



# HERITAGE

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## The Providence College Black Studies Program Newsletter

### *Hoodie Day: In Honor of Trayvon Martin and Racial Justice*

**“No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”**  
-Nelson Mandela

The recent death of Trayvon Martin (a young African American male, who was wearing a hoodie and suspected of being in the wrong place) has been traumatic for a number of individuals—both globally and domestically. His death raises a number of questions around issues such as: notions of belonging, accountability, stereotyping, justice, truth, and race.

what hidden or brushed aside. I was happy to see that there were plenty of other people on campus who share the same belief of justice and racial equality, which may seem very hard to find on a campus like PC.” – Murielle Joseph ‘15

On March 29th, the Providence College community gathered in honor of Trayvon Martin. Throughout the day, students and faculty wore hoodies in remembrance of Trayvon Martin’s death, as well as to express a stance for social justice and the intolerance of racism. In the afternoon, the campus engaged in a Community Rally where individuals shared their thoughts and feelings on the issues resulting from the death of Trayvon Martin. Below, students, faculty, and staff share their reflections from the day:



“Going to the Rally for Trayvon Martin was an experience that I’m so glad I had on campus. A large group of us came together for a common cause and it was so moving. I truly believe that through this tragedy, we were able to experience unity for a cause of justice and were able to relate to one another and to Trayvon as well. We each had the opportunity to share our experiences with racism on or off campus. Everyone listened and you could tell we all felt for one another. The story was not just a story. It was a real-life experience for a friend or a classmate, or even a professor. We all agreed that what happened to Trayvon was an unfortunate event and is something that cannot be tolerated in 2012.” – Stephanie Henry ‘15

“I thought that the experience was really eye opening and revealed a lot of things that would be left some-

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### *Understanding the “SlutWalk” Movement: Dora Mighty ‘12*

“Sex is something that people do together, not something you do to someone else” read a poster of a woman who joined one of the new waves of movements, the Slut Walk, that speaks out against sexual violence of women. Women face a number of unjust actions. For example, women’s work is consistently devalued, they are often treated in terms of products to be consumed. They are often perceived in the media as over-sexualized. As a result more women and girls are forced to become sex slaves, and often those responsible for such exploitation are not held accountable. Women who are assaulted are also often blamed for the assault. Thus, the Slut Walks.

Since then, the movement has gone global. Walks have taken place in many cities in the United States, such as Chicago and NYC, and in countries, such as India and France. The goal of this article is to scrutinize and understand this growing movement.

The SlutWalk movement is a response to a comment made by a police officer. On April 11, Constable Michael Sanguinetti was hosting a safety prevention class at Osgoode Hall Law School when he stated, “**if women avoided dressing like sluts they would not be sexually assaulted.**” This stirred many young women to actively critique this ideology of blaming the victim.

The SlutWalk movement began in Toronto, Canada.

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## Hoodie Day: In Honor of Trayvon Martin and Racial Justice

“Of course I attended the rally as it was simply the right thing to do. Regardless of the mud-



dle about the facts of the case, a young black man was dead for no good reason. To ‘mourn with those who mourn’ was what my faith called for as an individual and in community. Then as it turned from remembering a national tragedy to sharing personal stories of pain, I felt I was in a sacred space. A space for which others were trusting that I would hear and *really* listen, and entrusting me to move forward in action for truth and justice.”

– Elena Yee, director for the Balfour Office for Multicultural Activities

“Many critics of the nationwide gatherings to honor Trayvon Martin ask “Why Trayvon?” It is true that racism is manifested in disturbing and violent ways on a daily basis, towards unnamed victims who will never have a rally held in their name. However, the alternative is to



stay silent. Had the Providence College community stayed silent in the face of an opportunity such as this one, we would have missed out on an important dialogue that goes beyond the senseless killing of Trayvon Martin. Discrimination is alive and well on our campus,

and those who face it daily had an opportunity to have their voices heard. The testimonies of students, faculty, and administration kept us out in the chilly weather as if we were handcuffed together. Listening to members of our own community recount the harassment they have faced because of their race or ethnicity brought Trayvon’s story home. The personal was truly the powerful. We would like to thank the college for permitting the rally to be held on our campus, as we know this has not been the case at other institutions across the country. We also encourage members of the community

to involve themselves in the progressive conversations taking place at PC through student organizations such as SOAR (Students Organized Against Racism), Women Will, and SHEPARD (Stopping Homophobia, Eliminating Racism, and Restoring Dignity).”

