

# THE Onyx

Volume 2 Number 2

Fall 2000



Should the  
Black  
community  
be more  
tolerant of  
gays and  
lesbians?

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BEREA COLLEGE  
BLACK CULTURAL CENTER STUDENT NEWSLETTER

# THE Onyx

Volume 2 Number 2  
Fall 2000

A Student Publication of the  
Black Cultural Center

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*Letters may be edited for length and clarity.*



## FACULTY REFLECTION

# Berea's unsung heroes

*Founder's Day celebration to honor early  
African American students at Berea*

By **LARRY D. SHINN**

While most of us know that John G. Fee was an ardent abolitionist who was disowned by his family for his anti-slavery convictions, few of us could identify an African American student from the same era. Even though Berea's history is rich with stories of students who lived out Fee's dream, most of us know little about these unsung heroes from Berea's early years. Yet all would agree that we must learn from our past in order to build on that past.

Recognizing the benefits gained from learning about our early Berea "founders," starting this year and continuing annually, Berea College will celebrate "Founder's Day" in late October to honor the lives of African Americans (and occasionally others) who attended Berea prior to the enactment of the Day Law. At the Founder's Day convocation, the descendants of the individuals being honored will receive the John G. Fee Award to celebrate their ancestors' commitment to living out Fee's vision, as expressed in the motto "God has made of one blood all peoples of the earth." The Award will prominently feature the African symbol of the *sankofa*, to underscore the important lessons for which the symbol stands—that we must reclaim our past so we can move forward, to understand why and how we came to be who we are today. By honoring these early Bereans, we will learn more about our Berea heritage and hopefully, in turn, learn about ourselves as well.

Learning lessons from our past is an important facet of understanding our present and shaping our future, but we cannot stop there. As an institution and as individuals we must continually ask how we can live out and perfect Fee's dream of interracial education in our world today. As a campus community we will begin this fall to engage in conversations about how to improve the College's living and learning environment for Berea's African American and international students. In November the faculty will take part in a fall faculty symposium on the topic of interracial education, which the entire campus will be invited to attend. I encourage you to take part in these and other upcoming events, for I believe that solutions to the challenges we face can best be found if we listen to each other and if we work together. Please join me as we celebrate Berea's legacy and build on it to create a better future.

*Larry D. Shinn is the president of Berea College.*

By **COREY RUSSELL**

I write this article with the hope that the words of my story will be water for the parched souls of others, who like myself, thirst for unconditional love from their families and communities.

Last year I had an encounter with a female black student, who asked me, "Why would you choose to be gay? Isn't it hard enough just being a Black man? What's wrong with all the black men today? Either they are in jail, with white women, or gay!"

Shocked by her questions, I stood there in complete silence. It was like someone had super-glued my lips shut. I tried to answer her questions. But, at that moment, I simply couldn't. So, I politely picked up my backpack and walked out the door. Throughout the day, the female and her questions stayed on my mind.

About five months ago, in the process of "coming out" to my parents, I was forced to answer these questions. Being that my father is a Methodist minister and extreme fundamentalist, I knew that I would leave the battlefield with numerous injuries and afflictions. But, like a courageous soldier, I put on my armor, picked up my shield, removed my sword from the scabbard, and proceeded to answer the questions at hand.

And with long contemplation, this is my response to my parents and the black female student. Since I am neither in jail or dating a white female, the only part of the previous question I can honestly answer is the gay aspect. First, I need to set the record straight about whether sexual orientation is innate, learned or a conscious choice. In my opinion, I can't even remember learning to be gay. I am positive there is not a secret society or underground homosexual preparatory school training little boys and girls to be gay. My sexual orientation is just as natural and innate as my Blackness.

