



# HERITAGE

Volume 5, Issue 2

December 2011/January 2012

## The Providence College Black Studies Program Newsletter

A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song.

~Maya Angelou

How to Become a Social Activist	1
A Student Activist	1
Staff Spotlight: Elena Yee	2
Black Studies Ambassadors	3
Interracial Dating: Student Perspectives	3
A Student Activist Continued	4
Upcoming Events	4

### *How to Become a Social Activist:* Dara Greenidge '12

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "A person who hasn't found something he or she is willing to die for is not fit to live." Dr. King was referring to his commitment to social justice and racial equality. Today I ask, have you found something you are willing to die for?

Many of you are already activists. We salute your efforts!! If you are feeling overwhelmed by the myriad of issues, including homelessness, hunger and growing poverty, or maybe you are concerned with your place in society given the growing economic challenges we face, it might be difficult to even think of activism. In the midst of it all you can find your activist voice. Below, I offer you some simple and practical tips.

#### Speak your mind!

Use your voice to foster and encourage social change. Share what you know with others, facilitate events, and bring in speakers or experts to create active and engaged conversation about your issue. Remain respectful and meet people where they are. Resist the urge to tell others that they are "bad" or "wrong". To speak your mind you first have to listen.

#### Form connections and choose your method!

Network with people who are mutually passionate about your issue. There is certainly power in num-

bers. When people stand in solidarity for social justice, they are prone to receive more attention. Choose the method of activism that is right for you. Start small, consider writing a letter to an elected official, or even starting a Facebook page.

#### Educate yourself!

Remain updated about current events. Read widely and varied sources about your issue, and gain a wholesome understanding of what you are advocating for. This will allow you to formulate critical perspective to advance your cause. Don't be afraid to learn from others you might disagree with.

#### Find who is in charge!

In order to be an effective activist, you must be familiar with who is doing what and their approaches. Contact these individuals to assure that they are frequently notified of their efforts and to have the opportunity for input.

#### Be Flexible!

Activism requires flexibility. Be open to the evolution of the issue and involvement of others who might have different perspectives.

*For further reading: "How to Re-Imagine the World" by Anthony Weston.*

These five tips will help you get one step closer towards creating a more just and equitable society.

### *A Student Activist:* Stephanie Nunes '11

#### What is your current position at Providence College?

My title at Providence College is the Community Access AmeriCorps VISTA. I work with the EXPLORE Program, which is a college access and readiness program for high school students. [At various high schools] PC students hold weekly sessions to help students prepare [for] college. We focus on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders [to get them] prepared for their junior and senior year.

I am also working with Keith Morton on a collaboration between PC and the Smith Hill Community Development Corporation (CDC). We are working creating, in Smith Hill, a more visible presence (PC's) in the community. Professors will use the space for

classes, and students will be able to host programs. Keith Morton currently teaches a class there this semester called "The City and its Youth."

#### Throughout your experience at Providence College, how have you demonstrated activism on campus?

The issue that I am most passionate about is education. I have been an activist in the field of education through creating the EXPLORE Program to address an issue of education, during both undergrad and post-grad. [During] my freshman year, I met with faculty and staff about how to create the program. I wanted to establish a program to help address the lack of college access for

*Continued on Page 4*



## *Staff Spotlight* : Elena Yee, Director of Balfour Office for Multicultural Activities

**As the director of the Balfour Office for Multicultural Activities (BOMA), what do you hope to accomplish at P.C.?**

My vision and goals are to provide opportunities for all students to deepen their intercultural understanding, skills and maturity through: cultivating intentional relationships with one another, examining historical and theological and biblical perspectives on diversity serving locally and globally for mutual benefit, and participating in collaborative educational programs on and off campus for learning and growth

It's vitally important to me that *all* students are engaged in understanding how diversity plays a vital role in their lives as individuals and in community. For me it's an "and/both" rather than "either/or". That is, we need to address social justice aspects of diversity such as institutional racism, classism, etc. as well as celebrate cultures through food, music, dance, and so on.

