

Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr., President and CEO, Hip Hop Caucus

Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr., President and CEO of the Hip Hop Caucus, is a minister, community activist and one of the most influential people in Hip Hop political life. He works tirelessly to encourage the Hip Hop generation to utilize its political and social voice.

A national leader and pacemaker within the green movement, Rev Yearwood has been successfully bridging the gap between communities of color and environmental issue advocacy for the past decade. With a diverse set of celebrity allies, Rev Yearwood raises awareness and action in communities that are often overlooked by traditional environmental campaigns. Rev Yearwood's innovative climate and clean energy work has garnered the Hip Hop Caucus support from several environmental leaders including former Vice President Al Gore's Climate Reality Project, National Wildlife Federation, Earthjustice, Sierra Club and Bill McKibben's 350.org.

Rolling Stone deemed Rev Yearwood one of our country's "New Green Heroes" and Huffington Post named him one of the top ten change makers in the green movement. He was also named one of the 100 most powerful African Americans by Ebony Magazine in 2010, and was also named to the Source Magazine's Power 30, Utne Magazine's 50 Visionaries changing the world, and the Root 100 Young Achievers and Pacesetters.

Rev Yearwood is the subject of a Discovery Network Documentary for the Planet Green Channel. The film, 'Hip Hop Rev' (www.HipHopRev.com) follows a year in the life of Rev Yearwood, capturing a stunning but often unseen side to environmental activism. It is a one-year journey where the cameras capture the highs and lows of Rev Yearwood's efforts to involve urban communities in climate activism and green economy solutions. DJ Biz Markie, musician Wyclef Jean, actress Gloria Reuben, musician D. Woods, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson, activist Van Jones, and Rep. Barbara Lee, are all featured in the film.

Rev Yearwood is a national leader in engaging young people in electoral activism. He leads the national Respect My Vote! campaign and coalition (www.respectmyvote.com). In the 2012 Elections, numerous celebrity partners have joined the campaign to reach their fan bases, including Respect My Vote! spokesperson 2 Chainz.

The Hip Hop Caucus registered and mobilized tens of thousands of young voters to the polls in 2012. In 2008, the Hip Hop Caucus set a world record of registering the most voters in one day: 32,000 people across 16 U.S. cities. This effort was part of the Hip Hop Caucus' 2008 "Respect My Vote!" campaign with celebrity spokespeople T.I., Keyshia Cole and many other recording artists, athletes, and entertainers.

Rev Yearwood entered the world of Hip Hop Politics when he served as the Political and Grassroots Director of Russell Simmons' Hip Hop Summit Action Network in 2003 and 2004. In 2004 he also was a key architect and implementer of three other voter turnout operations – P. Diddy's Citizen Change organization which created the "Vote Or Die!" campaign; Jay Z's "Voice Your Choice" campaign; and, "Hip Hop Voices", a project at the AFL-CIO. It was in 2004 that he founded the Hip Hop Caucus to bring the power of the Hip Hop Community to Washington, DC.

After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Rev Yearwood established the award winning Gulf Coast

Renewal Campaign where he led a coalition of national and grassroots organizations to advocate for the rights of Katrina survivors. The coalition successfully stopped early rounds of illegal evictions of Katrina survivors from temporary housing, held accountable police and government entities to the injustices committed during the emergency response efforts, supported the United Nations “right to return” policies for internally displaced persons, promoted comprehensive federal recovery legislation, and campaigned against increased violence resulting from lack of schools and jobs in the years after Katrina.

Rev Yearwood is a retired U.S. Air Force Reserve Officer. In the lead up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq he began speaking out against such an invasion. He has since remained a vocal activist in opposition to the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2007 he organized a national pro-peace tour, “Make Hip Hop Not War”, which engaged urban communities in discussions and rallies about our country’s wars abroad and parallels to the structural and physical violence poor urban communities endure here at home.

Rev Yearwood is a proud graduate of Howard University School of Divinity and the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), both Historically Black Colleges and Universities. He served as student body president at both institutions. As a student at UDC, he organized massive student protests and sit-ins, shutting down the school for ten days straight, and achieved victory against budget cutbacks. After graduating from UDC he served as the Director of Student Life at a time when the city was attempting to relocate the school, under his leadership the city was forced to rescind its effort to marginalize and move the campus. Rev Yearwood went on to teach at the Center for Social Justice at Georgetown University, before entering the world of Hip Hop politics with Russell Simmons and civil rights activist, Dr. Benjamin Chavis.

He has been featured in such media outlets as CNN, MSNBC, BET, Huffington Post, Newsweek, The Nation, MTV, AllHipHop.com, The Source Magazine, Ebony and Jet, Al Jazeera, BBC, C-Span, and Hardball with Chris Mathews and featured in the Washington Post, The New York Times and VIBE magazine.

He was born in Shreveport, Louisiana. The first in his family to be born in the United States, his parents, aunts, and uncles, are from Trinidad and Tobago. Rev Yearwood currently lives in Washington, DC with his two sons, who are his biggest inspiration to making this world a better place.