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The Student Movement Volume 106 Issue 13: Know Your Roots: Reclaim Your Narrative

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Know Your Roots

RECLAIM YOUR NARRATIVE

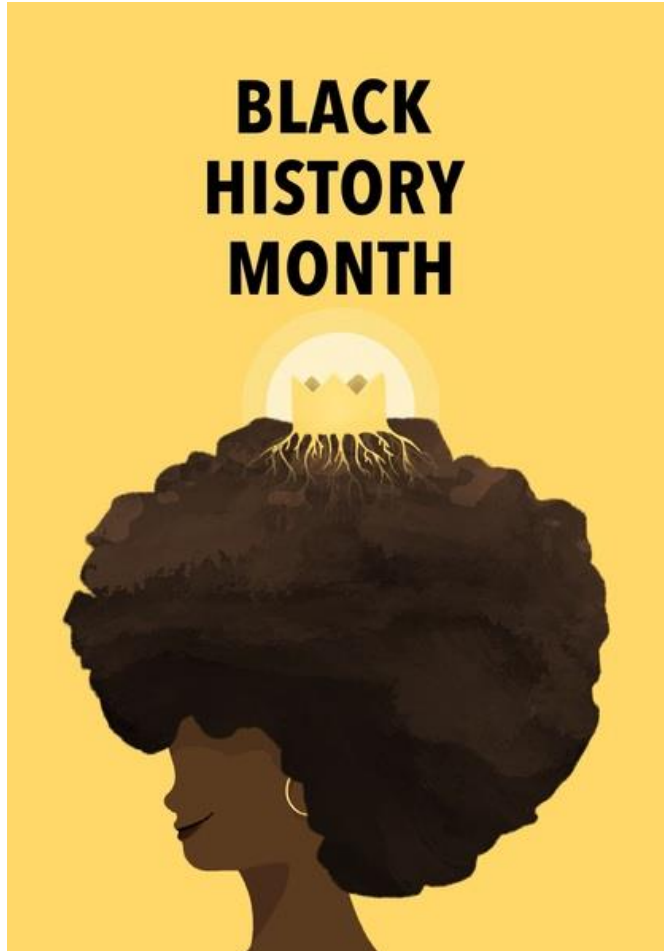


Photo by Marcel Mattox

Humans

HUMANS

Black History Month at Andrews University: Interview with Michael Nixon

Interviewed by: Timmy Duado [02.11.22](#)



Photo by Michael Nixon

I sat down for an interview with Michael Nixon (VP for University Culture and Inclusion) as we discussed his ideas, experience, and plans for Black History Month.

How excited are you for Black History Month this year?

I'm always excited for Black History Month. I think I'm particularly excited because

talking about our history is always important. However, we don't just do it in February, we celebrate all year. This year we picked the theme "Reclaiming our Narratives." One of the reasons we picked that is because there are a lot of forces in the broader society, culture, and politics, that are endeavoring to muzzle our voices, and really to snuff out the teaching of our history. I mean, literally, some people want to outlaw the teaching of Black history in a lot of elementary schools around the country.

I think it's exciting to have an opportunity to respond to what the culture is saying. The culture is trying to make it seem as if talking about these topics or thinking about these things is not important, or it's too triggering for people of other cultures. I think it's important to let our entire campus know in general, but then also our Black students in particular, how valuable they are and that their history is important.

What does Black History Month mean to you personally?

I try to think in a narrative format, as a story or as a progression/journey. We have the advantage of being on this side of the historical narrative, even though we still have a lot of difficulties. History for me, in one word, would just be "perseverance," because when I look back I can see so many contributions, struggles, efforts and consistency.

Every February, I'm always reminded of the perseverance of our people, and how we would not be here now without that perseverance. It's also challenging for me to think through how I can continue to push things forward, whether it's in the work I'm doing here on campus, or just in general. We can't do everything ourselves, but we can do a lot together. So how do we pull all of us together to make things better for the collective? When you look at the story of our history, what you'll find are people from all different walks of life, Black and non-Black, that came and put their efforts together to make things better for the marginalized and the oppressed. We are called to do the same thing.

How does Black History Month affect our campus?

It started off as just a Black history weekend. Our speaker this past weekend was talking about the history of Black History Month and how it originally just started off as Negro American week, then expanded to so much more. We used to just have a Black history Sabbath weekend here at Andrews. When I moved to this community in 1998, my dad became the chaplain at Andrews. I was in the sixth grade, and back in those days, I remember us just having a Black history Sabbath

weekend, having a speaker come, and that would take place at PMC. I think that it's evolved over time to where we now have an entire month of celebrations, activities and events. I think allowing our Black students and employees to be seen, valued and empowered has meant a lot to them. But I think it means a lot to our non-Black students and employees as well. It gives them an opportunity to celebrate Black culture, to learn, to affirm, to ask questions, consider this history and then think about how they can be a part of creating a better future for all of us. It's also an opportunity for us to continue to worship in our own authentic voice and style, which is always a super valuable thing.

Additionally, at least since I've been here, I think we have expanded into having more intentional cultural celebrations for lots of other cultures. We have our Hispanic Heritage Month and Filipino American History Month celebrations. We just started our AAPI celebration, which we're going to revamp and expand this year, as well. Our hope is for more and more people to be inspired to create spaces where their full identity and selves can be seen and affirmed.

What do you consider when planning the events for Black History Month, and the goals?

From my perspective, our primary goal is to empower our students and student leaders to really shape the events for the month in their own image. I think Alyssa Palmer (Associate Dean of Student Life) does a really good job at this. We also work very closely with people like Khaylee Sands (junior, pre-physical therapy), the BSCF President, and her team, who put in an immense amount of effort and work into all the different events for this month.

Miss Jan Pickett, our faithful member on that committee, has been the one behind all the different dinners, lunches and events that have been planned. This has also expanded into Dining Services. Dining services has made a good effort on the Wednesdays of the month to provide cuisine from the Black diaspora. As someone who went here as a student not too long ago—I graduated undergrad in '09—we wouldn't have had that in the cafe when I was a student. I think the effort that Chef Linda and her team are putting in is really helpful.

The primary goal is to empower our students to really celebrate Black culture in a way that's relevant for them. An equally important goal is to make sure that this space for celebration continues to be protected. I think over time when things happen regularly, it's easy to just take it for granted and assume that it's going to keep happening. But a lot of effort each year has to go into making sure it

happens. I see that as one of my primary roles on the committee, as an administrator here at the university, to make sure that the institution continues to be accountable and continues to support and provide resources where we can and make space for this celebration to continue to happen. Ultimately, at the end of the month, we'll look back and will see that God has done some pretty amazing things.

How are these events different from previous years?

I think that every year is different because we have different speakers. We just had Dr. Andrea Trusty King speak on campus and she did a really stellar job at not just using the theme, but also helping it to come to life for our students. I think another different thing this year is the [Anthony Brown and Group therAPY](#) concert coming this Sunday. That's something that we're going to want to do more consistently in partnership with the HPAC. Additionally, Dean DeLeon just did a really unique event this past Sunday, "The Sweet Potato Pie Journey," and put a lot of thought and effort into it, showing students a new way to understand and remember the authentically Black dish, along with some of the history behind it.

Since we have different students and people planning events each year, it's always going to come out in a new way, even if you're still getting some of the things that are familiar to you about our celebration each year. Our short courses are different each year, but I think those opportunities for reflection and conversation on the different topics of our lives provides the opportunity for a little bit more practical talk. We also have really good social events, you get educational events, you get some food and then of course music and other different types of things. I think I've said this at other places, and I'm a little biased because I'm here, but I think our Black History Month celebration is really second to none. We do it in a way that I haven't seen a lot of other places do it. And I think part of that is because the beauty of our not just cultural but international diversity. There are so many different perspectives on what it means to be Black, because every single one of us has our own little piece of Black history inside of us. That's what this month is all about, just being your authentic, unapologetic Black self.

HUMANS

Promoting Black Beauty Products as an Influencer

Interviewed by: Taylor Uphus [02.11.22](#)



Photo by Pearl Parker

This week I sat down with Pearl Parker (senior, English) who discussed her exciting journey as a social media influencer promoting Black-owned businesses and their beauty products.

What types of things do you do as an influencer in beauty products for Black women? What is your primary goal?

As an influencer, I primarily promote a lot of Black-owned or Black-founded haircare businesses. I think it's extremely important to put money into Black-owned businesses because it directly helps these business owners and the Black community. However, sometimes I will promote products based on my general liking or brands will send me products to try out, whether that be through gifted campaigns, a paid collaboration, or paid campaign. My primary focus is to empower both men and women to embrace their natural hair.

