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App Founder Discusses Resiliency at REDe Entrepreneurship Summit

Former inmate tells students that business ideas can have profound impact

NOVEMBER 19, 2021 BY JACQUELYN DELAVALDENE

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Marcus Bullock, keynote speaker for the fourth annual REDe Entrepreneurship Summit, speaks to Ole Miss students about adapting to challenges and using business to make a difference in the world. Bullock spent eight years in prison before founding the Flikshop app to help inmates stay connected with their families. Photo by Kevin Bain/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

OXFORD, Miss. – “The entrepreneurial spirit is like the Ole Miss spirit; it demands a commitment to excellence and signifies a passion for one’s pursuit,” **University of Mississippi** Chancellor Glenn Boyce told a packed room of students at the annual REDe Entrepreneurship Summit.

Boyce opened the fourth annual summit, which featured entrepreneur Marcus Bullock as the keynote speaker. The Nov. 11 session, hosted by the UM **Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship**, was aimed at inspiring students with varied academic backgrounds to engage in entrepreneurship.

“Life after prison can be one of success,” said Bullock, founder of **Flikshop Inc.**, an app that allows inmates around the world to stay in contact with their loved ones.

He saw an opportunity to create Flikshop after spending eight years of his own life in prison.

“I was able to see the world through my mother’s lens, and that gave me a clear vision of what my life would look like after prison,” he said.

Bullock’s mother played an essential role in the individual he has become as she continued to write letters and send pictures of what his life would look like once he got out. Upon his release in February 2004, Bullock was ready to adapt to the new changes and challenges that would come his way.

He applied for 41 jobs and was turned away from them all before he landed his first job at a local paint shop. Bullock then began a project that would change his life, hiring individuals who had similar backgrounds to develop and build Flikshop.

He found his vision by harnessing his hardships and experiences to help inmates around the world.

This service gives inmates “access to the Flikshop School of Business, a program Marcus created that teaches returning citizens entrepreneurship using coding and software development,” said Liza Cirlot Looser, chair of the CIE advisory board.

Using a blend of resilience, empathy, storytelling, community and systems, Bullock launched a brand he is proud of and that provides hope.

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Campus Briefs

Civil Engineering Professor Receives Most-Cited Paper Award

OXFORD, Miss. – Peer recognition is a rewarding experience for anyone, but University of Mississippi researcher Amir Mehrara Molan was elated when an article he co-authored recently received the Most Cited Paper Award at the 102nd Transportation Research Board meeting in the nation’s capital. The International Journal of Transportation Science and Technology presented the civil engineering

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Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy’s new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying “thank you.” “It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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Ole Miss In the News

Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to

"All 170,000 that we've connected today are able to tell a story," he said. "It tells an amazing story of love and empathy inside of places you think it wouldn't exist, and it's all led by a community of people who simply love their children, just like my mom did for me."

Bullock's marketing strategy was unusual, as he had a significant knowledge gap after being sentenced to prison during his sophomore year of high school. He took what he already knew about the jails, began marketing his brand by leaving postcards out during visitation hours and created Facebook ads that continued to grow.

"Marcus's message of using entrepreneurship to not only better his own life, but also to create positive change in his and other communities around the U.S., is a tremendous takeaway," said Clay Dibrell, UM professor of management and co-director of the CIE. "The power of entrepreneurship for affirmative social transformation resonates strongly with Ole Miss students."

Since August 2014, the CIE has assisted roughly 60 student-led startup businesses.

"We were so excited to host this year's REDe Entrepreneurship Summit in person," said Tong Meng, the center's director of programs. "It's wonderful to see our annual event contribute to the students' learning experience at Ole Miss, and the CIE will continue to bring great stories to our community."



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