

EXTENDING THE FAMILY

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN BLACK
AMERICA AND BIG BUSINESS THROUGH
HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE AND
UNIVERSITY ATHLETIC EVENTS



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ABSTRACT

Heritage Sports Radio Network (HSRN)'s Extending the Family initiative brings American Business and the African American community together at Historically Black College and University (HBCU) campuses, especially around athletic events. We seek to expand education, employment, and business opportunities for African Americans, while helping corporate America achieve a meaningful profit.

The Extending the Family initiative offers American Business a seat at the African American table. Through sincere cultural integration and meaningful interaction, these two powerful entities can learn from each other and forge a mutually profitable relationship. This initiative provides businesses with opportunities to sponsor HBCU athletic and educational activities, in-depth market insights, and expanded advertising options. Heritage Sports Radio Network is catalyzing this effort and will act as host for participating businesses.

PRELUDE

Joining a family can be a real culture shock. When Rasheed spent Thanksgiving with his fiancée's family for the first time, he found himself in unknown territory. Liza's family ate a peculiar dish of collard greens and green tomatoes; they chided each other during the pre-dinner football game, in tones that seemed serious more than lighthearted; and every family member waited for Gramma to say the word—when dinner started, when it was over, and whether the pumpkin pie tasted right.

When Rasheed sat at the family table that first year, he felt alone and out of place—the only one not deeply immersed in Liza's family culture. By his second wedding anniversary, however, Rasheed had become an integral part of Liza's family. He had learned what dishes to expect, how to accept and return mockery for football passes, and how to show respect for Liza's Gramma. He now looked forward to the feasts filled with love and laughter.

How did Rasheed become an integral part of his wife's family? He sat down with them on their terms. He watched. He listened. He celebrated Thanksgiving with them *their way*, at *their table*, and became part of the family.



THE **EXTENDING THE FAMILY** INITIATIVE

There are empty seats at the table of Historically Black College and University (HBCU) celebrations. Rather than Thanksgiving, we are talking about tailgating and sporting events, among other gatherings. These seats are reserved for American Business. The African American community is sitting at the table, with HSRN as their host, welcoming business leaders to become an integral part of their family.

American Business may feel out of sorts at first, but everyone will be seated at the table *together*, enjoying HBCU football and basketball games *together*, discussing business, the news, and a shared future *together*. By coming together with HBCUs, American Business can become an integral part of an American power family and reap the benefits. Our initiative outlines a vision of American Business and the African American community truly becoming one successful, extended family.

COMMON INTERESTS OF TWO AMERICAN TITANS

HSRN's *Extending the Family* initiative is about societal change. In his book *Drowning in Potential*, economist Rod Wallace explains no single organization controls all the parts needed to solve society's complex problems. So we must coordinate across organizations to make a meaningful difference.¹

We're coordinating across two powerful families to bridge the societal gap between the HBCU community and corporate America. Business has become the strongest, most diversely resourced American institution.² And the African American community represents a powerful counterpart to American Business's powerful, profit-driven engines. The African American community controls more than \$1.2 trillion in spending power,³ which makes it more financially powerful than the nation of Mexico (the 15th largest economy in the world⁴). Yet this significant American demographic lacks targeted employment opportunities, job retention support, and culturally relevant products and advertising.

HBCU athletic events are in a unique position to bring these two powerhouses together and to help American Business find a powerful way to deliver profit in service to society. Situated at the heart of Black culture, HBCU athletic events can provide American Business with unparalleled cultural perspective, market insights, and reputation support throughout the broader African American community.

To a certain extent, American Business and the African American community are already interwoven. Corporate America tends to recruit at HBCU campuses; every sizable American business employs Black men and women; and African American students eat school lunches produced by myriad American companies. Yet those bonds between American Business and the African American community are weaker than they should be—and opportunities for both sides go unfulfilled. By strengthening our bonds, our “families” can both prosper.

STRENGTHENING THE HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES: PILLARS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION

We believe corporate America and the African American community share a goal of ensuring the Black community is well educated, and the HBCUs playing a critical role in achieving that goal.