What inspired you to start doing this and why is it important to you?

It primarily started because I struggled with my natural hair a few years back. I was struggling to embrace it, struggling to style my hair and, at many points, I didn't like my hair at all. Overall, I found that learning about my hair, creating new styles, and finding products that work best for me helped me to embrace my natural hair. Then this bloomed into my passion of wanting to help others learn more about how to do the same. This is why this platform and being an influencer is very important to me. Knowing how to style your hair, how to manage it, and how to keep it healthy is extremely important. And on my platform, I'm able to share tips, give advice, show hair tutorials and recommend products tailored for curly hair. I also love creating new hairstyles and giving individuals inspiration on fun ways that they can style their hair, but overall it makes me feel great knowing that I'm able to help those on their hair journey. It feels great knowing that a lot of people are inspired by me and support my platform.

What have been some challenges you faced as you began to become an influencer?

When I was first becoming an influencer, I was facing a lot of doubt, doubt within myself, as well as the many individuals who doubted me and what I was doing. People doubted my capability and they didn't think that this passion of mine would really go anywhere. I also heard a lot of discouraging comments, especially when I first started. However, regardless of what people thought, I was still dealing with the battle within myself. A lot of times I was thinking, *is this passion worth my time and effort? Will it go anywhere?* And a big one was, *will I even achieve any of my goals in regards to this?*

What have been accomplishments you've achieved along the way?

My biggest accomplishment so far was working with the brand [CurlMix](#). It was seen on Shark Tank a couple of years ago. I worked with them on a campaign and it was

super rewarding. I felt honored to work with them because they are a well known, Chicago-based company. Another big accomplishment of mine was working for the fashion brand, [Asodara](#). My most memorable experience was doing an Instagram Live tutorial with their head wraps. They have like 31,000 followers, so it was a really exciting thing to do. I have smaller accomplishments as well, such as brands reposting my hair tutorials on their pages. Overall, I'm really thankful for these opportunities and accomplishments because I wouldn't be able to do any of them without God.

Do you feel that your major in English and minor in marketing have helped you during this process?

Initially, I didn't think they would because for a while I was more focused on academic writing. And there's definitely a difference between business writing and creative writing. I had to learn how to be flexible in different areas with my own writing and learn how to transfer the knowledge that I was learning in my English classes over to what I was doing on my social media pages. Overall, I think it's really helped especially with all the tools and insight I've gained from my major in English as well as minor in marketing.

Do you plan to continue this after graduation? And if so, what are your future plans?

I do plan on continuing after graduation. My primary plan would be to get more professional tech like cameras, a new laptop, and editing software programs. Right now, I film everything on my iPhone 11 and it is really difficult to edit on that. I want to make sure that I'm increasing the quality of my content as well as the transitions. I also want to focus more on my YouTube channel, creating longer tutorials and educational videos. I feel like I need to start stepping up and investing more into this passion.

Can you name a few products that you have really liked or would recommend to others?

My main disclaimer talking about hair products would be that not every hair product that works for me is going to work for someone else. However, I would definitely recommend the brands [Shea Moisture](#), [Cream of Nature](#), and [TGIN](#). Overall, there are a lot of products that I like, but the most important thing when looking for good natural hair products is to ensure that they have clean ingredients in them.

Check out Pearl's [Instagram](#), [Youtube](#), and [Tik Tok](#) to view product reviews and tutorials.

HUMANS

What does Black History Month Mean to You?

Interviewed by: Caryn Cruz 02.11.22



Photo by Jeronimo Bernot (Unsplash)

Each year Andrews University proudly participates in celebrating Black History Month, a commemorative reminder of our nation's history and the journey the Black community has embarked on. This month pressures us to reflect on our past as well as consider the present brutalities that Black society, and other minority groups, continue to endure. I asked a few AU students what Black History Month personally means to them and how they observe or celebrate this month.

Angelina Malcolm (senior, international business and Spanish)

Black History Month means to acknowledge that we exist and that our history is a

part of American history even when the history books try to erase us. It means acknowledging that we had a hand in creating the country we have today with our innovations, inventions, and ideas. For me, however, Black History isn't something I celebrate in the shortest month of the year but every day. Just being able to have an education and the opportunities that weren't given to people that look like me is celebrating my history. Other ways in which I celebrate are by supporting Black-owned businesses, educating myself on my history from going to museums to reading from Black voices, and continuously encouraging others to stay in the fight for justice and equality.

Morgan Williams (sophomore, social work)

Black History Month is a celebration of triumph, where we acknowledge the difficult past but rejoice in the future and what that brings for newer generations. We embrace Blackness in all its forms and try to educate others, because now more than ever before, we have a bigger platform.

Jewel Murray (junior, pre-physical therapy)

Black History Month is special to me because it gives me and the rest of the nation an opportunity to celebrate Blackness in all forms. I love the food, music, culture, fashion, language, and people groups that get to be celebrated. I love participating in the BSCF events and Impact services all month. Each year during Black History Month I challenge myself to learn all about someone new or not as widely known who made an amazing impact on my community.

Sheala Worsham (junior, architecture)

For me, Black History Month highlights the Black race and reminds us that we should not be ashamed of it. However, I don't place my identity in my race. We should always remember that it's not our race that makes us special. It's having Jesus as our identity, that we were given a second chance to be his children through his ultimate sacrifice that makes it all worthwhile.

Shania Watts (senior, viola performance)

As a Black individual in America, I've always struggled with national identity and a sense of belonging. Many people don't know what it's like to feel uncomfortable everywhere you go, but that is a feeling many Black people experience. Black History Month is a time when I really feel a real sense of belonging and pride in who I am. It's amazing to have this special time to reflect on our history as a whole and to come together through our shared struggles and experiences.

Camberley Berkel (senior, speech-language pathology & audiology)

Black History Month is something that has gained a rather new importance in my life. At home in the Caribbean, specifically my island, we did not celebrate it as much as here in the US. But through speaking to others and learning about various heroes and pioneers in Black History, it has become important to me to acknowledge and recognize those who have come before us. They have paved the way for Black people to have the life we have today. It's also a reminder to me that we are stronger than we think we are and we can aspire to do great things, create big things and be world changers.

Adoniah Simon (senior, social work)

There is so much ugliness that has shaped the lives of people of color and their predecessors. This month, we take a look at the struggles and triumphs of Black people in the midst of cruelty and gross injustice. We are a ways off from the wholeness that will come with the return of Jesus. But in the meanwhile, I choose to see my life as a celebration of Black history. In the words of Russel Ledet, we are our ancestors' wildest dreams. We have persisted despite the difficulty. I celebrate Black history with my every experience of joy, as I practice hope and as I express gratitude. These are the things that can sustain us in our fight towards a better future for Black lives locally and globally.

Arts & Entertainment

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Black and Proud: An Exhibition by Courtney Saunders

Qualyn Robinson 02.11.22



Photo by Qualyn Robinson

Throughout past decades, Black experiences, especially in the US, have been displayed under an unswerving theme of trauma and suffering. As artistic innovators, culture trendsetters, conversation starters, and storytellers, Black creatives hold the capability to contribute certain images, messages, and perceptions that reflect our culture to society. The beauty of Black art is its capability to celebrate our failings, flaws, and imperfections in a way that evokes feelings of passion, acceptance, and vulnerability. Former graphic design student, Courtney Saunders, did not want to exhibit trauma and suffering as the hallmark and identity of Black experiences. For her final project, Saunders produced B.A.P.

(Black and Proud) an art exhibit that examines the unique stories of Black individuals.

Originally intended as a solo piece reflecting her own Black experiences, B.A.P. had a staggering start. Saunders considered her first rough drafts too literal and uninspired. “I felt that I was limiting myself by only giving my perspective,” said Saunders. After multiple reconsiderations and several brainstorming sessions with her advisor, the idea of centering B.A.P. around the perspectives of others had emerged. “Maybe I could create an experience that more people could relate to.”

While Saunders was initially hesitant of the idea of reaching out to others (in fear of people being uncooperative) she was surprised when the opposite occurred. “Things just became easier because people like to talk about themselves, especially when there is discourse involved.” Once Saunders began initiating conversations, inspiration for her final project proceeded.

