

National leaders honor Percy E. Sutton: BLF gala draws public, private stars

When the Black Leadership Forum Inc. (BLF) launches the first Awards Gala in its 19-year history April 10, 1997, at New York City's Tavern on the Green, honoree Percy E. Sutton will receive BLF's first annual Lamplighter Award for Leadership. BLF Chairman Joseph E. Lowery, president of SCLC, will be assisted by the Gala's National Honorary co-chairs Coretta Scott King and Louis Gossett Jr. in making the presentation to Sutton. In addition to Lowery, most of the high-profile black organizational presidents and CEOs who make up BLF's board of directors expect to be joined at the gala by hundreds of top leaders and luminaries from national corporations and businesses, and from the civil rights, service, advocacy and entertainment communities.

Sutton, who served as the first African-American president of the borough of Manhattan, will be cited for his accomplishments as a businessman, communications industry mogul, attorney, civil rights leader and activist. During the 1960s he organized and led freedom rides, sit-ins, demonstrations and protests to challenge opponents of civil rights and equity for blacks. For over 40 years, Sutton has practiced law in the United States and the Virgin Islands, representing and advising such national figures as 1984 and 1988 presidential candidate the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. Percy Sutton is the founder and chairman emeritus of the Inner-City Broadcasting Corporation. He is also chairman of Queens Inner-City Cable System (QUICS) and of Africom Telecommunications Inc., an African-based satellite company promoting telephone service to the African continent. He was the force behind restoring the Apollo Theater in Harlem, where he currently promotes new talent and produces the famous live televised "Show Time at the Apollo." In the international arena, Sutton was a delegate, along with other nationally recognized business leaders, to the G-7 Nations, Ministers and Leading Industrialists Roundtable on Telecommunications in Brussels, Belgium.

The Black Leadership Forum was founded in 1978 by 11 Black leaders including the Rev. Lowery and Mrs. King; Vernon Jordan, then head of the National Urban League; Dr. Dorothy Height, of the National Council of Negro Women; and several black elected officials and leaders of other advocacy organizations. Today, BLF consists of top leadership from 21 organizations, and "... provides creative and coordinated black leadership, diverse in membership but clear on its priority to empower African Americans to improve their own lives and to expand their opportunities to fully participate in American social, economic and political life."

During the past year, BLF's agenda has included negotiations with Texaco, and dialogues with Eddie Bauer Inc. and several other corporations confronting problems of access and diversity; monitoring and intervening to assure black representation in the Clinton administration; public education on proposals for Welfare reform; involvement in voter education about California's Proposition 209 and also in assessing the process of disclosure regarding reported illegal drug trafficking in that state.

The April 10 first annual Lamplighter Awards Gala will launch a new BLF initiative to recognize, support, identify and assist in the advancement of new generations of black leaders, into and within public and private institutions. Gala entertainment will be provided by the Sherry Winston Band. Tickets must be purchased in advance of the gala's 7:30 p.m. opening. Those interested in

attending may call (202) 789-3505, or (212) 222-9400 for information and reservations.

In addition to Chairman Joseph E. Lowery, the BLF officers and members are Vice Chairman Eddie N. Williams, president of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies; secretary Hugh B. Price, president of the National Urban League; treasurer Dr. Ramona

H. Edelin, president of the National Urban Coalition; executive director and chief operating officer Dr. Yvonne Scruggs; Norman Hill, president of the A. Philip Randolph Institute; Oscar Eason Jr., president and CEO of Blacks in Government; William Lucy, president of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists; Bishop Roy L.H. Winbush, chairman of the Con-

gress of National Black Churches; the Honorable Maxine Waters, chair of the Congressional Black Caucus; Dexter King, president and CEO of the Martin Luther King Center for Nonviolent Social Change; Kweisi Mfume, president and CEO of the NAACP; Elaine Jones, Esq., director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund Inc.; the Hon-

orable Mary Pinkett of the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials; the Honorable Lois DeBerry, president of the National Caucus of State Legislators; the Honorable Emanuel Cleaver II, president of the National Conference of Black Mayors; Dr. Dorothy Height, president of the National Council of Negro Women Inc.; Dorothy R. Leavell, president

of the National Newspaper Publishers Association; Daisy M. Wood, president of the National Pan-Hellenic Council; Dr. C. DeLores Tucker, chair of the National Political Congress of Black Women Inc.; Herman Art Taylor, president and CEO of OIC's of America Inc.; and the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, president and CEO of Operation PUSH Inc.



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