



CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

THE GRAMBLING CONNECTION

Volume 1, No. 11

Friday, February 28, 2025 • "Keeping Our Citizens Informed on the Issues That Matter" • Grambling, LA

Grambling's Juneteenth Committee Hosts First Black History Month Parade



Miss Juneteenth. Photos by: T. Valentino



Local farmers.



Farmers honored.



Honorees served.

"Celebrating the contributions of African-Americans to the Workforce Labor Movement"

Staff Report
Photos by Tony Valentino

A small crowd gathered to watch Grambling's first Black history month parade held on Saturday, February 15. The parade was sponsored by the Grambling Juneteenth committee. The local area Black Farmers served as parade grand marshals to enhance this year's national Black History Month theme, "African Americans and Labor".

"We decided to go with our local farmers and talk about the significant role that they played in forming the collective experiences of Black people throughout history. It was a short parade, but hopefully it was impactful," said Deidra Scott, a member of the city's Juneteenth committee.

The celebration continued at the Grambling City Hall when farmers gathered to share with residents how they got into farming and how they plan to sustain their farms. Joining Scott was Boise Land & Cattle, Douglas & Debra Sapp Owner/Operator and Roberson Farms LLC, Carlyle & Craton Roberson, Owner Operator.

The theme focused on the significant role that work, in all its forms, has played in the collective experience of Black people throughout history. It aims to highlight how work, whether enslaved labor, skilled trades, entrepreneurship, or organized labor movements, has been central to Black history and identity. It explored the varied experiences of Black workers across different industries, skill levels, and historical periods," explained Scott.

"As a farmer, I think it was a great opportunity for all of us to get together and to get to know the people of our community and hopefully start buying from them," Scott said."

Grambling University Choir Hits A High Note for Black History



Dr. Cordara Harper, GSU choir director, instructs choir.

By Joice M. Dunn

The Grambling State University Concert Choir lifted their voices exploring compositions and arrangements of music by Black composers. The choir took the audience on a journey as they experienced the power of each song.

As the choir took its place on stage, the Lincoln Parish Library Events Center began to echo sounds of popular Negro Spirituals.

The choir sang such songs as "Jesus Is a Rock" arranged by Glen Bowler.

Serving as presenters was Cordara Harper, Ph.D., a tenure-track assistant professor of music education and choir director at Grambling State University.

Rev. Rylan Andre Harris, MRL, from Atlanta, directed the choir through one of the songs. He holds a Master of Religious Leadership with a concentration in Worship and Music from Emory University's Candler School of Theol-

ogy, Harris currently serves as a Minister of Worship & Arts, blending a variety of traditional and contemporary gospel, anthems, spirituals, and music of the Western canon. Harris's

See **CHOIR**, page 2

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Opinion

Moving Forward with the Lessons of Black History

By Rusty Potter

As Black History Month comes to an end, we must carry its lessons throughout this year. This month has been a time of reflection, learning, and celebration. We have drawn wisdom from powerful speakers, marched in the parades, and been inspired by essays from our youth. But, as we know, Black History can not be confined to February, it is a continuous journey of growth, resilience, and achievement.

The sacrifices of those who came before us paved the way for the opportunities we now enjoy. Their courage in the face of adversity reminds us that challenges are not roadblocks but



Rusty Potter

of Frederick Douglass reminded us that without challenges, there is no progress. His journey teaches us that the greatest accomplishments come from the most difficult struggles. The giants of our past- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Thurgood Marshall, and countless others, stood firm in the face of injustice. They did not wait for change; they created the change. Their stories

stepping stones to something greater. When we learn from the past, we gain the strength to shape our future.

History teaches us that progress does not come without perseverance. The life

remind us that while the journey may not be easy, it is always worth it.

Our history is not just about the well-known names; it is also about the everyday heroes - teachers, parents, and community leaders - who uplift and motivate positive change in our community. They remind us that greatness is not reserved for a select few but is within reach for all who are willing to work for it.

As we move beyond February, let us continue to make our faith in God, unity, education, and achievement, a top priority. Let us not only celebrate Black history but also build upon it. We can honor our past by striving for excellence in our own lives, by setting goals, breaking barriers, and lifting others as we climb.

We are privileged to live in a time where we have more opportunities than

those before us. Education, business ownership, and doors that were once closed are now open. While there is still progress to be made, we must not take for granted the strides that have already been achieved.

Black history is living history, and each of us has a role in writing its next chapter. What legacy will you leave behind? How will we inspire the next generation? The answer lies in how we live today. We must have a belief that our dreams are possible.

Let's take the lessons of this month and apply them daily. Let's walk boldly into our future, knowing that we stand on the shoulders of giants. The best way to honor our past is to make the most of our present. Keep learning. Keep moving forward!

Buc-ees is on its way: But is that a good thing?

By Marvin Berry

The Buc-ees we all love to hate is on its way to Ruston, and if what has been presented publicly is true, will be here sooner than we all think. There has been a ton of fanfare and a very surprisingly mixed reaction in the Ruston and Grambling communities.

New jobs at competitive wages. Food and snacks. Assorted merch. Traffic. Congestion. Transients. Tax breaks. Bring on the Beaver!

The travel oasis brings some of the best eats available - from fresh hot

sandwiches to their infamous wall of jerky and all points in between. Their amply available and competitively priced gas should bring savings to residents and travelers alike. Last minute need of a random t-shirt or hoodie? They got you.

Buc-ees will be offering dozens of new jobs at highly competitive wages, which comes as a concern for many small local business owners. These struggling enterprises are barely able to hold their current employees at competitive wages. They ask what

will happen when they can no longer remain competitive? How many local businesses will be forced to shut their doors for the last time? On the flip side, how many of the remaining businesses will then benefit? In the end, will there be more or less jobs in the community?

With the heightened number of travelers passing through the area, another concern that has been presented is the potential increase in crime and added human trafficking stop(s) along the i20 corridor. With thousands of

people expected to stop daily, there are many additional nefarious opportunities on and around the Buc-ees grounds. Like one person told me, "it's nothing worth thinking about until it's worth thinking about".

Money in. Money out. It all comes down to money.

Just a couple of "Beaver Nuggets" for your thoughts.... To beaver or not to beaver? That is the question...

Marvin Berry is a freelance opinion writer who resides in the Lincoln Parish area.

News

CHOIR from page 1

musical journey commenced at the age of four with the piano, later evolving to collaborations with renowned performers like Apollo's Ray Chew & the Crew, Melba Moore, Bishop Hezekiah Walker, Richard Smallwood, and more.

Appearing as special guest was Lannie Spann McBride, MM, from Jackson, Mississippi. She has served as the Minister of Music for the Greater Fairview Church for more than 35 years. After 30 years in public and private school instruction, McBride joined the Jackson State University staff as a visiting lecturer in music education with emphasis on music for children and applied secondary piano.

