



**XAVIER**  
UNIVERSITY of LOUISIANA

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**“Pulse of Perseverance” Book Launch, Signing and Forum at Xavier University of LA**  
***Rewriting the Narrative of the Young, Black Male***

New Orleans LA – Three Xavierite graduates [Dr. Pierre Johnson](#), [Dr. Maxime Madhere](#) and [Dr. Joseph Semien](#) are debuting their new book, “[The Pulse of Perseverance](#)” with a Q&A forum, book signing and reception event at Xavier University of Louisiana (XULA) **Thursday, February 15<sup>th</sup> from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.** in the **Qatar Pharmacy Pavilion Lobby and Atrium**.

This event is free and open to the public.

Award-winning The New York Times investigative journalist [Nikole Hannah-Jones](#) will moderate the discussion about the book, which details the three men’s struggles to overcome the obstacles of poverty, inadequate K-12 educations and family dysfunction as they pursued their dreams of becoming doctors.

The forum will also highlight the role that XULA, which sends more black undergraduates on to become doctors than any other college in the country, played in their success.

“Xavier University itself was my saving grace. It would’ve been very easy for me to slip through the cracks during the academic valleys of my freshman year, but Xavier actively worked to identify and support students like me,” says Dr. Johnson.

Rising from backgrounds marked by violence, drug use and personal struggle, Doctors Pierre Johnson, Maxime Madhere and Joseph Semien show that their challenges were stepping stones rather than roadblocks. At XULA, these three black premedical students struggled with the demands of Xavier’s rigorous curriculum, but formed a bond that allowed them to succeed, despite the challenges and setbacks each faced. “Pulse of Perseverance” relates a story familiar to many urban youth, and provides a roadmap for how they can overcome. “Fear of failure haunts us all, but it’s not failure itself that counts, it’s how we respond to failure that makes the difference,” Dr. Semien says. “No one’s journey in life is perfect; my own life is a testament to that.”

By sharing their personal struggles and ultimate triumphs, the authors aim to empower and inspire black youth to work towards their goals. But more than that, they hope this book will help

redefine the portrayal of the black male. "I find inspiration and hope in both the great and small," Dr. Madhere claims. "Having gone through the process of writing this book with my brothers, I am hopeful that our stories might speak to a young reader and offer him or her some degree of support or direction; who knows what sharing our stories might lead to? Perhaps someday, one of our readers will go on to change the world."

"Xavier has held true to the belief that every student can succeed," stated Norman C. Francis, President Emeritus of Xavier. "Each student is given the support they need from the Xavier community to achieve greatness. I am proud to have served as President of this institution for half a century and I look forward to watching it continue to grow and succeed as we move into the future."

Xavier University of Louisiana [President Reynold Verret](#) stated, "Today, we are building on our inspired founding vision to guide the path into an ambitious future. I continue to sustain the unique educational experience that has yielded so much success. We know that students come to us with different levels of pre-college readiness. Xavier embraces each one with an expectation of greatness, and they leave us ready to serve and to lead."

"[The Pulse of Perseverance](#)" is an inspirational story of success; one that demonstrates the importance of a strong support system and the investment of academic institutions like Xavier in students of color.

To book interviews with the authors for this event, contact Patrice Bell Mercadel, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer at 504-520-5452 or [pbellmer@xula.edu](mailto:pbellmer@xula.edu), Todd Ragusa at 504-330-2202 or [todd@ragusaconsulting.com](mailto:todd@ragusaconsulting.com) and Jacques Morial at 202-320-3966 or [JacquesMorial@gmail.com](mailto:JacquesMorial@gmail.com).

Preview copies of the book can be requested at [pulseofp3@gmail.com](mailto:pulseofp3@gmail.com). The book is available for purchase on [Amazon](#). You can learn more about Pulse of Perseverance and the authors at [www.thepulseofp3.com](http://www.thepulseofp3.com).

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#### **About Xavier University of Louisiana**

XULA students *Leave Ready* to serve, care, and lead their communities. For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana visit us online at [www.xula.edu](http://www.xula.edu) or follow us on Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter @XULA1925. Take a moment to learn more about how Xavier is preparing students for the future at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sD4mb-jYZC8>.

Once again, Xavier University of Louisiana received national accolades as one of the best universities in the country. Most notably, XULA is ranked as the best value among southern regional colleges and universities in the 2018 edition of "Best Colleges" by the U.S. News Media Group. Xavier also ranked No.1 in its grouping, heading the list of only 15 schools that qualified for the Southern Region category listed under "Great Schools, Great Prices."

