

BLACK JACK

FALL 2023

HOMEcoming 2023 EDITION



ISSUE 01

BlacSFA

BLACK LUMBERJACK ALUMNI CHAPTER

An Official SFA Alumni Association Network



MICAH LOVE

SFA African American Alumni Chapter Founder **SFA '01**

OUR HISTORY

In 2001 SFA graduate Micah Love had a vision to create a Alumni Chapter which focused on connecting SFA's African American students.

Over the past 19 years the SFA African American Alumni Chapter has consistently participated in SFA Homecoming, hosted a variety of fundraising events and provided scholarships to African American SFA students.

I was proud to start The SFA African American Alumni Chapter years ago and I'm honored to pass the torch to a new generation of Black Lumberjacks. I believe BlacSFA will continue and enrich and grow the vision for Black students and Alumni for years to come.

- Micah Love

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Editor's Note

I am a passionate media production/business professional and proud alumna of Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA). My mission is to celebrate and showcase the Black AXEcellence that has shaped the university's history. The vision of creating a platform for the Black community of SFA, as a magazine is so that we can aim to bridge the generational gap between students and alumni while highlighting the achievements and stories of Black individuals within the SFA community.



I received a Bachelor of Science degree in Radio/TV Production with a minor in Journalism. On campus, I participated in various organizations, including the National Broadcasting Society (AERho Chapter), KSAU 90.1 (campus) Radio Station, Big Jacks mentoring program, Student United Way, and the Eta Epsilon chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. My involvement in these organizations fueled my passion for media production and community engagement, which I carried into my professional career.

After graduating, I began my career as a promotions assistant at Radio-One Houston's 97.9 the Box and KMJQ Majic 102.1, gaining valuable experience in the media industry. Later I produced my own talk show, Beautiful Me TV, which aired from 2013 to 2018. This show, inspired and empowered women on their overall spiritual wellness.

I started my entrepreneur journey in 2015 and launched my own videography company. Currently, I am the co-founder of Blue Chip Works, a workforce development company that provides job opportunities and staffing solutions for individuals and companies alike.

By sharing the stories and achievements of Black individuals who have contributed to SFA's history, I hope to enrich the culture of the AXE. The magazine serves as a platform for alumni to share their experiences, accomplishments, and perspectives, ensuring that the legacy of Black AXEcellence at SFA is preserved and celebrated. I encourage all alumni to contribute their stories, creating a collective narrative that showcases the diverse and impactful contributions.

Through this magazine, we hope to inspire and empower current students. As the magazine is shared, hopefully this sparks conversations and inspires others to embrace their own stories. By amplifying the voices of Black alumni, the magazine will continue to showcase the vibrant and diverse community that makes up SFA's AXE family.

As always, "AXE'em Jacks!"

Crystal Holmes
SFA '13

BlacSFA

BLACK LUMBERJACK ALUMNI CHAPTER

An Official SFA Alumni Association Network

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Join us as we celebrate the history of black students on campus at Stephen F. Austin State University.



HOMECOMING 2024

Get the latest updates on how to get involved and be a part of making Homecoming a success.



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STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT LETTER

*Letter from the Centennial Student Body President
of Stephen F. Austin State University:*



I would have never imagined that a small-town, shy, and quiet Black girl like myself would have come to a university and believed that she too could lead and serve as Student Body President for a purpose far greater and bigger than herself. I write this letter to you, dear reader, as motivation and encouragement to pursue that dream, that goal, or that passion. Students, friends, and colleagues know that my campaign process was not easy, and resulted in a battle that ultimately tested my patience, my character, and my willingness. Without my desire to seek change on the campus of Stephen F. Austin and my courage to take on challenges thrown my way, I could have easily given up the goal to become President out of fear of failure – but every time I felt as though the fight was not worth it, I remembered the tenaciousness of leaders before me at SFA who did not give up at the first sight of an obstacle that was thrown their way. I desperately sought after this position because I am passionate about making progressive changes that will benefit students and put their needs and concerns at the forefront of university policy making. I also feel that as an African American Woman, I have a calling and moral obligation to take my advocacy a step further by upholding that developments toward a diverse and accepting campus culture will happen – giving all students who attend SFA the feeling that they have space at our university and know that their voice and existence matter. Though my platform entails much more, I hope that students, staff, and faculty feel well represented and advocated for through my administration and I promise to always lend an ear and be of support to the student body in every way possible. Let this letter serve as encouragement and confirmation that the students have elected an individual who is willing and ready to take on any challenge and my promise to you will be to always put your concerns, values, and opinions before my own. Thank you for reading, and I look forward to serving as your Stephen F. Austin State University Centennial Student Body President.

