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Thy Noble Shrine

FAMU NAA Miami-Dade Chapter Newsletter
FALL 2021 (September - November 2021)

COVER STORY

SHEERIE EDWARDS: CREATING A PATH INTO CYCLING HISTORY, ONE PEDAL STROKE AT A TIME.

TRACEY JACKSON - A hot day in Miami will lead someone straight to the beach to cool off in the ocean or in one of the area's many chlorinated pools (saltwater pool if you're fancy enough). But, if you're a cyclist, and it's Sunday, all roads lead to an enclave of commercial warehouses and office parks in a city named Doral that's nestled west of the Miami International Airport and the Norwegian Cruise Lines headquarters. The area is filled with office parks and secluded streets that make it perfect for a Crit Race (i.e. a Criterium Race is a bicycle race with a specified number of laps on a closed course over public roads closed to normal traffic). This was no ordinary crit race on any given Sunday for that matter. It was a special one. It would be the first race for Sheerie Edwards, the only black woman out of over 40 female cyclists. Her cocoa brown skin made her easily identifiable in the peloton (not to be confused with the famous exercise bike but simply a group of riders in a race). The setting was significant not only to Edwards but to her supporters and the two other predominantly black cycle clubs that were there to see history being made. Edwards, the only black woman to race in the Doral Criterium was on the cusp of having her name written somewhere in the cannon of cycling history makers. At 4'11, she's considered a giant even though she's called "The Pint-Sized Powerhouse". But with all things, her story did not start at the Doral Crit on that hot Sunday afternoon. It started during the COVID Lockdown of 2020.

Sheerie, a Graduate of Florida A&M University and formerly Miss FAMU 2007 was home recovering from surgery when the lockdown started in March of last year. The formerly avid gym goer needed a different way to stay in shape since everything was closed except for her storage room where an old clunky mountain bike resided. "I needed to get back into shape. I couldn't even last ten to fifteen minutes on that thing," she explained. "I needed a way to stay active." After pedaling around the neighborhood on that bike, she decided to purchase a much newer and lighter hybrid bike. "I started building up my endurance. I joined a group of friends to ride. Then, I invited my sorority sisters of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. to ride together. Then, I started to grow on my hybrid (bike)." Like Edwards and so many other people who picked up cycling during the lockdown, getting better and faster became the desired goal especially when mature cyclists would zip by "easy going" riders on their much lighter sophisticated (and



expensive) carbon road bikes. Soon, joyrides around the trails and neighborhoods were no longer enough. A beach ride on a lazy afternoon became an eye opener for Edwards and a bit of a turning point. "People passed me by on their road bikes, I mean, just really fast! I was like "What is this?" From that moment on I researched and bought my first road bike in July and the rest was history."

Once she purchased her road bike, the next step was to find a group of like-minded people so that she can continue her cycling journey. "I came across Level Up Cycling Movement and they offered their 'Tuesday Training Ride' specifically for beginners. I needed the knowledge of basic road safety and cycling fundamentals." Level Up Cycling Movement is a cycling group established to introduce cycling as a health benefit to minority communities while providing exposure to the sport of cycling. Also, not forgetting to mention that Level Up is a mélange of pro and master's level cyclists, marathon runners, tri athletes and cycling enthusiasts of color. "I met great people in the club especially Luis Scott who led the Tuesday training rides," she said. Edwards faithfully attended all beginner ride classes that taught the basics like, riding in a pace line, how and when to change bike gears, clipping and unclipping from the pedals and what types of cycling gear to buy which includes the colorful tight spandex outfits called "kits". It was a lot to learn and a lot to invest in for the sake of just getting out of the house to exercise. The payoff would come rather quickly. Soon, purpose summoned Sheerie beyond the beginner Tuesday rides. "With my dedication and skillset. I was asked to lead Level Up's Tuesday morning ride called 'The Tuesday Jump Off' where speeds were a sustained 23 mph pace for 28 miles non-stop that started at 6am." She began to grow beyond the Tuesday rides and started riding at faster speeds more days out of the week with other established groups for the remainder of the lockdown.



COVER STORY CONT'D

“I would ride with CTR (ne’ Century Towing Riders) and with their rides, my confidence grew.” Sheerie spent a lot of time with CTR honing her skills on their technical group rides that included climbing (i.e. riding upward) over tall overpass bridges and freakishly fast sprint zones. “CTR gave me the challenge that I needed. They are well known for their fast group rides while riding the distances of 23 to 100 miles per session. It was definitely the missing piece I needed to elevate me.” Not only did CTR give Sheerie the group rides that would increase her skill level but they also gave her the name “The Pint Sized Powerhouse”, a nickname that has become near and dear to her journey as a cyclist.

