USF Black Student Union's 50th Anniversary Gala

Lester Deanes
Welcome to BSU’s 50th Anniversary Dinner.

Pause for Applause

Take a moment....to look at crowd.

So Fancy.....My people! My people!

Let’s bring our night with a land acknowledgement:

This is abbreviated version created by a USF PASJ Alumna, Class of 2016:

As we share space to strengthen our journey towards consciousness & liberation, we must take time to acknowledge the difficult truths of our history that have shaped our current realities.

Our collective relationship with Indigenous peoples by this institution, this city, this country, and this continent is in immediate and sincere need of reconciliation and reclamation.

Today, we cannot deny the story of this land and it’s truth that is too often untold. Today, we gather on unceded, stolen Ohlone territory.

Even through devastating events, the Yelamu are still here and working tirelessly for their right to remain and evolve in the place we consider San Francisco.

We have the obligation, as guests, to inform ourselves about indigenous peoples and encourage the amplification of Indigenous voices.

Written By: A fellow guest in Ohlone territory- Calina Lawrence (Suquamish Nation) USF PASJ Alumna, Class of 2016
I'm Lester Deanes, Assistant Vice Provost, Student Engagement at USF.

I have the distinct pleasure to work alongside a group of talented students and staff in Division of Student Life. Responsibility for New Student and Family Programs, Student Leadership and Engagement, Cultural Centers and SAIP Internship program for graduate students studying higher education.

This is my first time attending this event, and I'm grateful to be here and to share in this exciting evening.

I'm also so pleased to see other staff, faculty and alumni in the room. Please stand to be recognized.

If you are a student and current member of BSU, would you please stand so we can recognize you.

The Theme for this evening is... it starts with us. As once quoted “All of Us are tethered.” In case you missed it that an “US” movie joke.

Pause for Applause.....

In fact, it has always started with us. Every student movement has been led by the collective. A group of folks ready to demand change. Folks with a deep sense of conviction that they wanted to see change in their institution.

In my own experience as a student and then as an administrator, student leadership in the black community has paved the way. Shaping educational experiences generations...building intentional supply networks for black folks on predominantly white college campuses.
It is often the unknown leaders who forever change the face of these campus.

Demanding to be seen and heard as the intellectual forces they are. Demanding for justice, equity and access for all people.

As a first year student in college, I felt lost at times at the small liberal arts college just outside of Chicago. I was one of about 20 african american students in the entire school. I went there for the financial aid and because I had to get out of St. Louis. At Least for four years.

It was not until a friend suggested I talk to these two upper class brothers Brennan and Rodney. I was able to sharing with them what was going on and how I did not feel connected on campus. I hadn't joined the BSU yet. They invited me to hang with them and study and shared a few suggestions for what classes to take and how to manage remain without feeling the pressure to perform for my white classmates and professors in class. Their kept my motivated to hang in there and complete more first year of college. I will forever be grateful for their mentorship.

We connected behind sharing the same skin tone, they had gone through the same experience I had. Proving that I could make it.

What keep me going Donell

Can you can each of you a favor....I want you to shout out the names for folks that have impacted your college experience worthy they are in the room are not. I’ll get us started....

Malik
Khalid
Beth
Derrick
Tiffany
Donell
Your turn....

Black folks know higher education is not system not built for your success. It takes our collective strength not just surviving college but thrive in this environment.

Tonight we celebrate 50 years of successes and struggles for the BSU at USF tonight will fellowship and together reminisce on our successes and celebrating what's to come

Let's get the party started.

Remember....All of Us are tethered.

Never forget who you are and make decision big and small that are consistent with your values. There will be times when your workplace or personal life will put your values to the time. Remind solid believe your mantra like “Am I living my best life?” Well cause you to evaluate your everyday action. Get back in alignment with what you value. It will keep you on your path.