Sincerely,

Jada Cartwright

STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT
STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION
STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

BLACSFA 101

THE KINGSMEN: A LEGACY OF ACTIVISM AND NON-VIOLENCE

Words from Bob Williams | SFA '70

A GROUP OF DEDICATED INDIVIDUALS FIGHTING FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

In the heart of Nacogdoches, a small city in Texas, a group of courageous individuals known as the Kingsmen emerged to address racial inequality and social injustice. Their non-violent approach and dedication to the principles of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. made them a force to be reckoned with. This is the story of their impactful journey and the legacy they left behind.

The Fight for Equality

The Kingsmen organization was formed to combat the deeply rooted racial discrimination that persisted in Nacogdoches. Their first major victory came when they successfully protested against a Washeteria that displayed a "black, white only" sign, four years after the accommodation bill was passed. Every Saturday, the Kingsmen demonstrated until the sign was taken down, marking a significant step towards racial equality.

Boycott for Change

The Kingsmen's determination to challenge racial prejudice extended beyond protests. When the black high school, E.J. Campbell, faced discrimination in Nacogdoches, the Kingsmen took action. They organized a boycott of the local business district, urging parents not to buy graduation gifts in Nacogdoches until a black clerk was hired. The boycott proved to be a resounding success, with not a single parent spending a dime on gifts in the town.



Putting an End to Police Brutality

One of the most daunting challenges the Kingsmen faced was the issue of police brutality. The police chief at the time had a reputation for beating up individuals in his jail. However, the Kingsmen, with their unwavering determination, managed to obtain an injunction against further abuse.

Federal Judge William Wayne Justice, based in Tyler, warned the police chief that any future incidents would result in his arrest. This ruling effectively put an end to the beatings.

The Kingsmen's Journey

The Kingsmen organization existed for two and a half years, during which they achieved significant milestones in their fight for equality. Led by their first president, Harvard Racism, a star basketball player dedicated to Dr. King's principles, the Kingsmen remained committed to non-violence.

However, towards the end of their tenure, some members felt the need for a more militant approach. In a spirit of compromise, the leadership was handed over to these individuals, and the Kingsmen peacefully disbanded after passing on their treasury of \$1,200.

Legacy of Accomplishments

The Kingsmen's impact on Nacogdoches was undeniable. Their dedication to non-violence and strategic activism brought about tangible change in the community. Their successful protests, boycotts, and legal actions paved the way for a more inclusive and just society. While they admired figures like Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael, the Kingsmen remained steadfast in their belief that a revolution against the Caucasian population was not the solution.

Their legacy serves as a reminder of the power of organized, non-violent resistance in the face of adversity.



The Kingsmen's story is a testament to the strength of unity, determination, and non-violence in the pursuit of justice. Their efforts in Nacogdoches left an indelible mark on the community, inspiring future generations to continue the fight for equality. The Kingsmen may have disbanded, but their legacy lives on, reminding us that change is possible when individuals come together to challenge injustice.



DR. ODIS RHODES MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



**Story Credit: Stephen F. Austin State University
Office of Development | Giving to SFA**

Members of Alpha Phi Alpha – Iota Mu Chapter established a memorial scholarship endowment honoring Dr. Odis Rhodes.

The first African American professor at SFA, Rhodes left an incredible legacy.

He was a lifelong educator, graduating with his bachelor's degree from Wiley College, master's degree from Texas Southwestern University and doctoral degree from the University of Houston. He completed post-doctoral studies at the University of Indiana.

Rhodes came to SFA in 1968, serving as a reading and language arts professor. He initially taught in small student groups, but as his popularity grew as an educator, his classroom filled, eventually reaching capacity. He was a friend, mentor and father figure to those who needed him. His joy was influencing the lives of his students and watching them succeed. Rhodes died April 17, 2015. The Dr. Odis Rhodes Memorial Scholarship was established to honor his legacy and love for higher education. Through your contributions, you are helping continue his legacy at SFA.

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Alumni Updates

Reginal Wright is now the lecturer in choral music at Baylor University.



Kassondra Perry Weaver received the 2023 Presidential Achievement Award.



Ronnisha Peterson SFA '17 was crowned Miss Dallas USA 2023.