After some powerful, encouraging words, McBride shared with the audi-

ence a solo called The Best I Can Be. Once the program ended, she also shared books, music and poems with students and others.

The choir closed the evening with "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho" composed and arranged by Moses Hogan.

When the floor was opened for questions by Dr. Harper, Dr. Liz White, Grambling graduate and retired professor of Louisiana Tech, posed a question concerning contemporary and Negro Spiritual music.

"We will always have the Spirituals. When Walter Hawkins came out with 'Oh Happy Day', it was rejected. There's not a real difference, its' how we use the music. Negro Spirituals is our story, and if we don't tell it, who will," a collaborative response was given by Dr. Harper and Harris.



Lannie S. McBride sings her song, as Rev. Rylan A. Harris and the choir look on.



Lannie S. McBride shares her writings with students.

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Community

A Legacy of Faith, Family, and Love

By Joice M. Dunn

Viola Wiley turned 100 years old in 2024. She retired from Grambling State University as a secretary in the Department of Physical Education.

She enjoys reading inspirational and romance books. Wiley worked with plastic needle craft for years, until arthritis in her hands no longer allowed her to continue.

One of Wiley’s favorite things to do was sharing words of wisdom with others through writing or oral conversations. In her words, Wiley would say living right: treating others the way you want to be treated.

Last year when she turned 99, a close friend of the family paid tribute. “Today is a day to celebrate Mrs. Viola Wiley (Maw Maw, as she is affectionally known). Happy 99th birthday. I love and thank you for the impact on my life. The words, the prayers, the family, the time you have given to so many, the opportunity to be you was embraced. The family is a testimony of sacrifice. The Bible (I Luke 9:23) talked about denying yourself to be more like Him and you and your family have done that, I love you so much,”

Bethany Harris Williams

Bethany Harris Williams celebrated her 102nd birthday on November 25, 2024. She enjoys eating a hearty breakfast each morning and watching religious television shows. She is thankful for Pastor Elliott Abney and her Love Chapel Baptist Church family.

Williams believes she has been blessed with a wonderful physician, Dr. Mark Blackwelder and Nurse Kim, who keep a close eye on her health.

Williams is the fourth child and third daughter of the late Rev. Elias Harris and Mrs. Della Allean Butler Harris. She is a lifelong resident of Lincoln Parish. Along with her 10 siblings, Williams was introduced to God at an early age. The family would read the Sunday School lesson and have devotion each Sunday morning prior to attending service at the Spring Hill Baptist Church. She attended the North Louisiana Baptist Association, held in September each year with her sisters, Birtha, Omegia, Mae D. and Ethel.

Williams attended Spring Hill Elementary School and continued her high school education at Lincoln High School located in Ruston. She worked at various jobs including the Cafeteria Department at Louisiana Tech University.

While living next door to her parents,



V. Wiley. All photos courtesy provided.

Williams developed a special relationship with them as well as her siblings. Williams and her mother, known as “Mama Della,” enjoyed quilting, canning vegetables and fruits for the family.

Perhaps her greatest joy was the birth of her four children – Otis, Artis, Girthany, and Gregory. Her legacy continues with her grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren. Williams was also the caregiver for many of her nieces and nephews as well as a mother figure to her children’s friends. One of her favorite things to do was prepare tea cakes for the children.

Lafaye C. Jackson

Turning 102 years old on February 13, a beautiful baby girl named Lafaye was born in the year 1923 to the parents of Enos and Ocie Johnson Carter. She was affectionately given the nickname "Babe" by her father because she mirrored the image of a baby doll. She was the youngest of four girls, Rosa Lee, Gayzelle, and Avrist. The Carter household provided a foundation of love, respect and empowerment for the girls.

In March 1929, Jackson began her primary education at Salem Elementary School and later graduated from Homer Colored High School in 1941.

Jackson was reared in a faith-based home where God was the center of her life. She and her sisters learned the importance of having a strong commitment to excellence through hard work



B. Williams.

and dedication from their parents. She leveraged many of her skills to support her evolution into adulthood with various careers as a housecleaner, educator and ultimately a successful business leader and entrepreneur. Yet, her greatest accomplishment was her transition to wife and mother. She was an adoring wife to late husband Rogers C. Jackson, Sr. for 55 years. Together, they reared four children, Stewart, Rogers Jr., Gwendolyn, and Carolyn in a loving home while instilling the importance of education. As the head of the household, Rogers empowered his family by promoting the motto “You Can Make It If You Try.” Lafaye continues to embrace that mindset and shares the message with her family and legion of friends, mentees, and leaders as her banner of hope for the future.

As Rogers and Lafaye grew in their marriage, their business aspirations mirrored the same. Together, they founded Memorial Funeral Home and Memorial Life Insurance Company in Cotton Valley, LA through the investments of several individuals and supporters. Over 80 years later, Memorial Funeral Home and Memorial Insurance Company operates through its 6 locations in Northwest Louisiana including Homer, Plain Dealing, Ringgold, Arcadia, Cullen, and Farmerville.

Lafaye was a trailblazer throughout her career advocating for many underrepresented in the Northwest Louisiana



L. Jackson.

communities. As a civil rights activist and participant in the early grassroots voting rights movement, she led an impactful and sustainable change for many disenfranchised groups. She channeled her efforts in supporting her community as a founding member of NAACP Homer, Louisiana Chapter. She served as president of the chapter for over 15 years. Understanding the importance of education, she became the first black woman elected to the Claiborne Parrish School Board in the 1973.

Lafaye’s compassion for children, coupled with her devotion to ensuring there was equitable education provided to the communities, led to the opening of the first day care center in Homer. Homer Childhood Learning Center, was an early education school which fostered a familial environment for children to learn, grow and prepare for the classroom setting. She and Annie Grant enrolled their first class of students in 1975 after both ladies completed college courses to prepare for their teachings. The school was a beacon of light in the community for over 40 years at its closure in 2018. To date, many former students attribute Homer Childhood Learning Center as the foundation of their early education and professional success.

With over 70 years of service, Lafaye is viewed by many as a mentor, trusted advisor, counselor, and pillar in the community.

Announcements

‘No Limit’ accepting registration for 2025-2026

The No Limit Soldiers Program is accepting registration and sign-ups. All area youth are encouraged to come out and participate. For additional information please contact Howard Kirkpatrick, 318-497-2978, Montez Moss, 318-243-7451 or Kelli Granger at 318-664-5435

HELP agency offers assistance to Parish residents

Humanitarian Enterprises of Lincoln Parish (H.E.L.P.) is now scheduling appointments to assist families with heating bills. Appointments will be scheduled

on a first-come first-served basis until all appointment times are filled or funds are depleted.

