

# HBCUCONNECT.COM

## VOLUME 18

# THE HBCU EXPERIENCE AS TOLD BY THE ONES WHO LIVE IT: **A ONE-OF -A-KIND JOURNEY**

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Anntonika |  
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## A LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

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What's up, HBCU Alumni fam!

As we gear up for the exciting summer of 2023, I can't help but feel grateful and proud of all we've achieved together this year. It's been an incredible journey, and I'm thrilled to welcome you to another captivating edition of HBCU CONNECT's Alumni Magazine!

Summer is on the horizon, and with it comes a sense of renewal and boundless opportunities. Just like the warmth of the sun rejuvenates us, this season is a time for our HBCU community to shine brightly. I'm beyond proud of the strides we have made, the connections we've fostered, and the impact we continue to have on the lives of our esteemed alumni.

As we get ready for an amazing summer, I gotta give mad props to all our alumni—you're out there making moves, breaking barriers, and showing the world what HBCU excellence is all about. This magazine is all about highlighting the incredible talent in our community, so get ready to see some familiar faces and fresh new ones too!

Speaking of remarkable individuals, we've got a special surprise for you! This edition showcases a true HBCU luminary and trailblazer—Opal Lee. Prepare to be inspired by her exceptional journey, a rhythm of success blended with dedicated efforts to make the United States more just and equitable. Opal Lee's work has brought Juneteenth to national recognition, and she continues to inspire countless hearts.

As the summer sun invites us to bask in its glow, let's remember the power of unity and empowerment within our community. Just like our HBCU roots run deep, our commitment to supporting each other is firm. Together, we elevate greatness, shatter limits, and blaze trails for the next wave.

In the spirit of progress and education, let us carry forward the torch of #EducateOURmen and #EducateOURwomen initiatives, ensuring that dreams are not only realized but nurtured and cherished. Each step we take in uplifting one another contributes to a brighter and more inclusive world.

To all our HBCU family, thank you! Your support, engagement, and dedication keep us thriving. HBCUCONNECT.COM has come a long way since '99, and we owe it all to you.

This summer, seize every opportunity, embrace challenges with grace, and let your HBCU spirit shine wherever you go. Together, we'll keep making waves and leaving an indelible mark on the world.

Stay connected, stay inspired, and keep shining brightly, HBCU Family!

Sincerely,

*Will Moss*

Will Moss | CEO | HBCU CONNECT  
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# HBCU Homecomings

Home Team	Visiting Team	Date
Alabama A&M University	Tuskegee University	Sep 30
Alabama State University	Bethune Cookman University	Oct 07
Albany State University	Allen University	Oct 14
Allen University	Edward Waters University	Oct 28
Benedict College	Kentucky State University	Oct 21
Bethune Cookman University	Texas Southern University	Oct 14
Bluefield State College	Lincoln University -Pennsylvania	Oct 07
Bowie State University	Virginia State University	Oct 07
Central State University	Savannah State University	Oct 14
Clark Atlanta University	Central State University	Oct 21
Delaware State University	South Carolina State University	Oct 21
Edward Waters University	Lane College	Oct 07
Elizabeth City State University	Johnson C. Smith University	Sep 30
Fayetteville State University	Johnson C. Smith University	Oct 21
Florida A&M University	Prairie View A&M University	Oct 28
Florida Memorial University	Webber International University	Oct 21
Fort Valley State University	Morehouse College	Oct 21
Grambling State University	Alabama A&M University	Oct 14
Hampton University	North Carolina A&T State University	Oct 28
Jackson State University	Alabama State University	Oct 14
Johnson C. Smith University	Saint Augustine's University	Oct 14
Kentucky State University	Albany State University	Sep 30
Lane College	Virginia University of Lynchburg	Oct 21
Langston University	Arkansas Baptist College	Oct 21
Lincoln University -Missouri	Northeastern State University	Oct 07
Miles College	Allen University	Oct 21
Mississippi Valley State University	University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff	Oct 14
Morehouse College	Kentucky State University	Oct 28
Morgan State University	Stony Brook University	Oct 07
Norfolk State University	Morgan State University	Oct 28
North Carolina A&T State University	Towson University	Nov 04
North Carolina Central University	Norfolk State University	Nov 04
Prairie View A&M University	University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff	Nov 04
Saint Augustine's University	Fayetteville State University	Oct 07
Savannah State University	Tuskegee University	Oct 21
Shaw University	Johnson C. Smith University	Oct 07
South Carolina State University	Howard University	Nov 04
Southern University and A&M College	Lincoln University - California	Oct 14
Tennessee State University	Norfolk State University	Oct 14
Texas Southern University	Lincoln University - California	Sep 30
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff	Alcorn State University	Oct 21
Virginia State University	Bluefield State College	Oct 14
Virginia Union University	Lincoln University -Pennsylvania	Oct 21
West Virginia State University	Glennville State University	Sep 23