When the world eventually went back to work early 2021, she still made time honing her cycling skills with her busy schedule. Soon, there would be other days of the week where she could make appearances at even more popular group rides in the area to continue her growth. These group rides were often male dominated and she would be the only black woman riding with mostly White and Hispanic men then maybe a handful of Black men. “I started going to Big Wheel Sunday, Unicosta-Group A, Don Pan on Key Biscayne, Weston Flyers and Alex Ride-Group A, with speeds that reached beyond 30 mph.” The numerous group rides, the meticulously dedicated drive and naturally competitive spirit eventually landed Sheerie at The Doral Criterium Race but first as a spectator.

At the time, there were no “women’s only” race categories and the ladies had to race in the men’s categories. But eventually a women’s race would be formed and once again, the call of purpose beckoned for Sheerie to move into a space that was even more challenging than extremely fast rides packed with men. “I knew by showing up in a bike race as the only black woman would be a heavy task as a newer cyclist competing in a Pro/ Cat Levels 1 through 5 with women that have over 15 years of racing experience. I knew it wouldn’t be easy. Everything was going to be earned outright like demanding my spot in the field and fighting to keep it.” Let’s not forget that road cycling is generally a White male dominated sport that only recently saw an influx of Black cyclists here in America since the lockdown. And, in South Florida, the demographics aren’t that much different with black people only representing less than 5% of cyclists with the rest being White and Hispanic.

After 3 short months of training with her UCI Level 2 coach, Multinational Road Cyclist and Time Trial Champion Jyme Bridges of Antigua & Barbuda, she was declared ready to enter her first race. On that hot Sunday, in front of a crowd of over 300 people, Sheerie and Jyme looked out towards the starting gates at all the racers moving into the corral. The parting words from Jyme was a simple and quiet “go get it!” Her family, friends, sorority sisters and supporters who wore t-shirts that donned the name “Pint-Sized Powerhouse” were lined up to take pictures with her and give well wishes before she moved to the start line. How did it feel to be the only black woman in the peloton you may ask? “I got the looks of course, I felt it. The others were racing with teams and knew each other while I was racing independently. Having my family and my supporters there meant the world to me. I simply focused on the moment.” And that she did! When the race started, she immediately and aggressively maneuvered for a decent place in the peloton as not to get left behind or what the cycling world calls “dropped”. Lap after lap well-wishers would scream and shout “Let’s Go Sheerie!” History was made that day with an amazing feat. She made it onto the “Top 10 Finishers” list as a first time racer which is quite rare for a new cyclist in a field of experienced riders.

There would be a few more races to finish before the off-season. Soon, pockets of available time showed up for group rides in between a grueling training schedule put together by her coach. And where there is time, there is room for a new milestone. Sheerie was asked to be a local brand ambassador for Rapha Miami Cycling Club. Rapha is a very high-end cycling lifestyle brand who sponsors Tour De France cycling team Education Foundation and premiere crit race cycle team Legion of Los Angeles that’s owned by the Williams brothers: two black men from Compton, California. To be connected to such a brand is an accomplishment! “When I was asked, I was like, am I ready for this, will they accept me?” In South Florida, cycling is White and Hispanic dominated. The Rapha representatives told me, “We want you, we need you!” That helped to make me comfortable because I asked myself if I was truly ready to be a ride leader for such a well-known group. Rapha is big on diversity, inclusion and greater equality. I am happy to be associated with a brand that is committed to those three points in and outside of cycling because representation matters.” Among being a local Rapha brand ambassador, she is also sponsored by Big Wheel Bicycles, a very popular and long standing local bicycle shop frequented by all levels of cyclists. Another accomplishment to add to her growing list.

When Sheerie isn’t burning up the roads in South Florida at high speeds and making space for other black women cyclists, the college professor who teaches Anatomy & Physiology and Biology has no plans of slowing down. “I’m willing to continue to share my story and share my journey to inspire other women and cyclists. I’m not here to reinvent the wheel. We have great black women pro-cyclists that came before me like Ayesha McGowan of Atlanta and Tienielle Campbell of Trinidad and Tobago. They are my inspiration. If I can bring exposure to others while I am on this journey, that’s good enough for me.” Sheerie isn’t re-inventing the wheel, she’s creating a new path in South Florida that black women cyclists can follow. Though a private person with a quiet demeanor, Sheerie is making space in the races, in aggressive male dominated group rides and at a world-renowned cycling brand. Through her grit and dedication, she finished the 2021 race season 6th in her category which is major accomplishment with less than a year of focused race training. She is truly living up to the name: “The Pint-Sized Powerhouse”.



