

the **Onlyx**

Volume 3 Number 1

Spring 2001



**Can single
parents
succeed as
full-time
students?**



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RECEIVE NEGATIVE COMMENTS?**

THE SEMESTER AT A GLANCE

BEREA COLLEGE
BLACK CULTURAL CENTER STUDENT NEWSLETTER

^{the} Onyx

Volume 3 Number 1
Spring 2001

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Black Cultural Center

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Letters may be edited for length and clarity.



EDITOR'S COMMENT

Superwomyn



**CHINWE O.
KPADUWA**
Executive Editor

Sisters, students, friends, leaders, lovers, wives, mothers, poets, and dancers portray the womyn in this spring issue of the *Onyx*. Their stories will inspire all of us who lead complicated lives to distinguish ourselves by the brilliance of their examples.

These are a few of the precious gems that are often under appreciated, over looked, and passed up. Their courage, strength, and endurance should not be taken for granted. We should fortify their character and encourage their growth while remembering the words of Ruby Dee:

“Oh-Oh girl you broke your stride. Did that put a dent in your pride? That’s all right my little friend. Don’t get mad. Don’t jump bad. Reassess your situation, make another evaluation. Then, take a deep breath, say a little prayer, and jump right on back in there.”

This issue celebrates womyn, (yes, spelled with a “y”), which depicts our individuality, yet recognizing our connection to men. Some of the articles will offer:

Tiffany Davis conveys the trials and triumphs of the 21st century womyn in her poem “Call Me a Woman Or Not At All”. Tiffany is a freshman biology and business major.



Davis



Harper

Irate by negative comments directed at African American convocations, **Jakira Harper** writes on the need for awareness in diversity issues. Jakira is a sophomore sociology major.

“I would like to see a lot of young men step up and showcase their skills,” says **Jason Oden**, who writes about African American men on campus. Jason is a junior majoring in business.



Oden



Rivage-Seul

Peggy Rivage-Seul, an Associate Professor and Director of Women’s Studies here at the College, writes an interesting piece about womyn’s issues and illustrates that we need only to look at Berea’s past to give us an idea as to which direction we need to be headed in as far as womyn’s rights are concerned.

By **KIKI ANDERSON**

My journey of becoming a single mother seems so long ago. I gave birth to Tomazyé in 1995. It was not easy to accept or adjust to my new situation. I was a star athlete on the track team and I had imagined going to a large university on a track scholarship. So, when I found out the news of my pregnancy, it took me for a loop. As time passed and I grew nearer delivery, I had to consider a different path for my life. I told myself that being pregnant should not stop me from pursuing my dreams. I simply have to include a little person in them. Because I wanted my child to have the best life possible, it was impossible for me to give up my dreams of going to college.

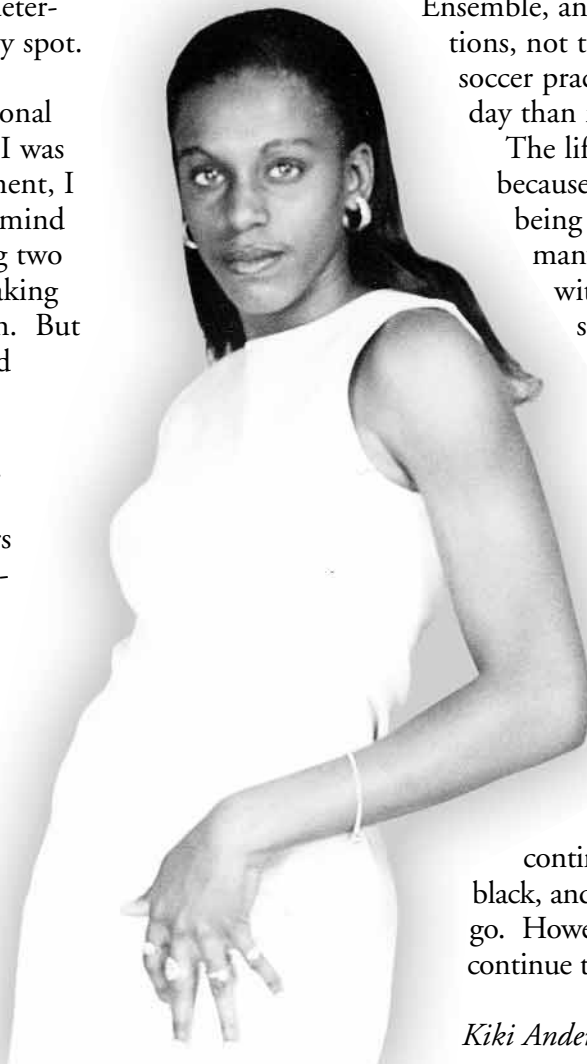
When Tomazyé was born, I was approaching the 11th grade. The previous year I had to sit out of the track session, but I was determined to come back and reclaim my spot. Actually, I won second place in the women's 800-meter run in the National Championship of South Carolina. I was really back on "track". At this moment, I knew I could do anything I set my mind to. In the meantime, I was working two jobs, maintaining my grades, and taking care of an infant. Times were rough. But I had the support of my mother and younger sister from the beginning.