# HBCU Classics

Name of Classic	Home Team	Visiting Team	Location	Date
MEAC/SWAC Challenge	Jackson State	South Carolina State	Atlanta, GA	Aug 26
Big Cat Classic	Edward Waters	Florida Memorial	Jacksonville, FL	Sep 02
Brick City Classic	Hampton	Grambling State	Harrison, NJ	Sep 02
Carolinans Classic	Benedict	Shaw	Columbia, SC	Sep 02
Chicago Classic	Central State	Mississippi Valley State	Chicago, IL	Sep 02
Labor Day Classic	Alabama State	Southern and A&M	Montgomery, AL	Sep 02
Labor Day Classic	Norfolk State	Virginia State	Norfolk, VA	Sep 02
Labor Day Classic	Texas Southern	Prairie View A&M	Houston, TX	Sep 02
Black College Football Hall of Fame Classic	Morehouse	Virginia Union	Canton, OH	Sep 03
Orange Blossom Classic	Florida A&M	Jackson State	Miami Gardens, FL	Sep 03
Red Tails Classic	Fort Valley State	Tuskegee	Montgomery, AL	Sep 03
Down East Viking Classic	Elizabeth City State	Saint Augustine's	Rocky Mount, NC	Sep 09
Eddie McGirt Classic	Johnson C. Smith	Walsh	Charlotte, NC	Sep 09
Louis Crews Classic	Alabama A&M	Lane	Huntsville, AL	Sep 09
Pete Richardson Classic	Southern and A&M	Jackson State	Baton Rouge, LA	Sep 09
Southern Heritage Classic	U. of Arkansas at Pine Bluff	Tennessee State	Memphis, TN	Sep 09
HBCU NYC Football Classic	Albany State	Morehouse	East Rutherford, NJ	Sep 16
Truth and Service Classic	Howard	Hampton	Washington, DC	Sep 16
Circle City Classic	North Carolina Central	Mississippi Valley State	Indianapolis, IN	Sep 23
Coastal City HBCU Classic	Albany State	Savannah State	Brunswick, GA	Sep 23
W.C. Gorden Classic	Jackson State	Bethune Cookman	Jackson, MS	Sep 23
Willard Bailey Classic	Virginia Union	Fayetteville State	Richmond, VA	Sep 23
State Fair Classic	Grambling State	Prairie View A&M	Dallas, TX	Sep 30
Gulf Coast Challenge	Alabama A&M	Jackson State	Mobile, AL	Oct 07
Morehouse Tuskegee Classic	Morehouse	Tuskegee	Birmingham, AL	Oct 07
Lucille M. Brown Community Youth Bowl	Virginia Union	Bowie State	Richmond, VA	Oct 14
Magic City Classic	Alabama State	Alabama A&M	Birmingham, AL	Oct 28
Commemorative Classic	Johnson C. Smith	Livingstone	Charlotte, NC	Nov 04
Fountain City Classic	Fort Valley State	Albany State	Columbus, GA	Nov 04
L. Douglas Wilder Classic	Virginia Union	Virginia State	Richmond, VA	Nov 04
Port City Classic	Grambling State	Alabama State	Montgomery, AL	Nov 04
Raleigh Classic	Saint Augustine's	Shaw	Raleigh, NC	Nov 04
Florida Classic	Bethune Cookman	Florida A&M	Orlando, FL	Nov 18
Turkey Day Classic	Alabama State	Tuskegee	Montgomery, AL	Nov 23
Bayou Classic	Southern and A&M	Grambling State	New Orleans, LA	Nov 25
Celebration Bowl	TBD	TBD	Atlanta, GA	Dec 16



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The logo features the text "HBCU CONNECT" vertically on the left, "TOP" in large white letters, "50" in large white numbers, and "EMPLOYERS" in white letters at the bottom. A circular badge is centered, containing a gold seal with "TOP 50" in red, "EMPLOYERS" in white, and "2023-2024" at the bottom, all surrounded by a laurel wreath.



As the summer months approach and the job market continues to heat up, we are excited to announce our 2023 Top 50 Employers for Students and Alumni Professionals! This list was prepared by HBCU Connect, one of the largest and best resources available for HBCU students, graduates, and employers. We have a unique perspective on HBCU recruitment activities, which we use to identify the organizations that are excelling at attracting HBCU talent.

We are proud to recognize these companies for their commitment to diversity and inclusion because we believe that HBCU graduates are some of the most talented and motivated professionals out there, and we are glad to see that these companies are taking notice. We encourage our HBCU community to look at this list and consider applying to these companies. These are great opportunities to start or advance your career with a company that values diversity and inclusion.

## TOP 10

1. JPMorgan Chase
2. Johnson & Johnson
3. Visa
4. Giant Eagle, Inc.
5. Wells Fargo
6. Pfizer
7. Virginia Economic Development Partnership
8. Walgreens
9. Bristol Myers Squibb
10. MassMutual



11. ServiceNow	31. SPX Technologies
12. Fidelity Investments	32. Fluence Energy
13. Agilent Technologies	33. CF Industries Holdings, Inc
14. NFP Corp.	34. Hackensack Meridian Health
15. Supernal	35. The Washington Center
16. CBRE	36. Amazon Services LLC
17. 84.51 LLC	37. Microsoft
18. Best Buy	38. Deloitte Services LP
19. GE Appliances	39. Maximus
20. LULU Lemon	40. UVA Health
21. Erie Insurance	41. Rent A Center
22. Ansys	42. Tetratech
23. U.S. Dept. of Veterans Health Administration	43. Albemarle Corporation
24. Pearson	44. Bank of America
25. Motorola Solutions, Inc.	45. Danaher
26. SCRIPPS Research	46. Sinclair Broadcasting Group
27. Truist	47. Nintendo of America
28. University of Rochester	48. The Coca Cola Company
29. HP	49. Cardinal Health
30. Bunge Limited	50. Thomson Reuters

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# HBCU GRADS: THESE INDUSTRIES ARE WHERE YOU NEED TO BE

For Seana Coulter, the moment she had been tirelessly working towards has arrived. As the leader of career services at Morgan State, a historically Black university in Baltimore, she has faced numerous challenges, from the pandemic to other obstacles. But now, the stars are aligning, especially for Morgan State's recent graduates. Coulter says that hiring for the class of 2022 has been exceptionally promising, with a wide range of opportunities available. Among the newest alumni updates, an impressive 93% are either pursuing graduate studies or enjoying successful career placements.