The African American community respects—and desires—the power that comes with quality education. More Black individuals are graduating high school than ever before. According to the National Center for Education, 76 percent of African-Americans graduated from high school in 2016.⁵ That is up from just 56 percent in 1968, and that number continues to trend upward.⁶ More of those graduates are attending colleges and universities. And African Americans with a college degree earn 42 percent more than those without, according to the US Census Bureau. The African American community is keenly aware of this gap and strives to extend the number of college graduates annually. Twenty nine percent of African-Americans age 18-34 say they intend to go back to school for a degree or certification in the next 12 months.⁷

HBCUs play a critical role in the university education of Black youth. Almost 300,000 (Black and non-Black) students attend HBCUs today.⁸ More than one in eight bachelor's degrees awarded to Black students today comes from an HBCU.⁹

The African American community jokes that every Black person is only one degree removed from a graduate of an HBCU. However, that joke underestimates the real impact of HBCUs. Every Black person is likely one degree removed from *multiple* HBCU alums. A Black person's aunt, uncle, best friend, spouse, or office mate—likely several of these highly educated people—have received their degrees from HBCUs.

Corporate America, the other power family in the relationship fostered by our *Extending the Family* initiative, requires a well-educated workforce to succeed. As Barrack Obama described in his 2009 State of the Union, “In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity. It is a prerequisite.”¹⁰

In fact, corporate America needs a well-educated *African American* workforce. In our current digital age, we must collaborate like never before. For example, a nurse in a public American hospital interacts with 130 different specialists on a regular basis¹¹—and all these interactions must be effective for healthcare outcomes to be successful. We all need to work together with broad, diverse groups of people to deliver positive and meaningful results in today's world. And African Americans are part of these groups.

At 14% of the U.S. population,¹² African Americans are critical to the success of everything. Your mother-in-law's life was saved at New York Central Hospital last month? At least one of the critical healthcare workers was likely Black.¹³ You want the best education for your children? A dozen teachers in your school district are likely African American.¹⁴ You want to ensure a just judicial system? There's a good chance your neighbor has served on a Black judge's jury.¹⁵ Ensuring African Americans are well educated is critical to American society.

An essential part of *Extending the Family* is to strengthen the HBCUs, since they are the place where corporate America and the African American community—our two families—will strengthen their relationship.

ENHANCED EMPLOYMENT

Approximately 60% of the Fortune 1000 companies have a minority recruitment strategy.¹⁶ We believe that an even greater share of America's most impressive businesses want to hire the best black candidates for well-paying, exciting jobs. Nielsen research describes African Americans as, "exuberant and reflective—optimistic about present-day advances in income, education, entrepreneurship, and healthcare, and determined to forge a better future as influential leaders."¹⁷ Sounds like an easy match!

Yet the internet offers plenty of failure stories. "Silicon Valley is struggling to hire and retain black talent," says The Portland Business Journal.¹⁸ "African American workers are disappearing at major US banks, all while men who run the biggest firms preach the value of diversity."¹⁹ According to Dr. John Sullivan, the Talent Management Thought Leader, minority turnover costs large companies millions of dollars each year.²⁰

Culture and cultural understanding matter. As explained by talent management expert Dr. John Sullivan, diverse employees are, by definition, different. And this difference makes assimilation more challenging for these employees. Many managers simply don't understand black culture—and it shows. Even managers who receive help in recruiting African American employees frequently do not receive support in assimilating and retaining those employees.²¹

The *Extending the Family* initiative aims to deepen this cultural understanding and to foster the relationships that will support quality employment for African American workers. It is our belief that by engaging corporate America to meet African Americans on their own turf, at African American events and celebrations, and to have open conversations about the hurdles to successful employment, business leaders will develop a sincere understanding of these cultural challenges. In turn, the African American community will share success stories and enhance these specific businesses' reputation across black America.

COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

In Mexico, the soccer stadium Estadio Akron was recently named for its motor-oil sponsor.²² And Alamo Rent-a-Car re-committed to sponsoring a baseball team in the Mexican Yucatan.²³ And remember, the entire Mexican economy is smaller than the spending power controlled by the African American community.

HBCU sporting events represent an untapped treasure trove of opportunities for corporate businesses. At present, these events are largely free of commercial sponsorship. Naming stadiums, placards on the walls of the basketball arena, advertisement on jumbo digital displays during half time, and even sponsorship of the football team's Most Valuable Player award. Those opportunities are valuable and immediate.

The market reach of HBCUs represents more than just 300,000 students and their sporting events. The HBCU community includes *millions* of college-educated alumni—and all their friends. These millions of African Americans and their friends purchase billions of dollars annually in consumable goods such as hair-care products, infant formula, clothing, and car tires. The African Americans about whom we are talking include *over one in eight Americans*.

By engaging with the African American community on HBCU campuses, American Business can tap into incredible potential for meaningful profit. The HBCU community values the power of its personal connections. Optimism, celebration, creature comforts, prosperity—all of these things are complementary to one another and we can help reinforce these values when members of corporate America and of the African American community meet on HBCU campuses.

