



THE GRAMBLING ★ CONNECTION

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GSU'S 2024 COMMENCEMENT:

A Jovial Celebration



Dr. Percy "Master P" Miller Delivers Keynote Speech.

Photo Credit: T. Valentino

By Lena W. Claybon

Grambling State University held its Commencement Ceremony on Friday, December 13, 2024 at the Fred Hobdy Assembly Center. The ceremony was a festive occasion paying tribute to the over 350 graduates from the class of Fall 2024 for their commitment to completing their educational pursuits despite setbacks, roadblocks or any challenges they encountered. The President, Dr. Martin Lemelle, set the tone for the event by calling it "a day wrapped in love... the deep, abiding love that carries, uplifts and transforms." He followed with the presentation of the Highest Ranking Graduate, the Valedictorian, Miss NaToria Tarrant, with an overall GPA of 3.88, who gave a touching and inspirational speech to her fellow 2024 graduates. The ceremony moved quickly along with David Aubrey, President of AT&T Louisiana and a GSU Alum (Class of 1995), taking the stage to introduce the keynote speaker, Dr. Percy "Master P" Miller, Hip-Hop Mogul, Producer, Entrepreneur and Philanthropist. During his powerful and thought-provoking speech, Miller told the students how proud he was



President Lemelle and Dr. Cheryl Ensley onfer degree upon graduate.

of them and that they did it the right way. "Many people give four or five years to incarceration, y'all gave it to education." He also pointed out, "This moment is the result of your dedication and determination. You made it. You sacrificed. You stayed on the grind despite the roadblocks and disappointments that I know a lot of y'all had. I know there were days when you felt like you wanted to give up, but you didn't. You kept going because you knew this was bigger than you. For those who didn't understand your journey, they couldn't see the moves you were making."

Miller reminded them of some of the remarkable Grambling graduates who've gone on to be incredibly successful such as Erykah Badu, Doug Williams, and Willis Reed. "Let's celebrate Denise Young Smith, who went from being a Grambling student to being a top executive at Apple. And now she dedicates her life to making a difference for the next generation. Also Mr. David Aubrey, who turned dreams into reality in becoming a top executive at AT&T. "And let's not forget Earl Ste-

See **COMMENCEMENT**, page 2

Master P Discusses the Importance of Education and Financial Literacy Among Black Youth

In a one-on-one Interview with the Grambling Connection, Master P gives his take on why he thinks re-programming black youth on financial literacy will help alleviate poverty in the Black community

By Lena W. Claybon

It's hard to find adjectives that have not already been used to describe this visionary and forward-thinking man. Iconic, legendary, trailblazer, mogul, business leader, philanthropist and the list goes on. First, he conquered the music industry with groundbreaking deals and millions of records in sales, then he continued his massive success into fashion, film, sports and even the food industry via brands like, Rap Snacks and Hoody-Hoos and, most recent, his healthy line of foods from his company, Miller Family Foods. But some of the work he's most proud of and passionate about has been his work with black youth and education, especially when it comes to teaching them about financial empowerment. After delivering his keynote speech at Grambling State University's Fall Commencement on Friday, December 13, 2024, Dr. Percy "Master P" Miller sat down with The Grambling Connection to answer a few questions



Co-Publisher/Editor Lena Claybon and Dr. Percy "Master P" Miller

and dish further on some of the things he said during his speech about black youth and education. **GC: So, you gave a very inspiring speech today to the students, and I just wanted to find out from you, why do you think it's important for black youth to go to college?** **Master P:** Well, I mean, you look at the percentage that our black youth are going to prison, and they're build-

ing prisons for us. Why not send us to college [instead]? And, I told that to the kids today, if you could give five to ten years of your life, and then have to start over after going to prison, why not give four years to education, and be able to make the right decisions and choices, because life is about choices. And if you don't have the education, then how can you make the right choices?

See **MASTER P**, page 2



Giovanni stands with Jean Nash, former Grambling State University *Gramblinite* editor, in the early 70s. Courtesy Photo

Nikki Giovanni passes away at age 81

By Joice M. Dunn

Renowned poet, activist, and Professor Nikki Giovanni passed away in a hospital in Blacksburg, Virginia, on Monday, December 9. The 81-year-old's death was caused by complications of lung cancer. Giovanni emerged as a major force in the Black Arts Movement after publishing her debut poetry collection, *Black Feeling, Black Talk* in 1968. Giovanni made several appearances at many Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) as her popularity grew. She was a featured speaker many times through the years at Grambling State University from the early 70s through the early 2000. "When I taught English at Grambling, my students and I often discussed her works. Also, my students recited her poetry. We had many lively discussions. My students really liked "Ego Trippin." This is one of her works that I have heard discussed at poetry readings and in pageants," said Melanie C. Thomas, former English professor at GSU. Thomas remembers two of her favorite quotes by Nikki Giovanni as follow: "If you don't understand yourself, you don't understand anybody else" and "Deal with yourself as an individual worthy of respect and make everyone else deal with you the same way." These quotes encourage people to first seek to understand themselves and to make people treat that as worthy of respect. "After studying her works, it was an honor to meet her in person. She was very kind and witty. She autographed books for me and my niece, Breyana, and even took pictures with her. She even autographed a poster for Breyana. Because Giovanni was a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., the Grambling Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta presented her with gifts and took pictures with her," reflected Thomas. Though Giovanni has parted this earth, her legacy will continue to be present in her works, which are enjoyed by many. Giovanni was a prominent poet and writer who first caught the public's attention as part of the Black Arts Movement of the late 1960s. Giovanni established Cincinnati's Black Arts Festival in 1967 and published her first book of poems, *Black Feeling, Black Talk*, in 1968. Her work often centered on race, gender, and politics. Beyond her poetry collections and children's book, the author held teaching positions at Rutgers University, Queens College, and Virginia Tech. She wrote passionately about the intersection of race, love, and politics during the civil rights era and sold-out concert halls where she performed her work aloud. By the mid-1970s, she had established herself as one of the leading poetic voices. She won a number of awards including Woman of the Year titles from *Ladies Home Journal*, *Ebony*, and *Mademoiselle*. Giovanni also made several television appearances, including the Black arts and culture show *Soul!* During the 1980s, she continued to publish and spent much of her time touring to attend speaking engagements. Giovanni also found time to teach at Cincinnati's College of Mount St. Joseph (now Mount St. Joseph University), Rutgers University, Queens College, and Virginia Tech University, where she worked as a professor. Continuing to write, Giovanni penned more than 30 books. This includes many children's titles like *Rosa*, a 2005 picture book about legendary civil rights figure Rosa Parks, and *Jimmie Grasshopper Versus the Ants* in 2007. Seven of her works—*Acolytes* (2007) and *100 Best African American Poems* (2010), among them—earned the poet NAACP Image Awards. Her



N. Giovanni

See **GIOVANNI**, page 2

Opinion

The Soap Box!

“Tis the season...”

By Brenda Daniel

SEASON’S GREETINGS! I believe I can correctly attest that life, no matter when, where, or how it is lived, is a treasured experience for most people. Even in the worst of worst conditions or circumstances, the ability to breathe in and breathe out brings with it a ray of hope, that somehow there is space for better days to come.

The opposing poles of peace or conflict, joy or sorrow, pain or ease, abundance or lack, and the likes, will always find a place in the day ins - and day outs of our lives. Unfortunately, knowing which way and at what time the pendulum will swing is a luxury we are not always afforded, but just know the pendulum *will* swing both ways again, and again. What helps us in both the highs and lows is that we keep this truth in the forefront of our minds.

Over the years that I’ve lived on the planet, I have witnessed especially this time of year which we all know as the



Brenda Daniel

Holiday Season and declared the “most wonderful time of the year,” that there are yet countless people who experience a hard swing of the pendulum to the negative side of the pole. It swings into sorrow, pain, lack, loss, and the likes... so, whether you find yourself there by your own choices or choices made beyond your control, just remember not to sink or allow yourself to drown in it. Although the swing may have left some permanent outcome, you will want to always be in a position that will allow you to be able to *see* when the next swing of change will happen..., and it will happen.