A new analysis of LinkedIn data sheds light on generally positive news for graduates from over 100 HBCUs across the United States. However, it also reveals how hiring trends vary across industries.

## Thriving Industries for HBCU Graduates

The data highlights significant hiring growth for HBCU graduates in industries such as **consumer services (30.9%)** and **education (28.0%)**. The fields of arts and recreation, hospitals and health care, and government administration also show strong median monthly growth rates in 2022.

Global employers are increasingly drawn to HBCUs to enhance their recruiting diversity. Several top-tier consulting firms, including Accenture, have formed partnerships with HBCUs, offering various opportunities such as job shadowing, guest lectures, and internships.

HBCU graduates are in high demand in many industries, but especially in education, healthcare, and government. In 2022, HBCU graduates saw their hiring

rates grow by 28% in education, 25.3% in healthcare, and 23.8% in government. These numbers are significantly higher than the hiring rates for non-HBCU graduates in these industries.

In contrast, HBCU graduates saw their hiring rates grow by only 8.2% in financial services, which is still higher than the hiring rate for non-HBCU graduates in this industry. The only industry where HBCU graduates saw their hiring rates lag behind non-HBCU graduates was tech, information, and media. In this industry, HBCU graduates saw their hiring rates grow by only 0.6% in 2022, while the hiring rate for non-HBCU graduates grew by 8.9%.

## Opportunities on the Rise

Overall, these numbers show that HBCU graduates are in high demand in many industries, and they are especially well-positioned for success in education, healthcare, and government. As more employers recognize the value of diverse perspectives and experiences, opportunities for HBCU graduates are expanding. Initiatives to empower students with applicable work experience are being implemented, creating a path for HBCU graduates to thrive in all fields, including tech.

HBCU graduates are breaking barriers, enriching workplaces with their brilliance, and upholding the century-long legacy of excellence established by HBCUs. As we celebrate these achievements, let's recommit ourselves to ensuring that opportunities are accessible to all, regardless of background. Let's also uphold the spirit of inclusion and diversity at the core of our workforce.

# INVEST IN GREATNESS!

## SUPPORT HBCU ALUMS' BLACK-OWNED BUSINESSES THIS SEASON

Historically Black Colleges and Universities have been the driving force behind cultivating Black excellence for over a century. Today, their graduates are taking the entrepreneurial world by storm, leading a new wave of Black-owned businesses that are gaining recognition and support across various industries. While Black History Month serves as a dedicated time to honor the remarkable contributions of Black individuals throughout history, it's essential to extend appreciation beyond a single month. Each moment presents an opportunity to celebrate the outstanding achievements of Black-owned businesses, which make invaluable contributions to our economy and society. By recognizing and supporting these enterprises, we empower entrepreneurs while promoting inclusivity, diversity, and equality within our communities. Let's take a closer look at some standout brands founded and led by HBCU alums.



**Dungeon Forward (FAMU)** At the helm of Dungeon Forward is David Castro, CEO of Complex Apparel. His brand is focused on creating headwear that represents the culture while also investing in the community through targeted scholarships. The David Koto Castro Design Charette and Scholarship, hosted annually at David's alma mater, Florida A&M University School of Architecture and Engineering Technology, is just one example of his commitment to giving back.



**Heard It All Before (FAMU)** Kristen Daniel, a graduate of FAMU's School of Business and Industry (SBI), founded the music game experience Heard It All Before. Her vision is to drive new paths toward music discovery through gameplay centered around music sampling.



**Greentop Gifts (Clark Atlanta University)** Jackie Rodgers, an alumna of Clark Atlanta University, launched Greentop Gifts in 2016. The brand is a go-to for celebratory inclusion and representation, with products like Clarence Claus, a Black Santa Claus, promoting diversity in all celebrations.



**Abeille Creations (FAMU)** Melissa A. Mitchell, a proud graduate of Florida A&M University, is the CEO of Abeille Creations. Holding a bachelor's degree in public relations, a minor in graphic design, and a master's degree in public administration, Melissa's brand is a testament to creativity and dedication.



**Terminal B (Howard)** Terminal B is the brainchild of Chris and Fay Breedlove, a husband-and-wife team, and Howard University School of Law graduates. Inspired by their passion for travel, they share an international love story through scent, taking their brand to new horizons.

These exceptional brands are just a glimpse into the incredible talent and innovation that HBCU graduates bring to the forefront of Black entrepreneurship. As consumers, let's actively support and uplift these businesses all year round.

# SAY WHAT? HBCUS: A VOICE FOR CHANGE

Historically Black Colleges and Universities have a rich history and legacy that is often overlooked. In an effort to raise awareness about these institutions, we asked the HBCU community through our Facebook page: What is one thing you wish more people knew about HBCUs? The responses were varied and insightful, but they all shared a common theme: HBCUs are more than just schools.