HBCU SPORTS ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The 101 HBCU campuses in America provide a home for African American culture, perhaps more than anywhere else. Walk the halls of most HBCU buildings and you'll find photographs honoring current leaders of American society such as Oprah Winfrey, a graduate of East Tennessee state; author Toni Morrison, a graduate of Howard University; and National Football League hall of fame inductee Jerry Rice, a graduate of Mississippi Valley State.

The HBCU campuses are also sites of transformative history. Walk around these campuses on a cloudy day and you may meet the ghosts of the Civil Rights Movement's most powerful leaders: 15-year old Martin Luther King, Jr., newly admitted to Morehouse College; and King's close friends and mentors, Dr. Ralph Abernathy and the Reverend Jesse Jackson, alumni of Alabama State University and North Carolina A&T respectively.

Virtually every HBCU campus played a critical role in inspiring Civil Rights leaders: Joseph Lowery (Alabama A&M), Walter Fauntroy (Virginia Union), Bayard Rustin (Cheyney University), Benjamin Hooks (Lemoyne-Owens), James Charles Evers (Alcorn). The list continues.

HBCU campuses also boast monuments commemorating powerful Civil Rights actions. At North Carolina A&T, a statue of the A&T Four proudly celebrates desegregation. On February 1, 1960, these four students sat peacefully at a white-only Woolworth's lunch counter until closing, despite not being served. In the following days, support for the peaceful sit-in grew and the spirit of desegregation rose to a proud fever pitch, both in North Carolina and across the United States.

At South Carolina State University, the Smith-Hammond-Middleton Memorial Center basketball arena also celebrates desegregation. In February 1968, three



Martin Luther King, Jr. at Morehouse College.



North Carolina A&T College students protest a segregated lunch counter at Woolworth's in Greensboro, NC.²⁴

students, Henry Smith, Samuel Hammond, and Delano Middleton, were killed and 27 of their colleagues injured by state troopers who shot them, mainly in the back, at the end of three days of rising tension. The goal of the sit-in that led to the Orangeburg Massacre had been to desegregate a local bowling alley.

On HBCU campuses, the power of the African American story is palpable. These places represent more than just *black history*; they represent the role of African Americans in advancing the experiment we call *America for all Americans*. If you want to understand black pride, black patriotism, and how African Americans view their role in American society, we encourage you to visit an HBCU campus.

Their schools' histories bond HBCU alumni to one another. A person who has attended an HBCU is a member of the *HBCU family*—not just an alumnus of one college or university. All of the HBCU campuses are home for an HBCU alumnus—not just the one school from which they graduated.

These alumni's greatest connection tends to be the African American history and pride embodied by these institutions *as a group*. Alumni love their alma mater but feel an even stronger pride in the *HBCU family* of 101 schools.

But while history makes these schools home, it's the festivities and incredible interactions at today's games that bring the African American community back to campus—and make these sporting events an essential point of cultural entry for American Business.

DEVELOPING BLACK PERSPECTIVES AT HBCU SPORTING EVENTS

African American culture is unique. Its roots are deeply American, yet black Americans celebrate more things more often than the average American: picnics, barbecues, games in the park. In many predominantly black neighborhoods, people tend to know and interact with their neighbors. In contrast, across America, however, we are increasingly isolated. "In the mid to late 1970s, according to the DDB Needham Life



The students who died during the Orangeburg Massacre at South Carolina State University: Henry Smith (19 years old), Samuel Hammond (18 years old), and Delano Middleton (17 years old).²⁵

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Style archive, the average American entertained friends at home about fourteen to fifteen times a year. By the late 1990s that figure had fallen to eight times a year (Putnam 2000, 254).²⁶ Across much of America, our ties with others are increasingly shallow, and we're becoming more isolated (Dunkelman, 2014, 2128.)²⁷ Black Americans make a point to enjoy each other's company, and this focus on building human relationships has real impact: African Americans tend to be more optimistic²⁸ than the average American and their suicide rate is half that of Americans overall.²⁹

Understanding black culture requires fully experiencing *the heart* of black culture. HBCU sporting events draw many of the most articulate, best educated, and most financially prosperous leaders from across the African American community. And at the heart of this crowd are the HBCU alumni themselves, representing more than one in ten Black Americans with a college degree.



Graduates from *all* 101 HBCUs are drawn to any sporting event involving two, or even one, of the HBCU schools. Suppose the best-educated people of your own culture gathered on ground hallowed by some of the 20th century's most critical events, for an all-day party. Through the smoke rising from the tailgating barbecues, you saw not only the leaders of your own generation, but also images from generations past connecting you to your community. Would you attend?

