



HERITAGE

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The Providence College Black Studies Program Newsletter

“We write because we believe the human spirit cannot be tamed and should not be trained.”
-Nikki Giovanni-

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Message from the Director

As we approach the fifteenth anniversary of the Black Studies (BLS) Program at PC, I am both honored and excited about assuming the role of Director. I intend to harness and build on this long and rich history of BLS. This is indeed a historical moment in which to assume this position. The election of President Barack Obama has (re) invigorated our discussions on race, class and gender in society. We are contemplating questions such as whether or not we need to recognize Black history and whether or not Blacks in the U.S. have now reached a state of equality with Euro-Americans. A minor in BLS enhances students' competencies to address these issues and more.

BLS Commitment to Scholarship

BLS is committed to promoting and encouraging scholarship that is designed to challenge multiple forms of oppression both within the U.S. and globally. BLS, using diverse methods and methodologies, makes active and ongoing efforts to support various intellectual pursuits that are designed to dismantle racism and other oppressive structures. The

program engages in various activities intended to encourage students to critically think of knowledge production and to arm them with the necessary tools to critique such production.

BLS Commitment to the Development of the Student

BLS is committed to the wholistic development of the PC student. Some of you, regardless of race or ethnicity, might wonder if BLS is for you. I say it is for all of us regardless of our social location. Our mission is to create a space where students can meet their intellectual and social needs. We recognize that learning is not limited to the classroom. As such, we will sponsor a number of community chats. This is a space where students and faculty can come together to discuss issues relevant to the community. Additionally, our commitment to an interdisciplinary education serves to enhance the student's overall education.

BLS Commitment to the Community

BLS recognizes its commitment not only the PC community, but to the wider community. As such, we will develop partnerships with local community organizations. Doing such affords students with the opportunity to engage in reciprocal learning by participating in various community events throughout the year.

Remember to visit our updated website for additional information about the minor and future programs. I am excited about BLS' future, more importantly, I am excited about the role you can play in its evolution.

Sincerely,
Julia S.
Jordan-
Zachery



Rhode Island's Black Heroes

By Lovelyn Bogle '10

Edward M. Bannister (1828-1901) an African-American landscape painter. Bannister was the first African-American artist to win national recognition for his work. Edward Bannister was born in Canada and initially settled in Boston, where he worked as a barber while struggling to establish himself as a portrait painter. When he moved to Providence, Rhode Island, in 1869 he joined an active artistic community; with two of his friends and colleagues, Charles Walter Stetson and George Whitaker, he established the Providence Art Club in 1878. He also became an instructor at the newly-founded Rhode Island School of Design. Bannister is best known today for his Barbizon-influenced landscapes, many of them in Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts. He won a first-prize medal at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876 with his landscape painting, *Under the Oaks*. He was one of the best-known painters in New England and the first African-American artist to win widespread acclaim.



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Black Studies At PC : The Origins

By: Lovelyn Bogle '10

Being conscious of cultural beliefs, students of color at Providence College during the 1990s, believed that “the systematic study of the history of the black community, its political, economic, cultural development, and its various manifestations in contemporary society, from the point of view of members of that community, is the mechanism through which” countervailing racist beliefs could be accomplished. They were aware of “scholars and citizens [who] continue to suggest that black culture is inferior, that black families are inadequate, that black genes are deficient, that black communities are pathological”. The most effective

way of countering ignorance is through knowledge.

These activists believed that “a true liberal arts education [should] involve exposure to a variety of intellectual viewpoints. The unique perspective of the Black Studies Program, that of those most oppressed by racism in American society, will be of great educational value to black and white students alike. *We need this view to appreciate the contribu-*

“The Black Studies minor was officially approved by Father Cunningham, the then President of the college, in 1995. “

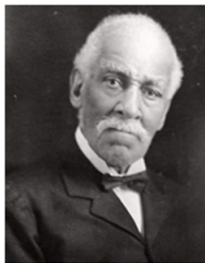
tions—cultural, historical, political, and social—of Africans and African-Americans which have been hidden by a nearly total emphasis on Europeans and their descendants (Italics added).”

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Rhode Island's Black Heroes

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George T. Downing (1819-1903) was a civil rights leader and successful businessman. He was born in 1819, the son of Thomas Downing. He married Serena Leanora DeGrasse on 24 November 1841 and they had 4 daughters and 3 sons. George T. Downing was an abolitionist, actively worked towards school desegregation in Newport schools, and was a spokesman who urged politicians to support the Civil Rights Bill. His activism began at an early age. During his teenage years, he worked as an agent for the Underground Railroad, and was not long thereafter a correspondent of Frederick Douglass. Downing later used his position in the Member's Dining Room as a vehicle for furthering his cause of equality for African Americans, particularly the issue of equal protection under the law for all Americans. Mr. Downing was particularly close with Congressman Charles Sumner (MA, 32 – 43 Congresses), and exerted some influence upon his stance on racial equality. Downing lived in Newport, RI, where he had a catering business, owned real estate and made contributions towards civic improvements.