B.A.P. began evolving into a fully-fledged project revolving around the African diaspora and how our intersected cultures have sculpted our livelihoods today. Saunders explained, “Some of us are African, African American, Caribbean, or Afro-Latino, but our origins are all the same. As we all share our different experiences with one another, we are retracing our stories and histories back to each other. So, a beautiful narrative formed in my mind that was complex and multi-layered. After multiple conversations and several sketches, I knew that I wanted all of my illustrations to connect and form Africa.” Saunders strategically placed a solid black line throughout each of the 12 pieces so that when looked at separately, there is no obvious connection among the portraits, but when brought together, they form a united piece in the shape of Africa—a reflection of that complex and multilayered narrative.

For Saunders, one of the most valuable lessons from B.A.P. was getting to better understand herself. With lots to prepare for when executing her senior exhibit, there was no room for second-guessing. “When creating, if I don’t like something, I usually scratch that idea and come up with another one. But with the time limit I had, I had to make instant decisions, be confident of those decisions and trust the critiques of my professors and advisors,” said Saunders.

Saunders’ senior exhibition premiered last December. B.A.P. astonished the

campus of Andrews where many got to experience a beautiful array of personal life stories accompanied by vibrant artwork reflecting the uniqueness of Black culture(s). Through the stories of Black familiarity, self-love, food, music, and dance, B.A.P. stood out as both an artistic encounter and enriching education.

Check out Courtney Saunders' [B.A.P \(Black and Proud\)](#) senior exhibit online.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Creative Spotlight: Michael Davis

Interviewed by: Steven Injety [02.11.22](#)

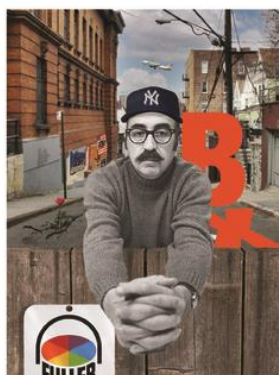
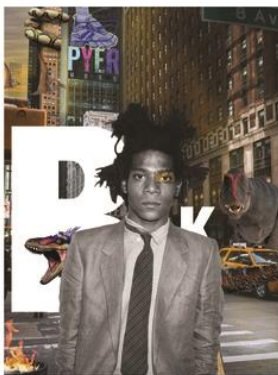


Photo by Michael Davis

Michael Davis is a senior studying marketing. He is a [creative director](#), [podcast host](#), and [graphic designer](#).

Did you know you wanted to pursue a creative career as a child?

I actually wanted to be a sports agent. I always knew I wanted to be somewhere near or adjacent to media though. I wanted to be like Rich Paul but to do it with WNBA players, to help create their brands, get them deals and just grow themselves.

What is the inspiration of your creative pursuits?

Most of my inspiration comes from things or ideas that I saw as a child, my core

memories, mainly things that have not been out in a long time. I like to bring the geometric loop styles from the 80s and 90s aesthetic, with a modern twist. I don't think I have a definite style, I don't really want to yet. I am still growing as a creative everyday. When I design things they do look a certain way, but they don't box me in. I recently challenged myself to design 30 things for 30 days. That process helped me figure out where my design fits. I grew up in Pennsylvania and in Jersey. When it comes to design, seeing Nike ads, Fubu and growing around the epicenter of streetwear, it has definitely influenced my style. Also growing up in suburbia has enabled me to look at certain things in design with a different lens, understanding the importance and uses of softer and chiller tones.

What is the point of your art?

To show people all the different things you can do. I'm not just a graphic designer; I'm also a marketing major. I also like to show people that there are young Black individuals who are able to make a living designing brand identities, streetwear – doing it and making it cool. My end goal is to have my own branding firm. I would like to inspire a high schooler or middle schooler who is wondering what you can do with graphic design. I don't think there was anybody who directly guided me that much. I did have a graphic design teacher in high school that helped me see what existed out there and what was possible. There were things that I had in my head as a high schooler, and now I am able to do it. While my teacher did give me a push, the majority of my motivation was internal. I also have to give credit to alumnus [Sarah Duvivier](#). When I first came to AU, there were not a lot of people who were Black and known for their art at AU. I thought she was the GOAT. Made me realize that this was something I wanted to do. I want people to wear my stuff and also to influence people to design themselves. To do it with the understanding of what design is. Not to create money, but to solve problems and create art.

What are some of your favorite brands?

One of my favorite brands is New Balance. They never really change themselves. They always have quality products. Even their basic models are of good, strong quality. Whenever they drop a new collection, the collection always has a story about it. I also enjoy Nike, as they are one of the best marketing and design brands. I recently wrote a [blog](#) about how Nike changed the trajectory of sneakers through their advertisements. Nike, where they are right now, is not by chance but because of a lot of hard work.

What do you think is the importance of Black artists/creatives?

Black artists are necessary. There are a lot of people designing without giving

people their flowers. There are quite a few people who are famous, whose style of art came from a person of color. Someone like [Keith Haring](#), his style of art came from a Hispanic guy. That Hispanic guy is nowhere near as famous as Keith Haring. Design is essential for Black artists to exist in order to create a new age of the Black design scene. Growing up, like many Black young adults, I did not feel that it was viable to be an artist or designer. It is really influential to see other people your age with similar backgrounds in the design scene. Growing up in a minority household, we do not really see creative careers as an option. We felt the need to choose the safe option. Seeing black artists helps creative careers seem possible for us.

Anything you want to let the readers know?

If you need anything designed look at my [website](#). I focus on brand identity and apparel design. I encourage everyone to appreciate design more and to look into minority designers—there are a lot out there. Without design the world would be bland. It is a privilege to have designers; everything you touch and look at has been designed intentionally.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Current Favorites: Black Figures in Media Edition

Kaela McFadden 02.11.22



Photo by Public Domain

Happy Black History Month, Andrews University! In honor of this month, the AUSM decided to collect a list of our fellow students' favorite famous Black figures across a variety of vocations. One way to celebrate and reflect on the contributions to our society made by Black people would be looking at the work of the people on this list. You could also make an effort to listen to a Black music artist or watch movies and TV shows featuring Black leads. However you choose to celebrate, I hope that you take some time to reflect on the incredible accomplishments of Black people and especially lift them up during this month.

- 1) Marcel Mattox (junior, social work)—Martin Luther King Jr., minister and civil rights activist
- 2) Nora Martin (sophomore, psychology and English)—Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, author of “The Thing Around Your Neck”
- 3) Khaylee Sands (junior, pre-physical therapy)—Lucky Daye, singer-songwriter
- 4) Jasmine Stallard (sophomore, architecture)—Michelle Obama, former First Lady and author of “Becoming”
- 5) Alexander Hess (junior, English)—Edward Enninful OBE, British Vogue editor-in-chief and European editorial director of Condé Nast
- 6) Owen Hamstra (sophomore, elementary education)—John Lewis, politician and civil rights activist
- 7) Andrew Potts (freshman, history)—Jaylen Brown, NBA player
- 8) Qualyn Robinson (senior, digital communications)—Tyler the Creator, musician and songwriter
- 9) Yoel Kim (junior, physics and math studies)—August Wilson, playwright for “Fences”
- 10) Megan Case (junior, music education)—Simone Biles, olympic world-champion gymnast
- 11) Nellie Karengo (senior, English literature)—Chadwick Boseman, actor
- 12) Shawn DeWitt (junior, psychology)—Zendaya, actress
- 13) Alannah Tjhatra (junior, biochemistry)—Amanda Gorman, poet
- 14) Noah Mack (junior, engineering)—Kobe Bryant, NBA player
- 15) Manoah van der Velde (junior, engineering)—Lewis Hamilton, Formula One race car driver
- 16) Jason DeWitt (freshman, engineering)—Kevin Hart, comedian and actor
- 17) Izzy Koh (junior, English)—Corey Hawkins, actor and executive producer of the “DUST” podcast
- 18) Darling Ramirez (junior, English and Spanish)—Chris Tucker, comedian and actor
- 19) Pearl Parker (Senior, English)—Toni Morrison, author

My current favorite Black figure in media is Angie Thomas, author of “The Hate U Give” as well as “On The Come Up” and “Concrete Rose.” I’ve only read “The Hate U Give” but the other two are on my “to read list” which I might read this month. I look forward to seeing more of her writing.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Signal Boost: Abbott Elementary

