The Black Cultural Center Visits Birmingham and Selma, Alabama

In five days filled with research, master classes, tours, performances, lectures, food and fun the BCC Performing Arts Ensembles traveled to Birmingham & Selma, Alabama to study the fall semester theme, “The Black Freedom Struggle: Historical Narratives, Contemporary Echoes.”

The October 9-13 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 4, 2015 and throughout the semester. The tour participants included BCC staff, ensemble members, Artists-In-Residence and Purdue photographer Mark Simons.

Research tour participants pose in front of the dome at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. In addition to being an architectural masterpiece, the institute is a local, national and international education and cultural resource offering a comprehensive set of programs and exhibits emphasizing the struggle for civil rights. They blend text and modern technology to share the history of the Civil Rights Movement.

One of the many highlights of the research tour was crossing the Edmund W. Pettus Bridge. This bridge is an iconic symbol of the Civil Rights Movement. Civil Rights activists first attempted to cross this bridge, marching from Selma to Montgomery on March 7, 1965. As they crossed the bridge, they were met with violence from law enforcement officials. This event is known as Bloody Sunday. Eventually after national and international media attention in concert with federal court intervention, marchers were able to freely cross the bridge on Sunday March 27, 1965. By this time the number of marchers increased from 600 to over 3,000. People continued to join the marchers as they traveled along U.S. Highway 80. By the time they reached Montgomery, there were over 20,000 people.
Tour participants visit the Civil Rights Memorial located across the street from the Southern Poverty Law Center building in Montgomery, Alabama. The engravings on the granite circle chronicle the history of the Civil Rights Movement and include the names of movement martyrs. Water also flows from the center and travels across the monument. The monument was designed by Maya Lin who also designed “To Heal A Nation,” the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

The above photograph was taken by Gordon Parks Fine Arts Ensemble member Terrance Jackson. All others were taken by Purdue Photographer Mark Simons.

On Saturday evening following dinner, the J. Lockhart Performing Arts Institute performed from their show “It Takes a Village” for PAE members in the auditorium of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. The performance told the story of blacks struggle for freedom from the Civil Rights era to today. The show featured dance, poetry and song.
On Friday, December 4, 2015 at 7p.m. in Loeb Playhouse the Black Cultural Center will present its 42nd Annual Cultural Arts Festival: “#Crossing the Bridge: Selma to Ferguson.” The festival will showcase a semester’s worth of research about our fall theme “The Black Freedom Struggle: Historical Narratives, Contemporary Echoes.”

This year’s show derived its name from tour participants making direct connections between the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and the contemporary #Blacklivesmatter Movement. The show provides students an opportunity to display their knowledge and share insights gained while traveling to Birmingham, Selma and Montgomery, Alabama and visiting sites of protest, struggle and organizing during the Civil Rights Movement of the 60s. When asked what should audiences expect, student coordinator for the Black Voices of Inspiration, Kimberly Graves, replied “The audience should expect to see a lot of emotion from the performers in the show. Personally, I believe that the Black Lives Matter Movement is pretty similar to the Civil Rights Movement. Police brutality has always been an issue in the black community but now people are starting to do something about it and I think that’s where many performers are pulling their emotions and energy from.” All BCC Performing Arts Ensembles will be performing in this event. We hope to see you there.

Admission: General Public, $7
Purdue Students, $5

For more information please contact the Black Cultural Center at 765-494-3092 or email: wpcaise@purdue.edu
The Lesson of Giving Back

By Javon Walker, staff writer

Recently Marylu McEwen, a Purdue alumna, gifted the BCC with funds to establish an endowment. We are very thankful and wanted to share Ms. McEwen’s thoughts on the importance of giving.

Walker: What is your relationship with BCC?
McEwen: I have no particular relationship with the BCC. As an undergraduate student at Purdue in the late 1960s and a doctoral student at Purdue in the early 1970s, I remember when the Black Cultural Center was established. I have always been interested in its work. More recently, perhaps for the past 6-10 years, I have received the regular publication from the BCC, so I am aware of the programs offered and what is featured in the newsletter about what students and staff are doing.

