



HERITAGE

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The Providence College Black Studies Program Newsletter

Welcome

*"Imagine all the people
Living life in peace
You may say that I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday that you'll join us"*
~ John Lennon

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Black studies programs (BLS) emerged, in the 1960s, in response to oppression. Such programs were institutionalized not only to respond to oppressive structures, but to engage in actions to achieve a more just and equitable society for mankind. Through critical analyses and scientific research spanning many

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disciplines and subfields, BLS programs encourage students to not only challenge oppression, but to work towards a more just and equitable society. The ever increasing intolerance of those considered "Other" suggest that some 40 years later, the work of BLS programs is increasingly more relevant today.

Our society has moved away from lynching and the burning of the African American body to more "passive" forms of

intolerance. Intolerance manifest in multiple forms such as religious and sexual victimization, increasing poverty among people of color, double digit unemployment in some Black communities, the harassment of Latinos/as, and the elimination of racial and ethnic centers on campuses throughout the U.S. We are witnessing and experiencing many of the disasters resulting from intolerance. BLS programs offer us the intellectual and technical tools that prove useful for not only understanding the various manifestations of intolerance, but also for challenging this growing intolerance that seems to be permeating various aspects of our society.

This year, we invite you to join us as we explore

disasters—natural, man-made and their intersections. We will explore disasters by focusing on Hurricane Katrina and the earthquake that devastated Haiti. Additionally, we will have discussions on disasters revolving around issues of diversity, poverty, education, and health care. Like our brothers and sisters of the 1960s, PC's BLS program remains committed to social justice. We welcome you in joining us as we continue the quest for social justice for all mankind.

Sincerely,

Julia S. Jordan-Zachery
Director of Black Studies

Hard Talk: Where's Balfour? by: Dr. Eric Hirsch

Providence College has a diversity problem. Until the last few years, when we have made some progress, the percentage of students of color hovered at around 6% to 8%. We are now close to 10%. The percentage of faculty of color is very low, around 8% as of 2009. We are 90% non-Latino/a white in a country where one third of the population in the U.S. and nearly two thirds of the population in the city of Providence is African American, Latino/Latina, Asian American, or Native American.

This is a problem for two reasons. 1) Due to various forms of institutional discrimination, people of color have much lower rates of educational attainment compared to non-Latino/a whites. For example, as of 2008, the American Community Survey reports that 30% of non-Latino/a whites age 25 and over had completed a Bachelors degree as compared to 18% of African-Americans, and 13% of Native Americans and Latino/as in the same age group.

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Hard Talk: Where's Balfour? (continued)

If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem. Providence College ought to provide an opportunity for a degree to ethnic groups facing discrimination. 2) Having fellow students with similar ethnic background as you impoverishes your education. Knowing about other cultures and knowing about the impact of racism are necessary to a decent college education. Students learn from each other and not only from the faculty. These skills/experiences are also considered essential for success in a variety of occupations, including business-related fields.

And the problem is not only about the numbers. The Providence College administration's own study, done in 2006 by Brian Bartolini concluded the following:

A. While in attendance at PC, students report that they feel individual differences are not consistently respected by their peers or by faculty/staff. They also sense a lack of commitment to under-represented populations on the part of the institution.

B. Compared to their peers at other colleges/universities, PC students, overall, are far less satisfied with the degree to which their fellow residents respect differences (in terms of culture, gender, or sexual orientation).

C. Students report that their PC experience has contributed less to their understanding of others and to their ability to work with others, especially those of diverse backgrounds, than their peers report at other colleges/universities.

D. Reflecting on their experience, PC alumni/ac report that the College did not do enough to prepare them for a world that is far more diverse than Providence College. Finally, a recent report done by the Princeton Review lists Providence College as having the "most homogeneous student population" in the entire country.

Given this problem on our campus, it is crucial that there be a support system in place for students of color and that there also be a significant effort to educate majority students about diverse cultures and about the reality of racism in our society. These tasks had been assigned to the Balfour Center for Multicultural Affairs for the last 17 years as clearly stated by Hugh Lena, the Vice-President for Academic Affairs:

Since its inception in 1993, Providence College's Balfour Center for Multicultural Affairs has provided a unique and supportive environment for students of color. The Center helped PC strengthen its diversity initiatives and promoted cross-cultural outreach and understanding on campus. As it fulfilled its two core functions – mentoring and advising recipients of multicultural school scholarships and coordinating multicultural events and activities – scholarship recipients realized expanded opportunities and the Providence College experience was enriched for all students.

