



## The Providence College Black Studies Program Newsletter

**“The past is a ghost, the future a dream. All we ever have is now.”  
- Bill Cosby -**

### Inside this issue:

Continuity and Change	1
Black Studies Course List	2
“My Song” By Brittany	2
Student Spotlight	3
A Diasporic View	3
Upcoming Events	4
Community Organization Directory	4



# HERITAGE

Volume 1, Issue 2

April 2009

## Message to the Readers

Welcome to the second issue of *Heritage*, the Providence College Black Studies Program Newsletter. As we prepare for the recognition of our 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of BLS at PC, we wanted to take the time to spotlight the multiple dimensions of Black Studies. This includes featuring student creativity. Raymond Hall, and Brittany Dorsey have submitted their creative work for your enjoyment. We thank them for allowing us to enjoy their work and we also welcome more student submissions in the future. As you organize your schedule for the upcoming fall semester, we en-

courage you to explore Black Studies courses—find the listings included within.

This issue also features a message from Dr. Wilesse Comissiong, former Dean of the Balfour Center, who stresses that knowing our history will help us understand our future. As part of our initiative to encourage community involvement “Taking Learning Outside of the Classroom” we have included a list of possible community organizations for you to explore. The Directory features several organizations, from Animal Shelters to the Boys and Girls

Club of Providence, in Providence that welcome volunteers.

Lastly, our segment, Diasporic View, centers Afro-Germans. This section is designed to stretch our imaginations of an African Diaspora. As always, we encourage you to explore Black heritage by providing you with a few local events. The Black Studies Program encourages you to be in constant search of knowledge—in all of its forms. The Program also encourages you to give back to the community. We thank you for taking time to read *Heritage*.

## Continuity and Change: *A Conversation with Dr. Wilesse Comissiong*

By Lovelyn Bogle '10 and Dr. Wilesse Comissiong



Dr. Wilesse Comissiong served and continues to serve in multiple capacities at Providence College. From 1991-2006, she served as Dean of the Balfour Center. Currently, as a part-time lecturer, She teaches seminar courses on Plantation Culture during the Antebellum South and also the Evolution of Education and African Americans. In the fall 2009 semester, Dr. Comissiong will teach Evolution of Education and African Americans.

A central focus of Dr. Comissiong’s teaching is to show continuity and change. Dr. Comissiong argues that although past institutional structures and processes, slavery and ‘Jim Crow’ segregation for example, are now legally dismantled, they still continue—often in more subtle and indirect forms. Beyond this, her courses aim to promote various intellectual pursuits that are designed to dismantle racism and other oppressive structures thereby illuminating the common history that affect us as peoples of this great nation. Knowing one’s history enables us to understand the various political and social structures that affect not only our daily lives, but our futures as well.

Dr. Comissiong’s course on the Plantation Culture during the Antebellum South gets at the heart of slavery and its atrocities. Themes center on the practice of breaking the African Spirit in order to turn Africans into slaves; silencing their revolts, dismembering families, inhumane treatments and the origin and practice of lynching. Often surprising to students, who tend to think of slavery and racism in terms of geographical boundaries, Dr. Comissiong centers the major role played by Rhode Island in the African Slave Trade. Many misunderstand slavery to be a sole phenomenon of the south, when in fact the ports through which slaves were brought to the New World were mainly through the New England coast, specifically Rhode Island’s.

So you might wonder, are these past racial atrocities currently relevant? Many have become desensitized to the issues of slavery and segregation; however, they remain intrinsic parts of our society and history and as such should not to be forgotten or understated. As Dr. Comissiong would argue, it is important to illuminate various aspects of our past in order to truly move forward to the ideal of a post-racial society—a society that encourages social justice and democratic inclusion not only domestically, but also globally.

Committed to excellence and scholarly learning, Dr. Comissiong aims to intrigue and inspire students’ desire to learn more about their histories and that of others, in order to promote better understandings of our differences and how we interrelate. This is a major step in achieving the dream of “Yes we Can.”