Happy Holiday to you and yours, and *Tis the Season* to purposefully be merry, thankful, and hopeful... that part, we do have the luxury to choose and control!

Full-Court Press

By Rusty Potter



Rusty Potter

In basketball, a full-court press is a strategy to disrupt the opponent's rhythm, force turnovers, and seize control of the ball. It requires relentless energy, strategic thinking, and unwavering determination. But what if we applied this same mindset to the game of life?

Life, much like basketball presents us with challenges, obstacles, and opportunities at every turn. It's a game where success is not guaranteed, and the outcome depends on our ability to adapt and overcome.

Imagine applying relentless pressure to your goals, refusing to back down in the face of setbacks, and seizing every opportunity enthusiastically. The full-court press mentality is not about waiting for opportunities to come to you; it's about creating opportunities through sheer force. It's about taking control of your destiny, refusing to be a passive spectator in your own life, and becoming an active participant in shaping your future.

Start by setting clear goals, developing a static plan, and taking action toward your goal. Embrace challenges as opportunities for growth, and learn from successes and failures.

Surround yourself with a support team of mentors, friends, and family who can cheer you on, offer guidance, and hold you accountable. And most importantly, believe in yourself.

Life is a game of ups and downs, victories and defeats. But with the full-court press mentality guiding your every move, you can face whatever comes your way with courage, resilience, and determination.

So, readers lace up your basketball shoes, step onto the court of life, and unleash your full-court press mentality. The game is yours for the taking. Are you ready to play?

Rusty Potter is a motivational writer and speaker dedicated to inspiring others to reach their full potential. He has completed four marathons, including one after recovering from a pinched sciatic nerve, showcasing his resilience and determination. Passionate about helping others grow, Rusty shares insights on goal setting, perseverance, and self-improvement, encouraging readers to overcome life's challenges. He can be reached at potterproperties@yahoo.com.

He Won, and He Is My President Because I Am an American

By Prentiss Smith



Prentiss Smith

Immediately after the election, I appeared on a popular morning radio show, and I was surrounded by Republicans who were very happy. I understood their joy, because we always like it when we win, and we hate it when we lose. That’s just the way it is. But as I said on the air, he won, and he is my President, because I am an American.

The people have spoken, and the results are loud, clear, and, for many, deeply troubling. Former President Donald Trump, a figure who I believe has been a very polarizing figure. Despite widespread concerns over his divisive rhetoric, abrasive character, and, at times, a dismissive attitude toward democratic norms, a majority of Americans have decided that his promises on the economy and immigration take precedence over personal conduct and foreign diplomacy.

For me, the election outcome reveals a stark truth about the country, and that is that many citizens prioritize domestic issues like economic security and immigration control above all else, even when the trade-off includes concerns over the very

principles that hold our democracy together—the Constitution and the rule of law.

As an American, I recognize the power of a democracy that respects the will of the people—even when that will goes against what I might believe. Like it or not, Donald Trump is the President-elect, and his policies and administration will affect all of us. He is, once again, the leader of the country.

The results are conclusive, and we must acknowledge them, even if some of us are not celebrating. Mr. Trump’s significant victory margin, coupled with likely majorities in the Senate and potentially the House, gives him a clear path to push forward with his policies. He has the mandate and the political machinery to enact change.

President-elect Trump is the most powerful president to sit in the oval office, ever. He has a Republican Congress, Senate, and the Supreme Court, which just gave him unlimited immunity. He is the

Republican Party, and he now controls all the levers of power in Washington, D. C. He is the man, and that is undeniable.

But the question I have is, what direction will he choose? That is the question weighing heavily on the minds of Americans from all backgrounds who supported him and millions of others who didn’t. His success comes with a responsibility to govern for all citizens, not just those who align with his policies or style.

His return to office carries the potential to heal divides, create economic opportunities, and address the pressing concerns around immigration reform. However, he has repeatedly shown a vindictive streak toward those he perceives as his enemies—enemies who, in reality, are his fellow Americans. Will he govern with a spirit of unity, or will he double down on the us-versus-them rhetoric that has previously characterized his approach? I am hoping for unity, but I am prepared for the for the dark side.

The stakes are higher than ever. With control over the executive and likely a powerful legislative branch, the President-elect has the chance to govern decisively. He can choose to bridge gaps and

create policies that speak to all Americans, regardless of their political leanings, or he can use his position to retaliate against dissent, fostering more division. U believe he has an opportunity to focus on issues that matter most—issues that compelled Americans to vote him back in, even if his character and approach often leave much to be desired.

We are now in uncharted territory, and though I may not agree with Mr. Trump on a host of issues, I am still an American. He is my President, and his decisions will influence the country I call home. In our system, democracy is both empowering and humbling; it demands that we accept the results and move forward, challenging though it may be.

As we look ahead to the next four years, I can only hope that he chooses the path of inclusivity and restraint rather than vindictiveness. America deserves a leader who rises above partisanship to serve all its people.

Whether or not I agree with him or not, he has a responsibility to uphold the office with dignity and respect for all Americans, regardless of their background, beliefs, or political alignment. I hope he does that, because he is my President, and I am a proud American.

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News

GIOVANNI from page 1

most recent book was 2020’s *Make Me Rain*.

In the late 1980s, the poet began a decades-long relationship with English professor Virginia C. Fowler. The couple, who met when Fowler recruited Giovanni to teach at Virginia Tech, married in 2016.

Giovanni was working on her latest poetry collection, *The Last Book*, when she died. The collection is scheduled for release in 2025.

COMMENCEMENT from page 1

venson, who came from the Bay area, went to Grambling and became one of the most sought-after entertainers in the world. Let’s give it up for E-40. Class of 2024, I can’t wait to see how y’all are going to leave your mark on the world. Y’all are going to be great.”

Before ending his speech, he told the graduates, “There's no limit to what you can do and where you can go. You can't control the future, but you

can control the decisions you make today. Nothing is impossible when you put your trust and faith in God.”

Following Miller’s speech, the President led the charge of conferring degrees and awards first to Doctoral candidates, then to the Masters Degree candidates, and then to those candidates for Bachelor Degrees. One by one, the candidates graced the stage with many taking the moment to dance, stomp, and flex letting the crowd know how happy they were to

see this day!

The 2024 commencement ceremony was a tribute to the dedication, hard work and perseverance, of its graduates. Family, friends, and loved ones were on hand to celebrate all the class of 2024 had achieved. The ceremonies were closed out by Dr. Tammie Richardson, the GUNAA President, leading the graduates in the Alumni pledge followed by remarks and announcements by President Lemelle and benediction by Pastor Cedric Bridges.

MASTER P from page 1

GC: Because of your entrepreneurial accomplishments, do you think there needs to be more entrepreneurial education added to college curriculums?

Master P: Yeah, and that's what I've been talking to the president over here at Grambling about. We want to build these types of facilities to be able to prepare African American kids the way other cultures prepare their kids. You look at some of these colleges... We were just talking about how Elon Musk created PayPal while in college. What are we doing?

Think about it... So, we need the resources in these HBCUs, to be able to be at that level to have corporations finance startup plans for these kids to build their own companies while they're in college.

And so, I was talking to David [Aubrey] from AT&T saying, maybe we need to go at these people to be able to get some type

of funding so we can have these entrepreneurs create these dreams and visions and bring them to life while they're in college.

So, think about [how] the most successful people that we have, when you look at these Fortune 500 companies... when you look at African American CEOs of these Fortune 500 companies, they only make up a tenth of one percent. So, how can we help or give to our community and our people when we're already outnumbered?

And when you talk about black billionaires [in this country], we could count them on one hand.

GC: Since you work with a lot of youth programs. are any of your programs doing that kind of work?

Master P: Yes, so I have TeamHopeFoundation.org, and we go into the middle schools and high schools and we teach financial literacy. And we started realizing that we need to start doing it at a young age. So, think about it, at seven years old, these other cultures are already building

credit for their kids.

[Black people} just think about the money but when we talk about financial literacy, you got to have a plan and a purpose. So, it's not about the money, it's about the ideas. The ideas are going to bring the money, and that's what we're teaching. Well, that's what we're programming the next generation to do, because we have to reprogram the next generation.

