

R.I.P. Cissy Houston



Cissy Houston, gospel singer and mother of Whitney Houston, passed away on Monday at age 91. Houston, who was born Emily Drinkard, started her music career in 1938 when she and her sister Anne and brothers Larry and Nicky formed The Drinkard Four gospel group. Their sister Marie joined the group and the name was changed to The Drinkard Singers. Houston's sister Lee managed the group and later became the mother of Dee Dee and Dionne Warwick. The group performed regularly around Newark,

New Jersey, and after an appearance at the Newport Jazz Festival, they signed a deal with MCA Records and became the first gospel group to release an album on a major label. The group would experience some more changes in the lineup and become The Sweet Inspirations. They had a Top 40 hit in 1968 with "Sweet Inspiration" and became an in-demand backup group. Van Morrison used them on his iconic hit, "Brown Eyed Girl," and Jimi Hendrix, Elvis Presley, Dusty Springfield, George Benson, Wilson Pickett, Aretha Franklin, and Carmen McCrae were some of the artists that used The Sweet Inspirations in their recordings.

Houston started recording solo records in 1963 with the single "This Is My Vow." Her solo album, *Presenting Cissy Houston*, was released in 1970. Houston recorded four solo albums in the '70s and had a disco hit with "Think It Over." She was the first to record "Midnight Train To Georgia" in 1972, one year before Gladys Knight & The Pips made it a hit. Houston was in demand as a session singer and recorded with Paul Simon, Better Midler, Burt Bacharach, and Linda Rondstadt. She performed live with her band around New York City and Whitney would frequently join her on stage. In the 90s, she won Grammy awards for her gospel albums, *Face To Face* and *He Leadeth Me*. She recorded the duet "I Know Him So Well" with Whitney in 1987 and it appeared on Whitney's second album. In 2006, she recorded "Family First" with Dionne Warwick and Whitney for the *Daddy's Little Girls* soundtrack. BET did a tribute to Whitney Houston in 2012 after passing and Cissy performed "Bridge Over Troubled Water." The average pop culture historian has relegated Cissy Houston to being the mother of Whitney but she was a vocalist in her own right that made music listeners understand that a backup singer was just as important as the lead vocalist. Her work on Aretha Franklin's "Ain't No Way" elevated the song into an otherworldly listening experience and this is why Franklin made sure to have Houston on stage with her during their last television appearance together in 2014 on *The Late Show with David*

Letterman. Houston paved the way for her daughter Whitney and numerous singers, especially those who showed their star power in a supporting role.

The 30th Anniversary Of Whitney Houston's Trip To South Africa Was Celebrated At 3rd Annual Legacy Foundation Gala



The 30th anniversary of Whitney Houston's trip to South Africa was celebrated at the Whitney E. Houston Legacy Foundation's 3rd Annual Gala. The foundation and Primary Music presented the event on Friday, August 9th, at the St. Regis Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia. Kevin Frazier of *Entertainment Tonight* and Pat Houston were the hosts, along with MC Jonathan Slocumb.



Whitney Houston was the first major recording artist to perform in post-apartheid South Africa. The show at Kings Park Stadium in Durban took place on November 8, 1994. Two subsequent shows were at Ellis Park Stadium, also known as Emirates Airline Park, in Johannesburg on November 12, 1994, which was filmed for an HBO special, and the final one at Green Point Stadium in Cape Town on November 19, 1994. Clive Davis, Honorary Chair and Chief Creative Officer of Sony Music Entertainment, opened the gala with a video message about Houston's historic trip to South Africa, her worldwide cultural impact on music, and her performance of "Home" on *The Merv Griffin Show* when she was 19 years old.



Musical director Kelvin Broughton led singer Yolanda Adams through a performance of Richard Smallwood's signature classic, "I Love The Lord," which Houston performed at each one of her concerts, and "Home," written by Broadway composer, the legendary Charlie Smalls, which is one of Adams' favorite songs performed by Whitney. Both of Adams' anointed performances received two standing ovations and left the audience wanting more. "Home" was also dedicated to South African special guest, Mirriam Solani Mazibuko, the director of the Orlando Children's Home in South Africa, who was the representative of this year's charity grant. Thirty years ago, Whitney extended a generous financial donation to them through her foundation.



