History Inherited: Jahari Spring Production

Spring semester at the Black Cultural Center means that ensemble spring productions are in full force. The remaining April production is “History Inherited” featuring the Jahari Dance Troupe. It takes place on April 26, 2014 7:00 pm at Loeb Playhouse. The title of the show was chosen to represent a reflection of the things Jahari learned as a group from the fall 2014 research tour. After returning from the tour, ensemble members desired for their choreography to mirror the many legacies of Gullah culture. Jahari student coordinator, Jordann Phillips, shares this about the show “When we reconvened from the fall semester I asked all the members who would like to choreograph a piece and to express their creative vision through dance reflecting one thing or concept we learned from the research tour? All of the choreographers were given creative freedom with their music selection as well as their costumes.”

Jahari has been working diligently all year to conduct a mind blowing spring show. The rehearsal process is definitely one that is very tiring for both the choreographers and the dancers. Practicing every week two times a week for 3 hours at a time could be very time demanding and frustrating especially when balancing class requirements with academic success. Yet according to Phillips, “We all realize that through these hard times this makes us stronger and better as people and that we have each other which draws us closer as a group.” The week of the show is “tech week” and this week is a lot different from any regular week of practice because instead of just practicing two days a week the ensemble practices every day and are in the theater running through all the dances and learning new spacing arrangements along with timing and lighting for the show.

When asked to describe the show, ensembles members shared the following: “It’s an inspirational and uplifting show.” “It will be a performance that we are hoping will inspire you to pursue your calling.” and “It inspires self-discovery and empowerment!” The show is directed and choreographed by Kevin Iega Jeff and Josh Ishmon of Deeply Rooted Dance Theatre, Artists-In-Residence for the Jahari Dance Troupe.

When: Saturday, April 26, 2014 7:00 pm
Where: Loeb Playhouse, Stewart Center
Price: Purdue Students $5, General Public, $7

Juanita Crider, Editor
An Ambitious and Exciting Year...

The 2013-14 academic year was an ambitious and exciting one. The Purdue Black Cultural Center rose to exceptional heights truly fulfilling our mission to be one of America’s best cultural centers. Statistics can’t tell the entire story of the success of the BCC but they are not a bad place to start. This year, the BCC had 88 students involved in our Performing Arts Ensembles, 22% of our students achieved a 3.5 or higher GPA and 92% earned at least a 2.5 GPA. The BCC ITaP lab has 10,642 users, 42 cultural and educational programs were executed featuring guest speakers, performers, film screenings, art exhibitions and more. 91% of our audience members ranked BCC programs as good or excellent. $10,000 in scholarships were distributed to academically successful students, the largest and most diverse audience ever attended the Gospel Meets Symphony program featuring the Black Voices of Inspiration choir and the Lafayette Symphony Orchestra. The community stayed abreast of BCC activities by reading more than 60 newspaper articles in the Journal and Courier and Exponent, watching 12 WLFI and WISH TV broadcasts and listening to radio interviews on National Public Radio station WBAA and Indianapolis urban station, WTLC. 6 editions of the BCC newsletter were published and distributed to 2,500 individuals on a monthly basis. A new electronic publication, BCC Cultural Briefs was launched to a world-wide audience. Next month, 17 students will participate in a study abroad experience to Brazil in partnership with the African American Studies and Research Center. Not only are we preparing students for international experiences but we also provide domestic diversity experiences for all students at Purdue. While these statistics and figures are impressive, they can’t begin to describe the energy, creativity and educational assets the center provides. The productions by the BCC ensembles have never been better, richer and more varied. The BCC challenges, inspires, elevates, educates and enlarges the spirit of everyone who elects to make it part of their Purdue education. We do something very special at the Black Cultural Center; we show things worth seeing and tell stories worth telling. The BCC is a beacon for our campus in fostering acceptance and promoting diversity and inclusion. The work at the BCC inspires me. We have something really special here as evidenced by the comments shared by our graduating students in this issue. As the semester draws to a close, I invite you to soak in the empowering surroundings at the BCC and make a commitment to increase your level of involvement and participation in the fall.

Sincerely,
Renee A. Thomas, Director
New Direction Players Spring Production

The New Directional Players (NDP), under the direction of Artist-In-Residence, Kecha Nickson, performed *Long Time Since Yesterday* by P.J. Gibson on April 11-12, 2014. The play is about a group of successful middle age Black women in the 80s who come together to mourn the death of a friend. The women were all college friends during the 60s. Therefore the play reveals stories of their triumphs and tribulations throughout those years. The playwright, P.J. Gibson, is the author of over thirty plays. She holds an M.F. A. in Theatre Arts from Brandeis University and a B.A. in Drama, Religion, and English from Keuka College. *Long Time Since Yesterday* alone has upwards of sixty productions. Currently Gibson is Professor of English at John Jay College.

When asked about the play selection process, Sara Muhammad, NDP student coordinator, explains it this way, “The selection process is driven by ensemble membership for the semester and what type of roles they can be placed in. This semester we have six women and six roles so the play is a perfect fit.” The rehearsal time leading up to show week is very intense, according to Muhammad. Although the play can be described as a dark comedy, there is also a significant amount of drama. NDP is very adept at tackling tough issues for subject matter in their work because they prefer pieces that relate to real world issues. This show was no different. Audience members enjoyed an engaging and thought provoking performance.

Congratualtions to all those who received the following awards at the Black Graduate Student Association’s Annual Award Banquet:

*Engagement-AGEP*

*Dr. Luther S. Williams Leadership Award*

*Kadari Taylor-Watson*

*Dr. Delores Cooper Shockley Presidential Award*

*Aria Halliday*

Juanita Crider, Editor
Graduates...