Mrs. Josephine Silone Yates, youngest daughter of Alexander and Parthenia Reeve-Silone, was born in Mattiluck, Suffolk County, N. Y., where her parents, grandparents and great-grandparents were long and favorably known as individuals of sterling worth, morally, intellectually and physically speaking. On the maternal side Mrs. Yates is a niece of the Rev. J. B. Reeve, D. D., of Philadelphia.

In 1877 Miss Silone graduated as valedictorian from Rogers High School of Newport; and although she was the only Colored member of her class, and the first graduate of color, invariably she was treated with the



Student Spotlight: Danielle Allard

By: Naomi Brown-Jones '11

A junior from Williamstown, MA., Danielle Allard is currently a Political Science major and a Black Studies minor. Additionally, Danielle has a concentration in environmental studies. I interviewed Danielle about her decision to declare Black Studies as a minor. Here is what I learned:

NBJ: Did you always plan on being a Black Studies minor?

DA: No. Originally, I planned on pursuing a minor in Asian Studies.

NBJ: So what made you change your mind? What drew you to Black Studies?

DA: I declared Black Studies in my sophomore year (for a number of different reasons). I felt that there were more courses offered in the Black Studies Program. Being a minor in the Black Studies program, gives me the opportunity to study and learn about a multitude of different cultures and ethnicities. I do not feel that the courses are completely limited to information centered on issues in the Black community. Additionally, I was drawn to the program because of professors such as Dr. Affigne. I have taken four courses with him.

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“I do notice when I am the only minority in a class...”, said Danielle, during the interview.”

utmost courtesy by teachers, scholars, and members of the School Board.

Two years later she graduated from the Rhode Island State Normal School in Providence, and soon began her life work as a teacher. During the eight years spent in Lincoln Institute, Jefferson City, Mo., she had charge of the Department of Natural Science, and was the first woman to be elected to a professorship in that institution.

She was one of the organizers and the first President of the Kansas City Woman's League; and in the summer of 1901 was elected President of the National Association of Colored Women, which organization she had already served as Treasurer for a period of four years. ♦

A New Dream Of Peace

By Naomi Brown-Jones '11

Nonviolence, in the U.S., is often associated with the Modern Civil Rights Movement era; a time associated with intense social inequalities and civil unrest. Often, nonviolence because is contextualized in this historic period, seems a relic of the past. The Institute for the study and Practice of Nonviolence (ISPN) seeks to challenge this by working with a number of organizations, such as area colleges, to teach the various practices of nonviolence.

On February 7, 2009, on the fourth floor of Feinstein, a group of individuals gathered together to learn about the practices of nonviolence. The group, led by trainers from the ISPN, included PC students, a PC professor, several community organizers and streetworkers. For six hours, spanning both Saturday and Sunday, the group discussed the core principles and steps of nonviolence and committed themselves to spread the message of nonviolence.

ISPN was founded in 2000, by Father Ray Malm and Sister Ann Keefe of St. Michael's Church in South Providence, to help provide a solution to the rising problem of community violence in Rhode Island. ISPN, led by executive director Teny

O. Gross, comprises of four major departments: Nonviolence Training, the Nonviolence Streetworkers Program, Victims Support Services and Youth programs. Since its inception, the Institute has been credited with helping lower the violent crimes rate, by 50 percent, in the city of Providence.

The Nonviolence Training department is currently working on a college initiative to help create a network of non-violence trainers and others interested in the movement. The recent event on campus is but one-step in achieving this initiative. The goal of the network is to connect the five major colleges and universities in the Rhode Island, and to help further spread the message of peace and nonviolence. At the forefront of the college initiative is a recent PC graduate, Alyssa Metthe'08. Ms. Metthe went to work for the Institute as an AmeriCorps Vista shortly after graduation. She believes that creating this network of nonviolence among colleges in Rhode Island will help give college students more effective ways to solve issues on campus as well as provide a new source of nonviolence trainers. ♦

“Since its inception, the Institute has been credited with helping lower the violent crimes rate, by 50 percent, in the city of Providence.”

A Diasporic View: Afro Brazil

- Brazil has the largest population of African descendants (60 million) in the Western Hemisphere.
- Brazil's Black population is second in size only to that of Nigeria.
- Brazilian music has its roots in African culture. The words 'samba' and 'lambada' come from the Bantu word siemba, meaning navel.
- Bahia, the center of the Afro-Brazilian renaissance, has an African (particularly Yoruba) character and presence.
- While having a different racial history in comparison to the U.S. Afro Brazilians share “similar” racial experience.
- There are very few black people in the higher echelons of society, including government, Congress and top posts in the civil service and armed forces.

