

A&T's Cage-Bibbs named to Hall of Fame at Grambling

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

North Carolina A&T Women's Basketball Coach Patricia Cage-Bibbs found herself among pretty good company recently, when she was named to the Grambling Legends Sports Hall of Fame.

Bibbs joined 14 other legends from the university, including Super Bowl XXII MVP Doug Williams, all of whom will be inducted on July 16 at Grambling State University's Eddie G. Robinson Museum.



Coach Patricia Cage-Bibbs will be inducted next month.

Bibbs had numerous accomplishments before arriving at N.C. A&T in March of 2005. But her accolades have multiplied in recent years. On Nov. 23, 2007, she became just the second coach of an HBCU women's basketball team to win 400 games, joining Alcorn State's Shirley Walker. Four months later, Bibbs received the 2008 Empowerment Award from the YWCA at its annual Girls & Women in Sports Dinner in Greensboro. Also in 2008, the Black Women in Sports Foundation of Philadelphia honored Bibbs with one of its Legends awards, and she was inducted into Grambling State University's Gallery of Distinction.

Two MEAC Coach of the Year awards and a MEAC Tournament title has also been added to Bibbs' list of accomplishments since her arrival in Aggie land.

"God has truly blessed me. When you look at the list of great athletes and overall great people that are going in with me, it is truly humbling," said Bibbs, who is a 1972 graduate of Grambling. "I've always had dreams and goals, and I never let anyone deter me from the things I wanted to accomplish. It's the same message I try to pass along to the young ladies in my program."

Bibbs, who started coaching at Grambling in 1984, has won 471 career games. She won six tournament titles at Grambling before being hired at Hampton University in 1997. She won three tournament titles at Hampton before retiring in 2004. After a brief stint away from the game, Bibbs picked up where she left off once she became the Aggies head coach.

Under Bibbs, the Aggies have won three straight MEAC regular-season titles. She led the Aggies to their first NCAA appearance in 15 years after claiming the conference tournament title in 2009. Her coaching legend grew in 2010 when she led the Aggies to two postseason wins in the Women's National Invitational Tournament. It marked the first time an HBCU earned two consecutive wins in a postseason tournament.

Chavis

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the congregation at Emmanuel. "Don't conform to injustice."

As a young man, Chavis led Oxford's first black resistance campaign in the early 1970s, which was sparked after his cousin, Henry Marrow, was murdered by three men. When the killers were found not guilty, the town exploded in racial tension. Chavis led a boycott of white businesses in the town — a movement that eventually led to the full racial integration of Oxford. The story of the Marrow's murder and Chavis's ascension to civil rights legend are documented in the book "Blood Done Sign My Name" and the film of the same name based on it.

Fresh from his success in Oxford, Chavis headed to Wilmington to try to bring about similar racial justice and change. As one of the Wilmington Ten, he and nine others organized a boycott to protest the segregated public school system in 1971.

Shortly afterwards, a string of arson attacks broke out, for which the African American protesters were blamed. Chavis served nearly 10 years in prison before a federal appeals court overturned the cases on a technicality. Even as a prisoner, Chavis says he stayed true to his mission of bettering the lives of his brethren.

"Even though I was locked up unjustly, I wasn't going to conform (to the norms of prison behavior). Even though I was in prison, I was still a pastor," said Chavis, who was ordained in the United Church of Christ in 1980.

While imprisoned, Chavis also taught GED courses. He told the congregation that one of the inmates that he taught to read was a member of the Ku Klux Klan. Despite their differing perspectives, Chavis says he and the other man enjoyed an amicable relationship. Later, when Chavis's appendix ruptured, the



Ben Chavis (center, left) and Rev. John Mendez (center right) stand with some of Chavis's brothers from Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity.

man, who was also a prison nurse, ignored his superior's orders to give Chavis an enema, a procedure that Chavis says would have ended his life by causing the toxins to flow freely into his bloodstream.

"When you help somebody, that help will come back to you," he declared. "...Don't ever give up an opportunity to do what is right for yourself and for other people."

In 2001, Chavis co-founded the Hip Hop Summit Action Network with hip hop mogul Russell Simmons. The Network works to empower young blacks.

"I am a strong supporter of hip hop," said Chavis, who also serves as president of Education Online Services Corporation, one of the leading providers of online higher education for historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) nationwide. "I believe this is the best generation of young people we've ever been blessed to witness."

Chavis's visit was timed to coincide with the church's observation of National Youth Sunday, said Mendez, a longtime friend of Chavis's.

"Ever since I've known him, he has done a lot of work with youth," Mendez commented. "That's his passion. That

really is his heart."

Chavis, 62, says the Hip Hop Generation — which is often misunderstood in his eyes — does hold a special place in his heart. He urged congregants to nurture the younger generation with respect and understanding.

"The world has a plan for our young people. We must say 'No' to that plan," he declared, noting that educational funding is being slashed across the country while budgets for correctional facilities remain largely intact. "Our young people don't need prison! Our young people need education; our young people need church ... We have so many opportunities to keep ourselves on the right path and to encourage our young people to always remain on the right path."

Mendez, who is also a longtime activist, said the nation is indebted to visionaries like Chavis, who risk life and limb to ensure equal rights for all.

"We talk about the victories; we talk about what we've overcome, what we've accomplished, but what remains ... unsaid is the pain, the agony that we endured over that time," Mendez remarked. "That's the price that so many of these people paid, and they didn't have to do it. They did it because they loved freedom."



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"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, then you are a leader."
John Quincy Adams

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