

AVA DUVERNAY, VENUS AND SERENA WILLIAMS AMONG HONOREES AT PORTRAIT OF A NATION GALA



WASHINGTON, DC - NOVEMBER 12: Serena Williams attends the 2022 Portrait Of A Nation Gala on November 12, 2022 in Washington, DC. (Photo by Paul Morigi/Getty Images for National Portrait Gallery)

by Eric Moody | BLACK ENTERPRISE

(BE) - More than 750 entertainers and influencers were welcomed to Washington D.C. Saturday for the 2022 Portrait of a Nation Gala.

The event, directed by art curator Kim Sajet, was held at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery.

"This year's Portrait of a Nation Gala strengthens our commitment to contemporary portraiture," Sajet said in an issued press release. "We collaborate with contemporary artists to illuminate the history unfolding around us while also looking back at the changemakers who came before."

Seven honorees received this year's Portrait of a Nation Award, including award-winning filmmaker Ava DuVernay, 23-time Grand Slam champion and entrepreneur Serena Williams, and her sister, fellow tennis champion and pay equity activist Venus Williams.

The award, established in 2015, recognizes individuals who have made transformative contributions to the United States and its people.

The awardees were also featured in portraits displayed in the National Portrait Gallery, honoring the extraordinary contributions these individuals have brought forth in their respective industries during a special red-carpet gathering.



Portrait of Ava DuVernay by Kenturah Davis

"Portraiture is both the past and present, contemplative and motivating, traditional and avant-garde, and we encourage everyone looking at the portraits of this year's honorees to reflect on how they might see history and want themselves to be seen," Sajet added in her statement.

Other honorees included humanitarian José Andrés, Grammy award-winning music executive, and philanthropist Clive Davis, attorney and children's rights activist Marian Wright Edelman, and leading public health expert Dr. Anthony Fauci.

The special gathering was curated by Rhea L. Combs, director of curatorial affairs, in collaboration with Taina Caragol, curator of painting, sculpture, and Latinx art and history, and Leslie Ureña, curator of photographs.

The event featured six newly commissioned portraits and one never-before-seen photograph by contemporary artists Ruven Afanador (Edelman), Hugo Crosthwaite (Fauci), Kenturah Davis (DuVernay), David Hockney (Davis), Kadir Nelson (Andrés), Toyin Ojih Odutola (S. Williams) and Robert Pruitt (V. Williams).

Attendees also enjoyed cocktails, dinner, and a performance by acclaimed Jazz musician Wynton Marsalis.

Smithsonian African American Museum Honors Chadwick Boseman's Black Panther Costume in New Exhibit

By Stacy M. Brown
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(NNPA) - A new exhibition debuting next spring at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) will celebrate Chadwick Boseman's Black Panther hero costume.

"Afrofuturism: A History of Black Futures," opens on March 24, 2023, and feature the late actor's iconic gear.

Black Panther counts as the first superhero of African descent to appear in mainstream American comics, and the film is the first major cinematic production on the character.

"Investigating Afrofuturist expression through art, music, activism and more, this exhibition explores and reveals Afrofuturism's historic and poignant engagement with African American history and popular culture," Smithsonian officials wrote in a news release.

"From the enslaved looking to the cosmos for freedom to popular sci-fi stories inspiring Black astronauts, to the musical influence of Sun Ra, OutKast, P-Funk and more, this exhibition covers the broad and impactful spectrum of Afrofuturism."

Through the 4,300-square-foot temporary exhibition, visitors will view a variety of objects from Afrofuturism pioneers, including Octavia Butler's typewriter, Nichelle Nichols' Star Trek uniform as the character Lt. Nyoto Uhura and Nona Hendryx's spacesuit-inspired costume worn while performing with LaBelle.



Black Panther original movie poster

The exhibition also utilizes select objects to elevate stories that speak to Black liberation and social equality, such as Trayvon Martin's flight suit from Experience Aviation, and his childhood dream of being an astronaut.

"Trayvon Martin's flight suit tells the story of a dream of space flight ended tragically by earth-bound violence," said Kevin Young, the Andrew W. Mellon Director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

"We are honored to tell more of Trayvon's story, exploring his love of flight and mechanics and his fondness for science and technology. Afrofuturism charts the joy of a rich, imagined future, often in the face of injustice."

Since its opening in 2016, NMAAHC has supported conversations, collections and initiatives surrounding Afrofuturism.

"Afrofuturism: A History of Black Futures" will be on view in the museum's Bank of America Special Exhibitions Gallery from March 24, 2023, through March 2024.

For more details about the new exhibition and to sign up for additional updates, visit the museum's Afrofuturism website.

CIA Director and Russian Counterpart Discuss Brittney Griner, Paul Whelan

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Brittney Griner

(NNPA) - CIA director Bill Burns and Russia's spy agency boss Sergey Naryshkin planned to meet on Monday, Nov. 14, to discuss the potential release of WNBA Star Brittney Griner and former U.S. military veteran Paul Whelan, both deemed by America as unlawfully detained citizens.

The Biden administration has maintained its determination to bring home Griner and Whelan.

Russian authorities recently transferred Griner to the country's dreaded penal colony, where many prisoners have detailed abuse along with a multitude of other human rights violations.

Russian officials jailed Griner in February when authorities arrested her at a Moscow airport after finding a small amount of cannabis oil in her luggage.

A court convicted Griner in August of trying to smuggle narcotics. She received a nine-year sentence, which an appeals court upheld last month.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said last week that President Biden had directed all in the administration to prevail on her "Russian captors" to improve Griner's treatment and the conditions many must endure in the country's penal colony.

Individuals who've spent time at one of Russia's infamous penal colonies reported that prisoners aren't allowed outside contact for weeks.

The colonies are notorious for corrections officers' repeated abuse of prisoners, violence among inmates, lack of food, and inadequate sanitation.

Confirmed reports said the United States government had offered to swap the so-called "Merchant of Death" Viktor Bout for Griner and another imprisoned American, Paul Whelan.

Bout, who's serving a 25-year federal prison sentence and notorious for his desire to kill Americans, reportedly has been at the top of Russian President Vladimir Putin's wish list.

"We communicated a substantial offer that we believe could be successful based on a history of conversations with the Russians," a senior administration official said earlier this year. "We communicated that many weeks ago, in June."

The families of Whelan, who Russia has held for alleged espionage since 2018, and WNBA star Griner, jailed in Moscow for drug possession since February, have urged the White House to secure their release, including via a prisoner exchange, if necessary, the report stated.

During her court testimony, Griner said she's still unsure how cannabis oil ended up in her luggage.

She said a doctor recommended cannabis oil for her injuries on the basketball court.

"I still don't understand to this day how they ended up in my bags," Griner said, adding that she was aware of the Russian law outlawing cannabis oil and that she had not intended to break it.

"I didn't have any intention to use or keep in my possession any substance that is prohibited in Russia," Griner said.

U.S. officials continue to wait for word from the Russian government on whether they will accept the swap, and now some are hoping that the planned meeting between the two Intelligence officials could yield results.