

## BSC ALUMNUS DR. JESSE CALLOWAY SERVED AS BLUEFIELD STATE COLLEGE'S 2017 COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER

BSC Alumnus Dr. Jesse Calloway served as Bluefield State College's 2017 Commencement Speaker: (Bluefield)—Corporate leadership development consultant and author Dr. Jesse Calloway served as the keynote speaker at Bluefield State College's 2017 Commencement Exercises on May 13, 2017 at the Brushfork Armory. For Additional Information, Contact Jim Nelson/Media Relations (304) 327-4103, [jnelson@bluefieldstate.edu](mailto:jnelson@bluefieldstate.edu)

BSC Alumnus Dr. Jesse Calloway "Passes Forward" His Life's Lessons (Bluefield)—As a child, Dr. Jesse Calloway knew all too well what it meant to be hungry, but his "lens of life" perceived the opportunity in every challenge. Recently, the Bluefield State College alumnus took time to reflect upon his life's journey and the lessons he now shares with others.

"I grew up poor," he recounted. "I was one of six children. When I was eight years of age, my mother died and we moved in with an aunt and uncle who had six children of their own, making them responsible for 12 children. As a young boy, I would get 25 cents worth of gasoline on credit, fill up a borrowed lawnmower, cut several yards, then take the money I earned to pay for the gas and buy myself food to eat."

"When I was 15, I started working at a restaurant in Radford Virginia. I always tried to do my best at every job. One day, the restaurant's manager, James Groves, told me, 'you're an excellent worker.' I became a cook, making more money, he then moved me to cashier and, at age 17, to assistant manager."

During high school, Calloway became interested in electricity and electronics, landing an entry level position at Hercules (the Radford, VA munitions plant) upon graduation. He also enrolled in electrical electronics technology at New River (VA) Community College. A supervisor at Hercules, Frank Graves, asked Calloway on frequent occasions to clean out a truck used to transport workers within the expansive munitions plant. He asked Graves, "Why do you tell me to clean the truck so often?" His supervisor answered, "It's because nobody cleans out the truck like you do. Whatever job you do, you do it at the highest quality. That's a trait that will benefit you throughout your life."

After earning an associate degree, Calloway enrolled at Bluefield State College in 1984. "Bluefield State offered a very workable way for me to get a bachelor's degree," he explained. Around this time, I had a wife and daughter, and I was working at Radford, then traveling an hour and forty minutes each way to and from the College. Faculty members like (the late) Dr. David Klingensmith were flexible with my assignments so I could continue to work and go to school." Still, it was very challenging, and many nights, Calloway slept only 2-3 hours.

"It was probably the most stressful time in my life," he remembers. "However, the instructors encouraged me, and I knew the reward would be worth the effort. I was certain I'd be a darned good engineer upon graduation, because I could take the theory I learned in the classroom and apply it immediately in a work setting. That education and experience stuck with me and prepared me for future challenges and opportunities."

Shortly thereafter graduating from BSC in 1988, Calloway joined Philip Morris USA, an Altria operating company. Starting as an entry level electrical engineer, he was soon promoted to senior electrical engineer, then group leader, then manager of quality and specification engineering. He earned an MBA degree from Virginia Commonwealth University. A series of promotions followed leading to his advancement to vice president of engineering. When he retired in 2011, Dr. Calloway was Vice President/General Manager (Processing & Manufacturing), Philip Morris USA.

Several years earlier, in 2005, Dr. Calloway accepted appointment to the Thurgood Marshall College Fund Board of Directors, serving in that capacity through 2011. "My lens was circumscribed by the people around me," he explained. "At Thurgood Marshall, I saw many bright kids who didn't have opportunity. They needed resources to live to their potential." During this period, he developed an engineering leadership program which he personally implemented in the Historically Black Colleges and Universities space. "I identified sharp students with the capacity to learn. Once in the program, they were exposed to different departments accelerating their professional growth and many advanced into leadership positions.

"My message to the young students is this," he summarized. "Nobody owes you anything. Do your best in every job. Learn from your mistakes and don't look back. Find an advocate and exceed their expectations. Never compromise your integrity."

In retirement, Dr. Calloway is also imparting his life's lessons through a planned series of books. The first of these books is titled; "All the Way to the Top: A Practical Guide for Corporate and Business Leadership"