

INSPIRE

Hip Hop Raised more than a Half-Million Dollars in Houston to support HBCU Students



MC LYTE, RENOWNED PIONEER FEMALE RAPPER, ROCKS THE CROWD AT 2022 HOUSTON UNCF “A MIND IS...”® GALA, PERFORMING FOR 600 GUESTS

The 2022 Houston UNCF “A Mind is...”® Gala was a truly epic statement for many reasons for the organization’s annual development efforts. The in-person fundraiser raised a substantial near-\$600,000 sum, returning to being a live event for the first time since 2019—and pulled it off with a “hip” flip on traditional UNCF fundraising galas by wrapping it all in hip hop music.

The night was strategically themed “Hip Hop You Don’t Stop” to appeal to a younger generation of philanthropists who grew up listening to a genre of music that resonates with so many.

Local legends filled the house at the event on Nov. 19 at the Houston Hilton Americas Hotel. Spelman College graduates Gaynell Floyd Drexler and Heidi McDonald Smith served as gala co-chairs. Dr. Alvia Wardlaw, curator and director, University Museum at Texas Southern University, also a Scholarly Advisory Committee member for the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History, was the gala’s honorary chair.

Additional honorees included Howard University graduate Nicholas Perkins, chairman, president and CEO of Perkins Management Services Company and Black Titan Investment Corporation and the first African American to own a national hamburger franchise; Morehouse graduate Rommel Quarterman, executive managing partner at Johnny Carrabba Family Restaurants and the proud father of a current Spelman College rising junior; and Dillard University graduate Dr. Ruth J. Simmons, president of Prairie View A&M University, also the first African American president of an Ivy League institution.

As with any highly sought out event, the night included the who’s who of Houston, all joining UNCF President and CEO Dr. Michael Lomax for a rousing night of hip hop history as funds were raised to support the UNCF mission.



U.S. REP. SHEILA JACKSON LEE (D-TX) (CENTER) TAKES A MINUTE TO POSE WITH GALA ATTENDEE GABRIELLE GUNN AND MOREHOUSE COLLEGE GRADUATE AND HOUSTON UNCF LEADERSHIP COUNCIL MEMBER BRYCE HAIRSTON KENNARD.



ANITA LOCKRIDGE AND HEIDI MCDONALD SMITH, GALA CHAIR AND SPELMAN COLLEGE GRADUATE, SHOW OFF THEIR BLACK-TIE FLY ATTIRE WHILE POSING WITH THE 1993 CADILLAC FLEETWOOD DURING THE 2022 HOUSTON UNCF "A MIND IS..." GALA AT THE HILTON AMERICAS-HOUSTON HOTEL.



SHELL USA, INC., RETIREE AND HOUSTON UNCF LEADERSHIP COUNCIL MEMBER AND HIS WIFE, MIKE AND LEANNE ALVAREZ, ARE ALL SMILES DURING THE GALA DINNER PROGRAM.

U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner and Houston City Council Member Tiffany Thomas were also in attendance. Huston-Tillotson University's (HTU) reigning Miss UNCF Surrender Lockridge and other HTU students networked and mingled with guests during the reception and dinner.

Major event sponsors were Waste Connections, H-E-B, ConocoPhillips, Brentwood Baptist Church, Wells Fargo, Enterprise Holdings Foundation, NABORS, and Benny and Nikki Agosto, Jr.

Highlights included the slow, loud and banging 1993 Cadillac Fleetwood parked outside the ballroom, a digital-visual storyboard filled with images showcasing hip hop culture and artists, professional break dancers from Break Free Houston, who gave a glimpse of what can be expected at the 2024 Olympics in Paris, and a mic-dropping performance by the one and only MC Lyte.

The UNCF Houston Area Office rocked the party by surpassing its half million-dollar goal before the party ballroom doors even opened. Going into the event the team led by Area Development Director Zarinah Poole, Development Director Kaylon Beck and Administrative Assistant Jewell Bass was also supported by Mayor Turner and Houston UNCF Leadership Council member Bryce Kennard, also a graduate of Morehouse College, in securing night-of donations from the attendees.

The Houston Hip Hop Gala is an outstanding example of how galas, masked balls and other vital UNCF fundraising activities support HBCUs and their students, ensuring better futures for all Americans.

