

Brooklyn's New Barclays Center Dubbed As Gospel Headquarters

Written by Forward Times Staff
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Though most know the new arena being built in Brooklyn as headquarters for the Brooklyn Nets NBA team, officials christened the Barclays Center on Thursday as New York's gospel music headquarters at a tambourine-shaking press event complete with a rousing choir performance that had Barclays Center developer Bruce Ratner clapping along from his pew.

"Gospel now has a home," said the Rev. Al Sharpton at the press conference, held at the House of the Lord Church on Atlantic Avenue. "We will now have a home and an address where you can pull up and kick your shoes off and praise the Lord in the right rhythm and the right beats...And if you're a gospel singer, you have not performed until you've performed at Barclays."

Sharpton said the new arena will serve as gospel's hub, the way Lincoln Center hosts classical music and the Apollo Theatre is famed for R&B and soul.

The Barclays Center's gospel line-up will include a Dec. 10 concert by Grammy winner Hezekiah Walker. The Brooklyn native wowed the audience at Thursday's event with an exhilarating performance of "Grateful" and "You're All I Need" with his Love Fellowship Choir.

"It's always been a dream of mine to have gospel music in this arena from day one...so this is a high moment for all us," said Ratner, who told the crowd that it was Walker who introduced him to gospel music "in a real way."

Other gospel shows on the Barclays Center calendar include an October performance by The King's Men (Kirk Franklin, Marvin Sapp, Donnie McClurkin and Israel Houghton), and "How Sweet the Sound," a national gospel competition, in November.