To answer the question concerning the difficulty of being black and gay, I whole-heartedly agree that it is very difficult, being a

# Can a Brother get some Love?

*is there a place in the black community for gays and lesbians?*

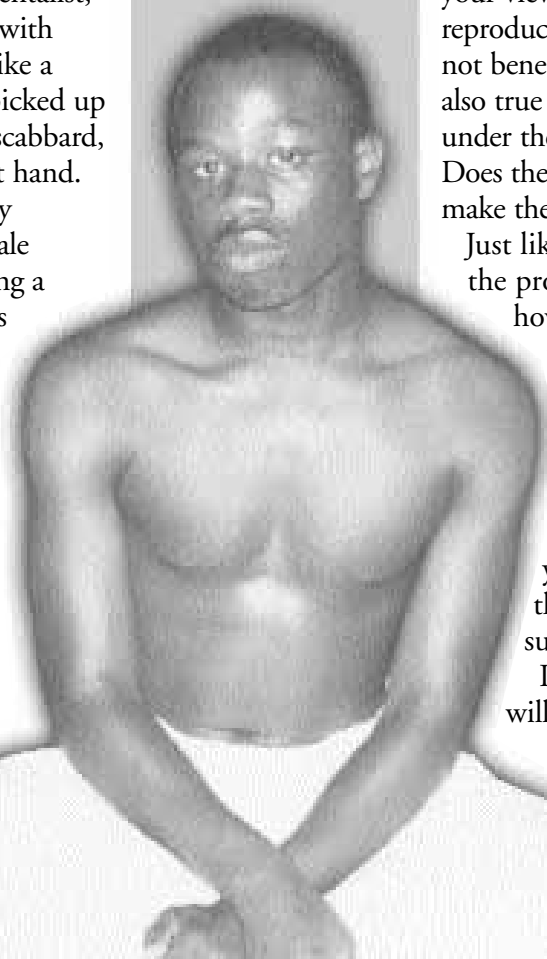
Black gay male. Does that change the fact that I am gay? Should I go around pretending to be something that I am not, because it is too hard to be a black and gay? It is equally hard to be black and female. There isn't anything wrong with me. I just choose to do what comes naturally to me. I choose to be happy. One thing I have noticed about the Black community is that we seem to be our own worst enemies. Rejecting each other because of petty things such as skin color and sexual orientation doesn't empower the black community.

I used to wonder if there was a place for black gays and lesbians in the black community. And I have come to the conclusion that such a place should and can exist. I know many of you reading this article are wondering "How could the black community, or any community, benefit from embracing and accepting homosexuals within their circle?" I guess this depends on your view of life. If you view life in a binary reproductive system, then homosexuals are not beneficial to the community. Is it not also true that barren women and sterility fall under the same category as homosexuals? Does the lack of reproductive capabilities make them less valuable to the community?

Just like charity starts at home, so must the process of teaching your children how to love self. If you teach a child that being homosexual is not natural and against biblical text, what essential are you telling the child? This doesn't mean that you have to totally abandon your beliefs. But what happens when you come home one day to find that that child has committed suicide as a result of those beliefs?

I guess the gist of this article is when will we, the black community, learn how to love, accept, and appreciate each other?

*Corey Russell is a junior nursing major at Berea.*



# EDITOR'S COMMENT

## Celebrate manhood



**CHINWE O.  
KPADUWA**  
*Executive Editor*

I decided to dedicate this issue of *The Onyx* to men of color. I wanted to provide an in-depth sight about their lives, challenges, and triumphs. Selecting the men to feature was very difficult. There is a diverse group of men on our campus, and I knew covering each group would be challenging. I tried to present an unbiased in selection of the men to feature. I wanted substance, real substance, not popularity.

Usually, when we, women, sit and talk about men, we have the tendency to come to the same conclusion, "there are no good men on campus". Let's ask ourselves this question, when was the last time you put a man down because of his looks, dress, car, financial status...the list goes on. If you are guilty of this, then I propose that we focus more on the substantial qualities of men: a good heart, good values, hard working, respectful, intellectually stimulating, and potential. This issue celebrates the many wonderful men who will become spouses, fathers, uncles, doctors, lawyers, educators, engineers, etc.