Interested persons may schedule an appointment by phone at (318) 251-5136 or in person at 307 N. Homer Street, second floor, in Ruston, each Friday at 8 a.m. until appointment times are filled. Office hours are Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

Monday appointments are designated for elderly and/or disabled applicants. Applicants must present a current utility bill, proof of total monthly household income, social security cards for all household members and proof of ID.

The Income Guidelines are as follows:

- Annual Income Based on 60% of Estimate State Median Income are as follows: Family size of one \$2,491; family of two \$3,257; family of three \$4,024; family of four \$4,790; family of five \$5,556; family of six \$6,323; family of seven \$6,467; family of eight \$6,610; family of nine \$6,754; and family of 10 \$6,898.

For additional information, call (318) 251-5136 and services are available to all people.

Wreath recycling, free tombstone cleaning available

Dr. Frances Staten, founder of the Longevity Project, is asking the community to join her in recycling wreaths like the ones placed on the tombstones of veterans. The wreaths will be placed on cemetery trees, and tombstones of Centenarians and veterans.

The project also includes the cleaning of the tombstone of persons who died as centenarians as part of an ongoing Project Staten said. There will be cleaning training provided by Jason Church, renowned Cemetery Preservationist. If anyone is interested in receiving training, please call 318-436-9572.

NAMI Family support group holds meeting

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) will hold a support group meeting Thursday, March 20, at 2 p.m. in the Lincoln Parish Library, George Byrnside Conference Room, 910 North Trenton St., Ruston. The meetings will continue each third Thursday of each month until December.

Dr. Jeannetta Stephens-Jones, Ed. D and Dr. Shirley Burch, Ph.D., will be present as well as NAMI Certified Peer Facilitators. Other group meetings will be held April 17 and May 15. The meetings will continue to be held June 19, July 17 and August 21. The next set of meetings will be held September 18, October 16, November 20 and December 18.

Anyone at least 18 years old may RSVP to jjones79aka@yahoo.com or call (318) 614-1961 or SJBurch57@gmail.com or

call (318) 350-1612. The meetings are free to the public and all are invited to attend,

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. The meeting will also include the installation of new officers.

Meetings are on teleconference -717-908-1834; Access Code 621055# and annual dues are due for the year. Make checks payable to Grambling Branch NAACP (#6094) and mail to P.O. Box 521, Grambling, LA 71245.

Membership is available to the public, either as an adult or as a youth (ages 7 to 17). Memberships for adults are \$30 a year and presently, the \$10.00 dues for children have been waived.

For additional information, please call or text 318-680-7679, Grace Tatem.

NAACP Youth to sponsor raffle

The Youth Councils of District "G" of the LA State NAACP is sponsoring a raffle on a chance to win a 63"TV for \$2 per ticket. The drawing will be held Friday, February 28.

The raffle is an effort to raise funds to visit the Civil Rights Museum in Washington D.C in July or August 2025. You do not have to be present to win.

For information, contact Grace Tatem, 318-680-7679.

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Community

State Senator Luneau speaks to LPRE

By Joice M. Dunn

State Senator W. Jay Luneau spoke encouraging words as he addressed the Lincoln Parish Retired Educators (LPRE) Town Hall meeting Thursday, Feb. 13.

Sen. Luneau, D-Alexandria, represents district 29 which includes Lincoln parish. He held from Rapides parish but has ties to Lincoln by graduating from Louisiana Tech University.

Luneau said there were a number of subjects he wanted to talk about that's important to the northern part of Louisiana.

Luneau credited former two-term Democrat, Gov. John Bel Edwards, for "realizing that North Louisiana is part of Louisiana."

He recalled a conversation with Edwards prior to him taking office, concerning needs on the Grambling State and Southern University campuses, citing GSU's former library. "There was black mold on the ceiling, and it was in deplorable condition," Luneau said. In August 2024, GSU opened a new \$17 million Digital Library and Learning Commons that had been more than five years in the making.

As he fast forwarded to the present, where Republican Jeff Landry is governor, because the republicans are the majority in both houses, they can pass whatever bills they like. Luneau said the democrats came together with a laundry list of things they wanted to see done and presented it to the Governor.

Sen. Luneau said, "To his credit, he didn't just sit down with us one-time, but numerous times and we talked about the issues. Two top of the ladder issues were education and health care. On the education side, we needed to make sure that money was there to give teachers as well as retirees a raise and Governor Landrey agreed."



Present in support of Senator W. Jay Luneau (2nd from left) was State Representative Rashid Young, Billy McBride, Lincoln Parish Tax Assessor and State Representative Chris Turner attended the LPRE Town Hall Meeting Thursday, Feb. 13. Photo by Joice M. Dunn

He said GSU and Southern needed to be on the same level as other colleges and universities in the state when it comes to recurring budget dollars.

During last fall's special tax reform session, Luneau offered his plan as an amendment to another bill but withdrew it saying it would have adversely impacted Louisiana's film industry tax credit and historic preservation tax credit programs, something he didn't want to do.

The Senator said there isn't a system in place when it comes to giving teachers raises. It is whatever the will of the legislator at the time. "We are looking at some legislation which says if we have a particular situation, you give the teachers, (retired) and state employees (retired) a raise," he said.

The Senator said he's preparing to prefile a bill that ends the excessive rebates of cooperations, meaning they can't get back more than they pay in. Everyone should pay their fair share.

The Legislature convenes April 12 for this year's regular session.

Louisianans now pay a 5% state sales tax, the highest in the nation. The change, backed by Gov. Landry, was part of the tax overall lawmakers approved in November. The new tax rate combined with other local sales taxes brings to 11% on the dollar the tax rate in Grambling and Ruston, and 12.75% in at restaurants in Ruston's Economic Development District No.1, according to the Louisiana Association of Tax Administrators.

Sen. Luneau explained support for earned income tax credits, an issue that often puts Democrats and Republicans at odds. He believes the tax credit can boost the state's economy.

"Nearly 100% of that money is spent in the state of Louisiana," Luneau said.

"Who says Democrats and Republicans can't get anything done or get along, I learned a lot from this meeting and I'm now encouraged," said Grambling resident Barbara McIntosh.

Members of The Call Me MISTER program at Grambling State University was extended words of thanks for volunteering to serve as assistants during the program. The program exists to change the less than 2% of African American Males teachers in the U.S., directed by Dr. George Noflin.

Donorations were made to the program by several businesses throughout the area. The companies included Spring Mart, King of Wings, Origin Bank, J.J. Express, Choudrant Soul Food and LPRE. Providing refreshments for the Social hour was Skip Russell of State Farm Insurance.

