The 2012 national theme for Black History Month is “Black Women in American Culture and History. From the earliest days of this nation through today, African American women have been influential in framing American socio political culture and history. While many prominent figures like Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, Toni Morrison and our First Lady Michelle Obama are well known there are still many, many figures whose contributions have been significant but remain virtually unknown. Below are a few examples of some black women who I would like to introduce you to. I encourage you to read more about these and other black women.

Regina M. Anderson (1901-1993) - Anderson was a playwright, librarian, and key member of the Harlem Renaissance. Anderson and W.E.B. Du Bois co-founded Krigwa Players which later became the Negro Experimental Theater.

Susie King Taylor (1848-1912) - Taylor is the author of Reminiscences of My Life in Camp with the 33rd United States Colored Troops, Late 1st S.C. Volunteers. She is believed to be the only black woman to publish a memoir of her wartime experiences.

Lisa P. Jackson (1962- present) - is a chemical engineer currently serving as the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). She is the first person of African American descent to serve as head of this agency.

Elizabeth H. Keckley (1818-1907) - was a former slave who became Mary Todd Lincoln’s custom dress maker. She is the author of Behind the Scenes Or, Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House.

Augusta Savage (1892-1962) - was an African American sculptor who worked nationally for equal representation of blacks in the arts. One of her most famous busts, titled Gamin, is on permanent display at the Smithsonian Art Museum in Washington, D.C.

Regina M. Benjamin (1956-present) - is the 18th Surgeon General of the United States. In addition to her medical degree, she also holds an MBA. As Surgeon General, she oversees an operational command of 6, 500 public health officers.
Celebrate Black History Month

Are you looking for a special way to celebrate Black History Month that is meaningful and will impact you and your family in a powerful way? I encourage you to register to participate in the Black Cultural Center’s “Discovering Your Family History – Genealogy and Cultural Tour” to Ft. Wayne, Indiana. The tour dates are March 2-3, 2012. We will visit one of the largest genealogical libraries in the United States, the Allen County Genealogical Center. The Genealogy Center is a remarkable family history destination. There you will have access to billions of U. S. historical records plus be able to leverage the millions of family trees and other helpful information. Representatives from the African American Genealogy Society of Ft. Wayne will be available to assist you with research.

The tour is designed to increase awareness of Black history and genealogy. A special workshop/storytelling session will be conducted by Condra Ridley. During this presentation, you will learn about the oral tradition of African American culture and experience how storytelling can be a powerful way to present family history. The afternoon will include a historical bus tour of Ft. Wayne, conducted by Dr. Miles Edwards. We will conclude with a visit to the premier African American Museum in Indiana, the African/African American Historical Society Museum. The Museum is dedicated to the memory of our ancestors. There you will view exhibitions that highlight the Middle Passage, Reconstruction, and the Civil Rights Movement. The Museum also includes a special collection of photographs and stories of the contributions of local Ft. Wayne citizens.

The BCC is sponsoring several other events in honor of Black History Month. Nationally known historian and author, Dr. Bettye Collier-Thomas will speak on “Black Women in American Culture and History” on Wednesday February 15. We look forward to the Langston Hughes Project on February 29, which will bring poetry, a jazz quartet and visual imagery celebrating Hughes’s work to Fowler Hall in the Stewart Center. We are thrilled to collaborate with the Art Museum to present “Trading Spaces: Exchanged Collections of African and African American Art”. I invite you to visit the BCC to see outstanding pieces of African and African American art on loan from the Art Museum of Greater Lafayette and Wabash College. I look forward to your participation in the celebration of Black History Month at Purdue.

Renee Thomas
Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon
The Fierce Urgency of Now

Nicolette Crouch, Staff Writer

On January 18th, 2012 Purdue held a commemorative program titled “The Fierce Urgency of Now” in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the Loeb Theater in the Stewart Center. The program was a part of the various week-long celebrations honoring Dr. King. As I walked into the theater I was greeted by an air of excitement and inspiration; men, women, and children of all ages and races were seated anxious to hear the enlightening words of Bernice Johnson Reagon. Reagon has been a very important voice against racism and inequality for over forty years. She is not only an outstanding teacher and speaker, but her voice and music have been a source of hope for Americans all across the nation. Dr. Irwin Weiser, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, illustrated Reagon as a “…self-described song talker”.

As the program began, the audience was privileged with a welcoming message from Dr. France Cordova, President of Purdue University, and Dr. G. Christine Taylor, Vice Provost for Diversity and Inclusion. Shortly after various awards in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were announced. Dr. Ian Ridgeway, professor of Earth and Atmospheric Science received the 2012 Dreamer Award and Jenaffer Beasley, a Jefferson High School teacher, received the Dream Teacher Award.