GC: So, what would be the best advice you would give kids starting out who are interested in pursuing the entrepreneurial path?

Master P: So, I think now... actually going online, studying, trying to figure out what financial literacy is. Because a lot of our kids go on these computers and they’re grabbing the wrong stuff. But imagine if you really understand what money is. A lot of kids don't even know who's on the dollar bill. They don't know who's the president. All they know is they want some money but they need to know what banking is about,

why it's so important to have different tax shelters and stuff like that.

Nobody teaches us that. Think about most of us, the first time we get money, we lose it, because we don't have the education to keep it. And, so, I think that we start programming our kids younger on understanding how the banking system works.

So that's what we started doing. We started teaching kids. We also talk about real estate now.

GC: So, what would you say to the parents who are raising these young African-American kids:

Master P: So, I'm saying let's invest into our kids' financial literacy. Once we start talking and communicating to them about it, then our kids are able to say, ‘Oh, I understand that.’

GC: Ok so they are trying to wrap us up so we’ll end this here but this has been very enlightening and thank you for your time.

Master P: Thank you.

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Community

Community Spotlight

Frances Staten, retired, but still on the move

By Joice M. Dunn

Dr. Frances Staten's career has been devoted to children in various communities. Even after her retirement she continues to engage in programs and activities designed to help not only the children, but the elderly as well.

Dr. Staten was a tenured Professor in the Department of Sociology/Psychology at Grambling State University until 2024.



F. Staten

She received her bachelor's (1971) and master's degree (1972) in science from Southern University Baton Rouge. The PhD (1984) in sociology with a concentration in Family and Social Gerontology from the University of Kentucky.

"Utica Junior College was the first institution of higher education that I acquired teaching and research experience, initiating, organizing, and coordinating intergenerational programs and activities and having the privilege honor and opportunity to be a participant in the Phelps-Stokes Foundation Cultural Educational Enrichment Program in West Africa during the Summer of 1973.

After moving on from Utica Junior College 1972-79, Frances Staten shared her knowledge with student at University of Kentucky from 1982-83. St. Augustine College (1984-85) received a touch of Staten's education before sharing it with Jackson State University (1985-86). She began her tenure at Grambling State University in 1986 but



Dr. Frances Staten stands with GSU and BEAP students.

spent a year in residence as a Visiting Professor at Southern from 1991-92.

She has founded and co-founded several programs and projects which were used to address the needs of institutions, individuals, and communities. Among them are the Grambling Social Research Club, Elder Youth Exchange of Services, Longevity Project, Environmental Project, Black Empowerment Apprenticeship Program (BEAP), Save Our African American Cemeteries Project, and the Energy Efficient Light Bulbs for the elderly.

In the years 2004-2005, Dream

Scholarships and Book Stipends were given to students, including: Ernestine Fleming, Gabrielle Fleming, Katherine Owens, Matthew Pruitt, Gerald Sye, Ricardo Wimberley, Deana Fleming, Victoria Patterson, Samantha Reed, and L'Shonda Thomas.

In 2007 along with several students, Dr. Staten participated in the first Youth Summit on Global Warming. Also in 2015, two students traveled with her to the Climate Change Summit in Paris, France. However, due to terrorist attacks and safety concerns they were unable to participate. She served as co-chair of

the Association of Social and Behavioral Scientist Conference in March of 2017.

She has shared her research on the family, health, and longevity at professional meetings and conferences all over the world, including places such as Canada, South/West Africa and India. She also acquired cultural educational experiences in the former Soviet Republics, including Russia Lativa, Georgia, Estonia, and Lithuania.

Dr. Staten has received numerous honors and awards at the local and national level, including the GSU Faculty Service Award, Earl Lester Cole Endowed Professorship, Association of Gerontology and Human Development in HBCUs, Thelma Smith ASBS Pathfinder Award, and ASBS Marguerite Rogers Howie Distinguished Service Award. For over 25 years she has served as advisor and for the Louisiana Eta Chapter of Pi Gamma Mu International Honor Society in the Social Honor Society in the Social Sciences, and the Governor of the same organization at the national level.

As an author/co-author she's done several articles which include Family Size Expectations among Black and White Students, Understanding Longevity, Up From The Plantation, Survival of Rural Black Families, Family Empowerment Affecting Longevity in The Black Community, and Teaching Theory/Research in the Cemetery.

Staten served as Faculty Mentor for the HBCU Climate Change Consortium at Dillard University. Her work paved the way for GSU to be one of the 20 plus institutions that are members of the consortium.

After serving for 47 years, Dr. Frances Staten appears not to be tired yet of giving of her knowledge and time.

The 'Willie Byrd Ford' Blessing Pantry Ministry; A Year In Review

Staff Report

There should always be a place where people in need can come to seek assistance, and now if one is hungry,

there is a Pantry.

Since the dedication ceremony for the "Dr. Willie Byrd Ford Blessing Pantry" on Feb. 25, this ministry has received several donations and dis-

tributed numerous blessings to the Grambling community. The home for the Pantry is New Rocky Valley Baptist Church, pastored by Rev. Julius R. Sumler.

Following the pastor's opening of the ceremony, Dr. Beatrice Tatem talked about her sponsorship of the Blessing Pantry as a desire to honor her aunt (Dr. Willie Byrd Ford) with this ministry to the Community. She also thanked the NRV Deborah Circle Ministry for bringing her vision to reality.

Representing Dr. Connie Walton, who was Interim President of Grambling State University at that time, Dr. Rudolph Ellis gave a statement of support for the Pantry. Representing the City of Grambling, Mayor Alvin Bradley also gave a statement of support.

The architect of the Pantry, Rev. Gairie L. Harris, delivered the dedication prayer, followed by the ribbon cutting.

The generosity of the community to this effort has been tremendous. Churches have responded: The Mt. Zion Harvest Drive collection was donated to the Blessing Pantry. St. Luke's Episcopal Chapel's members have made a concerted effort to donate. Sororities have responded: Delta Sigma Theta and Zeta Phi Beta Sororities, Incorporated have made continuous donations. Community organizations have responded: The Deborah Eastern Stars delivered Wonderful items. Community citizens, including the church carpenter, have made repeated contributions. The home church, New Rocky Valley Baptist Church, individual members turned in an array of items and checks earmarked for the ministry. Thus, the Pantry blessed the receiv-



The Pantry doors are open.

ers and the givers. Pastor Sumler and the Deborah Circle (Monica Bradley, the late Yvonne Calvin, Debra Hamilton, Hazel Hunter, Jeanette Hutchinson, Valena Lane, Nanthalia McJamerson, Freddie Washington, Emma Wilson, and Shirley Wilson Burns) want to end this year and celebrate this Holy Season with a resounding THANK YOU!

The pantry is open to the community and University. The current hours are Sundays from 12 p.m. until 1:30 p.m. To make donations please contact a member of New Rocky Valley Baptist Church.



Season Greetings!
May you find this Holiday Season filled with Peace, Love, and great Joy...

From Mayor Bradley, The City Council, and all those serving you at the City of Grambling!"



Dr. Beatrice Tatem, niece of Dr. Willie Byrd Ford, prepares to cut the ribbon.

Courtesy Photo

Community

Is it double joy for those born in December or not?

By Joice M. Dunn

The month of December for many is considered a magical time of the year. The month brings mostly happiness. December babies are born under the sign of Sagittarius or Capricorn and are characterized as honest, optimistic, enthusiastic, loyal, and fearless, but, since it's also the month of Christmas, how do some locals born during December feel about "sharing" their month with, arguably, the biggest holiday of the year?

Cathy Holmes Giles was born December 6 and loves that she was born in the month of December.

Muriel Butler was born on December 20, five days before Christmas. Once her doctor asked her if she got one or two gifts?

"I never felt like I was being cheated out of a gift. When I was younger, I got a gift for each occasion, my birthday and Christmas," Butler said.

She reflected on the grand dinner given to her by her children. "I was turning 75 years-old and all my relatives and friends were at the Community Center in Grambling. But now I am just excited to be alive and pray that God will continue to keep me safe," said Butler.