Dr. Atina Young SFA '00 is the Director of Human Resource in Channelview ISD. She previously held the position of Director of Curriculum since 2021.



The Psi Delta Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated celebrate their 50th Anniversary.



Percival Jewell Gibbs SFA '01 is a certified teacher who is the CEO/Director of Top Notch Tutoring that focuses on academic success for kids.





BLACK JACK

Black AXEcellence

Showcasing outstanding alumni making huge impacts in their community. Here are their stories...

Interviews by Crystal Holmes | SFA '13

Alumni Spotlight



A Glimpse into Success - Larry's Journey

In this captivating interview, we delve into the remarkable journey of Larry, a distinguished alumnus of Stephen F. Austin State University.



LARRY BROOKS SFA '01

This story is a testament to entrepreneurship, community building, and the value of forging connections. Larry shares his experiences from his college days to his thriving career in the real estate industry, along with his numerous achievements and words of wisdom for aspiring students.

The Beginning of a Legacy

The first in his family to graduate from college, Brooks said SFA served as the catalyst to his career as a real estate agent, business owner, author, philanthropist, motivational speaker, social media influencer and entrepreneur.

A football visit brought Brooks to SFA, and with a full-ride scholarship, he donned a jersey as lucky No. 13. A student-athlete in both football and track, Brooks played cornerback and was on the 1999 Southland Conference championship football team. He was a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. and a marketing major, which came in handy when he opened a nightclub, Club Platinum, in Nacogdoches in 2000.



The Journey into Real Estate

A Twist of Fate Leads to a Thriving Career

Larry's venture into real estate was an unexpected turn. During a winter break, he was introduced to the industry through a friend. "I didn't know anything about real estate, but seeing successful realtors with nice cars and attire left a lasting impression. I decided to obtain a mortgage license while still in college, paying \$300 for it."

His journey continued after graduation as he delved into the world of real estate. Despite being a trailblazer, Larry emphasized the importance of embracing the unknown and being the first to pave the way.

BLACK JACK NOMINEE

Setting the Standard in Real Estate

Known as the “Texas real estate king,” Brooks has built a successful career as the co-founder of Brooks and Davis Real Estate, the largest African-American-owned real estate brokerage firm in Houston.



ACCOLADES & ACHIEVEMENTS

Brooks was featured in a book by Rita Santa Maria, a prominent figure in real estate education in Texas, which highlighted his journey and success in building a real estate brokerage.

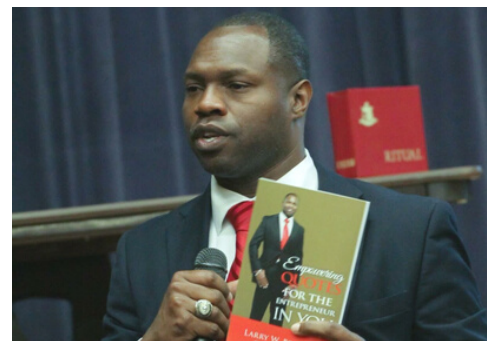
As a real estate broker, he educates around 80 agents on how to excel in the industry. Larry has earned the respect and recognition of his peers throughout the state, further validating his expertise and influence.

A jack of all trades, Brooks' abilities as an entrepreneur have kept him busy. In 2014, he was named the NextGen Realtor Group 20 under 40 Rising Star by the Houston Association of Realtors and the recipient of the Trail Blazer Award, which recognizes the next generation of leaders. Two years later, he was the recipient of the Entrepreneurship Leadership Award from the Houston Power Professionals for his ability to empower fellow entrepreneurs. He's also a member of the 100 Most Influential Real Estate Agents in Texas.

Photographs provided by Larry Brooks

STRENGTHENING THE ALUMNI LEGACY

A two-time author, Brooks has written “The Entrepreneur Code: 6 Keys to Unlock Your Success” and “Empowering Quotes for the Entrepreneur in You.” He often uses books as tools when speaking to up-and-coming business owners, real estate agents and entrepreneurs.



A MESSAGE FOR SFA UNDERGRADUATES

"Take pride in your degree from Stephen F. Austin, and be a part of the Alumni Association. Strengthen your degree, send more people to the school, and be ready to network with fellow alumni. Networking will open doors and opportunities you never imagined."

Brooks also emphasized the importance of connections in the professional world and how knowing the right people can significantly impact your career.

"I loved SFA; it was a game changer for me," Brooks said. "Honestly, without SFA I probably wouldn't be where I am today."

