



Queen Latifah

Origins

Dana Owens grew up in Newark and East Orange, New Jersey. She found the name Latifah in a book of Arabic names as a child; commonly translated with meanings such as gentle or kind, it became the basis of a stage identity that joined warmth to authority.

She developed through New Jersey's local DJ and crew networks and became associated with the Flavor Unit. Her early sound combined house-informed rhythm, jazz and soul references, and a commanding low register that did not ask permission to occupy space.