The Black Cultural Center Explores Low Country Culture

The tour included an exploration of the African American heritage of Savannah, Georgia. One of the sites of the tour, led by Jamal Toure, was First African Baptist Church. The church organized in 1773 created the first black Sunday school in North America. Here the group is pictured with Jamal Toure and Mayor Edna Branch Jackson, the first African American to hold this position.

In five days filled with research, master classes, tours, performances, lectures, food and fun the BCC Performing Arts Ensembles traveled to St. Helena, South Carolina and Savannah, Georgia to study our fall semester theme “Gullah Folklore: [Re]membering Our Pathways Through Low Country Legacies”

The October 4-8 tour serves as a “map” which Artists-In-Residence and performers will use to share the tour experience at the annual Cultural Arts Festival on Friday, December 6 and throughout the semester. The tour participants included BCC staff, ensemble members, Artists-In-Residence and Purdue photographer Mark Simons.

Research tour participants pose after enjoying a tour of the grounds of the historic Penn Center. Penn Center was founded in 1862 as a school for formerly enslaved Africans. In the early 20th century the school modeled its curriculum after that established by Booker T. Washington at the Tuskegee Institute. Later during the 1960s Penn Center served as a retreat site for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other Civil Rights leaders and groups. Today its mission is the preservation and promotion of the significance of Gullah history and culture.
April Turner instructed the dance master class. In this session ensemble members learned a traditional West African Harvest Dance. The movements of the dance tell the story of the agricultural process leading up to and including the harvest.

St. Helena native and fourth generation-sweet grass basket maker, Jery Bennett-Taylor, taught tour participants the basics of starting a sweet grass basket. The baskets are sewn using sweet grass from palmetto leaves. Bennett-Taylor explained the labor intensive process. She actually goes into marshy areas and collects the leaves. This is becoming more and more difficult due to the commercial development of land on the sea islands.

Storyteller and actress Natalie Daise works with a tour participant during her storytelling master class. Folklore and storytelling is a main staple of the Gullah Geechee culture. Many stories feature animals and spirits with human characteristics that teach moral lessons that are important to the community. The December Cultural Arts Festival will include artistic expressions of some traditional Gullah/Geechee folklore!
2013 Roger Blalock Emerging Leader Awards

At the 2013 Multicultural Student Leaders Conference the 2nd Roger Blalock Emerging Leader Award was presented to Purdue Students who attended the 2012 Empowering and Cultivating Emerging Leaders Student Conference. The award honors Blalock who graduated from Purdue University in 1969 with a bachelor’s degree in Physical Education and a Communication minor. Roger was a two-year basketball letter winner during his time as a student at Purdue. After graduation Roger served in many capacities at Purdue and was working as a Senior Associate Athletics Director until his retirement in January 2012. Throughout his 41 year career with Purdue he was seen as a trailblazer for many minority students on campus. Roger passed away unexpectedly on April 9, 2012. To be eligible to be considered for the award applicants must:

• Be in good academic standing according to university policy
• Must demonstrate community and campus involvement
• Must have attended the previous year’s leadership conference.

This years winners are Morgan Ashley Craft and Carmen Cucalon. See a brief profile of the winners below:

Morgan Ashley Craft
Sophomore
Major: Chemistry
“My primary leadership goal before I leave Purdue is to be a mentor to someone. In my short time at Purdue, I have accumulated many formal and informal mentors that have guided supported and encouraged me, My hope is to help as many people as I can. Being able to make a lasting impact on the world is very important to me.”

Carmen Cucalon
Sophomore
Major: Dietetics/Nutrition, Fitness & Health
“My primary leadership goal before I leave Purdue is to be able to acquire the leadership skills, knowledge and experiences needed to go back to my country, El Salvador, and work with the rural communities in spreading the importance of eating healthy, with the purpose of decreasing malnutrition.”

Juanita Crider, Editor
Lines snaked around the engineering fountain and the bell tower. The thousands of people waiting to enter Elliott Hall of Music to see the famous American astrophysicist, Neil deGrasse Tyson, made an impressive sight. Tyson drew in a crowd of nearly 6000 people this past September. Families with young children shuffled into seats next to groups of guys sporting backwards hats and tank tops. Some people had arrived as early as 3 p.m. to secure their seats, four hours before Tyson took the stage at 7 p.m. Music from 2001: A Space Odyssey, Start Trek, and other iconic science fiction works filled Elliott Hall of Music while patrons anxiously waited.

After two brief introductions, the audience erupted in a standing ovation as Neil DeGrasse Tyson strode onto the stage. He quickly begged the audience to at least let him earn a standing ovation before giving him one. Tyson also admitted that his black and gold attire was purely coincidental. A large projector screen towered above him as he gave his presentation titled, “This Just In.”

His talk centered on current events in the science community as well as Tyson’s opinions on society and his relationship with science. He jabbed at people’s fascination with scientifically insignificant things like the Harvest Moon, which fell on the night of the speech. Even dealing with a few people shouting professions of love for him during his speech, Tyson managed to keep his presentation light and full of jokes while expressing his deep passion for knowledge. During his speech, he took note of the smaller children in the audience, some as young as seven. Tyson encouraged their presence and even asked a few of them some questions. He discussed current advances, such as the Higgs Boson, the Mars rover, the Voyager 1 departure from our solar system, and his role in the “killing of Pluto.” After dismissing the concept of “intelligent design” by referring to dozens of the many ways “the universe wants to kill you,” Tyson looked to the future. He realistically evaluated future projects like the Mars One colony. To end his presentation, Tyson turned off the lights while reading from, in his words, “The Book of Sagan.” The crowd sat in silence and darkness except for the sound of Tyson’s voice and a beautiful image of Saturn with Earth as merely “a pale blue dot.”