Brazil has the largest population of African descendants (60 million) in the Western Hemisphere.

• Afro Brazilians, in response to marginalization, started schools and other organizations designed to teach black children their own history. A history of slave rebellions, uprisings and quilombos (free territories) set up by runaways. This history is often excluded from official schoolbooks.



“God and Nature first made us what we are, and then out of our own created genius we make ourselves what we want to be. Follow always that great law. Let the sky and God be our limit and Eternity our measurement.”

-Marcus Gavery-

Student Spotlight *(Continued from Page 2)*



NBJ: Tell me more about your experiences as a BLS minor.

DA: Being a minor in the Black Studies program, I feel that I am

given the opportunity to study and learn about a multitude of different cultures and ethnicities. I do not feel that the courses are completely limited to information centered on issues in the Black community. Currently, in my Race and Politics course, taught by Dr. Affigne, I am learning about Native Americans. I enjoy having the chance to learn the political views of many different cultures.

NBJ: What do you think is the benefit(s) of being a BLS minor?

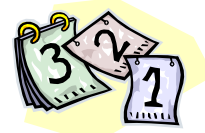
DA: I especially enjoy Black Studies courses because I learn relevant information and I also believe that these courses have taught me more than any of the other courses taken at Providence College.

Danielle is involved in many different organizations on campus that are helping to promote a multicultural atmosphere at Providence College. She is the secretary of the Asian-American Society, an Admissions Ambassador and a member of Students Organized Against Racism (SOAR). In her role as an Admissions Ambassador, Danielle does her part in trying to recruit students of color to Providence College. She believes that PC “definitely needs to improve” on the level of diversity on campus. Danielle talked about how the lack of diversity on campus affects everyone. “I do notice when I am the only minority in a class...” said Danielle, during the interview, she also went on to explain that the lack of diversity on campus is not preparing students well for the diversity that they will face once they leave PC and enter the real world.

Danielle is very committed to the issues of racial and environmental justice.

After graduation she plans on finding a job where she could combine her interests and help make minorities aware of their environmental rights. ♦

Upcoming Events



- **February 27, 2009 12:00pm**
Reading of Lincoln’s Inaugural Address, reading of President-Elect Barrack Obama’s Inaugural Address
Special guest: Chief Justice Frank J. Williams, Feinstein Institute,
Providence, College, Providence, RI
- **February 27, 2009 6:30-8:00pm**
Black History Month Celebration
with Benjamin Todd Jealous, President of NAACP
State House, Providence, RI (open to public)
- **February 28, 2009 9:00am-5:00pm**
Lincoln Symposium
John Hay Lownes Room
Brown University, Providence, RI (Open to public)
- **March 3, 2009 4:00-6:00pm**
Race in the 21st Century: Is it Still Relevant?
Guest Speakers Dr Lundy Braun, Brown University
and Dr. Eric Hirsch, Providence College
Moore III, Providence College
- **April 1, 2009 7-9:00pm**
Traces of the Trade
Screening and discussion with filmmaker Katrina Brown
Free and open to the public
The Gordon School
45 Maxfield Avenue
East Providence, RI
(401) 434-3833

Origins of Black Studies *(Continued from page 2)*

With the assistance of faculty, a number of students wrote a proposal for the implementation of the Black Studies Program at PC. The Black Studies minor was officially approved by Father Cunningham, the then President of the college, in 1995. The proposal entailed the goals of the program, and a detailed curriculum for the Black Studies Program. Students worked alongside faculty to launch the program.

Black Studies embodies the notion of diversity. It recognizes that acceptance of differences requires diversity in knowledge. As such, it seeks to create a space where students of various backgrounds can come together. The first set of

students to graduate as Black Studies minors were two students of color and two white students in 1997. With the hiring of a new Director, Dr. Julia Jordan-Zachery, the Black Studies Program is embarking on a new leg of its journey. A journey started back in the 1990s that seeks to diversify our intellectual pursuits. We invite you to come learn more about the Black Studies program and to help us move forward. ♦

Books of Interest

Jordan-Zachery, Julia. 2008. *Black Women, Cultural Images and Social Policy.* Routledge.

Marable, Manning and Vanessa Agard-Jones (eds.). 2008. *Transnational Blackness: Navigating the Global Color Line.* Palgrave Macmillan

Pattillo, Mary. 2007. *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City.* University of Chicago Press.

Robinson, Lena. 2008. *Psychology for Social Workers: Black perspectives on human development and behavior.* Routledge

