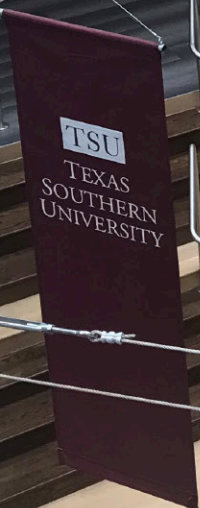


# ***THE VALUE OF AN HBCU***

***Stanley B. Lemons***

OCTOBER 2021

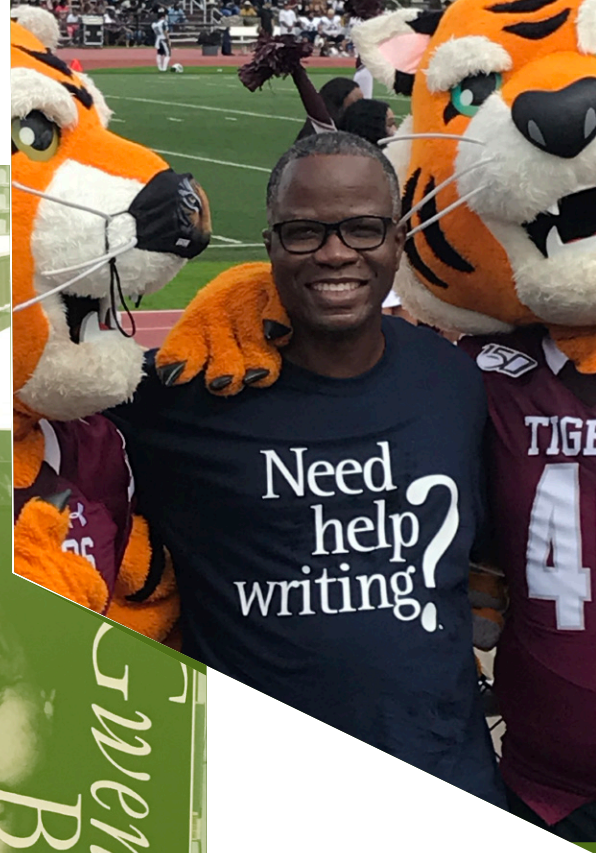




## I ATTENDED THE TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY (TSU) HOMECOMING THIS PAST WEEKEND, AND WHAT A HOMECOMING IT WAS.

Homecoming weekend for me started with a visit to TSU's Library Learning Center. The place is fabulous. Actually, it's breath-taking. The library could almost double as a museum, if not a work of architectural genius. I was transformed. I couldn't wait to explore the premises.

After a brief chat with the library's receptionist, I made my way to the fifth floor. I got off the elevator and turned to my left. I was immediately hit with images of Black artists, writers, and musicians. I stopped. I literally could not believe what I was seeing. These images of Black intelligentsia were carefully placed on the rows of book stacks. There was Maya Angelou, John Coltrane, Dorothy Vaughan, George



Washington Carver, and many others. Who did this? It was a masterful way of capturing my eyes and mind.

I took a seat in a cubby area near a floor-to-ceiling window. I wanted to take in the view. Suddenly, I could feel the emotions within me start to bubble up. Tears began to form in my eyes. I had finally come home. It was a connection to a school that I had longed for – a place where I felt a sense of natural belonging.

I started to think about my time as an undergraduate student at Amherst, a small private liberal arts college in Massachusetts. My mind then shifted to my

time as a MBA student at UCLA. As I reflected on my experiences at Amherst and UCLA, I wished that I had had the feeling that I was now experiencing while sitting in TSU's library. Seeing people who share my brown skin color and individuals who were and are role models on the stacks of TSU's library made all the difference. I was inspired.

Around 12:30 p.m., I decided to follow-through on my plan to leave the library and to head over to a homecoming reception at TSU's College of Education Building. I was one of the first guests to arrive. After a few minutes, other guests entered the room and a few people sat down at a table







where I was sitting. One of the individuals who sat at my table was Dr. Lacey Reynolds, an Education professor and administrator at TSU.

Dr. Reynolds and I chatted. During our exchange, he, almost predictably, asked me where I had attended undergraduate school. I said, "Amherst College." And then I added, "UCLA business school." Dr. Reynolds seemed to quickly put two and two together and made the correct assessment that attending an HBCU might be a new and different experience for me. He was right. He was right in a good way, but he didn't stop there. Dr. Reynolds was determined to welcome me to TSU. He introduced me to folks at the reception and wanted others to know me. It felt great. For me, here again, was my homecoming.

The next day, Saturday, October 2, 2021, was the homecoming football game. It was a rainy day and one that I thought might

be a bit messy. It didn't matter. I was excited to attend what would be my first HBCU football game at "My HBCU." Sure enough, the hype of the day and the game came true. There were the rows and rows of fans, African American fans. And there was the exhilaration of seeing the football team being cheered on by the sounds of the "Ocean of Soul Marching Band."

I speak with passion about my new school and my HBCU homecoming experience. I could be nostalgic and commence the wishful thinking of what it would have been like to attend TSU or, for that matter, any HBCU as a graduating high school senior? But really, I try not to go there. I don't want to try and replay the past or seek to change something that I obviously cannot. I appreciate my rock-solid academic training and the experiences I had at Amherst and UCLA. I made some amazing lifelong friends, and undoubtedly, I grew as a person.

My wish today is for U.S. colleges in general to continue the work of creating a more diverse and multicultural environment on their campuses. To "see yourself" at a school makes a world of difference.

Attending the TSU homecoming this past weekend was an emotional experience, and an experience that challenges me to want even more for "My HBCU," other HBCUs, and ultimately our country.

**Stanley B. Lemons**  
**Founder and President,**  
**TheSecretToWriting.com**  
**Education Doctoral Student**  
**at Texas Southern University (TSU)**  
**Email: stanlemons2@thesecrettowriting.com**  
**Phone: 404.869.1290**



**Share your feedback about Stan's words on the blog page of [TheSecretToWriting.com](http://TheSecretToWriting.com). Consider the following questions:**

How did the experience of attending an HBCU benefit you?

What advice do you have for middle school and high school students who are considering an HBCU as a college option?

What specific advice or story can you share to help students plan and prepare for college, at an HBCU or otherwise?