

# SPEAKEASY

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## Celeb-Studded Angel Ball Raises \$3.7 Million for Cancer Research

By Adrienne Gaffney



Theo Wargo/WireImage for Gabrielle's Angel

From left, Kim Kardashian, Kanye West, Nelly and Ashanti at the Angel Ball.

If you ever questioned the all-encompassing community that has been impacted by cancer, Denise Rich illustrated the point with the roster of guests she recruited for Gabrielle's Angel Ball, an annual gala event in honor of her late daughter which included old world legends like Joan Collins, Clive Davis and George Hamilton alongside contemporary stars like Solange Knowles and Estelle.

Rich, a songwriter and philanthropist, was able to call upon the goodwill of her vast network of friends for the event, held at Cipriani on Wall Street last night. After losing her daughter Gabrielle in 1996, she threw herself into high gear for the cause. "I had made a promise to her that we would keep raising money for research and so we start from one Angel Ball to the next and we start organizing the next one," Rich explained. "Our goal this year was to raise \$3 million and I think we're going to get there."

Representatives for Rich and the Angel Ball said Tuesday that the event raised \$3.7 million.

After a parade of guests made their way inside, the red carpet turned into veritable mayhem when Kim Kardashian and Kanye West pulled up and exited their car. The striking couple was uncharacteristically subdued and took their seats up front, conversing enthusiastically with their tablemates.

A seated dinner was accompanied by performances from Smokey Robinson, Natalie Cole, who lost both parents to cancer, and Nelly, whose sister succumbed to the disease. (Accompanying the St. Louis rapper was girlfriend Ashanti who assured us that Nelly didn't need any rehearsal prep from her:

“He’s got this one pretty much down pat!”) Writer Suleika Jaouad, 24 years old, held the audience captive with a speech about her experiences as a cancer survivor.

As the evening progressed, Star Jones called for guests to match a contribution of \$25,000. Hands went up like wildfire. (“They always ask me to do this part because I know who all the rich people are,” she joked.) Flamboyant billionaire Stewart Rahr stood up and matched the entire total of \$250,000 in honor of financier Michael Milken. The former pharmaceutical executive described the decision with characteristic ebullience.

“Nobody does more to give back than Michael Milken. Let me tell you, he’s my inspiration,” he said. “Michael Milken, there is no other person more powerful than Michael Milken. Okay, Senator Chuck Schumer was in my office the other day and he was telling me how he raised \$19 million – mmmmillion – for the hospital Sloan Kettering. Then Milken called me, I said, ‘Michael, tell Chuck Schumer, the senator, how much you raised for cancer cures, melanomas, everything.’ He said \$51 bbbbbillion. I rest my case. God bless you, stay well.”

Rahr, who swapped out the yellow-framed sunglasses that have made him famous in favor of neon Nikes, spent minutes speaking with Solange Knowles, seemingly dazzled. The musician and model just shot her first magazine cover for Elle South Africa but was more interested in celebrating Denise Rich. “I think that what Denise does in terms of finding research and just have access to the best of the best in the medical business. Everything starts with research and so to find that is where it all starts,” she explained.