

## CNN 'Black in America' Tour Stops at NCCU

Contributed by Britney Rooks -- Black College Wire  
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Students submit video reports, compete in spoken word contest

"To be black in America is to be part of a long rich tradition in this country. Being black in America, we have a lot of pride," said chemistry junior Alexander V. Jackson while at the CNN HBCU Tour. "We have a lot invested in America. If it hadn't been for black people in America, America wouldn't be where it is today. We're the backbone." The tour, part of CNN's "Black in America" series, hit N.C. Central University on April 10, just outside of the Alfonso Elder Student Union. The tour arrived at NCCU after stops at Florida A&M and N.C. A&T State. Marketing manager Keisha Taylor said CNN selected schools with students who would "provide us with some great In partnership with Essence Magazine, CNN provided a computer booth where students answered questions about race, sex and education. Students were also encouraged to text shoutouts and e-mail pictures of their friends and family that were displayed on CNN's LED screen. Women were encouraged to sign up for a free one-year subscription to Essence Magazine and \$15 iTunes gift cards were given away. The tour held a spoken word contest where students rapped and recited poetry for \$25 gift cards. Students voted for the winner of the contest by texting in their choice. Psychology sophomore Lance Johnson won the spoken word contest with his poem, "Roses Are Red." The poem was a response to the stereotypical comments that are aimed towards young people who write poetry. Johnson said he added a sophisticated twist to the elementary poem "Roses are Red" to send older America on a mental journey back into their past. He said his poem was meant to create a connection between young and old Americans by communicating through shared emotions. "It allowed me to really give my voice and show what I am as a writer," Johnson said. "A lot of people here at Central do not know that I write so it gave me an opportunity to showcase my talents." The tour also provided a live DJ and a graffiti wall. The HBCU tour was designed to promote CNN's "Black in America" series. The series is highlighted by three documentaries, beginning with a profile of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. The other two documentaries are entitled "The Black Man" and "The Black Woman & Family." "We really want to deepen our relationship with the African American Community," said Lara Hurst, U.S. CNN senior marketing manager. "We are investing a lot of resources and really talented people in producing this series and we decided we wanted to engage younger African Americans in this experience." Another component of the tour were the "iReports" — self-reporting done by students in booths while CNN was here and short videos produced earlier by students and entered in a contest. In the booths students were asked to express their views on one of three topics: • What does it mean to be black in America? • How is Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream relative to you and your generation • Is Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream still alive today? Students were given one minute to record their thoughts for the camera. The iReport video contest allowed students to submit a 1-10 minute video essay on topics picked by CNN. Mass communication senior Erica Horne won the i-Report contest at NCCU and her video aired on CNN. "It just gave me an opportunity to express to not only North Carolina Central University but to the world, the issues that go on in our community and how being black in America is not only a curse, but it's also a gift and it's something we should embrace," said Horne. Horne won a digital camera for her effort. "Ultimately the goal was to collect video content that could be used on air or on CNN .com," said Hurst. Horne's video competed with other winners from HBCUs for a grand prize trip for two to the Essence Music Festival in New Orleans. Students said CNN has taken a positive step by covering life at NCCU. "I think it's a good thing that CNN and other media take notice of black colleges," said Jackson "A lot of people aren't exposed to black colleges and for them to get a little glimpse of the black college life it's a good thing!" Johnson agreed and saw other benefits to the tour: "Seeing something like this on a national level may allow white employers to respect the education from the historically black schools," said Johnson. "I think it's a great thing!" {moshaloscan}Britney Rooks writes for the Campus Echo, the NCCU student newspaper, which originally published this article.