

5-12-2022

Voices Raised, Spring 2022

University of Dayton. Women's Center

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Voices Raised

COVID'S IMPACT ON WOMEN A TEST OF RESILIENCE



by Yolanda N. Stephens, Graduate Assistant & Newsletter Editor, UD Women's Center

In 2020 COVID-19 set foot on the scene, bearing a deep, unforeseen impact on everyone. What began as what we believed to be a temporary circumstance, is still present with us today. We could not have anticipated the impact that it has made, nor would we have believed that, two years later, we would still be wearing masks and social distancing. But, it is our current reality, one that we continue to juggle and navigate.

COVID-19 has impacted everyone, and there has been a substantial impact on women. According to a United Nations policy brief, *The Impact of COVID-19 on Women*, "the impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbated for women and girls simply by virtue of their sex."



Pre-pandemic, the gender wage gap left women making around 82 cents to every dollar that a man made, and the earnings are even lower for women of color. This economic impact has been further compounded as women are still earning less and many have lost jobs or had to leave the workforce to assume the role of unpaid caregiver for their families during the pandemic. This, in turn, produces economic and social stress, without the opportunity to engage in stress-relieving interactions with others, due to social distancing. The rise in stress has impacted the mental and physical health of women. The pandemic has led to an increase in gender-based violence as women are forced to lock down with their abusers. These are all issues that existed before, but have been magnified by the pandemic. Support is needed for every woman, everywhere. From equity in pay, mental health resources, flexible work arrangements, and caregiving resources, support and advocacy can produce equitable outcomes. Despite the challenges, women remain resilient and continue to push forward in a time of uncertainty and chaos. This issue is dedicated to all women, everywhere. May we continue to uplift and empower one another. May the men around us support gender equity and advocate for change that will further the cause of women everywhere.

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DIRECTOR'S CORNER: THE CAREGIVING JUGGLE

DR. LISA BORELLO, DIRECTOR, UD WOMEN'S CENTER



As a working mom, I can share that the past two years have been among the most difficult of my personal and professional life. Managing caretaking for young children is challenging under the best of conditions - but doing so during the pandemic has been untenable at times. I can clearly remember the announcement from Bombeck in March 2020 that the Center was closing and families needed to pick up their children right away and the massive relief I felt when it reopened its doors in August that same year. But that relief was short-lived as I slogged through a year of pandemic-forced half-day kindergarten (and intermittent zoom school) for my oldest son, and managed near-daily anxiety of another preschool closure for my youngest. The current school year has likewise seen its peaks (getting my children vaccinated) and lows (months where I didn't have a full work week in the office due to classroom exposures and illnesses). Still, despite the roller coaster, I recognize I was fortunate to have an understanding supervisor and flexibility to continue doing my job, a luxury not afforded to many.

As a sociologist and as a gender equity practitioner, I also recognize my own experiences are not unique - instead, they are a symptom of larger social problems.

Women have long managed the lion's share of domestic tasks in the home - from taking care of children and other adults in the household, to cooking, cleaning, and managing family appointments and activities. In fact, most families rely on women's unpaid domestic and emotional labor in order to function. But when

daycares, schools, elder care facilities and workplaces shut down due to COVID, working women were tasked with managing unpaid caretaking responsibilities and domestic duties in addition to work responsibilities, resulting in a '[double double shift](#)'. The pandemic shattered the "social safety net" that schools and daycares have provided working parents, revealing deep structural issues that have had a significant and disproportionate impact on women. While the social and economic impacts of the pandemic will be felt for years to come, national data shows women are fleeing the workplace at higher rates than men, erasing some of the gains women have made in the workplace. A 2021 McKinsey [study](#) showed one in four women were considering leaving the workforce or downshifting their careers as a result of the pandemic; working women with children under the age of 10 were the group most likely to leave. The Women's Center's own study of caregivers at the University of Dayton revealed deep concerns about the impact of the pandemic on career advancement. Our [findings](#) showed high levels of stress among caretakers, deep concerns about not adequately supporting their children's schooling, and lack of work-life balance - fatigue, burnout, and crippling mental health challenges are just some of the challenges our colleagues are facing. Ongoing support for caretakers, coupled with policies that support workplace flexibility, will be critical to helping our community not only manage the short and long-term impacts of the pandemic, but also create an environment where caretakers of all sorts can be successful.