I leave you with Ralph W. Emerson's quote featured in October's What's Up Calendar: "*Insist on yourself; never imitate...Every great man is unique.*" Enjoy reading.

## Aero Programs for Spring!

AERO will sponsor several programs/events this Spring, including:

**Sexual Responsibility Week**

February 11-17

**Safe Spring Break**

March 19-23

If you would like additional information on wellness programs, please contact Holli Hudson, Director of Wellness Services, 985-3432 or visit us in the Seabury Center.



### MISSION STATEMENT

AERO: the Alcohol Education Resource Organization's mission, as part of BACCHUS Peer Education Network, encourages our peers to consider, talk honestly about and develop responsible habits and attitudes toward alcohol and other related student health and safety issues.

ADVERTISEMENT

# The Semester at a Glance



Take a look back at the semester with us!

- A** Jason Oden at the top of the Pinnacle on Mountain Day
- B** Club Love Jones hosts
- C** "Black folks do hike!" – Mountain Day
- D** Smiles at Popcorn Bash
- E** Faculty at the Community Social
- F** Open House
- G** BSU King and Queen: Khalif Morris and Leah Johnson
- H** Primary Staff Outing to Actors Guild
- I** ASA Cultural Show
- J** Roots and Heritage Festival in Lexington



# Introducing the



# Shades

By **CHINWE KPADUWA**

Artistic, is an understated means of describing **Robert Major**, senior Studio Art major, and a native of Harlan, Kentucky. A young man that is so rich in heritage and personality, it's amazing that only a few have tasted from this fountain of life. Looking into his hazel-green eyes, I can't decide where to begin telling the story.

This brotha, yes, I mean *brotha*. To answer your question, yes, Bob can pass for a Caucasian. He was once asked by an acquaintance, "Are you a *wanna-be...Black?*"

In response, "I *am* black."

The acquaintance replied, "Oh I'm sorry, I'm not racist or anything."

This is the kind of treatment Bob occasionally



**Major**

experiences. With his art work, Bob has challenged people in class to answer the question "What *is* a black Man?" In an original painting entitled, "*I am who I am*", he painted musical icons like Tupac Shakur, Tyreece, and himself. In doing this, Bob attempts to educate people on the many shades of Onyx. He also uses performance art to express his ideas and values on the irrelevance of labeling. Bob enjoys

performance art, he feels body is one of the most versatile art mediums using sound, movement, mind, and knowledge.

In the Spring of 2000, he won the Hutchins Price award for a documentary on his identity in Black Appalachia. Race is an issue Bob deals with frequently, growing up in a

majority white town in Kentucky. He feels one of the many purposes for his being here is to educate people on race relations.

Bob's biggest motivation is his family, they have been a constant comfort to him all of his life. A family of four boys, with no one with a college degree yet, his identical twin races him to the finish line to get the diploma.

Looking into the horizon, Robert Major would like to become an art professor, would love to travel, while constantly learning about life and what it has to offer.



"I have to go back home...that's where my family and my people are; I came only to get knowledge and return home."

These words remain on my mind after my interview with **Thulani Mbatha**. Thulani, which means 'peace' in Zulu, describes this Alexandran (a district in Johannesburg, South Africa) character. I asked Thulani, "*What was it like growing up in apartheid South Africa?*" "Like? It was hell" exclaimed Thulani.

Life in Alexandra, a ghetto, is filled with violence, police raids at any time of the night, poverty, and amongst several other things. Thulani's eyes watched people die from the gun shots of police officers during riots. The only hope in the ghetto was Nelson Mandela, who could not be talked about or acknowledged. Mandela's release 27 years later brought back the word 'freedom' to the mouths and hearts of Black South Africans. Hope was restored! While

# of Onyx

campaigning for the presidential election, Mandela visited Alexandra, remembers Thulani. Recalling this day, "I saw a limousine pull up, the door slowly opened and Mandela stepped out of the car. People went crazy; there were cheers and chanting:

'AMANDLA! AWETHU! AMANDLA! AWETHU! (POWER IS OURS! POWER IS OURS!)' "Swept in the enthusiasm, I wanted to touch him badly, so I moved

forward and shook his hand." Simply amazed, I asked him, "*What did it feel like to touch one of the greatest men Africa ever bore?*" Shaking his head and smiling with a dazed look in his eyes, Thulani answered, "It cannot be explained."

