



COMMUNITY
AKA's Sponsors
Dazzling Jeans
and Pearls
Brunch
| 3



ARTS & CULTURE
Event Recognizes
Tangipahoa African
American Heritage
Museum
| 7

THE GRAMBLING ★ CONNECTION

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Louisiana's legislative maps violate Voting Rights Act, 5th Circuit rules



Photo credit: Wesley Muller/Louisiana Illuminator

By: Piper Hutchinson

District maps for seats in the Louisiana Legislature violate the federal Voting Rights Act, a panel of judges on the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled. Their decision upholds a lower court ruling that found the boundaries discriminated against Black voters. The panel's ruling was issued this month in the case *Nairne v. Landry*, in which Black voters sued the state over redistricting plans the legislature adopted in 2022. The new boundaries for Louisiana Senate and House of Representatives districts did not increase the number of majority Black seats. The plaintiffs alleged they were unconstitutional racial gerrymanders. The three appellate judges – James Dennis,

an appointee of President Bill Clinton; Catharina Haynes, an appointee of President George W. Bush; and Irma Ramirez, an appointee of President Joe Biden – upheld a 2024 ruling from U.S. District Judge Shelly Dick of the Middle District of Louisiana. Dick, who former President Barack Obama named to the federal bench, determined the legislative maps do not give Black voters a fair opportunity to elect their own representatives. Dick's ruling came after the 2023 elections, when a new class of lawmakers were elected, yielding a Republican supermajority in both chambers. The state appealed Dick's decision, arguing in part that Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act is unconstitutional and should not be applied to Louisiana. See **Louisiana's** Page 2

Black Attorneys General Unite Against DEI Attacks

By Vera Emoghene

Black attorneys general from across America are forming a powerful coalition to defend diversity, equity and inclusion programs under assault from the Trump administration, marking a significant moment in the ongoing battle for civil rights protection. The unprecedented collaboration brings together top legal officials who recognize the urgent need to counter federal efforts dismantling DEI initiatives. These leaders are preparing strategic legal responses to attacks on programs designed to address historical inequalities and promote fairness in education, employment and government contracting.

A major public forum titled Under the Blacklight Presents: Pre-emptive Alliances took place August 11. It showcased these attorneys general discussing their frontline defense of civil rights. The moderated panel, available via YouTube livestream, represents the first coordinated public response from Black state attorneys general to federal DEI rollbacks. The administration has also taken symbolic actions that trouble civil rights advocates. Renaming military bases to honor Confederate generals reverses progress toward removing monuments to those who fought to preserve slavery. Proposed cuts to Black history museum funding threaten institutions preserving African American heritage. The African American Policy Forum characterizes these moves as a targeted assault on Black knowledge, history and people. See **Black Attorneys** Page 2

aggressive federal action against diversity initiatives in decades, potentially affecting thousands of businesses and millions of workers nationwide. The administration has also taken symbolic actions that trouble civil rights advocates. Renaming military bases to honor Confederate generals reverses progress toward removing monuments to those who fought to preserve slavery. Proposed cuts to Black history museum funding threaten institutions preserving African American heritage. The African American Policy Forum characterizes these moves as a targeted assault on Black knowledge, history and people. See **Black Attorneys** Page 2



Tina Davis to Speak at Dope Thinkers only Conference

HOUSTON, TX — Kulur Group, in collaboration with Grambling State University's College of Business and humanUPtions, proudly announces that Tina Davis, President of EMPIRE, groundbreaking music executive, and a product of Grambling State University, will return as a featured speaker at the inaugural Dope Thinkers Only Conference (DTOC) presented by MJ on Purpose, September 11–12, 2025. Recognized as one of the most influential women in music, Davis has built a three-decade career shaping culture and launching stars, from her groundbreaking tenure as the first woman to lead A&R at Def Jam to her current leadership as President at EMPIRE, one of the world's leading independent music companies. See **Tina Davis** Page 2



Screenshot from African American Policy Forum YouTube | Under the Blacklight Live 2025



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OPINION



Douglas Gladstone

This is the tale of two Tigers – Reggie Baldwin and Gary Eave. Mr. Baldwin, who turned 71-years-old on August 19th, was a catcher who played for the Tigers between 1973 and 1976. Mr. Eave pitched for Grambling State a bit later, between 1982 and 1985.

Both were lucky enough to play in “The Show”: Mr. Baldwin with the Houston Astros in 1978 and 1979, and Mr. Eave with Atlanta Braves and Seattle Mariners between 1988 and 1990.

Yet only one of them is collecting a pension from Major League Baseball (MLB).

Regrettably, Mr. Baldwin is among the ever shrinking group of former ballplayers – 502 at last count -- who don’t receive a MLB pension because of the time when

they played. See, all Baldwin and the 501 other men like him played prior to 1980, when new vesting requirements were implemented in collective bargaining negotiations with the union representing ballplayers, the Major League Baseball Players’ Association (MLBPA), which lowered the service credit you needed for a pension from four years to just 43 days. But the men like Baldwin, who all had more than 43 days of service but less than four years, were not retroactively included in this new arrangement.

Instead, all the men like Baldwin receive are non-qualified retirement payments of \$718.75 for every 43 game days they were on a big league roster, up to a maximum payment of \$11,500.

However, a vested retiree can receive up to \$275,000, according to the IRS.

Baldwin made \$21,000 as a rookie catcher for the Astros in 1978. (Eave



Gary Eave



Reggie Baldwin

didn’t fare that much better, by the way; in his rookie year with the Braves, he earned \$62,500). Meanwhile, thanks to the 2022 collective bargaining agreement, the players’ union made sure that the minimum salary for current players rose to \$760,000 this season.

In the 52 career games he appeared in, Baldwin came up to the plate 87 times, scored five runs, collected 21 hits, including six doubles and one homerun, and drove in 12 runs.

With the average MLB

salary last year reported to be \$5.1 million, and with MLBPA Executive Director Tony Clark reportedly receiving a yearly salary of \$3.41 million, it is my position that the union is forgetting to take care of the men like Baldwin, who helped grow the game by enduring labor stoppages and going without paychecks all so free agency could occur. After all, unions are supposed to help hard working people in this country get a fair shake in life.

Since the league doesn’t have to have negotiate

about this matter in collective bargaining, it’s essentially up to the union to go to bat for these men.

What makes this especially reprehensible is that Clark, a former ballplayer with the Detroit Tigers and five other teams, received the Negro League Museum’s Jackie Robinson Award in 2016; however, he has never commented about these non-vested retirees, many of whom are filing for bankruptcy at advanced ages and having banks foreclose on their homes.

Other persons of color affected include Scipio Spinks of the Astros, Joe Gilbert of the Montreal Expos (who wore uniform number 42 as a tribute to Robinson) and Aaron Pointer, an NAACP award winner who was the first African-American linesman in the PAC-10.

I have never met Mr. Baldwin – for that matter, I haven’t met Mr. Eave, either – but I have made numerous appearances

with Mr. Spinks, who once body doubled the late Oscar winner Louis Gossett, Jr. in a television movie about Hall of Fame pitcher Satchell Paige called “Don’t Look Back.” Like myself, he puts the onus to correct this blight on the national pastime squarely on the back of the union.

That is why I implore the entire Grambling community to contact Mr. Clark, as well as MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred, if you’re amenable to the idea. If you want to assist in correcting this egregious error, Clark can be contact via email at comms@mlbpa.org while the Commissioner can be contacted via email at customerservice@mlb.com.

Thank you for anything you can do to remedy this injustice.

