

Hunt

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date, says he was eager to return to the birthplace of his faith.

"It's really something that refocuses me and anyone who does it," he commented. "Once you make it, it becomes almost like an addiction."

In addition to being a spiritually transforming experience for many, Griggs says that making such pilgrimages represents an integral part of the Islamic faith.

"One of the benefits of performing umrah is the prophet of Islam, Muhammad, has said that if one performs hajj, and that hajj, that pilgrimage, is accepted by Allah, then the reward of that is paradise," he stated. "If one performs umrah and your umrah is accepted by Allah, then all of your sins are forgiven - so you can't lose."

Though Griggs had made the trip to the Middle East several times before, when the four embarked on the journey April 22, it was the beginning of a very memorable experience for all concerned, he said.

"To tell you the truth, the last time I was there and made hajj was 1999, and one of my prayers was that the next time I come that one of my daughters would be with me," he recounted. "And for Darryl, Darryl reminded me that when he was in prison years and years and years ago, that I had said to him at one point, 'One day we're going to be sitting at the Ka'abah together.'"

Making his first umrah was an overwhelming experience for Hunt, who says the full impact of the trip is still sinking in.

"For me, after reading so much and studying it, to actually be there, it was just mind-blowing," he remarked. "It was amazing ... it was just so much to see and to feel and just to be spiritually uplifted because you understand your history and now you're walking in the footsteps of your history. That was something



Photo courtesy of K. Griggs

The trip also included a stop in Egypt. Here are Darryl and April Hunt and Imam Griggs on camel-back.

that I'll never forget."

Hunt's tale of wrongful conviction is well known by many locally and now internationally thanks to a HBO documentary, "The Trials of Darryl Hunt," that is showing this month on the network. He was in jail before his 19th birthday, wrongfully convicted of killing a white woman. Investigators botched the case and prosecutors turned a blind eye to evidence that pointed to Hunt's innocence. Still, he was convicted twice for the murder by two separate nearly all white juries. Four years ago, DNA evidence finally won Hunt, who had been sentenced to life in prison, his freedom after nearly two decades in prison.

In the weeks and months following his release from prison, Hunt says he almost couldn't believe that he had finally been delivered from his hardship. He likened that to the intensity of his emotional experience on the umrah.

"There were so many emotions going through me at that moment," he related. "When I first got out of prison, I always used to pinch myself and say, 'Am I really out?' I'm over there in Mecca, and I'm pinching myself, 'Am I really here?' and I'm feeling the ground - 'Am I dreaming or am I really

here?'"

The \$1.6 million settlement Hunt was awarded by the city of Winston-Salem, which concluded that the city's police department did not handle Hunt's case well at all, made him financially able to make the journey for the first time in his life.

Hunt says he has felt a renewed sense of dedication to his life's work since touching down back in the states May 4. "I haven't stopped since I've been back. My wife took the keys from me when we got in the house (after the trip) because she thought I was going to go to the office, which I had it on my mind," he remarked. "This really helped me get back and really focus in and get some clarity about what we are doing, and how to really make an impact."

As founder of the Darryl Hunt Project for Freedom and Justice, Hunt's professional responsibilities are great, making it difficult for him to take time off to travel, but he said he hopes to return to Saudi Arabia to make his hajj within the next year.

No matter what happens next, Hunt says he is infinitely grateful he was able to make the trip.

"If Allah took me right now, I'm happy," he said.

SPRING STROLL

Photo by Kevin Walker

Ziddorah Flowers and her six-month-old daughter, Zamiah, enjoyed the beautiful weather Tuesday as they walked down Fourth Street. Downtown streets were packed with people who also could not resist the sun and blue skies.



CSS

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fyng and working with proper school officials, placing burdens on other students and teachers.

"There has been very little accountability," explains Sam Dempsey, director of exceptional children programs for Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools. "Some problematic situations have led us to conclude that we needed to establish higher standards. Some of the CSS workers simply have not met our minimum qualifications to be in our schools and work with our children."

"We have looked to the model used in several other counties across the state for guidance, and our goal is to work with a group of about six companies, which would provide a choice for parents, while enabling school personnel to develop relationships with CSS agency personnel."

