

The 3rd Annual HBCU Honors Delivers Breakout Ratings Underscoring Its Momentum as a Leading Cultural Event on BET

Young-Adult viewership soars as HBCU Honors defies trends with major gains; expanded long-form now streaming on HBCU Honors YouTube.

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EINPresswire.com/ -- The 3rd Annual HBCU Honors Presented by BET continued its ascent as one of the network's most culturally resonant specials, delivering strong year-over-year growth among young-adult viewers while generating significant digital, social, and earned-media visibility.

Airing Thanksgiving weekend and hosted by Emmy-nominated actress and Fisk University alumna Kym Whitley, the one-hour telecast reached nearly 800,000 viewers across BET and BET Her during premiere week. HBCU Honors delivered double- and triple-digit percentage increases year over year among key young-adult demos, including M18-34, W18-24, and P18-34*—underscoring its growing relevance with next-generation audiences.

The 2025 campaign generated an estimated 8.4 million digital impressions and nearly 24 million verified coverage views across a 5.8 billion earned-media footprint, reinforcing the franchise's expanding cultural impact and advertiser appeal.



Across digital platforms, HBCU Honors achieved its strongest performance to date. High-impact cultural moments—particularly tributes to honorees—drove reach and engagement, resulting in 3.9 million confirmed views and more than 237,000 interactions. Creator, partner, and media-driven storytelling amplified visibility throughout the weekend, sustaining momentum well beyond the broadcast.

Brand partners played a central role in advancing the show's student-centered mission. Google returned as a key partner, powering the national Rising Star Talent Search and mentorship program featuring Myles Frost, Gabby Samone, Raheem DeVaughn, Google UX Designer Timothy J. Hykes, and Music Director Shawn Williams. Finalists David Henderson (Coppin State University) and Johanna Clarke (Bennett College) joined winner Ronald Johnson (Morgan State University) in Washington, D.C. for live auditions and creative development. Johnson's performance became a defining moment of the night, earning a standing ovation.



Mielle deepened its commitment to emerging storytellers through the HBCU Honors Media Futures Fellowship, supported by a generous contribution from the Mielle Cares Foundation. The program provides paid, hands-on experience across HBCU Honors and additional digital campaigns from August 2025 through March 2026.

Additional integrations from the Thurgood Marshall College Fund and UNCF highlighted workforce development, scholarships, and career readiness initiatives that empower HBCU students and future leaders. These student-led activations reinforced authentic, culturally grounded storytelling across broadcast and digital platforms.

Gilead Sciences, Inc. delivered a powerful on-air moment honoring World AIDS Day, spotlighting a recent Howard University alumna alongside Gilead's Head of Corporate Responsibility to highlight the company's commitment to HBCUs and HIV innovation. State Farm amplified awareness of the nationally celebrated Chris Paul HBCU Classic, reinforcing its longstanding investment in HBCU athletics and student opportunity.

Additional partners supporting the 2025 HBCU Honors included Events DC, The BOSS Network, Uncle Nearest, PlayersTV, Getty, Our Community Health System (OCHS), Pathways to Public Service, and IGNITE, strengthening the weekend's programming, student engagement, and multi-platform storytelling.

The telecast featured standout performances and tributes honoring Shirley Caesar, David

Banner, and Janice Bryant Howroyd, with musical contributions from Raheem DeV Vaughn, Jekalyn Carr, MAJOR., Y'Anna Crawley, Myles Frost, Howard University's Ooh La La Danceline, the Morgan State University Choir, Gabby Samone, DJ QuickSilva, J. Ivy, and Tarrey Torae. Special appearances by Angela Bassett and Roy Wood Jr. added cultural resonance and star power.

Presenters included Omar Goff (Mielle), Grace Ogunmodede (TMCF), Dr. Walter Kimbrough (UNCF), Rashad Burgess and Ashley Hamilton (Gilead), Melonie Parker (Google), Shaun Robinson, Dr. Cameka Smith (The BOSS Network), Lance Gross, Dr. Stacie NC Grant, Fawn Weaver (Uncle Nearest), and Tip "T.I." Harris, reinforcing the evening's themes of leadership, innovation, and legacy.

Bevy Smith and Ray Cunningham hosted Blue Carpet arrivals, while AutumnJoi Live anchored the Media Room with exclusive interviews and real-time content.

With strong ratings momentum, engaged young-adult audiences, and growing multi-platform value, HBCU Honors has firmly established itself as a premier destination for purpose-driven brands seeking authentic multicultural connection.

An expanded long-form edition of the 2025 HBCU Honors—featuring full performances and speeches—is now available on the HBCU Honors YouTube Channel, with additional content rolling out at HBCUHonors.org and encores on BET.

The HBCU Honors Foundation is led by Founder and CEO Michelle M. Bailey (Spelman College), Board Chair Michele T. Ghee, and Executive Director Dorinda Walker, who also serves as Creative Executive. Together, they serve as Executive Producers of the telecast.

Production is led by RedSummerTV, with Executive Producer and CEO Malik Buie (Morgan State University), Executive Producers Sam Walker II and Quan Lateef-Hill (Howard University), Music Director Shawn Williams, Experiential Producer LaToyia Dennis, Executive in Charge of Publicity Tosha Whitten, Digital Strategy Lead Kera McCain, and Visual Designer Ash Samuels of CRASH! Creative.

For more information, visit www.hbcuhonors.org or follow @HBCU_Honors on social media.

About BET Media Group

The BET Media Group, a unit of Paramount, a Skydance Corporation (Nasdaq: PSKY), is the world's largest media company dedicated to entertaining, engaging, and empowering the Black community while championing Black culture. The company connects Black audiences through a robust portfolio of brands, including BET, BET+, BET Gospel, BET HER, BET International, BETJams, BET Soul, BET Studios, and VH1. BET Media Group operates a leading, interconnected ecosystem spanning cable television, streaming, digital platforms, studios, live events, and international markets. For more information, visit www.bet.com and follow @BET on social platforms. Additional BET news can be found at paramountpressexpress.com/bet.

About HBCU Honors

HBCU Honors is an annual awards program celebrating the achievements of alumni and leaders connected to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Now in its second consecutive year on BET and BET Her, the program recognizes excellence across entertainment, technology, science, education, business, and community leadership. By showcasing the enduring legacy and cultural influence of HBCUs, HBCU Honors inspires the next generation of scholars, innovators, and changemakers. Founded by Spelman College alumna Michelle M. Bailey, the program is produced in partnership with RedSummer TV, The HBCU Honors Foundation, and Expectant Media, continuing its mission to celebrate the past, elevate the present, and empower the future of Black excellence.

About The HBCU Honors Foundation

The HBCU Honors Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing HBCU excellence through media, storytelling, and career development. The Foundation provides paid work experiences, mentorship, and professional development opportunities that bridge education with real-world industry access, equipping the next generation of Black leaders while amplifying HBCU impact nationwide.

Tosha Whitten

FrontPage Firm

+1 202-246-7875

[email us here](#)

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