

# What Happened to the Grambling Band That I Loved?

Contributed by Marvin Hurst -- Black College Wire  
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Has it been "band-napped?"

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To assume progress comes with the passing of a baton is conjecture operating at its optimum. In fact, assured progress is not a natural progression unless serious standards are implemented to guarantee that mastery is confirmed and continuous. That's what came to mind as I watched a travesty in Jackson, Mississippi. I couldn't believe my eyes.

The once almost invincible World Famed Tiger Marching Band had become the locally lamed. The G-Man Band had fizzled down to a ghastly "geeee." Someone please tell me what the hell happened to halftime? Better yet, where is the band I so love? Has it been "band-napped?"

The name is still there but anything that resembled the former greatness of the Grambling band is DOA and/or MIA. It breaks my heart as an alumnus and a hardnosed fan. This is also problematic because the young men and women who are in the band deserve better. But to do better you need to know better. Subsequently, I submit to you the problem is leadership and lack of vision.

If you need an example of how bad things have become for the band's program, view their 2009 performance against Jackson State University. Musically, it was capital murder. Our show, although well-intentioned, would have been best performed for elementary students. I saw nothing that looked like a university band. And, certainly, not a thing that looked like GSU.

I get the Michael Jackson tribute. But, the King of Pop impersonator? C'mon! The Thriller dance routine? That only works for the real MJ and award show tributes.

Please believe this isn't isolated nonsense. The same band had Santa Claus come on the field at the SWAC championship in recent years. WHAT?! It's all been going downhill for years. We need change!

This isn't a personal attack against Dr. Larry Pannell. I like him. But folks, business is business. The marching band is a vital public relations and recruitment vehicle for Grambling State. Um &hellip; not so much these days.

Another example of leadership lunacy is taking the red out of the former band uniform for that "yellow stuff" we march in now. Anyone who knows marketing and branding knows better. You don't change a brand after working decades to establish it. Ask the folks at Coca-Cola about their experience with the new Coke.

Other issues? The marching tempo is too slow. The arrangements are rudimentary. The breakdowns are lackluster.

Who would think in an age where dance has become mainstream that we can't engineer an interesting break down?

In collegiate sports, when a coach continues to lose the alumni, the university's symbolic upper brass demands more. That may lead to termination. It's a sometimes painful process to achieve long term success.

We need to take a step in returning our band to its rightful place. Our goal should be to continue a lasting legacy of marching magnificence. First, we need to exercise ourselves from the depths of being laughable.

I welcome all civilized verbal debate on this issue. However, if you open your eyes and ears you can see what I'm seeing. We need to do this together. Demand change.

The late Congresswoman Barbara Jordan spoke of change in the keynote address at the Democratic Convention in July 1992. I borrow and extend cuttings of her powerful words to my dear Gramblinites.

"It is possible to win. It is possible but you must believe we can and will do it &hellip; Change: From what to what? &hellip; We are not strangers to change &hellip; We will do nothing to erode our essence &hellip; Our history bears witness to that statement &hellip; E Pluribus Unum was a good motto in the early days of our country and it is a good motto today. From the many, one &hellip; That is not an easy task, but it is a doable one."

Let us revive our renowned treasure before destruction befalls one of our greatest traditions.

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