

Nothing 'Gucci' About A&T's Homecoming

Contributed by Dexter R. Mullins -- Black College Wire
Friday, 09 October 2009

Administrators halt support for concert featuring "Gucci Mane"

After all of the controversy regarding rapper "Gucci Mane" performing at the homecoming concert, North Carolina A&T has decided to take its name off of the concert in the best interests of the image of the university.

In a statement released this week, Chancellor Harold L. Martin Sr. stated that the university made the decision to detach itself from the Oct. 31 concert because the artists performing were in direct conflict with the values and principles of the University. "The headliners booked for our concert have generated dissonance among our student leaders and our constituents," Martin said. "This dissonance has provoked internal discussion and policy reviews which are both necessary and welcomed and which will undoubtedly make us better as a university."

As a part of this measure to separate A&T from the stipulations surrounding the homecoming concert, the University Ticket Office is also no longer selling tickets for the event. Students who are still interested in purchasing a ticket for the concert will now have to go to the Greensboro Coliseum or ticketmaster.com to purchase them. Over 6,000 tickets have already been sold.

While the decision was made in an effort to protect the image of the university, not all students agreed with the action taken. Saidah Green, a sophomore electrical engineering major from San Diego, was not aware that A&T had removed itself from the concert, but when she found out she made it clear that she didn't agree with the decision.

"I think it's kind of awkward because it kind of takes away from our homecoming event," Green said. "I think it should have been our concert, so if our individuals on the campus wanted certain artists off we should have removed them but if not then it should still be our homecoming because it is supposed to be."

Green was not the only person who disagreed. Delissa Riddick, a senior public relations major from New Jersey, said that she didn't necessarily think that removing A&T's name from the concert was the only solution, but she understood why those actions were taken.

"It is very unfortunate but sometimes things have to be done to protect the school's image and the different students that go to the school. Things happen," Riddick said. "I don't think it was right because the concert is one of our biggest money makers. Removing our name from the tickets doesn't remove us from the situation. It's not going to change anything."

"I think that a lot of people aren't really going to realize that this is not A&T's homecoming concert, regardless of the statement that Chancellor Martin released. The artists are still who they are and they are still going to pull in their fans, and the community takes up most of the seats of who actually attends the event, so the only difference is the money we are not going to make."

Homecoming is a very lucrative production, not just for the university, but also for the city of Greensboro. According to the university, on average, the homecoming festivities generate millions of dollars in revenue for the city of Greensboro over the course of just a few days.

Local businesses benefit from the added customer base when the more than 40,000 alumni come back to visit A&T, and hotels tend to be booked as far as nine months in advance for the event. Many locals and North Carolina natives also make it a point to participate in the celebration. A&T's homecoming has often been considered one of the largest tourist attractions in the state.

Valerie Dudley, the university's vice president of internal affairs, said that A&T received \$40,000 back from their total investment in the concert. A&T invested a total of \$100,000 in the concert in collaboration with the promoter for the event, Diamond Life Concerts.

Diamond Life has agreed to assume all financial responsibility for the concert, and is hoping that all the media attention around the concert will help drive up ticket sales to fill the gap in the loss of revenue. Student Government Association President Syene Jasmin said that he supported the decision that was made on behalf of the university.

"I am standing beside the decision of (Chancellor) Harold Martin, and I am confident in the decision that he has made," Jasmin said.

It has yet to be determined how this will affect the booking of other artists for A&T in the future, but Martin did allude to policy changes and reviews in his statement, which will undoubtedly have an effect on future events.

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Dexter R. Mullins is editor in chief of The Register, the North Carolina A&T University student newspaper, which originally published this article.