Solana Campbell 02.11.22

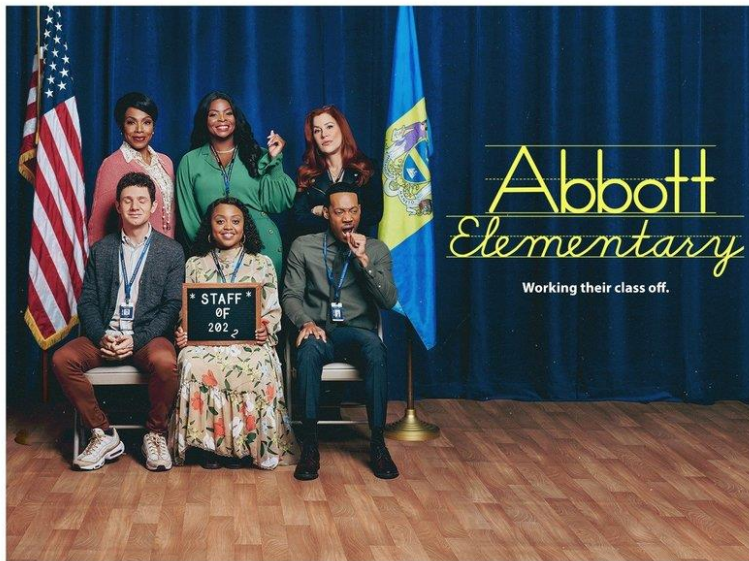


Photo by Public Domain

From the mind of Quinta Brunson, best known for her work with Big Mouth and BuzzFeed, comes Hulu's "Abbott Elementary," a comedy sitcom about an underfunded public school in Philadelphia. Brunson stars as the show's titular character, a second-grade teacher full of passion and new to the craft of teaching in a place where education isn't necessarily valued. Alongside Brunson, Tyler Williams ("Everybody Hates Chris," "Dear White People") plays her potential love interest and a substitute teacher who's been roped into staying on after the former teacher was removed for hitting a child. Lisa Walter ("The Parent Trap," "GLOW") and Sheryl Ralph ("Sister Act 2," "The Flintstones") shine as the older, more seasoned teachers whose traditional methods both guide and frustrate Brunson's Janine Teagues. Rounding out the cast is Janelle James ("Central Park") as the school's psychotic TikTok-obsessed principal and Chris Perfetti as Janine's teacher best friend, also new to the school scene.

Each episode traverses the issues that inner-city public school teachers face, from broken lights to not enough school supplies. Janine's sunshiny naivete balances out the hardened cynicism of the older teachers, providing viewers with a fun back-and-forth that forms the comedic foundation for most episodes. Above all, however, Abbott Elementary is heartwarming while exposing the clear racial struggles certain neighborhoods experience in America, with classrooms filled with young Black kids and even a teacher's staff made up mostly of Black teachers. It opens viewers' eyes to inequality but still guarantees laughs. While a show about elementary school might make college students cringe at the thought of diving back into that long ago time, I highly recommend this show. The comedy never relies on racial insensitivity and its activism is never in-the-face, but instead a subtle form of support for the show's messy protagonist.

With a name inspired by Quinta Brunson's real-life sixth grade teacher, Ms. Abbott, a storyline inspired by years of Brunson's time in the Philadelphia public school system and her experience with a mother who was a kindergarten teacher for 40 years, the show echoes reality in an attempt to raise awareness about the sad state of education in many cities while still emphasizing the passion and work that teachers put into their students every day. School is something each of us have experienced, a sort of communal experience, so take the time to check this out. Episodes release weekly on Tuesdays.

News

NEWS

Andrews University Hosts a New Career Center

Nathan Mathieu [02.11.22](#)



Photo by Andrews University

In the James White Library on the third floor in suite number 306, Andrews University is hosting a new Career Center. The Career Center, according to its [website](#), is dedicated to helping students in their development for future career decisions. Joydel Trail, the Career Services Advisor, describes how Andrews University did not have a specific department dedicated to student career development until recently. However, students of any standing—freshman or graduate—now can access all the resources that the Career Center provides. Trail also describes the importance for students to “familiarize themselves with [these] services.”

Students can book an appointment on the website. Services that the Career Center provides include résumé building and reviewing, mock interviewing, career planning, professional etiquette skills building, and networking skills building. Experiential learning services are also offered, helping students look for internships, co-ops, jobs, clinical experiences, or even service learning/volunteer work. The Campus Center even offers salary negotiations for students looking for a job.

For students who do not desire to meet with a career coach or counselor, the website is a great tool. Each skill listed has a detailed article describing steps students should take to learn a certain skill set. Finally, the Campus Center has a [4-year career plan](#) that students can review and use to help determine next steps in their career and professional journey each year. These services are important for any student looking to apply for jobs, both on campus while they do their schooling and after they graduate.

Even students who are searching for help to decide their major can benefit from the Career Center. Career counseling, coaching, and assessments are available, using several tests including Myers-Briggs, Strong Interest Inventory, and COPS to help students determine the best job for them. The Campus Center also allows employers to post their job openings onto the Andrews Network. This can provide students (and alumni) looking for internships or jobs an invaluable resource in their career journey. The Campus Center also helps run career fairs and hosts workshops and presentations. Student organizations and career development-focused groups can request [workshops](#) for the Career Center to present.

Luckily for students, the Campus Center is “currently open and ready for student use” according to Trail. Trail also expressed the need for graduate students as career coaches. If interested, graduate students can email Trail at joydel@andrews.edu for more information.

NEWS

The Honorable Decision: News on Joe Biden's Nominee For the Highest Court in the Land

Chris Ngugi [02.11.22](#)



Photo by Adam Szuscik (Unsplash)

The Honorable Stephen G. Breyer, who, at 83 years old, is currently the oldest justice on the Supreme Court, officially announced his decision to [retire](#) on Thursday, January 27. In response, President Biden issued a farewell address where he expressed his gratitude for all of Justice Breyer's years of service for his country. As the justice has announced his retirement, the current president has inherited the duty of replacing him. To quell any doubts about his decision, the president has made his stance clear in regards to what kind of person he wants to nominate for the position. He has [said](#), "The person I will nominate will be someone with extraordinary qualifications, character, experience and integrity. And that person will be the first Black woman ever nominated to the United States Supreme Court."

Joe Biden first made this promise as a presidential candidate in the February of 2020, when he [said](#), “I’m looking forward to making sure there’s a Black woman on the Supreme Court to make sure we in fact get everyone represented.” He said this during a debate that took place a few days before the South Carolina democratic primaries. This promise, as well as his other standpoints, helped him gain critical support to win the state of South Carolina, a critical victory in his bid for president. He reiterated this promise while on the campaign trail, and as president. Now, he intends to keep this promise.

This promise has many staunch [supporters](#), as well as [critics](#). Representative Clyburn, the U.S. representative of South Carolina’s sixth district and current majority whip, sums up many supportive viewpoints with the [statement](#): “this is an issue that is simmering in the African-American community [where] Black women think they have as much right to sit on the Supreme Court as any other women, and up to [this] point none [have] been considered.” Senator Ted Cruz, the junior U.S. senator for Texas, is one of many who have taken a more critical stance on this issue, and he [says](#): “It’s actually an insult to Black women . . . If [Joe Biden] came and said ‘I’m going to put the best jurist on the court’ and he looked at a number of people and he ended up nominating a Black woman, he could credibly say ‘OK, I’m nominating the person who’s most qualified.’ He’s not even pretending to say that.”

The history of presidents and their decisions for supreme court justices provide some [examples](#) of similar promises and states of mind that various presidents have exhibited. In 1980, before he became president, Ronald Reagan [said](#) that he would nominate a woman to "one of the first Supreme Court vacancies in [his] administration." He also said that “it [was] time for a woman to sit among our highest jurists.” He fulfilled this promise by nominating Justice Sandra Day O’Connor to be the first woman to serve as a supreme court justice. Another well documented public declaration occurred when President Donald J. Trump [said](#), “I will be putting forth a nominee next week . . . it will be a woman, a very talented, very brilliant woman. I haven’t chosen yet, but we have numerous women on the list." He then chose Amy Coney Barrett to be the fifth woman to serve on the supreme court in its 232-year history.

There are a [few individuals](#) who are thought to have high chances of being nominated by the president. One is Judge J. Michelle Childs, justice for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of South Carolina, who has also been nominated for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. She has been [championed](#) by

Senator Lindsey Graham and Rep. James Clyburn, both of whom serve in the state of South Carolina. Another potential nominee is Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, who currently serves on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit and was on the former President Barack Obama's 2016 shortlist for the supreme court.

For the first 177 years in the supreme court's history, only white men were considered for the position of supreme court justice. This streak ended with Thurgood Marshall's confirmation 55 years ago. 14 years after this, the first woman, Sandra Day O'Connor, was confirmed. In Thurgood Marshall's case, there was no public declaration that his race would be put into consideration. However, in Sandra Day O'Connor's case, her gender was explicitly, and publically, considered. If Joe Biden's nominee is confirmed, her race and her gender will have been explicitly considered, and she will be the first of 116 U.S. supreme court justices to be a Black woman. If that happens, we will be here to tell you about it.