Douglas J. Gladstone is the author of “A Bitter Cup of Coffee: How MLB & the Players’ Association Threw 874 Retirees a Curve.”

POTTER MOTIVATION

Adapt or Get Left Behind

By Rusty Potter

When my kids were young, I remember the Friday night ritual well. We’ll take them to Blockbuster Video, and we would spend what felt like hours walking the aisles, reading the back of VHS covers, and debating over which movie to take home. There was something special about it, the anticipation, the popcorn waiting at home, the joy of pressing “play” on the VCR and watching together as a family.

But then came Netflix. At first, Netflix was a DVD-by-mail service. Eventually, they moved

into streaming, bringing movies right into our homes without us having to drive anywhere. Slowly but surely, people stopped walking into Blockbuster. We stayed on our couches instead.

The story could have been different. Blockbuster had the chance to adapt. Netflix even approached them about a partnership in the early days. But Blockbuster turned them down. They didn’t believe the future was in streaming. They thought the old way was strong enough to last forever.

It wasn’t.

Blockbuster didn’t fail because people stopped loving movies. They failed because



Rusty Potter

they stopped evolving. They refused to pivot when the world around them shifted. And by the time they realized it, it was too late. The same is true in life. Change is inevitable. The question is - will we adapt, or will we

cling tightly to the old way of doing things, becoming irrelevant?

Growth requires humility. It means admitting that what worked yesterday might not work tomorrow. It means being willing to let go of what’s comfortable to embrace what’s possible.

Too many people, just like Blockbuster, believe their “success formula” will always work. But times change. Market change. Technology changes. People change.

We are not meant to stay the same. We are all evolving - physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. It is up to us to learn something new every day.

Life has a different lesson to teach us every day.

Maybe for you, the change is in your career - learning a new skill or adapting to new technology.

Change isn’t always comfortable, but comfort is where dreams go to end.

If you want to thrive in a changing world, you must be willing to reinvent yourself again and again.

Don’t be like Blockbuster - so confident in yesterday’s success that you miss tomorrow’s opportunity. Stay teachable. Stay flexible. Stay open.

Because in life, you either change, or you expire.

Louisiana’s From Page 1

The section prohibits actions and policy that restrict a person’s right to vote based on their race, color or membership in a language minority group.

The 5th Circuit judges disagreed with that argument.

Their decision said that when Congress approved the Voting Rights Act, “it did so based on overwhelming evidence that ‘sterner and more elaborate measures were needed to address ‘an insidious and pervasive evil,’ referring to laws in some states that sought to disenfranchise Black voters.

enfranchise Black voters.

The judges shot down the state’s request that it ignore the Supreme Court and disregard the intent of Congress when it outlawed racial discrimination in voting in Section 2.

“This is a historic affirmation of the rights of Black voters in Louisiana,” said Megan Keenan, a staff attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union’s Voting Rights Project who is representing the Nairne plaintiffs. “Today’s decision sends a powerful message: The Voting Rights Act is still a vital safeguard against racial discrimination in our

democracy.”

Though the 5th Circuit panel agreed that the maps in the Nairne case violate the Voting Rights Act, there is a stay on redrawing them until the Supreme Court rules in Louisiana v. Callais, the congressional redistricting case. A ruling on Callais is not expected until next May or June.

Attorneys for the Nairne plaintiffs have advocated for new maps to be quickly adopted and special elections to be held. But if new maps are eventually adopted, it is most likely they will not be used until the 2027 elections.

Tina Davis From Page 1

Her return to Grambling is more than an appearance – it’s a full-circle moment. After attending Grambling State, Davis secured her first music industry role as an executive assistant at Chrysalis Music Publishing, where she helped launch the company’s Black Music Division and worked with artists such as OutKast and Brandy.

She is also the President of Phase Too, Inc., a full-service management company known for discovering, developing, and launching the career of Grammy Award-winning

singer, songwriter, and producer Chris Brown. Her appearance at DTOC reflects her ongoing commitment to empowering emerging creatives.

“Coming back to Grambling feels like coming home, and returning for a fireside chat at the Dope Thinkers Only Conference is a huge honor,” said Davis. “This school gave me the foundation to build a career I’m proud of, so it’s incredibly moving to stand in front of the next generation and hopefully inspire them the way I was once inspired.”

The Dope Thinkers Only Conference is de-

signed to bridge the gap between academia and industry by equipping students and professionals with the tools, connections, and confidence to lead in marketing, communications, leadership, entrepreneurship, and creative industries.

DTOC is open to students, faculty, and professionals nationwide, offering transformational conversations, career-shaping workshops, and opportunities for mentorship and collaboration.

For registration, partnership, or volunteer information, visit dopethinkers.org/conference.

Black Attorneys From Page 1

Legal experts warn dismantling DEI frameworks could reverse decades of progress in workplace equality, educational access and economic opportunity for marginalized communities.

State attorneys general now act as the last line of defense for civil rights protections. Their coalition represents unusual coordination among state legal offices typically independent in operations and priorities.

Powerhouse panel brings expertise

Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell leads the panel as the first Black woman holding her state’s top legal position. Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison brings state and federal experience, having served in Congress before his current role.

Nevada Attorney General Aaron Ford, New York Attorney General Letitia James and Washington Attorney General Nick Brown complete

the panel. James, known for high profile civil rights litigation, has extensive experience challenging federal overreach affecting minority communities.

These attorneys general represent millions across diverse geographic and political landscapes. Their unified stance signals opposition to DEI rollbacks extends beyond partisan boundaries, encompassing economic competitiveness and social cohesion concerns.

Strategic legal responses emerge

The livestreamed discussion provided concrete examples of how state attorneys general can protect diversity initiatives when federal support weakens. Strategies include enforcing state anti discrimination laws, protecting state funded DEI programs and challenging federal overreach through litigation.

Critical moment for civil rights

The coalition forms at a crucial juncture. DEI programs have increased

corporate leadership representation, improved minority graduation rates and created inclusive workplace cultures. Dismantling these structures threatens economic mobility and social progress.

This represents more than a legal battle over specific programs. It reflects fundamental questions about American values, economic opportunity and social justice shaping future political and legal debates.

As attorneys general unite defending civil rights, their efforts may

determine whether decades of equality progress continue or face reversal. The panel discussion offers a critical opportunity for public engagement with these issues, providing insight into how state level legal action can preserve diversity initiatives despite federal opposition.

The streaming format ensures broad accessibility, allowing concerned citizens nationwide to understand how these policy changes affect their daily lives and what legal protections remain available at state levels.

Grambling Connection Staff

Lena W. Claybon
Publisher / Editor-in-Chief

Joice M. Dunn
Contributing Writer

Prentiss Smith
Contributing Writer

Designed by Get Current Studio
CEO, Michael Grant
Creative Director, Kenyon Shafer

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COMMUNITY

AKA's Sponsors Dazzling Jeans and Pearls Brunch

By Joice M. Dunn

The ladies of the Ivy and Pearls Foundation marched into the Ruston Civic Center with their boots on the ground as they celebrated the Dazzling Jeans and Shimmering Pearls Scholarship Brunch Saturday, August 16.

The crowd was welcomed and given a little demonstration of how the Epsilon Psi Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority show where their fans are and put their booths on the ground in pink and green style. The idea and concept of the event was presented to the chapter by Glenda Howard and Abigail James who attended similar functions in New Orleans and Opelousas.