**Tell us about your experience before coming to PC**

I started out as an engineer

then taught English in China and Vietnam. In-between I spent a year substitute teaching at a Pentecostal Christian school in Wasilla, Alaska as well as two years in graduate school studying at Wheaton College in Illinois to be a missionary. Instead of being a missionary, my path was re-directed into Student Affairs and I worked at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, CA in ministries and missions for two years then intercultural programs for the last 9 years until I arrived at PC this past August.

**Why did you decide to join the PC Community?**

Professionally I felt I needed to be at a place that defined diversity more broadly so I was particularly glad to hear about SHEPARD at PC and that I had freedom to interact and support LGBTQ students. I'm very interested in addressing and exploring the complexity of identity and the intersection of race, gender, class, etc. It was also important for me to be at an institution grounded in the Christian faith that encourages me to frame my work from a biblical perspective. I truly appreciate Catholic

social teaching which exhorts believers to be active in their faith through seeking the good of others with compassion, grace and love.

**Since you have been in this position, what challenges and successes have you experienced?**

I've been especially grateful for how faculty and administrators

have been open and willing to meet with me so I may share about my role and talk about how we could collaborate in our desire to educate and support students. Also, students have truly impressed me with their initiative and energy to make things happen whether it's starting a new organization, planning a program or proposing new ideas.

Some of the challenges have been figuring out the campus climate or "ethos" as I like to call it and as such how I can best connect with

students, how to market programs so students want to attend, and how to dismantle the perception that BOMA and the Unity Center

is only for certain students. Another challenge is that I'm essentially a one person department with one student coordinator with a budget not much more than what I had at Westmont with PC being nearly three times as large in student population. It makes for creative programming and collaboration!

**Are there future programs that you are planning for?**

This year I'm taking time to get, as the saying goes, "the lay of the land" by listening, observing and building trust. What's clear to me that PC students, like many college students, are very busy and there are many options to keep

**"Students have truly impressed me with their initiative and energy to make things happen whether it's starting a new organization, planning a program or proposing new ideas."**

them busy. I'm thinking through and praying about how I may contribute to the life of the college in meaningful ways that isn't "one more thing."

That being said, I'm working [on] a week of events to honor the life of MLK; such as a poetry and prose gathering, a leadership dis-

ussion, a conversation about MLK as pastor and preacher and a celebration of the MLK scholarship legacy. I'm also collaborating with several academic departments for a variety of programs – Jonathan Blanchard, a gospel performer, who will give a concert and teach

about the Negro Spiritual, and Byron Motley who will give a multimedia presentation about the

Negro Baseball Leagues.



For programming, I'm primarily focused on the educational aspect of diversity as it relates to identity, power, privilege and position as well as creating opportunities for intergroup dialogue and discussion. We already have great student organizations like BMSA and BOP who plan excellent celebratory cultural events that are open to all students.

**Lastly, feel free to add any thoughts or concerns or anything at all.**

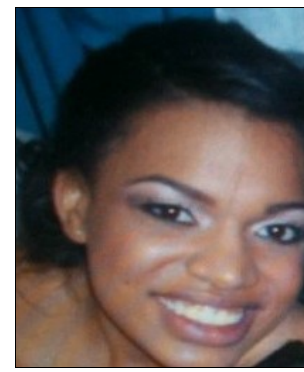
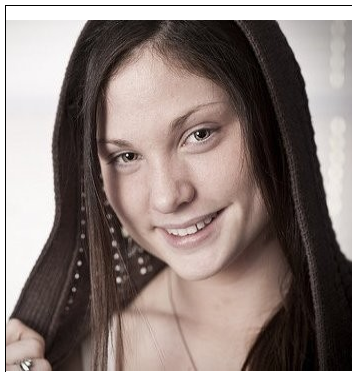
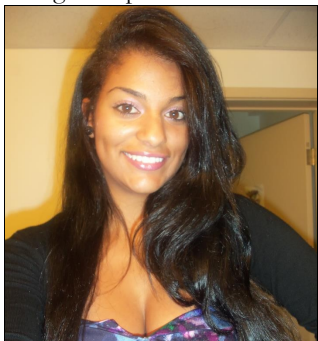
Last of all, my commitment to this work is deeply rooted in my faith and biblical understanding of and for diversity and social justice. I couldn't do it otherwise!