A year passed, and it was time to think about graduation and college. My senior year was more difficult because Tomazyé was then two years old. Now I was carrying a challenging class load, working two jobs, running track, and living on my own. I overcame the odds and I walked across that stage. Graduation was one of the happiest days of my life.

This moment of immense joy quickly passed as I grew more confused about my future. I was not certain what would happen. My godmother, a Berea College alumnae, told me about Berea and encouraged me to apply.

Me, Myself and I?

We think not!



However, Berea was too far to go with my child. So, I enrolled in a technical college. I attended it for a year. But I was not truly happy. I knew I was supposed to be at a four-year college. Then I decided to take my godmother's advice. I visited Berea during Carter G. Woodson weekend. I was very impressed with the college and its people. I knew that this was where I needed to be. After receiving my acceptance letter, I was so happy. But, at the same time I was also very scared.

With the support of family and friends, I began my preparation for Berea. I arrived to find that this would be a life changing experience. Times are still rough.

I am still a full-time mother with a full-time son. I have a full course load and I'm a member of the track team, Black Music Ensemble, and numerous clubs and organizations, not to mention Tomazyé's football and soccer practices and games. I do more in one day than many do in one week.

The life of a single mother is not easy because you are *both* parents. Nonetheless, being a single mother has taught me many valuable things that I will have with me for the rest of my life. My son is a very happy child and the greatest thing that has ever happened to me. Sometimes I wonder where I would be if I had not given birth to Tomazyé. That is too difficult to imagine.

I do not think I would have come this far in my life, learned so many valuable things, and encountered the many precious people I have along this journey. I know God has a plan for me and Tomazyé. I am grateful to everyone who has been here for me and hope that they continue to believe in me. I am a strong, black, and independent woman, who has far to go. However, life has been good and there will continue to be smiling faces along the way.

Kiki Anderson is a junior nursing major.

FACULTY REFLECTION

Berea's role in womyn's issues

By **PEGGY RIVAGE-SEUL**

This reflection begins with a confession: I am an ardent believer in the historic mission of Berea College. We all know the Berea story. Our founders held the faith-based conviction that the world around them was simply wrong. Slavery was a sin. The best way to denounce this economic system was to announce an alternative, namely, an educational community where women and men, black and white, slave and free, could work together to create a local economy where there was room for everyone to participate and thrive. We also know that Berea's early prophets were exiled from their land until the laws permitting the legal enslavement of blacks were overturned, once and for all. Instead of relocating, early Bereans returned to their promised land, and resumed their project of an alternative community.