That there's 107 of them spread across the south and the east coast, not just the 5-10 common ones you always hear about, and each of them has its own unique cultural experience that enhances the Black American experience.

My husband was a misguided 17-year-old looking at a very long prison sentence. His aunt filled out the application to FAMU for him, had the chair of the art department come to her house and view my husband's art. A week later, FAMU offered him a full ride Camille Cosby visual arts scholarship. His lawyer (a Bethune grad) fought hard and advocated for him. One condition of the plea deal was to take the scholarship and remain on the honor roll for two years. He did and the slate was wiped clean. HBCUs will save your life (literally).

You may THINK that you have a sense of what it means to be black in America. However, attending an HBCU will greatly enhance how you present yourself to other cultures and how to effectively operate within corporate environments! Usually being taught by professors that have been down that road! Always remember, "Success leaves clues," if you care to listen!

For the cities and states that don't currently house HBCUS that they be better informed about them in general. It's getting better but we still have a way to go. I have people in Cali for instance that I have had to educate on HBCUS because they didn't know we even existed.

It doesn't matter which HBCU you attended, when we get together, we share common experiences, laughter and how our HBCU had a major impact on our lives!

The state of belonging and identity are invaluable. The ability to be a part of leadership and connect with alumni who work in various industries speaks volumes for a successful career.

They provide a strong foundation and their graduates do succeed in their chosen professions.

That they exist! There is nothing in life like an HBCU experience!!

HBCUs are diverse. Diverse in thought, students, and experiences. HBCUs are the village you didn't know you needed. Come as an only child and leave with siblings, aunts, uncles, mentors, and friends.

The unwavering support. I had a baby in my junior year and when I say the professors and students embraced him without a doubt! They made sure I succeeded!!! I graduated with a Bachelors in biology from Fisk!

HBCUs are cultural institutions that have played a vital role in the advancement of African Americans in the United States. They have produced some of the most accomplished individuals in American history, including doctors, lawyers, politicians, scientists, and artists. They have also been a source of strength and inspiration for African Americans during times of adversity. In the face of racism and discrimination, HBCUs have provided a safe space for Black students to learn and grow.

It is important to value the legacy of HBCUs and to continue to support these institutions. They are a vital part of the American story, and we should all do our part to spread the word about the greatness of HBCUs and to ensure that these institutions continue to thrive for generations to come.





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# OPAL LEE

THE GRANDMOTHER OF JUNETEENTH,  
IS A ZETA PHI BETA SOROR:

## A LEGACY OF SERVICE AND ACTIVISM

Did you know that the 'Grandmother of Juneteenth', Opal Lee, is a sorority sister of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.? This HBCU graduate has dedicated her life to fighting for civil rights and equality, and she played a major role in making Juneteenth a federal holiday.

In 2016, at the age of 89, Opal Lee embarked on an extraordinary journey. She walked 1,400 miles from her home in Fort Worth, Texas, to the U.S. capital, Washington, D.C. Her objective was to promote awareness of Juneteenth and petition Congress to make it a national holiday and thousands of people joined her on her 21-day journey.

Her efforts did not go unnoticed. Her efforts were not in vain. Opal Lee witnessed a historic moment in 2021 when President Joe Biden signed legislation making Juneteenth a federal holiday. The significance of this achievement is immeasurable since it marks the first establishment of a new holiday in nearly 40 years, the previous being Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 1983.

President Biden praised her as the grandmother of the movement, recognizing her fundamental role in the push for Juneteenth national recognition. Vice President Kamala Harris also paid tribute to Opal Lee during her speech, acknowledging the years of advocacy by "the one and only Ms. Opal Lee".

This milestone was a significant success for Lee and the many people who labored to increase awareness of this important day.

Opal Lee's impact goes beyond her inspiring journey. She founded the Opal Lee Foundation, a platform

dedicated to educating people about Juneteenth and advocating for its recognition as a national holiday. She has also penned a memoir, "Walking with Hope: A Memoir of the Grandmother of Juneteenth," further spreading the message of freedom and equality.

Her voice has resonated nationwide, as she has appeared in numerous media interviews and spoken at events from coast to coast. Opal Lee has illuminated the significance of Juneteenth, reminding us of the enduring struggle for freedom and equality in the United States.

In 2023, Juneteenth remains a momentous occasion, a day to celebrate progress, and a call to action for the work that still lies ahead. Opal Lee's dedication serves as a guiding light, encouraging us all to stand up for justice and equality. Opal Lee's work has helped to make Juneteenth a more visible and celebrated holiday. She inspires people of all ages and serves as a living reminder of the significance of fighting for justice and equality.

As HBCU graduates, we proudly commend Opal Lee, our sorority sister, for her unwavering commitment and inspiring journey. Her activism has made a lasting impact, and her story is a testament to our power to create, change and build a more just and equitable society. Let's continue to celebrate Juneteenth together, honor our shared history, and work towards a brighter future for all. Together, let's continue to celebrate Juneteenth, honor our shared history, and work towards a brighter future for all.

# THE FUTURE OF COLLEGE ADMISSIONS: NAVIGATING UNCERTAINTY POST SCOTUS AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RULING

The recent Supreme Court decision to end race-conscious admissions in higher education has sparked a broader discussion on fairness and privilege in college admissions. The ruling has raised questions about how to achieve diversity without using race as a factor, and its interpretation remains in flux.

