

DECEMBER 2011

# EAGLE VIEW

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT



*Happy Holidays!*

James E. Shepard Memorial Library  
circa 1950s

# NCCU Awards 608 Degrees at December Commencement



John Silvanus Wilson Jr., Speaker

North Carolina Central University awarded 608 bachelor's, master's and law degrees on Saturday, Dec. 10, in a ceremony at McDougald–McLendon Gymnasium.

In a stirring, revival-style commencement address, federal education leader John Silvanus Wilson Jr. urged the graduates to harness courage and vision to overcome fear. "There is fear and courage inside all of us," he said. "Most of us focus on the obstacles in front of us and we operate out of fear. We need to focus on the goals and operate out of courage."

Wilson is the executive director of the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), an office set up within the Department of Education in the 1970s to strengthen the nation's 105 HBCUs and serve as a liaison between them and the federal government.

Wilson is a former professor at George Washington University and holds a Ph.D. from Harvard, but he also was trained as a preacher and is the son, grandson and great-grandson of preachers as well. That part of his heritage was on full display as he recounted a life-changing event from his teens.

The back yard of his home in a Philadelphia suburb contained a swimming pool and was enclosed by a four-foot chain-link fence, he recalled. Try as he might, when he needed to retrieve a ball that went over the fence, he was never able to hop the

fence in a single, swift move the way some neighborhood friends could, he said. It became an obstacle that nagged at him.

One day a visiting child fell into the deep end of the pool and began to struggle and sink. Wilson was outside the fence when he heard the cries of alarm. He leaped the fence, plunged in and saved the child from drowning.

"To this day," he said, "I don't remember exerting the slightest bit of energy getting over that fence. I was over in half a second. I know that science says it was adrenaline, but I wondered then and I often wonder now, 'How can I be in touch with the power that got me over the fence, all the time?'"

"Earlier, when I would go after that ball, I focused on the fence and I was driven by doubt and fear," he said. "But when I had to get to that pool, I focused on the drowning boy, and I was driven by confidence and courage."

"Graduates, there will be a lot of fences in your future," he said. "But you need to have a 'what fence?' mentality, a 'what fence?' psychology, a 'what fence?' theology. Do not focus on the fences in life. Focus on what is on the other side of those fences. That's where life is! That's where love is! That's where destiny is!"

NCCU Chancellor Charlie Nelms joined Wilson in congratulating the graduates and, as has become his custom, he publicly recognized a few for their success in overcoming obstacles.

He praised Nina Banks, who received a law degree. Banks persisted in the face of health and financial problems in her family that forced her to interrupt her undergraduate education twice. And after a successful first year at NCCU's School of Law, she had to have heart surgery. She didn't quit, though, and now she has been accepted into the Army's Judge Advocate General training program.

Nelms also recognized Landis Strickland, who received his Bachelor of Business Administration degree. Strickland escaped his difficult family circumstances and tough Durham neighborhood by joining the Navy. He served six years, got



Class of 2011 Graduates

## NCCU Students Show How Much They ‘CAARE’

Tiffany Gary, a sophomore on the women’s basketball team, smiled wide and stood on her tiptoes to hang an ornament near the top of the Christmas tree in the lobby of the CAARE Inc. center in downtown Durham.

With her long arms and graceful agility, it was easy for her to work high while fellow students decorated the lower part of the tree, sharing laughs as they untangled a mass of string lights.

It was a familiar and joyous sight around the holidays, but this one had a special twist. Gary was among nearly 20 volunteers from North Carolina Central University’s Athletics Department who arrived at the nonprofit center Tuesday to decorate, pack meals, prepare care packages and help make the day brighter for those struggling in dark economic times.

Within an hour of the volunteers’ arrival, the lobby crowded with people invited to receive a free turkey and trimmings, along with some personal care items.

“It makes me feel better as a person knowing that I am giving back to my community,” said Gary, who was joined by nursing sophomore JaNise Rhodes, psychology freshman Kaylah Blount and nursing junior Torya Smith.

CAARE is a grass roots operation that provides a variety of health and social services to low-wealth residents in the

married and settled into a civilian job in New Orleans — until Hurricane Katrina destroyed their uninsured home. He and his wife and their young daughter bounced through hotel and guest rooms in three states before returning to Durham. He entered Durham Technical Community College, transferred to NCCU and graduated magna cum laude.

And Nelms also praised John Archer, who was just out of college and in robust health at age 23 when his heart suddenly stopped — he was dead. Paramedics were able to quickly revive him, and a defibrillator in his chest now ensures that it won’t happen again. He started law school but had to quit when his marriage failed and he took custody of his newborn son. Two years ago, he enrolled at NCCU’s School of Business, and on Saturday — 11 years after the heart attack that nearly ended his life — he graduated cum laude with a Master of Business Administration degree.

Following NCCU tradition, Nelms hosted a reception for graduates and their families on Friday night. Separate receptions by campus colleges and departments took place after the commencement ceremony.



Tiffany Gary hangs an ornament at CAARE Inc.



Students work to stock canned goods at CAARE Inc.

Durham area. The organization began in 1995 with kitchen-table conversation between Dr. Sharon Elliott-Bynum, an NCCU alumna, and her sister, the late Patricia Amaechi. Yearning for a way to give back to the community, the socially conscious sisters started the nonprofit primarily to help with AIDS and addiction management.

In the last 16 years, CAARE has grown to become a major health and social service agency with an annual budget of nearly \$1 million dollars, including support from government and private sources. Although Amaechi passed away, her presence remains in the mural on the wall and in the heart of her sister.

“Here, we emphasize that there is no delineation between ‘them’ and ‘us,’ so a lot of the clients that we help come back to help others,” Elliott-Bynum said as she stood smiling underneath the mural. “That’s how we’re going to make our community a healthier community — it’s all of us doing our part.”