Barbara Flournoy McIntyre was born on



Barbara McIntyre

Christmas Day, December 25. At one time Barbara had mixed feelings about her birthday.

"As a child, my parents always celebrated my birthday as a separate event. They were always careful to have a party or distinguish the two. I grew up feeling "special" because



Gerald Ellis

my birthday was on Christmas day," she said.

My daddy would say that I was his, "Christmas present", but mama would describe how it snowed that day, and she was in the hospital for Christmas. As I became an adult, the two seemed to merge and became, "Merry Christmas/ Happy Birthday". I am sure others with birthdays in December have similar stories. I would keep reminding family that my birthday and Christmas day were two "separate" occurrences. I even suggested that we could celebrate my birthday on June 25th. I never thought it was fair that I had to clean, cook, and purchase gifts for others on MY birthday. The girls would always make the distinction and my niece, Jamie Flournoy Gordon, one year even celebrated on June 25th!

"I finally decided I needed to accept the inevitable and embrace the fact that Jesus and I shared a special day. To celebrate my own individuality and try to make it my own day as well. Thinking of it from that perspective made it special again. Remembering that Christmas is a day filled with love, giving, and togetherness, which makes me reflect on

the blessings in my life. Great family, friends, reasonable portion of good health, and to live in a safe community that has and continues to shield us from the craziness that has been and is to come. It's a reminder to focus not on what's missing but on the abundance around me. Now when someone is aware that my birthdate is Christmas day, I smile and say, "Yes...me and Jesus," said McIntyre.

Dr. Gerald Ellis was born December 26, and he said it couldn't have been better. "I enjoyed it because I had a double dose of everything," Dr. Ellis excitedly said.

"I got Christmas dinner and then birthday dinner plus Christmas leftovers for my birthday. It made the celebration even better. The hold time would be happy," he explained.

My parents always made sure that I received something for each day. I always thought it was an excellent idea.

"My mother didn't believe in birthday parties until you turned six. I became ill on Christmas day, but I didn't tell my mother. I had been waiting for my sixth birthday, so I could have a party. I wasn't going to miss it because of sickness, so I waited till it was over. I began to shake with chills and my fever went up," he said.

Everyone has a story to tell, so 'tis the season.

The Gamma Kappa Sigma Alumnae Chapter Returns to Grambling

Staff Report

The Gamma Kappa Sigma Alumnae Chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. was chartered on January 28, 1961 in Grambling. The chapter received its start from well-known members such as Doris M. Robinson (Omega Rho), a schoolteacher and Sadie A. Ludley (Omega Rho), also a schoolteacher, and both were a big part of the chapter throughout the years. Ludley made sure that the chapter stayed financial and active until her passing in 2016.

Gamma Kappa Sigma would be active for years after that serving the Grambling

and Lincoln Parish area. The chapter was known for its community involvement with the City of Grambling, Grambling Police Department, Grambling Fire Station, and Grambling State University. They were active with the other Divine 9 organizations as well as the NAACP-Grambling Branch.

Some initiatives included Operation Big Book Bag, Voter Registration, Little Miss and Mister Blue and Gold Pageant, Hattie McDaniel Breast Cancer Awareness, Community Policing Summit, Youth Symposium, Project Cradle Care, Mwanamugimu (Essay Contest), Buckle Up America, Domestic Violence, Financial Literacy, and many others.

After that, the chapter became inactive for a few years until recently. Due to the hard work of four members who saw the need in the Grambling area, the process to reactivate the Gamma Kappa Sigma Chapter was initiated. Beginning Aug. 26, the Gamma Kappa Sigma Alumnae Chapter was reactivated with 18 motivated and dedicated members.

Since then, they've had a great impact on the Grambling & Lincoln Parish area through reactivating initiatives such as Operation Big Book Bag and Voter Registration, as well as donating to the Little Pantries, Sponsoring a Anti Bullying Event, a toilet-ry drive to benefit the women & children of

DART and volunteering during the local Fall Fest.

They look forward to cultivating Partnerships & working relationships with their fellow D9 & other community organizations. Reactivation members include: La'Sheka Shine, Basileus; Demetria Farrow, 1st Anti-Basileus; Essence Payne, 2nd Anti-Basileus; Andrea Dillon, Epistoleus; Tara Black, Chaplin; Barbara Thomas, Anti-Grammateus; La'Toya Bourgeois, Parliamentarian; Shakendra Dorsey, Grammateus and Vickie Anderson, Sergeant at Arms. Other members are La'Bria Trufant, Shawanda Martin, Evelyn Jenkins, Caprishia Carter, Samiena Gatson, Candice Hudson, Arian'e Wallace, Darniesha Wright and Angela Young.

Announcements

City announces closures for the holidays

The City of Grambling would like to remind the citizens that offices will be closed for the holidays Tuesday, Dec. 24 through Thursday, December 26. The offices will also close on New Year's Eve, Dec. 31 and New Year's Day, January 1, 2025.

For Fire, Police and Public Works in case of an emergency residents may call (318) 247-3771.

Honoring the celebration of Kwanzaa

The Delta Sigma Theta Sorority in combination with the Grambling NAACP Youth Council will sponsor a Kwanzaa program on Friday, Dec. 27, 11 a.m., at the Grambling City Hall. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Liz White.

The celebration of Kwanzaa begins on Thursday, December 26 and end

Wednesday, January 1, 2025.

Retired educators to hold monthly meeting

The Lincoln Parish Retired Educators (LPRE) will hold its monthly meeting on Thursday, Jan. 9, 2025, at 2 p.m. at the Council on Aging Senior Center, 1000 Saratoga Street in Ruston.

NAACP meetings are set for third Thursday

The Grambling Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) hosts its regular monthly meeting on teleconference every third Thursday at 6 p.m.

Membership is available to the public, either as an adult or as a youth (ages 7 to 17). Memberships for adults are \$30.00 a year and presently, the \$10.00 dues for children have been waived.

For additional information, please call or text 328-680-7679, Grace Tatem.

Grambling property tax receives extension

Due to the late mailing of the CITY OF GRAMBLING, 2024 Property Tax Notices, Tax payments have been extended. The new due date is now FEBRUARY 5, 2025, instead of DECEMBER 31.

The LINCOLN PARISH Property Tax Notices were mailed Monday, November 25, 2024. Tax payments are still DUE BY DECEMBER 31 for Grambling residents. They can be paid in person, by mail, or online. In person payments via cash, personal check, money order or credit card can be made at the Tax Collector office on the ground floor of the courthouse located at 1000 West Texas Avenue in Ruston.

Business hours are 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. On-line pay-

ments via credit card can be made by clicking the "pay your taxes" link on the Lincoln Parish Sheriff's Office website (www.lincolnparishsheriff.com).

Please be aware that the credit card processing company does charge a processing fee for ALL credit card transactions. Payments received after January 5, 2025, will be assessed interest and penalties.

Subscribe to the Grambling Connection Newspaper

The Grambling Connection, the new community newspaper in Grambling, is offering print subscriptions for those who would like the paper mailed to them, as well as online subscriptions for those who would like to receive the paper in their email inbox.

To subscribe, please go to: www.gramblingconnection.com and click on the subscribe button at the top of the page. Thank you from the Grambling Connection Staff.

In Remembrance

Remembering Yvonne Calvin

Yvonne Calvin, a native of New Orleans, Louisiana, passed away at the age of 77 in Covington, Louisiana. She was survived by her son, Jerry, her daughter in marriage, Chantel, and six grandchildren: Nicolas, Jayda, JoHannah, Jacob, Gabrielle and Breah.

Yvonne was a certified Therapeutic Recreationist and a tenured college Professor at Grambling State University. She was a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. and Phi Epsilon Kappa Honors Fraternity. After graduating from Dillard Univer-



sity in 1971 with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, she went on to earn a Master of Science in Leisure Studies with an emphasis in Therapeutic Recreation from Southern University in 1987.