1 in 4 women considered leaving the workforce or downshifting their careers due to the pandemic.

-2021 McKinsey study

Get more information on our Caregiving Groups on pg. 7



Moving from Concept to Commitment to Practice

*By Angeline Washington,
Associate Director of Workforce
Diversification*

In the summer of 2017, President Spina convened the Hiring and Advancement for Diversity, Inclusion, and Mission Working Group, in effort to support the recruitment, hiring, retention and advancement of women and persons from domestic underrepresented racial and ethnic populations. This work and document birthed the concept of setting in place dedicated resources to achieve greater diversity among faculty, staff and administrators. Then, in the summer of 2020, the university announced its action plan to becoming an anti-racist university, in part committing to the goal of implementing aggressive strategies to increasing the diversity

and equity among faculty, staff, and administrators, and a dedicated resource to achieve this.

These commitments were realized when I was hired as the Associate Director of Workforce Diversification last May. While I've been at UD less than a year, I'm confident that the engagement that I've had with faculty and staff working to fill open positions across the institution has had a positive impact on our goal of becoming more diverse, but there certainly is a lot more work to be accomplished.

In addition to working with hiring managers and search committees, I've also been working to reestablish, strengthen, and create new relationships with local groups and organizations within the region, to build more diverse talent pools. This is just one of many initiatives that myself and others are engaged in and will continue to build upon.

Women's Leadership Immersion: A New Generation of Leaders

By Chelsea Rooney, Assistant Director, Student Leadership Programs, Center for Student Involvement

In 2016, a group of women faculty and staff at the University of Dayton came together to discuss a program for female-identifying students who were seeking skills to accompany the knowledge they were gaining in the classroom. A council of more than 30 women agreed that an opportunity to strengthen the practical skills of current junior and senior women was needed. After months of planning and with the leadership of the previous Director of Student Leadership Programs, Dr. Daria Yvonne Graham, and Graduate Assistant Cerelia Bizzell, the first Women's Leadership Immersion (WLI) occurred in January 2018 focusing on Strategy, Vocation, and Leadership.

Every year since its founding, the WLI Planning Committee picks up the charge to provide a space for female identifying students to learn and grow from each other. Planning the 2022 immersion, we knew it would come with challenges and growing pains as we all try to adjust to our new normal. With a new program format, the 2022 cohort is truly bringing in a new era for WLI.

In January, WLI welcomed 42 participants and 5 small group facilitators into this year's cohort. Participating in a two day long January retreat, these participants heard presentations and panels on a variety of topics from a powerhouse group of facilitators including Nan Whaley, former Mayor of the City of Dayton, Karen Spina, First Lady of UD, and Sandy Gudorf, President, Downtown Dayton Partnerships. We are ecstatic that for the first time, the cohort came back together in March to take part in weekly programming on topics such as financial wellness, salary negotiation, authenticity, and advocacy. We are so proud of this year's cohort and how they truly embody the theme of this year's program: Develop. Dare. Disrupt.



STAFF SPOTLIGHT: LEAH WARD

SPOTLIGHT: LEAH WARD

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND OUTREACH, UD WOMEN'S CENTER



I had an opportunity to sit down with Leah Ward, the new Associate Director for Education and Outreach.

Leah assumed this newly created role in the Women's Center in July 2021. Let's learn a little more about Leah Ward.

Leah, tell us a little bit about yourself.

I am a Dayton native, born and raised in the city of Dayton. I went to Ohio University for both undergrad and graduate school. My mother's grandparents went to school there and got married there in the 1930's so it was kind of nice to be in a space where I have family ties. I'm an only child. I'm a doctoral student and a staff member here at UD. Right now, I am preparing for my comprehensive exams, which will be in June.

What did you do after you graduated from Ohio University?