In Remembrance

John Robert Hall remembered

John Robert Hall was the fifth child of twelve children born to Willie D and Equator Hall on December 14, 1939. He joined Mount Pleasant Baptist Church at an early age.

He graduated from Pineview High School of Lisbon, Louisiana in 1960. He served as deacon at Mount Pleasant Baptist Church. Two years after graduating high school he moved to California where he met and married Dorothy Alice Branch on August 24, 1962. To this union Jonathan Clay Hall and Patrice Marshon Hall were born.

He and his family returned to Louisiana in 1967 and chose Grambling as their home. John became a member of Mt. Zion Baptist Church where he served

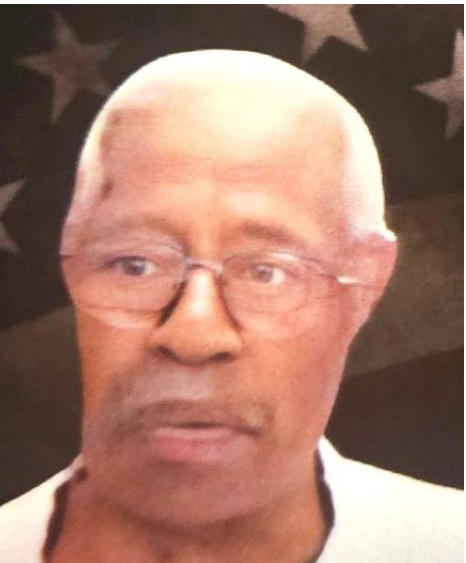
as a deacon. His career took many paths: owner of Texaco/Exxon gas station, J. & D. Restaurant, Hall & Son Construction, and Grambling Police Department as Assistant Chief of Police later elected Police Chief and retiring in 1988.

John leaves to cherish his memories: his children, Jonathan Hall, Patrice Hall (Tyrone), Patrick Hall (Kenya), and Keshia White; grandchildren, Johnell Hall, Jarrell Hall (Nekoda), Chasady Sims (Chris), Chad Sims, Kailyn Weaver, Anthony Weaver, Jr., and Andrew Weaver; great-grandchildren, Carter Qualls, Kal-El Xavier Hall, Ayana Zor-El Hall, and Loki Atreus Hall; godson, Adrian Wright; siblings, Thomas Hall (Dorothy), Vera Hall, Elex Hall, Effie Hall, Samuel Hall,

Martha Wayne (Adam), Wyvonnia Bolds (Mark) and Jackolyn Sanchez (Shedrick, Sr.), Uncle TJ Hall (age 101) and Aunt Iris "Sister" Bolton.

BROKEN CHAIN

[Little did we know] that morning that God was going to call your name. In life we loved you dearly. In death we do the same. It broke our hearts to lose you, you did not go alone; for part of us went with you the day God called you home. You left us peaceful memories, your love is still our guide; and though we cannot see you, you are always at our side. Our family chain is broken and nothing seems the same, but as God calls us one by one the chain will-link again.



Reflecting on the life of Joe W.E. Shyne Sr.

Joe William Edward Shyne was the youngest child of Reverend C.H. Shyne. Sr., and Lucille Harris Shyne. He was born September 29, 1939, in Shreveport, Louisiana.

At a young age, Joe's family moved to Grambling where he developed a deep love for the community, its educational opportunities and its sports programs.

He was a graduate of both Grambling State University and Louisiana Tech University, receiving his undergraduate degree from Grambling and his master's degree from Tech.

Joe became a teacher and coach in Cad-do Parish, dedicating over 30 years to in-

spiring and mentoring students at Booker T. Washington, Linear, Green Oaks and Fair Park campuses.

His involvement in politics began through his work with the NAACP, where he assisted with voter registration and served as vice president of the organization.

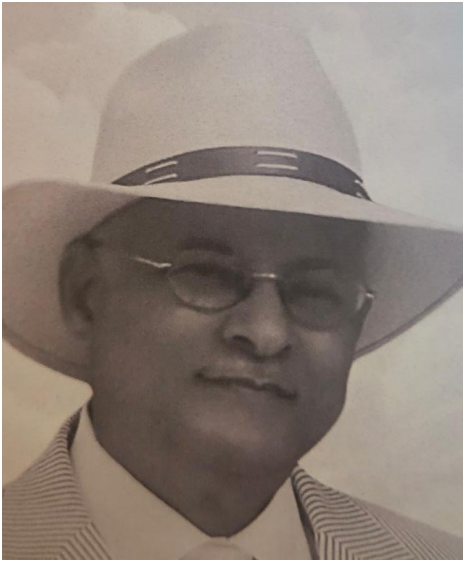
Encouraged by others to seek public office, Joe ran for city council of Shreveport in 1982 and proved he was unbeatable in the next four elections. He later ran again and won.

Joe believed his role was to be accessible and to address the needs of the people. A stranger to no one, Joe embraced life, cherished his family and found joy in his com-

munity. Both Shreveport and Grambling held a special place in his heart.

Mr. Shyne was highlighted in the Shreveport Times and honored by Mayor Tom Arceneaux of Shreveport for his service as councilman. Joe represented District F of the city with unwavering commitment.

According to a news release from the Mayor's Office, Mr. Shyne leaves behind a legacy of commitment and passion for the Shreveport community. Deep condolences were extended to the Shyne family during their time of loss and it honored Shyne's memory and the mark he left on the City of Shreveport.



Remembering Joseph R. Naylor



Joseph Roger Naylor was born on December 16, 1954 in Waco, Texas as the second son of Rev. Dr. Ollie Jerome and Willie Mae Brown Naylor. Joseph (who many refer to as Roy) graduated in 1973 from Richfield High School in Waco. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in food administration and a Master of Business Administration from Prairie View A&M University. He earned over 30 post graduate hours in Hotel Restaurant Management and Nutrition from North Virginia Community College, the University of Houston and Grambling State University.

Joseph married the love of his life, Patricia Lee Jones Naylor, for over 42 years. Nothing made him prouder than being a dad to his three children: Jenni-

fer Elizabeth Jones, Jessica Ann Naylor and Joseph Roger Naylor Jr. He considered Marlon D. Eleam Sr. and Ashley Bell-Naylor his son and daughter-in-law. His 11 grandchildren were the joy of his life.

After graduating from Prairie View, Joseph worked as Food Services Director for Aramark (ARA). In 1985, he became the Food and Dietary Services director at Highland Hospital in Shreveport, Louisiana. A year later he became the Cafeteria and Catering Manager at St. Francis Medical Center in Monroe, Louisiana. His food service career was just taking off when he became manager of food services at his alma mater and Food Service Director at Texas Southern University. One of the proudest moments for Mr. Naylor was when he became a professor and developed the Hotel & Restaurant

Management Program at Grambling State University.