In June of 2024, Pat Houston and key representatives of The Whitney E. Houston Legacy Foundation, along with board member Dr. Jacqueline Mohair, visited several places in Johannesburg that Whitney visited in 1994, including the Orlando Children's Home in Soweto. While there, the foundation team spent time with the children and young adult residents, and they performed a song. Pat Houston also made the presentation to Mazibuko, who is the charity grant representative.

In return, Mazibuko and her daughter were invited to attend this year's gala by Pat Houston. She and her daughter travelled to Atlanta and Mazibuko shared her story about the lifelong work and mission of the Orlando Children's Home. She also shared memories of a young Whitney, her beauty, her grace, her regalness, her extraordinary talent and her promise to return to the homeland. Mazibuko shared that Whitney promised her that she would return to South Africa.



Thirty years later, that promise was fulfilled, when Pat Houston and the foundation team returned to South Africa to visit Mazibuko and the young adults of the Orlando Children

Home, not only to represent the foundation but also the Houston Family.

“Whitney would have wanted us to return to South Africa to represent her and commemorate this special time in history, says Pat Houston. “Whitney had many significant milestones and historic moments in her life and career, but her love for children, her love for South Africa and its people, and getting to know and spend valuable time with Nelson Mandela and his family meant everything to her. Nelson Mandela and that experience in South Africa changed and reshaped her life, furthering her commitment to continue her work with children and young adults. Whitney was a great example of the Bible scripture, Luke 12:48, ‘To whom much is given, much will be required.’”



“I know we made Whitney proud. We helped to serve the foundation’s mission and purpose in the global community. And the tree Whitney planted thirty years ago at the Nelson Mandela home, which is now named the Nelson Mandela Museum, is

a reminder to us and a symbol to continue the work in her name and legacy.”



Whitney’s brother and longtime duet partner and background singer Gary Houston also performed a medley of Stevie Wonder’s classic songs, “Do I Do,” and “Love’s in Need of Love Today,” and the finale performance of “We Can Touch The World” with Pat Houston and the Sauce background singers.



Additional performances included Gregory Sams and Denisia, the recent winners of The Whitney E. Houston Legacy Foundation's Cover Song Competition. Sams performed "Miracle," and Denisia performed her New Orleans-styled reimagined version of "I Wanna Dance with Somebody (Who Loves Me)." Both received The Whitney E. Houston Legacy Foundation 2024 Voice Awards.

The annual fundraiser also included scholarships for college students studying the arts at historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). This year's recipients were Donovan McClain and Saniah Wharton of Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland.



Both, the silent and online auction were outstanding and some of the items are still featured on [Charity Buzz](#) and included a variety of one-of-a-kind curated packages from travel excursions to Whitney Houston tour costumes to artwork to signed sporting memorabilia to a variety of entertainment packages: Two of Whitney Houston's stage costumes, the Gold Gown with Turban and the Purple three-piece pant suit ensemble from the South Africa One Love Tour by South African designer Marc Bouwer; a travel excursion with Bermuda Tourism Authority, titled "The Greatest Love All: A Bermuda Celebration;" premium courtside tickets for Opening Night of the US Open; original artwork of Whitney Houston, "One Moment In Time" (Ernest Watson), and "Whitney Wears The Crown" (Tommy Marlon). Other original art pieces included the Barack Obama Portrait (Ernest Watson), and the work of various South African artists "The Serenade" (Isaac Hlatswayo), the signed "Mamelodie East, Magaliesburg" (Grand Maghandlela), the signed "African Nam" (Billy Molokeng), and the signed "Umama" (Peter Moyo), and the Whitney Houston Limited-Edition Poster (Craig Drake).



Sporting memorabilia from former pro ballers in the NBA and NFL included Dr. Julius Erving's autographed basketball and Converse Sneakers, Magic Johnson's signed basketball, Harvey Lee Armstrong and Marcus Allen's signed NFL football, and Marcus Allen's signed NFL football.