Brooks is active in his community representing SFA as a member of the Alumni Association Board

— *Black Jack Nominee*

Casting Lines

Meet Jazmine Robinson
SFA'10

Jazmine's journey at Stephen F. Austin State University was a tapestry of experiences, where she thrived as a student at SFA. She was part of KSAU 90.1, the campus radio station, spinning tunes from alternative music to classic hits. But it didn't stop there.

A sports enthusiast, Jazmine actively participated in intramural sports, playing basketball, volleyball, and even joining the women's football team.

“ —

I was really just involved in a lot of things rooted in radio and TV. I'm in APO, Alpha Phi Omega. I joined that early.



Fishing Passion Ignited

Jazmine's journey didn't end with college. It took a unique turn when she discovered her love for fishing. Her passion for the great outdoors and fishing started with her ex-boyfriend, and it was love at first cast. Over the years, she developed her skills and became an angler extraordinaire.

"The first fish I caught was a bluegill, and it was that small. Now look at me, catching everything."

"I need to showcase this because fishing is often under-highlighted, especially in the Black community."

Jazmine realized that fishing, especially among Black women, was underrepresented. Her love for angling led her to start her own social media platform, where she shares her fishing adventures. She wanted to shed light on the sport, and her journey quickly gained recognition. Representation matters, and she is paving the way for more women and minorities to take up fishing.

Creating Her Own Platform



“

If you look at the magazines, if you look at all of these brands, you don't really see a lot of us. The representation is not there.

"You don't really see a lot of women, especially Black women, who are trying to put fishing on a platform."

"Just give it a try; fishing can be an outlet, a sport, or a way to relax."

Overcoming Challenges and Fishing Tournaments

Jazmine acknowledges that fishing, like life, has its fair share of challenges. Patience is a virtue she's learned from her time on the water. She's also embraced the importance of reaching out for help when needed, be it in the world of fishing or beyond.

"Fishing has taught me just a lot of patience and reaching out to my resources when I need them."

While she's only ventured into a few fishing tournaments, Jazmine has her sights set on more. She wants to see more women, especially Black women, competing in fishing tournaments and breaking stereotypes.



"I want to see more women competing. We do have a women's league, but there's only one Black lady in it."

"I'm truly grateful for everything that has happened. It's amazing how something could start off just so small and it grows."

Jazmine plans to continue her fishing journey and provide guidance to others. Guiding and teaching lessons, especially for kids, are part of her vision. She knows that when passion meets purpose, incredible opportunities arise.



A MESSAGE FOR SFA UNDERGRADUATES

"I would encourage anybody to create a page that shows the journey. The successes and the failures, the ups and the downs."

"Don't waste a lot of time placing it on the back burner because it could truly be something."

Photographs provided by Jazmine Robinson



Winning Season, The Playlist to Success

Jonathan Cook, a prominent figure in the world of media and marketing, shares invaluable lessons from his journey.

Jonathan Cook SFA '10

The Power of Relationships

A true master of his craft, Jonathan, also known as J. Cook emphasizes the importance of people and relationships in winning the game. His success story is a testament to the power of building meaningful connections.

“

Do the work. If you do the work, when it comes time to put on the show or have the event, everything's going to fall into place.

Repurposing and Reimagining

J. Cook's journey has been filled with moments of creativity and ingenuity. He highlights the art of repurposing and recycling ideas to create new, successful endeavors. Drawing inspiration from his time at Walt Disney World, he demonstrates

how taking a fresh perspective on old ideas can lead to remarkable results.



Lumberjack Spirit & Pride

Jonathan was heavily involved in Student Activities Association (SAA), Jack Camp and served as an Orientation Leader for multiple years.



2023 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS CRYSTAL RADIO AWARD WINNER

A City's Best Marketer

As the Marketing and Promotions Professional of the Year in Houston, J. Cook's journey from promotions assistant to promotion director is a tale of dedication and hard work. He reflects on how this award signifies the fruits of his labor and the recognition he's earned among his peers.

“ —

I get my flowers. I've been doing this for 12 years, from starting at the bottom to where I am now.



A MESSAGE FOR SFA UNDERGRADUATES

For those aspiring to enter the media and marketing world, J. Cook's advice is clear: winning people is the key to success. He underscores the importance of dependability, being on time, and doing the job correctly. By making someone's job easier, you set yourself apart.

"Win people by doing things that others aren't doing."