Yvonne dedi-

cated her career to bringing joy to people through recreation. She worked as a recreational specialist at various facilities in South Louisiana before becoming the Director of Therapeutic Recreation. Services and Therapist at Baton Rouge General Hospital for 13 years. She later became an adjunct instructor at Southern University and a tenured professor, advisor, and recruiter in the Department of Leisure Studies and Therapeutic Recreation at Grambling State University. During her career, she served on several Louisiana state boards and receiver

numerous accolades, including Educator of the Year and Recreation of the Year.

Yvonne had a deep passion for the healing power of recreation, and she loved to share this with others. She also cherished her time with her church family, sorority sisters, close friends, and family. In her later years, she enjoyed Bible study, traveling with friends, and spending time with her beloved dog, Luna.

Yvonne was an accomplished and compassionate woman who made a lasting impact on her community.

Reflecting on Reverend Aill R. Harris Sr.'s Journey

Dr. Aill R. Harris, Sr. was born on December 16, 1932, to the late Nathaniel Harris and Myrtle McHenry in Jackson Parish.

Pastor Harris grew up in a very tight knit community in Jonesboro, LA known as the Mill Quarters. He recognized God's work in and around him at a young age and developed a profound love for the Church. He said, "I can never remember not believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God." Thus, he was baptized at an early age and accepted his call to preach at seven years of age and did so for the next eighty-four years

Reverend Aill Harris, Sr. completed his primary education in the Jackson Parish School System. Upon completion of high school, he enlisted in the United States Army and served in the Korean Conflict



as an Assistant Chaplain. After being honorably discharged from the military, he attended Grambling State University. Reverend Doctor Harris went on to obtain a bachelor's degree from the American Bible

College, in Nashville, TN and completed the barbering program at Madison Barber School in Tyler, TX. An Honorary Doctorate was bestowed upon him by the United Baptist Theological Seminary in Natchitoches, LA.

Dr. Harris has pastored for more than

seven decades. His Assignments have been in Kansas City, MO, Los Angeles, CA, Chandler and Tyler, TX. By far, Pastor Harris has spent the better part of his seventy-two pastoral years in the state of Louisiana. He has pastored in Winnfield, Ringgold, Columbia, Chatham and Mansfield, LA. For 50 years the Reverend Dr. Aill R. Harris, Sr. gave leadership as the resident theologian of the Zion Hill # 2 Missionary Baptist Church.

On April 26, 1958, Aill R. Harris, Sr. was joined in the bonds of Holy Matrimony to Eva Dell Jackson. Together, they provided love and leadership to their six children: Eyvette, Aill, Jr., Steven, Alleana, LaShanda, and Pernell. They were married for sixty-six years!

On Tuesday, December 3, 2024, in the early morning, Dr. Harris closed his eyes

on time and was awakened in eternity. He was preceded in death by his mother, father, siblings, and his oldest daughter, Eyvette D. Harris. His sisters, Carrie Chagois and Nellie Paterson also preceded him in death.

He leaves to cherish his memories, His loving wife of 66 years, Eva Jackson Harris of Natchitoches, LA; three sons, Pastor Aill Harris, Jr. (Lisa); and Pastor Steven Harris, Sr. (Twana), of Natchitoches, LA; Minister Pernell Harris (Shrecca) of Humble, TX; two daughters, Alleana Harris-Hayes (Vincent) of Shreveport, LA and Lashanda Harris of Alexandria, LA; a special godson, Jermany Woodley of Baton Rouge, LA; 20 grandchildren, 17 great grandchildren, 1 great, great granddaughter, and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, spiritual children, other relatives and friends.

Church News

The Word

Is there a true reason for this season?

By Reverend Elliott Abney

The verse John 3:16 “says “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

As this season falls upon us and as we reflect on our lives, and near the end of 2024, let us rejoice and be glad that God loved us so much. For Christmas and New Year’s is the time of year for caring and sharing, reflecting on the past and preparing ourselves for what lies ahead. This time of season isn’t the only time



Rev. Elliott Abney

that should draw us close to each other, we should carry that love for one another each day. Just as our Heavenly father cares for each of us, that same care and love should grow within us.

We think of this time of year as filled with lights, fireworks, and last-minute shopping opportunities for presents. But these traditions shouldn’t overshadow the true meaning and essence

of the Holidays. A meaning far beyond something that can be purchased or placed on layaway. A meaning beyond anything this world can give. Because Long before there was a Black Friday or a New Year’s celebration in time square or long before presents under the tree or black-eyed peas and cabbage greens for the new year, God gave us the true reason for the season.

Our reason to hope, our reason for joy, our reason to look forward with anticipation of a life beyond the cares of this world. And for this reason, God gave us his Son “Jesus” with a purpose of love

and promise of everlasting life. And that my brothers and sisters are a reason for celebration, because he is the Gift that keeps on giving; If we would but only receive him. So, “Don’t give me a mansion On top of the hill, Don’t give me the world with a shallow thrill. But just give me a savior, My life He can hold. For I’d rather have Jesus than silver and gold...”

Happy holidays to all and always remember that Jesus is the true reason for the season! Be blessed.

Reverend Elliott Abney is the pastor of the Love Chapel Baptist Church of Ruston and resides in Simsboro.

Church Announcements

Christmas at the Grove

Join the China Grove Baptist Church family for Christmas At The Grove Sunday, Dec. 22 at 3 p.m. Enjoy various soloist and food prepared by Yolanda Wilson.

The church is pastored by Rev. Damian Wilson Sr. and located on 406 Vernon St., Ruston.

Church to enjoy Christian Fellowship

The Liberty Hill Baptist Church will come together to observe a Christian Fellowship Sunday, Dec. 22 at 5:30 p.m. The church is pastored by Rev. Gar-

net Wagner and located at 619 Liberty Hill Rd., Simsboro.

Mt Olive to hold Memorial service/ Watch Night

The Mt. Olive Baptist Church Family will end the 2024 year with two scheduled programs. A Memorial will be held Sunday, Dec. 22, during morning service, and a Watch Night program will take place Tuesday, December 31 at 10 p.m.

The church is located at 571 Mt. Olive Rd. Grambling and Rev. Donald Young is the pastor.

New Rocky Valley pastor gives Christmas message

Pastor Julius Sulmer will deliver a Christmas Message Wednesday, Dec. 25 at 10:30 a.m.by way of teleconference. The message may be heard by calling 13132098800 and enter 3196573#. New Rockey Baptist Church is located at 2155 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Ave.

Churches come together for New Year’s Eve

The Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church and Mays Chapel Methodist Church will come together to observe Watch Meeting Night, Tuesday, Dec. 31 at 10 p.m.

Rev Brandon Crew, pastor of Pilgrim Rest will deliver the message.

The service will be held at Mays Chapel, pastored by Rev. Terrance Flucus, located on Westline Ave, Ruston.

Liberty Hill, Mt. Zion #2 to hold ‘Watch Meeting

Liberty Hill and Mt. Zion #2 Baptist Churches will hold Watch Meeting service, Tuesday, Dec. 31 at 10 p.m. The church is located at 619 Liberty Hill Rd., Simsboro.

Editor’s Note: If you have a church announcement, please email the information to the gramblingconnection@gmail.com.

