Homecoming 2006
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Popular performers have graced Howard's homecoming festivities for many years. In 1965, crowds anticipated diva-in-the-making Aretha Franklin. But times changed and students danced to a different beat. The overweight lover was in the house in 1987, when Heavy D and the Boys performed.

Howard Alumni Reflect on Homecomings Past

Back in the day when finger waves and Afro's were popular, before Gladys Knight left the Pips, and before Chris Brown took over Michael Jackson's reign as "King of Pop," Homecoming was the Howard University event everyone who knew about it (and some didn't) went to.

For years, Howard has attracted fans from all over the world to join in the tradition that celebrates the return of graduates, and reunites past, present, and "future" Bison. Crowds of students flock to ticket booths, lasting in lines for hours to buy tickets for events that feature music artists, actors, and alumni.

"Homecoming is the place to be," said Howard alum Dr. Audrey Byrd. "It doesn't matter if our team wins or loses, it's a time for the Howard family to come together and celebrate."

Byrd, who attended Howard in the 1960s, notices that the excitement of Homecoming hasn't changed since the time that she was a student.

"Homecoming was as popular then as it is now. Everyone planned for it and people spent lots of money on outfits because they wanted to dress to impress," Byrd said.

With students counting down the time until Homecoming arrives, many students have already begun preparation for the events by shopping for new outfits, preparing for family visits, and anxiously searching for tickets to sold out events.

"I'm a big fan of the Roots, so I stood in line for hours and still didn't get a ticket," said freshman psychology major Ashley Smith.

Before the popularity of current artists such as the Roots, Byrd's generation anticipated music legends like Aretha Franklin and Smokey Robinson and the Miracles to perform, while Dean of Residence Life Charles Gibbs and other Howard alumni of the 1980s anticipated music icons that shaped hip-hop into what it is today.

"I started at Howard in 1987. I was in school with Diddy (of course he was called Puffy back then), Shai and the Mad Rappers," Gibbs said. "That year Chuck D, Public Enemy, and Heavy D came, and we were looking for Shai to perform. MC Lyte was another performer we were looking forward to seeing."

Gibbs, who was a student athlete on a football scholarship, and 1999 graduate Dr. Reeshemah Burrell say that the Homecoming atmosphere was what they looked forward to the most.

"When we first went to Homecoming and went on the Yard, they had something like a pep rally called Spirit Week. When I first started to attend Homecoming, I wasn't a student at Howard, I was a student at Spelman, but my friends and I started cheering for Howard along with everyone else," Burrell said.

Among the many Homecoming events that exuberate excitement and fun are the on and off campus parties sponsored by sororities, fraternities, and other campus organizations. Gibbs, who is a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., remembers the infamous Omega-sponsored parties that were thrown when he was a student.

"I've heard so many stories about Omega parties and they seem really intense," freshman international business major Cindy Unegbu said. "I'm sure a lot of people will be going to an Omega party during Homecoming."

Promoting events has been much easier than in prior years with the development of new technology and advertising media, such as MySpace and Facebook. Because of this, the popularity of Howard Homecoming is increasing more and more each year.

The most significant part of Homecoming that is as important now as it was years ago are the camaraderie that Homecoming brings among attendants. Homecoming was and remains a time for students to have fun and indulge in new experiences and for alumni to reconnect with those friends from college years.

-By Qyana Agina
Homecoming Puts Hurtin' On Students' Pockets

While it is only a coincidence that Homecoming season coincides with refund check distribution, it seems in the days leading up to Howard University's most anticipated event, students are digging deep into pockets to fund festive weeks.

Having a ticket to a Howard Homecoming event is having a ticket to one of the hottest events in town this season. As a result, students have been known to skip classes to wait in line and purchase tickets to favorite events. With ticket prices running anywhere from $5 to $25 depending on the event, a student can pay a pretty penny getting tickets to the coveted events. While the Homecoming Steering Committee does provide special student pricing, usually a couple dollars less than general admission, this is not necessarily a concession for Howard students.

Because of chaos within the lines, coupled with police presence and time constraints, students don't want to take a chance standing in line and risk missing out on favorite shows. Students are instead choosing to head to Ticketmaster, in person or online to make sure not to miss out on the Homecoming experience.

Junior marketing major Amirah McFarlane bought her tickets at an area Ticketmaster outlet where she had to pay general admission plus an additional processing fee.

“I went to Ticketmaster just to cut out all the hassle and chaos...for an extra $5 (per ticket), I got my tickets in 15 minutes instead of three hours...it [gives me] peace of mind,” McFarlane said.

While this time of year, many students pay hefty prices, not for the events themselves, but for the outfits worn to the events. Howard, already known for being a fashion haven, is on style overdrive during the annual Homecoming celebration.