**2023
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Marketing/
Promotions
Professional
of the Year.**

FINDING HER VOICE

Following Her Passion

Ashley's journey in media marketing started long before she even knew the term "marketing." Her fascination with radio and the world of media began during her high school years, where the radio became her life teacher. Her journey serves as an inspiring example of pursuing your passion from an early age.

"I don't know what that's called, but I want to do that. I want to be the person that gives away the prizes and makes people happy by giving away prizes or letting them come to events for free."



Lessons on the Way

As Ashlo pursued her career in media and marketing, she learned valuable lessons. She emphasizes the importance of



Ashley "Ashlo" Turner SFA '14



creating a plan and sticking to it while staying creative. She encourages everyone not to dim their own light and to own their power. The significance of building genuine relationships and always treating people with good intentions is one of her guiding principles.

“

If I can be a blessing to you, God's gonna bless me. One of us wins, we all win.

THE POWER OF FULL CIRCLE MOMENTS



Ashlo shares her incredible journey to working with Foot Locker, highlighting the power of full circle moments. Her persistence, determination, and proactive approach led her to the position she holds today. The impact radio has had on her career and even opportunities that seemed lost at one time came back to her in surprising ways.

“
Everything happens for a reason, and God's got bigger plans.”



A MESSAGE FOR SFA UNDERGRADUATES

If someone helps you out in your career, keep that in mind. You never know how you may be able to pay it forward in the future. That's a blessing.

A Journey of Resilience

From initially not getting the role she applied for to ultimately landing her dream job, Ashlo's journey is a testament to resilience, determination, and believing in the bigger picture. Her role at Foot Locker has provided opportunities to create special moments that involve music, entertainment, and free giveaways, echoing her aspirations from the beginning of her career.

"This role has provided a lot of full circle moments."





GUIDING THE PATH TO HIGHER EDUCATION

SFA Roots

James' journey through higher education has been both inspiring and transformative. His story is a testament to the power of perseverance and the impact of a strong support system.

A proud SFA alumnus, he embarked on a career focused on empowering students and guiding them through their educational journey.

James Beeks SFA '15

THE LONGHORN TRANSFORMATION

James's career path led him to the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin). Inspired by students embarking on their college journeys, he transitioned to the admissions office, becoming a Longhorn overnight. The switch from purple to burnt orange marked the beginning of his higher education journey.

“

I was really excited about working for such a highly selective school and traveling all over the state.

I knew that going into the charter school world, I'd be able to land a role as a college counselor.





A Journey Through Challenges

James' journey was not without its fair share of challenges. He shared his perspective on facing obstacles and overcoming them, emphasizing the importance of leaning on trusted friends and support networks.

"I had to be willing to ask for help and be vulnerable, especially when it came to the work-life balance challenge."

“

I developed my passion for college access because I had that higher ed background and experience. College access was new to me, and it was exciting.

"Sometimes decisions are made that are beyond your control. You just have to keep going."

Future Goals and Aspirations

For James, the journey is far from over. He envisions a future that involves stepping into leadership roles within the education sector. His passion for serving students of color and first-generation students continues to drive him. He's also ventured into private college counseling, aiming to scale his impact further.

"I know that it's my time to challenge myself with a leadership role and help others grow."

"It's about figuring out how I can serve more people, putting effort into marketing, and investing in my business."



A MESSAGE FOR SFA UNDERGRADUATES

Recognize that your experiences, both big and small, will have a lasting impact.

"The things that you are doing matter, and you matter. Everything you're doing will help you in the long run."

"Anything that you've done is going to help you with making an impact where you want to."

Guidance for Future Professionals

For those aspiring to make an impact in the field of education, James offers valuable advice. He emphasizes the importance of professional development and building meaningful connections with the right people.

"It's about who you know and about who knows you."



Douglas James SFA '14



Illustrating Dreams

Inspired by Artistry

Doug, a gifted artist, has a story that's as inspiring as his work. His journey into the world of art was fueled by his father's influence. At SFA, Doug's artistic talents were nurtured, and his passion for graphic design and visual storytelling flourished, thanks to his involvement with the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

"I was making promotional flyers, photography, and later on doing videos, trying to capture different types of media events."

FROM T-SHIRTS TO FAME

Doug's entrepreneurial spirit led him to start his own business, initially focusing on t-shirt and logo design. During the pandemic, he dedicated himself to honing his craft and gaining recognition. His hard work bore fruit when renowned filmmaker Spike Lee discovered Doug's

work. Their encounter opened doors to collaborations with prominent artists and celebrities.

