Michael Eure Show Transcript
Entrepreneurship, Confederate Currency, and the New Gig Economy
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EURE: Hello this is Michael Eure, and I'd like to invite you to The Michael Eure Show featuring student hosts and very special guests talking about a variety of interesting topics. You can find us on the Eagle Stream YouTube Channel.

EURE: Hello, and welcome to the Michael Eure Show. My name is Michael Eure. Today's show is about entrepreneurship, confederate currency, and the new gig economy. My guest today is Sherrod Gresham, entrepreneur, author, and coin collector among many other things. Tell us a little bit about yourself.

GRESHAM: My name is Sherrod Gresham and I was born and raised in a little small town in Virginia. The name of the town was West Point. In 1974 I came to college at Saint Augustine's College here in the city, and graduated in 1978. And after doing that I went into human services, and worked in human services from 1978 to, I just recently retired in 2016 and now I'm promoting my business. And actually how I got into collecting and all of that, is that 30 years ago when I went to a bank in the city and I wanted to buy my wife a house. And I needed $3,000, we had saved $3,000 and we went to the bank and the bank asked us about our net worth. And what a net worth is, is how much are you worth? How many assets do you have? And so at the time, I went in, they asked me a series of questions. And those questions were one, did I have any stock? Well I just graduated from school and all that. I didn't know what no stock was, I mean I'm just glad I got a degree. So they asked me about a stock, I'm thinking about a stockyard. And that wasn't the case, so I didn't have any stocks. So then they asked me another question, do I have any bonds? And I didn't know what bonds were other than I knew at one time I used to do saving bonds but they talked about, Different types of bonds. And anyway, long story short, I didn't have any. So the lady in the story got frustrated, so she sighs. And she said Mr. Gresham, do you have an insurance policy? I said, yes ma'am. She said Mr. Gresham, how much is that worth? I said $10,000. She says, Mr. Gresham, you worth more dead than you are alive.
I was so hurt after she said that, I teared up. My mom and dad always taught me to respect folk. And I got up and I walked out of that bank with my wife and I, and so we were so hurt we decided we were gonna go to the beach. So we decided we gonna go to the beach, went to the beach and then came back and I still had on my heart to buy my wife this house. So I did something that my parents told me not to do, that was to go to a loan company. So I went to this loan company in the city and they asked me, do you, what kind of collateral do you have? I said, ma'am, I mean it was a young man, I said, sir, I only have three things to my name. And I said that's a living room suit, not a living room suit, a bathroom suit, a dinette set, and two cars. He looked at me and said, okay, we'll take that. They leaned on that and they gave me the loan and my wife and I was very, very happy. But they gave it to me at interest of 32%, this was in 1980. I took it. By the grace of god when I went to the

closing, they had what they called an escrow account. Escrow means that it will show insurances and your taxes. We were able to give that money, which was close to $900, and we applied that to the loan. And we were able to pay that loan off in two years. As the result of that, we then got our house, paid the loan off. And from that experience, led me to begin to look at finances in a way that the only way that you can ever have anything, you have to show on paper that you don't need it. And that was what drove me to do what I'm doing today in terms of entrepreneurship. In terms of the book that I've written called, African American on U.S. Currency & Numismatic Materials and Coins.

EURE: All right, now tell me a little bit about how you got about to collecting coins.

GRESHAM: Well one of the ways I wanted to begin to collect coins was that I heard, when I was at the bank, they was asking me about the different assets. So one of the assets was collecting them coins. So I decided, hey, I'm gonna start collecting coins.

EURE: Now coins and stamps, are they very valuable or does it depend?

GRESHAM: It depends, and what depends on, anything that is valuable is rare. In other words it is diminished. In the words, the number of coins or the number stamps that have been minted. That tells you whether or not it's gonna be valuable or not valuable.

EURE: Okay, so tell me how did you come about or stumble across this concept of Confederate currency?

GRESHAM: Okay, well one day I was doing a coin show. And, no, it was a guy that I met that had a book that was called Confederate Currency: The Color of Money. And in this book it showed Confederate currency and Southern currency with slaves on it throughout the South. And I was so fascinated that I took that book and began to go to coin shows and began to collect the original dollars. And the book talks about slaves on Confederate money in the South. And what that meant was that these persons, slaves, built the economy in the South by, one, picking cotton, transporting cotton. And so all the monies throughout the South had pictures of them doing that. And that was fascinating to me, so that's how I got started in collecting the currency.

EURE: Well which are your favorite samples of currency? I know you talked about picking cotton and some other things, do you have a favorite?

