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THE GRAMBLING CONNECTION

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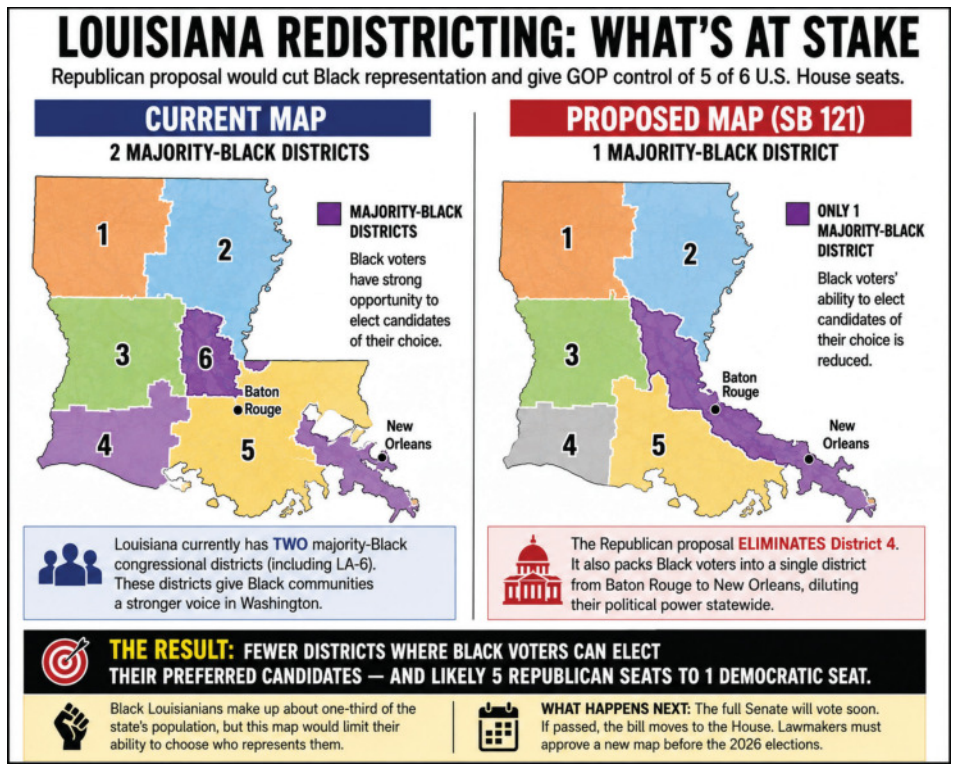
Louisiana Republicans Push Map That Reduces Black Representation in Congress

By Lena W. Claybon

Louisiana Republicans are moving forward with a congressional redistricting plan that would eliminate one of the state's two majority-Black congressional districts — a move critics say is designed to strengthen Republican political power while weakening Black voter influence in Washington. In a nearly 10-hour overnight hearing last week, the Senate and Governmental Affairs Committee approved Senate Bill 121 by State Sen. Jay Morris, a Republican from West Monroe. The proposal would dismantle the current majority-Black 6th Con-

gressional District represented by Cleo Fields and redraw the map in a way that would likely give Republicans control of five of Louisiana's six congressional seats. The proposed map keeps only one majority-Black district, stretching from Baton Rouge to New Orleans. That change would likely force Fields and Troy Carter — both Democrats and both Black lawmakers — into the same district, meaning one of them would almost certainly lose their seat. The redistricting fight comes after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled earlier this month that Louisiana's current congressional map was an unconstitutional racial gerryman-

der in the case *Louisiana v. Callais*. Republican lawmakers across several Southern states have since moved quickly to redraw maps in ways that could further solidify GOP control of Congress. Supporters of the new Louisiana map argue they are simply complying with the court ruling. Opponents say the decision is being used as political cover to dilute Black voting strength. "This 5-1 map is a political power grab," State Sen. Sam Jenkins said during the hearing. Voting rights advocates and Democratic lawmakers packed the Capitol throughout the night to oppose the proposal. See Louisiana Page 2



Fawn Weaver's message to GSU's Class of 2026: "Don't lose hope, keep moving forward"

By Jae Newton

GRAMBLING, La. — Nearly 500 graduates at Grambling State University's Spring 2026 commencement ceremony received a message centered on perseverance. Serial entrepreneur and New York Times bestselling author Fawn Weaver delivered the keynote address, encouraging graduates to stay focused even when life gets difficult. "What I know for sure is that each and every one of you are walking into a country that is trying to figure out who we will be," Weaver said. "The worst thing that you can do when you leave here is

to believe any of the negativity." She pushed students to stay committed to their goals and not let setbacks define them. "You will not fail because you didn't work hard enough," Weaver said. "You will fail only if you lose hope and give up." Weaver also told graduates that stepping into new industries or breaking barriers will not come easy. "If you go into an industry where you break boundaries and go past gatekeepers, expect that it is going to be hard," she said. "Don't ever complain. Do the work." In an interview follow-



Fawn Weaver is interviewed by KGRM's Jae Newton



ing the ceremony, Weaver expanded on her message of perseverance. See Fawn Page 2

2nd Party Primary Election To Be Held June 27, 2026 – What You Should Know

Important information for the Saturday, June 27, 2026, 2nd Party Primary Election: The deadline to register to vote in person, by mail, or at an OMV Office is May 27. The deadline to register to vote through the Geaux-Vote Online Registration System is June 6. Early voting is June 12-20 (excluding Sunday, June 14, and Friday, June 19, for Juneteenth) from 8:30 a.m.-6 p.m. The deadline to request an absentee

ballot is June 23 by 4:30 p.m. (other than military and overseas voters). You can request an absentee ballot online through the Louisiana Secretary of State's Voter Portal or in writing through your Registrar of Voters Office. The deadline for a registrar of voters to receive a voted absentee ballot is June 26 by 4:30 p.m. (other than military and overseas voters). On election day, the polls are open from 7 a.m.-8 p.m. See 2nd Party Page 2

Landry Recall Efforts Underway

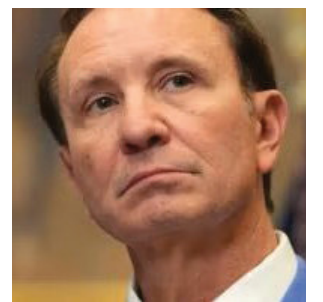
An effort to recall Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry (R) began on May 4, 2026. Supporters of the recall have 180 days—or no later than October 31, 2026—to collect 500,884 signatures to require a recall election. Proponents of the re-

call effort criticize Governor Landry for actions and statements they say undermine fair representation, neglect community needs, and prioritize punishment over meaningful solutions for Louisiana communities. Governor Landry was elected as Louisiana's governor in 2023 with

