

Black Women's Roundtable Women of Power Summit Addresses Important Issues



Washington, DC – The slaying of Trayvon Martin and other innocent teens was foremost on the hearts and minds of nearly 400 Black women from across the country that assembled recently in Washington, DC for the Black Women's Roundtable (BWR) inaugural National Women of Power Summit, three days of down-to-earth discussions "Amplifying the Voices of Women and Girls in 2012 and Beyond."

"It is important for the world to hear the voices of Black women from all walks of life on the Trayvon Martin issue and other issues that impact our community," said Melanie L. Campbell, president and CEO of The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (The National Coalition) and convener of BWR. "We are mothers, sisters, aunts and wives of Black men being gunned down on the streets. Enough is Enough. Our voice will be heard today and on Election Day."

To help amplify the voices of the physicians, lawyers, homemakers, labor workers and other attendees, the summit was broadcast live on the Internet (view at: <http://tinyurl.com/744254g>). Also, during a town hall and rally calling for the arrest of Trayvon's killer, a WUSA reporter aptly captured remarks from participants. Emotions were high as several BWR members were just arriving from protests on Trayvon's behalf in Sanford, Florida. Watch the video at (<http://tinyurl.com/83ajt6v>).

A kick-off prayer breakfast and civic engagement training featured Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Hale, founder and Senior Pastor, Ray of Hope Christian Church in Decatur, Georgia, who clearly

articulated the need for women to come together as our sister's keepers.

"African American women have higher rates of disease and health problems than any other women in the nation... We should be concerned that Black women are more likely to be uninsured because we can't afford it... We need the Affordable Care Act," said Rev. Hale. She continued, "We must stand up, speak up, and not shut up until we turn this thing around."

During her opening remarks for the BWR Mentor/Protégé Luncheon and BWR Leadership Awards, Susan L. Taylor, founder and CEO of National CARES Mentoring Movement told the standing room only crowd, "The village is on fire and we are the healing waters that our children are screaming for. We don't have to do what Sojourner truth did... what Harriet Tubman, Mary McCloud Bethune or even Dorothy Height did. We just have to think critically, have an agenda and stand behind it. Number one is voting rights."



Honored for their innovating and unwavering commitment to mentoring young aspiring leaders and for their exemplary civil rights, voting rights, women's rights and social justice BWR Leadership Award recipients were: Dr. Avis Jones-DeWeever, National Council of Negro Women; Tamika Mallory, National Action Network; Thomasina Williams, Sankofa Legacy Fund; Tanya Leah Lombard accepting for AT & T; Honorable Barbara L. Ballard, National Black Caucus of State Legislators; Eleanor Hinton Hoytt, Black Women's Health Imperative; Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Skinner Leadership Institute/The Masters Series; Barbara Arnwine, Esq., Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law; and Chanelle P. Hardy, Esq., National Urban League

Heather Foster, associate director of The White House Office of Public Engagement gave an update on White House activities of importance to Black women followed by public policy panels on Jobs and Economic Opportunity, Workers' Rights, the

Affordable Care Act Two Years Later, and technology and broadband expansion and access in urban and rural Black communities,

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson told the group that the EPA should be on their radar because, “the air that we breathe every day has an impact on our health and an even greater impact on the health of our children. The water we drink has an enormous impact on whether a community can be prosperous.”

Other BWR summit highlights include an International Diaspora conversation lead by Rev. Marcia Dyson, an international panel with Nicole Lee of TransAfrica, voter protection and mobilization trainings, and daily health walks and exercise sessions. Inspirational speakers included Dee Marshall of Girlfriends Pray, MESHELLE the Indie Mom of Comedy, Command Sgt. Maj. (ret) Michele Jones, director of the External Veterans/Military Affairs and Community Outreach for President Barack Obama’s administration, and Dr. Julianne Malveaux, president Bennett College for Women.

Nearly one hundred local teens from D.C. metropolitan area – many from Maryland-based Teen Sircles led by Sharon Cummings – joined the national youth for Community Day festivities held at First Congregational United Church of Christ.

“We had a health fair and mini expo, health panels as well as financial planning and entrepreneur workshops,” said Dr. Patricia Hobson, co-chair of BWR local host committee. “There were also several teen entrepreneurs on hand to talk about starting and maintaining their businesses.”

Made possible by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and AT&T Foundation, the summit was the culminating event for a national BWR Healthy Wealthy and Wise Tour that traveled the country promoting a healthy, wealthy and wise lifestyle and educating and uplifting underserved women and girls.

Black Women's Roundtable is an intergenerational network of The National Coalition bringing together diverse women to motivate Black women to engage in all levels of civil society. The National Coalition is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to increasing civic engagement in underserved communities. For more information visit www.ncbcp.org.