NEWS

The Sweet Potato Journey

Timmy Duado 02.11.22



Photo by Phillip DeLeon

As time has progressed on campus, Black History celebrations at Andrews University have become more prominent and creative. That creativity came to a new high with “The Sweet Potato Journey,” hosted by Dean DeLeon, Associate Dean for Student Involvement, Leadership and Activities on Sunday, February 6. In a post about the event, Dean DeLeon shares the special backstory behind “The Sweet Potato Journey.” He states:

In 1999, while a sophomore at Andrews University, I tuned into the Oprah Winfrey Show. Her guest was the incomparable Patti Labelle, who was promoting her new cookbook, “LaBelle Cuisine: Recipes To Sing About.”

Being a fan of soul food, southern baked goods and of course Patti Labelle, I was enamored. Some weeks later as I was on my way to class, I ran into a book fair that was being held on campus.

To my complete surprise and delight, they had one copy of Ms. LaBelle’s cookbook. With no money on me, I either asked the sales person to hold the book until I returned, or I hid the book amongst the other books until I returned with money.

Labelle Cuisine has been my go to cookbook for many of life’s special events. 22 years later, I’m back on campus and so is my beloved cookbook. Today during our Black History month event, “The Sweet Potato Journey,” I will be teaching my students how to make Patti Labelle’s sweet potato pie—a staple in the African American community.”

On February 6, inside the Beijing Classroom in the Andreasen Center for Wellness, Dean DeLeon and his team laid out a kitchen setup for Andrews students to come and make their own sweet potato pies. Most of the students who showed up had some baking backgrounds, but also were very excited to partake in the cultural journey. Malaika Ferguson (sophomore, nursing) said, “I appreciated this event, and it was also very educational. The whole history of the sweet potato and what it means to African Americans was very interesting to learn more about. I feel like Andrews has been doing a lot more for Black History Month.” She also touched on her family making pies and how that affects her now. “When I was younger, my mom was always in the kitchen, and one thing she always made was sweet potato pies. I used to watch her and want to get in the kitchen, but now that I am older, being in the kitchen here, and making my own was really fun.”

Jordanne Howell-Walton (graduate, clinical mental health counseling), one of the student workers for the department of Student Involvement, Leadership and

Activities, put together a presentation educating the students and faculty about the history of the potato, what it meant to African Americans during the 1800s and on, and the hundreds of different iterations of dishes and cuisine specific to the sweet potato. Her presentation spotlighted the story of a former slave, Mrs. Fisher, who created the first sweet potato pie recipe in 1881. Featured in the presentation was a photo of the original sweet recipe from Mrs. Fisher’s cookbook—the first cookbook ever written by an African American.

When asked about the event and her past experiences with sweet potatoes, Wambui Karanja (sophomore, nursing) said, “I loved this event. It was needed, and I felt more connected to my African American heritage. My mom was telling me about how my great-grandmother used to make it all the time for the family. I never had the opportunity to have it homemade and it was nice to do it here and do it well. I had a really good time, and I haven’t baked in a long time.”

Ideas

IDEAS

Being Bad at Being Black

Qualyn Robinson 02.11.22



Photo by Qualyn Robinson

Occasionally my mind goes back to sixth grade, where I am unable to fall asleep at night because I'm stressing over the homework I haven't completed, contemplating ways to avoid flag football in P.E. the next morning, and, most importantly, considering if I was Black enough to my peers and classmates. There's this strange phenomenon that transpires during the middle school years. A phenomenon where people suddenly become so meticulous and hyper-focused about the clothes they wear, the shape and appearance of their body, the words they say, the sound of their voice, pimples, dating, the advantages of being well-liked and popular and the consequences of the opposite. At the end of the day, it appeared as though everyone had something to worry about—my biggest worry was if my aspirations, wants and desires on the inside harmonized with the skin color on the outside.

Attending public school in a suburban, homogenous Illinois town led to obvious observations. I was clearly different from most of the student body in many ways—I was Black, introverted, a band kid, more effeminate, and had no sense of style whatsoever (I wore patterned sweater vests daily). The point being, I often stood out. Being noticeable in middle school meant that I was greeted with certain expectations.

For many of the kids at school, their perceptions of Black culture and people derived from YouTube videos, TV shows, and the news. At the time, the media's representation of Black people was predominantly not well-intentioned and true. This would lead peers at school to expect me to reflect some one-dimensional character they watched online. However, I was just a badly dressed, nerdy, flamboyantly quiet Black kid who couldn't dance or play basketball—which was more than enough reason for my classmates to consider me less Black. They were surprised and even disappointed when I didn't meet up to their expectations. I don't see these interactions as malice because I also rely on stereotypes when entering unfamiliar territory. The issue begins when the stereotypes of a group of people overshadow the characteristics of an individual.

To say these comments wouldn't get to me would be false. Because I have been and still do want to be liked by people, I felt like there was something I had to change. So, during second-period English, instead of learning and improving my grammar, I was ludicrously asking myself if I was bad at being Black. In a time and place

where I was meant to learn and discover who I am, people were already telling me who I wasn't.

It wasn't until I gained a little maturity that I realized people's expectations of my Blackness are insignificant. No one's opinions of me are more meaningful than my life experiences. My Blackness is not anything I'll ever need to prove. I wish my younger self would have realized sooner that everything I do, I do as a Black person.

IDEAS

Music vs Musician

Sion Kim 02.11.22



Photo by Getty Images

Which song have you listened to the most in 2021? Starting on the first day of December, people shared on their Instagram stories [Spotify's 2021 Wrapped](#). Since 2016, this music app has allowed its users to share their top 5 most-listened-to artists, genre, and songs on social media on the first day of December every year. With this easy and convenient feature, we get to visualize our taste for music and their producers.

Unsurprisingly, my top five most-heard songs were the ones that were released by my top 5 artists. Whether we like an artist because of his or her music or like the music because of the artist, there is a connection that exists between artists and their music. In addition, with the development of social media, our generation continues to expose ourselves to the lives of artists—which is more than their music. If we are allowing in so much information about the artists that we listen to, wouldn't that information affect our interpretation of their music? Some famous and popular musicians are tied to serious crimes and allegations. For instance, Marilyn Manson, an American singer-songwriter, has received multiple accusations of psychological or sexual abuse from more than a dozen of women. In another case, Travis Scott, an American rapper and record producer, has been criticized for his actions during a [concert at Astroworld](#) that took place last November. During the concert, the crowd were suddenly rushed toward the front of the stage and were trampled to the ground as they became unconscious from the compression. This incident resulted in the death of ten people, including a 9-year-old child. According to the videos taken from the concert, the musician chose to continue the concert even though he realized that people were getting injured and medics and police were coming in to rescue. Instead, he encouraged people to raise their hands and engage themselves in the show. Because of his actions in the concert, he has been sued by the injured victims and their families. How does knowing this affect our view of these artists and their music?

Despite these behaviors and misconduct, Harvey Mason Jr., CEO of the Recording Academy (which presents the Grammy Awards), has [declared](#) that the organization "won't restrict the people who can submit their material for consideration." Furthermore, Mason said, "We won't look back at people's history, we won't look at their criminal record, we won't look at anything other than the legality within our rules of, is this recording for this work eligible based on date and other criteria." And as if he tried to prove his statement, Marilyn Manson was nominated for Grammy Awards.

I agree with Mason Jr.'s point that we should give music awards to those who have made music that deserves the award. But wouldn't awarding the music that has been made or recorded by people who are tied to serious crimes and allegations encourage people to see and consider their misconduct with less severity? Wouldn't awarding those public figures give an impression that the society does not care about their life choices, even though we read and hear about them through different types of media everyday? One of my favorite artists had been accused and

confirmed of initiating bullying, drinking, and smoking in his teenage years. Consequently, he stopped appearing on shows and I stopped listening to his songs. Though I still like his style of music and lyrics, his music makes me uncomfortable to listen to because it involuntarily reminds me of his misconduct and that hinders the message and emotion of the song from reaching me. Therefore, I believe it is hard for me to enjoy the music of an artist of a known misconduct. To conclude, I think we should all make good use of the information from sources such as Spotify Wrapped and different types of media, including news and social media, to be aware of things—especially music and artists—that we allow to influence ourselves.

