



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senator Martins Celebrates Black History Month

JACK M. MARTINS February 17, 2012

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Roundtable Discussion and Awards Presentation Highlight Program

State Senator Jack Martins celebrated the 8th annual “Black History Month Awards” this past weekend with an educational roundtable discussion and entertainment awards presentation at the Elmont Public Library. The program was sponsored by Senator Martins and Highlighting Success. The Black History Month Celebration is a program that entails a community roundtable discussion revolving around a specific issue series, entertainment,

awards and spoken word.

“This year's Black History Month Celebration was a culturally rich program that showcased incredible talent and highlighted some truly great musical talent. The award honorees were inspirational and truly deserving their recognition,” said Senator Martins. “Jean Grant, Claudine Hall, Magaly Polo, Renee King and Rebecca Fortune are all Elmont Stars who make a difference each and every day,” Martins added.

This year's program kicked off with a roundtable discussion centering around redistricting and its impact to communities. The panel included Senator Martins, prominent Civil Rights Attorney Fred Brewington, Professor Sandy Figueroa of HOSTOS College, Dr. Robert Smith of Baruch College and Carl Achille, a NYC Police officer. The panel moderator was Tyra Onwuchekwa who is a co-owner of Seaburn Associated an independently owned bookstore and publishing company.

The awards program featured the outstanding contributions of the Sewanhaka Central High School Chorus, Elmont Memorial High School Musical, One 4 Five, TK Blue and the LIU Post Jazz Combo, the Elmont School District Jazz Masters Program, Elmont Fire Department and presentations of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Adult Award, Dr. Carter G. Woodson Award, Mary McLeod Bethune Award and Future Business Leader Award.

The program began with members of the Elmont Fire Department led by Chief Mike Capozziello leading the Pledge of Allegiance and a video presentation of “Lift of Every Voice.”

Senator Martins presented his annual Dr. Martin Luther King Adult Award to Claudine Hall and Jean Grant. Ms. Hall is President of the Jamaica Square Improvement League and was the first community organizer of the NAACP. Ms. Grant is a very prominent teacher aide at Dutch Broadway School and a mentor at the SCOPE after-school program.

“This is a very great honor and I can’t thank all of you enough,” said Claudine Hall in her remarks after accepting the Dr. Martin Luther King award. Hall thanked the parishioners of Emmanuel Baptist Church, members of the Jamaica Square Improvement League and the Elmont community for inspiring her. Jean Grant invited a child from Dutch Broadway School to the stage to read a special poem during her award presentation. Grant said , “I want to thank my family and the children of Dutch Broadway School because I love what I do and am grateful that I can help our young people.”

Highlighting Success and the Black History Month Committee presented the Dr. Carter G. Woodson Award to Haitian community activist Magaly Polo. Ms. Polo served as a President of HAFALI (Haitian American Family Association of Long Island), Red Cross, mental health advocacy issues and much more.

The two specialty youth awards were presented to Renee King and Rebecca Fortune. Miss King and Miss Fortune are both honor students and very active in Elmont Memorial High School. The awards were sponsored by the Center for African, Black, and Caribbean Studies at Adelphi University and Invest in Elmont.

The entertainment portion of the celebration included the outstanding performance of Elmont Memorial High School’s musical production “Beauty and the Beast,” the Sewanhaka Central High School Choir performing “Bridge Over Troubled Water,” One4Five performing spoken word stories and Professor TK Blue and the LIU Jazz Combo. Local residents particularly enjoyed the homecoming during the performance of Elmont’s own Jason Reese, Charles Jourdain and Mikhail Brown for the performance.

"This year's program highlighted Black History and issues that impact our community in a meaningful way," said Senator Martins concluding, "I'm proud that I could be a co-sponsor of this program."