"...let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Amos 5:24

## *Introducing:* THE BLACK STUDIES AMBASSADORS

The Black Studies Program would like to welcome our new Student Ambassadors! Black Studies Ambassadors are encouraged to raise awareness about issues of multiculturalism, equality, human rights, and social justice. The Ambassadors evoke interest in the Black Studies Program, attain strong leadership skills, and gain the opportunity to create positive change throughout the Providence College campus.

The Ambassador program has been apart of the black Studies program for two years. Nicole Farrelly and Mabelle Abreu, are two of our older members of the program. They have assisted in many events and activities promoting the Black Studies Program and social justice issues on this campus.



Nicole Moniz '13  
"With or without anybody, I am somebody!"

Zamoi Davis '13  
"If being black is a crime then I am guilty in every way possible and definitely unstoppable."

Nicole Farrelly '14

Mabelle Abreu '14  
"If you do not hope, you will not go find what is beyond your hopes."  
St. Clement of Alexandra there you do!

## *Interracial Dating:* Student Perspectives at Providence College

*Interracial dating, particularly the recent calls for Black women to date outside of their race, has resulted in some heated discussions. So we wanted to give Providence College students an opportunity to voice their opinions on interracial dating.*

"Those who do not support interracial dating do not understand that it is a form of backwards thinking that will only aim to separate us instead of uniting us. Culture is something that is learned, not something that we are born with. Something that is learned can always be improved upon. So if all of this is a learning experience, then interracial dating is just another way for two people to learn, grow, and possibly improve."

*Malakai Freeman '12*

"From personal experience, interracial dating was difficult because of his difference in family, culture, and ideals. But to me, I did not care what race the person is. Love is the only thing that matters and I like learning about different cultures."

*Candy Sanchez '12*

"Love is defined by feeling of affection for another person and is not defined by skin color or race. I think it's a good thing."

*Ashley Ventura '12*

"Interracial dating can be hard because sometimes you have to sacrifice what you believe to suit your partner's needs".

*Emily Phrasikaysone '12*

"Interracial dating at PC probably doesn't bother students. The administration, on the other hand, needs a reality check in so many ways that it wouldn't surprise me if they weren't in favor of it"

*Andrew McKenzie '11 (Alum)*

"Interracial dating is just dating, only some like to add the interracial part for the sake of bringing attention to the couple's differences. This is something that doesn't really matter since the color of their skin does not establish how their relationship occurs; that is up to them."

*-Andres Flores '12*

"Well since I am in an interracial relationship, I totally approve".

*Tara Moore '13*

"I am actually attracted to people of other races. My family would probably be a bit weary of it. I'm upper middle-class White Irish Catholic. I think they would want to know that the person I am with is 'good enough' for me. I would not say that my family is racist, they are actually very open-minded, but I guarantee that if I brought home a Black man or a Jewish man they would be more hesitant as opposed to if I brought home a White, Catholic man."

*Sigourney Considine '12*

### We Want to Hear From You!

We invite your comments on what it means to be an activist at Providence College. Send your comments to the attention of the Black Studies Program (blackstudies72@yahoo.com).

## *A Student Activist* : Stephanie Nunes, '11

urban students. I read a great deal about the issue. I am applying to graduate school to pursue a master's degree related to the issues.