Thulani attended schools in the ghetto where lessons are taught in Zulu. However, the political instability in the country led to his

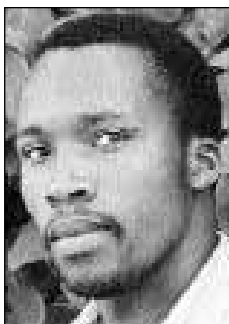
exile into Swaziland to continue with school without disturbance. Returning back to South Africa, Thulani passed an exam that enabled him to attend the American International School in Johannesburg. Only three students were selected from Alexandra. This opened doors for Thulani's higher education.

This opportunity also brought the need to learn the English language, since he had no use for it prior to this time. Two white families shaped Thulani's life in a very positive way. The Whaley family, a European family living in South Africa, taught Thulani to speak English and provided a home for him. They also taught him to

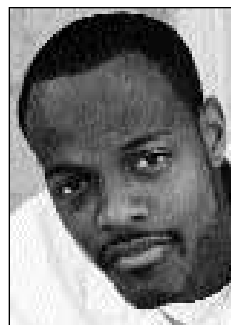
question people, something Blacks in South Africa were admonished from doing. The Bremer family of Virginia have also been instrumental in his life. Thulani grew up hating Whites due to his contact and interaction with them in the ghetto. The Bremer family, along with the Whaleys, showed Thulani not all Whites believed in apartheid, which changed his perspectives of Whites.

Thulani's greatest motivation is his own family. Raised by his grandmother who supported him financially by selling alcoholic drinks. His grandmother died in 1990 of diabetics, but lived to see Mandela set free.

Thulani was the first to graduate high school and will be the first to graduate college in his family. It is apparent to me in this interview that not only is Thulani being educated, but his whole family and neighborhood are also being educated.



**Mbatha**



**McCants**

**Ricardo McCants**, a native of Birmingham, Alabama is the third shade of Onyx. During my interview with him, I found confidence embedded in his demeanor, posture, even the way he gazes back at me looking for answers to my questions. Ricardo is a very focused individual. He finds solace in track and field. "It kept me out of trouble and off the streets". McCants competes in the 200

See **SHADES OF ONYX** on page 10

# NEWS BITES

## Kwanzaa celebration

Saturday, December 9, The Commons, Woods-Penn at 6:00 p.m.

## New faculty members

We would like to welcome our new "faculty of color":

**Lori Brooks** History  
**Winston Gittens** Education  
**Gloria Johnson** Campus Ministry

## 2001 Homecoming court announced

Congratulations for placing in the Homecoming Court: **Gabrielle McWhorter**, **LaShaundra Thedford** and **Munyaradzi Masawi** (First Runners-Up) and **Patrick Thomas** (Second Runner-Up).

We would also like to congratulate **Khalif Morris** and **Leah Johnson** (BSU King and Queen), **Carl Settles III** and **La'Quita Middleton** (First Runners Up) and **Jacqueline Muhammad** (Miss Congeniality).

## Wedding bliss

Congrats to newlyweds **Romeatrius Crutcher** and Meko Moss.

## You will be missed

The BCC would like to bid farewell to **Adeniyi Bakare**, an 18-year-old freshman who had to leave us early due to family emergencies.



### Bakare

Being an only child, he took the responsibly of caring for his mother while she recovers from breast cancer. His mother has been a source of inspiration in his life, and he was glad to adhere to her call. Adeniyi stated "I have enjoyed my few days in Berea. I plan to keep in touch."

This native from Nashville, Tennessee made an impression in a short time on campus. Adeniyi was a member of the Black Music Ensemble. The "boy" could blow, and was willing to demonstrate to anyone.