"The event in New Orleans was called the Jazzy Jeans Scholarship Brunch and we used that name until that chapter had it franchised and we changed the name to Dazzling Jeans and Shimmering Pearls Scholarship Brunch," explained Glenda Howard, chairman.

It is an entertainment event highlighted by guests and members wearing their decorated (dazzling) jeans.



The scholarship recipients stand with Dr. Chandra Hall (middle), president of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.



Some members of the Epsilon Psi Omega Chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority bust a move

Members of the sorority raise money by selling tickets and they also solicit funds and donations from area businesses and individuals.

"The mission of the Foundation is charitable, education, civic and scientific purposes such as providing scholarships for high school graduates seeking college education, improving community life through support activities and service projects to enhance or foster a better community," said Melinda Willis, president of the Ivy and Pearls Foundation. The foundation was established and incorporated in September 2013.

Scholarship recipients are both male and female and are supported by corporate sponsors who assist with scholarships.

The five scholarship recipients are **Cienna Willis**, who began her college education at Louisiana State University in Shreveport in January 2025 majoring in public health. The summer of 2023, she participated in Bayou North Area Health Education Center and completed 100 community service hours doing rotations around the hospital.

Omarion Rushing's goal is to launch a clothing brand that inspires individuals to shine their light and be themselves, no matter the circumstances. By furthering his education at Grambling State University, he will continue to engage in community service and leadership activities to make a positive impact.

Kayleigh Dewberry as a young Black woman, her main career objectives are the promotion of Civil Rights Justice, financial literacy and stability, and equality for minority and disenfranchised groups in the United States. She plans to attend Howard University and major in political science.

Charity Willis is passionate about helping others, especially children, and she's dedicated to becoming a competent and compassionate pediatric nurse practitioner. This passion has driven her to excel academically and to take on various leadership roles throughout her high school years.

Kayla Mitchell strives to achieve her dream of becoming a NICU nurse, she's excited to enroll in Grambling State University's renowned nursing program. Mitchell is eager to join this community of passionate, dedicated individuals who shares her commitment to making a difference in the world of healthcare.


Sponsors for the event included Century Next Bank of Ruston and Sparks Nissan Kia. Monroe, Louisiana. The Community Partners were Daphne Gallot, Independent Mary Kay Consultant of Grambling, La, Kings Funeral Home of Ruston, Paradise Funeral Home, LLC in Arcadia, Dr. Melinda Willis and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated Epsilon Alpha Zeta Chapter.



BEAP Program Receives Donation

Dr. Thomas Durant recently donated \$ 500 dollars to support the service research and community activities of youth participants in the Black Empowerment Apprenticeship Program (BEAP) under the Umbrella The Louisiana Eta Chapter. The monetary donation will,used for service- research training in the academic and faith community.

Dr. Thomas Duran is pictured with Dr . Staten, Co-Founder of Project BEAP, and a former BEAPer, De' Harrius Ceasar, one of the first recipients of BEAP Travel Research Award.




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Announcements

AARP To Hold Meetings 2nd Tuesdays

The Grambling Branch of AARP #5240 will host its regular monthly meetings starting Sept. 9 at Grambling Community Center at 11:00am. Please come and join us and hear more about AARP. The meetings will continue each second Tuesday of each month. Contact T. Younger, 318-247-6010.

Coalition dedication ceremony by invitation only

The Lincoln United Community Coalition (LUCC) will hold a dedication ceremony for the Alana Gilbert Belton Business and Leadership Academy and Awards Ceremony Saturday, August 30, 6 p.m. at the Coalition Building on 407 N. Hazel Street in Ruston. The event is semi-formal and by invitation only.

HBCU Boosters to sponsor GSU quilt raffle

The HBCU Boosters will hold a quilt raffle. The raffle will be \$5 and the quilt will have a Grambling State University design. The drawing is scheduled for Sept. 5. For more information or to receive a ticket contact Billy Norman, 318-497-0773; Henry Kelly 318-243-6123; Jim "Bear" Maryland, 318-607-2786; Carl McCarter, 318-235-6585 or Tommie Woods, 318-278-3163.

Annual Lincoln Parish NAACP Fish Fry set September 5

The Lincoln Parish NAACP annual Fish Fry will be held Friday, Sept. 5, at Pilgrim Rest B.C. 622 W. Line St Ruston. Pre-Sale tickets are \$12 as well as plates sold on the day of the

fundraiser. You may donate through any member as well as purchase tickets.

For more information contact Nakisha R. Evans (318) 278-2587 and the chairman thanks for the community support.

Line Dance class available for the Grambling area

A Line Dance Class with Yatta at Board & Bottle is now available for the Grambling area each Monday at 130 W. Park Ave. in Ruston and doors open at 5:30 p.m. The free class is being instructed by Kenyatta Collins.

The next session is set for Monday, Sept. 2. For additional information please contact Collins at 832- 891-7488 or WWW.REALLYGREAT-SITE.COM.

NAACP will hold monthly meetings on third Thursday

The Grambling Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) #6094B will host its regular monthly meeting on Thursday, Sept. 18, at 6 p.m. Via teleconference. For additional information, please call or text 318-680-7679, Grace Tatem.

NAMI Family support group holds meeting

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) will hold a support group meeting Thursday, Sept. 18, at 2 p.m. in the Lincoln Parish Library, George Byrnsrside Conference Room, 910 North Trenton St., Ruston. The meetings will continue each third Thursday of each month until December.

Anyone at least 18 years old may

RSVP to jjones79aka@yahoo.com or call 93180 (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.

GSU Football Nutritional Program seeks help

Looking for donations from committed and supportive friends of the Grambling State University (GSU) Football Coach Mickey Joseph and the GSU Football Nutritional Program. At This Time, All Donations are being made to: HBCU Boosters, Earmarked for the GSU Nutritional Program. Checks or Money Orders should be mailed to: P. O. Box 82, Grambling, La. 71245.

City of Grambling Water Department Issues Warning of 'Wrong' Sites for Paying Bills

The Water Department of Grambling wants Citizens to beware of paying their bills on the wrong sites online. Citizens should pay their water bills, property taxes and tickets at cityofgrambling.org ONLY. Once at the site, you will be directed to the payment page (ncount.com) where you can pay your bills. Several of these 'wrong' sites have cropped up lately according to the Water Department. One such site is doxo.com. DO NOT pay your bills on this site. Once your money is gone, the City has no way to retrieve it so BEWARE!

Free food distribution set for Saturdays

The Lincoln United Community Coalition will be distributing free food

for those who qualify each Saturday from 10 a.m. until noon. Food is distributed on first, third and fourth Saturdays from the Walmart retail store; second Saturday from the Northeast Louisiana Food Bank out of Monroe. Persons can come to the office at 407 N. Hazel in Ruston on distribution day at 9:30 to qualify. Plates are also sold for \$10 to help support the organization.

For more information, please contact Patricia Mims Brooks 318-265-2011 (office) or 214-662-5407.

Grambling Community Garden seek volunteers

Volunteers are needed for the Grambling Community Garden. If you are interested in lending a hand, contact DeVaria Ponton, master gardener. The garden is managed by Grow Grambling, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Ponton has the ability to grant volunteers hours and service-learning hours. Volunteers may contact Ponton at 318-278-9892.

Parish public transportation available to Grambling

The Lincoln Parish Public Transportation System (LPPTS) is available to the public, including the Grambling area. The system currently provides demand-response, curb to curb, non-emergency service and operates on a first call/come first serve reservation schedule. The service is handicap accessible.