At the "National Summit on Equal Opportunity in Higher Education" held on July 26, more than 100 academics, government officials, and education administrators discussed the implications of the Supreme Court's decision to end race-conscious admissions. At the conference, officials emphasized the importance of developing alternative tools to achieve diversity, such as recruiting through academic enrichment programs, improving financial aid, and facilitating seamless transfers for community college students to four-year colleges.

The Education Department's investigation into Harvard University's admissions alleging favoritism towards white applicants adds to the complexity of the matter. While it remains uncertain if similar investigations will be conducted at other institutions, the ruling has sparked discussions about the future of college admissions. The leaders of HBCUs have expressed concerns about the ruling's potential chilling effect on educational opportunities for people of color. However, they also recognize the opportunity to provide access to education for those who may face obstacles in predominantly white institutions.

As the future of college admissions remains uncertain, the need for meaningful diversity policies persists. The discussion on how to achieve inclusivity and equality in higher education is ongoing. It is essential to prioritize practical issues, such as supporting disadvantaged students once they are on campus and finding innovative ways to promote diversity while upholding fairness and accessibility.

## What role do HBCUs play in the quest for a more just and equal society?

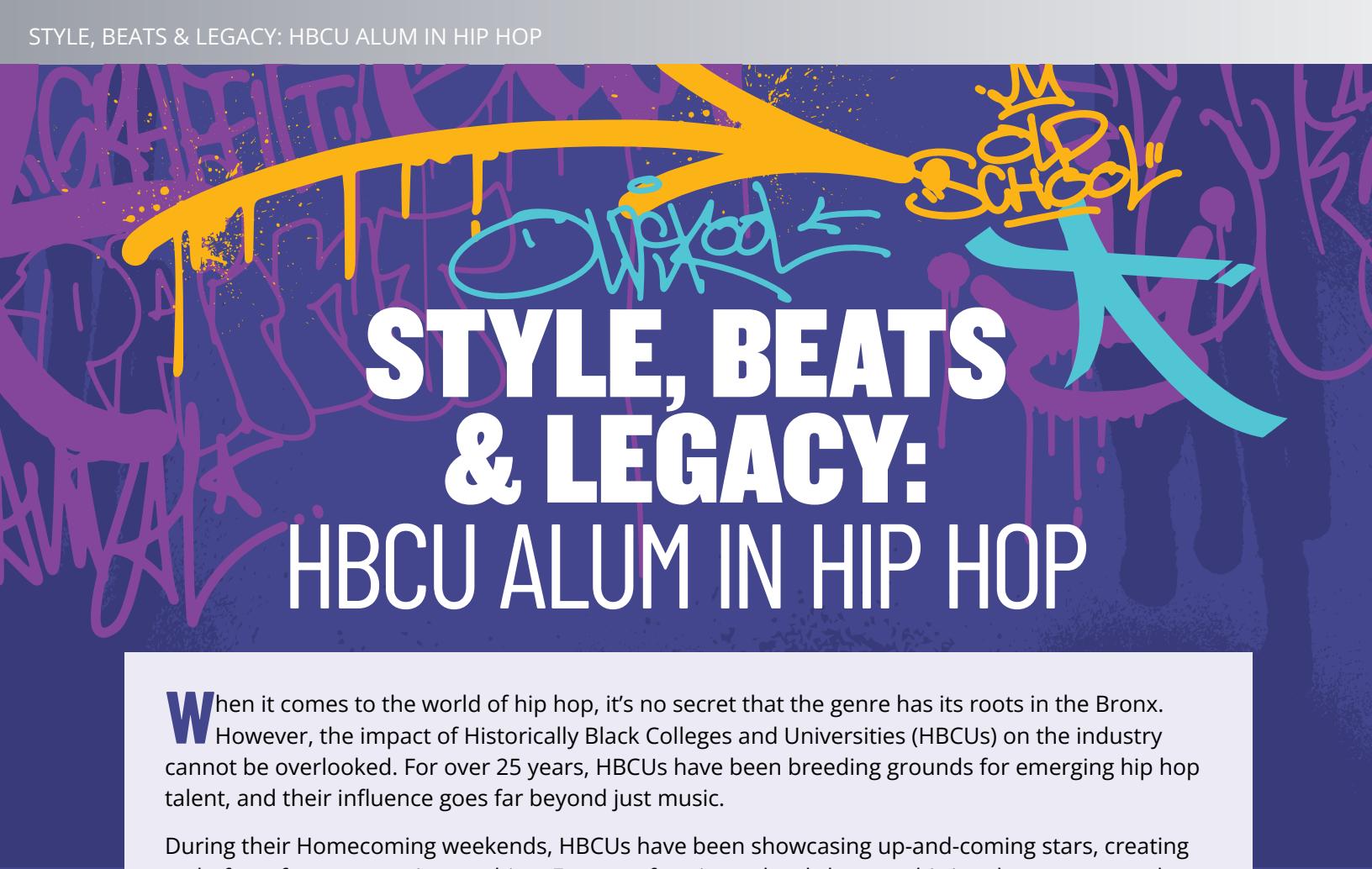
HBCUs have a long and storied history of providing educational opportunities for people of color. They have been a vital part of the fight for civil rights and social justice, and they continue to play an important role in preparing students for leadership and service. In the quest for a more just and equal society, HBCUs can continue to play a vital role by providing access to quality education for students of color, preparing students for leadership and service, and advocating for policies that promote equity and opportunity.

