

Champagne Reign Unites Black Founders and Community in Washington, DC

Inaugural event combines a live pitch competition, civic dialogue, and community investment in Washington, D.C.

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, July 9, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [MelaninCon](#) hosted the

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inaugural Champagne Reign on Sunday, June 28, 2026, at Realm Rooftop Bar and Lounge in the Shaw neighborhood, bringing together hundreds of Black entrepreneurs, creatives, and community leaders for an afternoon centered on a shared belief: the resources our community needs already exist among us, and the work is placing those resources into one another's hands.

The sold out event featured a live startup pitch competition, a discussion on the state of Black America,

and a rooftop celebration that continued to inspire conversations throughout the city.

The afternoon was hosted by Diamond Heeralall, founder of The Diamond Standard Co. and recipient of Hospitality Hued's 2026 Emerging Hospitality Leader of the Year award. Music was provided by DJ Jus Jamz and DJ Davy J The Virgo.

ECHO Pulse Pitch Competition Showcases Black Innovation

At the center of the event was the ECHO Pulse Pitch Competition, highlighting three Washington, D.C. based Black technology founders presenting their ventures before a live audience and panel of judges.

Keith Chaney, founder of Peadbo, a platform that helps individuals build personal advisory boards through mentorship and artificial intelligence, earned the competition's top honor.

The competition also featured Dr. Donnisha Davis, CEO and Co Founder of FlixMate, an entertainment discovery platform, and Phifer Turner, founder of GoalExecution, a shared goals and accountability platform.

"The prize was indeed the room, and I won," said Dr. Donnisha Davis. "I came prepared to tell the FlixMate story, make the business case, and connect with the right people. I left with new relationships, renewed conversations with partners, and several opportunities worth pursuing."

The competition was judged by Janine Brunson Johnson of D.C. United and Audi Field, I Shi Patterson Stuart, Vice President of Operations and Administration at the Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington, and Johnny Bailey of ShineHard Network.

The State of Us Panel Examines the Future of Black America

The State of Us panel was moderated by Fahn Darkor, Co Founder of Souled Out Dates.

Panelists included Constance Carter, Founder and CEO of Catalyst Real Estate Professionals, who addressed Black wealth creation and financial empowerment; former Tennessee State Senator Katrina Robinson, who emphasized civic participation and the power of the Black vote; and Stephon Braithwaite Martin, Co Founder and Vice President of Business Growth and Strategy at The Connect, who discussed intentional community building.

The discussion centered on economic advancement, political participation, and collective responsibility as pillars for Black progress.

Community Leaders Celebrate a New Washington Tradition

"The inaugural Champagne Reign was a wonderful way to spend a Sunday and launch what I believe will become a new Washington tradition," said Gerren Price, President and CEO of the DowntownDC Business Improvement District. "The first event always establishes the tone, and this gathering felt like the beginning of something truly special."

Investing in Black Excellence

Champagne Reign was made possible in part through the support of The Stacie Selise Group, the



Donovan Woodberry, founder of Champagne Reign, welcomes guests during the inaugural Champagne Reign celebration in Washington, D.C., bringing together Black professionals, entrepreneurs, and community leaders for an afternoon of networking, culture, and c

event's Leadership Partner, which equips professionals and institutions to lead with excellence and scale with purpose.

The event was produced by A [Celebration of Us](#), Inc. and supported by more than twenty community partners, including Broccoli City, Black Menswear, The Black Excellence Society, and Win With Black Men.

The event operated under a simple but powerful message: "We built the table. Now we toast at it."

Looking Ahead

"This was never just about one afternoon," said Donovan Woodberry, Founder of MelaninCon. "It was about proving what happens when we stop waiting for permission and begin pouring into each other. The founders, the connections, and the spirit inside that room represent the future we are building. Sunday was only the beginning."

ABOUT A CELEBRATION OF US

A Celebration of Us, Inc. is a Washington, D.C. based 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to Black professional development, entrepreneurship, and community empowerment.

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