Other music and entertainment packages included Bruce Springsteen's signed Fender Telecaster Electric Guitar, Narada Michael Walden's signed drumsticks, Ricky Minor's Each One, Teach One, a two-hour, one-on-one Zoom mentoring session on music production; and the Society of Voice Arts and Science package, "So You Wanna Be a Voiceover Actor" by Joan Baker and Rudy Gaskins; Whitney Houston's exclusive and commemorative music plaques from Sony Music South Africa and Sony Music Entertainment's exclusive RIAA plaque with more than 220 million records sold worldwide; the Best of Broadway packages including four Tony Award-winning and nominated musicals, The Lion King, The Outsiders, MJ: The Musical, and The Notebook; a pair of tickets to see Chicago and Earth, Wind & Fire's Heart and Soul Tour, along with a meet-and-greet with Earth, Wind &

Fire; a pair of tickets to attend Smokey Robinson's VIP concert; Whitney Houston Music Gift Basket, presented by Perryscope Productions; Putumayo World Music CD Collection; Sony Music Entertainment Artists Gift Basket; Sony Music Entertainment's Sony HT-A7000 Soundbar; Stax Records: The Limited Edition boxset; and Aretha Cool: The Intimate Portraits book (The Limited Edition).



The lifestyle packages included The Art of Cake, designed by Dr. Lincoln Alexander, who specifically designed a cake to

celebrate and commemorate Whitney Houston's 61st birthday and he also provided gift boxes to talent, Morningbirds Restaurant's gourmet five-course dinner for two, A Taste of South Africa package with special curated items, and a Naturopathica Gift basket.



The Whitney E. Houston Legacy Foundation, we would like to give a special thank you to the auction and gifting sponsors for their generous support and dedication including Bermuda Tourism Authority, Bespoke Theatricals, Bruce Springsteen, Concord/Stax, Craig Drake, Debra Martin Chase, Disney Theatrical Group, Earth Wind & Fire/Chicago/Tony Bulluck, Ernest Watson, Flour House Cakes & Co., House of Knipschildt Artisan Chocolates, Keffa Coffee, KYVAN Foods, Marc Bouwer, MARION P Home Collection, Matthew Jordan Smith, Morningbirds Restaurant, Narada Michael Walden, Naturopathica, Perryscope Productions, Perspectives Mosaic Gallery, Primary Wave Music, Putmayo World Music, Rickey Minor, Smokey Robinson, Sony Music Entertainment, Sony Music South Africa, Shaped by Houston,

Stephen Goulbourne, Steven Ciccone, The Estate of Whitney E. Houston, The Society of Voices Arts and Sciences, Theater Matters, Tommy Lane, U.S. Open/Michael Fiur Productions, and WEN® By Chaz Dean.



In 2020, The Estate of Whitney E. Houston formed The Whitney E. Houston Legacy Foundation to continue the mission and important work of the late global superstar's lifelong commitment to today's youth through program initiatives and services that reflect the values and needs of our young people. The Foundation also serves as a source of empowerment to help rebuild, repair, and restore the self-esteem of our youth and assist them in living productive lives.

Whitney Houston's global charitable work was initially established in 1989 as the Whitney Houston Foundation for Children. The organization provided much-needed resources to homeless children, build inner city parks and playgrounds, and provided college scholarships. Known for its world-renowned charitable initiatives and partnerships, the Foundation partnered with the Children's Defense Fund, Childhood Diabetes, The Rain Forest Foundation, Hale House, Special Olympics, United Negro College Fund, St. Jude Children's Research, and Whitney's historic South Africa concerts, of which a portion of the proceeds benefited local South African children's charities.

In 1997, Houston's elementary school was renamed The Whitney E. Houston Academy for Performing & Creative Arts. Originally opened in 1873, the Franklin School is now the oldest building in the East Orange, New Jersey, school district.

**The Whitney E. Houston Legacy
Foundation's 3rd Annual Gala
Will Be Hosted By Kevin
Frazier And Have Performances
By Yolanda Adams & More**



The Whitney E. Houston Legacy Foundation and Primary Wave Music will present the 3rd Annual Whitney E. Houston Legacy Foundation Gala on Friday, August 9th, 2024, at the St. Regis

Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia, which marks the 30th anniversary of Whitney Houston's three historic post-apartheid visits and performances following Nelson Mandela's historic election win as the then President of the new South Africa. Whitney was the first major recording artist to perform in the newly unified, post-apartheid nation. She performed at Kings Park Stadium in Durban (November 8, 1994), Ellis Park Stadium, also known as Emirates Airline Park, in Johannesburg (November 12, 1994), which was filmed for the HBO Special, and the final performance was held at Green Point Stadium in Cape Town (November 19, 1994.)

