



PROGRESS

THE NEW FREDERICK DOUGLASS MEMORIAL BRIDGE

FALL 2020 EDITION

**A PATHWAY
TOWARD
PROGRESS:
THE HBCU
ISSUE**

**LEGACY IN
ACTION
HBCU GRADS
REMAKING
THE BRIDGE**



**PROGRESS ON
THE NEW FDMB
THE ARCHES ARE COMPLETE!**

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The word "progress" is defined by "the forward or onward movement toward a destination."
It implies that to reach that destination, a clear pathway must be present upon which to move on.

As a transportation agency, it has been our mission to provide multiple pathways within the District for residents, patrons, and others in our greater community to move through. Countless engineers, inspectors, officers, and officials are responsible for creating the safe and reliable journey ways we enjoy today.

Now, we take a moment to recognize their unique pathways toward the destination of public service. In doing so, we celebrate the diverse, professional routes they've taken and the symbolic educational synchrony from where so many of our leaders got their start.

In this issue, aptly titled "A Pathway Toward Progress", we honor Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs), recognizing their collective as a formidable pathway from which the thinking, work ethic, and leadership qualities of this project's top contributors has been shaped.

Read about:

- The principal mission of HBCUs in our country and why the entire project leadership team on the new Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge views their educational experience at these institutions as "essential" for bridge-building.
- Why the founder of a local juice bar company (and HBCU graduate) felt it necessary to return to her roots and pave a natural pathway toward progress in key neighborhoods throughout the District.
- A recent graduate of the On-The-Job Training (OJT) Program who is already hitting the ground running in her role as a field engineer on the new Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge.
- Some of the key construction milestones achieved with the bridge's recent arch installation and what's next in building the superstructure

Get up close and personal with the events and people building an iconic pathway for progress in our nation's Capital, acknowledging the educational foundation from which so much of their admirable leadership has been molded.

As Frederick Douglass once said, "Knowledge is the pathway... to freedom."

Our movement toward this destination continues.

With optimism and uplift,



Jeff Marootian

Jeff Marootian
DIRECTOR, DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

"Knowledge is
the pathway...
to freedom."

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

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#FDMBVantagePoint: Social Media Snapshots



LEADERSHIP, LEARNING AND LEGACY



Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are higher learning institutions that were established prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with the principal mission of educating Black Americans. These more than 100 prestigious colleges and universities have trained and educated millions of young people who have gone on to excel in academia, the business world and beyond. Many of them are right here in the nation's capital helping to build the largest infrastructure project in the city's history - The New Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge (FDMB).

Here we celebrate and amplify the voices of four HBCU graduates who are leading the construction of this historic project – Dennis Howland, Joseph Dorsey, Errol Williams and Christopher Lawson. Each of these leaders offers insights into their unique experience at their respective educational institutions, how what they learned inside and outside of the classroom helped to prepare them for their roles in remaking the bridge, and why HBCUs are still necessary today to carry on the legacy of future bridge builders.

LEADERSHIP

Building a project of this magnitude requires ample planning, sound expertise and exemplary leadership. Each of these extraordinary professionals are leading in their own respective spaces, while also collaborating, which is a consistent skillset they recall learning while advancing through their educational institutions.

"My HBCU experience prepared me technically, professionally, and personally for my leadership role on this project. I participated in intercollegiate athletics and I learned leadership through active participation in professional and fraternal organizations such as the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) and the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). This is where my confidence soared!" - **Dennis Howland**

"Excellence with Caring is FAMU's motto. I strive to approach my work and the colleagues I collaborate with on a day-to-day basis with this exact attitude." - **Errol Williams**

"I really felt like my experience at Morgan provided a well-rounded foundation for me to succeed in any environment. Work ethic, perseverance, confidence, learning how to manage and balance responsibilities are all things I gained during my time there and they have contributed to my growth as a leader." - **Chris Lawson**

"The ability to design or build something that serves to aid and assist the public (hospitals and bridges to name a few) is why I wanted to learn amongst my peers and compete academically with some of the brightest minds in the world. That experience cultivated my leadership skills and the ability to collaborate, which has served me well in my career." - **Joe Dorsey**

LEARNING

Academic excellence, among visionary leadership and cultural awareness, are chief values that HBCUs share. Graduates often assert that the numerous lessons they learned outside of the classroom are as significant and valuable as the practical skill sets they learned from the rigorous coursework they experienced inside the classroom.

"My experiences at Morgan State inside the classroom were varied, well-rounded, and challenging, and included a stringent combination of coursework in the liberal arts, math and sciences, and engineering. I also worked at Greyhound Bus Lines 30 hours per week. This 'work-study' combination forced me to efficiently manage my time and prioritize my responsibilities, skills that I continue to utilize in my present professional capacity." - **Chris Lawson**

"Florida A&M prepared me to not only be technically proficient in my field, but also to be resourceful, resilient, and tenacious. My number one intangible takeaway from my HBCU experience revolves around mental fortitude. FAMU placed just as strong of a focus on individual character development OUTSIDE of the classroom as they did on educational development inside the classroom." - **Errol Williams**

"I believe that the ability to learn under varying circumstances and the understanding of how to adapt to any environment without the resources that are typically afforded students that attend PWIs (predominantly white institutions) are what made attending Morgan State so fascinating. In engineering and construction, there are many constraints that an individual may have to overcome to succeed." - **Joe Dorsey**

"During high school, I prioritized athletics and my social life over academics. My HBCU provided a nurturing environment to shore up my academic foundation. My career is built on a solid footing!" - **Dennis Howland**

LEGACY

For more than a century and a half, HBCUs have played a critical role in building up virtually every aspect of American society through the talented professionals they've produced. The leaders that they have trained and taught leave their institutions committed to preserving the rich legacy that the bridge's namesake Frederick Douglass embodied - perseverance, pride and power.