Given these facts, it is incomprehensible that the administration could do what they did last spring two days after Commencement, eliminate the position of Dean of the Balfour Center for Multicultural Affairs and dismantle the Center. The timing of this decision could not have been an accident. The idea was to avoid student/faculty mobilization against the decision. And the decision was made with zero input from students and zero input from faculty. In fact, the administration never consulted with nor notified the members of the presidentially-appointed Advisory Committee to the Balfour Center.

The scholarship program remains with an office under the College Dean's supervision. The activities portion of the Balfour Center barely exists. These events are being coordinated by someone who already has the full-time job of Suites Director. Much of the actual work is now being done, unpaid, by two PC seniors. What had been a large suite of offices and meeting rooms in Harkins Hall is now a one room office with three chairs, a

former storage closet. This action is a slap in the face for every student of color and everyone else who cares about the diversity issue on our campus.

Here's how the college can remedy this situation:

1. Appoint a chief diversity officer at the Cabinet level. Appointing someone at a lower level would mean that s/he could easily be ignored when the crucial decisions are made.
2. Conduct a full-scale diversity climate survey to better understand how that climate affects students, faculty, and staff on campus.
3. Formulate a clear plan to diversity the student body, faculty, administration, and curriculum with performance goals. The diversity officer would then be responsible to insure that the college would meet those goals.
4. Continue to have a multicultural center that sponsors a multicultural activities program. Burying this function under an existing administrative unit may mean that such activities are devalued, submerged in the existing dominant culture.
5. Continue to have a multicultural center with the space and resources that provide an effective support system for students of color.



IS DIVERSITY BENEFICIAL TO ME?

"positive impacts on student retention, overall college satisfaction, college GPA, intellectual self-confidence, and social self-confidence." (Austin 1993)

"survey data collected five years after college graduation, also underscores the longer-term educational benefits of cross-racial interaction for white students" (Villalpando 1996).

What do I have to say about Diversity? by: Dr. Charlotte O' Kelly

1. Do you think that the Balfour Center served its function in the Providence College community?

I was shocked to hear that the Balfour Center was closed. That it was closed at the beginning of the summer break without consulting the advisory committee or the Diversity Initiative committee members indicates that the administration wanted to avoid public debate on the issues. I think we need the Balfour Center more than ever. Despite some increased efforts, the college has not solved its diversity related problems. Ignoring them or taking a "color blind" approach won't make the problems disappear. To reverse the impacts of centuries of racism in our country and decades of homogeneity at our college, we have to be focused on the issues. We need eager, enthusiastic, well-trained professional staff in the Balfour Center tackling these problems on a day to day basis and looking to the long term. Handing the responsibilities of the Balfour Center off to administrators with lots of other duties is not a recipe for success. If the administration did this to save money, it is a false economy. Our reputation as one of the whitest colleges in the country does not serve us well. We also have an ethical responsibility to the Balfour students we have recruited. The problems minority students face in almost all-white classrooms, dorms, campus activities, etc. are well known. We need more education on practicing diversity effectively

Business as usual is not enough!

for our entire community. I don't think we'll do this without the Balfour Center.
2. What would you say are the challenges of diversity in America?

Affirmative Action has been presented as reverse discrimination against white people by conservative politicians and pundits as a way to undermine the Civil Rights movement. However, the people who have benefitted the most from affirmative action have been white women who often do not see how it has opened doors for them. Many whites do not see their own advantages. But they can be quick to see any possible reduction in those advantages. Such selfishness undermines the wider good.

3. What are the classes do you teach? How does it impact your students?

When I teach my African American Women class, we start with a discussion of Ida B. Wells. She was one of the first investigative journalists and among other stories, she researched lynching and found that the accusations of rape of white women were almost always false justifications for these terrorist acts. Students respond to this and much of the course content with "Wow, I haven't heard that before." There's a big knowledge gap about race in this country. I don't think their teachers have intentionally left this material out. The teachers

themselves have often never studied it. The textbooks they have are often white-washed because textbook selections committees in states like Texas and Virginia refuse to approve books that have good coverage of racial inequality issues. Recently Texas has complained about a "pro Islam bias" in our books and demanded that coverage of Islam be limited, as if our students learn much about it now! As for African American history students tend to learn little more than that slavery existed, but Lincoln freed the slaves, Rosa Parks sat down on a bus, Martin Luther King, Jr. had a dream and now everything is fine. I guess now they would add Barack Obama was elected President and we have a post-racial society. We need a Black Studies Program at PC to counter this knowledge gap. Dr. Jordan-Zachery has worked wonders with the program with the public events, the guest speakers and the energy she has put into the program. I am really pleased to be a part of the program.

