



## Appreciating Acuña among All-Stars

Midsummer Classic spotlight offers Braves fans a chance to bask in the fortune of having one of the game’s brightest stars in Atlanta.

SPORTS, C1

# The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

The Substance and Soul of the South • Sunday, July 13, 2025 • Atlanta, GA • AJC.com • \$4.00

## Black family reunions: Simple yet profound



Family members take photos together during the Thornton family reunion held in Atlanta on June 28.

PHOTOS BY NATRICE MILLER/AJC

Once torn apart by slavery, Black families are reclaiming connection through reunions grounded in history, healing and joy.

By Ernie Suggs | [ernie.suggs@ajc.com](mailto:ernie.suggs@ajc.com)

### BOOK I

A legacy of presence

There was a moment last month when Reginald Thornton, surrounded by family in a small ballroom at a Cobb County Embassy Suites, paused – caught by a memory too large for words.

He swept his gaze across the room and watched adult grandchildren mingle, uncles in seersucker suits trade jokes and aunts in wide-brimmed hats share hugs, a heavy tapestry of lineage.

They represent three branches of the Thornton family – descendants of brothers Frank, Willie and Clarence.

But Reginald’s mind turned to his father, Hubbard “Herb” Thornton, who had died just a year earlier.

A man of quiet devotion, Hubbard’s absence now gave the gathering a sharper sense of purpose.

“We have to encourage the younger people to start attending,” said Walter Thornton, who moments before had invited everyone to rise to pay tribute to his brother, Hubbard, while also noting the need for a younger generation to pick up the baton to carry the family traditions. Only three members of the entire gathering – Walter’s grandchildren – were under 30. “We are not going to be here forever.”

Reunions continued on A14



The gatherings hold memories and meaning for Reginald Thornton, who speaks to family members at a luncheon during the reunion.



The Thornton family prepares to take a group photo during their annual reunion held in Atlanta on June 28.

## Political saga surrounding All-Star Game returns to Ga.

League’s decision to bring game back to Atlanta revives ’21 election law fight.

By Greg Bluestein  
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When MLB yanked the All-Star Game from Georgia four years ago to protest the state’s new election law, it was more than a scheduling change. It marked a turning point in a national debate over ballot access that had reached a boiling point.

Now, as the game returns to Atlanta for a five-day celebration culminating in baseball’s All-Star showcase, Republicans long exasperated by claims the law was an illegal “Jim Crow 2.0” that made Georgia a laughingstock are instead claiming vindication.

Gov. Brian Kemp and other Republicans used MLB’s decision to rally conservatives – and put Democrats on defense after metro Atlanta lost a premier event expected to generate tens of millions for the local economy.

Kemp’s office last week framed the game’s return as proof the law’s supporters are on “the right side

All-Star Game continued on A10



Maria Bonilla (center) with her children. She was detained and eventually deported to El Salvador after a routine check-in with ICE. GOFUNDME

## ICE’s new tactic a worry for state’s poultry industry

Gainesville mom with work permit was detained at routine check-in, deported.

By Lautaro Grinspan  
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In May, Magali Bonilla, 21, drove with her mother, Maria, from Gainesville to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement field office in Atlanta.

Maria Bonilla had crossed the border illegally in 2001, but she obtained a work permit to stay and work legally in the country, because of her clean criminal record and her four U.S.-born children. To ward off deportation, she was required to regularly check in with ICE to prove her employment and allow the agency to check for arrests.

Magali Bonilla or her older sister, 22-year-old Araceli, routinely accompanied their mother to those ICE visits. The elder Bonilla never learned to read or write while growing up poor in El Salvador, and the sisters felt they were needed as conduits between their mother and federal agents.

Deportation continued on A10



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METRO, B5

### Wrongly imprisoned for 21 years, he’s seeking justice

“I just thought that the truth would come out, but sadly, it didn’t,” Sedrick Moore says. He is suing.



ROSWELL, A4

### River rescue turns tragic for hero who could not swim

Man’s sister said he lived by words from Gandhi: “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

INDEX

Business H1  
Classifieds D2  
Crossword E6  
Obituaries B9  
Opinion A17  
Travel E15  
Weather B12

Volume 77, Number 194



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