Joseph continually pushed his children and grandchildren to "Do their best in school and get an education." He inspired, not only his own children, but thousands of others that he taught and helped find jobs in the hotel, restaurant and business industries as their teacher, advisor and mentor.

Joseph Naylor, like his mother and father, always believed in community and church service. He accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior at an early age at New Hope Baptist Church in Waco, Texas. He grew up in the church and found joy serving in every aspect, from the choir to the usher board. His servitude included various churches including Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Grambling and Zion Traveler Baptist Church in Ruston.

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Church News

The History and Significance of the Black Church in America

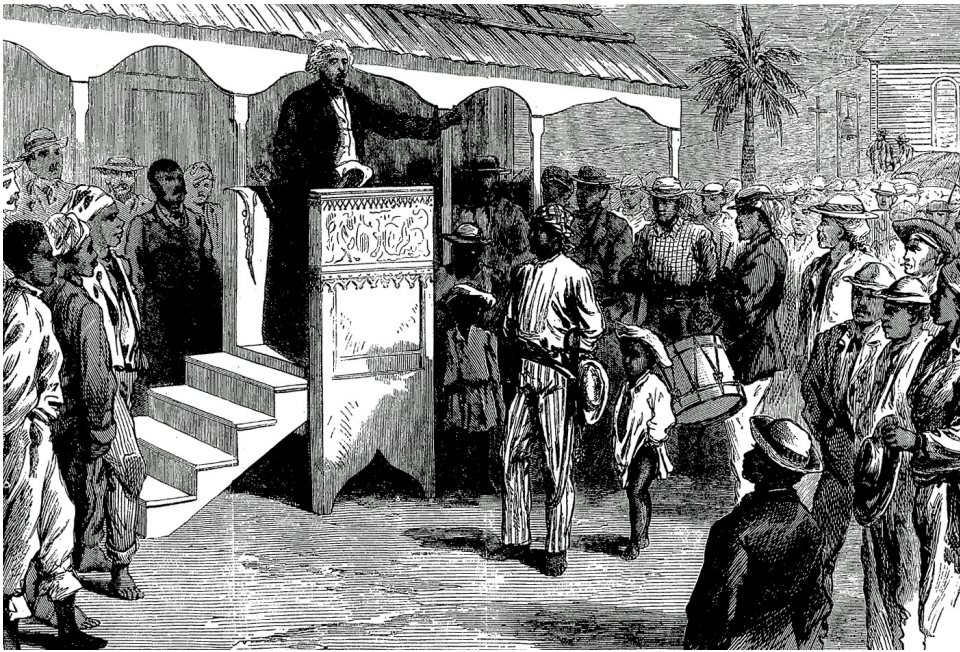
Staff Report

As we reflect on Black History Month, it is impossible to overlook the profound influence of the Black Church in America. Since the early 1800s, the church has been a cornerstone of African American life, shaping cultural identity, fostering resilience, and serving as a driving force in the fight for justice.

Frederick Douglass, a towering figure in abolitionist history, found his voice not in a spontaneous moment of courage at an anti-slavery meeting, as often believed, but within the walls of the Black Church. While enslaved, he attended the Sharp Street Methodist Church in Baltimore, and after his escape, he delivered his earliest public speeches at the AME Zion Church in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Like Douglass, many other influential Black leaders emerged from the church, including Adam Clayton Powell Jr., who succeeded his father as pastor of Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church before stepping into a political career that positioned him as a leading voice in the civil rights movement—until history shifted its focus to Montgomery, Alabama, and the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The Black Church has long been at the heart of Black political activism, dating back to at least the late 18th century. The failure of enslaved African Americans to launch a large-scale rebellion similar to the Haitian Revolution was not due to Christianity instilling passivity, as some suggest. Rather, it was a matter of sheer numbers and firepower—African Americans were vastly outmatched in an armed struggle. Instead of open rebellion, the Black Church became a covert space of resistance, nurturing hope and sustaining the community until freedom could be realized.

Prayer was not just an act of faith; it was an act of defiance. It gave strength to those facing oppression, and its power was felt even by segregationists like Bull Connor and George Wallace. Without the Black Church, landmark victories such



Fredrick Douglass preaches to parishoners

as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965—both signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson, with Dr. King and John Lewis, an ordained Baptist minister, by his side—would not have happened when they did. The church was not just a part of the civil rights movement; it was its foundation. The Black Lives Matter movement of today carries that same torch, drawing from the traditions of faith-fueled activism.

This legacy was especially evident in the passing of Rep. John Lewis. Amid the sorrow of a nation reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic and the killing of George Floyd, Lewis's funeral became a testament to the power of faith in the struggle for justice. His body made a final crossing over the Edmund Pettus Bridge, a sacred site in the fight for voting rights. For Lewis, voting was more than a civic duty—it was sacred. He shed blood for that right, and in honoring his legacy, the nation was reminded that faith has always been the bedrock of Black resistance. As Lewis once said, “The civil rights movement was based on faith. Many of us saw

our involvement as an extension of our faith.”

The endurance of African Americans through slavery and beyond remains one of the greatest testaments to human resilience. Between 1526 and 1808, approximately 388,000 Africans were forcibly brought to North America, with another 52,430 arriving through the intra-American slave trade. By 1860, that population had grown to 4.4 million. What allowed them to survive and even thrive despite the horrors of slavery?

They found strength in faith. The Black Church was a sanctuary where enslaved people could sustain hope, despite families being torn apart and their humanity constantly under attack. It was a place where they developed skills, preserved culture, and resisted the complete erasure of their identity. The belief in a future beyond bondage, even when freedom seemed unreachable, was an act of defiance in itself. As poet George Moses Horton expressed, if not for their own liberty, they clung to the hope that their children or grandchildren would one day be free.

Faith gave them vision. The writer Darryl Pinckney has argued that a person who cannot imagine a future is one who is lost in despair. By extension, a culture that cannot envision a future is at risk of dying out. But Black culture did not die. Instead, it flourished, nurtured by the Black Church, which served as a haven beyond the reach of those who sought to extinguish its spirit.

The church was more than just a religious institution—it was the heartbeat of Black expression. It was where music, dance, rhetoric, poetry, storytelling, and public speaking were all cultivated and celebrated. It was where literacy and intellectual discourse took root, often in secret, at great personal risk. Every Sunday, through sermons and song, the church became a stage for African American artistry, intellect, and resistance.

The Black Church was a bulwark against a system designed to break Black people's spirits. Instead of succumbing, they built a cultural force that was majestic, subversive, and deeply rooted in their struggle for dignity. What their oppressors intended as a tool for control—Christianity—became the very foundation of their fight for liberation. Through faith, enslaved people and their descendants found the means to challenge oppression, reimagine their world, and demand justice.