## Black Studies Program

### Course Offerings : Fall 2009

**BLS 101 001**

*Introduction to Black Studies*  
TR 11:30am-12:45pm  
Instructor Julia Jordan-Zachery

**BLS 220 001**

*Ethnicity/Social Diversity in America*  
TWF 08:30am-09:20am  
Instructor Michael Hayes

**BLS 302 001**

*Diversity, Community and Service*  
TR 01:00pm-02:15pm  
Instructor Ellen Salvatore

**BLS 303 001**

*Urban Politics in the US*  
TR 01:00pm-02:15pm  
Instructor Anthony Affigne

**BLS 305 001**

*Race and Ethnic Relations*  
Monday 02:30pm-05:00pm  
Instructor Eric Hirsch

**BLS 305 002**

*Race and Ethnic Relations*  
Thursday 02:30pm-05:00pm  
Instructor Eric Hirsch

**BLS 323 001**

*Contemporary Social Problems*  
TWF 09:30am-10:20am  
Instructor Robert (Bob) Pankin

**BLS 365 001**

*20<sup>th</sup> Century African American Literature*  
MW 08:30am-09:45am  
Instructor Tuire Valkeakari

**BLS 480 001**

*Seminar: Race, Gender & Public Policy*  
Thursday 02:30pm-05:00pm  
Instructor Julia Jordan-Zachery

**BLS 480 002**

*Seminar: Faith & Spirit in the African American Family and Community*  
Tuesday 04:00pm-06:30pm  
Instructor Wayne Solomon

**BLS 480 003**

*Seminar: African Diaspora*  
Monday 04:00pm-06:30pm  
Instructor Wayne Solomon

**BLS 480 004**

CRN 1167  
*Seminar: Evolution of Education and African Americans*  
Thursday 04:00pm-06:30pm  
Instructor Wilesse Comissiong

**BLS 480 005**

*Seminar: Hurricane Katrina: The Anatomy of a Social Disaster*

**Fall Registration dates:**

December '09 Grads April 17  
December '10 Grads April 21  
December '11 Grads April 24  
December '12 Grads April 28

Class of 2010 April 20 & 21  
Class of 2011 April 23 & 24  
Class of 2012 April 27 & 28

## "My Song"

By Brittany Dorsey '10

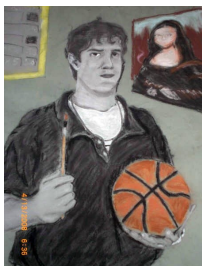
I learn something new everyday about the society I live in,  
The question that I ask myself is where do I begin?  
I sing a beautiful song which relays to you how I feel about my race,  
Sometimes I ask myself, since I'm not white then what is my place?  
(confusion)  
I ask this question simply because I am deemed inferior to  
Caucasians,  
These people who suffer daily predominantly consist of Latino,  
Blacks, and Asians.  
I am not a racist nor do I hate anything that indeed subsist.  
However, there are some things I must discuss, for the urge I can't  
resist. (anger)  
White refers to light which deters me from my rights,  
My right to be myself instead of "acting white" but only in the sights,  
The sights of those who are hiring but only after firing, those who  
don't "belong" again...I sing my song  
Am I wrong?  
Segregation, degradation, stereotypes, and generalizations,  
Are the issues which are ignored by the so called superiors of our  
nation.  
How can one be oblivious to such an extreme issue?  
Apparently it doesn't matter if it doesn't benefit YOU.  
You're expected to trust those who have the power to change things  
for the better,  
But those people are just as unpredictable as the weather.  
Oxford defines whiteness as one who is morally and spiritually pure  
and free of malignity. (unrealistic)  
Regardless, this definition will never alter me as a person nor will it  
shatter my dignity.  
My blackness is beautiful, your whiteness is too.  
Who am I to say that I am more beautiful than you?  
And you more beautiful than I, yes in some peoples eyes,  
And deep within those eyes hopefully innocence cries.  
Many Caucasians are blinded by their privileges and the things that  
they possess,  
They disregard other humans, selfishly they forget about the rest.  
I am not one to generalize nor am I one to resist interracial unity  
(blacks and whites)  
But I am one to speak my mind in reference to equal opportunity.  
I believe that it is important for you to be who you are and speak  
what you know,  
Everyone has their own song but if you don't sing it, the words no one  
else will know.

The Black Studies Program would like to recognize the following individuals:

Mr. Thomas Ongeru for his work on creating a new BLS website.

Dr. Jordan-Zachery for being awarded the 2008 National Conference of Black Political Scientists Best Book award.