## How can we support HBCUs?

There are many ways to support HBCUs. Here are a few ideas:

- Donate to HBCUs. Your donation can help to support scholarships, programs, and facilities.
- Volunteer your time at HBCUs. You can help with tutoring, mentoring, or other activities.
- Promote HBCUs to your friends and family. Let them know about the great opportunities that HBCUs offer.
- Advocate for policies that support HBCUs. Contact your elected officials and urge them to support policies that promote HBCUs.

HBCU graduates have a unique perspective on the importance of diversity and equity in college admissions. They can use their experiences and education to advocate for policies that promote these values. By taking these actions, graduates of HBCUs can help ensure that all students receive a quality education, regardless of their race or ethnicity.



# STYLE, BEATS & LEGACY: HBCU ALUM IN HIP HOP

When it comes to the world of hip hop, it's no secret that the genre has its roots in the Bronx. However, the impact of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) on the industry cannot be overlooked. For over 25 years, HBCUs have been breeding grounds for emerging hip hop talent, and their influence goes far beyond just music.

During their Homecoming weekends, HBCUs have been showcasing up-and-coming stars, creating a platform for young artists to shine. From performing at local shows to hitting the stage at student unions, numerous hip hop artists and producers have kept HBCU students dancing for decades. These talented individuals have proven their mettle time and again and continue to be celebrated globally.

The legacy of HBCU hip hop stars is filled with immense talent and creativity. Let's take a closer look at some of the notable HBCU alumni who have made significant contributions to the hip hop world.

## Common | Florida A&M University

An award-winning entertainer, actor, author, and social activist, Common's career has been marked by versatility and excellence.

## Tracey Lee | Howard University, Southern University Law Center

Lee's single "The Theme (It's Party Time)" catapulted him to fame in 1997, and he continues to impress with his musical and legal talents. Lee is now an entertainment attorney. He recently served as a professor at Coppin State University.

## 2 Chainz | Alabama State University, Virginia State University

A solo artist and former member of Playaz Circle, 2 Chainz has dominated the hip hop scene with his chart-topping hits and has been nominated (and won) numerous awards including Soul Train Awards, BET Awards, BET Hip Hop Awards and a 2017 Grammy win for "No Problems" with Chance the Rapper and Lil Wayne.

**Guru** | Morehouse College

Part of the iconic hip hop duo Gang Starr, Guru's influence and talent earned him a spot among the top 50 MCs of all time.

**Kontihene** | Hampton University

A leader in Ghana's hiplife music style, Kontihene has received honors for his music and contributions to the genre.

**David Banner** | Southern University, University of Maryland Eastern Shore

Besides his successful rap career, Banner is known for his outspokenness on racial issues in the United States.

**Wale** | Virginia State & Bowie State University

This Nigerian-American artist has earned widespread acclaim for his music and is a prominent figure in the hip hop scene.

**Little Brother** | North Carolina Central University

This trio of talented artists left an indelible mark on the hip hop industry during their time together. Four albums were produced before the group decided to disband. 9th Wonder has served as artist-in-residence at NCCU since 2014.

**DAS EFX** | Virginia State University

With their unique rap style, DAS EFX made a significant impact on the hip hop scene in the early-'90s.

**Metro Boomin** | Morehouse College

A renowned producer, Metro Boomin has worked with some of the biggest names in hip hop. In 2016 and 2017 he won Producer of the Year at both the BMI R&B/Hip-Hop Awards and the BET Hip Hop Awards.



ERYKAH BADU

#### **E-40 | Grambling State University**

After a successful Grambling talent show performance, he and cousin, B-Legit decided to pursue rap as a career. E-40's successful career as a rapper has spanned over 20 studio albums and numerous collaborations.

#### **Lords of the Underground | Shaw University**

The group came together as students- two MCs Mr. Funke/Funk Machine and DoltAll/ DuKelly and DJ Lord Jazz- when all three were undergraduate students at Shaw University. Releasing their 1st single, "Psycho" in 1992, the trio followed with three top 20 hits, including "Chief Rocka" which was #1 on US Rap charts from their album, "Here Come the Lords."

#### **Erykah Badu | Grambling State University**

A musical genius, Erykah Badu's soulful and captivating style has earned her worldwide acclaim. She studied theater and dance, and even formed a group with her cousin called Erykah Free. However, she left the university in 1993 to pursue a career in music.

#### **Don Cannon | Clark Atlanta University**

A highly respected DJ and record producer, Cannon has worked with various top hip hop artists. The Grammy-nominated producer founded Generation Now with DJ Drama, the label to which Uzi is signed.

#### **MC Ride | Hampton University**

Frontman of Death Grips, MC Ride's unique style and creativity have garnered both praise and curiosity from fans. A visual arts major at Hampton, he also sells acrylic paintings on his personal website.

#### **Sean Combs | Howard University**

Known by many names — Puffy of Puff Daddy or P. Diddy — Diddy's impact on the hip hop world as a producer, rapper, actor, and entrepreneur is undeniable. Though Combs left Howard after his sophomore year, he donated more than \$1 million to the college and in 2014 received an Honorary Doctorate in Humanities.

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# FROM FAMU TO NIKE

## G. SCOTT UZZELL'S INSPIRING JOURNEY OF SUCCESS



Florida A&M University (FAMU) is beaming with pride as one of its own achieves remarkable success in the sports business industry. Meet G. Scott Uzzell, a true business savant and a graduate of FAMU's prestigious School of Business and Industry. Recently appointed as Nike's Vice President and General Manager for North America, Uzzell's inspiring journey is one of hard work, dedication, and a passion for giving back.