“Imagine being constantly welcomed and treated with near-royal hospitality”

By **MARY TRUMBO**

Imagine being constantly welcomed and treated with near-royal hospitality. Imagine the flavor of tasty spicy cuisine, glass bottled Coca-Colas, along with several daily doses of Milk of Magnesia. Imagine



**Mary Trumbo at the University of Legon in Accra, Ghana.**

landscape so green, so beautiful, and so exotic it would be perfect for any fairy tale. These were the experiences of fourteen Berea College students and five faculty/staff members (Dr. Kathy Bullock, Keith Bullock, Drs. Keila and John Thomas and Dr. Robert Boyce) during our three-week trip to Ghana, West Africa.

During this trip we were extremely busy and rarely had free time. All of the students resided with host families in the capital Accra. We frequently traveled throughout the city shopping, sightseeing, visiting museums, etc. We studied traditional Ghanaian dance and drumming at the University of Ghana at Legon. Dr. Lisa Aubrey, a Fullbright Scholar from Ohio University, lectured us on Ghanaian culture

and mannerisms. We received a Fullbright lecture about the various types of traditional African art at the University of Kumasi (in Ghana).

Shopping and bargaining at the markets were a big highlight for some of us. A few of us were quite ignorant to the art of trade and bargaining. But, with the help of Bernard Kotey and some of the native

# AKWAAABA!

*or "Welcome" in Tri, a language in Ghana*

Ghanaians that assisted us during our stay, most of us became skilled bargainers - especially Kiki Anderson, who exclaimed at the National Art Center, "I refuse to be cheated!" Other highlights included a visit to the enchanting Aburi Gardens and Wood Carver's market, singing at the National Theater in Ghana's International Choral Festival, and visiting the villages where original Kinte and Adinkra cloths are made.

Perhaps the most powerful experiences we had were when we visited the village of Nankase and the Cape-Coast Castle. Tears streamed down many of our faces as we listened to the tour guide speak of the horrors of the slave trade and other horrendous practices that occurred at the castle. (The Cape-Coast Castle was the place where enslaved Africans were kept and exported). In Nankase, the chief, elders, and the entire village had a special ceremony and celebration for us. The villagers danced and played instruments and the school children sang and recited poetry. Dr. and Mr. Bullock were enstooled by the villagers as the "chief and queen mother of our American village." They were so overcome with emotion; they were speechless.

We were blessed with wonderful professors that spearheaded the trip, as well as a choice of academic credit: Black Studies, GSTR 224, or Short Term. We all gained an abundance of knowledge that annihilated any stereotypes we might have had about African countries. "I love Ghana and the Ghanaian people, who overall are so much more righteous than us Americans. I can't wait to return to my friends who have respect and value for life in ways that we are generally lacking," Corrie deJong expressed in his journal. I think most of us would agree.

*Mary Trumbo is a sophomore music major at Berea.*



**Above:** Students in their African attire following church service.



**Left:** Berea faculty and students learning the basics of drumming.

# Shades of Onyx

Continued from page 7

meters, 400 meters, 4X1, and 4X4 relay races. Mentioning all his races, I had to ask him, *Are you good?*” Confidently, “Yes I consider myself to be good. There is no use beating around the bush.” Of course, I smiled at him because I like a man who knows his trade and can identify his ability. In the Amateur Athletic Union Junior Olympics, he placed number 23 in the 200 meter race nationwide. Ricardo has not always been a track star, thinking of his childhood and laughing, he shares, “I tried out for track in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and didn’t make it”. Apparently, this disappointment in grade school did not dampen his determination in his adult years. His role model is Jesse Owens, the five time gold medallist from Alabama. McCants’s dream is to qualify in the Olympics. Keeping his goal in mind, he trains very hard.

I had to ask the million dollar question, *“what is like to grow up in Birmingham, what makes Birmingham so special?”* McCants smiled and told me that Birmingham is the place to be. “It is hard growing up at home; gangs, drugs, and violence are major distractions for young people”. This kid from ‘the ham’ has come a long way from his mother’s arms. McCants has not always been

this superior. In kindergarten he got kicked out for being a bad kid. I guess he straightened out somewhere along the way.