# Student Spotlight: Raymond Dean Hall J.R. Studio Art Major, Class of 2010



Hall's Self Portrait

I love the challenge of making something look photo-realistic every time I pick up a pencil or paint brush. My main inspiration is to captivate people and have them amazed, confused and second guessing what they thought they saw.

I try to mix up my art work a lot. Right now I'm working more with an airbrush and a computer, whereas before, I was working with a pencil, paint brush and colored pencils. I am always trying new things to test and push my skills as an artist. But my true passion is with the mixed media of the illustrated works. Another field I have started to work in is website design and layout. I am fascinated by the time and skill it takes to make a good website, and I am working on making my own to display my art work.

I would love to leave my name or thumb print on art like Da Vinci or Rembrandt. I was a runner up my senior year in High School in a state art competition and only lost to my friend that was an artist, who went onto the Los Angeles School of Art and Design. I have been recognized several times by my High School and State as an up and coming artist. Recently, I have done movie posters for various movies. Granted the posters were only seen over seas. Other than that I have not been in too many art competitions.

In terms of future aspirations, I hope to one day design major posters for movies and books. I would love to do a One Sheet for a movie whether it would be another sequel to Batman or another iconic movie of that proportion. I would also like to keep illustrating books, from comics to children's books. My career goal is to find a job that allows me to express my creativity through my art.

**"I love the challenge of making something look photo-realistic every time I pick up a pencil or paint brush."**

— Raymond Hall J.R.



Featured pictures are samples of Raymond Hall's work which can also be found online at [pcdigital08.com](http://pcdigital08.com)

# A Diasporic View: Afro-Germany

By Lovelyn Bogle '10

- While most Americans have never heard the term Afro-German (Afrodeutsche), nor are some Germans familiar with the term *ein Schwarzer*, a German who is black, there is an estimated 300,000 – 500,000 Germans of African descent living in Germany today.

- Africans have been known to Germany since the pre-Christian times of the Roman Empire.

- In 926 the Nubian Saint Maurice became a patron saint of the Holy Roman Emperors and has been honored in various sculptures and graphics throughout Germany: City of Cobourg's Coats of Arms or a sculpture in Magdeburg.



- The history of the African community in Germany began in 1100 A.D. when Wolfram Von Eschebach Parzival wrote his tale of how he was born to a German mother and an African father.

- Anton Wilhelm Amo became the first African to be accepted into a German university in 1703. He later wrote treatises on European moors, became a faculty member and was appointed to the state council of Prussia.

- Before and after World War I, many Africans came to Germany as students, artisans, entertainers, former soldiers, or low-level colonial officials.

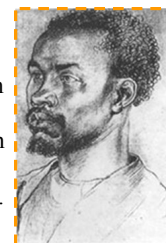
- African German mulatto children were marginalized in German society, isolated socially and economically, and not allowed to attend university. Racial discrimination prohibited them from seeking most jobs, including service in the military.

- The fate of black people from 1933 to 1945 in Nazi Germany and in Germany-occupied territories ranged from isolation to persecution, sterilization, medical experimentation, incarceration, brutality, and murder.

- However, there was no systematic program for Afro-German elimination as there were for Jews and other groups.

It is estimated that 25,000-50,000 Afro Germans died in Nazi concentration camps.

- The end of World War II brought Allied occupation forces onto German soil of which numerous soldiers were of African American, Afro-Caribbean or of African descent. More than 100,000 U.S. soldiers were to remain on German Soil. These men established their lives in Germany brought families with them or found new ones with German wives and children.



Albrecht Dürer, "Head of a Negro,"

Sources: "Afro-Germans." *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. 23 Mar. 2009 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afro-Germans>>.

"Black History and Germany." *About.com*. 23 Mar. 2009 <<http://german.about.com/od/culture/a/blackhistger.htm>>.

"History of Blacks in Nazi Germany and the Holocaust." *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. 23 Mar. 2009 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Blacks\\_in\\_Nazi\\_Germany\\_and\\_the\\_Holocaust](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Blacks_in_Nazi_Germany_and_the_Holocaust)>.

Willems, Jack. "Professor Discusses Afro-German culture." *The Traveler*. 14 Feb. 2006. 23 Mar. 2009 <<http://media.www.thetraveleronline.com/media/storage/paper688/news/2006/02/14/News/Professor.Discusses.AfroGerman.Culture-1611236.shtml?nrewrite200612150748&source=domain-www.thetraveleronline.com>>.