Each spring we give graduating BCC employees and ensemble members an opportunity to reflect and share feelings about their time at Purdue University. Read and enjoy!
Profiles of graduating seniors are continued on pg. 6

Jasmine Morris, Student Coordinator of Haraka Writers, Chemical Engineering, minor in Psychology

“I have been working for the BCC since second semester my freshman year when I became the student coordinator of the Haraka Writers. I started working as a library assistant in January 2011. I am seeking employment in the Lafayette area and possibly looking into graduate school as my post-graduation plans. The BCC has been a home away from home for me. It has been a place that I can relax and decompress. The BCC has been an instrumental part of my undergraduate career and I will always have a connection to the Center. I am very grateful for people I have met, friends I have made, and the experiences I have had.”

Kiara M. Johnson, New Directional Players, Wildlife

I have been active in the BCC as a member of the New Directional Players since the first semester of my freshman year. That was also the year I went on my first research tour. My major is wildlife. I am still actively seeking employment with national parks across the United States. Being active in the BCC gave me a sense of home while I was here at Purdue, especially since I didn’t visit home very often. It was amazing to be around like-minded people with similar interests from different cities and states. What I really like about the BCC is the sense of unity and encouragement. I know that I can always walk into the BCC and see a friendly face with whom I am unafraid to be myself around. That attitude carried over into my classes and helped me to make connections with my peers and professors in my department.”
The BCC also congratulates the following ......

Rechard Peel
Rolyn Clarke
Audrianna Marzette
Deanna Isaac
Ebony Woodard
Aria Halliday
Crissy Travis
Raymond Jones

We wish all graduates success in all of their future endeavors!
Stephanie Nicole Wilson (Prada), Student Coordinator
Black Thought Collective, African American Studies,
minor in Women in Gender and Sexuality Studies/ LG-BTQ Studies

“The Purdue Black Cultural Center is the reason I’m graduating today! It has not only offered me a safe space to explore my culture and hold dialogue about racial issues, but the ability to take part in research tours allowed me to have real life experience with culture. The staff has been pivotal in my motivation to succeed in this academic space and beyond Purdue. Not only do I feel I could come to them with anything personal going on in life but they have trained me as a coordinator to have the proper professional skills to market myself in other employment opportunities.

My fellow ensemble members have become my brothers and sisters here. It has made being away from family and friends back home an easier transition. The work done at the cultural center confirms in me my decision to major in African American Studies and to continue to do the work involved in spreading cultural awareness and diversity.”

Naeemah Webb, Member of the Black Thought Collective, M.A. American Studies, Los Angeles

She is receiving a M.A. degree in American Studies and plans to continue through the doctoral program at Purdue. As a member of the Black Thought Collective, Ms. Webb has enjoyed the opportunity to connect with others “who share the same passion and fervor to do research which impacts our respective communities.” Through her affiliation with the BCC, Naeemah was able to study abroad in Ghana. She notes this as one of her most influential BCC experiences. “Overall the BCC has kept me grounded while at Purdue, I walk out of the Center reminded of the African proverb ‘I am because we are; we are therefore’ which to me means that my success helps my community, and that thought alone keeps me pressing on.”
Breaking Bread At Purdue
Cultivating a cohesive, meaningful experience for African-American Students At Purdue

What is “Breaking Bread at Purdue?” It is a campus-wide collective effort that will establish an intra-cultural support network for Black students. Breaking Bread is designed to enhance the academic, cultural and social experience of Black students at Purdue.

Key Programs: The Black Male Excellence Network (B-MEN)

The Breaking Bread Philosophy

A solutions-focused opportunity to engage in meaningful interaction that highlights student successes and progress, igniting powerful energy to expose and address barriers and disparities at Purdue in addition to equipping students with the tools necessary to identify and coordinate appropriate strategic responses.

Why Bread?

The process of making bread is quite extensive and serves as the perfect metaphor for identifying and understanding student experiences and how we at Purdue can engage to challenge and support students in rising to their greatest potential to become productive leaders and global citizens.

The process of making [bread] involves…


Why Breaking Bread?

National research suggests that successful black students matriculate through college because they find peer support, develop social capital and political acumen, develop strong racial identities, and craft productive responses to micro aggressions.

For more information about Breaking Bread at Purdue please contact: Cason Brunt, Assistant Director at: brunt@purdue.edu or (765) 494-9374.
Ahhh …I love the aura of spring on college campuses. In addition to the budding blooms beginning to peek through the grass and students, faculty and staff melting from the polar vortex, spring finds me reflecting on poetry, prose, and pomp and circumstance. April is National Poetry Month and as someone who dabbles a bit in poetry, it is during this month that I am reminded of a quote from Rita Dove, former Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress and second African American to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry: “Poetry is language at its most distilled and most powerful.” I also think of prose; i.e. I begin to line up a list of for pleasure summer reading. This is something I look forward to after the required readings from a semester of scholarship in my graduate program. Lastly, this time of year the aroma of accomplishment infuses the campus atmosphere. Some have accomplished their first year and are setting goals for the next academic year. Others are closer to graduation than they were in August. While others will be donning the cap and gown to promenade to Pomp and Circumstance and thinking of post graduation plans. Faculty and staff are already planning and preparing for summer and fall to welcome new and returning faces. Despite where you fit in the above categories I recommend you extract some of the essence of this season of rejuvenation, renewal, resurrection and regrowth. Congratulations to all of the graduates. I wish you success in all of your future endeavors. Please continue to be life long learners!

Juanita Crider, Editor