I moved to Virginia and worked at Virginia Tech as a Residential Learning Coordinator in Housing and Residence Life. I had an all-girls hall and a hall with graduate students and international students. I then accepted an internal role as the Student Life Coordinator in Switzerland. The role was a catch-all for student development, so I handled conduct cases, Title XI concerns, chaperoned students, and more. I did that in Switzerland for three semesters before I returned home, which brought me back to Dayton. I worked at DECA as a Title I Aid before coming to UD to work in Housing and Residence Life in the student neighborhood, where I spent four years as a Community Coordinator before coming to the Women's Center.

What was most exciting about Switzerland?

I had never been abroad before, so all of it was exciting because it was all so new to me. It felt very odd to be so far from what I knew, but still be in the same world...like an out of body experience. The best part was that I went to 11 countries in a year and a half. I took one solo trip, which was eye

opening to travel alone. It was a good growth experience.

Looking back over your 4 years as a Community Coordinator at UD, is there one key thought or learning that you took away from the experience?

I learned to not let things go. There were situations that I brushed off, for various reasons, thinking that they weren't a big deal. I would minimize situations that, looking back, I would have liked to have been more firm with my confidence in myself to say "this experience was not great, or this situation was not healthy, or I don't feel safe in this environment." It taught me a lot about that, and I don't think I thought about that until you just asked me that question. It taught me a lot about my own standards and my own comfort with having conversations that don't always feel easy to have.

What interested you in the Women's Center?

Initially, I didn't have any interest in the role, I felt like all I could do was housing, crisis triage, and put out fires, etc. Initially I felt intimidated by it, like I couldn't do the work, because it wasn't crisis work and that's what I was good at. A close friend convinced me to apply. During my interview I realized "I can do this." I felt confident in my interview and then the interest came. If it wasn't for my friend, I wouldn't be in the role.

How has the shift been moving from the crisis, on-call duty, to the Women's Center?

Last semester it was tough. I was used to the need for things to happen in a quick manner, because everything in housing felt like it was an emergency, even if it wasn't. [In housing] it felt like everything was life or death...every moment. In housing, your life is no longer yours, in my opinion. When you live in [residential housing], it is not really your life anymore. Early on, it was uncomfortable it probably will be until I get my footing. Things will be timely, but nothing will be an emergency, like a life or death. That was not what I was used to.

What do you want to accomplish in your role in the Women's Center?

In my four years before serving the Women's Center, I had only been on the second floor [Alumni Hall, Women's Center location] one time when I had a meeting. I told Lisa [Women's Center Director] this Center is for white women who have families, children, husbands, partners, spouses, whatever, it is not a space for people that are like me. In my four years I didn't go to Women's Center programs, I don't think I engaged in the Center at all. What I really hope to accomplish is that the physical space is more utilized by our students. I think we're seeing that a little bit now. I want to put more life into the second floor of Alumni Hall, more of the student laughter and conversation and using our space, even after hours. I would love to see UD Men for Gender Equity really make an impact on the student experience. I really want to create an apprentice program for undergraduate students that are men to do some of the heavy lifting at that level, because I know that there are students in our spaces on campus that can move the needle in a different way than with faculty and staff. I would really love to see more engagement with our student organizations in our space. We've taken on two other student organizations this year, Womanists Empower and Las Mujeristas as I serve on both of their advisory teams. I would really love to see those two organizations and SAGE become organizations that are doing some of that work in their student arena. I want the space to feel like it's a space for women that look like me and not, what I think is not uncommon for women centers, which is a very heavy feminist lens which is white women. Every new student I meet, every person that knows I work here, I'm like "come over, this is also your space." I want this space to be a space where people feel like they can be present here. I want them to have a connection to us. I want our physical space to have a heavy student present space.

What have you found to be most exciting in these 9 months into your new role?

The most exciting thing is that I get to try some things out. I get to create new things and new programs.