The presentation earned Tyson a standing ovation, and the audience happily gave him one again. He opened the floor to a variety of different questions and answered all of them in depth. When asked about NASA’s history office, Tyson noted that “all NASA has is its history.” Neil DeGrasse Tyson continued to answer questions well beyond his scheduled speaking time before finally ending his talk.

APPLAUSE TO.....

Congratulations to Purdue alumnus and former BCC newsletter staff writer, Kendra Bracken Ferguson, who was a recent recipient of the College of Liberal Arts Emerging Voice Award. The CLA Emerging Voice Award recognizes young alumni who are models in their career, change agents in their communities, and representing the College as independent thinkers and visionary leaders who are productive, engaged, members of society.
The third day of the tour was spent at Geechee Kunda in Riceboro, Georgia. The day involved a variety of workshops on African inspired musical instruments, sugarcane harvesting, herbal medicine, blacksmithing and living history. One of the most enjoyable and talked about experiences was ensemble members engaging with what would be their dinner; i.e. the crabs for the crab boil. In the above pictures you see the before and after!

Indigo textile artist, Ariane King-Comer, instructed ensemble members in the historical process of using authentic indigo for textiles. Participants were able to decorate their own piece of cloth using the dye and a stamping technique. Indigo is a common dye used in many west African fabrics. Most of the indigo dye used today in clothing is synthetic. The authentic dye comes from the indigo plant. The leaves are processed in water to extract the dye. It is believed to be one of the oldest dyes known to man.
Participants visited the Pin Point Heritage Museum. Here they learned about the role of the crabbing, shrimping and oyster industry as employment for many in the Gullah/Geechee community. In this picture, ensemble members are learning hands on how crab baskets are made. Pin Point was an isolated and self-sustained Gullah/Geechee community founded by first generation freedmen and home of the A. S. Varn & Son oyster and crab factory. In 1985 the factory closed. In 2012 the factory re-opened as the Pin Point Heritage Museum in celebration of the history of this Gullah/Geechee community.

While at Geechee Kunda ensemble members participated in a session about African inspired musical traditions and instruments and also enjoyed the opportunity to join the Gullah Geechee Ring Shouters in an interactive workshop.
Most of us are aware of Purdue’s reputation of world class research that attracts the best and brightest students. That’s why most of us chose Purdue. But did you know that you’ve been hitting the books, your fellow Boilermakers have been busy hitting the halls of the Statehouse?

An effort led by former Purdue Student Body President, Brett Highley produced Indiana’s Lifeline Law which provides immunity for some alcohol-related offenses. According to indianalifeline.org, the law provides immunity for the crimes of public intoxication, minor possession, minor consumption, and minor transport to persons who reveal themselves to law enforcement while seeking medical assistance for a person suffering from an alcohol-related health emergency.

In order to receive immunity, the person must demonstrate that they are acting in good faith by completing ALL of the following:
- Providing their full name any other relevant information requested by law enforcement officers
- Remaining on the scene until law enforcement and emergency medical assistance arrives
- Cooperating with authorities on the scene

The law will not interfere with law enforcement procedures or limit the ability to prosecute for other criminal offenses such as providing to a minor, operating while intoxicated, or possession of a controlled substance.

“This law tells young adults that our priority is to get professional medical attention to those who need it, no matter what. It will remove the disincentives currently in place and encourage Hoosiers to seek medical assistance for those who need it.” says Highley.

The Lifeline Law has the potential to impact the lives of many Indiana students. The 2012 Indiana College Substance Use Survey reports that two-thirds of the Indiana college students who participated in the survey (67%) reported using alcohol in the month prior to the survey. Three-fifths (59%) of these students were under 21 years of age.

The Indiana Lifeline took effect in July of 2012, Purdue University was ahead of the game developing the PurdueCARES program in June of 2011. The policy stresses Purdue’s recognition that the potential of disciplinary actions could factor into a student’s decision to seek medical attention for themselves or others in an alcohol related emergency. This sparked the Purdue Community Alcohol-Related Emergency Situation (PurdueCARES) Program and policy:

“In cases of student intoxication and/or alcohol poisoning that occur on the West Lafayette campus, on the premises of a Recognized Student Organization or at a function sponsored by a Recognized Student Organization, the intoxicated student, as well as the student(s) seeking medical attention on the intoxicated student’s behalf, will be exempt from disciplinary sanctions related to alcohol consumption.”

If you or a fellow Boilermaker need assistance with issues related to alcohol or substance abuse you are encouraged to contact PUSH or CAPS.

Additional resources may be found at:
http://www.purdue.edu/swo/aod/resources.shtml
http://www.purdue.edu/makethecall/index.shtml
http://www.indianalifeline.org/
Quotes From the Research Tour...

“This may be one of my favorite trips. We have learned so much. I wish I could absorb it more. I’m excited to see what comes from this Cultural Arts Festival.” - Jasmine Morris, Senior

“The trip has been amazing! I have learned so much and expanded my knowledge in so many ways.” - Kyle Jordan De Deaux, Freshman

“This trip was really amazing! I made so many connections between this trip and the one to Ghana. It’s nice to learn something new that follows a theme. I feel so happy that my university provides us with these opportunities I would not have had otherwise.” - LaQuan Lunford, Junior

“Aside from Africa, I never thought of other ways we are all connected. Learning about the Gullah-Geechee people has taught me a lot about my own history. As a proud Liberian, and African, I now know my ancestors also came from this land.” - Roly Clarke, Senior

Indigo Freedom: BCC Cultural Arts Festival

Friday, December 6, 2013
Loeb Playhouse, 7 pm
General Public: $7
Purdue Students: $5