### Have you engaged in community involvement off-campus?

Yes, I have volunteered with Youth RAP since my sophomore year. Youth RAP is a program for youth that live in the Smith Hill CDC housing. It is an after school program during the academic year, and an 8-week summer school program. It is a very small group of students. It is a part of the Service Learning curriculum at Providence College.

### What has driven you to be so engaged on campus and in the community?

I would say that the reason why I decided to start the EXPLORE Program was based on my experiences. Being from a very urban, diverse school and then coming to a school like PC, I noticed that there is no program offered like this. RIC and URI offer programs to increase diversity on the campus and to help diverse students once they're there. I wondered why PC didn't have a similar program, especially since diversity has been a big issue being addressed a lot on campus. Once I was here and talked about the issue, staff and faculty were very supportive. It helped to have authority figures to tell me that my ideas made sense. The support that I have received with creating the program has helped me to continue speaking up and wanting to be involved.



### Do you think that PC has a prominent language around racial and social justice? Do you think improvements have been made in this area?

There are definitely attempts being made to improve diversity since there have been diversity forums held, as well as a recent hiring of a Chief Diversity Officer. The fact that Providence College is making it publicly known that it is trying to be diverse is great. However, people still feel uncomfortable talking about racial issues, and there is no

**"...Be involved. Academics are definitely important, but if you are not involved in some way, making friendships, or growing as a person, you're not going to get anything out of the campus."**

prominent language around race on this campus. But that is not only a PC problem; it happens outside of PC too. You want to speak openly about things but you feel you can't. Nevertheless, I have met friends at PC who were white, and very comfortable talking about issues of racial and social justice. The reason why I can is because I know they work in urban communities and are willing to have the conversations with me. With the friendships we made, we know we will not offend one another. However, when having general conversations on race with people you might not feel comfortable with, it may be difficult.

### If there were one thing you could advise students at PC that you have taken away from your experience here, what would that be?

I would tell them to be involved. Academics are definitely important, but if you are not involved in some way, making friendships, or growing as a person, you're not going to get anything out of the campus. Also, don't stay on campus so much. Sometimes you have to get off campus and realize that this is not reality. Be smart, get good grades, and have a real [life] experience!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### A Forum on Service and Vocation: Social Justice, Advocacy and Citizenship

A panel discussion of 3 to 4 speakers sharing their vocational stories for full-time service for 1-2 years to career.

Date: January 18, 2012

Location: Unity Center

Time: 5-6:30pm

### Movie Screening: "The Children's March"

Facilitated by staff and student leaders from RI Community and Justice, a social justice organization.

Date: January 19, 2012

Location: Unity Center

Time: 5-6pm or 6-7pm

### An Afternoon of Poetry and Prose to Honor the Memory and Spirit of MLK

Date: January 23, 2012

Location: Unity Center

Time: 4:30-5:30pm

### "What it takes to be a leader..."

Leadership Lessons from the life of MLK and what students can do now to be equipped to lead in their work, churches, community

Date: January 24, 2011

Location: Unity Center

Time: 4:30-5:30pm

Speakers:

Mayor Allan Fung of Cranston, President James Vincent of NAACP, Mayor Angel Tavares of Providence

### MLK as Pastor and Preacher: A Journey of Faith, Service and Justice

Date: January 25, 2012

Location: Center for Catholic and Dominican Studies

Time: 4-5pm

Speakers:

Fr. Ken Letoile, PC alum, Pastor Dove of Congdon Street Baptist Church, A speaker from Providence Dio-

cese, Black Ministries

### A Celebration of the Martin Luther King Scholarship Legacy: Past, Present and Future

Date: January 26, 2012

Location: 64' Hall Slavin Center

Time: 6-8pm

### February 2012 Black Studies Program Events:

Black History Month Exhibit,

Phillips Memorial Library

Black History Month Ribbons and Surveys,

Raymond Café

Black Studies Ambassador Coffee Chat:

Interracial Dating