Male and female students alike use this opportunity to show off a keen fashion sense. As many come from all over to celebrate at this historic institution, Howard students want to make sure that the personal responsibility of being the perfect visual representation of the legacy is fulfilled.

Junior finance major Ashley Thomas agrees.

“It is completely normal to dedicate days of planning and shopping to Homecoming,” Thomas said. “It's such a rare occasion that only comes once a year so of course you’re going to spend money trying to look your absolute best.”

Even area retailers know to be prepared for those getting ready for Homecoming. Howard students are known in local stores for paying the cost for the latest fashions and perfect accessories.

Rayneka Grant, assistant manager of Up Against the Wall on Georgia Avenue said, “With students, price doesn't matter if they feel as if other students won't purchase something because it is expensive...everyone wants to outdo one another.”

Dressing to impress is not the only dent in the homecoming purse, nightlife takes a toll on the pockets of Howard students as well. As a major metropolitan city with a large number of young urban professionals, Washington, D.C. nightlife has always been a costly affair.

With top-rated nightclubs like LOVE and H2O, where celebrities have been known to frequent when in town, promoters have been known to significantly raise prices during the Homecoming weekend.

“I think it's not fair that promoters jack up the prices, but it's a supply and demand thing,” said junior sports medicine major Emmanuel Onyeyirim. “If you want to have fun that weekend then you gotta pay up.”

For some of the District's most popular clubs, promoters have been known to increase cover charge by 100 percent and even 200 percent. Onyeyirim said, “I've seen $60 general admission for a club that's usually like $20. For some clubs its $100, if you want to skip the line, even more.”

By Nicole Alabi

Photo by Marlene Hawthorne & Derell Smith
One of the most expensive components of the homecoming experiences is the cost of tickets. This year, tickets ranged from $8 to $20.
STUDENTS TRY TO SAVE MONEY; STORES CRACKING DOWN ON RETURNING WORN CLOTHING

That time of the year has finally arrived. Howard students all over are rushing to the malls and local boutiques to get that right outfit for Homecoming. But many students partake in another game that isn't on the football field. Consumer reports show that young adults (16-23) are the most frequent to return items and a lot of the time have worn it out before returning it. Stores have created policies to avoid being scammed and often check the item before taking it back.

Dr. Tonya Henderson, an assistant marketing professor, thinks that stores are doing more to protect the respective company's interests. "In the past few years, returns have become problematic because stores are not allowing customers to return everything," Henderson said.

"I've done it once before at Marshalls, but that was because I knew someone who worked there and we were just cool like that," Danielle Harper, a freshman psychology major said. "I try not to do it a lot, but if I do, I make sure I iron [the clothing item] out and make it look unworn before it goes back," Harper said.

Many students work in the retail industry and understand the annoyance of people returning worn items. Keisha Zephirin Belle, a sophomore pharmacy major, used to work at Lane Bryant. "Every once in a while someone will come in and try to act like they've never worn it, when there's a big armpit stain or wrinkles. For some reason they always want to pick an argument when they know we can tell that they're lying. I don't understand why you would purchase something if you don't want it forever. Just don't buy it! I've learned from working in the retail business of how aggravating it can get, so I never do that, but I must admit they make up some creative responses to dup store associates," Zephirin Belle said.

The primary purpose of store return policies is to avoid losing money while retaining company credibility. High-end stores like Ralph Lauren Polo have completely different store policies, because the worth of the customer doesn't have the receipt. The stores also give the customer cash or whatever form the customer used to purchase the item. Polo and stores alike are able to do this because the company has earned enough credibility in the quality of the clothing and a customer would have to be very bold to try returning something that's been worn before.

Victor Rabara, the manager at Forever 21 at Pentagon City, thinks the return policy helps to avoid this issue. "Our policy is 21 days from the date of purchase, there is no cash back and all sales are final. We have more customers during this time of year but our policy helps avoid people bringing back something they've worn before."

Bebe also has a similar policy, but is a little more lenient. The company allows for a 30-day return policy with receipt and tags. The item cannot be worn and only credit and debit purchases will be refunded, cash is never given directly from the drawer.

By Danielle Kwateng
On paper, at first glance, it may seem as if the Morgan State Bears have Saturday's game locked up. It may seem as if they will come into Greene Stadium, handle their business, and head back up I-95 with another W in the results column.

However, this is Howard University during Homecoming. Meaning, what you "expect" is more likely than not, the opposite of what will happen. Many outsiders view HU's Homecoming as a weekend of flashy events and wild parties. They forget about the single event around which Homecoming is set...the game.