Area Church Directory

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Cathedral of Praise Worship Center - 2877 Highway 33, Ruston
First Assembly of God - 1400 Woodward Ave., Ruston

BAPTIST

Alabama, 16061 Hwy. 151, Arcadia
Barnett Springs, 1601 S. Barnett Springs Rd., Ruston
China Grove Missionary, 406 Vernon St., Ruston
Choudrant Love Chapel Baptist Church, 1525 Sikes St, Ruston
Christ Temple Baptist Church, 7349 Hwy 80. Ruston
Church of Restoration, 285 Main St., Grambling
Cook Baptist Church, 2000 Cooktown Rd, Ruston
Corinth, 4327 Hw 545, Dubach
Countyline Baptist Church, 7426 Hwy. 146, Ruston
Dayspring Baptist Ministries, 3191 South Vienna St, Ruston
Emmanuel, 1200 Farmerville Hwy., Ruston
Fellowship, 6476 Hwy 151, Dubach
Fellowship, 1572 Highway 507 South, Simsboro
First, 117 Oak St., Choudrant - One block south of Hwy. 80 in Choudrant
First, Hico St., Dubach
First, 200 S. Trenton St., Ruston
First, Simsboro
Friendship Baptist Church, 143 West Sixth Street, Bernice
Grace Baptist Church 2808 Trenton Ave. , Ruston
Grace Bible Baptist Church, 216 Rough Edge Rd., Ruston
Greater Pleasant Grove, 1270 Golf Course Rd., Unionville
Greater St. Luke, 163 St. Luke Church Rd, Arcadia
Gumspring Missionary Baptist Church, 3117 Hwy 151, Farmerville
Hico, 653 Hwy. 152, Dubach
Hopewell, 7657 Fellowship Rd., Hwy 151, Dubach
Lane Chapel, 1016 McAllister, Ruston
Lanes Chapel Missionary, Hwy. 151 Downsville
Liberty Hill Missionary, Simsboro Longstraw Baptist, 1799 Styles, Ranch Rd.,
Macedonia No.1 Missionary, Rt. 2, Dubach
Macedonia No. 2, 489 E. Sibley Rd., Choudrant
Mineral Springs, 4599 Hwy 822, Dubach
Mount Harmony, 210 Mt. Harmony Church Rd, Ruston
Mount Calm, 566 Mount Calm Rd., Simsboro
Mount Olive, Grambling
Mount Olive Outreach, 2817 S. Service Road W.,

Ruston
Mount Pisgah, Hwy. 3061, Ruston
Mount Sinai, 2269 Hwy. 145, Choudrant
Mount Vernon Missionary, 1356 Hwy. 167 N., Dubach
Mount Zion, 2586 Hwy 150., Grambling
Mount Zion No. 2, 113 California Plant Road, Dubach
New Hope, Choudrant
New Hope, 302 W. Vaughn, Ruston
New Liberty Hill, Hwy. 544, Simsboro
New Living Word Ministries, 1900 w. Barnett Springs, Ruston
New Pilgrim Rest, Inc., 2697 Elm St., Arcadia
New Prospect, 3438 Hwy. 167 N., Dubach
New Prosperity Baptist, 1378 Prosperity Church, Clay
New Rocky Valley, 2155 Martin Luther King Ave., Grambling
Northview Missionary, Highway 33, Ruston
Olive Grove, 3138 Olive Grove Rd, Choudrant
Pilgrim Rest, 622 W. Line Ave., Ruston
Pine Grove, 470 Chandler Rd., Ruston
Pleasant Grove, 1366 Pleasant Grove Road, Choudrant
Pleasant Grove , “The Oasis in the Woods”, 446 Bowden Rd., Ruston
Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, 1127 Mondy Rd, Simsboro
Rock Corner & Garden of Prayer, 824 Rock Corner Rd, Dubach, off Hwy.33, 14 miles north of Ruston Rocky Valley, Simsboro
Solid Rock Baptist Church, 1511 West California Hwy 80, Ruston
Southside, 3191 South Vienna St., Ruston
Springhill, 727 Dicks Store Rd., Ruston
St. David, Vienna.
St. John, Old Grambling Rd., Ruston.
St. Mary, 1114 Larson St., Ruston.
St. Peter, 404 Longstraw Rd., Ruston
St. Rest, 09 Walker Rd., Choudrant
St. Rest, Hwy. 146 West, Dubach
Temple, 1515 S. Service Rd. W. Ruston
True Believers Baptist Church, 184 CCC Road, Ruston
The Springs, (A ministry of Temple Baptist Church) 1601 S. Barnett Springs Ave., Ruston
The Springs.life The Word, 504 S. Main St., Grambling University - 2856 W. California,
Ruston Vernon Baptist Church, 190 Vernon-Eros Road, Ruston
Woods Chapel, 326 Hwy 454, Ruston
Zion Hill, 505 Lee St., Ruston
Zion Traveler, 1201 Martin Luther King Dr, Ruston

CATHOLIC

St. Benedict, 471 Main St., Grambling
St. Thomas Aquinas, 810 Carey Avenue, Ruston

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Church of Christ, 2902 Hwy. 80 West, Ruston
Grambling, 146 King St., Grambling
Northside. 1804 N. Trenton St., Ruston
Orleans Cir. Church of Christ, 2103 Orleans Cir., Ruston
Ruston, 2300 W. Woodward Ave., Ruston, www.

rustonchurchofchrist.org

EPISCOPAL

Church of the Redeemer, 504 Tech Dr., Ruston
St. Luke’s, 538 Main St., Grambling

METHODIST CHURCHES

Ansley Union Church, 328 Ansley Rd, Ruston, located 10 miles south of Ruston off Hwy 167
Antioch UMC, Simsboro
Arcadia First UMC, Arcadia
Choudrant UMC, 125 Pecan St. , Choudrant
Dubach UMC, Dubach
First UMC, Arcadia
Grace, 3401 N. Trenton St., Ruston
Lewis Temple CME, Main St., Grambling
Mays Chapel CME, 615 W. Line Ave., Ruston
Memorial UMC, 9325 Hwy 80, Simsboro.
Mt. Mariah UMC - Salem UMC - 11793 Hwy. 151, Dubach
St. Peter AME, 1104 Arlington St., Ruston.
Trinity Methodist, 1000 Woodward Ave., Ruston
Wesley Chapel Methodist Church, 4330 Hwy. 818, Ruston

PENTECOSTAL

Anchor Tabernacle, Exit 93 from I-20 then South 1/2 mile, Choudrant
First Pentecostal, Corner of Kentucky and Goodwin
Ruston King’s Court UPC, 2401 S. Service Rd. West, Ruston
LifePoint Church of Ruston, 1018 S. Vienna St., Ruston. lifepointruston.com
The Pentecostals of Ruston, 2851 Hwy 33 North, Ruston
Power House Temple of Christ Apostolic, 101 Main St., Grambling
United Pentecostal, Dubach Zion Temple Apostolic
Faith Deliverance – Eastern Hills, off Beacon Light Rd., Ruston Voice of Revival Ministry - 304 W. California St., Ruston

PRESBYTERIAN

Alabama (USA), 2091 Hwy 145, Choudrant
Covenant Reformed, 2106 Cooktown Rd., Ruston
Greenwood, Lincoln Parish Rd. 181, between Mitcham’s & Hwy. 146, Ruston
Ruston (USA), 212 N. Bonner St.

OTHERS

Abundant Grace Tabernacle, 3092 Hwy 556, Choudrant
Campus Community Worship Center, 1000 Saratoga St., Ruston
Christian L.I.F.E. Church, 107 Love Ave., Ruston
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 205 Woodhaven Rd., Ruston
Church of the Living God, 1438 Hwy. 167 W., Dubach
Church of the Nazarene, 1101 Center St., Ruston
Douglas Church, 1642 Hwy 821, Ruston
Dubach Church of God in Christ, 256 Voss Street, Dubach
Faith Church, 1507 Goodwin Road, Ruston

Seasons Greetings

from your friends and neighbors at

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Wishing you all the best this Christmas and the upcoming new year!

Arts & Culture

Looking back Twenty Years at ‘Confessions’

By Jaron Clark

How could I almost forget that this year marks the 20-year anniversary of one of the most monumental albums of modern R&B.

Anyone from Gen X to Gen Z [should be able] to say that one album defines an artist most memorably in their minds, and, that artist [should be] none other than Usher, and we can all say that these are our 'Confessions.'

Every now and again, the culture is truly fortunate to witness an artist on top of their game. One that unleashes an expose' that speaks to how we are living through such truth and transparency. One that we thoroughly enjoyed at the time and will be reminded of for always.

Usher Raymond III had already made himself the R&B heartthrob of the day with a slew of hits from his previous albums since his debut in 1994.

Now who would have even thought that the past 10 years was only the groundwork for what we received in 2004 with 'Confessions.' This was the project where he said it from his chest, "I Ain't Here To Play With Y'all!"

Originally from Chattanooga, Tennessee and a member of a local boy band called, 'NuBeginning', it was immediately obvious that "The Ush" outshined his fellow cohorts. It was then his mother packed them up to move to the bustling music scene of Atlanta in the early 1990's.

