

Audrey's society whirl



Audrey J. Bernard



NYUL's early morning breakfast is the Champion of all morning events. TED speaker James Rhee delivers fabulous keynote address

BEACON, April 4 - April 10, 2024, newyorkbeacon.com

The New York Urban League established the Champions of Diversity Award in 2004, inspired by Corporate America's support for affirmative action. Champions enables the New York Urban League to empower African Americans and underserved communities to secure a first-class education, economic self-reliance, and equal respect of their civil rights through programs, services, and advocacy. The 2024 Champions brunch took place on March 14, 2024, at the swanky Plaza Hotel in New York City and was hosted by NYUL President and CEO Arva R Rice. Erica Byfield, reporter, NBC 4 New York presided over the vibrant program that included the popular Panel Discussion of "What Keeps Us Up At Night?" moderated by Rice, Alphonso David, president & CEO, Global Black Economic Forum, Andi Gillentine, COO, Fidelis Care, and Champions Chair Adri-

anne C. Smith. Senior Vice President, Senior Partner, and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer at FleishmanHillard and Founder and President, Cannes Can: Diversity Collective who also served as Champion Chair. James C. Rhee, Founder and Author, red helicopter, Teacher, Producer, Investor and Goodwill Strategist delivered the keynote address in which he lectured from his TED Talk and Dare to lead interview with Brene Brown which has captured the imagination of millions. His transformative partnership with a primary Black female employee and customer base shocked the business community and inspired the world.

The annual Champions of Diversity event celebrated corporations and thought leaders for their commitment to promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices within their organizational culture. The honorees are exemplary leaders who are working towards creating an inclusive and equitable future for all. Rice expressed her admiration for the honorees, stating that they all share a common mission



Emcee Erica Byfield

of creating and sustaining an open and inclusive corporate culture. Rice also introduced the audience to Malcolm Ellis of Diageo the newly elected Chair of the New York Urban League Board of Directors. "As the New York Urban League prepares for what will be a significant year locally and nationally, Malcolm Ellis will lead the development of our 5-year strategic plan and the reactivation of board committees, including the

Building Committee, instrumental to the success of our capital campaign," adding "We cannot look forward without taking time to thank Ward Corbett, immediate-past Chair of the New York Urban League Board of Directors, for leading the organization through a challenging time and stewarding it to financial stability."

Adrienne C. Smith, served as the 2024 Event Chair and welcomed everyone to a morning fueled with great network-

ing, a delicious breakfast, and a dynamic program that featured the esteemed award presentations. NYUL presented the Disruptor Award: SAG-AFTRA accepted by Ezra Knight, actor-performer and SAG-AFTRA New York President. Leadership Champion: Novartis Rising Star Champion to Carlton Charles, Senior VP of Treasury & Risk Management Hearst Chairman, Level Up Ventures, A Hearst Company. The Recruitment, Retention & Belonging Champion was presented to SAKS. Smith was joined by Malcolm Ellis, Global Director, Technology, Architecture and Strategy & Head of Diverse Investments, Diageo Board Chair, New York Urban League. NYUL thanks its 2024 sponsors for their generous support: (Diversity Level Sponsors) FINN Partners, Tene Nicole Creative Agency, Wynn Resorts (Equity Level Sponsors) The Fragrance Foundation and L'oreal. The host committee included Icema Gibbs, Helen C. Shelton, Cecilia Nelson-Hurt and Alicin Reidy-Williamson. (Photos by Gerald Peart and courtesy NYUL)



Champions 2024 Honorees (L-R) Saks, accepted by Ryan Kenny, Carlton Charles, Novartis, accepted by Wanda Sims-Frierson, and SAG-AFTRA accepted by Ezra Knight



Arva R. Rice (c) with NYUL esteemed staff



Panel (L-R) Arva R. Rice, Andi Gillentine, Alphonso David, and Adrienne C. Smith



(L-R) Saks, accepted by Ryan Kenny, Novartis, accepted by Wanda Sims-Frierson, Carlton Charles, Arva R. Rice, SAG-AFTRA accepted by Ezra Knight, Adrienne C. Smith and Malcolm Ellis



NY Attorney General Letitia James, Arva R. Rice and Malcolm Ellis



Keynote speaker James C. Rhee, Arva R. Rice and Malcolm Ellis



(L-R) Ward Corbett, Marcia Maxwell, Arva R. Rice, Malcolm Ellis and Helen Shelton



Panel (L-R) Andi Gillentine, Alphonso David and Adrienne C. Smith