52% of the vote. Recall supporters Marian Gbaiwon Hills and Katilyn P. Stepter filed the recall petition on May 4, 2026. The recall petition lists the following reasons for recall: We are calling for the recall of Jeff Landry due to a pattern of actions

and statements that undermine fair representation, misalign priorities away from community needs, and emphasize punishment over meaningful solutions that address the root causes affecting Louisiana communities. Recall opponents

As of May 7, 2026, Landry had not responded to the recall effort. See also: Laws governing recall in Louisiana Every recall petition must clearly state the reason or reasons for the recall. See Landry Page 2



Jeff Landry

BIG ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE GRAMBLING CONNECTION



Effective September 1, 2026, The Grambling Connection is transitioning to a PAID model. This means the paper will no longer be free but will be available as a paid product through select outlets, and will continue to be available through print and online subscriptions. This change will allow us to bring you even more stories that matter most to our community—while expanding and strengthening our staff and coverage.

You will still be able to pick up free copies throughout the Summer. We will announce locations where it will be on sale over the next few months. Also, we are offering EARLY BIRD DISCOUNTS to new subscribers until August 1, 2026. We ask that you support us through this change so we can keep the paper strong and moving forward. www.gramblingconnection.com/early-bird



OPINION

When Politicians Choose Who Votes, Democracy Dies

By **Prentiss Smith**

For decades, I have watched America present itself as the world's great experiment in democracy — imperfect, often hypocritical, but forever moving toward a more inclusive union. As a political chronicler and observer, I see that promise under assault.

Across this country, Republican legislatures and conservative legal organizations are engaged in a coordinated effort to weaken, dismantle, and ultimately neutralize the protections of the 1965 Voting Rights Act — one of the most important pieces of legislation ever passed in my lifetime or in American history, for that matter.

When lawmakers ag-

gressively close polling places in Black neighborhoods, purge voter rolls, restrict mail voting, slash early voting, eliminate drop boxes, redraw districts to dilute Black political influence, and make it harder for poor and elderly citizens to vote, they are not protecting democracy.

The Voting Rights Act was born out of blood, sweat and tears, mostly blood and tears. People were beaten on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Citizens were terrorized, jailed, humiliated, and murdered simply for demanding the right to vote.

The Voting Rights Act changed America because it finally forced the nation to confront the truth: certain states could not be trusted to pro-



Prentiss Smith

gressively close polling places in Black neighborhoods, purge voter rolls, restrict mail voting, slash early voting, eliminate drop boxes, redraw districts to dilute Black political influence, and make it harder for poor and elderly citizens to vote, they are not protecting democracy. The Voting Rights Act was born out of blood, sweat and tears. People were beaten on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Citizens were terrorized, jailed, humiliated, and murdered simply for demanding the right to vote. The Voting Rights Act changed America because it finally forced the nation to confront the truth: certain states could not be trusted to protect voting rights on their own. And now, sixty years later, we are watching a slow-motion attempt to return to that era — not with billy clubs and fire hoses, but with lawsuits, legislative maneuvers, and carefully crafted talking points.

Rather than expanding its appeal to meet that reality, too many Republi-

can leaders have chosen a different strategy — reduce participation. I call it picking your voters, instead of your voters picking the politicians.

If your ideas cannot win in a fully functioning democracy, the temptation becomes limiting who gets to participate in that democracy. That is dangerous territory.

And Democrats are not blameless in this situation, they must also stop responding with weakness and procedural niceties. Stop whining and get to work building coalitions. Voting rights cannot remain a seasonal talking point dusted off every election cycle. If democracy itself is on the line, then leaders must act like it, and give it the urgency it deserves. I believe that Con-

gress should restore the full power of the Voting Rights Act. Federal protections should automatically trigger when states demonstrate repeated patterns of voter suppression. Election Day should become a national holiday. Early voting should be expanded, not restricted. These are the changes that many people, including me, have asked for.

History teaches us something uncomfortable: democracies rarely collapse overnight. They erode piece by piece. One court ruling. One district map. One closed polling location. One purged voter roll at a time. That's what I am seeing every day, and it's troubling.

Here in Louisiana, we have already seen warning signs that should con-

cern every citizen regardless of political party. Efforts to challenge or suspend legally cast ballots after the fact, confusion surrounding voter eligibility, and constant battles over district maps all contribute to growing public distrust in the electoral process.

And let's be honest about who is most affected when uncertainty and barriers are introduced into voting: working people, elderly citizens, poor communities, and voters of color who often lack the resources, flexibility, or legal support to fight back. Every time legally cast votes are placed under suspicion, democracy itself suffers a wound. Let's hope it is not a fatal wound! And that's my take. smithpren@aol.com

POTTER MOTIVATION

As The World Turns

By **Rusty Potter**

We've all heard the phrase, "As the world turns." For most of us, it brings back memories of a television show filled with drama, heartbreak, and cliffhangers. But in real life, those words carry an even deeper meaning: no matter what happens, the world keeps turning - and so must we.

Life doesn't pause when we make a mistake. It doesn't rewind when we wish we had chosen differently. It keeps

moving forward, steady and unbothered. It means that no matter how far we fall, we are always given another chance.

Mistakes are not the end of our story - they are part of our development. Too often, we allow one bad decision, one failure, or one mistake to define us. We sit in regret, replaying what went wrong, while life continues to move on. But growth doesn't come from standing still. Growth comes from learning, adjusting, and moving forward with purpose.

I challenge you to not just



Rusty Potter

learn one lesson from mistakes - learn five. Extract every ounce of wisdom from

the experience. Whatever it is, don't waste the pain. Let it teach you.

The truth is, negative times are inevitable. Disappointments will come. Plans will fall through. People may let you down. But none of those things has the power to stop your journey unless you permit them. The world doesn't stop when something goes wrong - and neither should you.

Resilience is built in motion. Strength is developed by continuing when it would be easier to quit. There is

something powerful about a person who can say, "Yes, I made a mistake - but I'm still moving forward."

As the world turns, let it find you growing. Let it find you learning. Let it find you refusing to be stuck in yesterday's setback. Every day is an opportunity to walk wisely, stand stronger, and move closer to the life you are building.

Don't let one bad decision define your momentum. Keep going. Keep learning. Keep turning - because the world certainly will.

Louisiana From Page 1

Many argued the state is reverting to a pattern in which Black voters — who make up roughly one-third of Louisiana's population — are denied fair representation in Congress.

One alternative proposal from Democratic State Sen. Ed Price would have created two congressional districts competitive for Democrats, but Re-

publicans on the committee rejected it.

