

Star Jones, Rev. Sharpton, Minyon Moore, & Wade Henderson at Spirit Awards



Washington, D.C. – A diverse selection of honorees reflected upon the significant accomplishments of The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (The National Coalition) over the past 35 years and its impact on the number of Black elected officials; then challenged the audience of over 400 to stay vigilant in addressing 21st century issues during recent Spirit of Democracy Awards Gala and 35th Anniversary Celebration in Washington, DC.

“Our esteemed honorees exemplify our theme of Leadership, Engagement, and Empowerment. Each of their remarks touched on issues ranging from the crisis in education to civil rights and the assault on labor unions,” said Melanie L. Campbell, president and CEO of The National Coalition. “This year, the 35th anniversary of the organization, our audience left with a charge to get to work so we can keep moving forward instead of backward.”

The intergenerational gala was hosted by former New York prosecutor and TV personality, Star Jones and included a tribute to the late Dr. Ronald Walters, a renowned political scientist and a founder of The National Coalition. Long-time National Coalition events manager, Ruby Pulliam, was also recognized during the event. Guests included leaders from civil rights, government, labor, and the faith communities. The 2011 Spirit Award honorees are:

Dennis Van Roekel, president, National Education Association, was presented with the Educational Innovation and

Empowerment Award by Arlene Holt-Baker, the executive vice president of AFL-CIO.

Randi Weingarten, president, American Federation of Teachers, was presented with the Educational Innovation and Empowerment Award by Ms. Holt-Baker.

Yelberton Watkins, chief of staff, Congressman James Clyburn's Office, was given the Emerging Leader Award by Mr. Lyndon Boozer, Vice President, AT & T Federal Affairs.

Wade Henderson, president and CEO, Leadership Conference on Civil & Human Rights was presented with the Trailblazer Award by Howard E. Woolley Senior Vice President, Strategic Alliances and Wireless Policy at Verizon Communications.

Minyon Moore, principal, Dewey Square Group was given Economic & Community Empowerment Award by Rev. Leah Daughtry, House of the Lord Church.

Rev. Al Sharpton, president, National Action Network was presented with the Chairman's Visionary Leadership Award by Melanie L. Campbell.

In commemoration of the anniversary celebration the founders of The National Coalition were recognized.

"In 1976 The National Coalition launched the first nationally coordinated coalition to register 15 million Black people to vote. Today we bear witness to the impact The National's Coalition's work has had on the number of elected officials in office," said Kevin Parker, principal, Capital Consulting Group and 35th Anniversary Spirit Host Committee Chair. "We have Black members of congress, mayor's, and the election of the first African American president of the United States, President Barack Obama. Thank you for your dedication and commitment."