

Written by Jeffrey L. Boney, Associate Editor
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An estimated 4,000 registered attendees joined the Texas Legislative Black Caucus (TLBC) as it celebrated its 40th Anniversary during the 2013 African American Legislative Summit held February 24-26, in Austin, Texas. Sponsored by HEB, the theme of the 2013 African American Legislative Summit was, “**From Texas to Africa & Back,**” highlighting the bonds and ties between the people of Texas & Africa.

From starting out on Monday morning at the state Capitol, to enjoying a relaxing lunch on the Capitol grounds, to advocating while the Texas Legislature was in Session, to attending power-packed panel discussions, to a free comedy show at the Hilton Hotel, and a chance to hear from a stellar list of international dignitaries, distinguished guests and award-winning talent such as South African Ambassador Ebrahim Rasool, Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, award-winning comedian J. Anthony Brown and award-winning gospel singer Yolanda Adams; this year’s conference was surely one to remember.

Each session, the Summit provides attendees with a premiere opportunity to hear from top thought leaders on issues affecting African Americans across Texas. This year, the Summit, under the direction of TLBC Chairman and Houston State Rep. Sylvester Turner, included a wide range of riveting panel topics that touched on every facet of the African American community including public education, business and wealth development, criminal justice, mental illness, the Affordable Care Act, Public Education, Higher Education, gun violence, international business opportunities and the current state and relevance of the Black media.

Houston Forward Times Associate Editor Jeffrey L. Boney served as a guest speaker on the

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Black Media panel discussion on Tuesday.

The Conference kicked off Sunday evening with a Chairman's Dinner at the Hilton Hotel Downtown in Austin. This invitation-only, black-tie affair honored Mr. Milton Carroll, an innovator in the Oil & Gas industry, who also serves as Chairman of the Board of Directors at CenterPoint Energy, Inc. and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas. Grammy-award winning gospel artist, and Houston's own, Yolanda Adams performed and inspired the crowd.

On Monday morning, attendees were officially welcomed to Austin during the opening plenary session. After the opening plenary session, attendees were treated to a series of riveting panel discussions at the State Capitol and a luncheon on the Capitol Grounds. After lunch, the Summit shifted to the host site, the Hilton Hotel in Downtown Austin, where various dignitaries and noted celebrities participated in stimulating panels and discussions. Later that evening, the TLBC Scholarship Awards Banquet took place in the Hilton Hotel Ballroom, where the 2013 TLBC Scholarship Recipients were honored. The keynote speaker at the Scholarship Awards Banquet was the accomplished Mayor of Atlanta, Mr. Kasim Reed. Comedian J. Anthony Brown closed out the evening by delivering his unique brand of comedy to attendees at a free comedy show.

On Tuesday morning, the Community Awards Breakfast took place at the Hilton Hotel, where attendees were moved to action and stimulated by the keynote speaker and the Summit concluded after the final series of panels at the Hilton.

Rep. Turner, his fellow colleagues from the Greater Houston area and all members of the TLBC should be commended for doing an outstanding job at this year's Summit.