After the awards were presented Bernice Johnson Reagon took the stage. “No bomb can cure the dream I have, freedom never dies…” Reagon sang a cappella as she walked out on the stage. I was awed and stilled as I listened to Reagon’s song by the all-women ensemble called Sweet Honey on the Rocks. Reagon founded the ensemble in 1973, and the group has been a strong presence in the community and hearts of Washington, D.C. As Reagon came to the end of the song, the audience chimed in on the last few lines. I was very eager to hear the words of wisdom Reagon was soon to tell.

Reagon was an active participant during the Civil Rights movement in the 1960’s offering the audience stories and testimonies ranging from her expulsion from Albany University due to a non-violent demonstration to her fears and experiences during the Montgomery Bus Boycott. We listened to accounts from the nation-wide sit-ins that took place at universities all across the nation and stories from the Freedom Riders who were arrested for non-violent demonstration. Throughout Reagon’s entire speech the audience was challenged to “be fierce” when faced with a situation that is not morally right. Reagon ended her speech by addressing all of her experiences throughout the Civil Rights Movement. “This might look like history unless you ask yourself ‘What is bothering you about the world you live in now’?”

Therefore, as the theme of the program emphasized, be fierce and be urgent, for our freedom was not one won without strife.
Accolades To.......  

Special retirement congratulations to Roger Blalock, Senior Associate Director, Intercollegiate Athletics for his 42 years of service to Purdue University.

Retirement congratulations also go out to Jackie Jimerson, Director of Multicultural Programs & Senior Associate Director Office of Student Services for the College of Pharmacy. You both will be greatly missed!

Applause to BCC friend and university photographer, Mark Simons, on receiving a gold medal from the Service Industry Advertising Awards (SIAA). The award recognizes the creativity and communication achievements of the service industry. Mark frequently travels with the BCC during our fall research tours documenting our experiences via photography!
Sister Citizen: Shame Stereotypes and Black Women in America
Casarae Gibson, Guest columnist

Tulane University professor and MSNBC political analyst Melissa Harris–Perry published *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes and Black Women in America* (2011). The anticipated release captures the intimate lives of African American women and their daily politics relative to how they examine the society and state in which they live. Harris-Perry examines the psychological, personal and emotional experiences that Black women experience publicly, which Harris-Perry claims are inherently political. To support her hypothesis, Harris-Perry outlines an introduction and seven chapters that chronicle the harsh but courageous experiences black women have endured because of racism and gender inequality in the United States. She begins with an excerpt from Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* using the female protagonist Janie Mae Crawford to frame a complex discussion about black women caricatures depicted historically and in American popular culture. These caricatures the Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire are critically analyzed in chapter two titled: “The Myth.” Harris-Perry gives historical information about these caricatures and how they have become lasting stereotypical identifiers that render false notions of black women’s experiences in the United States. She terms this the black women’s crooked room, where black women are often misrecognized for their character and work ethic precisely because the Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire stereotypes hold tangible weight in the public recognition of black women. To give credence to her historical information, Harris-Perry provides collective data from black women focus groups across the country that openly talk about their identities, relationships, motherhood and finances. She also retells historical incidents such as the depictions of black women in the Hurricane Katrina disaster and the complexity of race and gender surrounding the 2006 Duke Lacrosse controversy where Crystal Mangum, a black woman, falsely accused three white male Lacrosse players of rape. Thus, Harris-Perry emphasizes that black women discuss and handle pejorative depictions of themselves often in shame. This collective shaming that she argues in chapter three calls for the decades of emotional pain black women have felt about their identities both racially and gendered. To counter this shame, she offers examples of how black women deal with this pain often by affirming their strength and their qualities of self-sufficiency. Harris-Perry ends with a chapter titled: “Michelle” as she discusses the progressive ways black women are living their lives as professionals and as family women. She centers First Lady Michelle Obama at the crux of her ending chapter to signal her reader audience in recognizing how pejorative depictions of black women are ever present, however, black women are continuing to diminish those depictions.

I highly recommend this book because Harris-Perry blends well historical, analytical, and scientific data that recognizes the continuance of shaming stereotypes that often fault black women collectively in varied ways. To this end, Harris-Perry provides a complex discussion that centers black women at the root of the discussion that vocalizes our concerns in a forward thinking manner.

“This book is not a work of history, but it relies on black women’s history as a frame for understanding contemporary politics” (20)

Casarae Gibson is a graduate student in the English Department and serves as Scholar in Residence for the Black Thought Collective.
As students at Purdue, it is always important to know what resources the campus can offer and benefit your scholastic achievement; therefore, here are three libraries that you may not have known much about.

**The Earth and Atmospheric Sciences (EAS) library, which can also be referred to as the Map library because of their extensive collection of maps in their map room.**

Location: CIVIL, room 2253, enter through 2215  
Hours: Mon. – Fri. 8 a.m.-5 p.m.  
The Curator Terry Wade revealed she knew many students did not know about the library because, “we get a lot of students and graduate students that say they didn’t even know it was here and that we have a map room. But EAS students know about us and of course students who take classes in this building.” “It’s a good place to study, and we’ll be getting more seating space for more studying and if they need a map,” Wade added.

