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Equity and Inclusion Matters - Issue 6

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Otterbein's Office of Social Justice & Activism: Making the Invisible Visible



diversity CALENDAR

April 11

An Evening with Andrea Gibson and Megan Falley spoken word event (7 p.m., Cowan)

April 15

Lavender Graduation (4:30-5:30 p.m., Philomathean Room)

April 17

Otterbein Common Hour- Delving Into Dialogue: Identity and Representation (4-5:30 p.m., Roush 114)

April 26

Noble Transitions (7-8 p.m., Riley Auditorium)

MLK in 1963: 'Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children'

By Da'Viona Fowler '22

Each year Otterbein University honors the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in a public ceremony in Cowan Hall.

This year's convocation theme was Redefining Radical, where students were asked to reflect on what radical means to each individual. Reverend Dr. Gayle Fisher-Stewart, former police officer for 20 years, and founder of the Center for the Study of Faith in Justice, spoke about what makes one radical and discussed how Dr. King's radicalism was a necessity in our country's history.

"This country as we know was born in radical," Fisher-Stewart said. "To be radical, as we've heard, is anyone who challenges the status quo, regardless of whether or not that status quo is lawful or unlawful, regardless of whether or not it is right or wrong."

Director James Prysock, in the Office of Social Justice & Activism, led this year's convocation. "The speaker this year was amazing," Prysock said. "She really touched the word radical and defined it."



Reverend Dr. Gayle Fisher-Stewart addresses the MLK Convocation.

Winners of the Martin Luther King Jr. Peace and Justice Awards included: faculty/staff winner, Joey Oteng, Center for Student Involvement, student winner, Kiona Hernandez, organization winner, GARA (Girls Are Really Awesome). A special award was honored LaJoyce Daniel-Cain, who for 31 years was the director of the Otterbein Gospel Choir.

After the convocation students assisted in the Pack the Mac service project in the Fisher Gallery, that was hosted by the Center for Community Engagement. Students pack food and other items like toys, which were from the Westerville Area Resource Administration (WARM).

Bob Gatti recognized for advocacy at 2019 Central Ohio Social Justice Awards

Dean of Students and Vice President for Student Affairs Bob Gatti has been a supporter of all students over his 41 years at Otterbein. His advocacy and dedication to students and social justice was recently recognized outside of campus as well.



Gatti earns 2019 Central Ohio Social Justice award.

Dean Gatti was awarded the Education Advocacy Award – Individual in Higher Education at the 2019 Central Ohio Social Justice Awards on March 5.

“This is not solely an individual award, but is the reflection of the hard work of many faculty, staff, students and alumni at Otterbein,” Gatti said.

Gatti was one of seven individual award winners that coincided with six additional organizational awards. According to the Social Justice Award’s website, the mission of the awards is to empower and enlighten all minds to the success and achievements of central Ohio’s social justice leadership. The public and members of central Ohio social justice organizations can then nominate deserving professionals and leaders for the different award categories.

Gatti has been an educator for more than 40 years, helping to turn students into young adults capable of succeeding in an increasingly diverse world. He has spent his entire career at one institution, Otterbein University – a college of opportunity – serving in the Division of Student Affairs. He began his career as a residence hall director in 1978

and moved through a succession of student life positions until he was named vice president and dean for student affairs in 1992.

He has been a key player on campus in making sure that Otterbein’s historic commitment to diversity and inclusion is reflected in our current community. Currently chair of the Otterbein University Diversity and Inclusion committee, he has overseen many of the efforts to ensure that as Otterbein grows more diverse, it becomes more inclusive.

His work has helped support an inclusive environment as Otterbein has grown increasingly diverse in a very short time, moving from 11 percent students of color to 19 percent in just six years.

Gatti is always the first to offer his congratulations on all the accomplishments and success Otterbein has achieved, but he knows that awards do not mean it’s time to rest on our laurels.

“Although Otterbein should be proud of what we have accomplished, we still have plenty of work to do,” he said.

from the DIRECTOR

When we think of Otterbein University, we must think of including everyone in our pursuit



James Prysock, Director

of excellence. Inclusive excellence involves implementing steps to intentionally assist an institution support a comprehensive and harmonized set of systemic actions that focus specifically and purposefully on fostering greater equity, inclusion and accountability at every level of the institution.

Our goal is to further integrate diversity efforts into the core aspects of our institutions, such as academics, leadership, quality improvement initiatives, decision-making, daily operations and organizational cultures. Some of those efforts are captured in this newsletter and the Equity and Inclusion page on our website.

Inclusive excellence is also essential for engaging, supporting and celebrating our faculty, staff, students and alumni for sustaining a welcoming campus community that values and respects the identities, insights and contributions of everyone.

Traditionally, diversity has been measured by demographics or statistics. We must continue to move beyond solely numbers toward an inclusive community that embeds equity throughout our institution’s committee service, policies, curriculum, pedagogy, recruitment, hiring, retention and evaluation. We are certainly on the right path and must continue moving forward every day.

Accomplishing inclusive excellence is a long-term commitment and must have a full approach that embeds holistic appreciation and best practices into the very fabric of Otterbein’s organizational culture.

Otterbein seeks inclusive community

A majority of delegates supported the prohibition against LGBTQ+ persons' full participation in the United Methodist Church's life. Here is Otterbein's stance:

Our university has always been a leader in ensuring all have full access to a world-class education. That is why women were admitted as students on equal footing as their male counterparts and why women served as faculty

impactful, we must also seek to form a model and inclusive community on our campus and beyond. We do not pretend to have achieved perfection, but we continue to strive towards our goals in this regard. We are proud to have a campus community that welcomes all students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends as they are, and ensures that all are valued and welcomed.

from the **DIRECTOR** cont.