The debate became heated at times. Democratic lawmakers repeatedly questioned Morris about race, representation, and whether systemic racism still plays a role in politics. Morris declined to directly answer some of those questions, saying they were not relevant to the bill.

The hearing also followed controversy from

an earlier redistricting meeting involving accusations of racially charged remarks and rising tensions between Republican lawmakers and Democratic activists.

Critics say what is happening in Louisiana mirrors a broader national strategy in Republican-led states to redraw district lines in ways that maximize GOP seats while reducing the influence of minority voters and Dem-

ocratic-leaning urban areas. Political analysts have warned that aggressive redistricting ahead of the 2026 midterm elections could play a major role in

determining which party controls the U.S. House of Representatives.

The Louisiana Senate is expected to vote on the proposal soon, with the

House scheduled to consider the measure afterward. Lawmakers must finalize a new congressional map before upcoming election deadlines.

Landry Recall From Page 1

The recall committee chairman must file a copy of the signed petition with the Secretary of State's Office.

The number of required signatures for a recall is based on the number of qualified electors in the proposed recall member's district. The required signatures are as follows:

If 100,000 or more eligible voters: 20% of eligible voters in the district

If 25,000 or more but less than 100,000 eligible voters: 25% of eligible voters in the district

If over 1,000 eligi-

ble voters but less than 25,000: 33.3% of eligible voters in the district

If fewer than 1,000 eligible voters: 40% of eligible voters in the district

The recall petition must be submitted within 180 days of filing with the Secretary of State's Office. For voting areas with fewer than 1,000 qualified electors, the deadline is 90 days. If the final day falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, the deadline moves to the next business day.

If the Registrar of Voters certifies the petition has the required signatures, it is forwarded to the Governor, who must

issue an election proclamation within 15 days of receipt.

If the yes/no recall election is successful, the official is removed from office, and the office is declared vacant when the election results are certified to the Secretary of State. The vacancy is filled according to the usual procedure, but the recalled official may not be appointed to the position or be a candidate in the special election to fill the vacancy.

If the recall is unsuccessful, another recall election for the same official cannot be held for 18 months from the date of the failed election.

Fawn Weaver's From Page 1

"All they have to do is put one foot in front of the other," she said. "As long as they keep moving forward, they will get to the other side of it."

She added that struggles are part of the process, not the end of it.

"It is not a clean walk for anybody," Weaver said. "It is those who stop or retreat who never get to see what is on the other side."

Weaver also spoke on purpose, saying it is not tied to a job or title.

"I do not believe purpose is what you do," she said. "I believe purpose is who you are."

She explained that people may change careers or seasons in life, but purpose remains constant.

"You bring your purpose with you into every space," Weaver said.

When asked about entrepreneurship, Weaver

kept it direct about what it takes to succeed.

"If your life shows you are the quitting kind, don't try entrepreneurship," she said. "It is going to be hard. There will be challenges that seem impossible, and you have to be committed to keep going."

Still, she encouraged flexibility without giving up.

"You can pivot and not quit," she said. "If something is not working, pivot fast, but keep going."

Weaver also emphasized the importance of preserving history and telling untold stories.

"It is extraordinarily important for us to be the keepers of those stories," she said. "Because if we are not careful, they disappear."

She closed her message with a reminder about hope in uncertain times.

"If we lose hope, we lose everything," Weav-

er said. "But if we keep working and keep moving forward, we will get where we need to be."

Valedictorians

Grambling State University's Spring 2026 valedictorians all finished with perfect 4.0 GPAs and are already moving into their next steps.

Nyic'Quavayon Willis, a Criminal Justice major from Las Vegas, Nevada, will attend the University of San Diego on a full-ride HBCU Changemaker Fellowship before pursuing law school.

Wymeko Williams, an Accounting major from Mansfield, Texas, will begin his career with Turner Construction in Dallas while continuing toward his CPA.

Annia Shelton, an Elementary Education major from New Orleans, Louisiana, passed all PRAXIS exams on her first attempt and plans to return home to teach.

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COMMUNITY

LPRE accomplishes great stride before ending session

By Joice M. Dunn

Before the Lincoln Parish Retired Educators (LPRE) closed its session for the year, two top priorities were reached Thursday, May 14, at the Council on Aging Senior Center. The meeting opened with a different face and voice.

Rev. Arthur Simmons, presiding officer, demonstrated that learning never retires as he carried out instructions of absent president, Dr. Liz White. The meeting was opened in its usual form, with prayer followed by open letter from Dr. White.

The Scholarship Committee announced the selection of two scholarship winners, who were present at the meeting along with a parent.

The first winner was Layla Corinne Garner, a distinguished senior from Ruston High School.

Layla was introduced as an exceptional student, graduating with an impressive 4.6 GPA and an ACT score of 31. Beyond academics, she enjoys reading, working out, and traveling, and she is an active member of Mt. Harmony Baptist Church, where she serves faithfully as a Junior Ministry Leader.

When asked how she felt about winning the scholarship, she replied. "I felt elated, thankful, and truly grateful when I found out I received the scholarship. It



Newly installed Lincoln Parish Retired Educators (LPRE) officers are (from left) President Jeffery Sims, Secretary Ethel Drayton, Treasurer Rachel McCallister and Chaplain McArthur Simmons. Vice President Shirley Stringfellow is not shown.



The two scholarship winners, Elana (2nd from left and Layla, 3rd) stand with committee members, Ricky Burton, Ethel Drayton and Billy Graham.

reminded me of how many people have supported and encouraged me throughout my journey, including my family, mentors, teachers, and the scholarship committee. Receiving this scholarship motivates me to continue working hard toward my goals.

[Also], I chose Tulane University because it is a

prestigious university that provides strong academic opportunities, generous scholarship support, and allows me to stay in-state while pursuing my goals. I chose Biochemistry on the Pre-Med track because I have always loved science, especially biology and chemistry. Another reason I

want to pursue pulmonology is because I struggled with asthma as a child, and that experience inspired me to want to help others facing respiratory illnesses and health challenges," Garner said.

She continued, "My philosophy of life is inspired by the poem Be Not Defeated by the Rain by Kenji Miyazawa. I believe in remaining resilient, humble, and determined no matter what challenges come my way. One of my favorite scriptures is Book of Jeremiah 17:9-10 because it reminds me that God knows our hearts and examines our intentions."

Elena Grace Baines was named the second scholarship recipient, an outstanding senior from Ruston High School. She is an exceptional scholar with a 4.4 GPA and an impressive ACT score of 34. Her gifts and interests are wide-rang-

ing — she enjoys playing and teaching piano, horseback riding, participating in theatre and drama, attending church, and so much more. She is an active member of The Bridge Community Church, where she serves as a Youth Worship Leader, pianist, singer, and in several other roles that reflect both her talent and her heart for service.