GRESHAM: Not necessarily, well what I do now, I have a quilt, two quilts. That one on currency of slaves from Virginia and from North Carolina that I, when I do exhibits and presentations that I show.

EURE: Okay, when you go to these trade shows around the country, what are some of the most interesting pieces of money that you've seen? Or other items that you've seen?

GRESHAM: Where at the shows you've got everything from gold coins to currency with slaves on them. And one of the things that is interesting in all the shows is all about history. So the coins represent somebody's history, American history, European history, that even there is collections of folks on the Confederate currency. Not only currency, but the history of the Confederacy. Also there are African American coins that came out and began in 1946 with Booker T Washington, who was the first African American on a half a dollar. And followed by him was George Washington, Carver and Booker T Washington on a bus coin from 1951 to 1954.

EURE: As you travel around the country, did you find a continued interest in collecting coins and stamps and similar items emerging among youth?

GRESHAM: Yes.

EURE: Okay.

GRESHAM: Lots of youth, and the evidence shows there are a lot of parents who bring their children there to be able to collect. Cuz you have to remember all of your history in America is on the money and is on stamps. Anything that you wanna find out about America, you can find it on a US postal stamp. All in or on their currency, all your presidents. Most of your presidents that have been deceased or generals are on your paper money. For example, on a $50 bill is Grant. Grant was one of your presidents and also was the general in the civil war. George Washington, the first President of the United States is on your dollar. So all of your history, if you ever wanna learn about history is study your money. One thing we do, we do well. We spend it, but we don't know from which it comes. So all you have to do, all of your 13 original colonies is in the symbol of the dollar bill, in that little round circle. There are the original 13 colonies. So all of your history. So that's what's been fascinating to me is that you can learn so much by just looking at your funds, money in your pocket. They call it history in your pocket.

EURE: So when you talk about coins and then we have these stamps and I know we have black heritage collection, is that a recent phenomena too or has that been at the same time they did the black coins?

GRESHAM: Well, the first African American coin was in 1946 which the first African American on the stamp was 1978 and that was an African American woman, Harriet Tubman. She was the first African American woman on a stamp. That series has been lasting for now, 40 years. Matter of fact, this year with dolphin hikes.

EURE: And for the audience, I wanna make sure you know that you can ask questions at any point and we'll get those answers for you. So do you think that we should collect stamps now? Is it something that people can do no matter how old they are? Is it worthwhile?

GRESHAM: Yes, I think it's a wonderful hobby. I think it's a great educational tool. See, because one of the things I've learned too is that I don't do something just for some money. I do things, because that's a interest to me. Now if at the end of the rainbow, it brings some money. That's a wonderful thing, but I know that having a hobby and I've been collecting stamps and coins for over 30 years and it is just something that just fascinates me. It's a conversation piece. It's just a wonderful thing and I think that it gives people something to do, particularly the elderly. Well, they can pick stamps. Cuz you can collect all types. I might do African American coins. They might boats and ships, sports figures. It's so different. So many different ways that you can collect that hobby.

EURE: Well, that's very interesting and we are going to talk back some more. Right now, we're gonna take a short video break and we'll be right back.

Commercial Break:

STUDENT 1:Hey, what's up? How have you been? I haven't seen you in like forever.

STUDENT 2: I just finished the placement test and they told me to come here. What's this place about?

STUDENT 1: Yeah, that's the student success department. I just got done in there. They help students in their first year experience program.

STUDENT 2: So what's the first year experience program?

STUDENT 1: It's just for students who test in two pre-curriculum courses.

STUDENT 2: Okay, cool. So are they gonna be able to help me sign up for classes?

STUDENT 1: Not really, what they do is they let you know what classes you need to sign up for according to your test score and your major. They also help you set up your key account and your Wake Tech email, which is really important, and they have you sign up for orientation.

STUDENT 2: But do I need to go to orientation?

STUDENT 1: Yeah, you do. And if you don't, they'll put a hold on your account and you won't be able to register for classes and it has to be an in-person orientation.

STUDENT 2: Is the first year experience program mandatory?

STUDENT 1: Yeah, it is. I know, but I had a friend that was in it last semester and said, it was a really great program and it helped him understand exactly what he needed to do to stay on top of school.

STUDENT 2: What else do we have to do for the program?

STUDENT 1: We have to go to orientation, sign up for ACA090, which is a study skills class. Meet with a success counselor twice. Attend a workshop or event on campus and get a midterm report form signed by your instructor to know your grades.

STUDENT 2: What?