EVERY NEW STUDENT I MEET, I'M LIKE "COME OVER, THIS IS ALSO YOUR SPACE." I WANT THIS SPACE TO BE A SPACE WHERE PEOPLE FEEL LIKE THEY CAN BE PRESENT. I WANT THEM TO HAVE A CONNECTION TO US.
-LEAH WARD

That really excites me because there's that permission, that push even, to do it different. I have yet to hear a moment of "you shouldn't have done that," It's always like "try it out, if it doesn't work, well revamp it," but that's really exciting because traditionally, in my experience in housing, the end goal is our students well-being, so you can be kind of creative, but really it's like "get the student to graduation" and then the next students come in. I do enjoy the creativity that I get to utilize in this job.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

In 10 years, I want to have joy in my life. I don't really know what my path will look like career-wise and in my personal life, but I think that the work that I'm doing in the Women's Center has helped me see myself as a black woman very differently. Black women having joy is a sign of resistance. I think, in the world that we live in, in this white supremacist system, there's this underpinning that black people have to be under some thumb of something, some system, some presence, and I really, in 10 years, want to have joy every day. I want to feel joy in my spirit because I think that will be a sign that I'm doing whatever I'm supposed to be doing. To have that, joy, is something that is extremely powerful, rather than getting myself caught up on what kind of career I should have in 10 years. I'm going to have whatever career I have. I want to be in a light. I want to exude that energy that I think my ancestors worked hard to try to find and maybe had, maybe didn't, but that's what I want. That's where I see myself in 10 years.

FOCUS ONEQUITY, EDUCATION & RESEARCH

UD Men for Gender Equity

By Aqsa Sultana, Graduate Assistant, UD Men for Gender Equity

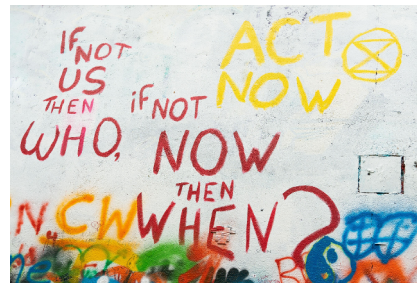
The objective of UD Men for Gender Equity is to increase men's knowledge, skills, and strategies related to gender equity to work toward positive individual and departmental change and enhance institutional inclusivity. We seek to establish a network of men-identified allies among faculty and staff who are committed to taking an active role in gender equity. Equity Allies are men-identified faculty and staff who participate in workshops facilitated by Equity Advocates, and participate in continued professional development through voluntary workshops. Allies advocate for gender equity in their departments and units by demonstrating inclusive behavior. The Equity Advocates are men-identified faculty and staff who participate in a two-day training model, and then work to engage and educate themselves and their colleagues on gender equity issues, as well as serve as proponents of this concept in their departments and units. Equity Advocates are accountable to the Women's Advisory Council, which oversees the initiative. Together, the Equity Advocates and Allies, in consultation with the Women's Advisory Council, seek to be agents of change by advocating for gender equity and diversity. To see the full list of members, click [Equity Advocates: 2019-2022](#).

Women's Advisory Council (WAC)

The WAC plays a vital role in gender equity initiative at UD. WAC members select and oversee the Men's Equity Advocates, direct the content for Men's Equity Ally sessions, and educate men about climate issues affecting women. Creating a clear hierarchy for Equity Advocates is important to the Council, as is ensuring accountability for these advocates. To see the full list of members, visit our website [Women's Advisory Council: 2021 - 2022](#).

Events hosted by the UD Men for Gender Equity

Over the 2021-22 academic year, the Equity Advocates hosted an Inclusive Excellence Academy session, through the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, titled: "Men's Work in Gender Equity: From Self-Reflection to Action," to examine how men self-assess their own roles in perpetuating - even unknowingly - gender biases at work. These sessions



identified the ways that implicit biases affect individuals' perceptions of inequities and the sessions engaged participants in scenario-based activities that helped

them to identify barriers to gender equity in their own workplaces. UD Men for Gender Equity Initiative's Women's Advisory Council and Equity Advocates also conducted the Listening Session, which acknowledged the changes to the professional and personal lives through the pandemic.

Isidore Site is Now Live!

The UD Men for Gender Equity Advocates have launched a new virtual education site on Isidore. Made for men-identifying employees at all levels, this site provides self-paced modules, resources, and spaces for virtual engagement to increase their knowledge, skills, and strategies around issues of gender equity.