"Although I was interested in leaving Ruston for college, it was hard to pass up the financial ease of attending Tech. My dream is to get my undergraduate degree and master's without any student loans, and, as I will be leaving Ruston to obtain my masters, it is essential that I save as much as possible in this stage of my life," she said.

Baines said, "Because of this, I am so thankful to be the recipient of this scholarship, and honored that the members of the Retired Educators would think of me. I've always been fascinated with how people think and work. In high school the Myers-Briggs personality types were a slight obsession of mine, and I bought books and watched videos about different personalities and their motivations and beliefs.

I've also spent my entire life in the music world. I've been playing piano for thirteen years now, and I can't imagine my life without continuing to study integral discipline. As both a pianist and a piano teacher,

I've seen firsthand what music can do for a human, and I look forward to seeing this even further as I double major in Psychology and Piano at Tech."

She added, "I think that your perspective in life is incredibly important. I pride myself on my ability to support others when they win at my loss, or when I have to navigate my day on an especially busy afternoon. I think that the word "deserve" gets in people's heads a lot, and when it does, I feel like nothing can be enough to satisfy that craving. When I begin to think too highly of myself, I always remember Isaiah 64:6, "all our deeds are like filthy rags" compared to the righteousness of God. But my favorite Bible verse of all time is Joshua 1:9, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous, do not be frightened, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go," Elena said.

In parting words, she encouraged others not to be afraid. "People are not as scary as you think they are. The only person stopping you from being outgoing and friendly and joyful and easygoing is yourself. Have fun! That's what makes high school fun. It's all about mentality, so be strong and courageous, and be yourself!"

Before the closing of the meeting, new officers were elected by acclamation. The officers will serve a two-year term.

Announcements

Sign Up Now CivicReady

The Civic Ready Messaging System is a mass notification system built for government communications. This is a free service for our citizens. Please sign up so you can be notified of city-wide alerts and emergency notifications. Sign up by going to City of Grambling website (www.cityofgrambling.org) and clicking on CivicReady.

Line Dance class open to 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.

For more information, please contact Collins at 832-891-7488 or WWW.REALLYGREATSITE.COM.

Annual Sugar Hill Reunion

The annual Sugar Hill Reunion will be held Friday, Saturday, Sunday, May 22-24, please may plans to be present.

A Meet and Greet Fish Fry will kick off the reunion Friday, a BBQ cookout will be held on Saturday and Fun Day will be Sunday. It is a BYOC Affair, meaning Bring Your Own Chair. Everyone must come down into the dead end. No one will be allowed to block driveways or hang out on Grant Street (Security will be enforced).

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 De-

partment. 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!

Councilwoman conducts 'Listening Post' for Grambling citizens

Grambling City Councilwoman Delores Smith/Mayor Pro tem is available on the first Monday of each month, noon at Grambling's City Hall for what she calls a "Listening Post." Smith is available to listen to, or answer city-related issues citizens may have. The listening post is a designated place and time to visit with Smith to get questions or concerns heard.

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 can grant volunteers hours and service-learning hours. Volunteers may contact Ponton at 318-278-9892.

'No Limit' accepting registration for Spring 2026

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

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.

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COMMUNITY



Grambling Chamber of Commerce Swears in New Officers

The Greater Grambling Chamber of Commerce recently held a ceremony (April 30) swearing in its new officers. The new officers are: (Pictured its) Zaneta Wagner, Parliamentarian, Augustine Moore, Treasurer, Pam McIntyre, Secretary, Tiffany Brooks, Vice President; Sharice Beavers, President

Juneteenth Festival Coming Soon

The upcoming 2026 Juneteenth Heritage Festival theme, "Celebrate Freedom. Celebrate Every Mind," reflects the festival's commitment to honoring not only our shared history, but also the diversity, brilliance, and contributions of every individual throughout the community.

This year's Grand Marshals will honor:

1. Autism Awareness
2. 2026 Lincoln Prep Championship Basketball Team
3. The Woodard Family

In an exciting addition, this year's festival will also combine with the Grambling/Lincoln Prep All Class Reunion as alumni from near and far return home to celebrate memories, reconnect with classmates, and honor the rich legacy of Grambling.

The festival officially begins Sunday, June 7, with a Gospel Explosion at 4:00 p.m. at Mt. Zion Baptist Church. Throughout the week, attendees can enjoy a wide variety of events including community discussions, cultural programs, health initiatives, family activities, and live entertainment.

Highlights of the celebration include the Miss Juneteenth Pageant, Juneteenth Bake-Off, Genealogy Event, Health & Wellness Fair, Vendor Marketplace, Parade, Fish Fry, and Fireworks Celebration.

- Festival Schedule
- Sunday, June 7
 - Gospel Explosion – 4:00 PM – Mt. Zion Baptist Church

Black Resilience: From Past To Present



- Friday, June 12
- Official Opening Ceremony – 10:00 AM – Grambling City Hall
- Miss Juneteenth Pageant – 6:00 PM – T.H. Harris Performance Arts Center on the Grambling State University Campus
- Saturday, June 13
- Fishing Tournament – 7:30 AM – 105 Park St., Grambling, LA
- Sunday, June 14
- Poetry Contest – 2:00 PM – Grambling City Hall
- Living History -remembering the past and inspiring the Future - 4:30 -Grambling City Hall
- Monday, June 15
- Grambling Chamber of Commerce Event: Building Grambling Together Community, Culture and Legacy – A Juneteenth Conversation Under the Tent – 6:00 PM at Grambling City Hall
- Tuesday, June 16
- Juneteenth Bake-Off – 10:00 AM – Grambling City Hall
- Tracing Our Past, Celebrating Our Future – 12:00 PM – Grambling City Hall
- Wednesday, June 17
- City-Wide Bible Study – 6:00 PM – Christ Temple Baptist Church
- Thursday, June 18
- Health & Wellness Fair – 9:00 AM– 1:00 PM – Grambling City Hall
- Friday, June 19 — THE BIG EVENT
- 4K/5K Freedom Run – 7:00 AM – Grambling State University Campus

- Car Show – 8:00 AM – Christian Center
- Vendor Marketplace – 9:00 AM – all day- Village of Grambling
- Parade – 5:00 PM – Village of Grambling
- Fish Fry – 6:00 PM – Village of Grambling
- Line Dancing – 7:00 PM
- Fireworks – At Dusk – Grambling Park
- Saturday, June 20
- Juneteenth Gala – 7:00 PM – Grambling State University Campus
- Tickets for the Juneteenth Gala will be available at City Hall, through committee members, or online at Juneteenth Heritage Festival Website.
- The continues to stand as a celebration of freedom, perseverance, history, and community while honoring the generations that helped shape Grambling's proud legacy.

