

BROADWAY TONY AWARD WINNERS PERFORM IN TRIBUTE TO DUKE ELLINGTON FUND-RAISER



TO MY NEFFERTITI SISTERS, PART 1

Recently, I was asked by the coordinator for the Las Vegas Nevada Miss Black Teenage Scholarship Program to speak to the 1992 contestants about my experience at SPELMAN COLLEGE. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the panel to speak to my fellow NEFFERTITI SISTERS because of my part-time JOB.

Even though I tried to explain to my employer the necessity to take off to make this very important meeting of the MINDS, I was denied. Nevertheless, it is very important to me that all of my young sisters understand my experience at SPELMAN COLLEGE, and how that experience enhances my life today. I guess we can start with THE DRUM BEAT because as AFRICAN AMERICANS THE DRUM BEAT, or THE DRUM has always united us since the days in the MOTHER LAND of AFRICA. No, ATLANTA GEORGIA is not AFRICA, but it is the CHOCOLATE HOME BASE WHERE SPELMAN COLLEGE is located. As an eighteen year old LAS NEVADA WESTERN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE of 1980, I have to admit my DRUM BEAT was very faint and distant. Growing up in LAS VEGAS, NEVADA around WHITE IS RIGHT attitude, and a limited amount of AFRICAN AMERICAN ECONOMIC TOGETHERNESS, both physically and mentally, there was indeed a starvation going on inside of me that I was not aware of. I can remember visiting SPELMAN COLLEGE for the first time when I was sixteen years old. Since my father, BOB BAILEY was a MOREHOUSE COLLEGE GRADUATE, it was only traditional that he encourage my brother, who is two years older than myself, to go to MOREHOUSE COLLEGE. Being just sixteen at the time, I thought that this family trip to ATLANTA, GEORGIA to take my brother to MOREHOUSE was going to be just that, another ordinary family trip. I think the OHIO PLAYERS said it best, "HEAVEN MUST

BE LIKE THIS!" Yes, even at sixteen I started to hear that DRUM BEAT, as we stepped upon the RED CLAY OF GEORGIA, and entered the MOREHOUSE COLLEGE CAMPUS. THE BEAUTIFUL BROTHERS WERE EVERYWHERE. It was like being in an ice cream polar, and I had a selection of DEEP CHOCOLATE, CREAMY BROWN, SENSUAL GOLD. It was truly a garden of beautiful AFRICAN AMERICANS, all apart of that EDUCATIONAL GANG. I was shocked to see so many brothers all gathered together walking across the campus with books in hand, and conversations of W.E.B. BUDOIS, MALCOLM X., DR. MAYS, and then some. I have often heard that when one visits AFRICA, you have a sense of immediate comfort because of that feeling of BELONGING. Yes, I FELT AT HOME IN ATLANTA, and on those MOREHOUSE grounds of which MARTIN LUTHER KING once tended. I know my brother was amazed as well, but I was amazed and HAPPY! I remember some brothers gathering around in a circle. I thought, "OH, OH, SOMEONE IS FIGHTING!" As I looked closer, it was the Q's and the KAPPA'S stepping. YEA, I could really hear THE DRUM BEAT NOW! It was LOUD AND CLEAR, AND HAD ME "A-BEAT-BOPPING." Even though, MOREHOUSE COLLEGE is an all boys college, women were everywhere, and they all gathered around to see the on-going step show.

I asked my father, "WHERE ARE ALL THE GIRLS COMING FROM?" He looked at me with a look like, "I THOUGHT YOU WOULD NEVER ASK?" HE QUICKLY EXCLAIMED, "THEY ARE COMING FROM SPELMAN COLLEGE, JUST ACROSS THE STREET, THAT IS THE ALL GIRLS SHOOOL." Later on that late afternoon music started to blast across MOREHOUSE'S CAMPUS. Everyone came out of their dormitories, and sisters and broth-

ers started to dance everywhere. "THERES A PARTY GOING ON," echoed through the air.

A tribute to the late Duke Ellington which will benefit local seniors takes place at 8 p.m. Friday, April 24 in the Trianon Ballroom of the Stardust Hotel and Casino, 3000 S. Las Vegas Blvd.

Entertainers who worked with the late composer and band leader formed a non-profit organization called "The Ladies Who Danced" in order to sponsor the gala tribute.

The benefit coincides with what would have been Ellington's 93rd birthday on April 29.

"This local group of former showgirls who were privileged to work with the Duke in their younger years are now senior citizens themselves. We decided to host a fund-raiser to

assist the newly opened City of Las Vegas Doolittle Satellite Senior Center because it needed financial assistance to provide services to seniors," said Alice Key, president of Ladies Who Danced and former Ellington chorus girl.

Key, a current member of the Las Vegas Senior Citizens Advisory Board, said funds will also benefit the Economic Opportunity Board of Clark County senior citizen program.

Performers at the gala will include Bunny Briggs, known as "Duke's dancer," who recently received a Tony Award for his performance in the Broadway hit, 'Black and Blue;' Cholly Atkins, a Tony Award winner for his choreography in 'Black and

Blue;' and Ernie Andrews, a balladeer, hard-swinging singer and blues shouter whose recording of "Soothe Me" sold over 300,000 copies when he was 17-years-old.

Olivette Miller, America's foremost jazz harpist will co-host the evening with Bob Bailey, long time Las Vegas resident and who currently serves as Deputy Director of the Minority Business Development Agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Tickets are \$40 and include a buffets dinner.

Additional information and tickets may be obtained by calling the following numbers: 733-0139, 458-3444, 386-6131, 451-9827, or 898-9091.



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