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The History Makers present for W.W. Law Lecture

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As a part of the Black Heritage Festival, Savannah State University and the City of Savannah presented the annual W.W. Law Lecture Thursday evening at the Jepson Center.

This year the theme was "Focused on the Future – Acknowledging Echoes from the Past," but with a desire for more respect for the purpose of the event and the worldly events that took and are taking place currently, Julieanna Richardson, Founder and Executive Director of The History Makers renamed the event "Focused on the Future – DEMANDING Echoes from the Past."

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The general purpose of the lecture was to shed light on W.W. Law himself along with all other black activists and individuals who've made contributions to black heritage. This year, Richardson and The History Makers were highlighted.

The History Makers are a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization with a mission to educate individuals of black heritage and create visual and audio content of history, expose the untold or untaught histories of black culture, preserve the content so that it can be preserved for the future, and then donate it so that libraries, schools, and universities can have access to the archive.

To introduce Richardson, Shed Dawson, Savannah State University's Greek Life Coordinator, before telling the audience about her successes, gave a brief description of the first time he heard Richardson speak, his first encounter with the History Makers webpage, and his discovery of great individuals that he recognized as monumental figures in Savannah and to Savannah State University.

"On each page there's hundreds of names in different fields, and I was completely mesmerized, because some of them were just local people in local places who, I can only imagine, if they didn't do what they did there, where would those people in our community be," he said.

For example, John B. Clemmons, former professor at what as Georgia State College (now SSU) and charter founder of the Delta ETA chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, incorporated, an organization in which Dawson is a proud member.

The last time Richardson had spoken to W.W. Law was prior to his death, a moment which she recalls as her most regretful moment in life, the opportunity missed to capture Law's history. "Mr. Law I'll be calling you to schedule your interview. He said in his voice "don't wait too long. We waited too long."

Throughout the lecture, Richardson shared an array of videos from The History Makers archive of people who were monumental and important to Savannah's history one. The archive holds more than 90,513 stories and 1,746 historically significant African American interviews, 9,000 hours of testimonies. Five hundred of the interviewees died and 99 percent of the 500 had no trace of a biography written

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about them. Richardson said reasons like those are why her passion was in preserving the black history so that others could enjoy what was almost forgotten.

President of Savannah State University Cheryl Dozier closed the lecture with some encouraging remarks. "When we think about our future we have to have the echoes from the past... What you just presented to us sister, is that our past informs our present, and our present informs our future," she said.

At the end of the night Shirley B. James, the Savannah Heritage Festival coordinator presented a plaque, which Richardson did not get to keep. This plaque, held a place where Richardson would be honored as a contributor to the W.W. Law Lecture which will be displayed in Hill Hall at Savannah State University.

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