Overcoming Challenges

For Doug, the art world is filled with challenges, but his passion and vision have kept him going. He advises aspiring artists to maintain their unique style, and to find joy in their work.

“ —

**Don't try to overthink it so much.
Don't try to let people tear you
down.**



Doug's perseverance and talent have recently earned him the Best Visual Artist of the Year award at the Broadcast Houston Awards.

The Challenges of an Artist

For Doug, the challenges in the art world don't discriminate based on gender. Both male and female artists face similar hurdles when it comes to selling their work. Success often depends on the audience one targets, the ability to establish connections, and the uniqueness of one's style.

"Whether you're a man or a female, it's always a big challenge because there are a lot of talented people out there."



A MESSAGE FOR SFA UNDERGRADUATES

Keep God first, manage time effectively, and nurture relationships. Networking is key to growth. Remain respectful, open-minded, and true to yourself.

"Always be respectful. Always have a good relationship with people. Don't think you're all that."

Photographs provided by Douglas James



*Ja'Leah Davis the MediaEyecon
SFA'14*

Youngest Woman to own a TV Station Nationwide

Houston native Ja'Leah Davis is trailblazing the media industry. She was heavily involved at SFA in various organizations such as her major's fraternity National Broadcasting Society (NBS Aer-ho) Chapter as Vice President. Fashion in Motion and NAACP. Along with serving various internships at local TV stations, she has been able to grow her brand in allowing her to meet and interview with celebrities and ultimately give her the opportunity in having her own television station at the age of 25.

February 1, 2018 Eyeconic Television LLC was officially launched. Airing on KVVU 15.10, an Analog/Digital Television Station reaching millions of viewers. This station also streams on Roku and Fire stick. Their mission is to provide a platform to those who display talent, entrepreneurship, and vision. The content focuses on the four "E's". One, entertaining through showcases spotlighting up and coming artist from various back grounds. Two, through educational programs that include How-To/DIY tutorials as well as documentaries and informational talk shows. Thirdly to enlighten the world nationwide by motivating people to go for their dream through inspirational content. Lastly, to give our entrepreneurs a chance to get their brand out there.

“It has not been easy but then again most things worth having never are. So many challenges have come my way however I remained consistent and did everything I could so that no matter what I kept going.

Eyeconic's vision is to become a multi-media platform that establishes visionaries and entrepreneurs from around the world who impact our nation. At Eyeconic Television they provide that unique opportunity to anyone at any level of their dream to be heard no matter what season of their vision they are in.



Giving back to the Community

As the station grew, she was able to launch the Eyeconic Academy 501 (c)3 that allowed for college students to have internship opportunities. The internships offer opportunities to get hands on experience with TV production, interview concepts, graphic design, editing and even hosting.

Ja'Leah is about her community and giving back is something she truly enjoys. July 2022 she launched Eyeconic Studios, as a space for creatives to come together and create in a space for them. The studio is fully equipped with production ready set up and even a podcast studio.



One of her most recent achievements was being inducted into Forbes 30 Under 30 2022 Class. This honor recognizes a set of

30 notable people under 30 years old in various industries issued annually. The American lists recognize 600 business and industry figures, with 30 selected in twenty industries each. The nomination process for Forbes 30 Under 30 is open to the public, and people may nominate themselves or another. The 30 honorees under the age of 30 in each industry list are scouted and selected by the editors of Forbes, independent judges, celebrity judges and industry experts.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

BLACK JACK AXCELLENCE

**SUBMIT
TODAY**

Help us put our alumni on the map by
telling your story in the Black Jack
Magazine. Nominate yourself or someone
you know who deserves to be featured.

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PAVING THE WAY TO CIVIL RIGHTS

Jada Cartwright
SFA Undergraduate Class of 2025

A Visionary Journey

Jada is an aspiring civil rights attorney and an undergraduate at Stephen F. Austin State University. She's pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in criminal justice with a minor in pre-law, and her ambitions are set high. Her dream is to contribute to civil rights work, starting her career with secret service and federal investigations,

which will eventually lead her to law school.

“

I'm wanting to do more like secret service work or federal investigation. I may do that for a couple of years and then go to law school.

Lessons in Collegiate Journey

Throughout her collegiate journey, Jada has gained invaluable insights. Her commitment to networking and building connections has played a pivotal role. She emphasizes the significance of engaging with fellow students, administrators, and staff, highlighting that such relationships have been the key to her success.