If we want to move forward with integrity, it is important to rehearse Berea's history. For Berea College was built on the pillars of racial justice, gender equity, economic fairness, and faith in God's promise for the city of heaven on earth. In spite of the negative changes wrought by time and convention, Berea has remained true to its economic alter-

native in a capitalist culture. Specifically, this has meant exercising what the Latin American Roman Catholic Bishops call "a preferential option for the poor." In other words, institutions (in this case, Berea College) consciously side with people who are economically marginalized, and hence unable to realize their full potential as human beings. Berea's commitment to educating low income students from Appalachia is precisely the kind of work the prophetic church in the Third World has claimed for its own during this bitter age of free market capitalism.

Berea's relationship to the global community of the faithful is crucial to maintaining the spirit of the first Berea community. For we are inextricably linked to an economic system that affects the entire world. If we listen carefully, we will hear another voice crying out from the periphery. It comes from the women whose lives have been literally sacrificed to an economy that celebrates corporate profits over human need. We need only to read the *United Nations Development Report* to chart the dramatic increase in the feminization of poverty over the past decade. Women's lives are unnecessarily shortened by the tremendous workload they carry.

It is for this reason that members of the global church are calling for "a preferential option for women." Institutions are being called to place the needs of women at the top of their agendas. This includes strong support programs for the health and education of women, as well as their children.

But putting women first goes beyond physical survival. It also means re-creating social structures that have historically subordinated women's work to the success of their male counterparts. At Berea College, we might see this as an attempt to centralize women's points of view, forms of decision-making, and alternative modes of teaching, learning, and knowledge production. We may want to take larger strides to assure that single mothers have every opportunity to enjoy the possibility of academic success. While it is difficult to speculate about gender fairness among the early Bereans, we do know that the doors of Berea College opened to women long before many co-educational institutions in the United States. It is on that firm foundation that Berea can lend a listening ear to the global community and respond to the call of justice that rings from as far away as 1855.

You're Invited!

Year-End Celebration on

Tuesday, May 8 from **10am to 1:30pm**
in the Alumni Building. We would like to recognize
your completion of another academic year!

Berea College Alumni Association

985-3104

Jackie Collier Ballinger '80, Director
jackie_ballinger@berea.edu

Mary Labus '78, Coordinator of Alumni Info. Systems
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Shelley Boone Rhodus '85
Coordinator of Events Planning and Student Relations
shelley_rhodus@berea.edu

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norma_kennedy@berea.edu

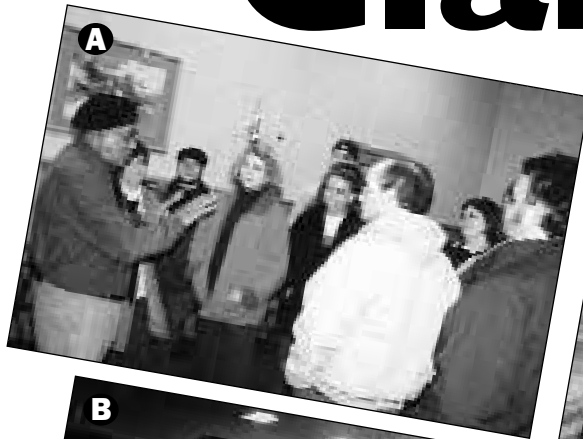
Reneé Deaton, xc '90, Secretary
renee_deaton@berea.edu

ADVERTISEMENT

The Semester at a Glance

Take a look back at the semester with us!

- A** Bobby Seale's convocation (Black History Month)
- B** Family Recognition Day (Black History Month)
- C** Black Comedy Tour (comedian CoCo Brown, (center), with students)
- D** Carl Thomas, Chinwe Kpaduwa, Unity Banquet speaker, Scott Horton and Linda Thomas-Buchanan
- E** Martin Luther King, Jr. March to City Hall
- F** Distinguished Service Award recipients: Cherie Timmons, Suleiman Okoogua and Waahida Tolbert
- G** Martin Luther King, Jr. Committee and Black History Month Task Force
- H** Black Cultural Center staff retreat





GO ON

By **CHINWE KPADUWA**

Each step she takes spells confidence, grace, and a rare sophistication. There is a difference when you lay eyes on **Kader Traore**. Serenity and intricacy are two words that could be used to describe her. The 21-year-old is African American in every sense of the word. Born of a Guinean father, and American mother, Traore spent eight of her childhood years in Guinea, West Africa. "The move was harder for me, I didn't speak French, and I had a hard time adjusting in school" remembers Traore. "For some reason the children in my neighborhood would sit and watch me. I never understood why," as she reflects on her childhood.



