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MEMOIR

Howard running back killed in Texas is remembered on campus.



by [Tiamoyo Harris](#)

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As junior graphic design major Kyrian Batiste prepared to begin the spring semester at Howard University, he knew that something was missing. It was not a class on his schedule, but rather his best friend and roommate, Terrence Tusan. Now that Batiste's roommate is not coming back, he's requested that no one move in and take Tusan's place next door this semester. Not that anyone could.

Tusan and Batiste had known each other since they were five years old. The two started playing youth football together and competed on the same teams ever since. Both Texans came to Howard together from Dallas-area schools on a recruiting trip during their senior year of high school, later making the decision together to be Bison.

Tusan was a 5-foot-6, 150-pound running back and Batiste, standing 6 feet 3 inches tall at 285 pounds, is one of the offensive linemen who blocked for him. On January 3, Batiste served as a pallbearer during his best friend's funeral.

"[Tusan's mother] wanted me to be the pallbearer because she knew I had his best interests in mind," Batiste said.

Just days before, on December 21, Tusan, a junior sports management major, was killed. He and Batiste were supposed to open Christmas presents that fateful Sunday night.

"I really didn't even open my presents or celebrate Christmas," Batiste said. "I had to be strong for my grandmother because she was already going through a lot. At the end of the day, there was nothing I could do."

In a case that has left many unanswered questions, Tusan was killed in a reported home invasion where police announced the victims killed the alleged suspects. Tusan was shot in the head and neck outside of the CastleRock Apartments in Denton, Texas. The two people listed as victims told police that three men charged into their apartment that Sunday afternoon.

The apartment residents suffered non-life threatening gunshot wounds and were treated at a hospital and released that night. Two of the three alleged intruders, Tusan and 18-year-old Jakobi Gipson, were already dead when police arrived on the scene. The third alleged intruder, Rashar Aikens, 19, was arrested January 6, and a fourth suspect, Lloyd Fraction, 21, surrendered to police January 7.

Two days went by before family and friends of Tusan knew he was dead. He did not have a wallet on him at the time of his death so he remained unidentified at the Tarrant County medical examiner's office until Tuesday, December 23. Meanwhile,

under the impression that Tusan was missing, his family and friends flooded social media with pictures of him and a phone number to call if seen. Once his mother, Donna, identified his body by his tattoos, news spread that Tusan was dead.

"When I found out, I had to pull over for a second," said Greg Pinckney, who had been a hometown friend of Tusan for 15 years. "First thing I did was go to Ms. Donna's house. When I saw her I couldn't do anything but hug her."

Right before his death, Donna and Tusan were starting to discuss life more seriously; she knew her son was maturing and that he was looking forward to getting his bachelor's degree. During Thanksgiving break, he came home and treated her to a New Edition concert. He started doing more around the house. Donna was especially glad Tusan was continuing a legacy by attending Howard. His aunt and godfather had previously attended Howard. Donna and Tusan's father, Kevin, met at Howard.

In 2004, the family suffered a significant loss when Joseph Tusan, Terrence's older brother, was killed in a racially charged incident as a freshman enrolled at East Central University. At the time, Tusan was 12 years old.

"The main thing is that I know he is with his brother," Donna said. "I know that this is what [Tusan] would want me to do and that's what keeps me putting one foot in front of the other."

Kevin and Donna both sat in the front row at their son's wake Friday, January 2 and funeral January 3 at St. John's Baptist Church in Grand Prairie, Texas, the church Terrence attended as well. Bison head football coach Gary "Flea" Harrell was one of the many Howard representatives who traveled to Texas to pay respects to Tusan and his family. At the funeral, Coach Harrell spoke about Tusan, who he called one of his favorite players.

"He'll always be a Bison. When it was times we were facing adversity, it was 'TuTu' time," Harrell said. "This man was very much loved from Washington, D.C. all the way to Texas.

When he transcends, we'll still be able to keep him close to our hearts. We can't ask why his time came so soon, we just have to continue to carry his legacy for what he gave us."

Tusan had just completed his best statistical season as a Bison, rushing for 331 yards and one touchdown to go along with a receiving touchdown. He led the team in yards per carry (5.6) and the highlight of his season came on a 70-yard touchdown run in a 38-25 loss to Rutgers University. Tusan is remembered by his teammates as not only an elusive runner in the open field, but also a caring person who looked to motivate others.

"I was having a hard time this season," teammate Stewart "Red" Hartman said at Tusan's wake. "He always told me to find the hole, get back to your old ways. It really does make you feel good knowing that people are always on your side, and I had to let his family know that."

The incident surrounding Terrence's death left many of his friends and family, sad, angry, baffled and confused. Suspicions around the case arose. Some alleged he was set up. When the story was first reported, few details about the case had been released by police. Fraction and Aikens were not arrested until two weeks after the incident took place. However, by December 28, the Dallas Morning News, Washington Post, New York Post and Yahoo Sports all had headlines indicating that a suspect who was a Howard football player had been killed during a home invasion.

"It was kind of hard because I felt like the media was portraying my friend as a bad person and not the person he was," Batiste said. "Why were they releasing the information [without] all the information? That's not who Terrence was."

In the case, the two alleged victims moved out of the apartment as soon as possible. Police reported that Aikens fled the scene after the incident. The fourth suspect, Fraction, whom police said was the driver, gave authorities contrary reports on his whereabouts the Sunday evening of the incident. As the investigation continues, Tusan's mother, along with all family and friends, remain firm as to who the real Terrence Tusan was.

"No one will ever be able to tear down what I know about my son," Donna Tusan said.

"I know no matter what has been said, I know what kind of child I raised. Sometimes you have to keep your circles a little smaller. He even told me to be careful about that."

Both Donna and Kevin were present Wednesday, January 14 at the vigil held in Greene Stadium to reflect on the life of their son. Coach Harrell, Batiste, senior quarterback Greg McGhee and other representatives from the athletic department spoke about their memories of the running back who wore the No. 27.

Tusan was a son, brother, alumnus of Euless Trinity High School, Howard student-athlete, friend, godfather and mentor. To Batiste, Tusan will always be remembered as his best friend. As he embarks on his first semester without Tusan, he will attempt to remain positive. In memory of Tusan, Batiste plans on getting some of the same tattoos that he had. If football works out for Batiste next season, he says he will play in Tusan's honor.

"I want everybody to know that he was a very humble and peaceful and loving person," Batiste said. "He always had your back no matter what. God has a better plan for him and he's up there with his brother. They always say in football 'the eye in the sky don't lie.' He's going to

be watching over me and my teammates.”

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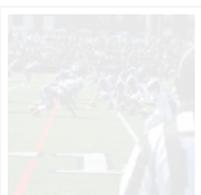
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