Although Howard has lost three of the past four contests against Morgan State, the Bison have emerged victorious in all of their Homecoming games for the past three years.

Howard's last Homecoming loss came at the hands of Morgan State in 2002. The 38-20 loss was HU's first loss to the Bears in seven years, and spectators watched as MSU running back T.J. Stallings single-handedly scored five touchdowns for 206 yards. However, it's been four years since Mr. Stallings has slipped on a Morgan State jersey, so the Bison needn't worry about a repeat of that.

The Bears' season record of 3-3 looks daunting next to the Bison's 1-4 start, but look a little closer and you will find that Morgan State has struggled (1-3) on the road. I'm sure MSU will bring plenty of fans from Baltimore in hopes of making the Bison turf feel a bit more Bear friendly, but those numbers will drown in comparison to the droves of students, alumni, and fans that will pack Greene Stadium in support of the home team.

The last two Bison/Bear match-ups have been decided by margins of seven points. If this game results in similar fashion, look for HU to hold the advantage as they are 6-3 in close games (decided by seven points or less), as opposed to Morgan's 5-11 in such games.

The stats may be in the Bears' favor, but the game isn't played on paper. The Bison will rise to the occasion and bring their season record to 2-4 while adding another tally in the Homecoming wins column.

Bison by six.
As we all know, Morgan State and Howard University, both in close proximity, and are both in the Mid-Eastern Atlantic Conference (MEAC). We also know the NCAA restricts gambling on school athletics, so there isn't any sort of legal wager allowed as the MSU Bears' football team prepares to visit rival HU Bison for Howard's 2006 Homecoming.

But, let us imagine that this was Las Vegas and we could place a friendly wager. If you wanted to collect cash on Saturday evening, you should side with the Bears.

Reason is, in the game of football, a great defense beats an average offense every time.

Despite a slightly slow start from the Bears' offense, their defense has played their best ball this season in years. Bears' defensive end Terrell Floyd said it's the "discipline" that Coach Lee brings to the team that makes the difference from last year. Whatever the trick may be, Morgan's total defense has improved from last in the MEAC last season to second ranked this season.

This is not a good sign for the Bison as they proved last week against Winston Salem that their offense has the tendency to fold against an aggressive defense. Howard has gained most of their offensive production this season through the ground attack with senior quarterback William Bladen, but they'll have to produce a passing game if they plan to move the ball against Morgan's number one MEAC ranked rushing defense.

If Morgan's defense can keep up their well-played it should be a very long game for the Bison.

Coming off a shut-out victory over North Carolina A&T—where the Bears held the Aggies to just 148 total yards—Morgan appears capable of repeating the performance they put on against Howard last year. When the two teams last met, Morgan defeat Howard in a 7-0 victory.

Like last season, there's a possibility this game can end up in a low scoring dog-fight. Unfortunately for the Bison, the Bears' offense recently found their "mojo," scoring seven touchdowns in their last two games.

Look for Morgan sophomore quarterback Mario Melton to have a big game in his fourth career start after replacing an injured Byron Selby. Melton, who was named MEAC offensive player of week five, can hurt Howard's seventh ranked rushing defense by ground or exploit their defense by passing to deep threat receiver Roderick Wolfe. Either way, the Bears plan to play the spoiler in front of a sold-out homecoming crowd at Greene Stadium.
Attend Yardfest: If it's your first year or you have been hiding underneath a rock, you must come out from now. You must attend Yardfest at least once before graduating. Yardfest is a time where you see a majority of the Howard University students whom you may have never seen before gather on campus to see a free concert, mingle, and get your grub on at the food vendors. At the Yardfest Howard students are dressed to impress in the latest fashion designs from head to toe, because that's just how we do it. The concert is always full of surprises and whatever artists is hot at the moment there is a good chance that they might come to rock the mic at the yard fest.

Purchase a fish plate: Now almost every Howard student who has attended a big game or previous Yardfest know what I am talking about, the famous fish plates served on campus which are finger licking good. Beware, the line might be all the way in Timbuktu, but it is worth the wait for four big pieces of fish with some hot sauce and two slices of bread. Trust me this is a meal that you won't regret and for some it's a tradition to get a fish plate. See you in line!

Attend Homecoming game: There is nothing like showing school pride during the biggest game of the year. Chanting Howard's famous songs, dancing in the bleachers with the cheerleaders, and cheering for your home team. Howard's band is always at its best at all games, but at Homecoming they most likely feature a celebrity guest. Who knows who will be walking around the track waving maybe Iverson, LL Cool J, Tyson Bedford who knows, but attending Homecoming game is worth your wild.