The United Negro College Fund reveals that although HBCUs make up only 3% of the U.S. colleges and universities, they enroll 10% of all African American students and produce nearly 20% of all African American graduates. Their alumni account for roughly 80 percent of black judges and 50 percent of black lawyers and doctors, and their students account for 25 percent of black undergraduates who earn degrees in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields.



Christopher "Chris" Lawson, Division Administrator for the District of Columbia for the Federal Highway Administration

Morgan State University, Civil Engineering

Chris is responsible for partnering with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) to deliver the Federal-aid Highway Program (FAHP) in Washington, D.C., and ensuring that the \$170 million annual program is properly administered. He acts as a steward to assist DDOT in advancing the New FDMB project from planning through construction.



Dennis Howland, Program Manager

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical (A&T) State University and Morgan State University, Civil Engineering

Dennis oversees all project activities to ensure overarching programmatic goals are met by providing resources, perspective, support, and decision-making as required.



Joseph "Joe" Dorsey, Deputy Program Manager

Morgan State University, Civil Engineering

Joe manages the day to day operations of the project and keeps the Senior Management informed and up to date on the critical issues and decision points that arise throughout the life of the project.



Errol Williams, Project Engineer

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), Civil Engineering Technology

Errol's responsibilities include utilities and interagency coordination, review of construction schedules, and maintenance of traffic designs. Errol also leads the development of a new and exciting youth mentoring initiative entitled STRIVE.



"HBCUs are relevant today because they continue to provide an affordable, quality educational opportunity for those who may not otherwise attend a university."

- Chris Lawson

"Proof that HBCUs are important and relevant today can be found in the fruit they bear."

-Dennis Howland

"They cultivate a sense of belonging, pride, and community uplift that I believe will always be relevant and necessary in our society."

- Errol Williams

"They are still important because of the historical value that is embedded in each campus. Each campus has a rich story and tradition of the forefathers that have sacrificed for us to be able to attend these 'cultural campuses' and to have something to be proud of."

-Joe Dorsey

To prospective HBCU candidates and future engineering and transportation professionals, they offer these words of wisdom.

"Start with the end in mind and take it one semester at a time. Remember to step outside of your comfort zone and get to know new people. They will become your lifelong friends."

-Errol Williams

"Explore all options and consider attending an HBCU that has your respective major. Learn all you can about your options and choose one that feels right."

-Joe Dorsey

"College is a place for intense development and growth. Like a construction zone, development and growth can be ugly and competitive. Be careful to choose a school that will best prepare YOU for success."

-Dennis Howland

"I would advise and encourage future engineers and transportation professionals to attend an HBCU for two reasons:

1. The educational experience is on par with any other university.
2. Attendees will receive a rich, cultural-educational experience amongst young people of similar background and culture who are aspiring to achieve great success."

-Chris Lawson



Fun Facts

We asked each of these leaders who is the most respected or admired alum of the HBCU they attended. Here's what they shared.

Chris Lawson: Earl Graves, the late Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Black Enterprise magazine (Morgan State University)

Dennis Howland: The Greensboro Four - Joseph McNeil, Franklin McCain, Ezell Blair Jr., and David Richmond, students at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University who organized the first sit-ins in Greensboro that sparked a larger sit-in movement across the South to end segregation (North Carolina A&T)

Joe Dorsey: Kweisi Mfume, U.S. Representative and Former President & CEO of the NAACP (Morgan State University)

Errol Williams: Keisha Lance Bottoms, Mayor of Atlanta (Florida A&M University)

MILESTONES



Progress is well underway on the New Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge, with the final arch installation taking place in August. Despite the weather, the unpredictability of the amount of prep work required for each arch segment before it is installed, and the unique challenges brought on by the pandemic, the project is still on schedule. Additionally, the project has continued to maintain positive safety performance throughout this season.

"The final arch being constructed is an important symbol of the project and it represents the fifty percent marker for the whole project. We're thankful for the men and women who represent the construction team executing on this project both before and during the public health emergency. It's been our priority to keep them safe throughout as they work on this critical safety and accessibility project for our city," stated Jeff Marootian, Director of the District Department of Transportation.

In early fall, work commenced on the superstructure, the main structure of the bridge that supports traffic and bears the load passing over it. The first part of the superstructure work, which includes the bridge deck and suspension cables, began with the deck at V-Pier 2.

"We are building the deck in segments. Each segment involves erecting steel, installing cable stays, setting precast panels and pouring stitch concrete. This work will progress both to the east and west of V-Pier 2 until we reach the abutments," states Adam Hollon, South Capitol Bridgebuilders Project Manager.

The anticipated timeline for the completion of the bridge is currently Fall 2021. The entire South Capitol Street Corridor project will be completed by Spring 2022.