As you filter through the material, please think about what your role is within the work that is being done and the work that has yet to be done. We all have spheres of influence in our daily lives. How can you use your influence to create a more inclusive culture within your classrooms, families, friend groups, etc.?

James Rypock

Otterbein's historic values of inclusion were reaffirmed by the Board of Trustees on Feb. 12, and that is only the beginning of the conversation our community



Attendees vote their conscience at the 2019 UMC General Conference.

members right from the start. It is why we admitted students of color before the Emancipation Proclamation. It's why we admitted students from Japanese internment camps. Even today, we are building on this legacy by attracting the most diverse class in our history and taking the lead in the college affordability crisis through commitments like the Opportunity Scholarship and Tuition Transparency.

For our leadership to be

For this reason, we stand with those in the United Methodist Church community who feel disappointed and frustrated about the choice to keep doors closed for LGBTQ+ individuals who want to worship, live and lead while being authentic and honest about who they are.

Like many in the UMC, Otterbein's leadership is reflecting on what the recent 2019 General Conference vote means for our community and our future.

will have in the coming months. We respect, value and recognize the emotional, spiritual and intellectual volatility of this reality, but we pledge to stay true to our values and make intentional decisions with all of our community members in mind.

Otterbein continues to stand as a leader in the country for inclusivity. This will not change and all should know they are welcome here.

Former Green Party vice presidential candidate visits campus

Winona LaDuke, economist, writer and environmental activist, met with students and faculty members in February on campus while serving as Otterbein's 2019 Vernon L. Pack Distinguished Scholar-In-Residence. The Harvard graduate from the White Earth Indian Reservations in Minnesota discussed a variety of issues, including sustainable development and renewable energy.

LaDuke had lunch with multiple students and talked with them about everything from sustainability to her family's therapeutic horses.

"We talked about so much," sophomore Symia Grayson said. "Winona has adopted kids and is an amazing person."

LaDuke's activism against the Dakota Access Pipeline was a frequent topic of conversation. The North Dakota pipeline runs through Native American territory.

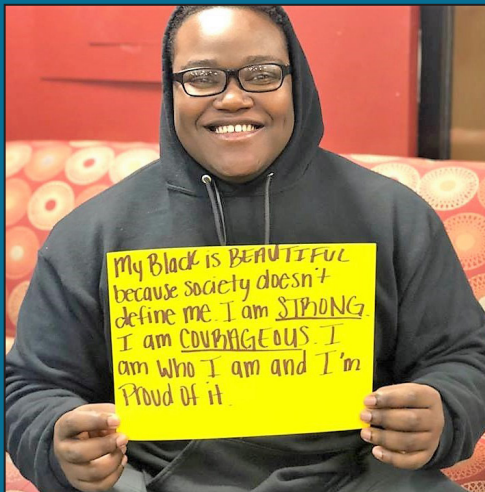
The Vernon L. Pack Distinguished Lecture and Scholar-in-Residence program was established in 2002 through a generous gift from alumnus Vernon L. Pack, a 1950 graduate of the University. A distinguished lecturer visits campus to address



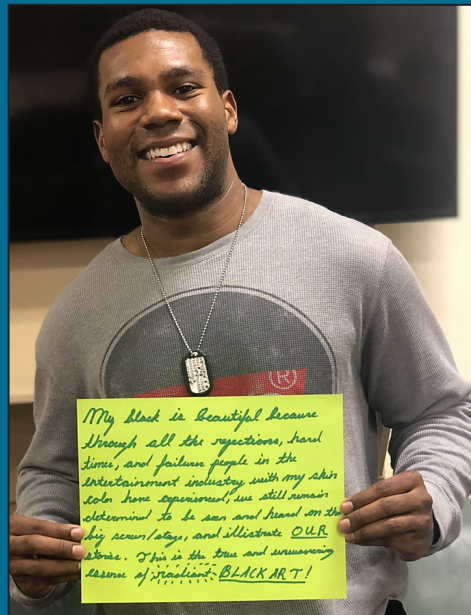
Pack Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence Winona LaDuke.

important current issues that will allow the Otterbein community to reflect on ethical, spiritual and social issues. In alternate years, an esteemed scholar is invited to campus to reside for up to one academic year in order to provide an educational enrichment experience for Otterbein students.

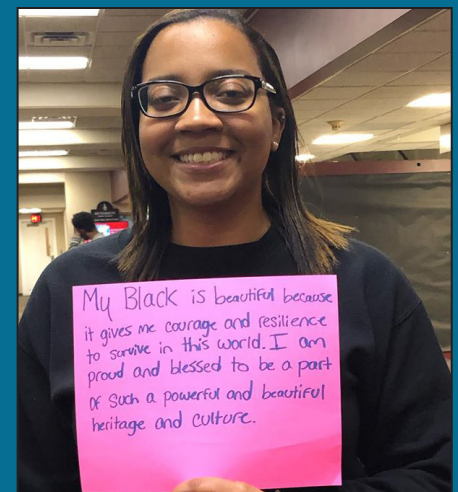
The Office of Social Justice and Activism asked students why their black is beautiful and meaningful to them.



Vashawn Walker '20



Desmond Fernandez '21



Gabrielle Marshall '20