- HIGHLIGHTS
- June 18th and 19th - they will be doing Free Heart wellness checks that includes a \$45 free gift cards
 - June 18th and 19th
 - Blood drive donations will be available
 - Most events are free and all will serve refreshments..
 - Fish Fry tickets available online or at city Hall
 - Vendor/ Parade sign up text 318 514 8855 for link.

THE GRAMBLING ★ CONNECTION

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www.gramblingconnection.com/early-bird



CHURCH NEWS

BOOK REVIEW: The Lies—and Truths—that Keep Some Black People Out of Church

A California pastor's book confronts the painful parts of Christian history but points to the healing power of the gospel.

By Halehuya Hadero

A few years ago, I became more bullish on evangelism and joined a church outreach group. I ministered in the two predominately Black neighborhoods where I lived. I had hundreds of conversations and heard many objections to the faith. But the most common pushback came from people who found it challenging to reconcile their Blackness with Christianity.

It is not an exaggeration to say that today, the legacy of colonialism, slavery, and Jim Crow stands as one of the biggest hindrances to furthering the gospel in the US. Calling Christianity “the white man’s religion” isn’t necessarily new. But it has grown more legs in recent years amid national polarization about race and politics, including in the American church. At the same time, young Black people have become more skeptical of Christianity and I’ve personally walked some friends through their own questions.

In response to the growing need, Black Christian leaders, including Eric Mason, Sarita Lyons, and Jerome Gay, have written books in recent years that

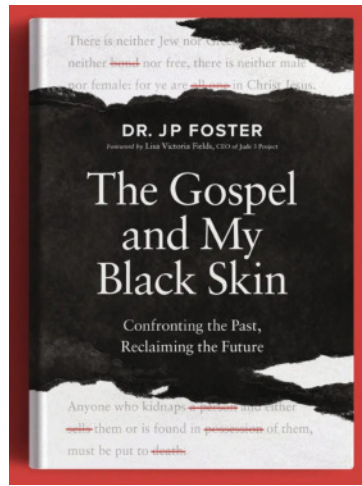
offer a robust, contextual defense of the Christian faith. JP Foster, pastor of a predominately Black church in Inglewood, California, just added his name to that list with *The Gospel and My Black Skin: Confronting the Past, Reclaiming the Future*.

The book is Foster’s personal, historical, political, and theological reflection on the legitimate racial wounds that keep Black people from the Christian faith, the stories of faithful Black witnesses, and the question of whether we can embrace Christianity in an era of evangelical-backed Trumpian politics.

Foster empathetically takes his intended audience (ranging from unbelievers and deconstructionists to committed Christians) through each topic and offers a robust defense of the faith. He addresses how scripture was manipulated to further racism through the slave Bible, the religious justifications used to promote white supremacy, and by the resistance of Southern evangelicals to the Civil Rights Movement. He also calls for churches and Christians to pursue racial justice today.

The book is unsparing in its criticism of white evangelical politics, yet hopeful about pursuing biblical unity. It is a valuable tool for anyone interested in the field of urban apologetics, even though some of its arguments about justice are too abstract.

Throughout the book, Foster is rightly critical of the fusion between Christianity and nationalism and of a version of our faith that “sounds less like the teachings of Jesus ... and



more like a civil religion draped in red, white, and blue.” He writes that many American Christians need to abandon this distorted approach and affirm the image of God in each person by rooting out injustice wherever it resides. But aside from giving a few clues, such as citing issues like mass incarceration and redlining, he doesn’t spell out how exactly people can do that.

The lack of details was my biggest pain point with the book (on top of some repetitive sentence constructions), particularly because the most serious conversations about race ask not whether there are problems we need to fix but what justice should look like on the ground.

How do we solve racial disparities and repair what’s broken in our society? Should it include reparations? How can the church, in practice,

be the hands and feet of Christ to predominantly Black communities that have suffered? And what does it look like for the church to encourage Christians to do it locally?

For a book that leaned heavily into racial justice and was written, at least partly, for Christians thinking about these issues, I would have loved to read more details.

That said, Foster’s primary aim is apologetics, which he tackles well. A large section of the book traces the long history of Christianity in Africa, a necessary pushback to the widespread belief that Black people first heard about the faith on slave ships and plantations. From my experience, I know that many people simply do not know the true history, and sharing it might move the needle in some conversations and relationships.

Foster notes there are also problems in this area. Western Christians and scholars, for example, need to stop sidelining the Africanness of prominent early theologians such as Tertullian, Athanasius, and Augustine (whose cultural origins in Roman Africa, as Catherine Conybear wrote in a recent book, are important to truly understanding his life and career). Foster writes,

“These leaders were shaped by African soil, African questions, and African communities—but Rome’s language became the medium of their message.”

And that’s where the erasure began. Over time, as European scholars curated the story of the church,

they centered Rome and sidelined Africa. They imagined the early church as a European story told in Latin rather than a global movement that included vibrant African voices from the very beginning. Figures such as Aurelius and Augustine were painted in European tones—literally and figuratively—until their African heritage faded from the page. And the African origins of their theology were all but forgotten.

The book then comes back to America to trace how Christianity inspired abolitionists and civil rights leaders to fight against slavery and segregation, and argues the true faith is liberatory. Foster cites notable names and makes good arguments throughout. However, I’m not sure how much this point will move people who have chosen to leave not just the church at large but also the Black church, which has always been intrinsically tied to civil rights.

Many Black congregations are also facing growing generational gaps. Congregants choose to disaffiliate for many reasons, and reaching people who have left the faith or are deconstructing—including young Black people—requires attending to the rampant moral relativism (“my truth”) in the culture, as well as other issues.

For those struggling to reconcile their blackness with the Christian faith, Foster’s work is a reminder that God doesn’t call us to choose one over the other. We can be both Black and faithful to spiritual teachings [in or out of the church].

Church Announcements

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 next meeting will be held on Monday, June 8. The meeting is spearheaded by Patrick Jefferson, former state representative, along with invited speakers. Every man is invited to come and worship.

Saint Duty to host Arcadia

Women’s Conference

St. Duty CME Church will hold a Women’s Conference at the Arcadia Community Center, located on 651 Washington Street, May 21- 23, hosted by Dr. Pamela Peoples, pastor of St. Duty.