Step Show: The step show is the biggest Homecoming event that you would be out of your mind to leave this school without attending. Last year was a show to remember with the Deltas taking over the show by earning first place. The Divine Nine are always performing at their best with new tricks up their sleeves of the throwing of knives, creative themes, craziest human formations of their signs, and stepping like it's their last day on earth. This a show that you must witness or you will hear about what a great show you missed from everyone who attended.

What Will Seniors Miss Most about Homecoming?

"The high quality of artists that the University attracts."
- Kema De-Lacoste, senior Biology major

"The opportunity to meet so many new people."
- Shanon Morris, senior Nutritional Sciences major

"I'll miss just enjoying the festivities as a student. I'll miss being on the inside rather than the outside looking in as an alumni."
- Meagan Fitzgerald, senior Broadcast Journalism major

"Seeing everybody come together on the Yard...it's a different feeling than the disconnectedness of Howard students and locals any other time."
- Monica Cooper, senior English major

What Are Freshmen Anticipating Most about Homecoming?

"I just want to people watch. I'm sure that will be fun."
- Chris Quest, freshman Psychology major

"I can't wait to see my friend Brandon in the fashion show."
- Ivy Pierce, freshman Psychology major

"The cute boys...oh and the school spirit."
- Autumn Walker, freshman Chemical Engineering major

"I'm looking forward to Yardfest and the after parties."
- Lloyd Eley, freshman Electrical Engineering major

Compiled by Sakita Holley
Don't Believe the Hype: Another Perspective on Homecoming

Everybody is familiar with that famous lyric branded by rap artist Ludacris in his light-hearted song, "Pimpin' Around the World," in which he proclaims that he will "jump in the car and just ride for hours" making sure he doesn't "miss the Homecoming at Howard." Let's break it down: what is really special about Howard's Homecoming that attracts students, alumni, local community members, celebrities, and people from all around the world?

Every year students wait in tiresome lines to a maximum of nine hours to purchase tickets to a week's worth of events that include the fashion show, comedy show, coronation ball, gospel concert, football game and step show. In addition to those events are the notorious after parties and the tradition of students literally emptying their pockets to strut their "money makers," flip their hair, and get their "grown and sexy" attire on across the Yard during Yardfest.

So again, what could really be so special about Howard's Homecoming that it gets its 15 seconds of fame in Ludacris' lyrics? Was it really worth mentioning or did Ludacris' lyric contribute to the over-dramatic hype over this annual week?

To examine the "attractive" aspects of Homecoming, the primary place to start would be the events. The main attractions, the comedy show, fashion shows, R&B concert, Yardfest, and the step show, are events that anyone can host. If there are the students who choose to spend ¾ of the day waiting in a never ending line to purchase tickets to these events and then turn around and scalp them. This brings forth another perspective: is Homecoming really about profits or school spirit and reuniting the Howard family?

Surely, when little things like the ones mentioned up above are noticed it still leaves the question open about what is actually the basis for the hype over Homecoming.

While there is no doubt that countless amounts of students are excited over Homecoming, senior speech communications major Tiffany Cofield firmly believes that the ideology and attitudes of students during Homecoming are displaced in an inappropriate way.

"Homecoming is overrated because there is more of an emphasis placed on what's going on where as before it was about coming together to enjoy the student 'experience," she said. "Now it's all about money and who has tickets and who doesn't, and then people are scalping tickets for unreasonable prices."

"We're supposed to be helping each other," Cofield said. "We're supposed to be leaders for America and the global community but you're going to charge someone $70 to go to the fashion show."

Why haven't the issues mentioned by Cofield been approached instead of just written off as being "tradition"?

Howard is repudiated as the most "hyped" Homecoming for a HBCU, but for 2006 Morehouse alumni Johnathan Mungo, he gives Homecoming two thumbs down and instead opts for Morehouse's Homecoming.

"Morehouse is great; there is no partying alumni who have come before and to once it isn't, then we will be justified in making it "hype."

According to Mungo, people willingly travel to other Homecomings to get a new perspective, and diverse perspective.

"It's important to get a diverse experience because you need to have other experiences to be fuller and more complete."

To return to the original question about the hype surrounding Homecoming, students should look more into the root of the experience; honoring alumni who have come before and to celebrate as family. At majority white schools, football may be the primary focus of Homecoming, but as for the homecoming of HBCU's, it is a celebration of the rich legacy of prominent alumni and world leaders who have walked along the Yard, sat in the same classrooms, and lived in the same dorms as we all have. No matter how somebody wants to spend Homecoming, the basis of it should not be forgotten and once it isn't, then we will be justified in making it "hype."

-By Brittany Hutson
The Life, Death, and Afterlife of THE NOTORIOUS B.I.G.
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