This faith also gave them the moral authority to hold America accountable for its contradictions. While the nation spoke of freedom and democracy, it upheld slavery and racial subjugation. Black religious leaders turned the mirror back on their oppressors, exposing the hypocrisy at the heart of America's identity. They called on future generations to close the gap between the nation's ideals and the realities of racial injustice.

The relationship between the Black Church and the African American community is inseparable. As the late Rev. Joseph Lowery once said, “I don't know whether the faith produced them, or if they produced the faith. But they belonged to each other.”

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
Christ Temple, 7349 Hwy 80. Ruston
Church of Restoration, 285 Main St., Grambling
Cook, 2000 Cooktown Rd, Ruston
Corinth, 4327 Hw 545, Dubach
Countyline, 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., - One block south of Hwy. 80 in Choudrant
First, Hico St., Dubach
First, 200 S. Trenton St., Ruston
First, Simsboro
Friendship, 143 West Sixth Street, Bernice
Grace, 2808 Trenton Ave. , Ruston
Grace Bible, 216 Rough Edge Rd., Ruston
Greater Pleasant Grove, 1270 Golf Course Rd., Unionville
Greater St. Luke, 163 St. Luke Church Rd, Arcadia
Gumspring, 3117 Hwy 151, Farmerville
Hebron, Love Chapel, 1525 Sikes St, Ruston
Hico, 653 Hwy. 152, Dubach
Hopewell, 7657 Fellowship Rd., Hwy 151, Dubach
Lane Chapel, 1016 McAllister, Ruston
Lanes Chapel, Hwy. 151 Downsville
Liberty Hill, Simsboro
Longstraw, 1799 Styles, Ranch Rd.,
Love Chapel, 1525 Sikes St, Ruston
Macedonia, No.1, 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, 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, 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, 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, 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, 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, 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
Church of Christ, 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
Ansley Union, 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, 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, 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, 1018 S. Vienna St., Ruston. lifepointruston.com

The Pentecostals, 2851 Hwy 33 North, Ruston
Powerhouse 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
Church of God in Christ, 256 Voss Street, Dubach
Faith Church, 1507 Goodwin Road, Ruston
Focus Christian Ministries, Martin Luther King Community Center, 901 Martin Luther King Dr., Ruston
Fountain of Praise United Worship Center, 1394 Hazel St., Arcadia
The Gospel, 108 Sanctuary Rd, Ruston
Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, 2508 Kavanaugh Road, Ruston
Impact Worship Center, Greenwood Recreation Center, 1306 Cornell Ave, Ruston
Ruston Housing Authority Building 901 Martin Luther King Dr. Ruston.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *If you would like your church information listed, please email the Grambling Connection at grambliniteconnection@gmail.com.*

Health & Wellness

Charming's Corner

Sound Baths: The Healing Power of Vibrational Therapy

By Charming Davis

In today’s fast-paced world, stress and anxiety have become common companions in our daily lives. Many seek refuge in meditation, yoga, and other holistic healing practices, but one ancient technique is making a profound comeback—sound baths. These immersive experiences use vibrational frequencies to promote deep relaxation, emotional release, and even physical healing.

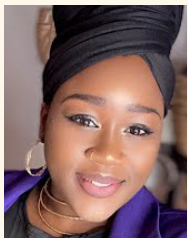
Two years ago, while on a travel assignment as a respiratory therapist near Orlando, Florida, God led me to the healing power of sound baths during my own personal journey. What started as a simple experience quickly became a transformative practice that changed my life in ways I never expected. The peace, clarity, and deep relaxation I found through sound healing was undeniable, and I knew I had to share this gift with others. Sound baths are simple, easy, and non-invasive—yet incredibly powerful. They provide a space for pure relaxation, allowing the body, mind, and spirit to realign effortlessly.

What is a Sound Bath?

A sound bath is a meditative experience where participants are enveloped in healing sounds produced by instruments such as singing bowls, tuning forks, gongs, and chimes. Unlike traditional music, which has a distinct melody and rhythm, sound bath frequencies are designed to slow brain waves, guiding the body into a state of deep relaxation. During a session, individuals may lie



Sound Bowls



Charming Davis

down or sit comfortably while the sound healer plays these instruments, allowing the vibrations to wash over them. The experience is often described as deeply calming, helping to release mental, emotional, and physical blockages.

The Science Behind Sound Healing

Sound healing is not just a spiritual practice—it has a scientific basis. Everything in the universe, including the human body, vibrates at specific frequencies. When we are stressed, sick, or emotionally imbalanced, our vibrational state can become disrupted. Sound baths help to realign these frequencies, promoting a sense of balance and harmony.

Research has shown that sound therapy can:

- Reduce stress and anxiety by lowering cortisol levels
- Improve sleep by promoting delta brain waves, which are associated with deep rest
- Alleviate pain by stimulating the release of endorphins
- Enhance mental clarity and focus by balancing the left and right hemispheres of the brain
- Support emotional healing by releasing trapped emotions stored in the body

Who Can Benefit from Sound Baths?

Sound baths are accessible to everyone, regardless of age or background. Whether you are dealing with chronic stress, emotional trauma, insomnia, or simply looking for a way to enhance your meditation practice, sound baths offer a

gentle yet powerful path to healing. Some people report experiencing a sense of euphoria, while others may have an emotional release through tears or deep relaxation. Each session is unique, providing what the body and mind need at that moment.

Experience a Sound Bath with a Certified Sound Healer

If you’re ready to experience the transformative effects of sound healing, I invite you to schedule an individual or group session with me at Naturally Charming Universe Holistic Wellness Center. As a certified sound healer, I create personalized experiences tailored to your healing journey.

Sessions are available to be booked during our business hours:

- Tuesday–Friday: 8:30 AM – 1:30 PM
- Saturday: 11:00 AM – 5:00 PM

311 Main St. Grambling, La

You can also book a session online at www.naturallycharminguniverse.com. Come relax, reset, and restore your energy in a peaceful and welcoming space. Your journey to healing through sound begins here!

Every purchase made at Naturally Charming Universe Holistic Wellness Center automatically enters you into a weekly drawing for a chance to win a free one-hour healing session. Plus, we host various in-store events and games, giving you even more opportunities to win a one-hour healing session of your choice. Stop by, shop, and join in on the fun for your chance to experience the healing power of our services

WHY IS MENTAL HEALTH STILL A TABOO AND WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

By Dr. Jeannetta Stephens-Jones, Ed.D.

In this 21st century, the topic of mental illness continues to be a taboo topic throughout society. According to research, mental illness affects 19% of the adult population, nearly 50% of teens and close to 15% of children each year. Looking at these percentages suggest that it is crucial for all of us to become more aware of mental health issues. We should take care of our mental health just as we do our physical health.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MENTAL HEALTH AND PHYSICAL HEALTH?

