



Commencement

May 2009

Dr. Ralph Inspired Graduates to Dream

Actress Sheryl Lee Ralph burst into song when she took to the podium at Huston-Tillotson University's Commencement Convocation early Saturday morning



before a crowd of 2,000. Her powerful voice and words of inspiration assured the graduates that even during the daily deluge of bad economic news, opportunities

and wealth will surface. She also focused her message on giving back to the community, avoiding negative influences, and being spiritually and mentally healthy in life. She was especially proud of her new "Dr. Sheryl Lee Ralph" title after receiving an honorary doctorate in humane letters from President Larry L. Earvin for her humanitarian efforts and work in theater and the arts.

Ralph is a veteran of film, television, and Broadway. A Tony Award and Drama Desk Award nominee, her extensive film credits include "Sister Act II," "The Flintstones," and "The Mighty Quinn."

The University also recognized Carol L. McDonald, the second president for the Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas, Inc. (ICUT) and ICUT Foundation in Austin, Texas. She received the honorary Doctor of Laws for her advocacy, commitment, and support of higher education.

Among the 2009 graduates were ten W.E.B. Dubois Honor Scholars and the first graduate of the Pathways to Academic Socialization and Success

(PASS) Program. The PASS Program is designed for motivated, first generation college students who seek to strengthen their transition from high school to college. Jessica R. Brooks, criminal justice, is the University's first PASS graduate.

The convocation featured inspirational performances from the concert choir, conducted by Dr. Gloria H. Quinlan, and the traditional "Hallelujah Chorus." The University also paid tribute to the Class of 1959 in honor of their 50-year reunion from Huston-Tillotson College.

In addition to Ralph, other Hollywood celebrities in attendance included Judge Mablean Ephriam (right) to watch relative Terrence Brooks receive his bachelor's degree in business administration. Ephriam was featured on the popular "Divorce Court" as the "family law crusader" of justice during the half hour daily television show that held the number one daytime show rating in 1999. After rendering her first college keynote address during HT's 2004 commencement, she introduced several of her relatives to the institution who are now enrolled. It was also announced that Ralph's son would be attending HT in the fall.



The graduating class included students from the Bahamas, Jamaica, Liberia, Republic of South Africa, and Trinidad and Tobago. Business Administration



W.E.B. DuBois Honor Scholars left to right are Gail N. Maduro, Llereva Mortimer, Arriel Goodman, Jeffrey Plummer, Arlene Delgado, Khadi-Ann Dixon, and Ashley Davis. Not pictured are Kenneth Chapman, Kemba Valentine, and Kim Valentine.

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Top Ranking Students Recognized During Honors Convocation

Huston-Tillotson University saluted its highest achieving students at the annual Honors Convocation held in King Seabrook Chapel on Friday, May 8, 2009. Top ranking juniors and seniors in each major received an award for their hard work during the 2008-2009 academic year. Students on the Dean's List, Cumulative Honor Roll, Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges, and in Honor Societies were also recognized. The theme for the 2009 convocation was "Yes We Can."

The celebration featured hair-raising musical performances from the Jazz Combo, directed by Dr. Martin G. McCain,

Jr., and uplifting selections by the concert choir, conducted by Dr. Gloria H. Quinlan.

The 2009 Honors Convocation guest speaker was ACRESH Chief Executive Officer Barry Eugene Avery Johnson. ACRESH is a development partner and co-owner of Hoffman-Streuver LLC, a master development entity created to complete the \$1+ billion mixed-use Southwest Waterfront redevelopment project on the Anacostia River in the District of Columbia. Johnson told the room full of alumni, faculty, staff, students, and trustees to lift up others who are not as focused, educated, or accomplished as they are. He revealed his own emotional "riches to rags"

story and encouraged the young honorees to look beyond their negative experiences in life to turn their tribulations into triumphs.

Johnson has held a number of executive management positions with global media companies, including The Walt Disney Company, Sony Music, and MSBET, a web-based joint venture between Black Entertainment Television (BET) Holdings and Microsoft. He is a graduate of Yale and Harvard universities, respectively, and a resident of Washington, D.C. and Birmingham, Alabama.

Damian H. Spencer (left) and Quincy S. Bland representing **Phi Beta Lambda (business)**.



Kelli M. Bray, Janel M. Gibson, Arriel Goodman, Sharmeka Thompson-Nwoko, Maurice B. Miles, Gail N. Maduro, Jeffery D. Plummer, and Mathew Bet, representing **Beta Kappa Chi (scientific)**.



Katriena L. Gentle, Dawn K. Shannon, and Tonya K. Joyner, representing **Pi Gamma Mu (social sciences)**.



Yolanda Fonseca, Joseph Melvin, Oscar L. Lewis, Ismael Rosales, and Dorothy J. Milburn, representing **Kappa Delta Pi (education)**.

Graduates (cont'd)

recorded the largest number of graduates with 30, which represents a 30% increase from 2009. Sociology majors experienced an almost 200% increase in the number of graduates with 11 candidates, compared with four in 2009.



Jennifer M. Kizzee (left) and Rochelle D. Robinson, representing **Alpha Kappa Mu (general)**.



Marnique D. Wesley, (right) representing **Sigma Tau Delta (English)**.