– Caroline Jones ’14 and Brooke Petit ’14

“It was necessary that we have a rally for Trayvon Martin because nobody should ever feel scared or distrustful of another human being. Because I can only understand this issue through a lens of white privilege, I worry constantly that I overstep boundaries or misunderstand my place in fighting discrimination based on skin color (which I can empathize with, but never fully grasp). Instead of trying to work from the anger I felt that Trayvon was racially discriminated against (which I have plenty of), I worked off of the feelings that I knew I could most closely relate to: his fear. Whether I drew from the feelings I have while walking alone to my car as a woman, or how I felt when my childhood house was engulfed in flames, I know that I have felt fear, and I know how much that can cut someone down mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Having started with this base, I imagined how I would feel if my every move was questioned,

if I was made to feel distrustful and afraid of those I came in contact with for simply *living*. This certainly would have shaped and changed me as an individual who society constantly pushed away, worked *against*, not as I am now, accepted wherever I go.

I worry about saying anything akin to “I wanted to help organize this rally because...” or anything to that effect, because I did nothing. I heard that a poster was needed, I felt strongly about this tragedy, and was able to draw something up to assist those who really put the event together: Dr. Jordan-Zachery, Dr. Hirsch, and Dr. O’Kelly. I only hope that I can do what little I am able to do in any situation where I hold the privileged position and have the opportunity to help.”

–Stelliana Chalkiadakis ’13



For me, this recent violent removal of a Black body from public space makes me think critically about our understanding of community in this “post” state. And by post, I don’t mean post-racism or post-gender, but post human interactions (where race still matters). In a state where our interactions take place in virtual reality, if at all, how do we (re)define our understanding of community? Beyond this, how do we begin to think of our responsibilities to each other—that is the common good?

– Julia S. Jordan-Zachery

**The Trayvon Martin Rally will be an annual event at PC.**

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## *Understanding the “Slut Walk” Movement: Dora Mighty ‘12*

The Slut Walk movement has united women to publically call out sexism and patriarchy. The founders of the Toronto Slut Walk, Heather Jarvis and Sonya Barnett. Jarvis stated, *“It isn’t about just one idea or one police officer who practices victim blaming, it’s about changing the system and doing something constructive with anger and frustration”*. The Slut Walks have been placed in larger conversations around issues justice for women—social, political and economic.

The aim of the SlutWalk movement is to redefine the term “slut”, hoping that it creates a global dialogue in which women feel comfortable discussing sexual assault without fear of blame. The walks seek to combat a culture that teaches *“don’t get raped”*, as opposed to *“don’t rape.”* The argument is that if we take away shame and blame, then we are able to confront sexism and patriarchy. Many people who participate in the SlutWalk are survivors of sexual assault. This movement has given them a voice—to call out and challenge multiple oppressive structures.

The larger movement challenges institutions such as the media. The media perpetuates an image of over-sexualized women. One only has

to consider the recent comment made by Rush Limbaugh when he referred to law student Sandra Fluke as a “slut” and a “prostitute”. In a recent study, Hatton shows that images of women in the media have become increasingly more sexualized and indeed more pornographic. According to Hatton, *“Sexualized portrayals of women have been found to legitimize or exacerbate violence against women and girls, as well as sexual harassment and anti-women attitudes among men and boys.”*



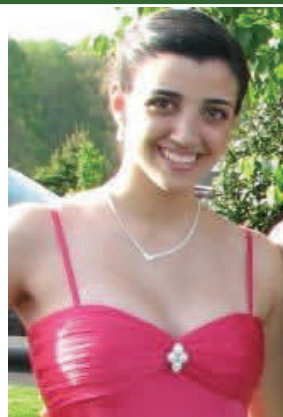
When sexual violence occurs, blame is often displaced—from the perpetrator to the victim. Often, the woman is blamed for dressing provocatively. Her behavior becomes the focus. As such her assault is rationalized as a result of her alcohol consumption, or substance abuse, especially amongst the college population. It is time for us to challenge this. It is time for us to teach don’t rape!