IDEAS

The Day I Became Afro-Latina

Gabriela Francisco [02.11.22](#)



Photo by Shutterstock

I visited Italy in high school and decided to go to the balcony of Saint Peter's Basilica with a couple of friends. We were on a school trip, so we asked the sponsors if we could go, and they said yes, as long as we got back in time. We convinced them we could run to the top, see everything, and come down within 15 minutes, so off we went. We did indeed make it to the top, out of breath and about to pass out, but we made it with time left to go down. Naturally, we followed the crowd of people going through a door, because where else would everyone be going except down? Well...up. For some reason, this didn't occur to me until I had gone up a couple stairs and noticed everyone in front of me kept on going higher and higher. Once I realized this, I started to turn around to head back down but there was nowhere to go. Everyone behind us was already making their way up and with each step the stairwell kept on getting narrower, with nowhere to turn.

That story is a pretty accurate description as to what it felt to be a Latina, not born in her Latin country, living in America. It felt confusing and suffocating. On one hand, there was the weight of the dictator Trujillo's [atrocities](#) committed on Haitians and Black Dominicans that every Dominican carries whether they want to admit it or not. This deeply rooted anti-Blackness (if not addressed) is not only perpetuated by Dominicans onto Black people, but onto themselves. Because of the tradition of anti-Blackness, it is hard for Dominicans to claim that inherent part of their identity: being Black. Consequently, for me, not being born or growing up in the Dominican Republic made me unable to fully grasp the culture for myself (for better or for worse in this case), but even further from being able to claim the inherent Blackness in me. On the other hand, there was the fact that while I felt super American living in a small town with neighbors who own farm animals and a county fair that has tractor-pulls (I mean, come on!), I was never going to be seen as *truly* American. The duality of this experience, of not being able to claim either part of me completely as I mentioned earlier, was confusing and suffocating.

It all changed for me on one Saturday night, when there was an event held on campus where a panel of people from the [African diaspora](#) talked about their experiences. Although it was hard for me to get my head around the fact that I was part of the African diaspora because I could barely claim being Dominican, I realized this feeling, my experience, wasn't isolated. I wasn't the only one who felt like this, caught in between two worlds, and this was the first time everything made sense. I don't remember if the term "afro-latino" was being talked about just yet, but this was it. This conversation gave me the permission I didn't know I needed to claim who I was. Being able to claim being Afro-Latina was a breath of fresh air. It

was the experience of getting to the top of the Basilica after being trapped in the stairwell and being able to take a deep breath. After the panel discussion, I went home overjoyed and almost in a gospel way blurted out everything I had just heard about. While it was difficult to process this new information, it also gave my parents the permission they needed to fully claim themselves the same way I was able to.

I'll forever be grateful for that day: the day I felt like I finally belonged somewhere, the day I finally felt seen, the day I became Afro-Latina.

IDEAS

The Devastating Effects of Climate Change on Economically Disadvantaged Countries

Denique Black 02.11.22

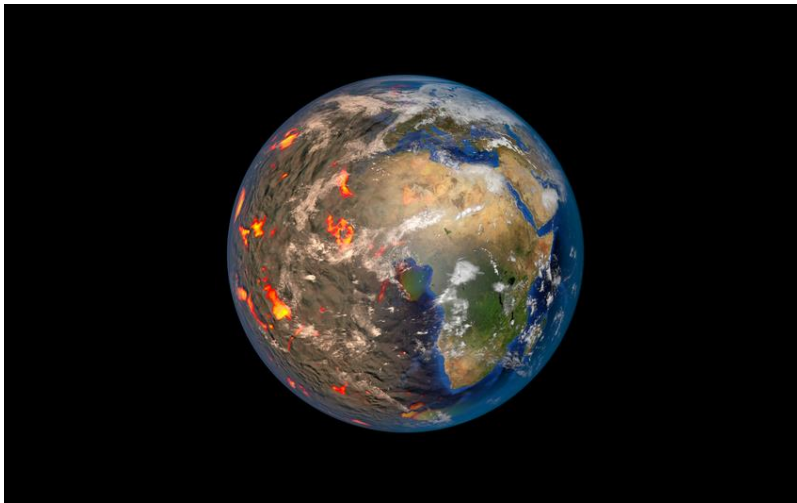


Photo by Shutterstock

Climate change has been a topic of discussion for many decades. Prominent climate change activists such as Greta Thunberg, Kelsey Julihana, Jamie Margolin, and other climate activist groups [urge](#) lawmakers and people in power to address this issue before it's too late. Although their efforts have been hugely impactful, they rarely acknowledge that climate change has a more significant impact on economically disadvantaged countries than wealthy countries because they are located in geographically vulnerable areas and cannot cope with the devastations of climate [change](#).

While climate change is a universal problem, wealthy countries have become a significant source of environmental pollution in pursuit of economic gain, leaving poorer countries to feel the consequences. Countries such as China [question](#) the motivations for why they should sacrifice their economic growth to save the environment, making it difficult for them to consider a revision of their economic practices. Yet, the quest for monetary gain has led to devastating consequences, more so in economically vulnerable countries. [Effects include](#) rising sea levels, changes in rainfall patterns, extreme weather, and air pollution, which results in health [complications](#). For example, the continent of Africa, which is home to a number of economically disadvantaged [countries](#), accounts for only 3% of the world's gas emissions, yet they reap the brunt of global warming [consequences](#). In particular, the Sahel people of sub-saharan Africa heavily [rely](#) on rainfall to nourish their crops. Due to climate change they experience drought and floods that negatively impact their crop yield. This issue has destroyed livelihoods. According to the [World Health Organization](#), climate change is the biggest threat to the health of humanity. [Moreover](#), in poorer areas of Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific region, almost 2 million people have died due to the effects of air pollution compared to 333,000 in Europe and the Americas. According to the WHO, people in urban areas of low- and middle-income countries are at a 98 percent risk of breathing unhealthy air and suffering from diseases related to high levels of air [pollution](#).

Although the future of climate change seems grim, there is still a lot we can do. The fact of the matter is that it's in our best interest that all countries are involved in the process of preserving the planet that we all share. Therefore, it is necessary for lawmakers and people in power to make evident strides to limit human contribution to global warming. Future generations may be at more risk than we think if we allow climate change to get out of hand. To counteract the effect of global warming on economically disadvantaged countries, the international

community must help economically disadvantaged countries reduce the impact of climate change by increasing access to water, reducing the effects of droughts and floods, and promoting reforestation. As members of Generation Z, we have a pivotal role to play when it comes to counteracting climate change, especially those of us living in wealthier countries. We can do our part by making minor life adjustments like recycling, using sustainable products, and even reusing items around our living space. These small actions can add up and make a huge impact. Furthermore, it's imperative that everyone is involved in the democratic process at the local, national and global levels. It is necessary to support both climate activists and climate policies. In addition to using your voice to spread awareness, it is crucial to elect environmentally-conscious people into positions of power where they will have agency to enact change regarding the issue of our climate.

The world would be a much better place if the problem of climate change didn't threaten our very existence and if economic interests did not separate the global community. We need to address the disparities and deficiencies that global warming has caused, especially when it comes to vulnerable countries. Global warming should be number one on the agenda of lawmakers and the people in power. Future generations are counting on us to make a change now!

Pulse

PULSE

An Ode to Breakfast Burritos

T Bruggemann 02.11.22



Photo by Darren Heslop

Do you remember the dark times?

I do. Times of pestilence and hunger. Times of destitution, when we would wake up with despair in our hearts and have nothing to ease our misery. This was a time of sorrow. This was a time of affliction. This was the time when you could not purchase a breakfast burrito at the Gazebo.

For the breakfast burrito has no equal on this cerulean sphere. Like Ambrosia it restores the soul; like Lembas it sustains the frame, for only the mightiest can stomach more than one. The very first taste is arresting, yet there is more to follow. It assails the senses—a deafening, consuming flavor. This is passion; this is bliss.

This is catharsis, quenching all fear and longing. If the Israelites were given breakfast burritos they never would have hungered for quail.

In the sweltering forges and frantic trenches of the Gazebo they are crafted with but five hallowed ingredients. Plump and luscious, the heavenly provision in the arms urges haste and inspires courage. Attempting to carry one such boon back to a dorm room without devouring it is Hercules' thirteenth labor. Had the Tree grown breakfast burritos, Adam and Eve might have fallen all the sooner.

