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Legacy Celebration Honors Meredith, African American Firsts

Alumni return to alma mater for recognition and reflection

OCTOBER 4, 2022 BY EDWIN B. SMITH



UM alumna Rose Fenorl pays tribute to James Meredith during the Legacy Celebration, comparing him to biblical hero Joseph. Photo by Kevin Bain/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

OXFORD, Miss. – Memories and laughter filled the air and a few tears filled some eyes as dozens of African Americans who achieved “firsts” at the **University of Mississippi** returned to their alma mater for the Legacy Celebration.

Drawing more than 300 people, the Friday (Sept. 30) event in the Johnson Commons Ballroom was part of a **series of activities** commemorating the 60th anniversary of the university’s integration by James Meredith. The civil rights icon and many other honorees were feted by UM administrators, faculty, staff, alumni and students.

“When I look around this room, I can see a distinct thread woven throughout our university’s history, beginning with James Meredith and leading us to today and the people gathered in this room,” Chancellor Glenn Boyce said. “Because James Meredith took that first step – that contested, daunting, nearly impossible first step – to integrate this university, so many others have been able to pursue their dreams and flourish.”

Nic Lott (BA 01), first Black president of the Associated Student Body, and Kimbrey Dandridge (BAJ 13), first Black female ASB president, were among the speakers.

“James Meredith was and is a man on a mission,” Lott said. “He came here, and he’s leaving this a better place than he found it. I’m so happy to see the University of Mississippi celebrating his life and legacy.”

Dandridge also paid tribute to Meredith.

“Mr. Meredith, I love you and Dr. Meredith so much,” she said. “You have been such an inspiration in my life and in the lives of so many others. We’re standing with you in your mission.

“I don’t know what’s next, but I know that it will be great.”

Visibly moved by the words of appreciation, Meredith challenged those in the audience to do more for others coming behind them

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Campus Briefs

Students Learn ‘Real Politics’ in Washington, D.C., Winter Session

OXFORD, Miss. – Eleven University of Mississippi students spent their winter break learning about the people who work behind the scenes of the American government in Washington, D.C. Lead by Jonathan Klingler, assistant professor of political science, the students of Pol 391: Applied Politics met not with candidates, but with the people who make candidates’

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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 abate. The Federal Reserve’s

"What I did in 1962 was historic, but what is needed now is a thousand times more important," he said. "I'm on a mission to take care of the 80% of our people who still haven't made it.

"I'm going to do everything I promised God that I would do to help others."

Rose Flenorl (BAEd 79), first Black female student named to the UM Student Hall of Fame, first Black female Alumni Hall of Fame inductee and first Black **Ole Miss Alumni Association** president, compared Meredith to the biblical hero Joseph, noting that the two men shared the same character traits of courage, opportunity, knowledge and perseverance.

"We are all standing upon the shoulders of others who came before us," Flenorl said. "While it's great that we were the first, we must make sure that we are not also the last."

Following Flenorl's tribute, a video featured African Americans who achieved "firsts" at the university during the past six decades. These included Lucius Williams, first Black UM administrator; Peggy Gillom-Granderson, first Black female basketball player; and Ethel Scurlock, the first African American to lead the **Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College**.

Afterwards, Dr. J. Steven Blake (BA 80) challenged the audience to support the **James H. Meredith Legacy Scholarship** he helped establish earlier.

"My hope is that through our combined and generous gifts, this scholarship will grow until it matches, even surpasses the level of the most prestigious scholarships this university currently offers," Blake said.



Dr. Steve Blake, a 1980 UM alumnus, appeals to Legacy Celebration attendees to support the James H. Meredith Legacy Scholarship Fund. Photo by Kevin Bain/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

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Shawnboda Mead (center), vice chancellor for diversity and engagement and chair of the 60th anniversary of integration committee, gives James Meredith a gift of appreciation for his presence during the week. Photo by Kevin Bain/Ole Miss Digital Imaging Services

Norris "EJ" Edney, assistant vice chancellor for diversity and inclusion, highlighted the Pathways to Equity institutional diversity, equity and inclusion plan and efforts underway to promote student success.

"Mr. Meredith, I'm a product of the many benefits made possible at this university by your sacrifices," Edney said. "My endeavor is to reach back and pull people through the doors you knocked down and propel them down the hallways to success built in memorial to your sacrifice."

Closing remarks were delivered by Shawnboda

Mead, vice chancellor for diversity and community engagement and chair of the 60th anniversary committee.

"Thank you again for 'opening doors' that have led us to this very celebration of firsts and alumni excellence," Mead said. "Because of you, we will continue working on the mission of dismantling systems of inequity for future generations.

"We are committed to building on your legacy in service to Mississippi and the world around us."

Sponsors for the event included the offices of the Chancellor and Provost, Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, School of Education, College of Liberal Arts, Ole Miss Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and the Gertrude C. Ford Center for the Performing Arts.

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