## BIOGRAPHIES



**Dr. Pierre Johnson**, a native of Chicago, is a board certified ob-gyn specializing in minimally invasive robotic surgery and pelvic floor repair. After receiving his bachelor's degree in biology pre-med from Xavier University of Louisiana in 2002, he went on to receive his medical degree from the University of Illinois in 2008. Dr. Johnson has been in ob-gyn private practice since 2013, and currently resides and practices in the Chicagoland area. He was featured in The New York Times Magazine article, "A Prescription for More Black Doctors," in 2015. In 2016, Dr. Johnson received the Xavier University "40 under 40" award and in 2017 he received the Alpha Kappa Alpha Monarch "Man of the Year" award.



**Dr. Maxime Madhere**, from Brooklyn N.Y. and raised in Washington DC, is a double-board certified cardiac anesthesiologist who earned his diplomate status from both the American Board of Anesthesiology and the National Board of Echocardiography. After receiving his bachelor's degree in biology pre-med from Xavier University in 2002, he went on to receive his medical degree from the Howard University College of Medicine in 2008. Dr. Madhere has been in private practice since 2013, and currently resides and practices at a regional medical center in Baton Rouge. He is an active member of 100 Black Men of Metro Baton Rouge, where he was recently honored as the 2017 "Member of the Year". He is also a member of the Urban Congress on African American Males, an advocacy group that seeks to improve the lives and expand the strengths of black males and local black communities.



**Dr. Joseph W. Semien Jr.**, a native of New Orleans and former member of the U.S. Army, is a board certified ob-gyn and chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Lake Charles Memorial Hospital. After receiving his bachelor's degree in biology pre-med from Xavier University of Louisiana in 2001, he went on to receive his master's degree in tropical medicine at the Tulane University School of Public Health. Dr. Semien went on to receive his medical degree at St. Matthew's University School of Medicine in 2008. Dr. Semien currently resides and practices in Lake Charles, La., specializing in minimally invasive surgery and urogynecological and reconstructive pelvic surgery. He is an active mentor and affiliated member of several organizations that strive to redirect and redefine the African- American and inner city youth in his community.



**Nikole Hannah-Jones** has won numerous national awards for investigative journalism, including the Peabody Award, George Polk Award and the National Magazine Award. In October 2017, Hannah-Jones was named a prestigious MacArthur Fellow for her reporting on school segregation and is writing a book on the topic called, "The Problem We All Live With," to be published in the One World imprint of Penguin/Random House. She is a co-founder of the Ida B. Wells Society for Investigative Reporting, a training and mentorship organization aimed towards increasing the number of investigative reporters of color.



**President Reynold Verret**  
***Xavier University of Louisiana***

Dr. C. Reynold Verret was unanimously elected XULA's president by the Board of Trustees, taking office on July 1, 2016. Prior to his appointment as president, he has served as provost and chief administrative officer at Savannah State, Georgia's first public historically black university. Immigrating from Haiti in 1963, Dr. Verret went on to complete his undergraduate degree with honors from Columbia University, a doctorate in biochemistry from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a postdoctoral fellowship at the Howard Hughes Institute for Immunology at Yale University and the Center for Cancer Research at MIT. In addition to his role at Savannah State, Verret served as provost at Wilkes University in Northern Pennsylvania and as dean of the Misher College of Arts and Sciences at the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia. He also served as the chair of the chemistry at Clark Atlanta University, where he helped allocate close to \$10 million in grant funding. His background in the sciences makes him particularly suited to Xavier, having developed programs to prepare STEM teachers, secure tuition support for teacher certification in STEM fields and affirm joint instructional and research programs.



**Dr. Norman C. Francis, President Emeritus**  
***Xavier University of Louisiana***

Dr. Norman C. Francis' 47 years as president of Xavier University of Louisiana is among the longest of any college president in the United States. A 1952 graduate of Xavier University, he went on to Loyola University Law School, where he earned a J.D. in 1955. He spent 1956 to 1957 in the U.S. Army's Third Armored Division. Recruited to return to Xavier, Francis served as dean of men in 1957 and in 1963 was hired as director of student personnel services. In 1964, he was promoted to assistant to the president, in 1967 to executive vice president and in 1968 to president of Xavier University. In 1986, he was named one of the 100 Most Effective College Administrators in America.