MY VISION: A GLORIOUS DAY

On November 7, 2018, you and your soul mate leave early from your home for the trip to Baton Rouge, Louisiana. At approximately 12 noon on November 7, 2018, you set sight on the Federation Center for Alumni and Economic Development. Both graduates of the Southern University System, you proudly exclaim: "Wow! What a magnificent building! It has been a long time coming. The Federation has an alumni center…. Our Home on the Bluff!" As you and other alums walk through the massive Columbia Blue and Gold entrance doors, you are serenaded by the 12-member Human Jukebox Jazz Ensemble performing in the Ashford-Freemont Atrium. You marvel at the Phyllis Hyman-like instrument of the beautiful young lady who has achieved national renown as a jazz singer as well as a Human Jukebox Dancing Doll. At the immaculate marble registration desk, you are given the keys to the suite that you have leased to buy. The bellhop who is an employee of the Scotlandville-Baker-Zachary Workforce Council guides you and your soul mate to your fourth floor suite. As you pass through the Columbia Blue doors, you are amazed that all of your specifications and expectations have been met…. even the gold molding around the ceiling, the blue and gold hangers in the closet, and the framed picture of a jaguar over the master bed. You realize that there is now a tangible lasting bond to your Alma Mater… O Southern, Dear Southern.

After a bit of freshening up, the two of you decide to tour the center. Your first stop is the John A. Woods Observation Deck. From the highest floor, you watch the steady traffic of steamboats and barges navigating the mighty Mississippi River. You proclaim:"I now understand and appreciate the "as mighty as the river, thy name will ever be." Only "persons of color" have the proclivity to comprehend the significance of this structure. No one but a Southernite can appreciate the time expended and struggle for the Federation to build our Home on the Bluff. With joyful tears in eyes, you rue the reality that so many members of the Federation-Jaguar Family did not have the opportunity to experience this glorious day of celebration.

Later in the evening, you and your soul mate join other alums who have purchased or leased suites for the celebration dinner held in the Bashful-Barnes Memorial Hall and Conference Room. All gaze at and through the cathedral windows ornamented with etched pictures of Southern University and Federation founders and pioneers. There's Pinchback, Demas, Stamps, Allain, Joseph and Felton Clark, George Netterville, Melba Stewart Thomas, Beatrice Davis, Ida Nance, et.al. As you look around the immense dining facility, you have no reservation in mentally declaring that tonight will be an enriching, extraordinary, and emotional experience.

The Celebration Program produced by Derrick Warren, Khadijah Thompson and Glinda Rutledge is a work of art and a fitting keepsake to preserve tonight's moment for all celebrants. Following the invocation by Reverend James E. Brown, former Federation President Preston

Castille recognizes members of the Southern University System Board of Supervisors, Southern University System President, chancellors, faculty and staff personnel from the five campuses. Dallas Chapter President LaQuitta Thomas adroitly handles the task of giving recognition to alumni chapter presidents, Federation committee chairpersons and members, and Office of Alumni Affairs staff in attendance. Preston reintroduces the members of the Alumni Center Committee and praises each for individual and collective efforts since August 1, 2014. No one exhibits any boredom from the many profound and eloquent extemporaneous remarks from dedicated warriors for Southern University: Dr. Ray Belton, Patricia Deamer, Dr. Bobby Phills, Michael Adams, James Mahomes, Dr. Leon Tarver, Pam Whitley, and others. Evincing laughter from the audience, Dr. Robert Ford's courteous, but loud applause had the effect of limiting Deamer's time on the microphone.

As the celebration nears closure, a toast is offered by Reginald Joseph, the chairman of the Federation's first Alumni Building Fund:

> "Seventy-seven years after the Federation was chartered, we now open our Center for Alumni and Economic Development. The center provides a unique way to bond the Southern University Federation Family, Southern University System, our three foundations, and the communities of Scotlandville, Baker, Zachary, and North Baton Rouge. This center will not only allow us a permanent home, but will provide a place for many educational, cultural and social experiences. Our Home on the Bluff will be a beacon to attract students and highly qualified faculty to nurture them. Each day of each semester as they approach graduation, the students will know that the Federation has their backs and is committed to their graduation. These students will become Federation members. As the years pass, this center will exist for all alums and represent the Federation's eternal tribute to the legacy and future of our Alma Mater, Southern University."

You and your soul mate notice that there are no dry eyes among the celebrants. The tears appear to add an unforgettable, lasting aroma and taste from the goblets. The hearts and souls of all celebrants become imbued with renewed strength of dedication. You, your soul mate and other celebrants are inspired to sing with the harmony of a well-trained choir:

O Southern, Dear Southern
Thy praises we shall sing
Until all the heavens
And echoes loudly ring.
The winds of the sky
As they pass us by
Will adoration bring.

O Southern, Dear Southern
We owe our all to Thee
In downfall or victory
We'll always
Loyal be.
Thy Sons and Daughters
As they work
Will be inspired
By Thee.

O Southern, Dear Southern
Thy name shall ever be
As mighty as the river
That flow on to the sea
As pure and true
As the Gold and Blue
That stand out
Bold for Thee.

November 7, 2018 is a blessed, and indeed a glorious day! On November 8, 2018, looking from your suite's window, again awestruck at the majesty of your Home on the Bluff, you declare: "There are many glorious days ahead. As mighty as the river, Southern University, thy name will ever be."

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Written By Thurston "T.J." Jones [[September 13, 2016]]
SUBR Class of 1967 (Pre-Med Zoology)
Member, Dallas Chapter/SUAF (1976 – present)
Life Member/SUAF (1977-present)
Life Member-Diamond Level/SUAF (2015)
Vice Chairman, Strategic Planning and Governance Committee/SUAF (2014-present)
Vice Chairman, Alumni Center Committee/SUAF (2014 – present)
Member, Recruitment and Retention Committee/SUAF (2016)
Member, Class of 1967 Endowment and Scholarship Fund (2013-present)

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