Resources:

National Sexual Assault Hotline - 1.800.656.HOPE  
Day One: <http://www.dayoneri.org/>

## *Black Studies Minor Graduates 2012*

**Briana Rivas-Morello**  
Major: Health Policy Management and Global Studies  
Minor : Black Studies



**Emily Kozak**  
Major : Social Science  
Minor: Black Studies



**Dara Greenidge**  
Major: Global Studies  
Minor: Sociology and Black Studies



**Regina Etienne**  
Major: Political Science  
Minor: Black Studies

We wish you Kila la kheri!

## *The Arab Spring: Dr. Sandra Keating, Associate Professor of Theology*

### **What are your thoughts on the so-called Arab Spring?**

What we have come to call the “Arab Spring” was an unexpected, but hoped for outcome of efforts after the events of 9/11 to bring about peace and stability in the Middle East. I credit both those who have been working to end dictatorships and terrorism, and the accessibility of modern technology such as internet and cell phones. Technology has allowed those who long for a better future to see what the possibilities are and to connect to those who will support them worldwide. **Nothing like this has happened before – we are truly living in an amazing age!**

### **How do you see the future of the uprisings unfolding?**

Although the timing of the uprisings came as a surprise, I think we will see that they follow a pattern that has been developing over the last couple of decades. As dictatorships and authoritarian regimes are overthrown, there is both a search for stability and prosperity, and a desire to recapture lost heritage. A characteristic of many of these countries has been forced modernization along with secularization. Even though this can bring many benefits, it can

also bring a sense that important values and identity markers have been repressed.

In the Middle East, of course, Islam has deep roots; yet Muslims have not played an important role in shaping these countries *as Muslims*. Now there is a question what role Islam will play in the public sphere, and how it will be reflected in constitutions and governing structures. I think that we will ultimately see a variety of approaches, but I also expect that this will be worked out over a long period of time. We should not forget that it has taken several centuries for the relationship between religion and state to be worked out in the West, and we are still discussing it.

### **What are the implications not only for the Middle-East, but also for Africa?**

I think long-term this is an extremely positive development. **In the short term, we need to be concerned about the position of women and religious minorities.** In many of the places where secular governments were imposed, the rights of women and religious minorities were protected, even if other rights were limited. When there is no clear governing structure, cultural prejudices can easily threaten those who are powerless.

My hope is that success in the Middle Eastern countries now in transition will inspire citizens of other African countries living with dictatorships and turmoil. Many African countries are in desperate need of freedom and stability, and they may be able to find hope in the Arab Spring.



## *Syrian Unrest—Standing in Solidarity: Dara Greenidge '12*

The Syrian uprisings have evolved into a worsening struggle for the people of the country. Beginning on January 26, 2011 as a movement affiliated with the Arab Spring, the thirteen months of conflict in Syria has led to at least 11,000 deaths—many of which were armless protesters. Thousands of Syrian civilians have also been fatally injured and imprisoned. It is truly shocking that what began as a peaceful protest has turned into such a violent situation. The people of Syria had one aim in mind at the beginning of their protest: justice and equality. They were tired of their rights being taken away from them under the regime of President Bashar al-Assad, and demanded that their voices to be heard.

Currently, the Assad regime continues to kill their own people. They fabricate stories about the conditions of Syria while speaking to the international community as an attempt to present a country at peace. Meanwhile, crowds of people are targeted every day by government and military snipers. Constant bombings have affected civilians' daily lives, as they leave their homes without knowing if they will return. The Syrian psyche has been completely altered; people are accustomed and desensitized by death because it exists all around them.



In early April, the Assad regime claimed to have initiated a ceasefire backed by the United Nations, but yet innocent civilians are indiscriminately attacked and killed each day. The United Nations has also sent thirty observers from the international community to help create peace, but Syrian protesters argue that it is not enough. Claims are made that up to 3,000 observers are needed for the unjust regime to actually fall. At this moment in time, Syrians express an outcry for international help.

As Providence College students, there are ways in which we can help stop the injustice in Syria. We should begin at educating ourselves and others.

### **Will you stand in solidarity?**

For more information:

AlJazeera: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/syria/>

Syrian Uprising Timeline: [http://www.historyguy.com/syrian\\_uprising\\_2011.htm](http://www.historyguy.com/syrian_uprising_2011.htm)

Middle East Policy Council: <http://www.mepc.org>