HBCU sporting event celebrations draw attendees from across the African American community: black leaders looking to discuss current events; business people looking to network; and multi-generational families looking to enjoy a tailgating picnic. The seven HBCU championship football games that form the Super Series, for example, draw more than a half million attendees, and hundreds of thousands more attend virtually through radio and internet broadcasts. This crowd is well-educated and influential, with a high average income.³⁰

HBCU SPORTING EVENT IMPACT EXTENDS ACROSS THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Imagine the quality and focus of the conversation when you gather such a crowd. HBCU sports crowds are there to celebrate the African American community. They're there to celebrate education. And they're there to discuss what's happening in America today.

In this type of culture-centric gathering, information flows. Opinions are formed, reputation is reinforced, and decisions are made. What is the African American community's perspective on Starbucks closing their stores for diversity awareness training? Do we need an initiative to expand scholarships for HBCU students? What is the meaning of patriotism for African Americans in the United States today? Such critical questions are discussed informally and can be discussed formally in official forums surrounding HBCU sporting events.



Howard University football fans, circa 1956

The resulting perspectives and decisions are then shared and spread across the African American community, as those attending the games bring the news back to their own social circles.

THE **EXTENDING THE FAMILY** INITIATIVE

In this HBCU athletic event environment, we can effectively bring together the American Business and African American communities to make a difference for all involved. Corporate brands can communicate their respect for the African American community with sponsorship of HBCU games, broadcasts, and athletic awards, and thereby earn loyalty from the community.

The potential of *Extending the Family* is more significant, however. Businesses have an opportunity to create meaningful relationships that will positively impact Black education, minority recruiting, and selling opportunities.

At the root of our initiative is an exchange: investing time and resources in forming a deep understanding of African American culture will, in turn, create meaningful opportunities for corporate America. Sending a recruiter to an HBCU college campus may tick a box, but *Extending the Family* provides the opportunity to *get to know* the family—and reap the benefits.

Large numbers of events can be executed around HBCU sporting events, including sponsored speaker engagements, discussion panels, and joint community events. Topics can include, for example, what defines a successful employment relationship, what aspects of education are most valued by the African American community, and what the hurdles to obtaining quality financial advice are for middle-aged Black professionals working in small business. The creative options are endless.

These formal events, partnered with informal discussion with the African American community at *their* cultural home on HBCU grounds, provide unique opportunities for American Business to develop deep insights about:

- recruiting messages that strongly resonate.
- effective engagement and development of Black employees, improved value creation and retention, and a strengthened pipeline of potential senior management appointments.
- development and marketing of products that appeal to the African American community.

Black employees on a business team and marketing panels outside of HBCU campuses certainly serve a role in engaging the African American community. However, just as a market-entry initiative into Peru requires visiting Peruvian soil, the *Extending the Family* initiative affirms that American Business must meet Black America on their home soil to develop a sincere and successful relationship.

Extending the Family is both personal and powerful. The HBCU community is opening their doors and welcoming American Business into African Americans' cultural home, and we believe the results can be worthwhile for all.

EXTEND YOUR FAMILY

We need your help. Spread the word with anyone in position to connect with potential business participants, or to spread the word further. This includes journalists, bloggers, religious leaders, academic researchers, key businesspeople, and well-connected individuals. Send anyone interested to Heritage Sports Radio Network (HSRN.com, TheFamily@HSRN.com, (302) 492-1132).

You'll be helping bridge the gap between corporate America and the HBCU community, and creating education, employment, and commerce opportunities. More importantly, two of the most powerful "families" in America today will join forces to learn from each other and benefit together.

HSRN is the host and is catalyzing this initiative which will feature:

- Sponsorship of HBCU athletics and HBCU education, including on-air advertising, on-campus signs, and more.
- Opportunities uniquely identified and executed by and for individual organizations, including those featuring presence at HBCU athletic events.
- Activities coordinated across participants to create the environment that will support the initiative's vision—in which both shareholders and society will benefit.

A *Council of Elders*, of all physical ages, will provide wisdom and insights that help ensure the initiative remains on target. This council will be composed of leaders from the HBCU community and lead-business decision makers. The council will be focused on:

- Sustaining participants' spirit of "Meaningful Profit"—in which participants collaborate to create the environment in which shareholders and society benefit.
- Raising awareness of the *Extending the Family* initiative.
- Maintaining a clear, shared vision of success.
- Targeting and committing to coordinated efforts that leverage individual participant strengths to multiply benefits.
- Supporting a learning environment in which members share successes and failures with each other.

Contact Heritage Sports Radio Network:

HSRN.com

(302) 492-1132

TheFamily@HSRN.com

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