Walker: What is your relationship with Renee Thomas?
McEwen: I first met Renee Thomas in March 2015 although I have heard many positive things about her, her work, and the BCC from my friend and colleague Sandy Monroe, currently Director of Undergraduate Academic Advising at Purdue.

Walker: What about the BCC sparked you to set up an endowment?
McEwen: Although I have not worked at Purdue since 1974, I have stayed in close touch with colleagues at Purdue and have maintained some sense of Purdue’s students from reading and from talking with friends and colleagues. In addition, I have been really impressed by my observations of what the BCC is doing for Purdue students and for Purdue in general. The various trips offered for students to learn more about Black and African American history and culture, as well as speakers and other programs, stand out for me. The endowment is small, but I thought that the annual proceeds from the endowment may assist students involved with the BCC each year either to represent the BCC or to attend a conference or workshop.

Walker: What do you hope to see out of the BCC from years to come?
McEwen: Although I do not have specific ideas for the BCC, I hope that the BCC will not only be able to maintain the kinds of programs and resources it currently has, but will be able to expand those. I also hope that others will choose to provide endowments and gifts to the BCC. It is important for me to learn more about what the BCC is doing, besides what I read informally in the regular newsletters, which, by the way, are excellent!!

Walker: Why do you feel like it’s important to give back to programs like ours, such as the BCC?
McEwen: The lesson of giving back is one I learned both from my parents and also from my Purdue mentors in the Dean of Women’s and Dean of Students’ offices. I believe that I have a commitment to pay back to Purdue. However, for me, I want to contribute where I think there is a need and where I think the money will be used well. I have benefited in so many ways, from my parents, my Purdue mentors and friends, and also from my professional experiences and graduate students with whom I have worked. Now it is my time to give to others. Walker: Also, is there any additional comment that you feel important for the readers to know.
McEwen: Javon, you may or may not know that I am a white woman. I have had to learn -- and have chosen to learn -- about race, racism, and white privilege -- during my adult life. My more recent academic and scholarly work has focused on race, diversity, and multiculturalism. I believe that spaces and places such as the BCC not only benefit Black students, but they contribute to the greater Purdue community. If I was living in West Lafayette now, I would choose to participate in some of the programs offered at the BCC. I hope that others at Purdue, regardless of race, choose to do so. The BCC makes Purdue a better place for all -- and I believe that it certainly enhances the Purdue experience for many Black students at Purdue and, hopefully, other students as well.
Tour participants visited the campus of Tuskegee University where they enjoyed a master choral class under the direction of Dr. Wayne Barr along with Tuskegee University Choir. Afterwards students enjoyed a time of dinner and fellowship with Tuskegee choir members. This monument of Booker T. Washington, “Lifting the Veil,” was dedicated in 1922 and stands at the center of campus. Washington was Tuskegee’s first president. The inscription at the base of the statue reads: “He lifted the veil of ignorance from his people and pointed the way to progress through education and industry.”

Master class instruction is an important element of the research tour experience. In this picture, Ms. Jackie Lockhart, director of the J. Lockhart Performing Arts Institute, conducts a master dance class with tour participants. The master classes prepare ensemble members for the Cultural Arts Festival where ensembles work both within their respective disciplines in addition to working together as a team for the total production. Other Birmingham artists who conducted master classes were poet Sharif Simmons and choral instructor Annie Joe Edwards.
Ensemble members participated in team building activities to develop communication and trust. After each activity, tour participants reflected upon their experience to explore how they function as a team and ways to become more effective.

Touring the Ancient Africa Enslavement and Civil War Museum, located in Selma, Alabama, was an immersion experience. The museum is set up to simulate the Middle Passage and the sale of enslaved Africans once they reached the Americas. The museum includes a hall of resistance which celebrates themes of Black liberation and hero and heroines of resistance to enslavement while also promoting the excellence of people throughout the African diaspora.