Reservations are required 24 hours in advance unless prepaid and cancellations must be made two hours prior to pick-up time. For additional information please contact Samantha Dimmer, transportation coordinator 318-251-5138.



IN REMEMBRANCE

Ollie Valena Lane: A Life Defined By Love and Generosity



Ollie Valena Lane, age 89, of Grambling, Louisiana, passed away peacefully on Saturday, August 9, 2025. Born on Valentine's Day in Mansfield, Louisiana, Valena was the beloved daughter of Ollie Marie Powell Purvis and Wilbur T. Purvis, Sr.

An extraordinary woman, a phenomenal leader, and a beacon of kindness—Valena Purvis Lane lived a life defined by grace, generosity, and unwavering devotion. Born on a day that symbolizes love, she embodied it fully, pouring compassion into every corner of her life through service, faith, and

community.

Valena pursued her passion for education with determination, earning a Bachelor of Arts in Education from Grambling State University and later attaining an MBA in Business Administration with an emphasis in Accounting from Louisiana Tech University.

She served as an educator in the Webster Parish School District before transitioning into leadership roles that shaped her community for decades. She became Executive Director of the Grambling Housing Authority in 1980, where she faithfully served until her retirement in 1997. Her joyful signature greeting—"Greetings!"—became a cherished hallmark of her presence. Guided by James 1:2-3, she met every challenge with faith, resilience, and warmth, believing that joy was both a gift and a calling.

Her tenure with the Housing Authority was marked by transformative accomplishments: securing vital grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, expanding public housing units from 18 to 98, and acquiring 80 Section 8 vouchers. She also procured a 15-passenger van to transport residents to church services,

educational programs, and even unforgettable trips to Disney World for families who had never left their hometown.

Valena continued her impact as Executive Director of Community Coordinating Counseling, Inc., where she organized joy-filled experiences for youth and seniors alike. From local events to international excursions—Dubai, Egypt, Hawaii, New York, Martha's Vineyard, and the historic inauguration of President Barack Obama—Valena's vision was global, but her heart remained rooted in local service.

Faith was the cornerstone of her life. Valena first united with Corinth Baptist Church in Mansfield, LA, and later joined New Rocky Valley Baptist Church in Grambling under Pastor Julius Sumler. There, she remained an active servant in youth programs and the annual Vacation Bible School, carrying on a spiritual legacy passed down through generations.

Valena Purvis Lane will be deeply missed. Her laughter, her kindness, and her unwavering love leave behind a legacy that will continue to inspire generations. Though we mourn her passing, we celebrate the radiant life she lived—and we carry forward the light she so generously shared.

She is survived by her

devoted sister, Thelma Lee; her cherished sister-in-law, Irene Purvis; and her dear aunt, Rita Purvis. She also leaves behind a host of loving cousins, nieces, nephews, and extended family members, all of whom were touched by her spirit and strengthened by her love.

She was preceded in death by her loving husband, Lawrence Jack Lane; her parents, Wilbur T. Purvis, Sr. and Ollie Marie Powell Purvis; her siblings Doris P. McCall, Joyce P. Sudds, Evelyn P. Wright, Wilbur T. Purvis II, Velma P. Hollie, and Israel S. Purvis; and in-laws Louis McCall, Jeffrey Sudds, Robert Wright, Shirley Purvis, Prella Hollie, and Phillip Lee.

Ollie Valena Lane was laid to rest at Centuries Memorial Funeral Home & Park, 8801 Mansfield Road, Shreveport, LA 71108-5813, in Memories East; Lot 1034; space 2 on Tuesday, August 19, 2025.

Special thanks to Pastor Julius Sumler, Jerry Brooks, the funeral staff of Centuries Memorial Funeral Home & Park, CCC, Amedisys Hospice Care, Spring Lake Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation, and the many friends and family members who have shown love and support.

Our hearts will forever carry her memory.

Tributes to Ms. Ollie Valena Lane

My favorite aunt has finished her course

She was the queen of living life to the fullest. She was the essence of unconditional love for our family and her friends. The teacher in her taught us how to leave a legacy that continues to shine past our time on earth. I have so many fond memories of her. My first trip to Atlanta was with her and Uncle Jack.

She supported ALL her nieces and nephews with her presence, prayers and her pocketbook. Our family and her friends will miss her dearly! Rest well Aunt Valena!

Wilbur T. Purvis, Pastor of Destiny World Church, Atlanta, GA

Reflections for a great leader

The Community Coordinating Council, INC, is a Non-Profit, Human Services Organization, which began on July 23, 1997. The Organization was Founded by The late "Pinkie Carolyn Wilkerson," attorney and former State Representative.

Mrs. Valena Lane was selected as The "First" Executive Director of the organization and continued her extraordinary service up to the time of her passing on Saturday, August 9.

The "CCC," under The Leadership of Mrs. Lane and its Board of Directors, was primarily self-funded but received support through state and local grants and private contributions during the last 12 years. Mrs. Lane coordinated efforts that took high school students to the state legislature, where they actively worked to submit bills. The 100-plus members have traveled all over the United States and to lands be-

yond like the Holy Land. She conducted educational seminars largely for five different chapters throughout District 11 and through the CCC, provided scholarships to graduating seniors annually.

The continued focus and service to "Senior Citizens and Youth" by the Community Coordinating Council, INC, will be an "Ongoing" Legacy To Mrs. Lane and its mission of service to others.

In Loving Memory of Valena Purvis Lane, Our Loving Soror.

We honor the life and legacy of a remarkable woman- Valena Purvis Lane. She was a leader, a sister, and a servant whose presence lit every room when she entered. She was a Golden Life Member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and she had an opportunity to be elected as Chapter President for the Grambling Alumnae Chapter of Delta



Ms. Ollie Lane and Friends

Sigma Theta Sorority two terms, 1977-1979 & 1981-1983. She was recognized during the Women's History Celebration honoring GAC's past presidents in 2023

during the chapter's 75th Diamond Anniversary Jubilee Kick-Off: Red Dress Brunch and Beyond event. Soror Lane was the epitome of a servant lead-

er and always willing to serve in her church, sorority, and community.

She carried her love of music like a soundtrack to her life- whether through song, worship,

or laughter that rang out like a joyful melody. Her joy was contagious and her laughter reminded us that even in challenging times, God's grace gives us reason to smile.



CHURCH NEWS

”Tributes Cont’d”

Though she is no longer with us in body, her spirit will continue to echo in the music of our hearts, in the work we do, and in the laughter we share.

*Patricia Hutcherson,
Chapter President
Grambling Alumnae
Chapter of Delta Sigma
Theta Sorority, Inc.*

Remembering a great community leader and friend

Man in his lifetime plays many roles. He makes his entrance and exits and then is heard no more. This was not the case with Ollie Valena Purvis Lane. Her “Greetings! Greetings! Greetings!” is still being heard. The Fruit of her Spirit is being lived by those she taught and by her words of “If I can just give to others, then my life will not be in vain.”

I worked with her and the youth on the “Behave! Behave! Believe!” project before I became

a coordinator. I worked and traveled with her with Project Gold before I was able to become a member of Project Gold. She decided to pull all groups together and the first CCC Extravaganza was held in Ruston Civic Center in June of 2005.

She accommodated everyone. She organized one-day trips for those who were unable to spend time on longer ones. Her organized longer trips, to name a few, have taken us to Hawaii, Branson, Canada, Martha’s Vineyard, and

the Holy Land in Israel (where some decided to be baptized). The most memorable trip was to President Obama’s Celebration in Washington, D.C.