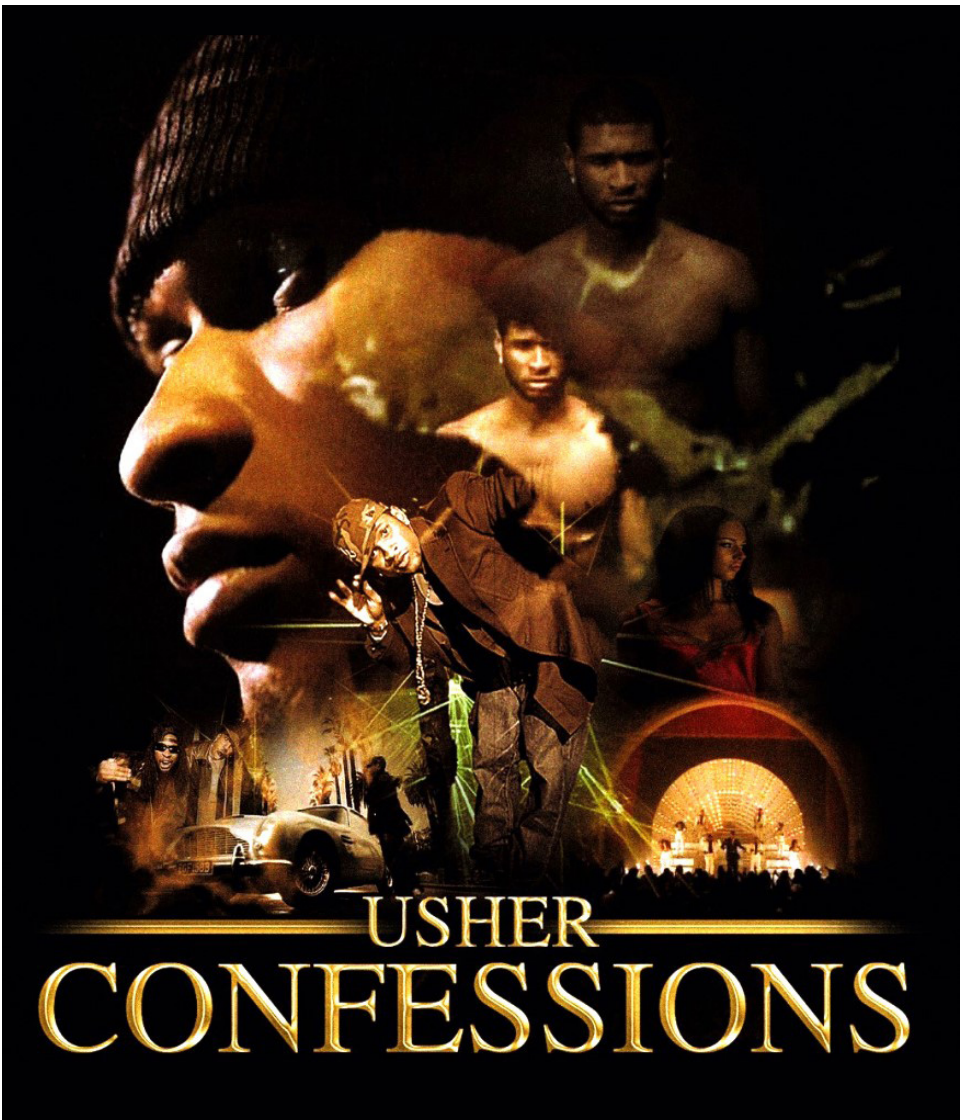
This is when he was partnered with Jermaine Dupri and signed to LaFace/

Arista. Young "Ush" was in prime company as he had always been since he first hit the scene, but this time they were standing on business.

[The Confessions album] achieved over 1 million sales in the first week of its release to 8 million in 2004 and 15 million overall worldwide, a Grammy Award for Best Contemporary R&B album in 2004, and the sales rank of 14 times platinum certified it as the best-selling R&B album of the 21st century!

This was easily achieved with hit singles that were released, like "Yeah" featuring Lil Jon & Ludacris, "Burn", Confessions Pt. II", "My Boo" featuring Alicia Keys and "Caught Up". Other deep cuts went hard as well such as, 'Superstar', "Bad Girl", "That's What It's Made For" “Can You Handle It?”, and "Seduction." All This magic was made possible by production and songwriting credits from a highly credible roster that included Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis, Lil John, Brian Michael Cox, Robin Thicke, Just Blaze and Dre & Vidal just to name a few.

No one would dare argue that the 'Confessions' project was the sonic journey that we all needed at the time for what we knew and loved about Usher and what he has continually put down throughout the years following into the present as the undeniable talent we witnessed in him from day one! Thank You, Sir, for after 20 years we can go back and be reminded of what it is to be honest with ourselves in life's little situationships.



Lifestyle & Wellness

Staying Healthy Through the Winter Season

By Candace McLaughlin, RN

Winter is here, and with it comes a mix of cozy moments and a fresh wave of germs. But just because it's chilly doesn't mean you have to feel under the weather! Let's talk about staying healthy through the season with a few simple practices that keep the sniffles at bay and our energy up!

1. Keep Those Hands Clean

It might sound like something you heard a thousand times in childhood, but washing your hands is your best friend during flu season. Aim for 20 seconds of scrubbing with soap and warm water, especially before eating and after touching public surfaces. And if you're out and about, a small bottle of hand sanitizer will help get rid of those pesky germs.

2. Load Up on Nutrients and Vitamins

Winter diets tend to get a little heavier, and while that extra comfort food is understandable, don't forget your fruits and veggies! These are packed with antioxidants and vitamins that keep your immune system sharp. A multivitamin, or a dose of vitamins C and D, can also add a little extra defense. These vitamins help strengthen your immune system, especially during shorter days when we see less sun.

3. Exercise: Yes, Even When It's Cold

Exercise in the winter can feel like a chore, but it's worth it for your body and your mood. A quick 20-minute walk, some stretching, or even an online workout at home can help maintain your fitness and immune function. Plus, exercise gives you an endorphin boost, which might help brighten up those gray winter days.

4. Get Your Vaccinations and Check-ups

Flu season peaks in the winter, so don't skip those vaccinations. And while you're at it, keep up with any routine check-ups or doctor appointments.



Prevention is always better than treating an illness, and your doctor can give you extra guidance on what's best for staying healthy through the season.

5. Natural Remedies to Ease Cold Symptoms

If you do start feeling a tickle in your throat, reach for some natural remedies that can ease symptoms. A warm honey lemon tea can soothe and provide a small dose of vitamin C. Ginger tea is also great for congestion and boosting immunity, and a humidifier at night can help keep nasal passages moist and comfortable. Remember to stay hydrated, as water is key in helping your body fight off any illness.

6. Stay Connected but Cautious

The holiday gatherings are fun, but they can also be a breeding ground for colds and flu. Try to keep some distance if someone is visibly unwell, and if you're the one feeling off, it's okay to skip a few social gatherings. Everyone around you will be grateful!

By following these tips, you're not only protecting yourself but also the health of your family and community. A little prevention goes a long way toward making sure winter is about warm memories instead of cold symptoms. Here's to a happy, healthy season ahead!

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Campus Corner

Grambling State’s Call Me MiSTER® Program Graduates its First Student during Fall 2024 Commencement

(Grambling, LA) Ja'Deric Talbert, Call him special. Call him a trailblazer. But most importantly, call him MiSTER. Ja'Deric Talbert was one of more than 300 new graduates to receive a degree from Grambling State University (GSU) last Friday morning (12/13/24) during Fall 2024 Commencement at the Fredrick C. Hobdy Assembly Center. But among all of those graduates, Talbert was one of a kind.

That’s because Talbert was the first graduate from the Call Me MiSTER® (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) program at Grambling State, an initiative striving to increase the pool of available teachers from a broader more diverse background, particularly among the State’s lowest-performing elementary schools. Student participants are largely selected from underserved, socio-economically disadvantaged, and educationally at-risk communities. The 2024 conference aimed to foster a community of support and development for these future educators, providing them with the tools and inspiration necessary to succeed and lead in their careers.