CONSTRUCTION, DECONSTRUCTED

Ramp up your construction knowledge with these definitions and fun facts. Don't forget to take notes - this won't be the last time you hear construction lingo! Stay tuned for our next Facebook trivia contest where you can win some cool New FDMB swag!

V-Piers get their name from the V-shape of the support pier of a bridge that will be visible above the water. The design provides better bridge support with fewer piers, which means less use of concrete and obstructed views of the river.

Cable stays connecting the arches to the bridge deck are cables (made of steel) that are used to transfer structural load or to hold a structure in position without using piers, columns or other supports.

Precast panels are made by casting concrete in a reusable mold or form, which is then cured in a controlled environment, transported to the construction site and lifted into place to form the bridge deck.

Concrete "stitching" is placing concrete between the precast deck panels to connect and create an integral deck slab.



HISTORY IN THE MAKING

In addition to the project team, many HBCU alumni are working to build the bridge in different capacities. Here we share their perspectives about the unique roles they each play in remaking the new Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge and how their HBCU education has uniquely equipped them to serve. We asked them what special characteristics of an HBCU or valuable lessons they learned while they were there helped them thrive in their careers and what some of their fondest memories were. Here's what they had to say.



Ra'Adia Cloyd, Office Engineer, DDOT

Shaw University, Raleigh, NC; Major: Math

University of the District of Columbia (UDC), Washington, DC; Major: Architectural Engineering Technology

Role on the New FDMB: I'm responsible for document control of the project. In this role, I manage the project library of internal documents and update materials (i.e. permits) that will be used in the field.

"I appreciated the smaller classrooms, which created a great student-teacher ratio that allowed the professor to actually know their students. Most importantly, there was a sense of family. Applying that sense of collaborative effort to my work, I thrive off of a sense team."



Adria Anderson, Contract Manager, Aridai

Howard University, Washington, D.C.; Major: Sociology, Minor: Psychology

Role on the New FDMB: I'm part of the compliance team responsible for monitoring the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program engagement and Local Hiring and On-the-Job Training (OJT) Programs executed by the contractor. I produce quality data visualizations that inform decisions and convey the project's progress in providing equitable opportunities to minority-owned businesses and employment opportunities.

"Many of my classes required me to conduct research, observe people in the community, and take a human-centered approach when implementing new initiatives. Howard was committed to grooming excellence in its students, but more importantly, teaching their students to consider their impact in the community, and the world at large. Howard reminded me that I do not exist in isolation, and to network within your community. These lessons led to my first job out of college, and took me around the world to countries like Tanzania and Thailand."



Alberta Paul, Communications Specialist, DDOT

Howard University, Washington, D.C.; Major: Political Science, Minor: Education

Role on the New FDMB: I interface with outreach consultants to inform them of the concerns from the residents impacted by the bridge being built in their neighborhoods. I assist in developing strategies to help them understand the issues and concerns clearly, review all of the materials created for the impacted communities, and provide recommendations for improvement. I also review and transmit all traffic advisories that alert the public to the impacts the project will have on their commute.

"My fondest memory at Howard was working for six months as a student-teacher at a local high school (Roosevelt High School) mentoring and training students in critical thinking skills, writing and communicating historical facts. Mentoring of youth in the field of engineering has been my focus since coming to DDOT 14 years ago. Aiding them in properly communicating with the general public about their project design, proper strategies for implementing construction activities and assessing what type of public relations strategies are needed for the project."



Ashley Mitchell, Design-Construction Information Liaison, CSMI

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), Tallahassee, FL; Major: Political Science

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University College of Law, Orlando, FL

Role on the New FDMB: I'm part of a team tasked to conduct community, employment, and contracting outreach. I aim to proactively provide information to and coordinate with stakeholders who are directly affected by the project, while also being as responsive as possible to their questions and concerns.

"I attended FAMU on both academic and softball scholarships. One of my greatest lessons in use on this project came from the softball diamond; the importance of teamwork. There are a number of contractors acting in support of this project, playing different positions. But because we're on the same team, we can cheer for each other as we share the goal of project success."



Lauren Powell, Public Outreach and Information Specialist, CSMI

Texas Southern University, Houston, Texas; Major: Biology

Role on the New FDMB: I support South Capitol Bridgebuilders in all public engagement aspects, especially those pertaining to On-the-Job Training and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) opportunities.

"Attending an HBCU for me was a right of passage. I'm a 4th generation HBCU grad, and Texas Southern's STEM program was a winner for me. The promotion of excellence in all achievements despite the roadblocks one may face has been particularly helpful to me in my career."



Brunson Cooper, Managing Director, Corenic Construction Group

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (A&T), Greensboro, NC; Major: Civil Engineering

Role on the New FDMB: Our company, Corenic Construction, constructed the centralized office for South Capitol Bridgebuilders, the team responsible for the construction of the New Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge. This fully-functioning office occupies approximately 16,000 square feet and serves as the headquarters for this five-year bridge project.

"Attending an HBCU instills an extremely strong sense of confidence that prepares you to take on the world. Also, the support system at an HBCU is unrivaled by any other type of college or university. I learned that teamwork will take you a long way in life. As individuals we have different weaknesses, strengths, talents, skills and ideas but when we organize and come together, we create a positive work culture where everyone is contributing their best. There is nothing you cannot achieve!"



