Aggies Embrace A&T Four Spirit

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A&T Register

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Despite the anticipation of bad weather conditions, students, faculty, family members of the A&T Four, community members and activists gathered with much enthusiasm in Williams Cafeteria for a celebration like no other.

February 1 marked the 47th Sit-In Anniversary. The celebration began at 6:00 a.m. honoring the courage of the A&T Four with a commemorative breakfast.

Some students commented on the large turnout for the event.

"I'm very surprised and pleased with the student turnout this year," said Tibias Throne, a junior graphics major who attended.

47 years ago, Jibreel Khazan, Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil and the late David Richmond marched into downtown Greensboro and requested service at the segregated lunch counter at F.W. Woolworth's. Their efforts led to many changes in civil rights for African Americans.

Campus leaders, distinguished guests and the honorees carried the program of the celebration titled "Reclaiming Our Heritage: Redefining Our Legacy."

The program started with the welcome by Dean of Students and celebration committee chairperson, Judy Rashid, Ph.D.

"I'm always humbled by the program. It reminds my soul of my obligation to serve. It is not about me, but about my involvement to do it for the students," Rashid said.

Greetings came forth from Velma Speight-Buford, Ph.D., the chairperson of A&T's Board of Trustees.

Sharelle Barber, SGA president of Bennett College and Chenae White, president of A&T's Council of Presidents.

"It is the simple, yet sincere actions," said White, "which bring about social change."

Joseph McNeil accepted the greetings by giving honor to "past and present heroes." He also urged the audience to speak up in the face of 'cultural erosion.'

The guest speaker finally addressed the audience and immediately grabbed their attention, speaking without any aid. Nontombi Naomi Tutu, the daughter of Archbishop Desmond and Nomalizo Tutu, activists who fought against apartheid in South Africa, was the guest speaker.

Tutu, a human rights activist, said people can not simply dream, but they must act.

She drove the point home by speaking specifically about the courage of the A&T Four.

"They knew that their dream was more important than what happened to them on that particular day," Tutu said.

The mother of two also inspired young people to claim their legacy as being apart of the whole story and not to be ashamed of their history because it is world history.

She warned that if the story is not shared with the younger generation, the pride associated with it would also be lost.

"Not only do we remove them (children) from the pain, but we remove them from the pride," Tutu said. "Part of redefining our history has to be questioning the retelling of our history in 28 days, the shortest month of the year," she said.

Tutu ended by saying that the struggle for civil rights was led by young people, the struggle in apartheid South Africa was led by young people and the struggle for a just world needs to be led by young people.

Armita Floyd-Moody, SGA president closed the program.

"We really understand and appreciate what civil rights leaders have done for us and we are being accountable to them," said Moody.

The breakfast was enlightenment for some and a joy for others.

"It was well worth the sleep I lost. It is so inspiring to know that A&T continues this legacy that will say to the world give us our rightful places," said Mary Griffin, a Dudley High School counselor.

The program highlighted and praised how the A&T Four contributed to a chain of events that changed the destiny of all Americans.