputy mayor for strategic initiatives. She takes over the role from Sheena Wright ’90CC, ’94LAW, a former Columbia Trustee who is now the city’s first deputy mayor.

**The American Academy in Rome** granted five Columbians 2023–24 Rome Prizes, which support artists and humanities scholars as they conduct work in Italy. Composer Kate Soper ’11GSAS was honored in the musical-composition category and multimedia artist Kamrooz Aram ’03SOA for visual arts. Classics scholars Kate Meng Brassel ’06CC, ’18GSAS, Mary C. Danisi ’17BC, and Mary-Evelyn Farrior, a PhD student, were awarded for ancient studies.

**Archivist Kenneth Cobb ’78GSAS** was honored with a Sloan Public Service Award for his decades-long career at the New York City Department of Records and Information Services. The award, which is often called the “Nobel Prize for New York City public servants,” was given to seven employees out of more than 310,000.

**Erika Byers ’12TC, ’16GSAS** was named a 2023 beneficiary of the Google for Startups Black Founders Fund, which provides up to $150,000 grants to Black entrepreneurs and offers mentorship, training, and other resources. Byers’s company, Teamwork Healthcare, connects families of autistic children with clinical therapists as well as personalized and community-based care.



IMDb

**President Biden** appointed Jonathan Lavine ’88CC, chair of Columbia’s Board of Trustees and a co–managing partner at Bain Capital, to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, which oversees the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in

Washington.

**R. J. Jenkins ’03CC,** director of education at Columbia’s Center for Veteran Transition and Integration, received the 2023 HigherEdMilitary Spotlight Award, which honors professionals who support veterans and active service members on US campuses.

***It Ain’t Over*,** a documentary about baseball legend Yogi Berra written and directed by Sean Mullin ’06SOA, had its theatrical release in May. Mullin, a graduate of West Point and Columbia’s School of the Arts, is an Army veteran and the president of Five by Eight Productions in Los Angeles.



Guide to school abbreviations

All categories >>