Conrad Scott, Principal Engineer, Accompong Engineering Group LLC

Morgan State University, Baltimore, MD; Major: Civil Engineering

Role on the New FDMB: Assisted with traffic engineering and drainage design services.

"I chose an HBCU because I wanted the experience to develop within an environment that compliments minorities and allowed creativity. Team building was a highly valued skill I developed while at Morgan, which I frequently use in my work activities today. Some of my fondest memories include doing projects and assignments with teams, attending sporting and social events, and making ever-lasting friends!"



Andrea Jackson, Deputy Compliance Officer, DDOT

Morgan State University, Baltimore, MD; Major: Political Science

Role on the New FDMB: I manage the small business inclusion program, which means that I am responsible for ensuring that the project complies with federal regulations that govern the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program. I am also responsible for oversight of the On-the-Job Training Program.

"Attending an HBCU provided me with a self-awareness from a cultural perspective. Growing up in the South and attending predominantly white primary schools, I was not made aware of Black History Month until I matriculated at Morgan State University. MSU allowed me to build networks that still exist today. While networking is common with most universities, an HBCU afforded me a different experience because the environment is warm - you are greeted with a hug on the day you set foot on campus. When I see another Morganite, they are my family. Morgan gave me a sense of family because of the shared academic and cultural experiences at an HBCU."



Malcolm Barnes, Compliance Officer, Capitol City Associates/HNTB

Howard University, Washington, D.C.; Major: History

Role on the New FDMB: I am a Compliance Officer with a Black & Woman-owned business, which performs Commercially Useful Function (CUF) reviews of the Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs), who have contracts or subcontracts on the New FDMB project.

"I mentor African American male students in the D.C. College Access Program (DC CAP). I always tell them that the networking connections I developed as a student continue to pay off as an adult. The same people that you played ball with (I was a student-athlete), socialized with and studied with are now in leadership positions all over the region, and are able to open doors and close business for you years later. The social network that you cultivate at an HBCU is an invaluable asset that distinguishes them from other universities, which is almost as important as the academic foundation!"



Clarence "Trey" Dickerson, Deputy Associate Director for Traffic Engineering & Signal Division, DDOT

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Greensboro, NC; Major: Civil Engineering

Role on the New FDMB: I was part of the project team that interviewed and selected the competing Design Build teams and the construction/project management teams. I currently manage the Work Zone Group that reviews all of the work zone construction activities for the project.

"Learning to collaborate with people of all cultures and backgrounds was one of the most valuable lessons I learned. Also the knowledge that I gained from professors who care about your success was invaluable. One of the biggest points that stuck in my head that a professor once said to me was 'Here at NCA&T we teach you how to think, not what to think.' That very saying made me think not with the norm, but think outside of the box to find solutions when people said there was no solution."



Joseph "Joe" Lewis, Principal, BTG

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University; Major: Industrial Engineering

Role on the New FDMB: I own a company that assessed how successful the DDOT contractor has been at achieving minority participation (diversity and inclusion) as prescribed by the Agency. We also recommended ways for ultimate success on this project, in this particular area.

"As a student-athlete at an HBCU you learn a lot about perseverance both on the field, in the classroom and on campus. The spirit of the school and the support from the alumni was uncanny. There was such strong pride about being an Aggie, it really does live with you for a lifetime. It is one of the important places where black history and proud heritage is built for African Americans."



David Janifer, Managing Consultant, BTG

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University; Major: Architectural Engineering

Role on the New FDMB: I am on the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program Assessment team hired by the project's Construction Manager, HNTB.

"The atmosphere at NCA&T was such that students felt as if they always had to succeed at whatever task they were given no matter what obstacles arose. That attitude was fostered by the faculty as well as the camaraderie established in everyday campus life. I was part of a village that believed in the pride of the institution, in addition to the potential of our individual abilities. That spirit taught me to relay the same beliefs in my personal and professional capacities to this day."



Lauren Stephens, Public Information Officer, DDOT

Howard University, Washington, D.C.; Major: Journalism

Role on the New FDMB: I am responsible for managing internal and external communications for DDOT, which includes the New Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge Project.

"Some of my fondest and most memorable experiences at Howard came from my interaction with the professors. Often at universities, you can get lost in the sea of thousands of other students who attend. I bring with me to this job the many lessons my professors taught me and the confidence they instilled by believing in me."



Daejon Simpson, Engineer, HNTB

Howard University, Washington, D.C.; Major: Civil Engineering

Role on the New FDMB: I serve as a field auditor with the construction manager on the project.

"A special characteristic I would use to describe my HBCU experience is the concept of "each one teach one." The alums before us set an example of what it meant to be of service, whether it was returning to teach or providing opportunities to help students propel. Thus far in my career, I recognized the impact of teaching (on both sides of the spectrum). The gratitude that emerges from both parties help cultivate meaningful relationships."



Justin Taylor, Intern, HNTB

Morgan State University, Baltimore, MD; Major: Civil Engineering (Senior)

Role on the New FDMB: In this role, I review plans, inspect substructures and superstructures, assist with installation and relocation of utility lines and review maintenance of traffic protocols.

"The professors put us in front of big name companies. You never know who is at the recruiting/career fairs or who you're talking to. One day I ended up talking to the director of the DC division of FHWA (Christopher Lawson). I was just being myself and one thing led to another and he became my mentor. Being able to pick his brain and have him to introduce me to the other powerful people working on the project has been invaluable. That's the value of having an HBCU experience - the relationships."