Uzzell's path to success began with a business degree from FAMU, which he complemented with an MBA from the renowned University of Chicago. He honed his skills and expertise at prominent companies like Procter & Gamble, Nabisco, and Coca-Cola, establishing himself as a marketing and sales expert. His exceptional talents caught the attention of prestigious firms, and he soon became a board member of State Bank and Trust Company, Fairlife, LLC, and Suja Juice Company.

But Uzzell's meteoric rise didn't stop there. He was entrusted with the reins of Converse, where he became the Chief Executive Officer and President of the apparel brand. Demonstrating remarkable leadership, he guided Converse back to its glory days as a basketball brand with a global impact.

However, Uzzell never forgot his roots, remaining deeply connected to Florida A&M University. Thanks to his efforts, FAMU secured a six-year agreement with Nike, making the sportswear giant the official footwear, apparel, and equipment provider for the university until 2027. In addition, Uzzell brokered a groundbreaking deal that made basketball legend LeBron James a

school partner. The partnership led to an exclusive apparel and shoe deal with Florida A&M, a testament to Uzzell's commitment to giving back and uplifting his alma mater.

His inspiring journey serves as a beacon of hope for aspiring businessmen in the sports industry. From completing three internships during his time at FAMU to leading global brands like Coca-Cola and Converse, Uzzell's story motivates us all to dream big and achieve greatness.

John Donahoe, President & CEO of NIKE, Inc., acknowledged the profound impact of Uzzell's leadership, stating, "We're driving even greater focus and integration across our business and teams through these changes, doubling down on what Nike does best: seamlessly serving athletes with compelling product." Uzzell's appointment as Nike's Vice President/General Manager of North America underscores the company's dedication to innovation, athlete service, and unparalleled brand storytelling.

G. Scott Uzzell's story reminds us that with hard work, determination, and a passion for giving back, HBCU graduates can shape the future and leave a lasting mark on the world of business. As he continues to make history, Uzzell stands as a shining example of excellence, leadership, and the power of HBCU education to change lives. Embrace the spirit of excellence and success, and together, let's continue to uplift the legacy of HBCUs and inspire greatness in all of us.

# ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY WOMEN BREAK NEW GROUND WITH OWN CREDIT UNION



In a groundbreaking move, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. has taken a historic step towards financial empowerment and independence. The organization has successfully launched its very own credit union, appropriately named "For Members Only" or FMO Credit Union. This monumental achievement marks the first Black-owned, sorority-based, women-led digital banking financial institution in the United States.

Alpha Kappa Alpha, founded by Black college-educated women and one of the nation's oldest service organizations, has grown to include almost half a million members. The inauguration of FMO Credit Union at the sorority's international headquarters in Chicago carried immense significance. Danette Anthony Reed, CEO, and AKA's International president, emphasized the importance of this institution, stating, "Everyone doesn't understand the impact we make financially, so you have to start doing things so folks know we know how to control our money."

The FMO Credit Union, chartered, regulated, and insured by the National Credit Union Administration, offers several banking services, including primary savings and loans. During its inaugural year, the institution caters to AKA members, their immediate family, Alpha Kappa Alpha staff, and credit union employees.

This credit union aligns itself with the sorority's six initiatives, including a focus on building and sustaining economic wealth. FMO Federal Credit Union executive director, Terri Bradford Eason, highlighted that "Every member will be an owner of the credit union," allowing

everyone to share in its success and impact.

Founded in 1908 at Howard University, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. has a rich tradition of service and stands as a testament to the power of sisterhood. Over the years, distinguished women such as Vice President Kamala Harris, the late Toni Morrison, and television personality Star Jones have graced its ranks. Vice President Harris, with her strong history of supporting community lenders and banks, has been instrumental in investing billions of dollars in historically underserved communities. Her efforts, including the Economic Opportunity Coalition (EOC) and the CDFI Equitable Recovery Program, have been crucial in driving positive change.

This landmark achievement is just one example of the women of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority's dedication to creating positive change and empowering their community. From establishing credit unions to transforming historical sites into museums, the sorority's commitment to economic and social progress continues to make a lasting impact.

FMO Credit Union serves as a powerful symbol of financial empowerment, and its success will undoubtedly pave the way for more transformative endeavors. As members of the HBCU community, let us celebrate this historic achievement and explore the opportunities it presents for fostering financial strength and independence for generations to come. Together, we can build a brighter and more prosperous future for all.

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# HBCUS: THE UNDERFUNDDED GEM OF AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION



**B**lack Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have been a cornerstone of education and empowerment for Black Americans for over 185 years. Despite their immense contributions to Black communities and the nation, a recent Candid and ABFE investigation revealed a shocking reality: Compared to Ivy League colleges, HBCUs receive 178 times less funding from major US foundations.

In 2019 alone, the eight Ivy League schools were granted a staggering \$5.5 billion from the top 1,000 U.S. foundations, while the 99 American HBCUs received a meager \$45 million. This disparity is disheartening, as HBCUs play a critical role in tackling systematic racism and reducing educational and economic inequities that Black Americans experience.

HBCUs have a rich history of providing higher education opportunities to Black students when formal education was forbidden or limited to white institutions. The founders of these institutions believed education was a pathway to political and social equality for the newly freed Black Americans. Today, HBCUs continue to be vital in developing Black leaders, advancing upward mobility, and contributing to a more equitable society.