After an oral history panel with foot soldiers of the Birmingham Civil Rights Movement, Mr. Samuel Pugh, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute Outreach Coordinator, listens as students share reflections. Panelists Janice Wesley-Kelsey and Clifton Casey were teenagers when they were involved in Birmingham protests and were arrested for their participation.
HIV/AIDS Awareness Week at Purdue
November 16th- 20th

By Alexis Porter, staff writer

Every year, the Purdue University’s LGBTQ Center hosts HIV/AIDS Awareness Week. The week is designed to raise awareness in the campus community of the AIDS pandemic caused by the spread of HIV. Lowell Kane, the director of Purdue’s LGBTQ Center, states, “HIV Awareness Week inspires students, faculty and staff members of Purdue to realize that you do not need to be infected to be affected.” The week will include many opportunities for Purdue University’s community to become more educated of the epidemic of HIV.

This year HIV/AIDS Awareness Week begins on November 16th and runs until November 20th. The week will begin on Monday with the creation of a panel for the AIDS memorial quilt. The quilt was created by Cleve Jones, a native of West Lafayette, in order to honor the friends, family, and loved ones of an individual who has passed due to HIV. Each year during HIV/AIDS Awareness Week, the LGBTQ Center selects a local member of Purdue University to be honored in a panel, which will later be added to the quilt.

On November 17th the Asian American and Asian Resource Cultural Center will host the guest speaker Dr. Mangala Subramaniam in Krannert Auditorium. Dr. Subramaniam will discuss her research of the impact of HIV in the communities in India. Also Purdue Student Union Board (PSUB) and Queer Students of Color (QSOC) will pass out red ribbons to honor the victims of HIV near the Class of 1950. PSUB and QSOC also will promote students, staff and faculty to wear all red this day.

A film screening of the academy award-winning movie How to Survive a Plague will be hosted in Fowler Hall at 6pm Wednesday. The film is a documentary about the early years of the HIV pandemic and the formation of the activist group ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power). After the screening, the star of the film, Peter Staley, will host a discussion panel along with other ACT UP members from New York.

In Krach 260 on November 19th, starting at 10 am, there will be a series of workshops covering topics ranging from HIV harm reduction, the HIV outbreak in Indiana to needle exchange programs and other strategies than have been effective in preventing HIV. Purdue will also host Terri Wilder, a social worker who has worked with HIV patients for 17 years. Wilder will discuss prevention for Purdue’s student population by giving information on pre-exposure and post exposure. After the workshops, a large group conversation will be encouraged in order to collectively discuss ways that the group can end the epidemic of HIV.

The week closes out with free HIV testing in the Purdue Memorial Union’s Lafayette Room from 9:30am to 5pm on November 20th. The test is conducted by using oral swabs that show results within twenty minutes. Later in the day, students, faculty, and staff are invited to march from the Purdue Memorial Union to the Black Cultural Center. At the Black Cultural Center, the quilt panel will receive dedication.

The LGBTQ Center, PSUB, QSOC, and ACT UP Purdue invite all of Purdue University’s community to get involved with HIV/AIDS Awareness Week. The week begins on November 16th and ends on November 20th. Come support all of those who are directly and/or indirectly affected by HIV.
Greetings,

As editor of the BCC newsletter, I consider it an honor to carry on the great tradition of sharing news and information about the Black Cultural Center and Purdue University overall. Nothing gives me more pleasure than meeting alumni who tell me how much they enjoy receiving the newsletter. I also enjoy parents requesting extra copies when their son or daughter is featured in an issue and when I highlight a recent achievement of faculty or alumni.

Recent changes to the university’s printing services have caused some delay in how quickly you receive each issue. In an effort to address this, I recently sent an email to over 500 readers asking who would prefer to receive the BCC newsletter via email. The response was overwhelming. Not only did many of you let me know your preference, so many sent encouraging comments while also mentioning how you share the newsletter with others. For some of you, I did not have an email address. Therefore, I am writing this to ask you to email me if you would like to be added to the list of those who would prefer to receive the BCC newsletter by email. Please be assured we will still be printing and mailing hard copies of the newsletter. However, for those of you who choose email delivery you will receive your issue earlier. Thanks so much for your dedication to the BCC. I look forward to hearing from you. You may contact me at: jcrider@purdue.edu

Juanita Crider, Editor