Gender Equity Research at UD Colloquium

Hosted by the Women's Center, Women's and Gender Studies Program, and the Provost's Office, the third annual Gender Equity Research at UD Colloquium in April featured research conducted over the 2021-22 academic year by Gender Equity Research Fellows (GERF), Tina Beis (University Libraries) and Kayla Harris (Marian Library). Supported by undergraduate research assistant Gabby Campana, their project, "Policy and Practice: Evaluating Workflows and Communication for Maternity Leave at the University of Dayton," focused on the experiences of faculty and staff who have taken maternity leave since the implementation of the 2017 policy offering six weeks paid leave. The research team conducted surveys with employees and supervisors, and interviews with faculty and staff interviews who have taken maternity leave since 2017, as well as performed comprehensive benchmarking of peer and aspirational institutions to understand their caretaking policies and benefits. GERFs shared preliminary data and themes focusing on the use and understanding of the maternity leave policy and its connection to UD's culture, workplace expectations and UD's Catholic and Marianist Values. The completed report of findings and recommendations will be available on eCommons in May. For more information on the fellowship, visit go.udayton.edu/GERF.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

From the Office of Diversity and Inclusion

By: Annie Mumpower, Graduate Assistant, Office of Diversity and Inclusion

The pursuit of gender equity and inclusion is imperative to the University's commitment to [inclusive excellence](#). In support of this mission, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion regularly offers [Inclusive Excellence Academy](#) (IEA) sessions, open to all faculty and staff.



This year's IEAS schedule included multiple sessions focused on gender equity and inclusion.

"Men's Work in Gender Equity: From Self Reflection to Action" was facilitated by Patrick Thomas, professor and co-chair of UD Men for Gender Equity. The session focused on the role men play in gender equity, obstacles men may face, how to overcome those obstacles, and the ways everyone benefits from gender equity. The group had a great discussion around workplace culture, awareness, and ideas for creating a more inclusive environment at UD: most notably,

focusing on the positive impact of men modeling work-life expectations that can apply to all.

As a follow-up to the Gender Bias session hosted in Spring of 2020, "Gender Bias and Microaggressions 2.0" was facilitated by a top-notch cross-functional team: Lisa Borello, Laura Carper, Riley Jelenick, Justin Keen, and Leah Ward. Session participants considered the difference between intent and impact, defined microassaults/microinsults/microinvalidations, and discussed intervention strategies when microaggressions are encountered.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion looks forward to hosting many more IEA sessions in the future and invites faculty and staff to join them in the collective embrace of inclusive excellence.

Inclusive Excellence Academy sessions are 60-90 minutes and offered in both in-person and virtual formats. A full schedule of sessions is available at the beginning of each semester and can be found on [Porches](#).

LACTATION ROOMS

The Women's Center strives to make UD as inclusive and supportive as possible for all nursing people. The Center works with Human Resources, Facilities Management, and other campus partners to provide secure lactation rooms for people to breastfeed or privately express breast milk. Lactation rooms are located in Alumni Hall, Curran Place, Fitz Hall, Kennedy Union, Kettering Labs, Roesch Library, St. Mary's Hall, 1401 S. Main, and UDRI on East River Road. All lactation rooms have sinks within the space, or nearby, and a refrigerator (except Alumni).

WOMEN'S CENTER CAREGIVING RESOURCE GROUPS

The Women's Center offers resource groups to help those who are juggling caregiving. Join us as we navigate life and make self-care a beginning step in caring for others. **Contact womenscenter@udayton.edu for more information on these groups:**

Elder Care Resource Group: If you care for an aging parent, family member, or other adult and you are looking for a community of individuals to share best practices and resources then this is your group!

Working Parents Resource Group: Join other working parents as we balance the complexities of work and parenting.

Foster Parent Resource Group: This group offers fellowship, resources, support and advocacy for foster and adoptive families, child advocates and those interested in learning more.

Women's Self-Care Support Group Regardless of the many hats that you may wear, parent, spouse, caregiver, etc. this self-care support group is focused on the act of self-care as caregiving.

WOMEN OF UD TURNS 5!