Providers must meet several criteria to be eligible, and one

of the key considerations is a "demonstrated capacity to uphold high standards of training and provide quality service across multiple schools simultaneously," according to the agreement, which will be effective at the beginning of the 2007-08 school year.

"There already are some excellent providers in the community, and they're working with the school system," says Dempsey. "We just want to ensure that each student has

access to the same quality of services and that those services can be properly monitored and audited."

Dr. Jane Foy, medical director of the School Health Alliance for Forsyth County, agrees. She says, "The criteria we have developed will assure that students who need these services are correctly identified and that CSS providers and school personnel collaborate with students and their families in meeting their needs."

Alcoholism

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members in 150 counties. There are no dues or fees for AA membership. AA is a program of total abstinence, and the members simply stay away from one drink, one day at a time. Sobriety is maintained through sharing experiences at group meetings and through a 12 Step recovery from alcoholism program. In many NC communities, there are Spanish language AA meetings that meet on almost any day of the week. There are also meetings

for family members of alcoholics (Al-anon and Ala-teen).

If you or someone you love has a drinking problem, take control and make the decision to get help today.

- Contribution by Sarah Fahey

For further information, questions or comments about this article, call toll-free 1-877-530-1824. Or, for more information about the Maya Angelou Research Center on Minority Health, visit www.wfubmc.edu/minority-health.

Winfrey

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has been number one in the nation for 20 consecutive years and has 48 million viewers a week in the U. S. and abroad.

Anchoring "was my father's dream for me. But, God had a bigger dream for me... And so I tried to live in the space of God's dream," she said.

The euphoric moment was emboldened by the fact that Howard University history has played such a major role in the overall advancement of Blacks. The brainstorming for arguments in the Brown v. Board of Education began at the Howard Law School.

The late Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison, civil rights activist Stokeley Carmichael and singer Roberta Flack are just a few of the names in the university's alumni hall of fame.

But, even amidst the utmost fame and the success of having her own film company, Harpo Productions and "O, the Oprah Magazine", Winfrey warned the graduates that opportunities will constantly come to "sell out" what they believe to be right.

She said her producers tried to change her name to Susie, but she resisted. And, over the years, she has been repeatedly warned that certain subject matters would cause her advertisers to flee.

"If I could count the number of times I've been asked to compromise and sell out myself for one reason or another, I would be a billionaire 10 times over. My integrity is not for sale and neither is yours," she shouted to the cheering crowd.

Winfrey, who received an honorary Doctor of Humanities, is known for her passionate and compassionate style of communicating. Howard President H. Patrick Swygert introduced her by the words of poet Maya Angelou, "The only thing greater than Oprah's accomplishments is the size of her heart."

Her talk show topics often espouse themes and anecdotes that tug at the heart. Her speech was no different.

"You receive a lot of awards in your life. But, there's nothing better..." she said as she choked back and wiped away tears. "...than to be honored by your own."

Just as quickly, the audi-

ence broke into laughter as she quipped, "I'll be calling myself Dr. Winfrey on Monday morning."

Preceding Winfrey, honorary doctorates were also bestowed upon Julian M. Earls, executive-in-residence at the Nance College of Business Administration at Cleveland State University; Henry Luis Gates Jr., director of the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African-American Research at Harvard university; Walter E.

Massey, president of Morehouse College; and Irene Sue Pollin, founder of Sister to Sister: Everyone Has a Heart Foundation, Inc.

All of them credited their ancestry for their success. Winfrey did the same.

The loudest applause and cheers during her speech came in response to her recalling the advice of her beloved grandmother, Hattie Mae Lee, a maid, who worked for whites. Her grandmother charged her to grow up and "get some

good white folk that are kind to you," Winfrey recounted. "And I regret that she didn't live past 1963 to see that I did grow up to get some really good white folks - to work for me."

In giving back to communities, Winfrey implored the graduates to lean on Howard's motto of "Truth and Service".

She said, "The most important lesson I can offer you from my own life is that in order to remain successful and continue to wear the

crown, as you walk the path of privilege, you cannot forget the less privileged that you left behind. You use your life in service, somehow to others and you turn around and give back what you've been given... You've come from a long line of giants whose shoulders you stand on, giants who graduated from this school and giants who never made it to school... I believe in the words of Jimmy Baldwin, 'Your crown has been paid for so wear it.'"



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