

# The Onyx

Volume 6 Number 1

Spring 2004

Do we  
really  
need a  
Black TV  
channel?



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Semester  
in  
Pictures!

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**Plus...**  
Poetry, News  
and more!



# Celebrate your HERITAGE

# The ONYX

**Volume 6 Number 1  
Spring 2004**

A Student Publication of the  
Black Cultural Center

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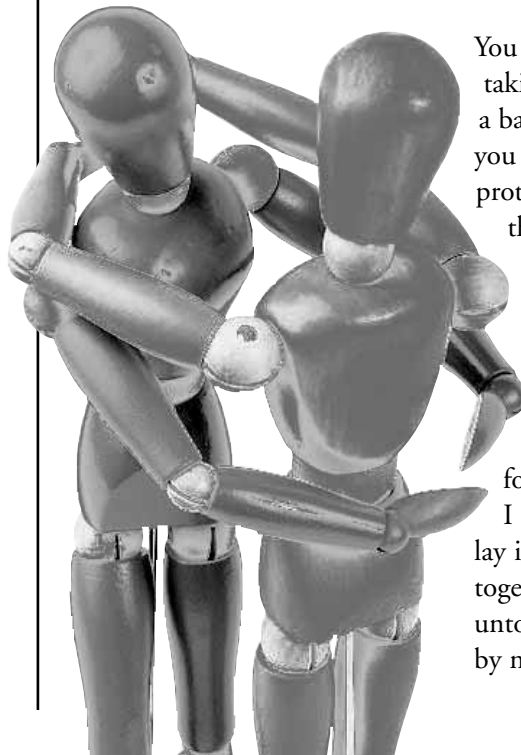
## EDITOR'S COMMENT

### Explore your roots!

The Spring 2004 *Onyx* is dedicated to all persons of African descent. Celebrate your heritage! Learn, grow and support each other—that's the only way we can be successful in this world. Never give up!

**DANIELLE SAUNDERS**, *Editor*

## POET'S CORNER



You embraced my hand  
taking it into your palm like  
a bandage you rubbed it upon  
you like a cloak that could  
protect you from all harm  
the world could threaten to create  
and in that second I existed  
like a light I danced  
and leaped  
unseen and unconceivable  
not captive or captivated by  
any force this life could offer me  
for a suspended gasp  
I  
lay in you and you in I  
together we were one  
untold and undone  
by no one.

**KISHA ARTHUR**

STAFF  
REFLECTION

# African or American?

## An Exploration of Identity

By **JONATHAN L. JOHNSON**

*“Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black here at the dawn of the Twentieth Century.”*

Dr. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois published these words in *Souls of Black Folk* in 1903 to address what he considered to be the problems of his emerging era as “the color line” in American society. Resulting from this crisis, African Americans were bound to conceal who they were in the midst of who society presumed them to be.

Here, Du Bois describes the passionate conflict of the “double-consciousness” between that of Negro and American thought, perception and identity. Du Bois’ essays in the *Souls of Black Folk* were not an attempt to define the African American, but to convey an insular meaning of what it meant to be Black in America.

Today, in the twenty-first century, over one hundred years later, to what would Du Bois attribute the dilemmas of Blacks in America? Certainly, scholars, poets, the media and social critics alike have all addressed racism, socioeconomic status, affirmative action and the state of the Black family as critical issues in the Black community. Yet, how is the notion of double-consciousness applicable to how Blacks in America perceive themselves today?

As a member of this community, this question is significant, particularly the extent to which African Americans actually relate to themselves. How are African Americans distinguished from other Americans? What is meant by African American identity?

See  
related  
article  
on  
Page 6

**NEWS**  
**BITES**

**Con-Grad-ulations!**

Good luck and congratulations to our graduating seniors!

