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BODY:

A New York nationalist and a Brooklyn patriot, I get more satisfaction from writing positive columns than negative ones. So this is a celebration of some of my favorite things about New York. The New York Public Library. And the Bed-Stuy branch, where I discovered James T. Farrell, Hemingway, and Betty Smith's "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" when I was 16.

David Burney, the director of design for the Housing Authority. He makes decisions based on the merits, not politics - a rarity in this field.

Ray Kelly. When there is a bad police shooting, he tells the truth and doesn't cover it up. And he keeps cutting crime while respecting civil liberties, proving we can have both.

Jazz. The Vanguard, Blue Note, and Iridium. The Knickerbocker Steakhouse, Thursday to Saturday. And the Dizzy Gillespie auditorium at the Baha'i Center on East 11th Street every Tuesday. New York is where you can hear Clark Terry going strong at 83, and Jason Moran, Wynton Marsalis, Joshua Redman, Billy Taylor, Diana Krall, or Cassandra Wilson almost any week of the year. Or hear the future at Fez. Or wait for Sonny Rollins to display his undiminished mastery at a club, or maybe on the Williamsburg Bridge, where he used to practice.

Kadiatou Diallo. Five years after her son's death from 41 shots, she has become a presence in this city. Her dignity and intelligence shine whenever she has something to say. She suffered her unfair loss with amazing grace.

Tony Kushner, New York genius.

Dan Kane, the president of Teamsters Local 202, is the best unknown union leader in town. In 1990, when he was 26, Mr. Kane defeated a mob backed incumbent to liberate his local from the grip of gangsterism. Since then, he has run a clean, democratic union of 3,500 members. He just won a wage increase and employer-paid health insurance for 1,200 members at the Hunts Point Market. Mr. Kane's members earn twice what nonunionized produce and warehouse workers get.

Tony Bennett, a class act out of Astoria.

Walt Frazier's rhyming calls of Knicks games, with his creativity, agility, dexterity, familiarity, and hilarity - but never futility.

The City University. It made me what I am, when it was free.

Mary Brosnahan Sullivan, who has been helping the homeless for 15 years, without getting compassion fatigue or frustration burnout.

Jimmy Breslin's columns in Newsday. Nobody is better on race, class, Iraq, or how most politicians are "half people."

Isiah Thomas. He changed the chemistry and hired Lenny Wilkins.

Lenny Wilkens. I went to Boys High with him in 1955. Even at 17, he had the serenity and maturity of someone 35.

The reporters and anchors on NY1. Dominic Carter's early exclusive interview with the parents of Timothy Stansbury brought a tear to my eye.

Davidson Goldin knows politics.

Jonathan Schwartz's show on WNYC. He plays Sinatra, show tunes, jazz, blues, and cabaret. And with the most astute introductions and sketches of the songwriters, since Mr. Schwartz's father wrote his share of the American songbook.

Lawyer and organizer Ramon Jiminez. Most people who graduate from Harvard Law School go to Wall Street to make money. He went to East 149th Street in the South Bronx to make justice. Two weeks ago, he organized an event honoring journalists and activists at Giovanni's Restaurant on the Grand Concourse that raised \$10,000 for clean-needle exchanges.

Joe Torre. And GM Brian Cashman, who started as an intern in 1986, a superb talent evaluator.

The Diane Arbus exhibit at the Grey Art Gallery on Washington Square East.

Jonathan Lethem's novels about Brooklyn.

Washington Square Park at the end of a snowstorm. The majestic arch and fresh beauty can stir the ghost of Henry James.

Monsignor John Powis of Bushwick, who performed his last mass - in English and Spanish - earlier this month and then retired. He has spent his whole life living the purity of his faith and helping the least among us.

Jon Stewart's "The Daily Show" on Comedy Central. This is the sharpest political and press satire on TV.

A Brooklyn Cyclones baseball game in Coney Island, with the salty smell of the sea breeze and the mustard scent of hot dogs mingling with the cheers of 7,500 Brooklyn baseball fans.

Gleason's Gym and Bagels by the Park in Brooklyn. The OTB in Chatham Square. Harvey Pack and the paddock at Belmont before a big race.

Jeffrey Wright. He has played Martin Luther King Jr. in "Boycott," a Dominican drug dealer in "Shaft," Jean-Michael Basquiat, Howard Bingham in "Ali," the gravedigger in Hamlet, and three roles in HBO's epic "Angels in America." He is as good as acting gets without showing off.

The Film Forum on Houston Street for the best documentaries and revivals.

New Nets coach Lawrence Frank. He looks like a physics professor at MIT, but his work ethic, substitution patterns, passion, preparation, and people skills have turned the Nets's season around. Having Jason Kidd to run the floor doesn't hurt.

Spike Lee is our most underestimated filmmaker. "Malcolm X" should have won the Academy Award in 1992. And the convictions of KKK members in the Birmingham church bombing are Spike's Academy Award for his documentary "Four Little Girls."