Speakers for the event on Thursday at 7 p.m. will be Pastor Lisa Hawkins; Friday at 7 p.m., Apostle Teresa Jacksonon Saturday, Pastor Jacqueline Mason and other speakers are Elder Sara Stewart, Lady Krishanda Abney, Evangelist Nelcina Moore and Lady Natalie Henderson.

The conference will also include the Silent Peace book release.

White Oak Grove to hold celebrate Women’s Day

The White Oak Grove B.C will hold a Women’s Day program on Sunday, May 31, at 3 p.m. The church is pastored by Rev. Anthony Abney.

The Love Chapel Choir will serve as guest during the service.

China Grove Church opens ‘China Closet’

The China Grove Baptist Church will open the ‘China Closet’ to the public each Friday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the church on 407 Vernon St., Ruston.

The Closet will be open to anyone in need of clothing or assistance. It is under the supervision

of the matrons/mission department of the church.

For additional information contact Evangelist Annie Wilson at 318-570-9134 or call Tonika Blake at 318-243-3295. The church is pastored by Rev. Damian E. Wilson, Sr.

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.

New Hope Church to hold community-wide Bible Study

The New Hope Baptist Church of Ruston will hold a noon community-wide Bible Study each Wednesday. The church is located at 301 W. Vaughn Ave., Ruston.

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

Area Church Directory

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Cathedral of Praise Worship Center - 2877 Highway 33, Ruston

First Assembly of God - 1400 Woodward Ave., Ruston

BAPTIST

Alabama, 16061 Hwy. 151, Arcadia

Barnett Springs, 1601 S. Barnett Springs Rd., Ruston

China Grove Missionary, 406 Vernon St., Ruston

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 Farmer-ville 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, 571 Mt. Olive Rd. Grambling, Louisiana.

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.

Lifechurch.LA, 3000 S. Vienna St., Ruston

LifePoint Church of Ruston, 1018 S. Vienna St., Ruston

Living Water Full Gospel Church, 149 Fairgrounds Rd., Ruston

Miracle Temple COG-IC, 1405 S. Farmerville, Ruston

New Living Word Ministry, 1900 Barnett Springs Rd. Ruston

New Testament Church at Grambling Inc., 508 Main St., Grambling

Praise Temple, Ramada Inn, 107 Love Ave., Ruston

St. Paul Lutheran, 504 Tech Drive, Ruston

The Bridge Community Church, North Campus, 2301 N. Trenton, Ruston

Triumph The Church and Kingdom of God in Christ, Hwy. 3061 E. Tenn. Rd., Ruston

United Faith Tabernacle Ministries & Prayer Center, 303 Cherry St., Bernice,

Upon the Rock Outreach Center, 513 E. Texas Ave., Ruston



HEALTH & WELLNESS

CHARMING'S CORNER

Faith in the Sunshine and the Rain

By Charming Davis

There is something about sunshine that makes faith feel easy. When life is flowing, doors are opening, bills are paid, and relationships feel aligned, we are quick to say, "God is good." We lift our hands, we give thanks, we testify. In those moments, gratitude pours out effortlessly because everything around us reflects what we desire.

But what about the rain? What about the seasons where things feel uncertain, heavy, or unclear? The moments where prayers seem unanswered, where silence replaces signs, and where the path ahead feels hidden? Too often, in those moments, we begin to question. We withdraw. We wonder if we are being punished or forgotten. But the truth is—God does not disappear in the rain. If anything, those are the moments where His presence

is working most deeply behind the scenes. We live in a world that conditions us to only honor what we can see. But there is so much happening beyond our physical awareness. There are doors being blocked that would have led to destruction. There are delays protecting us from outcomes we are not ready to face. There are unseen forces shifting, aligning, and preparing us for what is meant to become.

What we experience is only a small fraction of what is actually unfolding. The rain is not absence—it is preparation. Just like the earth needs rain to grow, we need seasons of discomfort to evolve. Growth does not come from constant ease. It comes from pressure, from stretching, from being placed in situations that challenge who we thought we were. In those moments, our faith is not proven by how loudly



Charming Davis

we praise in the light, but by how deeply we trust in the dark. Can you still say "thank you" when you don't understand? Can you still believe when things are not going your way? Can you still feel supported when everything around you feels uncertain? That is where true faith lives.

There is also a deeper truth many overlook: sometimes what feels like loss is actually divine redirection. What didn't work out may not have been aligned. What left may not have been meant to stay. What feels like a setback may actually be a setup for something greater.

We are often so focused on what we can see that we miss what is being protected, blocked, and redirected.

Faith requires us to trust not only in what is visible, but in what is unseen and unheard.

There is purpose in every season. There is meaning in every day.

There is divine intelligence guiding every step, even when it does not make sense in the moment.

The rain does not last forever—but it always leaves something behind. It nourishes the soil. It strengthens the roots. It prepares the ground for what is next.

And so, the next time life feels heavy, instead of asking, "Where is God?"—ask, "What is being prepared for me right now?"

Shift from questioning to trusting. From resisting to allowing. From fear to faith.

Because He is always there—in the sunshine and in the rain.

If you are navigating a season of uncertainty and seeking support in reconnecting with your faith, grounding your energy, and finding clarity within, you are invited to begin or continue your journey at Naturally Charming Universe Holistic Wellness Center. Whether through energy healing, sound therapy, or intentional self-care practices, support is available to help you realign and restore.

Business hours are Wednesday through Friday from 9:30 AM to 1:30 PM, and Saturday from 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM. The center is closed on Sundays and Mondays.

Caring for the Caregivers: Why Safety is the Missing Link in Mental Health Awareness

By Jasmine Smith

(This is a reprint from BlackDoctor.org)

During Mental Health Awareness Month, we rightfully focus on patients' well-being and the breaking of stigmas. However, there is a silent side to the mental health crisis that often goes unaddressed: the safety and psychological well-being of the practitioners themselves.

Kara Smith, a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) and private practice owner in Maryland, is a supervisor to the next generation of therapists, and is also a vocal advocate for a tool that is becoming essential in the field—the Silent Beacon wearable safety device.

Smith shared her journey from a "naive" young clinician to a protective supervisor, illustrating why providers' safety is the foundation of quality care.

A Career Built on "Naive" Courage

Smith's passion for safety isn't theoretical; it's born from years of working on the front lines without a net. Looking back at her early career, she recalls the risks she took as a standard part of the job.

"I worked in housing services for a few years... a housing complex for formerly homeless individuals and families," Kara shares. "I was regularly going into their homes... I was doing wellness checks on them, literally knocking on the door, and they're not answering. I'm going in by myself, you know, the 30-year-old woman. I was pregnant for some of it. I look back like, how come nobody took that extra step to have a safety plan in place?"