However, the study reveals a troubling trend. Large U.S. foundations have been steadily reducing their support for HBCUs between 2002 and 2019, with funding dropping from \$65 million in 2002 to \$45 million in 2019. Moreover, HBCUs receive around two-thirds of what “similarly situated institutions” are granted, demonstrating a lack of financial support.

The disparities are not limited to overall funding but also extend to the grant dollars reserved for research and endowments. HBCUs face significant challenges in attracting substantial private donations and building larger endowments compared to their predominantly white counterparts.

Furthermore, the study found that within the 99 HBCUs, there were glaring disparities in funding, with the top 10 funded HBCUs receiving over half of the total foundation funding. Moreover, private HBCUs received more than twice the grant amounts as public HBCUs.

As a community of HBCU graduates, it is crucial to acknowledge and address this funding disparity. The contributions of HBCUs to the advancement of Black Americans in various fields, including medicine, law, and STEM, are undeniable. Yet, the lack of financial support hampers their ability to provide quality education, infrastructure, and endowments.

It is essential to question why HBCUs receive such limited funding from major foundations to ensure a more equitable future. How can we collectively advocate for greater financial support for these institutions that have been pillars of opportunity and success for Black communities?

It's time to push for comprehensive funding for HBCUs, as they continue to be a force for positive change and social mobility. Let's come together as a community and HBCU allies to advocate for the financial backing these institutions deserve and ensure their continued legacy of empowerment and excellence.

# BLACK AMERICANS AT HIGHER RISK FOR STROKE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



**O**n the surface, you may feel healthy and invincible as you enter your 50s, excelling in your chosen profession. The thought of having a stroke might seem remote, something that happens to older individuals. But as recent events have shown, stroke can strike at any age, especially for Black, middle-aged men. Stroke is a leading cause of death and disability in the United States, and Black Americans are at a higher risk for stroke than other racial groups. Several factors contribute to this increased risk, including genetics, lifestyle, and social determinants of health.

## So, what exactly is a stroke?

A stroke occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is interrupted, depriving the brain of oxygen and nutrients. This can damage or kill brain cells, leading to a range of symptoms, depending on the area of the brain affected.

## The Role of Genetics

Genetics plays a role in stroke risk. Black Americans have a higher prevalence of certain genetic variants linked to strokes, such as variants that increase the risk of high blood pressure and diabetes.

This increased risk is influenced by a variety of factors, including socioeconomic determinants of health and physical location. Understanding the risks and taking proactive steps to manage them is essential for safeguarding your health. Geography also plays a role, with higher stroke mortality rates among Black people living in the southern states, known as the "Stroke Belt." Rural areas with limited access to healthcare and healthy food options also contribute to the risk.

## Risk Factors for Stroke

There are a few risk factors for stroke, including:

- High blood pressure
- Untreated sleep disorders
- Atrial fibrillation
- Obesity
- High cholesterol
- Sickle cell anemia
- Diabetes
- Carotid artery disease
- Illegal drug use
- Smoking
- Peripheral artery disease
- Other heart diseases

## What Can You Do to Reduce Your Risk of Stroke?

There are numerous things you can do to reduce your risk of stroke, including:

- Managing your blood pressure
- Eating a healthy diet
- Controlling your cholesterol levels
- Managing your diabetes
- Limiting alcohol consumption
- Sickle cell anemia
- Controlling your weight
- Avoid smoking
- Getting enough sleep
- Exercising regularly
- Avoiding illegal drugs
- Other heart diseases

Stroke is a serious health condition that can have a devastating impact on your life. However, there are several things you can do to reduce your risk of stroke. By taking steps to manage your risk factors and to live a healthy lifestyle, you can help to protect yourself from this leading cause of death and disability. The best time to focus on your health and make positive changes is always now.

# BOWIE STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENDS EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS BEHIND BARS



In a stride toward progress, Bowie State University, Maryland's oldest HBCU, has broken new ground by partnering with Jessup Correctional Institute (JCI) to offer incarcerated individuals an opportunity to earn college degrees. This transformative initiative is made possible through the Second Chance Pell Grant program, enabling inmates at JCI to rewrite their narratives.

Damon McDuffie, an inmate at JCI for the past three years, found the program motivating, inspiring him to obtain his GED and enroll in classes. "Being around people that's been locked up since they've been teenagers, or don't have education or support - it motivates you to do better," shared McDuffie. Pursuing a bachelor's degree in sociology at Bowie State, he is among nine incarcerated students in the program. McDuffie's journey holds special meaning as he joins his sister in attending an HBCU, kindling family pride.

Kyle Longerbean, another student in the program, embraces education to connect with his son. He finds

solace in telling his kid that, despite his circumstances, he's achieving academic success. "[I'll tell him] I might be in prison, but I'm still getting A's and B's. I'm 37 years old, and dad's still in school, so you can do it," Longerbean said. "He has no excuse now."

Carolyn J. Scruggs, secretary of the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, highlights the far-reaching impact of education, noting that it instills a sense of pride, purpose, and hope among inmates.

As the program gains momentum, the university plans to expand to include more degree options and perhaps collaborate with women's correctional facilities. It is consistent with a bigger trend of HBCUs leading the charge in extending education behind bars. A beacon of progress and empowerment, these programs underscore the power of education to transform lives, offering new beginnings and opportunities for growth within and beyond prison walls.



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