By Leah Ward, Associate Director, Women's Center

This year marks the fifth anniversary of Women of UD. We have seen the program flourish and grow and we continue to celebrate women at the University of Dayton. This year, the theme, "Women of UD: Adapting to Uncertainty" was an opportunity to celebrate women who have adapted to these unprecedented times not

only for themselves but for others around them. The ongoing impacts associated with the pandemic, continued social unrest, and looming challenges ahead for higher education presented opportunities to support one another and our community.

The 15 women in the 2022 Women of UD cohort tapped into their **inner strength** to be role models to their peers and colleagues, and remained

present and grounded despite navigating their own challenges. They utilized **creativity and innovation** in order to meet the needs of their community, office, organization, or department. With vision and purpose, these women sought new ways to build community and continue the mission of the institution. They remained **humble** in order to move the work forward.



2022 Women of UD Honorees

Sama Wathiq Ahmed, Undergraduate Student, Mechanical Engineering

Yamilet Perez Aragon, Undergraduate Student, Sustainability and Graphic Design

R. Darden Bradshaw, Associate Professor and Area Coordinator of Art Education, Department of Art & Design

Katy Jo Bull, School Director, Dayton Early College Academy High School

Marie Dock, Undergraduate Student, Civil Engineering

Dr. Mary Insana Fisher, Associate Professor, Department of Physical Therapy, School of Education and Health Science

Marie Gaeke, Sr. Administrative Assistant, Department of Engineering Management, Systems, and Technology; School of Engineering

Beth Hart, Principal Lecturer for School of Engineering; Director for Women Engineering Program, Diversity in Engineering Center

Carissa M. Krane, PhD, Professor, Biology

Dr. Allison P. Leigh, Director of Marianist Strategies, Office for Mission and Rector

Catherine W. Mix, Associate Vice President, Strategic Enrollment Management and Director of Financial Aid

Katie Overholser, Sourcing Director

Shannon Penn, Law School- Assistant Dean for Student Affairs & Registrar

Alexandra Smith, Assistant Director, Fraternity & Sorority Life

Christina Smith, Director of Residence Life, Student Development

STUDENT ORGANIZATION SPOTLIGHT

STUDENT ADVOCATES FOR GENDER EQUALITY (SAGE)

The Student Advocates for Gender Equality (SAGE) student organization is an integral part of the Women's Center in contributing to its mission, developing student leaders committed to gender equity, and providing programs to the UD community related to gender and social justice issues. SAGE gets students involved with hands-on experience in advocating for gender equity issues. SAGE members work to create an inclusive environment that educates the UD community about issues of gender equity and intersectionality, inspire change in our campus culture to make the UD community a safer and healthier place for all students and foster a healthy atmosphere of intercultural competence and inclusion for all individuals regardless of race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability status. Contact Sierra Johnson, johnsons47@udayton.edu, for more information.

WOMANISTS EMPOWER

Womanists Empower is an organization founded in December of 2021 to represent underrepresented women. Womanism is a term coined by author Alice Walker in a short story *Coming Apart* and later in the book *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Walker defined the term as, "A black feminist or feminist of color" (p. XI). The mission of the organization is to empower women in marginalized communities and hold events to give these women a voice in facing their injustices and circumstances. For women in underprivileged communities to have the ability to be proud/confident, empowered, and have equity in this community. The organization works to educate others on the experiences of multiethnic women during different cultural heritage months. During the 2021-2022 academic year the Feminist Educational Series focused on the experiences of Latinx women, women in the LGBTQ+ community, Native American women, Asian American & Pacific Islander women, Black women, and Multiracial women. Each event consisted of a presentation followed by a student panel that represented the women of the respective identity. The President is Sama Ahmed, Vice President is Jada Gee, Secretary is Yamilet Perez Aragon, Treasurer is Nyah Johnson, Research Committee Chair is Zaria Glover, Public Relations Chair is Sierra Cook, and our Community

Service Chair is Anel Solares. Contact ahmeds17@udayton.edu or geej02@udayton.edu if you have any questions about Womanists Empower or would like to join our organization.