Chapelle Branch, Intern, HNTB

Morgan State University, Baltimore, MD; Major: Transportation Systems (Senior)

Role on the New FDMB: I conducted field inspections to make sure operations complied with approved plans, and I assisted with other duties assigned by project engineers.

"One of the greatest things you get out of an HBCU experience is being able to connect with people who truly want to help you succeed. The professors, faculty members, and alumni provide many opportunities to help you learn and grow academically. They all make themselves available to you, provide you with wisdom and help keep you on the right track in all areas of your life. All of these resources have made me feel more than prepared to soar in life and overcome any obstacle."

LOCAL BUSINESS HIGHLIGHT: PAVING A NATURAL PATHWAY

In this issue's Local Business Spotlight, we celebrate Turning Natural, a juice bar company that has five locations throughout the Washington, D.C. area including Anacostia and Capitol Hill, neighboring communities of the New FDMB. This unique juice bar specializes in cold-pressed juices, fresh smoothies and other vegan/vegetarian-friendly options in traditionally underserved communities. Our interview with Turning Natural's owner Jerri Evans, a graduate of HBCU Tennessee State University, shines a spotlight on this Washingtonian's return to her native roots.

What inspired you to launch Turning Natural?

It was really my mom. After being diagnosed with Stage 2 breast cancer, she completely changed her eating habits and lifestyle, which forced my brother and I to follow suit. She created juices and other natural recipes right out of her kitchen, which she sold to her community. This lifestyle sustained her until the cancer, which had gone into remission, aggressively returned and ultimately took her life ten years later. After her passing, I quit my job as an aeronautical engineer with Lockheed Martin in Atlanta and I spent the next two years traveling and soul searching. When I returned to D.C., I became inspired to expand on my mother's idea and work when I saw how illnesses in the communities in which I grew up were fueled by a lack of nutrition and poor eating habits. The name Turning Natural was a play on my mom's last name (Turner) and how people transition into a healthy lifestyle; it's the beginning of a new bridge or pathway to nature's roots.

Why was it important for you to have locations in Anacostia and Capitol Hill (two neighboring locations of the bridge)?

Each location means something to me. My very first location in District Heights was the community where I attended church growing up. The Anacostia location, which I consider my favorite, is right around the corner from where I grew up at 16th Street and Good Hope Road SE. The people are so supportive and colorful there. My mom grew up at 21st Street

and Benning Road, which at the time was being rezoned as the beginning of Capitol Hill. That H Street neighborhood has transformed so much over the years and has in many ways brought things full circle for me.

As a business owner in the District and neighbor of the bridge as a resident, how do you see the bridge benefiting residents and businesses the most?

I see our missions being the same – access. When I first moved back to D.C. I realized there was only one way in and one way out of our neighborhood in Anacostia. Now that there is more direct access, people get to see the beauty and value of this side of SE that we in Wards 7 and 8 get to see on a regular basis. With Turning Natural, I wanted to give the communities on this side of the river access to healthy food options. We are both giving access to things to which we normally wouldn't have as much access.

What inspires you about Frederick Douglass?

I'm an avid reader and I know that Frederick Douglass, who was self-taught, loved to read as well. My mom had us read as a form of punishment, but the more I did it the more I actually grew to love it. It's inspiring to know that not only was he an advocate for people reading, but taught many other slaves how to read.

Why did you decide to attend an HBCU, and what did you study?

Candidly, I was not considering an HBCU as my first choice. My mom's friend who invited me to an annual dinner hosted by Tennessee State University (TSU) for D.C. area graduates was to blame for how I ended up at an HBCU. It was there that I met the President of TSU at the time, Dr. Heffner. He was so impressed by me, he not only took me under his wing, he offered me a full presidential scholarship right there on the spot. In addition to the scholarship offer, I was also blown away by how genuine everyone was and the way the faculty talked about their students and programs.

I ultimately received a double engineering degree in aeronautical industrial technology and aviation management. I went on to become an aeronautical engineer working on fighter jets with Lockheed Martin.

What experiences, inside and outside of the classroom at TSU specifically can you point to that taught you valuable lessons you are using in your work today?

The number one lesson I learned was the importance of relationships. The friends and people I came across in college, going on 20 years ago, is a solid network of people I can still count on today. I believe the value of this network has translated to business. I could not have grown the way I've grown in business without those relationships. One of those relationships was Dr. Heffner. While he has passed on, the value of his mentorship and guidance lives on. I believe we have to continue to advocate for HBCUs because I don't know if I would have succeeded in the way that I did without that representation.

The experience also taught me how to hustle. While I had a full scholarship, I counted on odd jobs to help me with my living expenses. I learned how to make a lot of things out of nothing, which continues to serve me in my business today.

What's next for Turning Natural?

We have opened five locations in seven years. While I'm grateful for the success we've had, there are some functions that are missing that we need to focus on right now. I love that we have stayed true to our mission of hiring from the communities our stores are in, but we have done our team a disservice by not spending more time helping them to develop some valuable and critical skill sets. While we would love to continue to open more locations and expand into different cities, we are focused on making investments in the people who serve the people we serve.