Yet! Twice in recent memory have breakfast burritos—those golden morsels—been kept from students, leaving our lives haggard and futile. In the beginning of the previous two school years, breakfast burritos were disturbingly wanting. O, how we wandered through the valley of the shadow and death! It was a vicious enough time for we wise veterans, but how could the powers that be keep these blessed delights from the aching hearts of the fledgling, dewy-eyed freshman? They, who enter with such hope and guilelessness, left with no protection from the maelstrom of this forlorn life.

Should such a trend of injustice occur once more this fall, shall we stand for it? I say not! I say let this be a land flowing with breakfast burritos! Let them be plentiful as the autumn harvest! Let the people feast and fill their hearts with jubilation. Let those who are weary come to the Gazebo and be given rest. Let them be nourished by the fruit of everything good in this world. Let all come and savor the miracle that is the breakfast burrito.

...

tl;dr breakfast burritos are really good

Diaspeirein: The Bridge Across

Wambui Karanja 02.11.22



Photo by Yejide Mwongozi

The term *African diaspora* is used to describe the worldwide compilation of communities that originally descended from native Africans. This includes African Americans, Afro-Latinx individuals, Caribbeans, and Africans living outside of the continent. The word *diaspora* has its roots in the Greek term *diaspeirein*—*dia* meaning “across” and *speirein* meaning “scatter.” Conclusively, the study of the complete term *African diaspora* reveals that the communities that make up the diaspora come from one and, subsequently, are one.

Cultures within the African diaspora present a beautiful array of various customs, languages, traditional foods, and much more. Each representative from this vast assemblage of cultures has something uniquely valuable to add to the richness of any intercultural environment, as we readily observe on our own Andrews

University campus. Celebrating and learning from cultures that differ from our own is an excellent way to not only better our personal cultural understanding, but also to lend to the uplifting of intercultural communities at large.

In spaces where there are a lot of Black people who have themselves immigrated to the United States or have immediate relatives who have immigrated to the United States—such as Africans, Caribbeans, and Afro-Latinx individuals—it can be especially difficult to find one's identity as an African American. Growing up as a literal African American—my dad being Kenyan and my mom being a native Black Californian-American—has been a complex journey, particularly in navigating what it means to be a Black American.

During BSCF's Impact vespers last Friday night, Zyon Wiley (junior, pre-physical therapy) excellently articulated feelings that I so deeply resonate with. When asked what being Black has looked like to him, he said:

... on a minor note, I think it's also looked kinda lonely. I'm an African American and Andrews is a beautifully, wonderfully diverse campus and you'll see a lot of Caribbean people, you'll see a lot of African people[,] and sometimes that being such a rich culture, you just feel like a normal African American guy and you don't really know where you fit in the mix. So I think that although it's been really comforting being around Black people, trying to find my identity, specifically as an African American, has been something I've wrestled with.

As I consider the possible causes for this apparent rift separating African Americans from other cultures within the African diaspora, two issues come to mind: 1) Slavery largely severed the ties between African Americans and their original culture, causing a large-scale identity crisis that is still very prevalent and 2) stereotypes about African Americans held by other groups in the diaspora place African Americans at a disadvantage in regard to making meaningful connections with their original roots.

With reference to my first point, I observe a distinct lack of cultural connection that would bridge African Americans to their African origins. There is widespread ignorance in regard to the continuing impact that slavery in this country has had on Black people. They were cut off from their families, their culture, their languages, and most importantly, their identity. Slavery tore apart the family fabric within the Black community, which has proven tremendously hard to restore. Children were separated from their parents and siblings; sold off to never see their

loved ones again. This history has had a lasting effect on African Americans. Even now, families are still suffering from the profound psychological trauma of slavery and discrimination. As recently as the 1960s, a system of racist laws—Jim Crow laws—ensured that Black people stayed “in their place” and were denied opportunities to succeed.

More than 400 years of this type of suffering does not just go away, as suggested by those who may say, “But that was so long ago.” Many immigrants who come to this country, even ones within the African diaspora, are not able to truly understand the damage caused and therefore the reasoning behind generational suffering in Black American communities. This leads me to my second point: the suggestion that the stereotyping of African Americans is a clear contributing factor to why Black Americans may feel disconnected from other groups within the diaspora.

The belief that African Americans can be nothing more than lazy, loud, and aggressive is a trope that I have found to be disturbingly prevalent within African, Caribbean, and Afro-Latinx communities, as well as communities outside of the African diaspora. To gain substantial evidence of this, I decided to ask a few African Americans about their experiences with individuals from other groups within the diaspora. Most could recall times where they were discriminated against or looked down upon for being African American as opposed to another Black member of the diaspora who “has a culture.” A consistent theme among the interviewees was that it often feels like it is Black Americans against everybody else. If we are not being treated as less than by the majority race, we are being treated as less than by those who are supposed to be our brothers and sisters but who do not view us as such.

Two central contributing factors to the stereotyping of African Americans by other groups in the African diaspora are that 1) Black Americans are misrepresented in the media and 2) many Black Americans do not have a solid grasp on who they are historically and, subsequently, who they are culturally. One of my interviewees made a statement that I think is very powerful in regard to this. She said, “I feel that Black Americans have no language or ancient traditions; therefore, we cannot relate outside of our physical features or generational group unless we have acquired stolen/lost knowledge along the way. I think it is hard to understand a group of people who do not understand themselves.” It is indeed difficult to understand a people who have no anchor, but it is not impossible.

I believe there are tangible steps we can take to begin mending the divide between African Americans and other cultures within the diaspora. One step is to take control of our own narrative by first realizing that knowing and studying our history helps us to know who we are as a people. My mother puts it like this: “You cannot be free if you do not assert your own freedom.” We can do this by educating ourselves through reading books, learning from knowledgeable African American elders and leaders, and finding ourselves in spaces that offer education about our past *and* our future.

Another step, one that pertains to the African diaspora as a whole, is to foster a sense of familiarity and awareness between cultures. The only way this can be done is to develop genuine relationships with those outside of our own cultures. We need to be intentional about seeking out and building relationships with individuals and communities purely for the sake of attaining a more accurate perception of them. In this way, we can begin to dispel the false stereotypes we often hold so dear. Practically, I think this process can take place through a series of deliberate steps. It begins with reflecting on our own cultural identity—whether we have a strong sense of it or not. Then comes analyzing our cultural identity in relation to other cultures within the African diaspora and deciding if we even should view ourselves as a united people. Lastly comes the part where we actually branch out and make meaningful connections with those other cultures. (I charge each of us to determine what “meaningful” looks like.)

Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie posited in her TED Talk, entitled *The Danger of a Single Story*, that “like our economic and political worlds, stories, too, are defined by the principle of nkali [a noun that loosely translates to ‘to be greater than another.’] How they are told, who tells them, when they’re told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power.” Reclaiming our narrative, as is the theme for this year’s Black History Month at AU, requires intentionality and genuine regard for the humanity of others as to prevent falling prey to the danger of the “single story”. We have the power to re-evaluate the way we view and relate to one another, creating a space to make positive changes and ultimately build each other up as a united people.

How to Write a Great Personal Statement

Alannah Tjhatra 02.11.22



Photo by Justin Morgan (Unsplash)

Personal statements are stressful. How are you supposed to make yourself look good? How do you kiss up to a grad school in such a manner that they love you enough to accept you into their program? There are a lot of tips floating around, a lot of advice. But how does one actually *apply* these pieces of information? Below, I've compiled some tips on how to write a statement that is sure to increase your chances of getting you into your desired graduate school.

First of all: what *is* a personal statement?

A personal statement should serve to help the admissions board gain a deeper understanding of who you are, apart from just your education and work experience. It should explain why you're a great fit for the program you're applying to—why you are worth any time.

Ask yourself some questions.

This is always a good starting point. Some important ones may be:

- What are the key points I want to communicate about myself?
- What are my specific career goals, and how does graduate school play a role in these goals?
- Are there any causes for concern that should be addressed? (Ex. is there a career and schooling gap, or a low GPA at one point? How will I explain that?)
- What sets me apart and makes me unique from other graduate school applicants?

These are tough questions. If you're not sure how to even begin answering them, I suggest asking a close friend or family member what they believe your strengths are. Pay attention to your study habits and the classes you enjoy, and see how these things might fit into your personal statement. Try to think of previous experiences that have shaped a significant portion of you. (I recommend thinking about these questions in the shower, or before you go to bed so that they can haunt your dreams until you discover some answers.)

Once you have a response to these types of questions, you can form a general idea of how you want to shape your personal statement. You'll be able to figure out where your strengths lie and in what ways you can make yourself more attractive and unique to the admissions board.

Do your research.