LAS MUJERISTAS

Las Mujeristas is an organization founded in October of 2021 to represent underrepresented Latina women. The term Mujeristas comes from Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz, in which she explains that this was vital because of the racism she faced within the feminist movements and the sexism within Liberation Theology. She would have definitely been influenced by early Womanist scholars, Black feminists, and Chicana feminists. Although Mujeristas is focused on Latinx communities in the United States, it also applies to anywhere that Latinas are! The focus of Las Mujeristas is to provide a community and safe space for Latinas on campus that might consider themselves as mujeristas. In this space, we will discuss issues that are going on worldwide and on campus, spread awareness on these, and create community service opportunities to give back to the Greater Dayton community. Some of the goals and objectives for this organization are to provide a space for conversation and change at the University of Dayton and how this impacts Latinx communities off-campus. We also want to educate the campus community and student body on worldwide and local issues affecting Latinx women. This organization strives to provide a safe environment for all Latinx women at the University of Dayton by giving information sessions on ways to connect them to the resources on campus that ensure their well-being and privacy are protected. Lastly, we want to promote gender equality on campus to make sure that Latinx students, faculty, and staff are treated fairly on and off-campus. During the semester of Spring 2022, we have had events like our first meetings, meeting our executive board, and a panel on toxic relationships. The President is Victoria Rivera, Vice President is Aileen Navarrete, Secretary is Erica Velecela, Treasurer is Stephany Figueroa, Social Chair is Anel Solares, and our Service Chair is Noelia Hiraldo. Contact riverav4@udayton.edu or navarrete1@udayton.edu if you have any questions about Las Mujeristas or would like to join our organization. Can't wait to hear from you!

VOICES FROM BLACK WOMEN

We had an opportunity to hear a perspective from two black women voices of UD: Dr. Novea McIntosh, faculty member, and Ashley Wright, graduate student. They shared their voice on the question:

All women have a voice; however, it is unfortunate that it is often a challenge for the voice of a woman to be heard. This is compounded for black women. What would you like to share with our readers from the voice of a black female?

"The first thing that comes to mind when I ponder what it means to be a Black woman is that my very existence is a result of women who had the audacity to assert their voice in the face of extraordinary oppression. I am often amazed when I think of all the women who came before me who used their voices to affect change and assert their humanity. They did this through art, literature, dance and activism—and teaching, practicing spirituality and creating community. Of course this came with great sacrifice, and yet I am standing here as a result of their willingness to do so.



Ashley Wright

Ph.D. Student, Educational Leadership

Several years ago I had a dream that I lived near a tree that I could not see around. It was so wide and dense, I could not see the other side of the tree. One day, I went out by this tree feeling a tremendous amount of sadness. All of a sudden, the branches began to sway and sing to me. It was the most beautiful and healing music I had ever heard, and right before I woke up the tree produced fruit for me to eat. I like to think that the tree represented my ancestors, and that I would be okay going forward. Likewise, I look to the women in my own family for wisdom. Everyday they encourage me to do those things they only dreamed of doing. Even when the world says no, they give me permission to create the life I want to live, to experience joy, which is still a revolutionary concept for a lot of us. My journey so far has not been easy, but it certainly would not have been possible if it were not for the women who laid the path for me. For this, I am thankful."

As an Afro Caribbean Black woman, I grew up in a space where Black consciousness and African intellectual traditions cemented my identity and values, symbolic of our joy and liberation. I know and acknowledge the intrinsic value of Black women's personal narratives in a world that maintains systemic structures to marginalize, minimize and dim our lights. I constantly grapple with challenges of my life's journey displaced in a dominant culture, which uses ascriptive characteristics to exclude Black voices, making us the 'other'. But no one can silence Black women. We magnify our own voices. We are warriors narrating our own stories rife with ingrained tears visible and invisible, as we celebrate the joys of our beings and triumphs over obstacles orchestrating our constantly changing circumstances fiercely stalwart and courageous. We walk boldly, possessed with great endurance and strength, building on the rich legacy of Black women who continue to lift us up and remind us of our Black brilliance. Our Black joy revives and restores us as we use our collective consciousness and memories in solidarity with other sisters to resist oppression and redeem our communities. My faith makes me whole. So, I continue to use my academic and activist voice to dismantle and disrupt.



Novea McIntosh, Ed.D

Co-Program Director, Urban Teacher Academy,

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