- Satrice Allen
- John Bircckhead
- Charesa Bradberry
- Dena Buress
- Christian Caul
- Taraia Coleman
- Theresa Curtis
- LaTonya Davis
- Natalie Davis
- Tiffany Davis
- Jamie Eckford
- Shemeka Hamilton
- Mehreteab Helebo
- Pa Jatta
- Eddie Jeffreys
- Leah Johnson
- Shelda King
- Wiseman Koster
- Celeste Lee
- Katrina Maloney
- Reck Mhango
- La'Quita Middleton
- Reneen Mincy
- Kimberley Morrison
- Romeatrius Moss
- Ruqayyah Murtadha
- Eusebia Mwasaru
- Ann Ndei
- Adowa Nyamekye
- Joseph Owusu-Ansah
- Charity Pickens
- Trnaye Pierson
- Toccara Porter
- Kumba Semega-Janneh
- Shaquita Smith
- Felicia Sullivan
- Angel Todd
- Al Toe
- Willandra Wallace
- George Webb
- Frances Williams
- Niyetta Williams

**POET'S**  
**CORNER**

**First-Born of Royalty**

*Dedicated to Little Miss Niara Selah  
A strong, steadfast woman of high purpose.*

Who shall this woman be?  
Another Harriet Tubman  
Who'll free her enslaved people  
Not mindful of the hefty bounty on her head?

Shall she be a female version of Malcolm X  
Who'll give her life to changing the mentality  
Of her people and making them rise above  
The status the White man said?

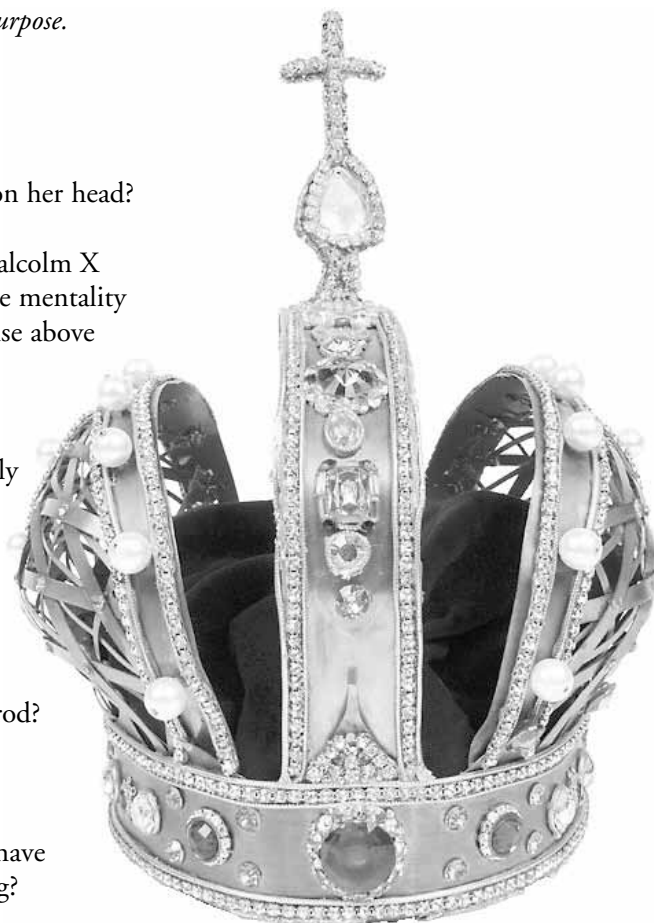
Or, shall she be a Nat Turner  
Who sacrificed his life by ultimately  
obeying the  
Holy Will of God?

What about God's servant, Moses?  
Will she, too, lead her people  
To the Promised land  
With Faith and the raising of her rod?

First born of Royalty  
The Daughter of the King  
What kind of voice will this Sista have  
When she opens her mouth to sing?

Will she be Awake  
Or will she be a dreamer?  
I pray she'll be Awake because  
Dreamers only dream.

First born of Royalty  
The Daughter of the King  
I pray she changes this old world  
With the message that she sends.



**LA' QUITA MIDDLETON**

# The Semester *in pictures*



**A-C** Ghana Short Term



**D-E** Step Afrika Convo



**F-H** Unity Banquet



# Feed the DREAM

*Learn to  
embrace  
your  
African  
heritage*

By **SHARONDA GRIFFIN**

This semester included two very important celebrations of African American culture and history. On January 19th the Berea Community came together to celebrate the birth and life of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. On February

## **COVER STORY**

21st various offices across campus joined together to sponsor the annual Unity Banquet, which is a part of a weekend celebrating Dr. Carter G. Woodson, his legacy, and the contributions he made to Berea College and the study of African people throughout the Diaspora. Both events provided an opportunity for celebrations and also for gaining information about the importance of African peoples to the international community.