STUDENT 1: Yeah, I know. But once you meet with your student success counselor, they'll go through everything with you. And if you don't understand, just ask some questions.

STUDENT 2: Well, I guess I better get started.

STUDENT 1: Yeah and while you're in there, don't forget to sign up for orientation.

STUDENT 2: Yeah, I don't want to miss that.

STUDENT 1: Yeah, you definitely don't. Maybe I'll see you around, maybe at orientation or something.

STUDENT 2: Yeah, I'll see you later. See you.

STUDENT 1: To sign up for orientation, go to orientation.waketech.edu and don't forget to activate your Wake Tech email.

EURE: We're back and I'm here with Sherrod Gresham, Collector of Confederate Currency. You're also an author. Tell me a little bit about your latest book, African Americans on US Currency & Numismatic Materials. I get tongue twisted on that. Go ahead.

GRESHAM: Numismatics mean that's the study of coins, currency and metals. That's what that where that's the fancy word for a collector and study of that hobby. My book was written as a compilation of currency, coins and metals, specifically for African Americans. And it was written to give African Americans a guide to be able to, if they wanted really to collect some of the coins or the medals or the currency, they have a book that they can look to. When I started out, I did not have that. All I knew I wanted to collect based on the embarrassment that I had. So I tried to put together a book and the book starts off with confederate notes, and some of those notes are a part of my collection of slaves. And then the second chapter is African Americans who have signed currency. See, the president has a secretary of treasure who's responsibility is to sign currency before it is sent out for us to spend. So on your money today, you have two signatures and those signatures are persons that are assigned by a president of the United States to sign that currency. Well, there are

five black African Americans who signed currency. Starting in the 1800s right after Reconstruction, right during Reconstruction. And so in the book are those five signers who sign currency in the money they sign. And also, one of those persons is a African American woman by the name of Asatilla Martin. She's the first and only African American woman to sign currency under Jimmy Carter's administration in 1977. And then in the next chapters, you will see the first African American coins that came out which are Booker T Washington and George Washington Carver. And then you have what they call a commemorative, those are commemorative coins. What a commemorative coin is, is a person who has made a contribution to American history. So you have Booker T Washington, George Washington Carver. You have the Little Rock Nine who are the nine students who integrated the schools in Arkansas. There is a silver dollar in their honor. There is Jackie Robinson who broke the color barrier. There is a silver dollar and a gold coin in his honor. You have the Crispus Attucks coin. You remember the revolutionary war? The tea party? The shot around the world? Well, the coin that represents that is Crispus Attucks. And finally you have a silver dollar on the Civil Rights Movement that came out in 2014 celebrating 50 years of that, the civil rights document. And then you move on from there to metals. Metals on Roy Wilkins. Who was the head of the NAACP Colin Powell the first African-American Secretary of State and right on to President Obama's inauguration medals as well as his presidential medals that came out in January 2017.

EURE: All right, and we're gonna talk a little bit more. But I think I wanna be off a little bit these images tell me what they are and what you do with them.

GRESHAM: The images that you see, these are what they call, they're dancing dolls. And if you like to see me perform these dancing dolls, I will be on September the 16th at it's called the Harvest Fest. It's at Yates Mills Park off Lake Willamore Road. I will be performing there about 12 noon to 12:45 in between a couple of bands. I have been doing that now for the last four or five years of performing the dancing dolls. But these dolls are unique because they were made by a friend of mine, his name was George. George died in 2008, at the age of 86 years old, but in the depression, George went to a bank up in Henderson, North Carolina. And in the back of that bank was a ten-cent store was a guy dancing some dolls. And at the time, George was about he went to his dad and said, dad can you buy me one of them dancing dolls? So George how much is it? He said $1 George look at him and said I can't afford it. George dropped his head then his dad put his hand on his shoulders said George you can make that doll. So George went home and got a butcher knife, an apple crate, two match stem, and a hanger and made his first dancing doll. And from the age of 13 years old till he died in 2008, he has made these dancing dolls.

EURE: Wow.

GRESHAM: And so I have a collection of his dancing dolls. And I danced in his honor, and I have a few of them that I have for sale but overall I use these and dance these dolls in his honor.

EURE: So I guess you're not gonna do it for us in here but tell me about your book, if people wanna get a copy of your book, how would they do that?

GRESHAM: They could email me, one, at greshamcoins1@hotmail.com or you also can buy it on Amazon, or Created Space.

EURE: Okay, so I know that you have been at various events, like the African-American Cultural Celebration at the Museum of History. And that's coming up and I'm just gonna throw out, anybody that's interested in performing or presenting, the deadline is September 15th. You can go to the Ocala museum of histories website and that's a great event and you'll be there again?