Fun Fact

Jerri's first career choice was fashion design. It wasn't until a career fair, which separated the "girl jobs" from the "boy jobs" that she became interested in engineering. When someone challenged her in saying that girls don't become engineers, she made a decision to turn her passion for math and science into a career.





HITTING THE GROUND RUNNING

In August 2017, DDOT, in partnership with South Capitol Bridgebuilders, launched the On-The-Job Training Program to provide training opportunities for women, minorities, and disadvantaged persons to increase their participation in every job classification in the highway construction industry. These jobs range from electrical technicians and cement masons to field office record-keepers and landscape workers. The goal is to successfully place individuals in the program as trainees and to provide them with the required training to reach journeyman status.

HANNAH GAUDET

Here we shine a spotlight on a recent graduate of the OJT Program, Hannah Gaudet, who is already enjoying her job as a field engineer on the New FDMB. A Ward 2 resident in the District, Hannah says her favorite part of the job is "getting to be out in the field every day and being thoroughly involved in the construction process. So far it's been pretty cool." Her role as a field engineer involves helping to plan out the arch segment lifts and working with inspectors to make sure the job is performed safely and effectively.

Meet the newest participants of the OJT Program and learn what they're looking to achieve by their participation in the program.

HUMA ILYAS

I am originally from Long Island, NY but I currently live in D.C. and am a student at George Washington University. I am in my junior year and I'm studying mechanical engineering with a minor in operations research. I got connected with the bridge project through a recruiter for the Walsh Group at a career fair. I began working as a project engineering intern for quality control on the project in January of this year. My duties have ranged from participating in weekly quality walks and writing reports on deficiencies to working with subcontractors to ensure the proper sign-offs are obtained and draft technical proposals. As a minority woman in engineering and an intern, it feels good to be treated as an equal. I might not play a big role, but this is a huge milestone for me to work on such a large project as my first construction job.



Huma Ilyas



Myles Cooper



Antonio Pinchback



David Boyd

MYLES COOPER

I began working on the New FDMB in September as an oiler for the crane and my supervisor recommended the OJT Program to me. So far I've learned to always be alert and detailed and I've learned how to perform basic maintenance on the crane, which includes oiling it and making sure it's clean. I am most excited about how everything will look when it's finally done, especially since I was able to contribute to the project in some way.

ANTONIO PINCHBACK

I am originally from Danville, VA and I currently live in Ward 1. After leaving the U.S. Navy, I did a lot of independent work from nonprofits to starting my own business through Craigslist. I went through an entrepreneurship program sponsored by the D.C. government for veterans, and shortly after I began working on getting a CDL license to build my moving company. I heard about the virtual hiring event while working on my license and I got connected to the OJT Program through that event. I am looking

forward to being able to travel with a construction lifestyle once I complete the program. I'm also excited about being able to have my fingerprints on such a big project for the city.

DAVID BOYD

I'm originally from Arlington, VA and I currently live in Ward 3. Prior to joining the OJT Program, I was working at a private construction company in Arlington. My supervisor recommended the OJT program to me because he thought I would be a good candidate. I entered the program because I thought it would be a good way to further my skills and learn as much as I can while I figure out exactly what I want to do in the construction field. Since joining I've been doing rigging, measurements, and working with lead pipes. I'm most excited about being a part of something that's going to benefit the community.

DBE SPOTLIGHT

PROGRESS FOR THE PEOPLE



Monica Ray's business partner Phinis Jones founded Capitol Services Management, Inc. (CSMI) in 1985, and she joined him out of a sheer desire to quench her thirst for entrepreneurship. Years later, they embarked upon their largest project to date, serving as the design build construction liaison for the New Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge (FDMB) project. In this role, CSMI is primarily responsible for public outreach as well as local hiring and minority contracting.

As senior vice president of operations, Monica focuses on acquiring new business and ensuring that her company is exceeding expectations when it comes to producing results. She sees the most rewarding part of her job as being able to give minority contractors that would not normally have been able to work on a project of the size and stature of the New FDMB an opportunity to have a seat at the table.

"Sometimes my staff and I laugh about this being a local project with regional impact. It's cool to be able to make sure that residents who live here and companies that have grown from the ground up here get to participate in this process. It feels really good to be that link between the local community and a bridge of this magnitude," states Monica.

Being a resident of the Ward 8 neighborhood Congress Heights, Monica views herself as a neighbor of the bridge, which she uses to commute between home and work. She carries a sense of pride in being able to work on a project so close to home both literally and physically.

"As a District resident, it's always cool to be part of anything that's historic. I have a 7-month old grandson who I'll be able to tell one day that we helped to build this bridge. We have the ability to put fingerprints on a project that will benefit the community in such a huge way. The bridge has a role for our community in that it will help connect the neighborhoods like mine on this side of the river with the greater Washington, D.C."

Monica believes that her time at HBCU Fayetteville State University, where she studied business administration and economics, uniquely prepared her for the work that she is doing today. Her two biggest takeaways from her time there, where she was a student leader and a basketball player — grit and nurturing.

"HBCUs have this wonderful way of nurturing young minds, but in a way that reinforces grit. That's my most important business priority right now – figuring out how to make it when times are tough. That has become more relevant and evident now in the time we are facing with the coronavirus pandemic. We've had to shift on the fly, change our business model, figure out how to get things done in a very nontraditional way. The HBCU experience helped build my ability to be flexible and make it through no matter what."