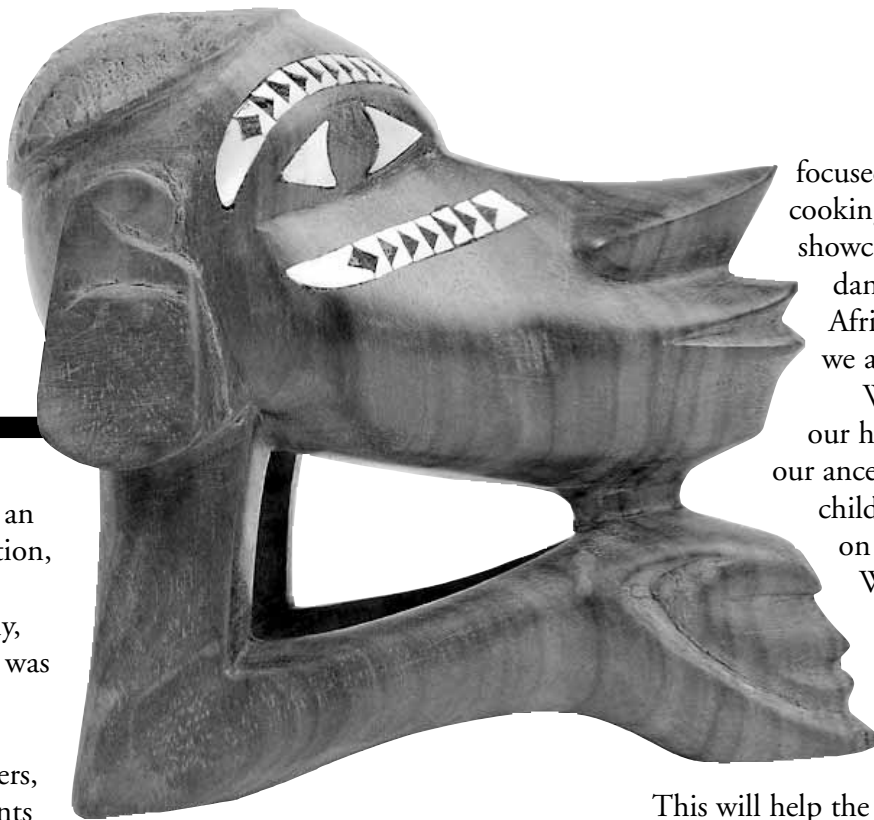
The activities for the King Day celebration developed around the planning of members of the Department of Religion, Campus Ministries, Student Life, Black Studies, Residence Life, Seabury Center, Convocation Committee, History Department, Hutchins Library, Berea Baptist Church, and Union Church. Throughout the day, community members could celebrate the legacy of Dr. King at a fellowship breakfast, a video presentation, a chapel service, a march to city hall, various programs presented by the Child

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the Unity B  
a night of c  
together fo  
community  
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and prospec  
Carter G. V  
College and

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challenged  
callings. A  
artist and n  
everything  
how it relat  
true educat  
you know a  
truthfully a

With th  
has to offer  
We demon

**“When you know about your heritage, you are able to embrace it truthfully and whole-heartedly.”**



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onvocation,  
elight  
Similarly,  
Banquet was  
coming  
r  
y members,  
f, students  
ctive students coming together to acknowledge  
Woodson’s legacy and what it means to Berea  
d our world.  
MLK convocation, Professor Nikki Finney  
us to search for our vocations and recognize our  
t the Unity Banquet Alice Lovelace, a spoken word  
mother of noted actor/activist Hasan Davis, took  
back to Woodson. She talked about Africa and  
es to us today. She demonstrated how important a  
ion is to all of us embracing our heritage. When  
about your heritage you are able to embrace it  
nd whole-heartedly.  
ne banquet we tried to focus on showing what Berea  
to prospective and current community members.  
strated a cultural emphasis in our menus, which

focused on African retentions in southern gourmet cooking and the cultural connections of our student showcases which covered different talents including dance, mime, and song which all stem from our African roots. Even in our collaborative efforts, we again embraced our African heritage.

