

Baccalaureate event honors Black UNLV graduates

By *Lés Pierres Streater*
Sentinel-Voice

Family, friends, and well wishers gathered at the Beam Music Center in the Doc Rondo Recital Hall at UNLV on Friday, to celebrate the Sixth Annual African American Graduation Celebration & Reception. This event honors Black graduates receiving various degrees from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

This celebration was not created to isolate African-American students from the university community but rather to serve as a cultural gathering for students who share a common ground.

Historically, African-American students have had to learn that, in so many instances, they need to work twice as hard to achieve the same success as others. Also, they have accepted the burden that, as future leaders in our community, they must help others to achieve their goals as they achieved their goals — just as others sacrificed before them to allow them to be successful.

The theme of the celebration centered on the words of rapper and social commentator Nasir Jones: "No idea is original; there's nothing new under the sun. It's not what you do, but how it's done."

Undergraduate degrees in various categories were

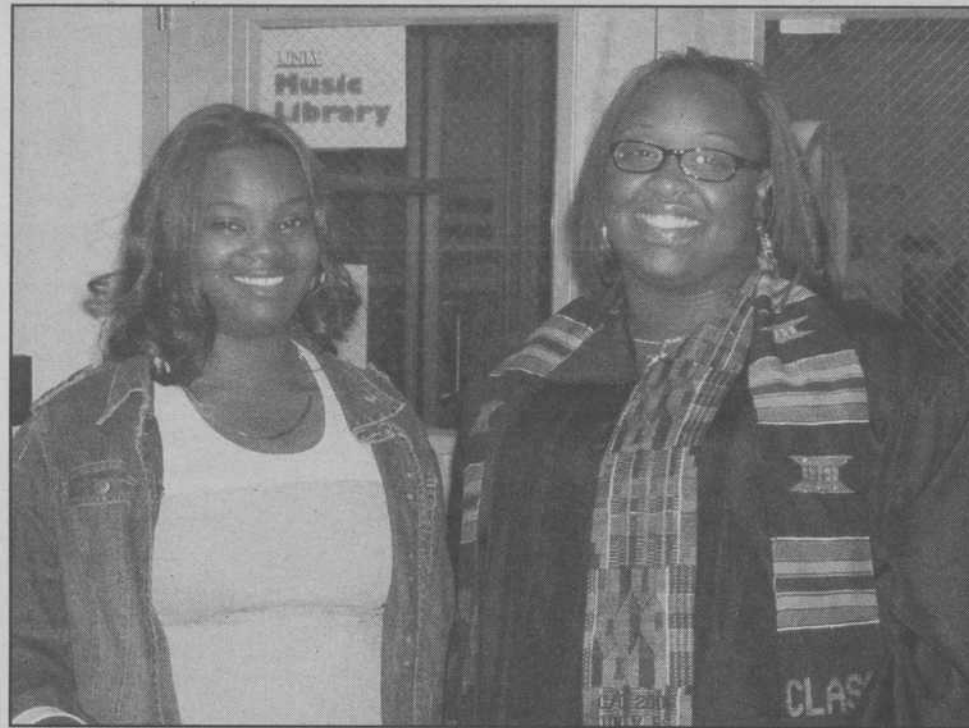
earned by 112 students, and 36 students received their graduate degrees in various categories.

Serving as the Masters of Ceremony were Trent Williams, along with Tearney Erwin who delivered the undergraduate student address. Introduction of the keynote speaker, Dr. Carla Gary, was given by Reginald Butler.

Gary is the assistant vice provost in the office for Institutional Equity and Diversity at the University of Oregon.

She earned her juris doctorate in law from the University of Iowa, and is a national consultant on several key issues and areas: management of a diverse workforce; multicultural leadership and cross-cultural communications; the politics of race and gender in higher education; the constructs of race and class in the courtroom; the business of diversity and related topics.

Gary addressed the graduates with words of hope: "It is an honor to be in your presence. I am humbled by your accomplishments. I'm inspired by your commitment, and I am hopeful that you really are going to be all that you have the capacity to be. I love the theme of this evening's event, because we don't need to reinvent the wheel. We need to find an-



Sentinel-Voice photo by Lés Pierres Streater

Tiffany Hendricks, left, congratulates Brandi Brown for completing her undergraduate classes at UNLV as they participated in the Sixth Annual African American Graduation Celebration and Reception on Friday.

other way to use it. What we have here, today, is a legacy, and we are standing on the shoulders of others who have come before us as they stepped out on faith, knowing that they may never get to see the end. They did it because their legacy would be your opportunity."

In keeping with the overall theme, she encouraged the students:

"You have an obligation to give back to the community what was given to you. Your commitment is to go

back and take your skills, abilities, gifts and talents to see what is needed and how you can make it happen with what you bring. Do not presume that someone who doesn't have a degree doesn't have wisdom — or that everyone who has a degree, does. Education is not the

piece of paper that you put on the wall. It's the ability you have to communicate, engage, participate, and make things better."

Reminiscing about the spirit of Sankofa, the mythological bird, Gary said: "We come from a long line of powerful people and we

would not be here today if it wasn't for their strength. I remember a line from an old Negro spiritual which states 'I look back and wonder how I got over.' We have to remember the symbol of this bird, with its head permanently turned backwards so that it can always see from whence it came from. The literal translation of this is to go back and fetch it.

"You cannot travel forward unless you are clear on where you've been. You are someone's future, and you will be others' past. We are no better individually than we are collectively. Your obligation is to make sure that the path you travel is wider for those who are traveling behind you."

A significant factor added to this graduation ceremony was that two individuals recognized this year for their efforts to complete their schooling worked as food servers to the other students at the college.

Tiffany Hendricks, who graduated this past December, stated "When I first came here four years ago, I was a (See *Graduates*, Page 14)



Sentinel-Voice photo by Kathi Overstreet

SEA FOOD, EAT FOOD

Lawrence Wells, chef/owner of Heart and Soul Express Restaurant, located on Martin Luther King Boulevard and Alexander Road in North Las Vegas, shows off some of the 2,000 pounds of live blue crab and crawfish flown in from Louisiana and Chesapeake Bay on the East Coast to serve his customers last weekend during the First Annual Live Blue Chesapeake Bay Crab Festival.

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