During her recuperation, she was still working with us virtually on the Pinkie C. Wilkerson Luncheon, distributing food to the needy, finalizing plans for the Dubai trip, and plans for the Christmas tour.

Valena and I were known to many as Mutt and Jeff or that tall lady and that short lady. She

said that her grandfather told her mother, “You have one weird one”. She brought a calm spirit to all the unfortunate situations we encountered in the many years that I knew her.

I NEVER saw her angry.

I NEVER heard her raise her voice.

I NEVER heard her use profanity.

She was “one of a kind”. God broke the mold when she was born. Some people are placed in your life for a reason; a short time to

meet a specific need. Some people are placed in your life for a season; certain to be a factor in your growth from there. Some people are placed in your life for a lifetime; gifting you with rare and enduring relationships meant to provide a constant source of support and love.

Ollie Valena Purvis Lane, a member of CCC, thank you for serving as our Executive Director and friend.

To God be the Glory!

Elmira McCarty, friend



Memorial Resolution Honoring the Life and Legacy of Mrs. Ollie Valena Lane

WHEREAS, The Mayor, City Councilmembers, and Citizens of Grambling join the Lane Family in the Celebration of Life for Mrs. **Ollie Valena Lane**, a beloved citizen, educator, dedicated ministry and community leader, whose life was marked by extraordinary service, compassion, and dedication to the betterment of others; and

WHEREAS, **Mrs. Valena Lane** was a proud resident of Grambling for over six decades, where she enriched the lives of countless individuals through her work in the Children’s Ministry at New Rocky Valley Baptist Church, an Educator, Director of Housing, a Lifetime Member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, and Civic Engagement as Executive Director of Community Coordinating Council, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, The City of Grambling remembers **Mrs. Ollie Valena Lane** for her legacy of service for organizing educational seminars and cultural trips that broadened horizons for youth and adults alike, including visits to presidential inaugurations, national landmarks, and international destinations; and

WHEREAS, To the family, be it known that the presence of her infectious smile, her pleasant “Greetings-Greetings-Greetings”, her words of wisdom, and her faithful service to our community has left a void that will be filled with pleasant memories of Mrs. **Ollie Valena Lane**; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, **Alvin R. Bradley, Sr.**, Mayor of the City of Grambling, and the City Councilmembers: **John F. Brown, Jr.**, **Cathy Holmes-Giles**, **Jerry Lewis**, **DeVaria Hudson Ponton**, and **Mayor Pro-Tem-Delores Wilkerson-Smith**, on behalf of the citizens, hereby honor the memory of **Ollie Valena Lane**, celebrating her enduring legacy and expressing profound gratitude for her immeasurable contributions to our community;

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Grambling, Louisiana to be affixed the 19th day of August 2025.

Alvin R. Bradley, Sr.

Mayor of Grambling

A POEM: VALENA LANE CAN

Written by Mary Scott Hobdy (2004)

Who can answer the phone
In a lively voice,
With “Greetings” so pleasant
And make your heart rejoice?
VALENA LANE

Who drives the church van
All around and around
To transport our youth
Wherever they are found?
VALENA LANE

Who takes them in and out of state
To ensure that their skills are up to date?
Who has a shepherd’s heart for their needs
And fills their lack with kindly deeds?
VALENA LANE

Who can light up your day
As you travel a rough road
By a positive smile
That lifts your heavy load?
VALENA LANE

Who affects eternity everyday
Through words and deeds that are ample
And taught by the way
Of our Savior’s powerful example?
VALENA LANE

Who never seeks
for honor and praise
But quietly labors
in all her ways?

So, to whom shall we say, “We love you”
As we gather here today;
To whom shall we say “Thank you”
In an humble and gracious way?
VALENA LANE

©2004 by Mary Scott Hobdy



THE GRAMBLING CONNECTION

The Grambling Connection is looking for Freelance Writers!

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CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

Liberty Hill Baptist Association to hold Prayer Breakfast

The Liberty Hill Baptist Association, Inc., Women’s Auxiliary will hold a Prayer Breakfast Saturday, Sept. 6, at 9 a.m. at New Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church Fellowship Hall, 2697 S. Elm St., Arcadia, LA 71001.

The theme for the event will be Praying for America, coming from II Chronicles 7:14.

A full breakfast including grits, eggs, bacon, sausage, biscuits, fruit, orange juice, coffee and water will be provided. Tickets may be purchased for \$20.00.

The members will come together in unity and fellowship and offer prayers of strength and renewal for the Association, churches, communities, homes and our nation. Tickets are available for each district from our Woman’s Department District Leaders. Please call 318-451-9303 for any additional information.

Mt. Olive Mission to hold monthly meeting

The Mt. Olive Baptist Church Mission Department will hold its meeting Saturday, Sept. 27, at 10 a.m. at the church.

The church is located at 571 Mt. Olive Rd. Grambling and Rev. Donald Young is the pastor. For more information contact Sharon Ford Dunn at (318) 614-4726.

Men’s Fellowship group to celebrate Jesus

The area Men’s Fellowship group will meet every second Monday of each month at the Memorial Funeral Home Chapel in Arcadia, Louisiana, located on 128680 LA-9 71001 from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. The men only group gathers for strength, courage and knowledge.

The meeting is spearheaded by Patrick Jefferson, former state representative, along with invited speakers. Every man is invited to come and worship.

Church of Christ in Grambling Extends invitation

The Church of Christ in Grambling invites all to worship. Bible Study is held Sunday at 10 a.m. and morning worship at 11 a.m. Listeners may join online services by tuning into the YouTube channel, 146 King St. Church of Christ. Wednesday night Bible study begins at 7 p.m. The Zoom ID is 9744743562 and the church may be contact at ChurchofChristatGrambling@gmail.com or 318- 596-1038. The Church is located at 146 King St.

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



HEALTH & WELLNESS

CHARMING’S CORNER

Seeing Beyond: Awakening the Third Eye Chakra

By Charming Davis

The third eye chakra, located in the center of your forehead between your eyebrows, is the gateway to vision, intuition, and spiritual wisdom. When it is open and balanced, you are able to see beyond illusions, trust your inner voice, and make decisions with clarity. You don’t just rely on what the eyes can see—you move with insight, discernment, and guidance from a deeper place within.

But when the third eye is blocked, it can feel like walking through life in a fog. You may second-guess yourself, struggle with confusion, or feel disconnected from your spiritual guidance. On the other hand, if it is overactive, you may be lost in illusions, fantasies, or distrust of reality.

Signs of an Unbalanced Third Eye Chakra

- Difficulty making decisions
- Feeling confused or mentally scattered

- Ignoring your intuition or second-guessing yourself
- Headaches, eye strain, or trouble sleeping
- Feeling disconnected from your spiritual path
- Being overly skeptical or closed-minded
- Living in daydreams or illusions rather than reality

Why the Third Eye Chakra Matters

In many African-American families and cultures, intuition has always been present—it is what guided our ancestors, what warned them of danger, and what whispered strength into their spirit. Yet for generations, society has taught us to silence that inner knowing and only trust what can be proven. But when we deny our third eye, we deny a powerful gift.

