

Tom Joyner to help Morris Brown students with monetary grant

By *Artelia C. Covington*
 WASHINGTON (NNPA)—Four months after losing its accreditation, Morris Brown College may be getting a bit of a reprieve, thanks to a donation from radio personality Tom Joyner.

Joyner announced on his nationally syndicated morning show that he is offering \$1 million to help students currently enrolled at Morris Brown College complete their education.

Morris Brown lost an appeal earlier this year to keep its academic accreditation, making the school ineligible to receive the federal financial aid that most of its students rely on to pay their bills, which includes about \$10,000 in tuition per year. Federal aid accounted for more than 70 percent of Morris Brown's income. About 90 percent of Morris Brown students relied on that aid.

"We decided to help out because, for one thing, we had the money and because we were able to help," says Joyner, whose radio show airs in more than 100 markets. "We've been trying to figure out a way to help for some time now."

Joyner had previously announced on his radio show that he would spar with former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson, but so far he hasn't heard anything from Tyson's camp.

"I figured that anyone who fights him gets \$10 million, so I thought I'd get in the ring with him, get the money and give it to the school," he says.

U.S. Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.) says he is proud to see that someone stepped in to help the fledgling school.

"I was simply delighted when I heard about the contribution that Mr. Joyner made to the school," he says. "It is so important that we keep schools like Morris Brown available because they give young Black men and women an opportunity to go to school—a chance that they might not have had anywhere else."

Morris Brown, a private liberal arts college founded by the African Methodist Episcopal church, is more than \$15 million in debt and lost its accreditation because of poor bookkeeping practices. Also, the U.S. Education Department has ordered the school to repay \$5.4 million in federal financial aid it received for students who did not qualify because they had dropped out or never enrolled.

Because of its financial

problems, Morris Brown has had to cut staff and close some of its buildings. This fall the school opens with a smaller staff and a much smaller enrollment.

The school will retain just 21 of its 108 faculty members to teach the approximately 225 students who have committed to attend. Last year, the 118-year-old institution saw enrollment slip from 2,547 students to about

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1,130 as word of its financial woes spread.

Morris Brown officials did not return telephone calls for comments about Joyner's gift.

"Our foundation has only one mission and this is to help students survive at Black colleges and we are there for those students who need us," says Joyner. "Our concern was if the school going to remain open and if they were

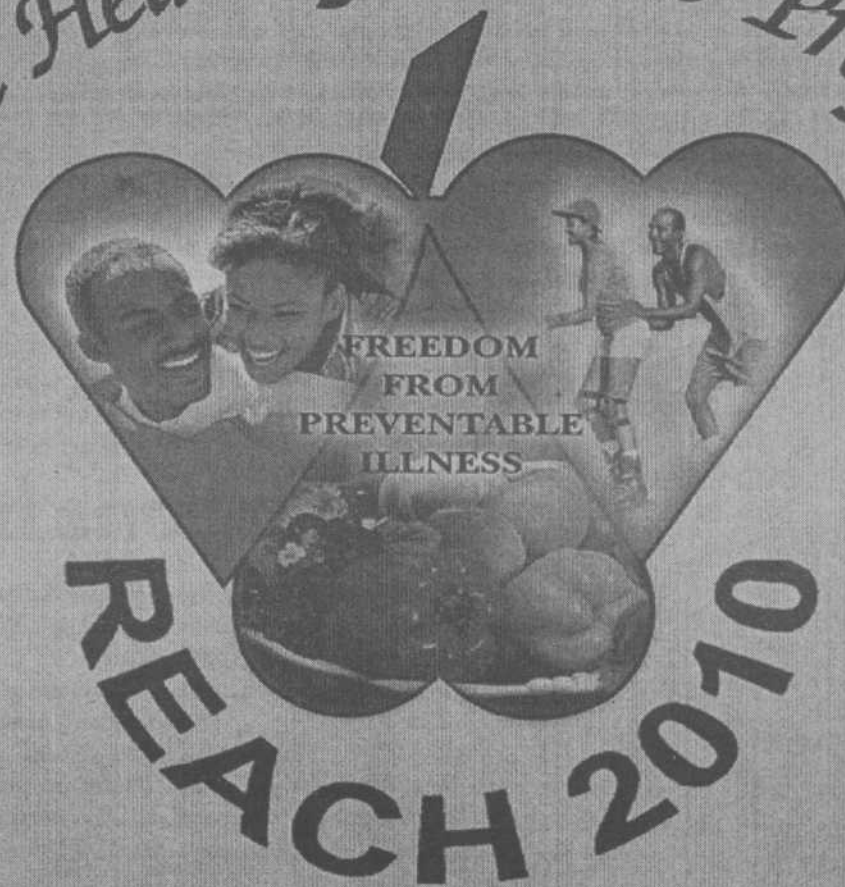
going to be able to keep going."

Joyner added that Morris Brown's quest to get back its accreditation is going to be a long process.

"We just figured that with our donation we could at least help some students achieve some dreams. I know that it's just a drop in the bucket compared to how much they really need, but that is what we are here for," he says.

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