CHAPTER MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Roshell Rinkins, a life member in our chapter, has been doing big things for the love of FAMU. As Senior Director of Grants and Administration for the Knight Foundation, she spearheaded a \$1.5 million donation to FAMU to be utilized towards the new Will Packer Performing Arts Amphitheater. She also assisted her fellow classmates (The Freshman Class of 2000) in reaching \$305,742.44 which will go towards endowed scholarships. Roshell, you are a powerhouse and we truly appreciate you! Thank you for being a part of the Miami-Dade Chapter!

UPCOMING EVENTS

NOVEMBER

- 18-20 - NAA Leadership Summit
- 20 - Florida Blue Florida Classic
- 25 - Thanksgiving

JANUARY

- 1- Kwanzaa Ends
- New Year's Day

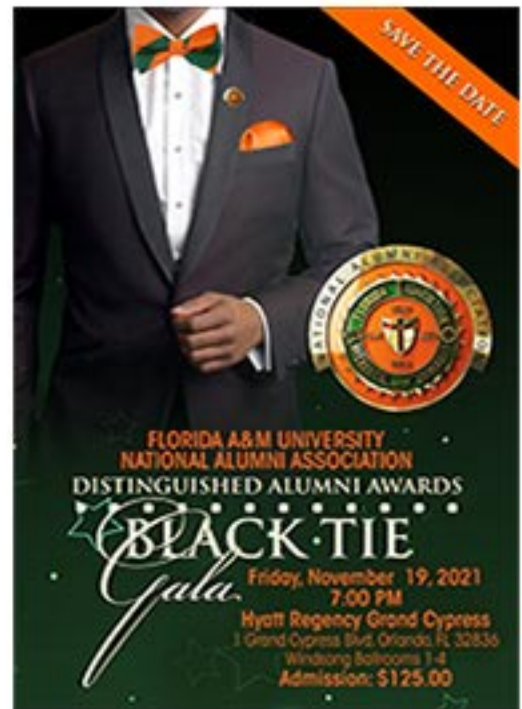
DECEMBER

- 18 - Chapter Meeting
- 25 - Christmas
- 26 - Kwanzaa Begins

MARCH

- 9 - Be Out Day Miami

COMING SOON



CONGRATULATIONS



Dr. Cassandra Arnold has been selected as a 2021 Distinguished Alumni Awardee. She will be awarded for her constant efforts in the field of Government. We are proud of you!

As of
11/11/2021



2021 - 2022 Membership: 131
Life Members: 58
Membership Goal: 200
Percentage of Goal: 65.5%

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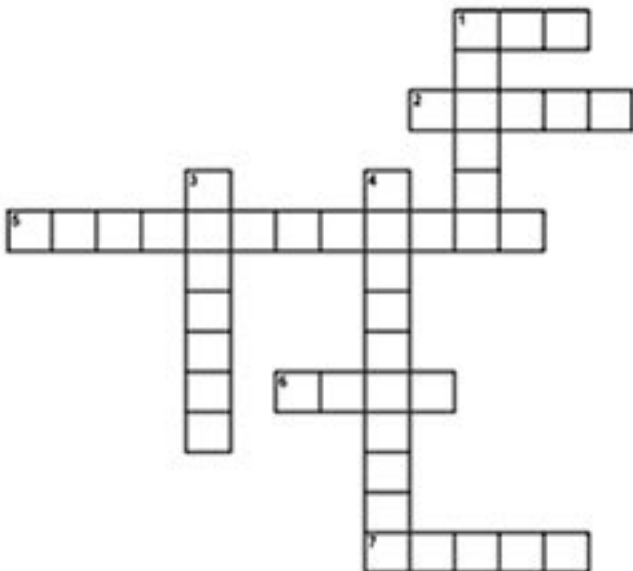
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OR

Cash App: \$MDFAMUNAA

MDFAMUNAA Fall 2021 Crossword Puzzle

Can you figure out what the words are? Try it out!



Across:

1. The school that requires its students to wear suits
2. The stadium where our football team demolishes the opposition
5. A Structure that is named in honor of Will Packer
6. The newest building on campus guarded by the bronze Rattler
7. A female Residence Hall that once was a male residence hall

Down:

1. A hand motion that Rattlers do again, again & again
3. A female Residence Hall that lives in the memories of countless alumnae
4. A main street on campus that connects to FAMU Way

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