Balancing this chakra allows you to trust yourself again, to break free from confusion, and to walk with spiritual confidence. A healthy third eye brings:



Charming Davis

- Inner wisdom and trust in your intuition
- Clarity in decision-making
- Stronger spiritual connection
- Vision to see possibilities others may overlook
- Alignment of the mind, body, and spirit

How to Heal and Strengthen the Third Eye Chakra

- Practice meditation and visualization daily
 - Keep a dream journal to connect with your subconscious messages
 - Work with herbs like mugwort, rosemary, and spearmint
 - Sip calming teas such as chamomile or lavender
 - Meditate with crystals like amethyst, lapis lazuli, or sodalite
 - Practice affirmations such as: “I trust my inner wisdom. I see clearly. I am guided by Spirit.”
 - Spend quiet time in stillness—listen to your intuition before speaking or acting
- At Naturally Charming Universe Holistic Wellness Center, I help clients reconnect with their intuition and strengthen their spiritual insight. Through Reiki, spiritual consultation, and holistic tools, I guide you into a deeper trust of yourself and the

wisdom within you. You can schedule a phone consultation with me today to begin awakening your third eye, clearing confusion, and stepping fully into alignment with your higher vision.

Trusting Yourself is the Key

The third eye reminds us that we already carry the answers we seek. Your intuition is your compass, and when you learn to listen, life begins to flow with more clarity and ease. Healing the third eye chakra is about reclaiming that inner trust, breaking cycles of doubt, and walking boldly in the truth of your spirit.

Naturally Charming Universe Holistic Wellness Center

Address: 311 Main Street, Grambling, Louisiana 71245
• Phone: (318) 789-5393
• Business Hours:
• Monday – Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
• Saturday: 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Walmart shrimp recall urgent radioactive contamination

FDA discovers dangerous Cesium-137 in Great Value frozen shrimp from Indonesian distributor – check these specific lot codes in your freezer now

By Miriam Musa

Your freezer might be hiding a serious health hazard right now. The FDA just issued an urgent warning about Walmart frozen shrimp radioactive contamination that could pose serious risks to anyone who’s purchased certain Great Value products recently.

Here’s everything you need to know to protect yourself and your family.

The contamination discovered at U.S. ports

U.S. Customs and Border Protection detected possible Cesium-137 — a radioactive isotope — in shipping containers at four different ports across the country. When the FDA tested frozen shrimp from the Indonesian distributor BMS Foods, those samples also came back positive for the dangerous substance.

The good news? No contaminated shrimp has actually entered the U.S. food supply yet. But the FDA isn’t taking any chances, which is why they’re recommending recalls for all products from this distributor.



Check your freezer immediately

If you’ve got Great Value frozen shrimp in your freezer, grab the package right now and check these specific lot codes:

- Great Value frozen raw shrimp, lot code: 8005540-1, Best by Date: 3/15/2027
- Great Value frozen raw shrimp, lot code: 8005538-1, Best by Date: 3/15/2027
- Great Value frozen raw shrimp, lot code: 8005539-1, Best by Date: 3/15/2027

Found a match? Don’t cook it, don’t eat it — throw it away immediately. The FDA’s message is crystal clear: these products should not be consumed under any circumstances.

What makes Cesium-137 so dangerous

Let’s talk about what we’re

actually dealing with here. Cesium-137 is a radioactive isotope that can cause serious health problems. This silvery-white metal becomes liquid near room temperature and easily bonds with other substances to create crystalline powder.

External exposure to large amounts can cause burns, acute radiation sickness, and in severe cases, even death. While the contamination levels in these products haven’t been specified, any exposure to radioactive materials is concerning enough to warrant immediate action.

Why this recall is different

Here’s what makes this situation particularly noteworthy: the FDA is recalling products that haven’t even tested

Walmart

positive for contamination. They’re taking this precautionary step because the shipping containers from BMS Foods tested positive for Cesium-137.

This approach shows just how seriously federal agencies are treating potential radioactive contamination in our food supply. Better safe than sorry when it comes to radioactive isotopes.

BMS Foods completely banned

The Indonesian company BMS Foods is now completely banned from shipping any products to the U.S. until they resolve whatever conditions led to this contamination issue. The FDA determined that their products violate federal food safety laws because they appear to have been prepared, packed, or stored under unsanitary conditions.

This isn’t just about these specific shrimp products — it’s a complete halt on everything from this distributor until further notice.

What you should do right now

If you purchased any of the

affected products, disposal is simple but important. Throw the shrimp away in your regular trash — don’t try to return it to the store or handle it more than necessary.

The FDA is working with distributors and retailers to ensure proper recalls happen across the board, so you might start seeing these products pulled from shelves if that hasn’t happened already.

Staying informed about food safety

This incident highlights why checking lot codes and staying updated on FDA recalls matters. Food contamination can happen anywhere in the supply chain, from production facilities to shipping containers to retail storage.

Make it a habit to register for FDA recall alerts or check their website periodically, especially if you frequently buy frozen foods or products from international distributors.

This radioactive contamination scare serves as a reminder that our food safety systems, while generally effective, aren’t foolproof. The quick detection and response prevented contaminated products from reaching consumers, but it’s up to you to check your freezer and dispose of any affected items. When federal agencies say don’t eat something, especially when radioactive materials are involved, that’s advice worth taking seriously.

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21 Wrangler High Altitude Certified \$31,599

19’ Toyota Rav 4 Limited \$26,995

23 Hyundai Sonata Limited \$24,999

23’ Durango GT Launch Edition Certified \$29,888

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ARTS & CULTURE



Museum Supporters browse silent auction items

Event Recognizes Tangipahoa African American Heritage Museum

BY Richard Meek

A diverse crowd of more than 200 gathered Aug. 2 in the ballroom at the Southeastern Louisiana University student union to show their support for the Tangipahoa African American Heritage Museum and Veterans Archives, which sits in the center of a predominantly Black Hammond neighborhood. The event, which featured lively music by the New Orleans Potholes

brass band and, in true southeast Louisiana tradition, ended with a second-line, was the largest fundraiser of the year for the museum. “The money we raise during this event supports us throughout the year, so it is very important,” museum Director Delmas Dunn said. The museum is dedicated to preserving, maintaining and educating the public on African American history in Louisiana, with a concentration on Tangipahoa Parish.

