

# Black History Month Celebrated by BRAG

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Photo By: WWD Staff

J.J. Thomas and Gail Monroe-Perry

NEW YORK — The Black Retail Action Group celebrated Black History Month in Harlem Wednesday night, though organizers said there is still work to do when it comes to opening up the upper ranks of retailing to people of color.

“The problem is retention; we do get them in entry-level [positions],” said BRAG’s president Gale Monroe-Perry. But it’s difficult to mark progress since many large firms are reluctant to say what percentage of their workforce is people of color. “Most companies aren’t willing to share those numbers with us,” she said.

Retailers aren’t uncooperative, though.

“Most companies are receptive,” she said. “I’m not sure they really know how to begin.”

A good start is getting the attention of those at the top of the corporate flow chart.

“It really starts with training the people in the higher ranks,” said Michael Brown, manager of executive training and development at Lord & Taylor. “It’s challenging, but I think we’re all getting there.”

The event, which drew more than 300 people, was held at the Schomburg Center for Research for Black Culture and featured a dance performance from Savion Glover, who won the best choreography Tony Award for “Bring in Da Noise, Bring in Da Funk” in 1996.

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