His mother played an influential part in his life. She gave him the love and support he needed and molded him into the positive man he is today. His uncle, a.k.a. “Sonnyman”, also gave him encouragement. However, the most influential being in McCants life is Christ. Ricardo will be the first in his family to graduate college, “I don’t mind paving the way for the family but I wish there was some guidance in that aspect”. I believe he’s done pretty well for himself even without the ideal role model. A man of service, Ricardo plans to give back his time to the community. He wants to give young people at home motivation and hope to rise above their struggles. McCants leaves us with a few words that keep him on track:

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win”  
**I Corinthians 9:24**

*Chinwe O. Kpaduwa is a senior political science major at Berea and Executive Editor of The Onyx.*

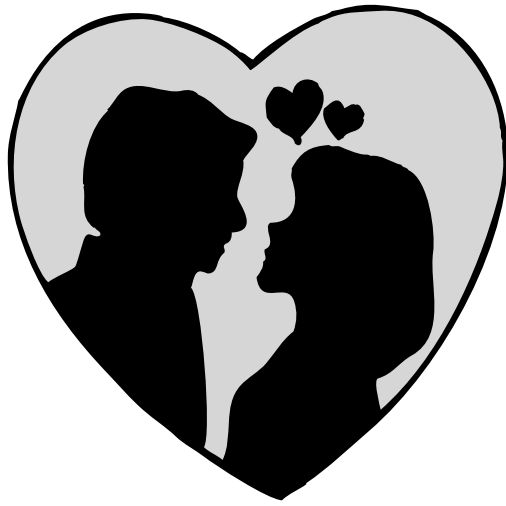
## THE BLACK STUDIES PROGRAM AT BEREA COLLEGE

The Black Studies Program at Berea College views its role as enhancing the general academic quality of the institution through a comprehensive program of learning and studying about the black world, that is, the people of the African Diaspora, and in so doing, promoting an educational ethos of cultural and ethnic diversity. The program is committed to preparing students to live in an increasingly complex and diverse world.

Many courses count toward the Black Studies minor. Visit the Black Studies office (Phelps-Stokes 201) with a copy of your courses to find out. Are you interested in some aspect of Black history or culture and you cannot find a course? Consider independent study as an answer to your dilemma.

Mary Young, Director of the Black Studies Program  
985-3455

ADVERTISEMENT



# Is love color blind?

*Interracial dating still a hot topic for some*

By **TERRENCE SURLS**

What color is love? The college believes that "God has made of one blood all people of the earth." In other words, the college believes that love is whatever color you want it to be. There are some students around campus that will tell you it does not matter. However if you ask other students they will tell you love is black, white, or whatever color they are. What is your view of interracial dating?

Is it influenced by the following: having a biracial (mixed) child; having biracial children in your family; dating persons of another race; having friends that date interracially; having friends of different races; being from an urban area or rural area or considering yourself to be liberal or conservative? Is it possible that these experiences and numerous others have helped shaped your view of interracial dating? Let's go back in time for a moment.

Imagine the first time you saw an interracial couple. How did you react

and feel? How old were you? Where were you? How did your friends and family react to it? These factors and many more can affect your views of interracial dating. Before you declare yourself to be racist, liberal, or indifferent, I ask you to remember the first time you saw an interracial couple walking on campus. What did you think? What did you say to your friends? Were you angry or upset? Did you try to ignore them? Or did you just stand there and shake your head? One's upbringing, environment, and associates influence our initial reaction to interracial dating.

When addressing the issue of interracial dating it is important to try to see the issue from all sides not just the urban African-American perspective. In trying to cover all views of this issue, I asked several black, white, and international students from several different regions

See **DATING** on **back page**

## THE WORD

**Question:** How has being a minority on campus affected you?



"As an African American male on campus, I sometimes feel that people are threatened because I carry myself with great confidence and authority."