Photographs provided by Jada Cartwright

"If you're just yourself, putting yourself out there, and trying to form relationships with people, then you're more likely to be successful and presented with a lot of opportunities."



A MESSAGE FOR SFA UNDERGRADUATES

As a first-generation college student, keep pushing forward, even in moments of doubt. Seek support from those who believe in your success. This provides a vital foundation for personal and academic growth.

"You have to have a support system and a support team that you can rely on when you're feeling that way."

SGA President's Vision

As the Student Government Association (SGA) president, Jada has a clear vision for her tenure. She and her campaign partner focus on advocating for diversity and inclusion, promoting transparency within SGA, and increasing student engagement. They also aim to enhance campus safety and dorm security. Above all, their goal is to bridge the gap between administration and students, fostering an environment where everyone can advocate for the issues that matter to them.

"We're really just wanting to focus on making sure that the organization becomes more welcoming and that people feel like they can have a place there to advocate for issues that they care about too."

Overcoming Shyness

Jada's path to leadership wasn't without its challenges. Overcoming her own shyness was a significant milestone. The inspiration she drew from other leaders on campus, like Lauren Roach, was a game-changer. Jada's advice to others is to approach people, start conversations, and express your admiration, as this can open doors to countless opportunities.

“ —

I used to be really shy. But just going up to people and starting a basic conversation or just telling someone you inspire me really opens doors.



A CUT ABOVE THE REST

A testament to hard work, determination, and the power of family influence.

Daunte Houff SFA '22

Daunte's Entrepreneurial Spirit Shines

Success often has a way of finding those who are truly passionate about their craft. In the case of Daunte, success found him when he followed his heart and ventured into the world of hairstyling.

“

I wasn't interested in hair during school. But during my senior year, I offered to style a girl's hair, and it turned out I was pretty good at it. My work went viral on Facebook, and suddenly, everyone knew my name.

Daunte's journey into the hairstyling industry was significantly influenced by his mother, who had been a hairstylist since the day he was born. Her guidance and her ownership of beauty shops throughout his life paved the way for his future success.

Daunte's Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

Daunte's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) didn't go unnoticed during his time at SFA. He received multiple awards for his exemplary contributions:

1. Alumni Excellence in DEI: Awarded by the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, recognizing Daunte's unwavering commitment to making the campus a more inclusive place.
2. Most Successful Graduate Student Under Black Student Caucus: This prestigious award underlines his achievements and leadership within the Black Student Caucus.
3. Homecoming King: A nomination-based award highlighting Daunte's role as a student leader voted on by his peers at SFA.

Future Endeavors and Aspirations

Elevating His Brand and Beyond

Daunte has his sights set on a bright future. He shares, "I'm planning to graduate in December 2023 with my master's degree, and I'll be getting my second degree. I also plan to take on the role of Vice President over ASU in my last semester."

As for his brand, Daunte is eager to take it to new heights, solidifying his expertise and creating a lasting legacy in the hairstyling industry.

Daunte's journey at SFA was filled with remarkable experiences, from hosting events to receiving prestigious awards. His story is a testament to the power of passion, hard work, and the support of his family and community. We look forward to witnessing his continued success as he takes the hairstyling world by storm.



A MESSAGE FOR SFA UNDERGRADUATES

1. Keep God First: Prioritize your faith in every aspect of your life, big or small.
2. Expand Your Network: Get out, meet people, and build relationships. You never know when you might need them.
3. Handle Your Business: Focus on your academics, then expand your horizons.
4. Stay Humble: Life is all about connections, good vibes, and having a great time.

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**CONVERSATIONS
Q&A**





BLEED PURPLE

Vincent Adams SFA '88

Q: What would be your biggest inspiration that led you to choose your industry?

A: I've always had a desire to serve humanity. I worked in retail in High School for one of my mentors, Mark Mathews, who later opened his own State Farm Agency. He is a SFA Graduate and shared the State Farm Agency Opportunity with me. I have a plethora of mentors and mentees that challenge and inspire me daily.

Q: What are some lesson(s) learned you would want to share?

A: Know and believe in yourself, then what others think won't disturb you. We are all standing on the shoulders of our ancestors. My Faith has always been the driving force behind my successes. One of my spiritual mentors, Dr. John Barnett Jr., always quotes "live well, love well, and learn how to let go well." I live by these words!

Q: As a minority in your field, what encouragement/advice would you want to share?