What is Black Studies ?



BLACK STUDIES COURSE OFFERINGS: SPRING 2011

BLS 101	Intro to Black Studies	Jordan-Zachery	BLS 416	Race and Politics in Americas	Affigne
BLS 225	The African World View	Kyei-Poakwa	BLS 480	Race, Gender & Pub. Policy	Jordan-Zachery
BLS 230	Faith/Sprit Blk Fam and Comm	Staff	BLS 480	Sem: Toni Morrison	Valkeakari
BLS 323	Contemporary Social Problems	Pankin	BLS 490	Independent Readings	Jordan-Zachery
BLS 325	African American Women	O'Kelly	BLS 491	Directed Research Project	Jordan-Zachery



What is Black Studies? by: Dara Greenidge

There has been some debate as to whether Black Studies is necessary for college students. In our society, specifically our educational structures, students are generally unable to find true and eccentric stories about regions other than the West. It has become somewhat normalized in our discussions to associate blacks only with slavery and the Civil Rights Movement. But in what other aspects of history have blacks played a prominent role? Can we name ten people of African descent who have made exceptional contributions to our society—other than musicians or athletes? A majority of college students would fail to answer these questions. And this is exactly why there is a strong necessity for a Black Studies Program in higher education.

Although prominent figures such as W.E.B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, George Washington Williams, and other scholars of the nineteenth century practiced studies of racial inequality and black issues, Black Studies was not created until the late 1960s. During this time, blacks throughout the country began to fight against the oppressive forms of institutional discrimination that infiltrated our nation. Rather than fear whiteness, they emphasized “Black Power” and a strong sense of pride for their heritage and roots. Along with this newfound desire to embrace what it meant to be black came the greater awareness of black history and culture. Such recognition led to the gradual creation of Black Studies as a scholarly field.

“Education is that whole system of human training within and without the school house walls, which molds and develops men.”

~W.E.B. DuBois

Until white privilege no longer affect our society—and even afterwards—Black Studies is fundamental. At PC, there is a distinct aversion towards difference due to the strong lack of diversity. It is a valid observation that the Black Studies Program had taken progressive initiatives to encourage the black story to be heard, but in many ways this is not enough. One of the largest reasons for this dominant and normative presence of whiteness is due to the selective nature of academic curriculums. It challenges that which appears as the “norm”. Some might believe that Black Studies is “touchy-feely” or therapeutic exercise. Black Studies, like

other mainstream disciplines, possesses a varied set of epistemologies, ideologies and methods designed to critically analyze social, cultural and political phenomena. Other disciplines do not go out of style when social phenomena “disappear.” Therefore, Black Studies must maintain a ceaseless presence in order to raise awareness and to deconstruct false notions of a racially integrated society.



UPCOMING EVENTS

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

Movie Screening: When the Levees Broke

Tuesday, October 19 at 6 PM

Moore II

A collection will be held for the victims of Hurricane Katrina

Lecture: A Look at New Orleans by Avis Jones-DeWeever

Tuesday, October 26 at 5:30 PM

Feinstein 400

A collection will be held for the victims of the earthquake in Haiti

Lecture by Dr. Patrick Breen (PC) Nat Turner and the End of Virginia's Most Deadly Slave Rebellion."

Friday, October 22 at 3 PM

Moore III

RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

Jump Rhythm Jazz Project

Friday, October 22 at 7:30 PM

Sapinsley Hall in the Nazarian Center

General Admission: \$15

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

"A Civil Society: Can we Protect the Rights and Liberties of all Communities".

October 19 at 7 PM

"Why Immigration Reform Is So Difficult: Latinos as Threat in the Media"

October 26 at 7 PM

Why America Can't Think Straight About Race (Even with a Black President)

November 2 at 7 PM

"How To Change the World With Your Bare Hands"

November 9 at 7 PM

How Black Women's Stories Complicate Race and Gender Politics

November 30 at 7 PM

BROWN UNIVERSITY

Immigration: The Long History of Exchange Between the Southwest and Mesoamerica.

Wednesday, October 20 at 5:30 PM

"Muslims in the West After 9/11: Religion, Law and Politics,"

Wednesday, November 10 from 5 to 7 PM