This experience highlights a dangerous gap in the industry: the most complex, high-need cases are often assigned to the least experienced therapists. "The most novice, new-out-of-grad-school therapists... that's where they start their careers," she notes. "Most therapists are women... and they are put in these situations where their safety is at risk."

Beyond "The Chair by the Door"

For decades, the standard safety advice given to therapists has been dangerously minimal. Smith describes the status quo with a touch of irony.

"The only thing we're ever

taught about our safety coming out of grad school is to put your chair closer to the door so if something happens, you can get out before they do. Obviously, not everybody can get out of those situations, or we wouldn't be having therapists being assaulted and murdered even in the workspace," she notes.

This realization prompted Smith to seek out better protection when she opened her own practice. She now provides her team with Silent Beacon devices—wearable panic buttons that can call 911 or alert supervisors with a single touch.

Protecting the Empath Therapists are, by nature, empaths. While this is their greatest strength, Smith argues it can also be a vulnerability if not balanced with professional safety measures.

"We go in with a compassionate stance, as we should," Smith explains. "But I think because we are generally empaths, we kind of go overboard and forget that as much as we care about our clients... There are risks."

The Silent Beacon allows her staff to maintain that compassion while having a "silent" failsafe. One of the most critical features is the ability to call for help without the client knowing an alert has been triggered. This is vital in situations where a client may be experiencing a mental health crisis or emotional deregulation.

"The therapists feel we're safe, therefore we can show up for them," Smith says. "We can't do that if we don't have a way to get help if we need it."

A Call for Industry Change As we celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month, Smith is calling for a shift in how agencies, hospitals, and private practices view their duty of care. Despite the high stakes, she estimates that 95 percent of therapists have no formal safety plan in place.

"I would love to see people invest in something," she urges. "It's such a low-budget industry... but to prevent burn-out, to keep people wanting to work in these situations, it is a great small price to spend to add to your team's wellbeing."

The numbers tell the story: Social workers are nearly 5x more likely to experience serious workplace injuries than other professions, often driven by violent incidents in the field.

Nearly 1 in 5 psychologists report having been threatened by a patient.

More than 80% say they've feared a client would attack them.

For Smith, providing these devices is a way of telling her staff they are more than just "cogs in a wheel." It's a way of ensuring that while they care for the community, someone is also looking out for them.

Mental health awareness isn't just about the mind; it's about the environment in which healing happens. By protecting our providers, we ensure that the mental health field remains a sustainable, safe, and effective space for everyone.





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ITINERARY AT A GLANCE

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| <p>JUNE 18, 2026 THURSDAY</p> <p> 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM Registration & Packet Pickup Location: Lincoln Prep 1453 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue Grambling, LA 71245</p> <p> 5:00 PM – 8:00 PM Meet & Greet Class Meeting room assignments will be provided during registration. Location: Lincoln Prep 1453 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue Grambling, LA 71245</p> | <p>JUNE 19, 2026 FRIDAY</p> <p> 8:00 AM Tailgate Setup Classes allowed to setup as early as 8am. Class location/map will be provided week of 5/26.</p> <p> 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM Packet Pickup Location: Lewis Temple CME Church</p> <p> 5:00 PM Parade Location: Village of Grambling</p> <p> 6:00 PM Fish Fry Location: Village of Grambling</p> <p> Fireworks at Dusk Location: Grambling Park <i>Hosted by the City's Juneteenth Committee</i></p> |
| <p>JUNE 20, 2026 SATURDAY</p> <p> 10:30 AM – 1:00 PM Business Brunch Location: Lincoln Prep</p> <p> 7:00 PM Juneteenth Gala Attire - Formal or African (School Colors Suggested) Location: Grambling State University Campus</p> | <p>JUNE 21, 2026 SUNDAY</p> <p> 10:30 AM Worship Service Location: New Rocky Valley Baptist Church 2155 W. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue Grambling, LA 71245</p> |

Even though registration is closed you can still purchase tickets for the Fish Fry and The Juneteenth Gala from the City of Grambling website.

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SPORTS

Eight Chosen for GSU's 2026 Legends Hall of Fame Class

GSU Athletics

Eight of Grambling State University's greatest athletes of all time are set to be honored at 6 p.m. July 11 as the Grambling Legends Sports Hall of Fame inducts its 18th class into the prestigious organization, which honors former student-athletes, coaches, and contributors to the university's athletics program.

The Grambling Legends Class of 2026 includes Reginald Baldwin and Aaron Randle representing baseball; Paul Haynes representing basketball; Leonard Griffin, Gilad Landau, and Roderick Henderson representing football; Robin Foster representing softball; and Lennox Yearwood representing track and field.

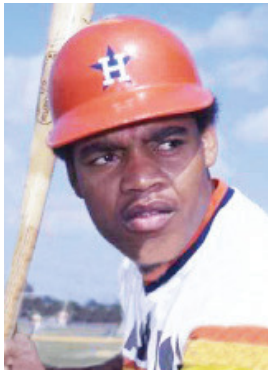
"I am excited about this year's Hall of Fame," said Napoleon Johnson, a former basketball great and president of the Grambling Legends Sports Hall of Fame. "This is an outstanding group of individuals, and I am proud of each of them. I encourage everyone to join us in recognizing these Hall of Famers and showing appreciation for their accomplishments."

Former Grambling State and NFL great Doug Williams, co-founder of the Grambling Legends Sports Hall of Fame, said there are still many worthy candidates deserving of the honor. "When you think about all the athletes who have come through Grambling, selecting a class is never easy. But every selection represents greatness. When the athletes are announced, you sit back and say, 'Wow,' and reflect on the many others who are also worthy. Our responsibility is to ensure that those selected represent the very best of Grambling's tradition."

Grambling Legends co-founder James Harris also expressed strong support for the 2026 class, noting that it reflects individuals who upheld the excellence and legacy of Grambling State University athletics.

Reginald Baldwin – Baseball

At Grambling State, Baldwin played under the legendary leadership of Ralph Waldo Emerson Jones and assistant coach Wilbert Ellis, becoming a four-year starter and earning All-Southwestern Athletic Conference honors while compiling a .375 career batting average. He was named Most Valuable Player in 1976 and demonstrated leadership both on and off the field. Baldwin was named an All-American in the National



Amateur Baseball Congress in 1975 and was drafted by the Houston Astros in 1976, reaching the major leagues in 1978 before a shoulder injury ended his career. Following baseball, Baldwin built a successful career with IBM, earning national recognition for his work, before answering the call to ministry and co-founding Antioch International Ministries, where he continues to serve communities across the nation.