Talbert, who grew up near GSU in Arcadia, Louisiana, said it wasn’t that he had always dreamed of being a teacher while growing up, it was simply a case of being in the right place at the right time that led to the start of his vocational journey. “Growing up, I didn’t always see teachers who looked like me, especially Black men. I had about three that I can recall,” Talbert said. “I knew that representation mattered, and I wanted to be that person for students who needed to see it. When I heard about Grambling State University launching the Call Me MiSTER program, it felt like a perfect fit.

“CMM provided a purpose bigger than myself — it was a mission to address the lack of diversity in the classroom. Becoming the first MiSTER at GSU was humbling. It was a chance to set the tone, build something lasting, and pave the way for others to follow.”



Ja'Deric Talbert

GSU Associate Professor Dr. George Noflin started the Call Me MiSTER program at Grambling State and recruited Talbert to be the program’s first student.

“For four years, Mr. Talbert has been the face of the Call Me MiSTER Program serving as our first president,” Noflin said. “As I have watched his growth and maturity, it makes my heart full of joy to know what he will bring to the students that he serves.”

“Mr. Talbert is full of potential. He exemplifies the tenets of Call Me MiSTER: Ambassadorship, Brother’s Keeper, Personal Growth, Teacher Efficacy, and Servant Leadership. Students will benefit because of his greatness. He is a true leader.”

Talbert calls being a part of the Call Me MiSTER program a transformative experience.

“It’s not just about learning how to teach; it’s about learning how to lead, inspire, and connect with students,” Talbert said. “Without the program, I think my education would have felt more solitary.”

“CMM gave me a network of like-minded individuals who shared the same goals and struggles. It also offered

mentorship that shaped my confidence and pushed me to think beyond the classroom. I’m not just preparing to teach; I’m preparing to make an impact.”

Noflin said Talbert has already made an impact at Grambling.

“I remember telling him that the success of this program is based on the success of the first cohort,” Noflin said. “Not only is his graduation great for him, but he set the bar high for others to follow. This milestone also gives credence to the Call Me MiSTER Program because he is the beginning of the many other ‘Super-MiSTERS’ to come.”

Talbert already knows where he’ll be making his first “real world” impact after leaving GSU — the same place he’s been doing his student teaching in Monroe, Louisiana.

“Teaching at Barkdull Faulk Elementary has been an honor,” Talbert said. “It’s shown me the importance of community and how much influence educators have on young minds.”

“My students remind me daily why I chose this profession. I’ve already accepted a full-time position at Barkdull Faulk Elementary teaching fourth grade math and science.”

While serving as a teacher, Talbert said he plans to continue being a student with the ultimate goal of obtaining a doctoral degree.

“Call Me MiSTER has been a huge influence on my desire to pursue a doctorate,” Talbert said. “The program taught me to think big and to see myself not just as a teacher but as an innovator and leader in education. I’d love to one day lead a CMM program and continue its legacy.

“As MiSTER president, I’ve seen the power of mentorship and advocacy firsthand, and I want to carry that forward on a larger scale.”

Talbert is still exploring his options as to where to continue his education on the postgraduate level.

“My goal is to find a program that aligns with my passion for educational leadership and equity,” Talbert said. “Wherever I go, I want it to be a place that supports my vision of transforming education and uplifting communities.”

Talbert plans to continue teaching on the fourth-grade level as he moves into his future.

“I love teaching fourth grade, and I think it’s because it’s such a pivotal year,” he said. “At this age, students are beginning to develop critical thinking skills, but they still have that curiosity and eagerness to learn. I feel like I can have a real impact, not just academically but in helping them build confidence and resilience.

“Math and science also challenge students to problem-solve and see the world in new ways, which I love being part of.”

He also relishes his role as Grambling’s first Call Me MiSTER graduate.

“Call Me MiSTER isn’t just a program — it’s a movement,” Talbert said. “It’s about changing the face of education and giving students role models who inspire them to dream bigger.

“My journey has been one of purpose and passion, and I hope it shows others that the work we do as educators truly matters. It’s not always easy, but it’s always worth it.”

Grambling State teams finish first, third at BizTech Challenge

Office of Strategic Communications

New Orleans - A pair of teams from Grambling State University (GSU) earned Top 3 finishes on Nov. 29 as they competed in the BizTech Challenge held annually in conjunction with Bayou Classic Festivities in New Orleans.

The BizTech Challenge was specifically designed to increase innovation and entrepreneurship in STEM-based fields among students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

This comprehensive hands-on learning and mentorship program aims to build innovative ecosystems between university administrators, faculty, and students, and the public and private sector.

The BizTech Challenge 2024, powered by Nexus Louisiana, invited teams from six Louisiana HBCUs — Grambling, Dillard, Southern University, Southern-New Orleans, Southern University Law Center and Xavier University of New Orleans — to present groundbreaking STEM-based business ideas in a high-energy pitch competition.

Grambling’s Team ISHARA earned \$15,000 as first-place winners while GSU’s Amber Accessories won third place.

Earlier in November Team ISHARA earned \$3,000 as first-place winners at the Golden Pitch Competition held at GSU.



Team ISHARA

tion held at GSU.

Accounting and computer information systems major Christotes Nartey-Tettah and engineering technology major David Nintang make up GSU’s Team Ishara under the guidance of mentor Brandon Harris, CEO of Bloom Booking.

Team ISHARA presented a “gamified recycling solution” that integrates smart machines in high-traffic areas to encourage sustainability by rewarding in-

dividuals for recycling.

The team presented a “gamified recycling solution” that integrates smart machines in high-traffic areas to encourage sustainability by rewarding individuals for recycling.

“This is motivation to us,” Team ISHARA said in a statement. “It means that our idea is feasible, possible, and it solves a problem. This is a good opportunity for us to invest in our business and continue to scale. With this win, we are looking to further develop our product and expand our team.”

Earning third-place honors for GSU was Team Amber Accessories, which created an innovative safety solution that embeds panic buttons into jewelry such as rings, earrings, and necklaces.

GSU students Emmanuel Nnanna, Eniola Irinoye, Tanyaradwa Mangundhla, Stecy Chirinda, Flyness Namatama developed Amber Accessories under the guidance of mentor Christina Davis, senior business consultant from the Small Business Development Center at the University of Louisiana-Monroe.

“Events like the BizTech Challenge allow our students to share their creativity, to brainstorm, learn and grow, both as student scholars as well as business professionals, so we’re really excited about it,” said Dean of GSU’s College of Business Dr. Derrick Warren.

Jared Evans Appointed Chief of Staff for Congressman Cleo Fields

Jared Evans, a distinguished alumnus and voting rights attorney '09, has been appointed Chief of Staff for Congressman Cleo Fields. In this role, he will oversee daily operations for both the Congressman’s Capitol Hill and district offices, while also acting as his primary political and policy advisor. Previously a Senior Policy Counsel at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Evans played a pivotal role in the landmark Robinson v. Landry voting rights case.



Jared Evans

Sports

Grambling Overpowered by LSU at the Brookshire Arena

By Leon Mitchell

GSU Athletic Communications

BOSSIER CITY, LA | In a tough matchup on Sunday, Grambling State (2-7) fell to No. 5 Louisiana State University 100-54 at the Brookshire Arena. Despite their efforts, the Lady Tigers faced challenges against a dominant LSU team.

Grambling struggled offensively, shooting 29.4% from the field and 23.5% from beyond the arc. LSU (11-0), on the other hand, hit 48.7% of their

shots, including 80.8% from the free-throw line. Aneesa Morrow led LSU with a double-double of 26 points and 16 rebounds.

Rebounding was a decisive factor, with LSU outrebounding Grambling 64-30, including a commanding 27-14 edge in offensive boards. LSU also controlled the paint, outscoring Grambling 58-28 down low.

Grambling's Halima Salat stood out with 12 points off the bench, while Kahia Warmsley added eight points and six rebounds to go along with three assists.



GSU Women vs LSU

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Grambling LA 71245
Paramveer LLC
DBA superior mart #4

Members : Lakhwinder Singh , Vasu Walia

12/18/24

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DBA Superior mart #3
Members : Lakhwinder Singh, Vasu Walia
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