Psychological, emotional and social wellbeing describes mental health. Mental health affects how one feels, thinks, acts and relates to others. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescents to adulthood.

Physical health, on the other hand is the state of one’s body which includes the overall fitness level which can impact the quality of life.

Mental health does not receive the same level of attention as physical health because of widespread belief that physical health is more important. In reality, mental health is just as vital.



Dr. Jeannetta Stephens-Jones

HEALTH CONTINUES TO BE A TABOO TOPIC

The following are some reasons why mental health remains a taboo topic:

Mental illness is viewed as a weakness which has been observed in both male and female. Research cites that it is more apparent in men due to their masculinity.

It is a misunderstood phenomenon: lack of knowledge in the area of mental health can cause one not to be able to recognize signs and symptoms.

Being labeled frightens some individuals: mental health is so misunderstood and being labeled may cause other to label an individual as being unstable which could make it even harder to get help.

Mental health illnesses are not covered by insurance:

Many times, the mental health illnesses are not spoken about and kept a secret

Receiving a mental illness diagnosis is taboo and is also stigmatizing which can have a negative impact not only on the individual, but on the family as well. In some cases when an individual is diagnosed with a mental illness, that individual is looked upon as being weak or dangerous. These types of descriptions can cause discrimination in areas such as housing, employment and social interactions.

HOW CAN WE BREAK THE TABOO

We can break the taboo and remove the stigma by educating school employees, students, and communities. We would do well to initiate open discussions with family members and friends. Other ways to assist in breaking the taboo include the following:

- Promote positive portrayals of mental illness
- Build communities of support and increase funding for mental health research
- Mental illnesses are medical conditions that affect approximately 60 million Americans every year, regardless of race, religion or economic status. As

important as mental health is, we find that it continues to be a difficult topic to include in our conversations. At some point in life, everyone experiences emotional and mental pain.

Resources:
www.webmd.org

www.nami.org
www.mayoclinic.org
www.helpguide.org
Jeannetta Stephens-Jones, Ed.D., retired educational diagnostician/ speech pathologist and president of NAMI Ruston. Contact her at jjones79_aka@yahoo.com.

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REASONS WHY MENTAL

Arts & Culture

Architect With Local Roots Plays Part in Black History

Reflecting on Black History ... “enlightening dreams, building futures.” J. Chaffers

Staff Report

James A. Chaffers, D. Arch., FAIA, NCARB, is a 1959 Valedictorian graduate of ‘old’ (but not forgotten) Lincoln High School of Ruston, Louisiana. He continued his education at Southern University in Baton Rouge, graduating Magna cum laude.

After completing five years of military service as an officer — including combat duty in Vietnam, Chaffers went on to graduate from the University of Michigan and became the recipient of the nation’s first Professional Doctor of Architecture degree. Chaffers completed further architecture and engineering studies at Stanford University, Terman Engineering Center, Palo Alto, CA. Upon receiving his doctorate, Dr. Chaffers accepted an invitation to join the faculty of the College of Architecture at the University of Michigan. After 41 years, he still teaches as an Emeritus Professor of Architecture.



James A. Chaffers, D. Arch., FAIA, NCARB



“People’s Oasis” ‘Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial.

MLK

Dr. Chaffers was asked, in April 1997, to serve as Senior Design Consultant for the design of a “living memorial” in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Guided by competition criteria co-developed by Dr. Chaffers, the winning entry for the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial emerged from design entries submitted by over 900 designers from 52 countries, worldwide. After 14 years of planning and construction, the MLK Memorial was completed in August 2011 and

high-lighted with an Official Presidential Unveiling Ceremony officiated by President Barack Obama. Commemorated as a ‘Stone of Hope,’ Dr. King’s Memorial joins a National Path of Leadership and sits on a triangular path of Presidents -- a revered path that includes, The George Washington Monument, The Thomas Jefferson Memorial, and The Abraham Lincoln Memorial. This cornerstone of Love, Justice, Peace, and Possibility now stands in the U.S. Capital, on the U.S. National Mall in Washington, DC.

Teaching and Professional Practice

Teaching at the University of Michigan, Chaffers has received three “Distinguished Faculty” and three “Outstanding Teacher” Awards. The Lincoln Parish resident has also been honored as “Educator of the Year” at Michigan Colleges and Universities. In further recognition of his distinguished teaching and professional practice, he recently earned elevation to the “College of Fellows,” “FAIA, within The American Institute of Architects. (Elevation to “Fellow” status is among the highest honors that the American Architectural Profession can bestow upon one of its members. Chaffers heads his architectural firm, J. Chaffers • Architect LLC, as Design Principal and President.

On Black HISTORY . . .

The most faithful spirit of Black History is its ‘eight-generational’ accounting of a people’s American and African lineage. In keeping with this spirit, Dr. Chaffers shares that his classes . . . “weave talent and passion with persevering vigor, collaborative trust, and unrelenting optimism.” Quoting Dr. Chaffers again, he shares that “Black History illuminates and deeply saturates all dimensions of my life’s journey. As such, my life of teaching speaks as a clarion, carrying gifts of other voices and other visibilities, loud and clear.

Black Professors Create Curriculum Study Guide for Kendrick Lamar’s Super Bowl Halftime Performance

Nationwide — Dr. Linda J.M. Holloway, an Associate Professor at Alabama State University, has teamed up with one of her favorite colleagues, Dr. April T. Berry, an Adjunct Professor at the University of South Alabama to launch a curriculum study guide for Kendrick Lamar’s 2025 Super Bowl Halftime performance.

Both women say that Kendrick used his platform at Super Bowl LIX in New Orleans, LA to take the world to a brief classroom encounter. There has been a lot of buzz in the media about the true meaning of the symbolism that was embedded in his performance, and many people did not understand it, while others did.

Therefore, Drs. Holloway and Berry have taken aspects of Kendrick’s performance and provided both an educational and mental health awareness spin to explore cultural symbolism and enhance learning and growth for students both in and outside of the classroom. The curriculum they created allows the world to enjoy learning with Kendrick as the teacher.

With such diversity in thinking, this presents a strong argument for the need



Kendrick Lamar performs at Superbowl halftime.

to deeply understand the importance of cultural competence. “If you lack cultural awareness, are unable to think critically, and are not open to expanding your knowledge base, much can be misunderstood and misinterpreted,” says Dr. Holloway. “For this reason, we have created this curriculum study guide that is free and available to all educators around the world.” This is not the first time for these two

scholarly women. Two years ago, they released a curriculum study guide to unpack the Kirk Franklin Story about his endeavors to locate his biological father. It was called “Black Fathers Matter: Unpacking the Kirk Franklin Story”. They also released the “Curriculum Study Guide about the Montgomery Riverboat Brawl”.

