

PRESS RELEASE

Phillis Wheatley Students Propose to “Bring Back the Classic”: A Legacy Lesson

By Therisa Callier
May 9, 2013

Houston, Texas – In celebration of Phillis Wheatley’s 85th anniversary, Dr. Thurman Robins was the guest lecturer for the English Literature Advanced Placement (AP) and HCC/Dual Credit classes. Dr. Robins’ presentation based on his book, “Requiem for a Classic: Thanksgiving Turkey Day Classic” so inspired Senior English and Dual Credit teacher, Ms. Therisa Callier, that she designed a research proposal lesson centered on the history of the Turkey Day Classic and its importance to Phillis Wheatley, Jack Yates, and Booker T. Washington High Schools and their football and band programs.

One of the dual credit students, Tyeisha Shackelford, also a Gynesys Works student, is assigned to work in the Mayor’s office. Genesys Works is an internship program that enables high school students to work at major corporations during their senior year in high school. Ms. Shackelford asked for assistance with her group’s proposal and Mayor Annise Parker assisted her. After completion of all the group projects, the Mayor was given a copy of each group’s work. Mayor Parker, so impressed with the student’s work, has invited the students and their teacher, for a visit with the Mayor on May 20, 2013.

Dr. Thurman Robins is a retired Texas Southern University professor. His book chronicles the annual football classic between Jack Yates, Phillis Wheatley, and Booker T. Washington High Schools established during 1927 and the Jim Crow Era. The Thanksgiving Day Classic began in 1935 and continued until Thanksgiving Day 1966 with the integrations of Houston schools and in accordance with the University Interscholastic League (UIL) rules which eliminated the Thanksgiving Turkey Day Classic.

In 1985, prominent Wheatley alumni such as Al Edwards, Forrest Henry, Judy Newsome, and Felix Cook were instrumental in attempting to restore The Classic and were interviewed by one of the groups. The proposal project the students created is the hope of being successful in establishing their own legacy. The proposal criteria included the projected impact a “Revised Classic” would have on 21st century neighborhoods and businesses surrounding these schools; created a format that would support the restoration of The Classic; and compared economic opportunities of past dollar values to present and future dollar values.

The Wheatley group will travel by Metro Transportation, provided courtesy of District B Council Member, Jerry Davis. The group will visit the Mayor’s office, do a short walking tour of our city’s revitalization, with lunch provided by Council Member Jerry Davis. The group will also visit the famed Buffalo Soldier’s Museum, before returning to Phillis Wheatley’s campus.

The “Bring the Classic Back” proposal project is a research lesson of history, legacy, and hope. The Phillis Wheatley students know the importance of retaining a legacy, not only as a financial gain for their communities, but as an historical tribute to our city and its people.

For More Information, Contact: Therisa Callier, ELA Department Phillis Wheatley High School tcallier@houstonisd.org
4801 Providence Street, Houston, Texas 77022 Office: (713) 671-3900 ext. 413; Fax: (713) 671-3951

###