A: Having mentors in different areas of your life is a game changer. We all need people in our lives that will be transparent in helping us achieve our goals.

Q: Please share any achievements and/or accolades you have received and want to share.

A: One recent humbling experience was being asked to sing the National Anthem at the "State Farm Centennial Anniversary Celebration" in Las Vegas in front of about 20,000 Colleagues. Upon arrival back home in Fort Worth, Texas, I received an email from the State Farm Enterprise thanking me for my efforts and advising me that they were donating \$5,000.00 to a Local Charity in my name. Needless to say, my beloved Brothers of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Beta Tau Lambda Chapter, were elated to receive the donation to our Beta Tau Lambda Charitable Foundation! Our Lord is Faithful!



A MESSAGE FOR SFA UNDERGRADUATES

Know that if you don't grind, you don't shine! If you're expecting something for nothing, you're doomed for disappointment. Establish meaningful relationships with those who inspire you. As I often share, the more you learn, the more you earn.

"Teamwork makes the Dream Work!" Ax'em Jacks!



BLEED PURPLE



Felicia Latson SFA'02

Q: What would be your biggest inspiration that led you to choose your industry?

A: My first examples of "community social workers" were my family members. My dad drove the church van. So, I was always in tow as he provided transportation and help to anyone in need. My grandmother was a fiery community advocate that would stand up to any politician not fulfilling their campaign promises. My mom was everybody's "auntie" on the block that all the neighborhood kids came to with problems they couldn't tell anyone else about. In a way I think social work chose me even though I don't choose it somedays.

Q: What are some lesson(s) learned you would want to share?

A: Create your own definition of success and bask in that. Examine what messages you received about what you are supposed to be and see if that aligns with who you actually have joy in being. As a first-gen college student at SFA I thought I just needed to work hard, graduate, and get a great job. However, after four years I wasn't passionate about my major and did not want to continue to graduate school at that time. Fortunately, a professor took notice of me and saw beyond my slipping grades to have a conversation. Ultimately, he encouraged me to apply to Peace Corps as of means of exploring new opportunities.

Going to another country to work for free was NOT in line with what I thought I should be doing with my life. But, I opened myself to the possibility and it turned out to be the best decision I ever made. The lesson: stay open to evolving.

Q: Please share any achievements and/or accolades you have received and want to share.

A: I have been recognized as a 1) 2020 Houston Business Journal "Women Who Mean Business" Honoree 2) 2022 Modern Healthcare Hero Nominee 3) 2021 Fifth Ward Go Neighborhood Champion

Q: As a minority in your field, what encouragement/advice would you want to share?

A: As you make your way to positions of power, don't lose the voice of those that don't have access to those decision-making tables. Bring those voices with you and elevate them. Courageously disrupt systems of injustice and inequity wherever you go.



A MESSAGE FOR SFA UNDERGRADUATES

If you are pressuring yourself to have a life plan figured out before your graduate, relax. Plans will shift all the time. As long as you are opening yourself up to your purpose, the right doors will open to put you in the right places or have your name spoken in the right conversations.





Celebrate the

60th

anniversary of

Black Alumni

at Stephen F. Austin State University

Save the Date

Homecoming 2024
Gala Celebration

**Congratulations to SFA's own
Football Athletes for signing pro.**



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GIPSON**

SIGNED



**BJ
THOMPSON**

ROUND 5

PICK 166



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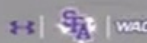
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WELCOME

LEONARD BISHOP WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
HEAD COACH



Congratulations to Associate Head Coach Leonard Bishop being
named the 10th head coach of the Ladyjacks Basketball team.

Celebrating
LOVE
Black ♥



Reginald '03 and Natasha '02 & '04 Williams of the Houston area celebrated 20 years of marriage on May 24, 2023.

The alumni met during their undergraduate years at SFA; where Reginald was a linebacker for the championship 1999 SFA football team and sealed their fate with a forehead kiss in front of the Stonefort Museum! Their family includes Solomon, 17; Reina, 15 and Kingston, 11.

Celebration of Life



We honor and celebrate the alumni who have passed on. Please submit any life celebrations to www.blacsfa.com.



2023-2024 Calendar

November

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			01	02	03	04
05	06	07	08	09	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

● Fall Break

December

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					01	02
03	04	05	06	07	08	09
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

● Winter Break

January

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	01	02	03	04	05	06
07	08	09	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

● Winter Break ● Martin Luther King Jr. Day
● Professional Development/Student Holiday

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HOMECOMING 2024



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