Traore

After secondary school (high school) in Guinea, she moved to Philadelphia to live with her grandmother. Wondering which culture Traore identified with more, I asked, "Do you consider yourself more American or African?" With a perplexed smile she replied, "It's hard to describe. I am more African when surrounded by oblivious Americans. However, in the midst of Africans, I am more African American. Then, sometimes, I am not fully connected to both." Embracing her complex identity, Traore celebrates both cultures. She understands her ties with both African and African American communities. Traore also believes the similarities between the two cultures are more important than the differences.

Adapting her quest for unity from her Guinean background she states, "In Guinea there is less individuality, and

more group identity, which makes you stronger." Traore has a great desire to work with African American families. Currently majoring in Child & Family Studies, she would like to contribute to the unity of the African American community.

Family ties and spirituality are important facets of Traore's life. Having missionaries for parents, she was introduced to spirituality at a very young age. Nonetheless, this maturing child would like to discover God for herself.

Inspired by her love to meet people from different backgrounds she said, "I want to understand people, at least I can be more tolerant, and see where people are coming from."



Imagine for a moment, a black womyn dressed in a white tutu swaying like a dove from one corner of the stage to the other. She moves rhythmically to "On My Knees" by Jaci Velasquez. With a focused expression, her poise is graceful, leaps are elegantly stretched apart, she falls softly, her head bows as the music stops. The ballerina is

Gabrielle McWhorter, a native of Birmingham, Alabama.

McWhorter began dancing at 12. She tried tap, jazz, modern, and on ballet she says, "I popped too many toe nails." Therefore, she combines all



GIRL!

types of dance in her magical performances.

Dancing was her way of dealing with her father's sudden death. So, McWhorter decided to channel her grief to dancing. Healing began as she choreographed dance steps in the privacy of her sanctuary. "Concentrating on dancing cleared my mind, it was a way for me to express my feelings at that time" she reflected.



McWhorter

Born into a close knit family, McWhorter has a mother, and two older sisters for love and encouragement. The youngest child, "I guess I'm a little spoiled" she admits with a smile.

Family is a significant aspect of her life, a source of continued affection. It was her grandma's wish for her to attend college. McWhorter has fulfilled that wish.

After graduation, she plans to own a dance and medical center. With her eyes prized on Columbia College in Chicago. She intends to practice dance therapy to

patients with cancer and physical disabilities.

Because she is not deterred by obstacles in her life, McWhorter's determination and paramount trust in God will bring many riches to her life.



"I can't wait to graduate in May! These past four years have had their ups and downs.

Nevertheless, I have enjoyed my stay here," says **Edith Doh** a citizen of Bamenda, Cameroon. Majoring in Nursing, she plans to get a masters in the same field, and looks forward to starting a family in the future. Doh considers her greatest accomplishments making it through college, and growing to know herself during her years at Berea. "I have come to understand more about my principles, but most importantly, the need to tolerate other views", she says. Her long-term goal is to improve health practices in Bamenda. "Most people are uninformed about health. For example, some mothers do not acknowledge pre-natal care for their unborn babies. I plan to create a means to educate people about vital health practices," she proclaims with an assured look on her face.