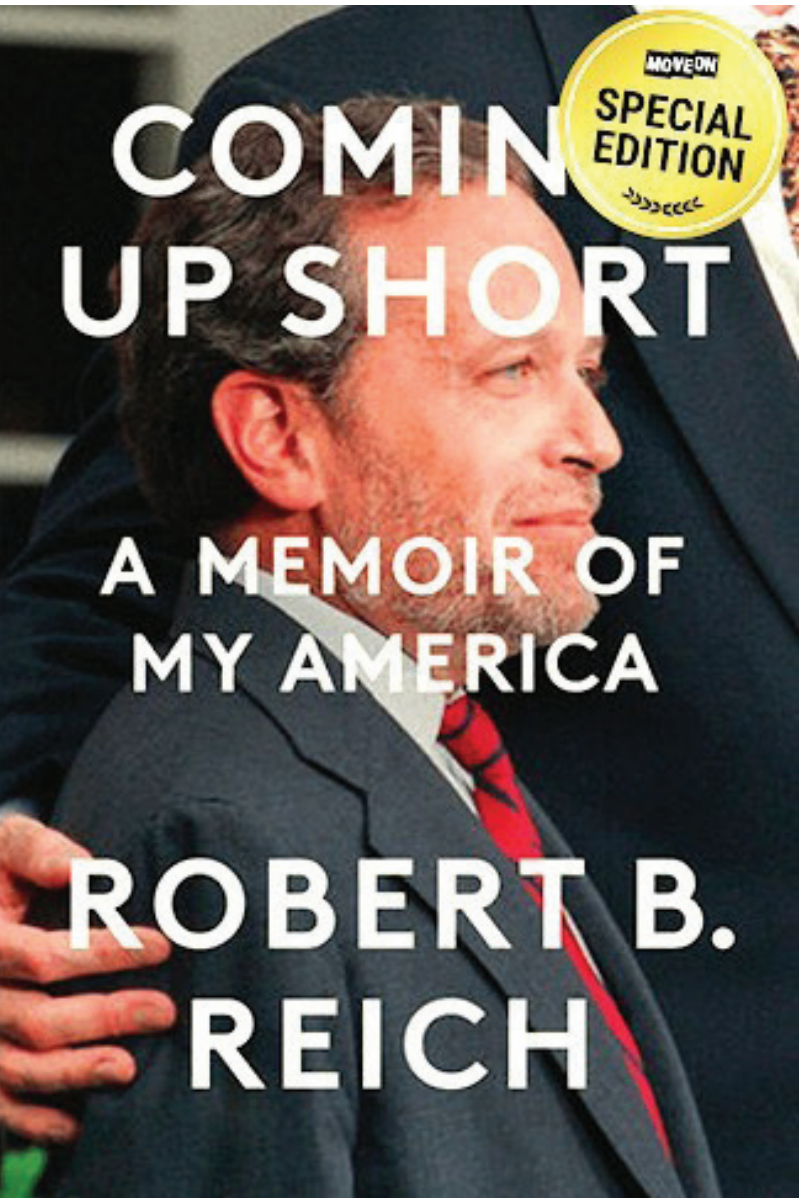
Dunn said the museum details the history of African Americans from Africa to Hurricane Katrina. Tangipahoa Parish council member Louis Joseph, who said he is honored to have his picture in the museum honoring him as the first Black Tangipahoa Parish Schools superintendent, called the museum a “godsend.” “It’s a great thing for people to see and a great way to keep up with our

history,” Joseph said. “I am very proud of it.” Keynote speaker William Wainwright, president of Southeastern Louisiana University, praised the work of the museum and its impact on the community. He stressed the importance of understanding the generational and transformational impact the museum has had through the power of education. Wainwright said he was deeply moved by the chronology of the museum’s galleries and the

challenge it presents for visitors to not only promote awareness but also lead them to action that strengthens humanity. “Everyone here tonight stands on the shoulders of those who laid the foundation to continue the important work of the museum,” he said, noting its 2007 opening. Wainwright singled out African Americans who have played significant roles in the history of Southeastern, from Mildred Myles Crawford, the university’s first

Black student to earn a degree, to popular TV host and former Lady Lion basketball player Robin Roberts. Through original murals, original art and artifacts, the museum brings to life the African American culture for visitors. Dunn said one of the museum’s main objectives is to educate everyone, regardless of ethnicity, on the struggles of African Americans. For information on the museum, visit www.ta-ahm.org.

Book Review: America is coming up short



By Robert Reich

Here’s something you might not know about me: I was born on June 24, 1946, just 10 days after the birth of Donald Trump. He and I grew up all at once in the very same America, and yet, at the same time, we lived in very different worlds. I have worked in politics for over 50 years, always striving to make life better for the many, not the few. I marched for civil rights. I protested the Vietnam War. I watched my generation, the baby boomers, inherit from our parents a nation with the largest economy and strongest democracy in the world, and one with the largest and most prosperous middle class. And I watched in horror as my generation failed to protect that middle class. We allowed for a massive consolidation of wealth to those at the very top. Years ago, I warned that a demagogue would exploit resentment about inequality in this country and unleash a wave of intolerance and cruelty. In my opinion, out-of-control inequality—and long-festering resentments—set the stage for Donald Trump to take power and implement his far-right agenda.

But I have never stopped believing in America. Which is why I wrote a new book, “Coming Up Short: A Memoir of My America.” In it, I reflect on where we’ve been, what got us here, how we might chart a path forward, and my personal experiences along the way. I have been so grateful to have the support of MoveOn members for many years, which is why I set aside some books specifically for MoveOn, and I would be honored if you ordered one. In my book, I talk a lot about bullies. It’s a topic I know quite a bit about. I encountered my first bullies as a kid, being tormented on the playground for being short. And throughout my career in politics, I’ve come across a whole lot of bullies who have used their wealth and power to reshape the economy to serve only their interests, erode trust in our democracy, and clear the path to install a bully-in-chief, Donald Trump. But I also know how to defeat bullies: people power. By coming together, we show that love is stronger than hate and that, in the long run, a grassroots movement organizing millions of people across the country can never

be defeated by a few billionaires writing checks in a back room. MoveOn is organizing millions of Americans in every state, every congressional district, and every corner of the country to stop the bully we are currently facing, Donald Trump. Their work is crucial in the coming days, months, and years as they push the Democratic Party to truly learn from the 2024 election while mobilizing to protect our most vulnerable communities from mass deportations, attacks on birthright citizenship, and discrimination. The truth is, we cannot make deals with tyrants. As I’ve said before, Trump has shown repeatedly throughout his career that he does not consider himself bound by any law or court. The only way to protect ourselves is to unite and stand up to his bullying. I hope that my book can provide some helpful insight into how we got here—and how we get out. And that it may be able to give you some inspiration—and a few laughs— No corporate bookstore will put your money directly to work standing up to bullies, including Donald Trump and his MAGA enablers.

— Robert Reich —



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SPORTS

GSU Unveils State-of-the-Art Indoor Athletic Facility

GRAMBLING, La. | Grambling State University recently unveiled the design for a state-of-the-art Indoor Athletic Training and Performance Facility, a bold investment made possible through state funding that underscores the University's commitment to enhancing the student-athlete experience, advancing year-round training, and carrying forward the storied legacy of Tiger Athletics.

The design concept represents a commitment to the future of Grambling State's student-athletes-supporting their growth on the field, in the classroom, and as leaders who continue the University's proud tradition. Serving as a cornerstone for athletic excellence, the facility will provide access to top-tier resources-including a 70-yard turf field, climate-controlled training space, and dedicated areas for sports medicine, strength development, and team preparation. These enhancements reinforce Grambling State's dedication to preparing champions for every arena of life while positioning the University among leaders in athletic innovation and infrastructure across Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

"This design concept is more than an idea-it's a promise," said Dr. Trayvean Scott, Vice President for Intercollegiate Athletics. "We are preparing champions who will



carry forward the legacy of Grambling State. This facility is designed with them in mind, ensuring our student-athletes have the tools to compete and excel in every season."

Highlights of the planned facility include: A 70-yard turf field supporting football, track, and multipurpose training. Climate-controlled space for year-round conditioning and drills. Advanced lighting and video systems for film review and performance analysis.

Designated areas for sports medicine, strength training, and team meetings.

This project demonstrates a powerful investment in the future of Grambling State Athletics. It reflects the University's drive to build resources that strengthen athletic programs, enhance student-athlete development, and continue Grambling's tradition of excellence.

"Supporting our student-athletes means investing in every dimension of their journey-athletic, academic, and per-

sonal," said Grambling State President Martin Lemelle, Jr. "This facility embodies that vision. It is more than a space to train; it is a commitment to their well-being, their preparation, and their legacy. At Grambling State, we are not simply building for today-we are creating pathways that ensure future generations of student-athletes have the resources, opportunities, and support to thrive at the highest level."

A groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled for Friday, October 10th, 2025 adjacent to Eddie G. Robinson Memorial Stadium. Conceptual renderings released today offer a first look at the modern design and vision for the facility. Alumni, fans, and media will be invited to witness the start of this transformative project.

