

*Coleman College*

THE FORGOTTEN HBCU





The tree on the campus of Coleman College  
in Gibsland, Louisiana became the

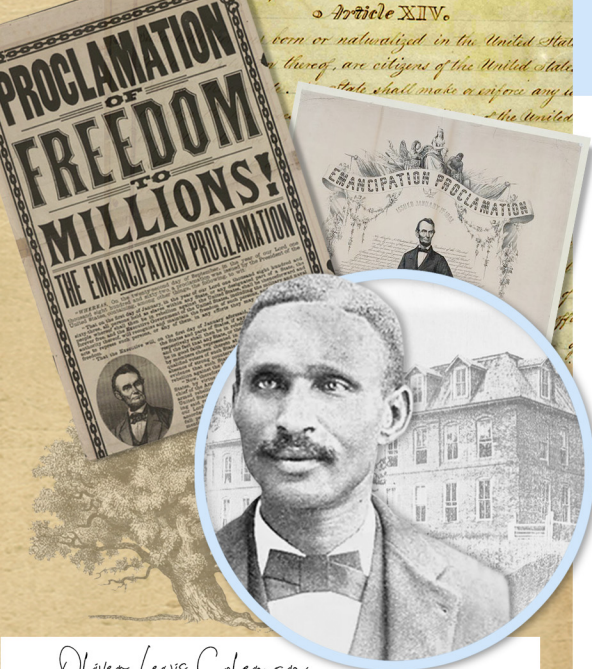
**“The Praying Tree”**

when Father Coleman prayed under it  
during the drought of 1896. Shortly after  
he saw a flow of water emerging from a  
spring just eighty yards from the tree.

## Introduction:

**Oliver Lewis Coleman, born free to slave parents**, obtained his rudimentary schooling on the “master’s” plantation. After the Emancipation Proclamation, Reconstruction provided a means to continue his pursuit of education and he later attended and graduated from Alcorn A&M College in Lorman, Mississippi. This led to his vision and ultimate goal, the establishment of **Coleman Male and Female Academy, the predecessor to Coleman College. This Historically Black College (HBCU) in Gibsland, Louisiana was the first school for freed slaves located in Northern Louisiana...** an area rife with racism, intolerance and bigotry.

**After interviewing various relatives, including his grandfather, mother and others, John Marks began his search for answers. How, with little funding and meager resources, was O.L. Coleman able to launch and sustain an effort to build a college? How did he find the support, the teachers and the students? How did he evade and cope with the racist atmosphere and attitude of the post civil war South? And perhaps the most intriguing and elusive question – why did Oliver Lewis Coleman set out to do this?**



Oliver Lewis Coleman

FOUNDER and PRESIDENT: COLEMAN COLLEGE 1887-1927



## The Descendent:

John R. Marks, III. was among the first African-Americans to attend Florida State University (FSU) and the FSU College of Law. **He is a successful and accomplished attorney, public servant, mentor and the great-grandson of Oliver Lewis Coleman.** Marks is the longest-serving mayor in the history of Tallahassee, FL. As the youngest—and the first African-American—appointed to the Florida Public Service (utilities) Commission in 1979, he also served as chairman. He has been an adjunct professor at Florida State and Florida A&M universities.

Marks 'affiliations include the American, National, Florida, and Tallahassee Bar and Barristers Associations. Recognized as a Distinguished FSU Grad, he has also been inducted into the Florida A&M Education Gallery of Distinction.

As a captain in the United States Air Force (USAF), assigned to the JAG Corp, Marks served his country during the Vietnam War.

Marks has served as president of both the Florida League of Mayors and the Florida League of Cities and appointed to the US Conference of Mayors Board of Trustees. As Mayor, Marks 'agenda focused on economic development and social equality, targeting veterans, the elderly, and the homeless and his tenure included a yearly Summit on Race, Culture, and Human Relations. He valued and prioritized relationships with sister cities and international partners. On Marks 'watch, Tallahassee became the first city in the US to develop a smart-grid utility system, leading to its designation as the top Public Utility in the nation and the title, "America's Most Livable City."

**Like his great-grandfather, Marks is driven by a deep sense of purpose.** But there is an accomplishment that eludes Marks: **uncovering and revealing the "complete story" of Oliver Lewis Coleman and Coleman College** so that this period in history can be honored, recognized and preserved for generations to come... **a fascinating, untold story of a truly great American.**



John R. Marks, III

ATTORNEY AT LAW - GREAT GRANDSON of O.L. COLEMAN

## Why this Documentary?



As an adolescent I remember family gatherings and discussions surrounding life in Northern Louisiana. There were summer visits and extended conversations about both of my mother's grandfathers, one an educator, the other a successful land owner and farmer. The portrayals of family life were expressed with pride and reverence. My mother, Mildred Coleman Marks, talked about both grandfathers in such glowing terms it was clear that Oliver Lewis Coleman and Robert Lewis were quite unique and accomplished.

Unfortunately, their accomplishments and legacies had not been chronicled. They each had such distinct and rich histories that writing about both in one book would be daunting. So, in the summer of 1977 after interviewing my grandfather, M.M. Coleman, Sr., I made a commitment to ensure that the history of Coleman College and its founder Oliver Lewis Coleman would be properly honored, preserved and shared.

– John R. Marks, III

## Serendipity:

**Call it fate or serendipity**, during his early efforts to write a book about Coleman College, Marks was contacted by Patrick Anderson, a grad student at the University of Central Florida. Anderson's father graduated from Coleman and in his search to find out more about his father, he decided to dedicate his masters thesis to the story behind the creation of the school. **Astounded that they both shared this common goal of uncovering the rich history of Coleman College**, Marks and Anderson teamed up and set out to discover the truth about O.L. Coleman, Coleman College and its legacy of distinguished alumni.