Four-time Grammy Award-winning recording artist Yolanda Adams will be the headlining performer at this year's gala, with a special performance by Gary Houston, Whitney's brother and longtime duet partner and background singer, along with more surprises. The event will be hosted by Kevin Frazier of Entertainment Tonight and Pat Houston, president of the Whitney E. Houston Legacy Foundation. The Honorary Chair is Clive Davis, the legendary Rock and Roll Hall of Famer and Chief Creative Officer of Sony Music Entertainment.

Also performing are Gregory Sams and Denisia, the recent winners of The Whitney E. Houston Legacy Foundation's Cover Song Competition. The charity grant will be presented to Mirriam Solani Mazibuko, the director of the Orlando Children's Home in South Africa, which is one of the organizations that Whitney extended a generous financial donation to through her foundation thirty years ago. Last month, Pat Houston and team members of the Foundation traveled to South Africa to a few of the places that Whitney visited in November 1994, including the Orlando Children's Home, to spend time with the young residents there, where they prepared a presentation and performed a song.

Also, during that time, thirty years ago, Whitney initially planted a tree at the Nelson Mandela home, which is now named

the Nelson Mandela Museum. "Our trip to South Africa a few weeks ago was very fulfilling and emotional," says Pat Houston. "A few of us haven't been back to South Africa since 1994. Whitney would be proud to know that the Orlando Children's Home is still there and serving an important and vital purpose in the community. She would also be pleased about some of the substantial growth in the country in many areas. And she would be delighted to know that the tree she planted at the Nelson Mandela Museum is beautiful, still flourishing, and in a safe place, surrounded by love."

The annual fundraiser, which is held on August 9th to commemorate and celebrate Whitney's birthday, includes scholarships that will be presented to students studying the arts at historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); both a silent and online auction on Charity Buzz featuring a variety of one-of-a-kind curated items and packages, including original and limited-edition artwork by both South African and American artists; five-star luxury vacation excursions opening night tickets to the U.S. Open, and much more.

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Whitney Houston Garden State Parkway Area Unveiled In New Jersey



ARETÉ

The act of actualizing one's highest and best sense of self, with a moral excellence of character and for the greater good.

The philosophy endorsed by Plato, Aristotle, and Seneca.

WHAT'S YOUR ARETÉ?

The New Jersey Hall of Fame's mission is to celebrate the great state of New Jersey, honor its legends, and inspire its citizens to realize their highest and best sense of self.



Whitney Houston was honored on December 14th with renaming the Vauxhall Service Area on the Garden State Parkway in New Jersey. The area was redesigned, and visitors are greeted by a massive image of Houston, her biography, and the platinum record she earned for "I Will Always Love You." The interactive exhibit has her achievements, quotes, and images presented on the Selfie Monitor, where fans can take photos next to Houston. Visitors can also explore the profiles of other New Jersey Hall of Fame inductees.



"This is another step in our ongoing mission to uphold

outstanding New Jerseyans as we educate and inspire future generations to live their lives on purpose and realize their highest sense of self and for the greater good,” said Steve Edwards, President of the New Jersey Hall of Fame. “Through our exhibitions at service areas and transit terminals, our mobile museum, our school curriculum programs, and our upcoming Entertainment and Learning Center at American Dream this spring, we will tell the story of New Jersey heroes like Whitney Houston and the obstacles they overcame to be their best.”

State Senator Patrick J. Diegnan led the effort to rename the parkway service areas after New Jersey Hall of Fame inductees and State Senator Joseph P. Cryan attended the event. Newark Council Member-At-Large Rev. Louise Scott-Rountree introduced Pat Houston, representing the Estate of Whitney E. Houston.

“Whitney was the true definition of a Jersey girl,” said Pat Houston. “She loved New Jersey and her hometown. She was born, bred, and educated here. Whitney has traveled to six of the seven continents, and no matter where she visited, she always looked forward to returning home to Jersey. And with more than 400 awards and honors to her credits, I know she would be most proud of the Whitney E. Houston Garden Parkway Service area renamed in her honor.”