She arrived in the United States in 1997 to attend Berea College. The transition from Cameroon was anything but



Doh

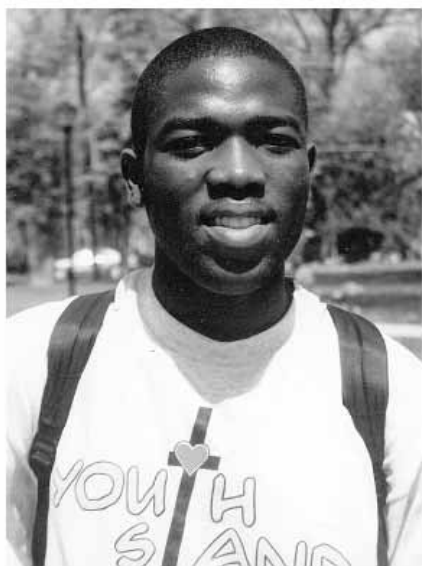
a smooth one she said, "Although both countries speak English, I had a difficult time communicating with Americans." Having other Africans on campus made her culture shock less severe. Although Doh still gets homesick, she is completely adjusted to the American life-style.

Irate by the generalizations, and stereotypes about Africa, Doh on several occasions has felt the need to educate people about her background. "Africa is a continent and not a country. It has an immense wealth of diversity, people should learn to distinguish between the two," she exclaimed.

"My father is my motivation. He is very goal oriented, hardworking, and persistent," Doh informed me. Having both parents in the teaching profession, they have always had high expectations. It was pressure living up to her parent's expectations, and setting good examples for her

See **GO ON, GIRLS** on **back page**

Hey, guys! Are you doing your part?



stepping UP

Black men on the front line

By **JASON W. ODEN**

What is the role of the Black man? We could speculate for hours for an answer to this question. I believe the role of a Black man is to be dedicated to the uplifting of himself, his community, and to

enhance the understanding of the Black culture. With this role in mind, I want to call my brothas to step up to the challenge. Berea College takes great strides in promoting the culture of Black students in the form of the Black Cultural Center, Black Student Union, and the Black Music Ensemble. There are a great deal of opportunities for Black Students to get involved and help improve the sense of community we would like on campus. Two areas where participation is most needed are the committees and activities of the Black Cultural Center and the Black Student Union. First, I would like to salute the Black women

“ *It was embarrassing to see only eight Black men participate in the (Martin Luther King) march* ”

of Berea College for coming to the forefront in leadership positions of the two groups. They have participated in projects that involve Black issues. The sistas have indeed been holding it down, but they need our help.

In January, during the Martin Luther King Celebration, there was a commemorative march. It was embarrassing to see only eight Black men participate in the march. Even more embarrassing, on the planning committee for Black History Month, there were only two Black men. This is an illustration of the need for us to step up and take it upon ourselves to get involved in anything that helps to promote our history and culture.

I have heard a lot about what we would experience at a traditionally Black College. Is it possible for the black men at Berea to know the wealth of the black experience encountered at traditionally black colleges? I believe Berea is a campus that is rich with opportunities for Blacks to learn about their culture and themselves. The Black Cultural Center coordinates programs such as, Black Summits, a forum to discuss issues that effect the Black community. The Martin Luther King Jr. Committee, that coordinates programs to take place on Dr. King's birthday in cel-

ebration of his life and work. The Black History Month Task Force, a committee that works diligently to provide events for the month of February. Cultural programs that place students center stage to show their talents in shows and copesetics. For those of you who like step shows, in February they made a wonderful attempt for one night to give you the Greek atmosphere. To me the “Black Experience” is having the opportunity to learn about your culture and to take an active role creating the process and the sense of community wanted.

You see, it's the active role that is my concern, because I don't think there's an individual on this campus that can say they don't have that chance. We have to take responsibility on some level and say “I will not be one of those who are always complaining, but I am out there putting in my two or three cents, trying to be apart of the solution and not the ever growing problem.” There are those of us who possess some of the skills to be great leaders and role models at Berea. We have to seek out opportunities and take advantage of them. It troubles me to see the same loyal and dedicated few at every event that takes place. Whenever the Black Cultural Center or the Black Student Union presents an event, the attendance should be overwhelming. Men should crave the opportunity to show their support for an event of that nature. I would not have written this article if I didn't feel that the Black men of Berea College were capable of stepping up and joining others on the front lines in helping to enhance our culture at Berea. I applaud the brothas who are stepping up to the forefront and out of the stereotypes perceived for us. To others, we need your support everyone has something they can contribute. We all need to step up.