The documentary “**Coleman College: the Forgotten HBCU**” shares the journey of John Marks as he travels the country and talks to family, friends, and historians to uncover the facts and truth about his family's amazing legacy.



*Marks meets Anderson*

RESEARCH & COLLABORATION: COLEMAN COLLEGE

**Pre-production** for the Coleman College documentary began in February of 2022. **Filming** for the project began in May of 2022.

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To complete the project, we need to film interviews and coverage at the following locations:

- Washington DC
- Tallahassee, Florida
- Northern Louisiana
- Nashville, Tennessee



**Production Schedule:**

- Production/Filming - May through July
- Research and Scripting - August through September
- Editing - October through November

**Production Budget:**

The estimate to produce the entire documentary is **\$100,000**.

This budget includes but is not limited to:

- Continued Research and Scripting
- Filming all necessary interviews and coverage
- Securing stock footage, photos
- Composition of Original Music Score
- Post Production
- Color Correction and Audio Mixing
- Creation of a Pitch Deck and Proof of Concept

**Fundraising:**

**Our goal is to secure three (4) sponsors at \$25,000 each** which will provide the funds to complete the project.



## BACKGROUND:

**Studio Auteur, LLC** is a content creation company specializing in long form documentary production. **President and CEO, Jerald Harkness has 30 years of broadcast documentary producing experience**, and has won many awards such as a national Emmy, Best Documentary for the International Academy of Web TV, a Webby nomination and various Festival selections and awards. Past network clients include **ESPN, VH1, A&E, Paramount TV, Scripps Network, PBS, and Urban Movie Channel.**

**“Coleman College: the Forgotten HBCU” will be produced by Harkness and award-winning Producer Adrienne Lopez.** Lopez is an award winning Producer and has worked for a number of networks including **Nickelodeon, MTV, BET, HLN, Paramount TV and NatGeo.**



## POTENTIAL NETWORKS:

The broadcast and streaming interest in the Coleman College documentary will be extremely high given the high demand for African American content.

Potential Networks for the project are:

Netflix	Curiosity Stream
Hulu	Smithsonian Channel
Amazon	Peacock
PBS	Paramount TV
A&E/History	Bounce/Scripps Networks





## Jerald Harkness

EXECUTIVE  
PRODUCER



### AWARDS INCLUDE:

2019 **Webby Nomination**, 2018 **International Web and TV** 2018 and 2007 **Heartland Film Festival** 2002 **National Emmy** 1994 **Pan African People's Choice Award** 1993 **National Educational Gold Apple Award**



Award winning documentary producer/director for over 25 years. Credits include **ESPN, VH1, A&E, NCAA, Paramount TV, PBS and Urban Movie Channel.**

Harkness is currently CEO of Studio Auteur, a content creation company. Harkness and Studio Auteur recently directed and produced the Wesley episode for The Election Effect, a 5 part documentary series that explores how kids were affected by the 2016 Presidential Election. **The Election Effect** won numerous awards including **2018 the International Academy of Web Television Best Documentary series**, **2018 The Heartland Film Festival Making a Difference** selection, and a **2019 Webby Nomination.**

In 2019, Harkness and his company Studio Auteur launched **True First**, an 8 part docu-drama series that celebrates forgotten and overlooked African American trailblazers and pioneers. The series is currently streaming on **Urban Movie Channel.**

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## Adrienne Lopez

### EXECUTIVE PRODUCER



Adrienne Lopez, Emmy nominated Producer, Talent Executive and Talent Manager and Casting Director for all genres of television, including talk shows, reality tv, competition shows, conflict talk shows, studio shows and award shows. An industry veteran, she was the **casting and talent lead on all Nickelodeon series and pilots**. She has extensive experience as a talk show producer, booker and writer and through her company Sweet Mary Productions, **she has booked talent on MTV, HLN, Nuvo/FuseTV and National Geographic**. She also served as **executive producer on a BET series**. Lopez was also **Senior Vice President and Executive Producer for Kenny Smith's production company** and has extensive experience booking top sports talent. An attorney and a mother of grown twin sons.

#### HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

##### Current:

**Producer/Senior Booker** - The Tamron Hall Show-ABC/Disney

**Talent Producer** - The Onyx Family Series on Facebook and pocketwatch.tv

##### Former:

**Producer** - Divorce Court, 20th Century Fox

**Director of On-Air Talent** - HLN

**Producer** - The Little Baller Series on Nickelodeon featuring Orlando Magic Guard, Cole Anthony & Dallas Wings star, Skylar Diggins

**Producer** - The Election Effect, Paramount TV, Shine Global

**Producer** - The Culture of Proximity, Viacom Velocity

**Casting/Booking** - SiTV/NUVO

**Talent Producer and Executive Producer** - BET

**Talent Manager/consultant** for anchors, experts and contributors

**Producer** - Kenan Thompson Ultimate Comedy Experience

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## Patrick Anderson

### RESEARCH



#### **Areas of Historical Research:**

- Coleman College Archives,
- Black Education in the South
- Black Education as Public History



UNIVERSITY OF  
CENTRAL FLORIDA

#### **Education:**

- B.S., Western Illinois University
- M.A., University of Central Florida
- Thesis Proposal- Coleman College: 1887-1934
- 2022 University of Central Florida (Public History)

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