A few years ago, Elliott-Bynum met NCCU Athletic Director Ingrid Wicker-McCree and head women’s basketball coach Joli Robinson. Together, the women formed Top Ladies of Distinction, a service organization targeting young women.

That connection led to the department’s relationship with CAARE. It’s a place where service learning comes alive for students, Robinson said.

“Young people haven’t always experienced things, and you

can’t understand until you’ve experienced it,” Robinson said. Volunteering helps students appreciate what they have and break down barriers, she said.

“Some (clients) are here by choice, most are not,” Robinson said. “Being here shows the students that you should always treat people with respect, regardless.”

CAARE staffers used Veteran’s Day to focus on their project to build a 15-bed shelter for homeless veterans. On Nov. 11, the NCCU women’s basketball team joined with students from Duke University for a day of service that included a sleepover in an empty room at the center.

“We wanted them to feel what it was like to wake up with no resources, to have nothing,” Elliott-Bynum said.

Gary remembers the night well, and she remembers the talk the next morning from a homeless man who described his life to the students.

“It was a good experience. It really opened our eyes,” she said. “I’ve learned you don’t have to be a millionaire or have a lot of money to show people that you care. It puts a smile on my face just being here.”

And with that megawatt smile, Gary went right back to trimming the tree.

## NCCU Law Hosted EPA Administrator and Business Leaders

Lisa P. Jackson, administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, chaired a roundtable discussion with about 30 business and government leaders at the North Carolina Central University School of Law. The White House Business Council and Business Forward NC, a trade group formed to encourage participation by business leaders in the policymaking process, organized the gathering.

“I truly believe and will always believe that the environment is a nonpartisan issue,” said Jackson as she opened the session

## Photography Exhibit Highlights African-American Resistance

with remarks about the collaborative nature of President Obama's administration. She continued to state that the EPA's tightening of pollution standards easily contributes more benefit than cost, saving lives and mitigating "hundreds of billions of dollars" in healthcare expenses and productivity losses. She added, "Americans actually like the idea that they're protected by the EPA."

She predicted that clean energy would become a \$4 trillion-dollar industry and challenged those present to develop the innovations that would create those jobs.

Three businessmen brought challenges of their own related to EPA regulation and support for their environmentally conscious operations.

John Gaither, president and CEO of Reichhold Inc., raised a concern with the U.S. Health Department's recent listing of styrene as a carcinogen. Gaither stated that "75 years of research shows it's not a carcinogen" and he wondered aloud about the risks of replacing it with some other chemical in the manufacture of his company's polyester resins about which scientists have much less knowledge.

Andy Marchiano, president of Longistics, a logistics and trucking company, asked how the EPA might support his fuel-efficient operation by either incentivizing environmental protection or penalizing competitors that forgo the expensive fuel efficiency upgrades. Greg Merritt, vice president of Cree, an innovator in LED lighting, pressed Jackson about how the EPA intended to ensure the adoption of the new lighting efficiency standards to be enacted Jan. 1. Merritt suggested "incentivizing the market to adopt energy efficient technologies through tax policy or credits."

NCCU Law School Dean Raymond Pierce was enthusiastic about the benefits of roundtable meetings such as this, the second to be held at the Law School this year.

"I think it's invaluable for the White House, through its Cabinet-level representatives, to seek out the concerns but also the ideas of our top business leaders in formulating policy," said Pierce. "These men and women are making the decisions that will determine job growth in this state and those decisions can be influenced, one way or the other, by public policy."

A stunning collection of photographic portraits, "Let Your Motto be Resistance: African-American Portraits," will run at the North Carolina Central University Art until Jan. 15, 2012. The collection reveals the nation's history through an African-American lens, using the lives of well-known abolitionists, artists, scientists, writers, statesmen, entertainers and sports figures. The exhibit will run until Jan. 15, 2012.

Among the featured photographers who employ a variety of strategies to create their powerful images are Mathew Brady, James VanDerZee, Doris Ulmann, Edward Weston, Gordon Parks, Irving Penn and Carl Van Vechten.

The exhibit's title was taken from a celebrated abolitionist and orator Henry Highland Garnet. In the speech titled "Call to Rebellion," Garnet challenges the American slaves to rise up and emancipate themselves, arguing that armed unrest would be the most effective way to end slavery. "Let your motto be resistance," he exclaimed, "Resistance! Resistance! No oppressed people have ever secured their liberty without resistance."

"The need to resist, to challenge race-based assumptions, laws and practices that sought to limit black life, has always



Malcolm X



Martin Luther King Jr. with Coretta Scott King, Yolanda Denise

been a central tenet of African-American culture," said Kenneth Rodgers, director of the NCCU Museum of Art. "This resistance has many faces. While some African-Americans demanded change at any cost, others chose nonviolent confrontations."

For general information or assistance, call 919-560-6211.

## Put the Love Back in Your Holiday Giving

Often paired with this time of year are hopes to surprise our loved ones with special gifts that mean a lot to them...but that is not always so easy. Check out this gift idea that is sure to please everyone.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE >>](#)

## Featured Photo

Dr. Townes visited the campus and toured the building named for her mother, Dr. Mary M. Townes, former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and a longtime professor of biology. The \$36 million science building was named for Townes in 2005.



(Pictured: Left to Right) Abdul Mohammed, Dean, College of Science and Technology; Gail Hollowell, Assistant Professor, Department of Biology; Emilie Townes (daughter of Dr. Mary M. Townes) Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Andrew W. Mellon Professor of African American Religion and Theology at Yale Divinity School; Lois Deloatch, Vice Chancellor, Office of Institutional Advancement.