FOLLOW GRAMBLING ATHLETICS

Stay updated with Grambling State Athletics by following @GSU_Tigers on X, @gramblingathletics on Instagram, and /GramblingStateTigers1901 on Facebook, or visit gsutigers.com.

GSU Announces "One Grambling" Athletics Inaugural Day of Giving Campaign to Elevate Student-Athlete Success and Strengthen GSU Athletics

By: Grambling State Athletics

GRAMBLING, La. – Grambling State University Athletics has announced the launch of One Grambling: Athletics Day of Giving, a unified fundraising campaign dedicated to advancing student-athlete success and elevating GSU Athletics to new heights.

The campaign brings together alumni, fans, and partners in a shared effort to strengthen the foundation of GSU Athletics, providing critical resources that support championship-level programs, enhance facilities, and create opportunities for student-athletes to thrive both on and off the field. The campaign will launch on October 10, 2025, and conclude on October 11, 2025, during Homecoming Weekend.

"As those who follow college athletics know, this is a time of tremendous change and opportunity in our industry," said Dr. Trayvean D. Scott, Vice President for Intercollegiate Athletics. "Through all of that change, the foundation of our department remains the generosity and support of our fans, alumni, and partners. There are many ways to make an impact, but the truth is this:



to achieve the ambitious goals we have for our Tigers — on the field, in the classroom, and beyond — we must grow donor support. Every gift matters, and every supporter plays a role. I encourage everyone who believes in our student-athletes to join us, because together, we can ensure Grambling State Athletics continues to thrive for generations to come."

The campaign aims to directly support the department's three key pillars:

TiGer NIL – Expands Name, Image, and Likeness opportunities for student-athletes through direct pay programs and an innovative revenue-sharing model, providing financial resources and professional development to help Tigers maximize their personal brands.

TiGer Nutrition – Enhances health and wellness support by providing year-round nutrition resources, fueling stations, and mental health services tailored to the demands of student-athletes, helping them perform at their best physi-

cally and mentally.

TiGers Build – Drives facility upgrades and new construction to ensure GSU teams have first-class spaces to train, compete, and develop, creating a championship-caliber environment for current and future Tigers.

Contributions to One Grambling: Athletics Day of Giving will directly fund the resources needed to operate GSU Athletics at a championship standard, including state-of-the-art training facilities and comprehensive support for student-athletes both on and off the field. Gifts will also enhance programs focused on nutrition, mental health, and overall well-being, ensuring tigers are prepared to excel academically, athletically, and personally. Every contribution helps create an environment where student-athletes can achieve their full potential, build lifelong skills, and carry the Grambling State legacy forward for generations to come.

For more information about One Grambling: Athletics Day of Giving and to learn more about ways to support GSU Athletics, please contact athleticsdevelopment@gram.edu or tigerclub@gram.edu.



A comparison between the primary (left) and alternate (right) jerseys

Grambling State Tigers Unveil Special Uniform for Bayou Classic Rivalry Game

By Phil Hecken

The Grambling State Tigers have unveiled a new all-black alternate uniform. Grambling State will wear a new alternate during the "Bayou Classic" against Southern on November 29. This is a major rivalry game in HBCU football.

The new alternate jersey features a collar slogan, "Kings of the Bayou," which will of course not be visible during the games.

The helmets are black, with a gold "G" decal (similar to the Packers or Georgia Bulldogs').

The jersey features new red "tiger" stripes on the shoulders, along with the Grambling "G" logo on the base of the collar. "GRAMBLING" in a gold university block font adorns the chest.

Block style numbers are below the wordmark, in gold outlined in red.

Finally, the pants are black and contain the same red tiger stripe pattern as the sleeve caps and shoulders.

As noted, these are spe-



New Jersey for Bayou Classic

cial one-game-only alternates to be worn in the "Bayou Classic," is a significant event in HBCU culture, highlighting a long-standing rivalry. It features the annual football game between Grambling State University Tigers and Southern University Jaguars. It started in 1974 at Tulane Stadium and has roots dating back to 1932. A trophy is awarded to the winner. The game is now played inside the Superdome, and this year takes place on November 29th.

The new black alternates are actually somewhat similar to the present all-black uniforms the

team wears.

The main differences here are the shoulder striping, which on the old uniforms featured a gold/red/gold stripe across the top of the shoulders, and this same stripe is on the pants. In addition, the regular black jerseys also have thin gold striping around the neck and arm openings, and the color pattern on "GRAMBLING" and the uniforms is inverted: the wordmark is gold with a red outline, and numbers are solid gold. On the new black alternates, the wordmark is solid gold and the numbers have red outlines.

ESPN's First Take hitting four HBCUs in fall 2025

By Steven J. Gaither, HBCU Gameday

ESPN's First Take is going all in on HBCU coverage this fall with its most ambitious schedule yet. The popular debate show, hosted by Stephen A. Smith — himself a proud HBCU graduate of Winston-Salem State University — will spotlight four campuses and events across the country. The schedule includes two storylines that tie directly into the historic coaching debuts of former NFL stars Michael Vick and DeSean Jackson.

Michael Vick headlines ESPN's First Take Start

The season kicks off on August 28 at Norfolk State University, setting the stage for Michael Vick's first game as head coach of the Spartans. Few names in football resonate more strongly than Vick, a Virginia native whose career electrified both college and professional football. His arrival at Norfolk State has drawn national attention, and First Take is positioning itself front and center.

By choosing Norfolk State as its first stop, First Take highlights not only the excitement around Michael Vick but also the growing spotlight on HBCU athletics. For Norfolk State, this marks a pivotal moment in both football and institutional visibility.

Classic Rivalries on National Television

On October 24, First Take will broadcast live from Birmingham, Alabama, at the Magic City Classic presented by



Coca-Cola. The annual matchup between Alabama State and Alabama A&M is the largest HBCU football classic in the nation, drawing tens of thousands of fans. Featuring the show in the heart of this tradition underscores ESPN's commitment to amplifying HBCU culture, rivalries, and pageantry.

DeSean Jackson,

Vick vs. Jackson: A Showdown of Former Eagles

Just five days later, on October 29, First Take will set up at Delaware State University, ahead of one of the most intriguing storylines of the season. Michael Vick's Norfolk State team will face Delaware State, led by new head coach DeSean Jackson. The two were teammates with the Philadelphia Eagles, and their matchup at Lincoln Financial Field provides the perfect stage for an HBCU coaching battle with national implications.

The buildup to this contest not only puts Michael Vick back in the spotlight but also showcases how HBCU football continues to attract high-profile figures. For fans of both pro and college football, this game offers crossover appeal like never before.

Closing Out at Bethune-Cookman

The fall schedule concludes on November 20 at Bethune-Cookman University ahead of the Florida Blue Classic. Known for its proud football tradition and legendary band, Bethune-Cookman represents another cornerstone of HBCU culture. The stop ensures First Take's tour covers multiple regions of the HBCU landscape, from the Mid-Atlantic to the Deep South.

ESPN Elevating HBCUs on the National Stage

For Stephen A. Smith, who often speaks passionately about his own HBCU experience, this expanded schedule is more than television programming. It's a celebration of historically Black colleges and their role in shaping sports, culture, and leadership. By featuring Michael Vick's debut, DeSean Jackson's coaching rise, and iconic HBCU classics, First Take signals a growing national investment in stories that matter to HBCU communities.

With football legends on the sidelines and First Take on campus, fall 2025 promises to be a season where HBCUs take center stage like never before.