**Cornelius Butler**

Birmingham, Alabama



"As a biracial student, integration is easy for me. I have all sorts of friends, and most times I don't feel excluded. Of course there is a predominant group on campus. However, I still enjoy the diversity."

**Katie Green**

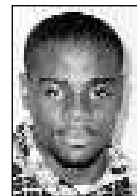
Gainesville, Georgia



"It feels like a zoo, groups of little species in cages. There should be some more species added to the group. The diversity on campus is good, but there could be more. Most of all, it has had a more positive impact on me."

**Tramane Chapman**

Roanoke, Virginia



"I am the real sense of the word "minority" on campus. I am not White, African American, or African. Since I fall through the cracks, I had to struggle to be acknowledged as an entity. Right now we have representation on campus, but we could use some more."

**Marc Saintelus**

Port-au-Prince, Haiti

# MISSION STATEMENT

The Black Cultural Center first opened its doors in July 1983. The Center was established and based on the premise that true integration and equality cannot be achieved without a general awareness and understanding of black culture. The Black Cultural Center provides programs and services that foster cross-cultural exchanges and intentional social intercourse.

The mission of the Black Cultural Center is to:

- assist Berea College in maintaining an environment that acknowledges, respects, and enhances diversity and promotes interracial educational opportunities;
- assist the College in its effort to recruit, retain, and graduate students of color;
- assist students of color in developing a greater understanding of his/her own culture and heritage
- provide support services, program, and activities that promote the intellectual career, social, moral, and personal development of students of color and assist them in achieving their highest educational potential; and
- assist Berea College in recruiting and retaining faculty of color.

# ANCESTOR HIGHLIGHT

## Benjamin Banneker 1731-1806

Benjamin Banneker was the most famous Black American of the Revolutionary Period of American History. A scholar and scientist, he was always seeking answers, or ways of predicting answers to questions.

He invented a clock, edited an almanac and had scientific papers read in European capitals. He was chosen by President Jefferson to assist in the development of plans for Washington, D.C. He and a close friend chose the site for the White House.

Born a free man, he had the right to vote. He was known and respected here and in Europe; yet by 1803 this right to vote was taken away from him and all free Black Americans, in his native state of Maryland.

# Dating

Continued from **page 11**

and backgrounds their views on interracial dating. An overwhelming majority of students said they had no problems with interracial couples. However, only a slight majority said that they would date outside of their race. Students interviewed said that the Berea College community appears to accept the idea of interracial dating.

So, with this information, I went to African American women and asked if they agreed with interracial dating. Most of the African American women said they have no problem with interracial dating, unless it involves African American men dating white women. Some African American women feel that there are too many black women by themselves. There are some African American women around campus that believe that it is the responsibility of black men to love, cherish, respect, and care for black women first. They feel that since most of the black men's primary caregivers were black women, then they should especially love them.

When I asked the black men about this situation, most replied that this is a case of sour grapes and them not having someone to date. Other black men say that African American women are too bossy and controlling. Some men even went as far as saying African American women intimidate them. Most African American men said that they had no problem with interracial dating. But no African American male interviewed who dated interracially said they did so because they were too frightened to try to approach an African American female.

The topic of fear does not seem to figure into the topic of interracial dating around campus. One of the problems with society is that people tend not to say what they feel. So, as a reasonable adult, I know that the real feelings about interracial dating were most likely hidden from me. However, the real meaning, message, and theme of this article is that most people who date interracially do it because they really like the person. They are not dating people for a status symbol or to spite or disrespect black women/men. People who date interracially do so because they feel love is colorblind. As a small community on campus, African Americans, African, and people of African descent should unify and talk to overcome problems. We should not let things like interracial dating divide us, we should be able to love our brothers and sisters for who they are not for who they date.

*Terrence Surles is a senior education major at Berea.*

**Official Disclosure:** *In no way is the preceding article an official survey, document, or in anyway represent views of Berea College or the Black Cultural Center.*