That determination is serving CSMI well, as they are showing no signs of stopping in the face of the economic downturn. They have just finished work on Minnesota Ave. and Key Bridge construction projects in the District and they were just awarded a contract with St. Elizabeths East Phase 2 project, which includes a new shelter, hospital and stabilization of a historic horse barn and roadways on the campus. These plans are set to change the complete face of the Congress Heights neighborhood in which Monica lives.

Fun Fact

Monica's fondest memory at her HBCU was her pledging experience with her sorority, Delta Sigma Theta Inc. It was her fondest memory because it was fun and challenging; it brought tears, but it also contributed to the grit. She believes that experience was where she honed leadership and consensus-building skills that she still uses in her business today.

IMPACT IN ACTION



Get inspired by these words of wisdom and key lessons from famous HBCU grads who embody the legacy and leadership of our bridge's namesake, Frederick Douglass.

"When you see wrong or inequality or injustice, speak out because this is your country. This is your democracy. Make it. Protect it. Pass it on."

- Thurgood Marshall, Class of 1930, Bachelor of Arts Pre-Law Cum Laude, Lincoln University (attended Frederick Douglass High School in Baltimore), Supreme Court Justice

"Take the harder way, the more complicated one, the one with more failures at first than successes. Then you will not regret it. It is the reason you are on the planet at this particular time in history. Your very existence is wrapped up in the things you are here to fulfill."

- Chadwick Boseman, Class of 2000, Bachelor of Fine Arts in Directing, Howard University, Actor

"It comes down to this: black people were stripped of our identities when we were brought here, and it's been a quest since then to define who we are."

- Spike Lee, Class of 1979, Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communications, Morehouse College, Academy-Award Winning Screenwriter and Film Director

"When we divide, we cannot win. We must find common ground as the basis for survival and development and change, and growth."

- Jesse Jackson, Class of 1964, Bachelor of Science in Sociology, North Carolina A&T, Civil Rights Activist

"We must not assume a door is closed but must push on it. We must not assume if it was closed yesterday that it's closed today."

- Marian Wright Edelman, Class of 1959, Bachelor of Arts in French Civilization, Spelman College, Founder Children's Defense Fund

"Education is all a matter of building bridges."

- Ralph Ellison, Class of 1936, Studied Music/English (did not complete degree), Tuskegee Institute, Writer

"A government is invigorated when each of us is willing to participate in shaping the future of this nation."

Barbara Jordan, Class of 1956, Bachelor of Arts in Education Magna Cum Laude, Texas Southern University, Lawyer and Politician

"If there is a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, you must be the one to write it."

- Toni Morrison, Class of 1965, Bachelor of Arts in English, Howard University, Novelist and Professor

"I don't harp on the negative because if you do, then there's no progression. There's no forward movement."

- Taraji P. Henson, Class of 1995, Bachelor of Fine Arts in Drama, Howard University, Author and Actress

"I want young girls to realize that the possibilities are big. They can be race car drivers. They can be astronauts. They can be CEOs."

- Rosalind Brewer, Class of 1984, Bachelor of Science in Chemistry, Spelman College, Businesswoman, Chief Operating Officer of Starbucks

"I think education is power. I think that being able to communicate with people is power. One of my main goals on the planet is to encourage people to empower themselves."

- Oprah Winfrey, Class of 1986, Bachelor of Arts in Speech Communications and Performing Arts, Tennessee State University, Businesswoman, American talk show host, actress, television producer, media executive, and philanthropist

KNOWLEDGE IS THE PATHWAY TO FREEDOM

A SPECIAL MESSAGE

Dennis Howland, Program Manager for the New Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge Project, offers closing insights on the influence Frederick Douglass had on the creation and development of HBCUs and how his legacy lives on through the next generation of leaders produced by HBCUs.

When Douglass fled to New York in 1838, it was illegal to teach black people to read and write in many southern states, including Maryland. The states feared that if black people were educated, they would no longer accept slavery as an option. Frederick Douglass proved this fear to be valid despite never having been formally educated himself. There was, however, at least one place at the time that did educate black people, The African Free School.

The African Free School was established in New York City in 1794. It is known as the first institution dedicated to the education of free and enslaved black people. The African Free School started as a one-room schoolhouse and ultimately grew in size and expanded to multiple locations throughout New York City and were later integrated into the NYC public school system. Among its graduates was Dr. James McCune Smith who was a physician, writer and abolitionist and a close friend and associate of Douglass.

Following the African Free School, there were only three Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) established prior to the Civil War: Cheyney University, Lincoln University and Wilberforce University. They were all founded in some way to educate and uplift blacks who had few opportunities for higher education in a discriminatory society. Cheyney was the first in 1837, but by the time the latter two institutions were established, Douglass had published A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (1845), had delivered hundreds if not thousands of speeches against the institution of slavery, and his newspaper, The North Star (1847).

Douglass was living proof that enslaved black people were divinely made human beings equal in potential to all other human beings. He inspired, or at the very least, gave cover to the abolitionists, philanthropists, and educators who started Lincoln, Wilberforce, and every institution created to educate black people.