Editor's Note: *The photographs accompanying this article are used as an illustration only. No attempt is made to “identify” males who do or do not need to “step up”.*

NEWS BITES

Upcoming event

Friday, May 18, Black Cultural Center Senior Farewell Barbecue at the Russell Acton Folk Center, 4:00 p.m.

Student awards

Congratulations to the Distinguished Student Service Award Recipients:

Suleiman Oko-Ogua, **Cherrie Timmons**, and **Waaahida Tolbert**.

The following students of color were big winners at this year's scholarship convocation: **Terry Albury**, Florence Prize for Essays, Helen Brann Scholarship in Social Sciences, and Fuliang and Louise Chang Award; **Robert Major**, Francis S. Hutchins Art Award; **Syreeta Pratt**, Emily Ann Smith Scholarship, Lucille Bush Duncan Award in Education and Henry W. and Edna Austin Awards; **Tekeisha Fields**, Thornton Wilder Dramatic Writing Award; **Nicholas Ndiege**, Ballard-McConnell-Willis Mathematics Scholarships; **Berhane Temelso**, Waldemar Noll Prize in Physics; **Pa M. Jatta**, Pugsley Freshman Mathematics Award; **Felicia Swinney**, Underwood-Alger Biology Scholars; **Suleiman Oko-ogua**, Walter Morris Gay Memorial Award; **Raven Brents**, Opal Stamm Huskey Scholarship; **Joseph Ansah**, Class of 1942 Scholarships; **Kanichole Taylor**, Father Henry L. Parker Scholarship, and **Michael Samuel**, Father Henry L. Parker Scholarship.

The new presidents of the following student organizations are:

ASA: **Thulani Mbatha**

BSU: **Omar Rasoul**

Cosmopolitan Club: **Martine Dumas**

Welcome aboard!

The Black Cultural Center (BCC) would like to introduce the new Program



Ashley

Associate, **Fannie Ashley**. Ms. Ashley joined the BCC team on March 2. She will be assisting with student development and cultural programs. We are glad to have her on board. You can reach her at (859) 985-3797.

POET'S CORNER

21st Century Womyn

Call Me a Woman or Not at All!

I am an African-American woman, living in the 21st century,
Bold, Brainy, and Beautiful, I am the descendant of a queen,
Inner strength and Wisdom inherited from a king.
Personality complex, like colors of a rainbow,
And the color of my skin gives off a milk-chocolate coated glow.
Call me a woman or don't call me at all,
I will not answer to any ole call.

Foolish, I've been called,
But I'm not foolish just inspired.
I've been called a nothing,
But the haters who said that, are also liars.
Hate me if you must,
I could really care less.
It would be a waste of my precious time to address pettiness.
Naïve, I have been called,
But they couldn't be referring to me,
Because life I have experienced,
Giving me certain maturity.
They say I act all educated but that's really a lie,
My answer for that is that I am better wise.
They frown because I'm the ideal mother or wife,
Just mad because they can't walk in my shoes or live my life.
Call me a woman or don't call me at all,
I will not answer to any ole call.

I'm not conceited nor am I vain,
Although I do like the sound of my name.
I'm just trying to be all that I can be,
By living life to the fullest seizing every opportunity.
Well-rounded and intelligent is the memory I want to leave,
Signing my name down in the book of history.
So when people look back they will say,
Call her a woman or don't call her at all,
Because throughout life she stood proud and tall.

TIFFANY DAVIS

What Bull!

Why do "some" convocations receive such negative comments?

By **JAKIRA HARPER**

This article is in reaction to the select negative convocation comments of some Berea College students.

"Did anyone else feel the blatant hostility in this man's voice? Black Panthers a peaceful protest group? Give me a break. Communist from the beginning. It was and still is a very dangerous terrorist hate group. He is a very dangerous man spewing this hateful venom. It shames me that Berea College would have this man talk to us."