Aaron Randle – Baseball

Randle, a standout baseball player from 1971 to 1974, earned All-SWAC recognition and distinguished himself as a three-year starter and Honor Roll student-athlete. During his collegiate career, he led the team in multiple statistical categories and helped establish a standard of excellence on



the field. Drafted by the Chicago Cubs, Randle played six seasons of professional baseball, contributing to championship teams and earning MVP honors. Following his athletic career, he dedicated his life to public service, serving 28 years with the Florida Department of Corrections while remaining actively engaged in community leadership, youth development, and mentoring initiatives.

Paul Haynes – Basketball

Haynes was a dominant force for Grambling State University from 2000 to 2004, earning SWAC Freshman of the Year and SWAC Player of the Year honors while becoming a three-time All-SWAC First Team selection. He finished his




collegiate career with 1,958 points and 849 rebounds, earning national recognition as a USA Today Honorable Mention All-American and ESPN Academic All-American. Following his playing career, Haynes competed professionally across multiple leagues and now leads a successful sports psychology business, helping athletes at all levels while continuing to invest in youth development through camps and outreach programs.

Leonard Griffin – Football

Griffin earned four letters for the Tigers from 1981 to 1985, establishing himself as a dominant defensive presence with 164 career tackles and 25.5 sacks. He was selected in the third round of the 1986 NFL Draft by the Kansas City Chiefs, where he played 103 games and made a significant impact at the professional level. Griffin later returned to Grambling State as a coach and transitioned into education, where he served as an administrator and






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mentor. His commitment to service includes the establishment of scholarship programs and ongoing contributions to community advancement and youth development.

Gilad Landau – Football

A native of Israel, Landau was a standout kicker for Grambling from 1991 to 1994, earning national recognition for his performance and

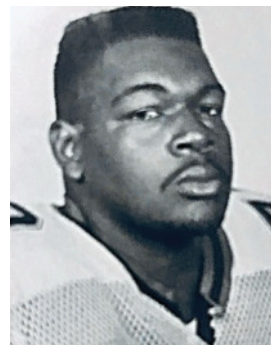


resilience. He set records in extra points and field goals while earning two Academic All-American honors. Landau was also the recipient of the

Ernie Davis Award, recognizing his perseverance and ability to overcome adversity. His career reflects a balance of athletic excellence and academic achievement, embodying the discipline and determination of Grambling student-athletes.

Dr. Roderick Henderson – Football

Henderson's career reflects a lifelong commitment to excellence in athletics, education, and leadership. A standout football player under legendary coach



Eddie Robinson, he earned All-American honors and played a key role in Grambling's 1992 national championship. Henderson balanced

athletics with academic success before pursuing advanced degrees in education leadership. He went on to build a distinguished career as an educator and administrator, ultimately serving as superintendent and leading significant improvements in academic performance, infrastructure, and student outcomes within his district.

Robin Foster – Softball

Foster was a member of Grambling State's first women's softball team from 1983 to 1986 and was selected as



team captain, demonstrating both athletic excellence and leadership. She earned recognition through the National Honor

Society and other academic honors while majoring in Therapeutic Recreation. Following her time at Grambling, Foster dedicated more than three decades to youth development, coaching multiple sports and creating programs focused on leadership, mentorship, and life skills. Her work has positively impacted countless young people and continues to reflect her commitment to service.

Lennox Yearwood – Track and Field

Yearwood distinguished himself as captain of the track and field team, demonstrating both athletic excellence and leadership, and later represented Trinidad and Tobago in the 1968 Olympic Games. He went on to achieve significant academic success,



earning a Ph.D. and a Juris Doctorate, and built a distinguished career in academia, law, and community service. Throughout his

professional journey, Yearwood has remained committed to mentorship, nonprofit leadership, and advancing opportunities for future generations of students and student-athletes.

The 2026 Grambling Legends Sports Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony promises to be an evening of celebration, reflection, and recognition—honoring those who have defined excellence and elevated the legacy of Grambling athletics.

Tickets for the induction banquet are \$100 per person or \$750 for a table of eight. The event will be held at 6 p.m. on Saturday, July 11, 2026, at the Fredrick C. Hobby Assembly Center.



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Congratulations to Our 2026 Graduates!



Abbott, Drue



Abney, Adalyn



Baker, Ivy



Beard, Hay'Den



Benton, Mericka



Bias Jr, C.J.



Blake, Koy



Bonner, Bri'lam



Bonner, Chasten



Bota, Esther



Brewster, Elijsha



Britton, Kinsley



Brooks, Wynter



Brown, Malayiah



Buffét, Lyric



Burton, Colton



Candler, Kolten



Carter, Kyson



Casey, K'Novah



Clemons, Khyson



Kacen Combs



Cooke, Jhade



Cooks, Kayleigh



Cowan, Bobbie



Daniels, Jaylon



Davis, Kayden



Davis, Kehlani



Davis, Nakhlon



Dawson, Tonjanika



Dean, Dre'dyn



Dunn, Latravion



Edwards, A'Sani



Fair, Hiannias



Freeman, Bailey



Freeman, Laih



Garner, Nafayja



Ginyard, Taryn



Hardyway, Braisleec



Hargrove, Dream



Hargrove, Sha'laysia



Harper, Aiden



Harper, Alana



Hartwell, Lennox



Heard, Navi



Hendricks, Emem-Jahi



Hendricks, Kosey



Hunter, Ki'Yan



Jackson, Kayden



Jenkins, Ameri



Joe, Ari'Yonna



Johnson, A'MarJay



Johnson, Cayden



Lee, Jeremiah



Lockhart-Johnson, Ty'Niyah



Lopez-Matias, Brisa



Martin, Jr., Carlos



Matthews, I'Lyan



Mattox, Ketavous



Mayfield Jr, Jireh



Moore, Nia



Nelson, Kasier



Ortega Reyes, Ilianna



Overstreet, Ava



Pacheco, Ivan



Palmer, Terrance



Patton, Riylan



Perry, Ahmad



Phillips, Malachai



Pringle, Demari



Ramriez Galvez, Derek



Richard, Peyton



Roberson, Truu



Robinson Jr, Stephan



Robinson, Sanyla



Ruiz Perez, Karime



Samuel, Deicara



Sapp, Jer'Myracle



Salsberry, Bruceclen



Smith, Jazelle



Smith, Keshawn



Sonia, Jasmyyn



Spencer, Serenity



Standifer, Riloh



Tatum, Ja'Vion



Thomas, Madisyn



Traylor, Kaior



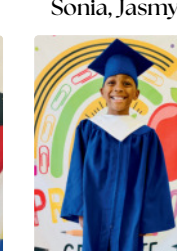
Williams, King



Wilson, Princeton



Zelaya, Eydan



Zimmerman, Asher

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