



Black Alumni Collective Holds National Conference at Duke University

By **TheBurtonWire** - May 17, 2022



Durham, NC | Duke University April 28-May 1, 2022. Photo Credit: AJ Shorter Photography

A group of Black college graduates from various institutions, ranging from Howard University to Oxford University to Duke University, believe there is power in connection and the collective voice of Black alumni to make change. Thus in 2018, a group of Black alumni representing schools from around the country including HBCUs and PWIs formed the Black Alumni Collective, a national network of Black alumni committed to unifying and empowering Black alumni, individuals and groups, through civic engagement, economics, and advocacy.

To continue this vision, the Black Alumni Collective hosted a national conference at Duke University April 28-May 1, 2022. The four-day in-person event was preceded by a virtual conference in March that featured a conversation among several university presidents and panel discussions exploring the role of Black leaders in media and technology and how Black athletes are collectively lifting their voices for social change.

The Black Alumni Collective was created in Atlanta in 2018 by alumni leaders from more than 10 schools with the vision that Black alumni from universities across the country should know each other and work together to achieve a common purpose. They wanted to not only improve campus life but life after graduation in their communities.

“We want to go forward, go higher; there’s power in a collective voice,” said Sanders Adu, the conference co-chair and a 1994 Duke University graduate. “We are targeting 500 Black alumni from more than 50 schools. We have reached out to HBCUs, large state schools, and private schools,” said the former president of the Duke Black Alumni Association.

Black Alumni Collective co-founder and conference co-chair Sanders Adu. Photo: AJ Shorter.

Highlights of the in-person conference included discussions on navigating Black health disparities, Black voting and political power, Black economic power, and Black women’s leadership roles throughout society, said Tadena Simpson, conference co-chair and a 2005 graduate of Duke University.

Black Alumni Collective Panel, “Lessons in Leadership” featuring Dr. Mark Anthony Neal, Derrick Heggans, Natalie Lamarque and Nicole Venable. Photo: AJ Shorter

Speakers included Dr. Eugene Washington, chancellor for health affairs at Duke and president and CEO of the Duke Health System; Blayne Alexander '08, NBC News and MSNBC correspondent; Satana Deberry J.D.'94, M.B.A.'06, district attorney for Durham County, N.C.; renowned scholar Dr. Mark Anthony Neal; Natalie Lamarque, general counsel of New York Life and dozens of Black leaders in the fields of medicine, technology, business, law, nonprofit organizations, and more.

"There was something for everyone," Simpson added.

In addition to the conference, attendees also had the opportunity to tour Duke's campus and take note of Black contributions to Duke's history, like Duke Chapel, designed by the Black architect Julian Abele, and the recently christened Wilhelmina Reuben-Cooke Building, named for one of Duke's first Black undergraduate students.

Black alumni in attendance were graduates of Howard University, Purdue University, University of South Carolina, American University, Florida State University, North Carolina Central, Auburn University, Emory University, Duke University, Charleston College, Florida Atlantic University, LSU, Harvard College, University of Colorado, Pitt, Wake Forest, Princeton, North Carolina A&T, FAMU, Babson College, Queens University and many more.

Local Black nonprofits and prominent Black business owners were also highlighted in order to support the Durham Black business and nonprofit communities.

For more information about the conference, visit the [Black Alumni Collective website](#).

To view more photos of the conference and attendees, click [here](#).

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