

## Something To BRAG About: BRAG 39th Annual Scholarship & Awards Gala



The Black Retail Action Group (BRAG) recently held its 39th Annual Scholarship & Awards Dinner Gala. The event took place at Cipriani's Wall Street location in Lower Manhattan. BRAG is a not-for-profit, professional organization dedicated to empowering African-Americans in pursuit of careers in retail and related industries. Their programs include scholarships, college chapters, internships, and executive development workshops.



Magic Johnson receiving award

This year's gala was attended by retail industry executives, celebrities, members of the press, and students from schools served by the BRAG organization. The evening began with a cocktail reception, during which time guests had the opportunity to peruse the silent auction, prior to taking their seats for dinner.



The Award Winners

The first speaker for the evening was BRAG President Gary L. Lampley, who spoke about the significance of the event's theme: the power of change. He referred to the current transformation of the global fashion industry and encouraged viewing it as a catalyst for positive change with regard to diversity and inclusion.

Actress **Malinda Williams** served as the gala's Mistress of Ceremonies and presented the awards to each of the BRAG honorees. They included:

**Colin and Latisha Daring**, Co-Founders of the Brooklyn Boutique, Pieces Incorporated. Their advice: "never lose sight of your passion".

Best Buy CEO **Brian Dunn**, who was unable to attend but was represented by Best Buy's John Thompson. He commented that "There is no greater civil right than the right to education."

**Richard Dent III**, Senior Vice President, Chief Operating Officer, & Co-Leader of Victoria Secret Pink. Dent acknowledged the fact that, "God won't care how many panties and hoodies I've sold, but who I have helped."

**Earvin "Magic" Johnson**, Chairman and CEO, Magic Johnson Enterprises, who attributed his success to knowing his customers." The former NBA athlete raised \$10,000 for BRAG in approximately ten minutes with an impromptu live auction of his LA Lakers court-side seats.

**Shawn R. Outler**, Group Vice President, Multicultural Merchandising and Vendor Development, Macy's Inc. She explained that she learned about strategy from her sisters, "because when you have four girls in the house and one bathroom, you've got to have a strategy."

**Stephen I. Sadove**, Chairman and CEO, Saks Inc., who declared that, "Department store retailing isn't dead, department store retailing is waiting for innovation and that is what is going to drive the growth of our company."

**Constance White**, Fashion Expert and Style Director, eBay. White remarked that she was lucky enough to get a break when she needed one and encouraged those in a position to help others in a similar fashion, to do so.

At the conclusion of the presentation, guests were invited to enjoy after dinner dancing. As they left the venue, each was the recipient of a bag containing gifts from Lord & Taylor, Victoria's Secret, The Children's Place, and others.

Rhonda Erb