GRESHAM: Yes

EURE: Okay, and will you have the dancing dolls and your-

GRESHAM: Probably will have because the space is limited so I saw to pick one or two things to present because of the number of spaces that I have, but I'm doing my website over again some of it will be presenting a different places. So I'll put that out and sometime I also on Facebook so you can look at, it's called Gresham's Historical Artifacts on Facebook. And I always post different things that come out in places that I will be in the future.

EURE: And I know you spoke to many schools and many civic leagues, and maybe we'll get you back at. Maybe one of the professors would like you to come talk to the class? Would you be available for that?

GRESHAM: I'm available to do so.

EURE: Okay. Alright. So we have went around a lot. We're gonna go to the break right now. And we'll be back and take questions and finish with Sherrod. Thanks.

Commercial Break:

Discover career and employment resources at Wake Tech. We can help you land the job you want and jump start your career. Here are five fool-proof tips to help you get ready for your future.
Tip number one, get your resume in shape. Wake Tech's career specialists can help you make sure your resume is polished, professional, and up to date.
Tip number two, practice your elevator speech. What's that? It's you, the Wikipedia version, that highlights your skills and experience and leaves potential employers wanting to know more.

Tip number three, prepare for your interview. Research the company and come up with relevant questions to show you're interested and that you've done your homework.
Tip number four, attend a career fair, take advantage of a wide net of employers and the opportunity to showcase your strength.
Tip number five, wear professional job appropriate attire and present your best self. Remember to smile, shake hands firmly, and speak clearly. Get the latest info and tips like these at careers.waketech.edu. Discover your future.

EURE: Alright. Welcome back with Sherrod Greshan. And we're gonna take some questions now if anybody has any. But we did talk about The Entrepreneurship and the New Gig Economy, and the New Gig Economy is really not new. That's just an idea of working as an entrepreneur; it's just a term. So had you heard that term before?

GRESHAM: I had not.

EURE: Wow, that's just a term, it doesn't mean anything. So we just want people to know that it's just about you contracting and having different skills that you kind of work out.

Q&A: What was the significance of collecting these currencies, treasures, books? Why did you do that? What was the significance for you?

GRESHAM: Significance for me is, one, learning my history. One, through collecting those items. I am a picture person and coming up in high school, believe it or not, or even in school, I hated history because all I earned about was slavery. And when you talk about people's self-esteem, when you talk about people's psyche, I wanna see people like me that are successful. And then I wanna take that and then share that with other people, that I don't care what you go through or what happens There are some folk that was in a situation worse than you and look what they did. So the significance of getting those people and showing that there was a race of people that worked real hard, still working hard. What I don't believe is getting the credit, all the respect for the work and the foundations which they built this America on.

EURE: Do we have any other questions?

Q&A: Yes, Miranda wants to know how many coins do you have?

GRESHAM: How many coins do I have? Well, I have what they call a collection. I have a what they called a Silver Eagle. Ronald Reagan, in 1986, started an American Silver Eagle collection. That was around the age of, my son was born in 1985. I began to collect that collection in 1985, a coin or two each month for 31, my son will be 32-years-old this year. So this is my 31st year of collecting that coin.

Q&A: Wow, What's the most valuable coin you own?

GRESHAM: The most valuable coin I own is probably this gold coin. There's a gold coin that just came out in the United States Mint. And that gold coin has, for the first time in the history of the United States, an image of a black woman for liberty, all right? The United States Mint put that coin out on April the 6th. Right now, that coin, in terms of the mintage of that coin, they're only gonna mint 100,000. Right now it's only 23,000 existing. And it will stop selling that coin on December the 31st.

Q&A: First coin?

GRESHAM: First coin was Booker T Washington, Washington-Carver.

Q&A: That was your first coin ever?

GRESHAM: Yeah.

Q&A: What's your favorite coin?

GRESHAM: I have to say my eagles. That's a beautiful coin. And when you talk about the history, the American eagle tells the story. You got the 13 colonies on the back represented by stars. I mean, you talking about American history, that the silver eagle. And it's one of the most beautiful coins that I have seen.

EURE: Okay, so we're gonna get ready to wrap up. I'd like to thank the audience for working with us, especially through our technical difficulties. But we think that Sherrod Gresham was a great visitor to our show. We'd like to probably have you back to some other events.

GRESHAM: Glad to come.

EURE: And I'd like to thank you. And we'll see you next time.

GRESHAM: All right, thank you.

EURE: All right.