They find that these types of curriculum study guides provoke deep critical

analysis of various topics mostly rooted in enhancing cultural competency.

About the Professors

Dr. Linda J.M. Holloway is a Counselor Educator with over 30 years of teaching experience. She is known for her electrifying teaching style where she engages the classroom with the community. She lives and teaches by her teaching philosophy, “Classroom Without Walls” where she strategically moves students from theory to application using videos, movies, and books. She is also a multi-award-winning children’s book author who has published 8 children’s books thus far, a poet, and a story activist.

Dr. April T. Berry is an Adjunct Professor and mental health professional who has a passion for teaching and approaching mental health from a holistic and well-rounded approach. She truly enjoys bringing her classes to life with fun, thought-provoking, and creative tools to enhance the classroom environment and learning experiences of her students. Additionally, she has a passion for peer mentoring, social justice, diversity outreach, and motivational speaking.

Sports

Grambling State Bounces Back with Convincing Win over PVAMU

GRAMBLING, La. | P.J. Eason scored a career-high 17 points with 10 rebounds to help Grambling State rout Prairie View A&M 70-48 on Willis Reed Court at the Fredrick C. Hobdy Assembly Center on Monday night. GSU improved the 9-17 overall and 6-7 in the SWAC, while PVAMU fell to

4-22 and 3-9 in SWAC play. Eason was dominant for the Tigers, going 7-of-10 from the field and notching his third double-double of the season. He added two blocks, a steal and an assist to his tally. Mikale Stevenson (16 points) and Kintavious Dozier (14 points) were also

strong on offense for the Tigers. Trailing 12-10 midway through the first half, Grambling State used a 9-2 run to grab a 19-14 lead with 7:33 to go until halftime. The Tigers carried a 27-26 lead into halftime. Prairie View A&M briefly retook the lead, going up 31-27 with 18:27 to play. Grambling State pushed back in front, utilizing a 12-2 run capped by a

jumper by Eason to take a 39-33 lead with 11:13 to go. The Tigers grew its cushion to double-digits, with 5:11 remaining, on a mid-range jumper by Dozier, making the score 53-43. GSU dominated from that point, outscoring the Panthers 17-5 over the final five minutes of the ball game to run away with the 70-48 triumph.

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G-Men vs Prairie View

Jaqua Hill: Taking Pride In Service

Jaqua Hill is a company’s dream employee. He’s hardworking, dedicated and takes pride in service to his customers. At only 26, he has risen through the ranks to become one of the top sales people at Courtesy Chevrolet in Ruston.

We recently sat down with him to discuss his job and work ethic to see if he could impart any knowledge or words of wisdom to his younger counterparts coming behind him who might be getting ready to enter the workforce.

GC: Ok, Mr. Jaqua, tell me how long you’ve been with Courtesy?

Jaqua: I’ve been with Courtesy four years, going on five. I started in 2021, December of 2021.

GC: Was this your first car sales job?

Jaqua: Yes, my first real job, period, out of college... Well, actually I’m still in college.

GC: Oh, ok so where are you in school?

Jaqua: Grambling. My financial aid ran out so I’m working to finish paying my way through school.

GC: Oh, wow, commendable. So, where are you originally from?

Jaqua: I’m from Mansfield, Louisiana.

GC: What made you decide to go to Grambling?

Jaqua: It was far enough away from home, but not too far where I couldn’t get to home within two hours.

GC: Since you’ve been at Courtesy, what do you feel has been your biggest accomplishments?

Jaqua: My biggest accomplishment is [going from] a person who didn’t know anything about the industry to becoming one of the top salesmen there.

GC: That’s great!

Jaqua: I mean, I’ve seen many salesmen come and go over the four years I’ve been there and I’m still here. I was just a kid that didn’t know nothing about it. I was just broke and ready to make some money!

GC: I hear you!

Jaqua: ...And Mr. Mike Slater gave me the opportunity to do that. He taught me everything I knew. Also, Todd Till (current General Manager), Christopher Feron, the owner’s son, and Mr.[Robert] Fer-



Jaqua stands by trucks. Photo by T. Valentino

on, the owner, gave me the opportunity to just flourish in a place where I didn’t know I could flourish.

GC: That is wonderful! So, what do you think is the reason why you’ve been able to excel so well?

Juqua: I think I’m a good listener. What my managers tell me to do, and what anybody that know a little more than me have to say, I like to listen. I’ve always been an older spirit, so I like to listen and when you tell me something, I’m going to go do it. So that’s one of the reasons, because these guys have been in the industry 25, 30 years.

GC: I think a lot of younger people (and older) can benefit from hearing that... So what aspect of the job do you love the most?

Jaqua: I love when somebody comes and they pick out a car that I tell them everything about it, and they really want that car, but they’re worried about their finances. And, then, we figure it out, and they’re happy at the end of the day. [It’s nothing like] that last picture I get of them smiling in front of that vehicle they always wanted, or didn’t know they could get, it’s a feeling of accomplishment that I made them hap-

py

GC: So what are your future goals?

Jaqua: My Future goal is to move up to upper management... if I stay in the car industry.

It’s something I’m comfortable in. I’m one of those people, even if I’m not selling anything that day, I’m still going to have a great attitude. I’m not going to be down like, ‘Oh, I can’t sell.’ Because once you get that attitude, you don’t sell anything. So, I’m always optimistic.

GC: Well, you’ve got the right attitude for it. So, do you plan to stay in this market, after you finish school?

Jaqua: Well, actually, I just got engaged.

GC: Oh wow, congratulations!

Jaqua: Thanks. So, she lives in Dallas and she’s from New York so she loves the city. So, I’ll probably explore the Dallas market when it’s time.

GC: So, let’s talk about Courtesy. Are there any special incentives, anything going on right now you want to let people know about?

Jaqua: There’s plenty. Like right now we got \$15,000 off on select 2500’s [trucks], gas burners or diesels. We got up to \$11,500 off 1500 trucks... Crew cab or

Quad cab.

We got almost \$6,000 off on all Jeep products.

GC: So, why should people come see you as oppose to another dealership?

Jaqua: When you come to me, not only do you get a person that cares about giving you what you want, giving you the price you want, but a person that also is an expert in all the new products we have. So, I’m a Jeep expert. I’m a Wagoneer expert. I’m a Ram expert. I’m a Chrysler expert. They make us take all those tests. So we know our products.

I’m not just a guy handing you the keys for you to test drive. I’m going to test drive with you. Show you all the features and we’re going to work the numbers out. Then, after the sale is done, you can still call me anytime day or night.

GC: Sounds great! Well, that just about wraps it up. Thank you for your time.



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