The comment above by a Berea College student is in response to the Bobby Seale's convocation on February 22. Was there *blatant hostility* in Mr. Seale's voice when stating that "A true revolutionary group serves the people?" Was he making *communist innuendoes* when he referred to the Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights as the foundation of the group and their endeavors for equality? Overall, the Bobby Seale convocation was rated excellent, so does this mean that most listeners missed the *hateful venom* he spewed in his remark "all power to all people"?



Bobby Seale signing his books "Seize the Time" and "Barbecuing with Bobby"

Apparently the individual twisted and misconstrued Mr. Seale words into the negativity they wanted to hear.

"This convo really sucked. I am not interested in the black radicals of the '60s," another comment from the Bobby Seale's convocation card. How does this and other statements of the sort, consistently seen throughout Black History Month and whenever a speaker on race and diversity visits, make you feel? Are you shocked, overtaken with anger, irritated, or are you undaunted and acceptant of the thought that there will always be negative comments? As an African American community in the midst of an institution committed to diversity, we should all feel concerned and a sense of curiosity as to why these individuals are so seemingly resentful, close-minded, and defensive when introduced to a non sugar coated account of the black experience.

It is ironic that the students making these comments may be our "friends" even though they may believe consistent talk of race only promotes the problems. Furthermore, they do not necessarily

See **WHAT BULL** on **back page**

THE WORD

Question: What have you learned *personally* since you have been at Berea College?



"Interacting with diverse people on campus has been an enlightening experience. I have learned that we all come from different walks of life and Berea is the common ground bringing us together. In spite of our differences, we can all get along."

Azziza Majani

Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo



"Many different cultures and people are represented on campus. The majority of my friends are international students, and we engage in discussions covering many issues. College is also more demanding than high school."

Mike Freeman

Clarksville Tennessee



"I've learned to persevere - never to give up on what I really want, be it friendship, grades, or even a degree in Business Administration. It's really worth it, believe me!"

Samuel Wornor

Monrovia Liberia



"Life isn't always step-by-step like it was before. Things are constantly changing no matter what your plans are."

Abbie Tanyhill

Louisville Kentucky

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 multicultural 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

Phillis Wheatley 1753-1784

One of the better known poets of the colonial period in American history was Phillis Wheatley.

Kidnapped from Africa at the age of nine and brought to America as a slave, she served as a maid to a family which gave her its name. When Phillis did not seem well, her master and his family took her to England for her health.

During the time she spent in England, some of her early poetry was written. She wrote a poem to George Washington who invited her to visit him at his Cambridge headquarters.

Her first book of poems was published in London in 1773. It was the second volume of poetry published by a woman from America. She was the first American to use the word "Columbia" in speaking of our country.

What Bull!

Continued from page 11

believe that people of diverse ethnic backgrounds should be shipped back to their ancestral homelands or segregated in any other way and nor are these students part of a *terrorist hate group* that they claim our speakers to be.

These may also be the students who will continue to perpetuate the cycle of problems in our educational, social, criminal, and economic institutions, to name a few. They may not do this consciously, but through their defensive and uninterested attitudes towards the subject. The refusal to listen, understand, and appreciate the diversity is the root of the racial problems in our society. *"What bull. Racism is not as prevalent as it has been made out to be here."*

This comment from the bell hooks convocation in March of 1999 is evident of the lack of awareness members of our community have about issues of race. Now is the time to reach out and promote understanding of differences. If negativity towards the life experiences of your mothers, fathers, and grandparents is not a stinging blow to you, then you may also be a part of the problem. It is incumbent upon us to take an active role in engaging our peers in dialogue about the beauty of diversity. As one student stated in a convo comment: *"Communication and awareness are the keys to happiness, success, and love."* Universally, this applies to all people. If we put aside our defensiveness and differences and help others to do the same, change is possible.

Go on, girl!

Continued from page 7

siblings to follow. Reflecting on her family she said, "Whenever I decided to do anything, I had to consider how it would affect my family, not just myself." A member of Phi Kappa Phi honor society, Doh is confident that she has surpassed the expectations of her parents.

With her mind on graduation, Doh expects both parents present as she exits Berea, and enters the next chapter of her life.

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