

Howard Senior Dies in Spring Break Accident

Contributed by Jana Homes -- Black College Wire
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Popular student drowns in Cancun, Mexico

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The rain picked up as the stream of people gathered to cross The Yard late Sunday, March 15. The vigil for Davon Green Franklin, planned for 10:30 pm around the Howard University flagpole, was relocated into the Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel under the leadership of Dean Bernard Richardson. As attendees flowed into the building, raindrops mingled with tears as sobbing students embraced. Many were shocked to learn that Green Franklin, who was heard from as recently as early Sunday afternoon, had suffered a drowning accident in the early evening that day while on Spring Break in Cancun, Mexico. Green Franklin was a senior from Baltimore, Md. and an active member of the Howard community. At the vigil, members of the Xi Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi, Fraternity Inc., as well as members of the university's Campus Pals represented the organizations with which Green Franklin was most notably involved.

Known for an effervescent smile and positive outlook, he strived to learn lessons from everything he encountered. Through his account on popular social networking site Twitter, Green Franklin shared a message he gleaned from his surroundings early Sunday. "Life Lessons from the ocean water: the waves will pull you out further before they take you back to shore," he said.

Though little is known about the circumstances of the accident, those who attended the vigil made it known that they appreciated the time they spent with Green Franklin. Shoulders were lent for support around the chapel as looks of pensive disbelief clouded the faces of his loved ones. Students, alumni, faculty, and staff were all on hand, representing various campus organizations, including many of the Greek-lettered groups. On a campus known for its fashion savvy, it was clear that mourners disregarded stylish pretense and came as they were to honor Green Franklin's memory and support one another.

Melech Thomas, former Mr. Howard University, organized the event along with Howard University Student Association (HUSA) President Bryan Smart and Dean Richardson, to provide support for all those struggling with the news. "It's nothing too complex. It's just people coming together that have a similar heart that may be aching and grieving, right now," he said.

Dean Richardson, who simply asked "What do you do at a time like this?" requested that loved ones come and share their memories of a life that seemed to touch so many. After each story, Richardson told the crowd to join in saying "We remember you, Davon" or "We love you, Davon."

Norman Gyamfi, a fellow member of Xi Chapter, Kappa Alpha Psi and Green Franklin's close friend, recalls being downtown when he heard the news and immediately calling his own mother. She told him that no one who believed in God is ever truly gone; a statement he is sure applies to Green Franklin, who was known to preach sermons with a passion not often found in one so young. Gyamfi said that his friend would not want those he left behind to spend their time grieving, but he would implore them to cherish the life they have and the loved ones still with them.

"Y'all is trippin'," he said Green Franklin would be saying with a smirk, "I lived a good life." Though Gyamfi was struck by the sudden nature of the incident, he urged the crowd to take a lesson from the event. "You could be living one moment, DMing, twittering, facebooking, whatever, and the next moment be gone," he said, adding that Green Franklin would want those he loved to continue to be the best that they could be, as he often reminded them.

Green Franklin was said to have been both a teacher and an encourager to those around him, regardless of age. "He was younger than all of us, but he would teach us and keep us on the right path," said Reginald Guy, another member of the Xi Chapter. The younger members of the fraternity also shared memories of what he had taught them.

"One thing Davon taught me that particularly resonates with me was to avoid the unhappy and unlucky," Calvin Simmons recalled. He also said that Green Franklin was selfless and reliable, always there when anybody needed him. "We need you now and we know you're here so just continue to be with us," he concluded.

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Jana Homes writes for The Hilltop, the Howard University student newspaper, which originally published this article.