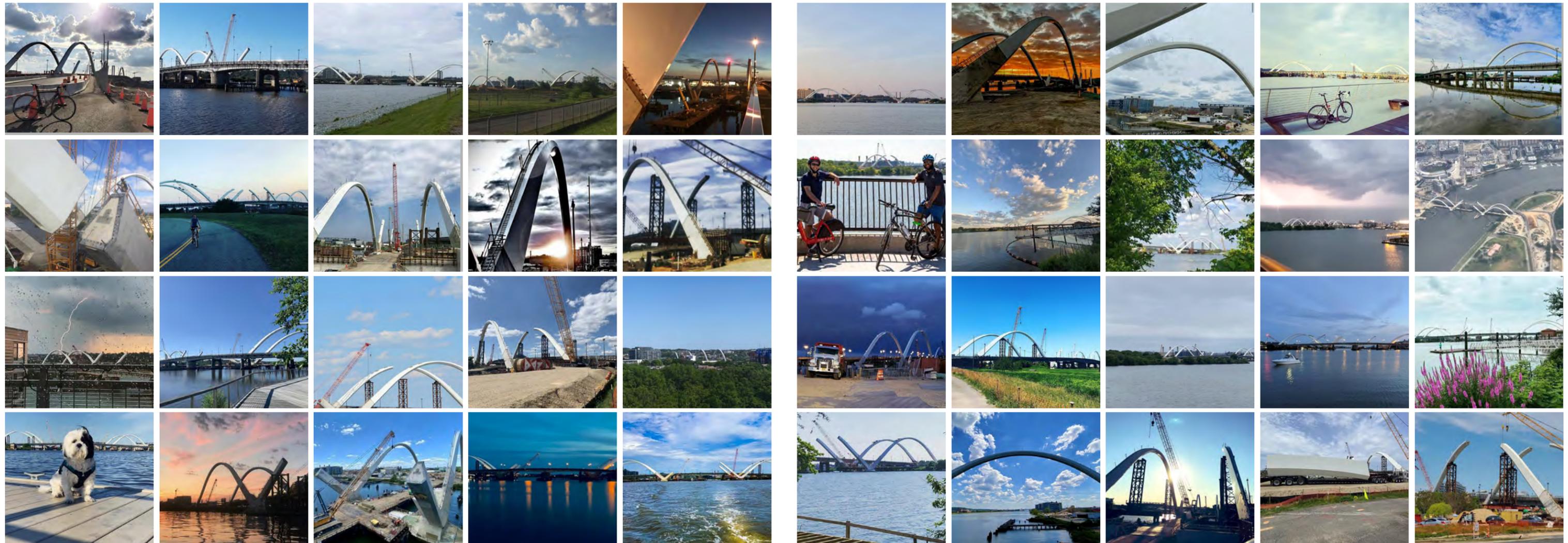
HBCUs brought us the Tuskegee Airmen and countless leaders of business, politics, religion, sports, and culture. As Douglass proved his mettle on the speaking circuit, graduates of HBCUs continue to prove our mettle on the world stage. Notable alumni include Martin Luther King, Jr., W.E.B. DuBois, Oprah Winfrey, Ronald McNair, Spike Lee, Earl G. Graves, Jr. and Kamala Harris.

A cynical person might try to argue that the success of black people on the world stage is evidence that HBCUs are no longer relevant or necessary. My retort is that our success is evidence that HBCUs continue to produce good fruit, and that good fruit is sufficient justification for continued, and even greater, investment and support of HBCUs. As the District Department of Transportation constructs the iconic signature bridge named in Douglass' honor it is poetic and a fitting tribute to this hero, that graduates and current students of HBCUs are playing integral roles. His education prepared him to be a bridge for the freedom of his people. Our education has prepared us to build a bridge named in his honor. Education is truly the pathway to freedom!



#FDMBVANTAGEPOINT: SOCIAL MEDIA SNAPSHOTS

With the addition of new arches, we've gained new vantage points of the bridge across the region. Thanks to all who have tagged us on social and shared photos! Here's a snapshot of our collective #progress, through the lens of our digital community:



Featured photos by: @202FSUNole, @ANACOSTIASERIES, @andy_g_waiters, @AnnaForgieDC, @army_recueros, @Boatdogs_DC, @borowskikeith, @brogiebear28, @Chris_Roell, @chrisjstew, @CJBabyDaddy, @claireschneider2056, @coffeeneur, @dcequalshome, @dcmet20, @DDOTDCDirector, @digiphile, @downtownbrown, @fergindc, @JCruzmarcano, @jen_1n, @jcnwinharper, @kareneramsey, @kazak99, @kirstenmgreenwell, @laurenlarsonmedia, @MakeseMotley, @maustermuhle, @Minnesota_Nicer, @mjs73, @pawlitico, @pirateofthepotomac, @planningindc, @shamrox, @thebiggreenw, @thesouthwester, @TimSloanDC, @VincentMorris, Cory M Guillory, Steven Gilner Sr

HAVE ANY COOL PHOTOS TO SHARE FROM YOUR VANTAGE POINT?

Send to us at info@newfrederickdouglassbridge.com or tag us on social media @newfdmb with #FDMBVantagePoint for a chance to have your photo featured in our next issue!

THE NEW FREDERICK DOUGLASS MEMORIAL BRIDGE



REMAKING THE BRIDGE

BETWEEN
CULTURES,
COMMUNITIES,
AND PEOPLE



FALL 2020