To write a great personal statement, you should know what kind of individuals your grad school of choice is looking for. Do your research and, if possible, find out which professors or administrators are on the admissions committee. Learn what the school is known for, what its atmosphere seems to be. That way, you'll be able to 1) see if the school is a good fit for you in the first place and 2) tailor your personal statement as best you can to what the school is looking for. Of course, remain authentic about it. Don't invent hobbies that you never had or extracurriculars that you never participated in, just to look good for an Ad Com. (It didn't work for Noah Centineo in "The Perfect Date," and it definitely won't work for you.)

Make your first draft [without worrying](#) too much.

People are often daunted by that stubborn cursor at the top corner of a blank Word document, blinking away in loneliness. Don't be one of those people. Instead, *just start writing*. You don't need a detailed outline when you're just beginning. That

will come as you write. In my experience, the best ideas often appear when you're typing up a mindless rough draft. Once you get into the flow of things, allowing your mind to think freely, you will begin to see something emerge that you can continue to shape in future drafts.

Be specific.

A personal statement is about communicating what distinguishes you from other applicants. To accomplish this, it's a good idea to share specific anecdotes that highlight your statements. Nobody wants to know about that one time you did a generic something with a generic somebody and how it suddenly made you feel like you wanted to help people. (You know who I'm talking to here.) Instead, people want to hear about your unique, personal experiences. If you're a strong leader, write about a time that trait helped you succeed in a specific situation. If you're artistically inclined, tell of a particular situation in which your creativity greatly aided you. Write about your personal reasons for wanting to get into the program. Specific, personal stories will provide a deeper understanding of who you are and where your intentions lie.

Strike the right tone.

Speaking of personal stories, it's also important to give readers a glimpse of your personality and character—but you also have to ensure that you don't *overshare*. Grad schools want to get to know you, but they don't need to hear about that time you laughed so hard Sprite came out of your nose.

My opinion is that a personal statement can be conversational while still remaining professional. It should demonstrate your genuine interest and enthusiasm, and highlight your various strengths. It should also avoid the common cliches. For example, [avoid beginnings like](#): “From a young age...” or “I am applying to this place because...” Avoid telling stories that you *know* the board has heard a million times, and don't exaggerate or exploit your experiences. Instead, tell your story with clarity, sincerity, and integrity. Remember that [good writing is simple writing](#).

Be honest.

This is probably the most important thing to remember when writing a personal statement—and something I have touched on throughout this article. Still, I will reiterate it: be honest. Be yourself. It's important to try and bring out your best qualities, but don't make yourself into somebody you're not.

Proofread. Every single time.

As you start to reach the end of your personal statement journey, realize that you're not actually at the end. One or two drafts will rarely do it. As with any good piece of writing, your personal statement will require multiple rewrites and/or revisions. After you write a draft, let it sit for a while. Come back to it after a few days (or even weeks, if you have time), then rework it again. Proofread for grammar and spelling mistakes. Get multiple trustworthy sets of eyes on your drafts.

A personal statement is not an academic paper. It is not an essay or a resume that elucidates all the accomplishments of your undergraduate years. It is not a plea or justification for admission. Instead, a personal statement should serve as an authentic picture of who you are; an invitation for the reader to get to know you. It is a story that only you can write. Best of luck to all.

The Last Word

THE LAST WORD

The Diminishment of Dr. King's Legacy

Lyle Goulbourne 02.11.22



Photo by Unseen Histories (Unsplash)

In American discourse, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. has often been portrayed as a nearly mythical figure who ended institutional racism and whose legacy can be boiled down to his famous quote: “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their [character](#).” However, if you spend time examining what MLK said, did, and wrote during his life, you will find that he was much more extreme and disliked than we are led to believe. In fact, during his final year King held a 75% disapproval rating in America, which is higher than the disapproval

rating of Donald Trump at any point during his [presidency](#). So how has our perspective on Dr. King changed so drastically and what did he believe that caused him to be so widely disliked?

This specific quote on skin and character from King's "I Have a Dream" speech has been frequently called upon to denounce current racial justice movements. Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin [stated](#) "In the immortal words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., we're called to judge one another based on the content of our character and not the color of our skin. And that's why there's no place for critical race theory in our school system, and why, on day one, I'm going to ban it." When asked how he felt about giving minorities preferential access to Covid vaccines, Dr. Ben Carson stated "If Dr. Martin Luther King were here today, he would be absolutely offended. He wanted people to be judged by their character and not by the color of their skin."

This singular quote is constantly used to sum up MLK's legacy as advocating for colorblindness; then it is transferred to arguing against affirmative action or reparations or a variety of other race-based remedies to historical injustice. This ignores the fact that the purpose of King's dream speech was to promote the right for Black people to vote amidst Jim Crow segregation laws that made it legal to discriminate based solely on the color of someone's skin. MLK wanted to end the era of explicit discrimination in America, and one of the major obstacles to this goal was that many White Americans at the time judged people based solely on their skin and not their character. They therefore did not support ending legal discrimination against Black people. Today, the notion that everyone should be judged by their character and not their skin is something everyone should agree with, and the vast majority of people do. Therefore, telling everyone to judge someone based on the content of their character is a much lower bar, as that is the status quo. We need to evolve past using this one line from one speech that Dr. King gave as a benchmark for equality.

So what should be the benchmark for equality? Fortunately, Dr. King himself explicitly addressed this in the fourth and final book that he wrote before he was assassinated. King [stated](#), "The white liberal must affirm that absolute justice for the Negro simply means, in the Aristotelian sense, that the Negro must have 'his due.' There is nothing abstract about this. It is as concrete as having a good job, a good education, a decent house and a share of power. It is, however, important to understand that giving a man his due may often mean giving him special treatment. I am aware of the fact that this has been a troublesome concept for

many liberals, since it conflicts with their traditional ideal of equal opportunity and equal treatment of people according to their individual merits. But this is a day which demands new thinking and the reevaluation of old concepts. A society that has done something special against the Negro for hundreds of years must now do something special for him, in order to equip him to compete on a just and equal basis.” MLK is asserting that true justice and equality cannot be achieved by ignoring race and the history and disparities that led to the state of things today. In other words, it would be unjust to ask a bootless man to lift himself up by his bootstraps.

King knew that the fight for equality would prove much more difficult in this new arena. He [stated](#), “Many of the people who supported us in Selma and Birmingham were really outraged about the extremist behavior towards negroes. But they were not at that moment and they are not now committed to genuine equality for negroes. It’s much easier to integrate a lunch counter than it is to guarantee an annual income to get rid of poverty for negroes and all poor people. It’s much easier to integrate a bus than it is to make genuine integration a reality and quality education a reality in our schools. We are in a new era, a new phase of the struggle where we have moved from a struggle for decency, which characterized our struggle for 10-12 years, to a struggle for genuine equality, and this is where we’re getting the resistance because there was never any intention to go this far.” The most challenging part of the civil rights movement was not passing the Civil Rights Act, as this cost the country comparatively little. The most challenging part has been and will be finding economic justice.

In fact, MLK held many beliefs that were not and are not politically popular. He sought to confront economic injustice and the Vietnam [War](#), which angered liberal and White allies like President Lyndon [Johnson](#), while young Black activists grew impatient and skeptical of his non-violent [methods](#).

One of the less well-known aspects of MLK's legacy is that by the end of his life, he had become a champion against poverty, not just among Black people, but all Americans. Regarding economic injustice, King [stated](#) “We must ask the question, ‘Why are there forty million poor people in America?’ ...When you ask that question, you begin to question the capitalistic economy” and later [said](#) “It didn’t cost the nation one penny to integrate lunch counters, but now we are dealing with issues that cannot be solved without the nation spending billions of dollars and undergoing a radical redistribution of economic power.” King more explicitly stated his position by [saying](#), “I am convinced that capitalism has seen its best

days in America, and not only in America, but in the entire world. It is a well known fact that no social institute can survive when it has outlived its usefulness. This, capitalism has done. It has failed to meet the needs of the masses.” I am not here to debate the merits of capitalism, but I do want to note that despite what some may think, MLK advocated for a much more radical form of justice and equality than what he achieved before he was assassinated. Over the course of his career, MLK endorsed several economic policies that are not currently supported by many politicians from either party, including a federal jobs [guarantee](#), guaranteed [income](#), [reparations](#), and a complete elimination of [poverty](#).

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s legacy has been diminished, and as a result we believe he simply stood for peaceful protests and racial justice that is colorblind. However, this depiction hides the truth of what he believed. I hope that with knowledge of his beliefs we can better understand his legacy, what his legacy should be, and whether we are living up to it today.