

Russell Simmons



USA Today recently named Russell Simmons one of the “Top 25 Most Influential People of the Past 25 Years,” calling him a “hip-hop pioneer” for his groundbreaking vision that has influenced music, fashion, finance, television and film, as well as the face of modern philanthropy.

Russell Simmons has been instrumental in bringing the powerful influence of hip-hop culture to every facet of business and media since its inception in the late 1970s. From producing and/or managing such early hip-hop artists as Kurtis Blow, Run DMC, Whodini and the Beastie Boys to signing seminal luminaries like Jay Z, Foxy Brown and Ludacris, Simmons’ groundbreaking vision was crystallized with partner Rick Rubin in the creation of the seminal Def Jam Recordings in 1984, launching the cultural revolution known as hip-hop. Russell Simmons has been the master architect of that phenomenon, envisioning and creating the trends in popular culture. His fashion empire Phat Farm, which begat Baby Phat and Run Athletics, put the definitive stake in the ground for hip-hop clothing and others followed.

His film and television production company with partner Stan Lathan – Simmons Lathan Media – created the wildly successful HBO’s “The Def Comedy Jam,” “Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry,” “The Nutty Professor,” the Tony Award-winning stage production “Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry Jam on Broadway” and the international hit on MTV, “Run’s House.” Simmons has put his imprint on the financial services industry, as well, leveling the playing field for all to have access to the American Dream with the Unirush Company’s RushCard. In 2006, Simmons broke new ground yet again, becoming the first African American to launch a major jewelry company – Simmons Jewelry Co. (SJC) – with partner and SJC president, Scott Rauch. Major retail chains followed, carrying the company’s collections, now distributed to over 2000 stores.

This past Spring, Russell released a new book entitled Do You! 12 Laws to Access the Power in You to Achieve Happiness and Success, which combines effective business practices with a spiritual foundation to be the best you can be. The book was a top 4 New York Times Best Seller, and was featured on The Oprah Winfrey Show. And, with Accel Partners' Jim Breyer, Russell co-funded the Simmons' founded unique, personalized internet portal for the hip-hop community - Global Grind - with the purpose of connecting young people around the world, a generation that Simmons has strongly encouraged, nurtured and supported, and one that has proven to be more giving, loving and compassionate than the generation before them. Simmons' newest ventures are two hot clothing collections - Argyle Culture and Atman.

Russell Simmons' interests extend far beyond the business world, and he spends a great deal of his time and considerable energy working for social, political, and philanthropic causes, pushing hip-hop on to new plateaus of power and relevance. Russell and his ventures are driven by a personal and corporate belief that hip-hop is an enormously influential agent for social change, which could be responsibly and proactively utilized to fight the war on poverty and ignorance. In 1995 he, along with his brothers Danny and Joseph Simmons (Rev. Run of Run DMC), founded Rush Philanthropic Arts Foundation. The organization is dedicated to providing disadvantaged urban youth with significant exposure and access to the arts, as well as offering exhibition opportunities to underrepresented artists and artists of color.

He is also Chairman of Rush Community Affairs and the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, dedicated to bringing all religions and ethnicities together. The organization's president is Rabbi Marc Schneier, also head of the World Jewish Congress. Following the historic Hip-Hop Summit Russell organized in June of 2001, he co-founded the Hip-Hop Summit Action Network (HSAN) with civil rights activist Dr. Benjamin Chavis. HSAN's mission is to harness the cultural relevance of hip-hop music as a catalyst for education advocacy and other societal concerns fundamental to the well being of at-risk youth throughout the United States. HSAN enables artists to use their celebrity to give back to the community. Among HSAN's major initiatives is helping to spearhead the first changes to the Rockefeller Drug Laws since 1973, orchestrating getting \$300 million added back into the New York City education budget, Hip-Hop Team Vote - a 50-city grassroots force that worked throughout 2004 to register and mobilize young voters across the country, as well as three successful years of the "Get Your Money Right" Financial Empowerment International Summits. HSAN has traveled the country and the world implementing over 60 Hip-Hop Summits empowering young people around the issues of education, financial literacy and voting.

In 2006, after a trip to Africa to see how some diamonds were positively affecting the lives of Africans where they are a natural resource, he created The Diamond Empowerment Fund™ (D.E.F.) to help Africans help Africa and sensitize the diamond industry to the plight of the Africans. Simmons Jewelry Co. has created a special collection of jewelry – The Green Initiative – which is giving back to Africa through D.E.F. He also serves on the Board of Directors of Petra Nemcova's Happy Hearts Fund, which gives aid to children throughout the world who are victims of natural disasters.

Russell Simmons is a native New Yorker who attended City College of New York.

Russell and Kimora Lee have two daughters, Ming Lee and Aoki Lee.