**The Pharmacy library best known as the Pharmacy, Nursing, and Health Sciences Library.**

Location: Pharmacy building, room 272  
Hours: Mon. - Thurs. 8 a.m. - 10 p.m., Fri. 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Vicki Killion, head of the Health and Life Sciences Division, explained that “this library holds material that supports programs in pharmacy, nursing, health care issues, and information on drugs. It is a small library, during the day there are a lot of students but at the same time a quiet library.” Killion included an interesting fact for students who may want to check out the library’s material, “We have a huge collection on natural products such as herbal medicine.”

**The Digital Learning Collabortory**

Purdue Libraries and Information Technology at Purdue combined resources in 2002 to create the Digital Learning Collabortory (DLC). According to their web page “DLC’s mission is to support and facilitate the integrated learning of information and technology literacy for Purdue University students.”  
Location: Basement of the Hicks library, room B850  
Hours: Monday – Thurs. 7 a.m. - 2 a.m., Fri. 7 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
When Sean McLane, Assistant Administrative Coordinator of the Collabortory was asked what the DLC could offer students. He said “It offers a lab with a concentration in multimedia, digital videos, and graphics. We have staff members who can help students with these programs.” McLane also added that professional cameras could now be checked out from the Hicks front desk instead of the lab.

It is best to get familiar with these three locations because they may be helpful during your years at Purdue.
Trading Spaces: Exchanged Collections of African and African-American Art

Allias Jones, Staff Writer

Should you travel to the Art Museum of Greater Lafayette off of the corner of 10th and South Street, you will find quite the treasure trove of valuable African-themed art in the Robert B. & Eleanor M. McDonald Gallery for Regional Artists.

From January 20th to March 14th, this art gallery will hold several pieces from six private collections selected by guest curator Mona Berg, the former Director of Purdue Galleries. These pieces were chosen from Berg’s own collection, as well as the collections belonging to the Purdue Black Cultural Center, Purdue University Galleries, the Wabash College Museum, Dr. Derek Davenport, and Dr. France Cordova and Christian Foster.

Christian Foster was actually quite pleased to be involved in the formation of this collection, from meeting with the committee in Westwood to aid in choosing the pieces to using art from his own living room. “It’s a great idea,” Foster remarked. “I’m excited I was asked to be part of it. No one had ever asked me before.”

The Art Museum of Greater Lafayette held the opening reception for its four exhibits on January 20th, where key members behind the scenes of the exhibit were acknowledged. BCC director, Renee Thomas, was asked to say a few words on the Trading Spaces Exhibit, commenting on the two very different audiences that are attracted to the Black Cultural Center and the Art Museum of Greater Lafayette, as well as her hope to diversify and expand those audiences. “The exchange,” Thomas stated during her remarks, “is one small way to celebrate the history and diversity of our heritage.”

There was also an opportunity to speak with LaToya Hobbs, an artist with a piece featured in the exhibit. A graduate student at Purdue University, she has been working as an artist since 2007 and believes it is “always a pleasure to share my work with the general public.” This is her second time showing her work at the Art Museum of Greater Lafayette. In addition, her work is also currently being featured at the National Wet Paint Exhibition and the Zhou B. Art Center, both in Chicago.

Feel free to check out the Art Museum of Greater Lafayette to partake in some particularly poignant pieces of African and African-American art from January 20th to March 14th. Also, as part of the trading spaces program, African American artworks from the Art Museum’s permanent collection will be on display at the Black Cultural Center during the same time frame. Please join us and take part in this exotic and enriching endeavor.
If you have ever been on a tour of the BCC led Jolivette Anderson-Douoning, our Cultural Liaison & Program Specialist, or myself you will no doubt hear the phrase captured in the title of this editorial. As an undergraduate I studied American history with a concentration on the 20th century African American experience. Now as a graduate student in American studies at Purdue I am extending my interest in African American Studies by examining the life, culture and thought of the maturing black female. So I guess it goes without saying that in many ways I live and breathe black history, black culture and black thought. Some reading this might at first glance think that saying I live and breathe black history, culture and thought might be too narrow a path for living. However, I would argue quite the contrary. Studying black history, black culture and black thought intersects with so many other people and places throughout the United States and the world. For example one cannot truly examine the history of the NAACP without running across Mary White Ovington, Oswald Garrison Villard or Dr. Henry Moscovitz, who were white, Jewish and founding members of the organization. Or if you truly study the Black Panther Party you will definitely need to know about Richard Aoki, a Japanese American and founding member of the Oakland, California BPP who eventually became field marshal in the organization. For those who might be interested in black literary greats like Langston Hughes or Richard Wright, a study of their life will take you to Europe. While living in Europe, Wright became friends with Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. I think you get the picture. African American studies, Black Studies, Africana Studies, or whatever title you choose, is a field whose “tentacles” have the ability to connect you to many people throughout our nation and across the globe. I encourage you to consider taking a class in the department, attend some programming, visit the BCC, or at least read more about it. Be careful it may become a lifelong passion!