While we are in the process of learning about our heritage and how it relates to our lives as far as our ancestors, I realize how much I didn’t know as a child. It is important to expose our children early on to African history and connections to the West. This exposure should include children of all backgrounds. It is important that an interracial group of children have an understanding of the opportunities and advantages that they have that weren’t available to children of previous generations.

This will help the world, not just Berea College, gain a better understanding of the possibilities of interracial education.

As with the MLK theme, *Feeding the Dream*, which entails teaching and experience, it is just as important to talk to our children about our ancestry and the importance that Africans play in the lives we live today. There are things that we are only learning as adults, that we can teach our children. My son knows so much more about his heritage at age four because of his early exposure and my intentional efforts to teach him about who he is. This has to be a continuous process, not only for us, but also for the children.

Remember to “Feed the Dream” and “Embrace Our African Heritage,” not just on special occasions but throughout the entire year.

*Sharonda Griffin is a Junior Black Studies major at Berea College.*

## NEWS BITES

### Winners of the 2004 Unity Banquet Awards

Congratulations to the winners of the annual Unity Banquet awards which were presented February 21, 2004.

#### DISTINGUISHED STUDENTS

Satrice Allen—senior  
Chris Awosika— junior  
Melanie Harvey—sophomore  
Sonia Mbah—freshman

#### DISTINGUISHED FACULTY

Linda Strong-Leek—Women's Studies

#### DISTINGUISHED DEPARTMENT

Printing Services



## Notable Quotable

"Accepting your greatness is the process of discovering it—revealing it—living it—tapping into it—and exploting it. Maximizing all of your talents and gifts, so that at the time of your transition, when you leave the planet, you will have no regrets. You will have given all that you have to fulfill your divine purpose."

—**Rev. Paula L. McGee**  
from her book,  
*Accepting Your Greatness*

Rev. McGee will be the featured lecturer for Berea College's Accent on Christian Faith. For additional information, go to [paulamcgee.org](http://paulamcgee.org)

## POET'S CORNER

### Terrible IFs

Misery cried alone that evening  
And I refused to sit with her on such a beautiful night.  
Sweeping along the sidewalk, my thoughts warming me  
Or at least numbing the cold that surrounded the twilight

I pushed through the doors of the diner,  
Introduced by the sweet chime of the bell attached to the door  
The culture of the diner blurring around me  
And the loud ambience of forks, knives and spoons muted in the 39th Street eatery

"Good evening, can I take your order?"  
"Just a hot chocolate, please"  
"Hot Chocolate? Okay."

She floated over to the cups and almost innately brought me my cup  
Just like every Wednesday night.

"Thank you," was all I said, sipping silently in the cornered booth.

I pushed through the doors of the diner,  
Tagged by the sweet chime of the bell attached to the door  
The culture of the diner blurring behind me  
And the loud ambience of forks, knives and spoons muted in the 39th Street eatery

**CHRIS "CAP" HAYES**

### Ocean Waves

The sound of ocean waves  
Crashing into rocks and sand  
Peaceful to me, but torture for my ancestors  
The crash of the waves signifies a change in the tides.  
Changing tides brought merchant ships  
Ships seeking goods, cargo, people.  
The change of the tides brought change and uncertainty.  
Far away lands and cruel, cruel conditions  
The sound of ocean waves, crashing into rocks and sand  
Peaceful? I think not.

**ADOWA NYAMEKYE**

# Do we *really* need BET?

By **GYUDE MOORE**

About a semester or two ago, someone with the nickname, Convoman, on the defunct BC Live website asked, “What if there were a White history month, a “White Student Union or a White Cultural Center?” And although some people would not be caught dead making such statements publicly, they do reflect on these things, sometimes referring to them as ‘reversed racism’. They harbor thoughts like, “What else do Black people want. Apparently, Black people no longer want equal rights, they want *special* rights.”

I am not sure that I will be able to adequately respond to those concerns, but feel that it is necessary to share my reflections on such comments. First, we must continue to remind ourselves that Blacks are a minority with a history unlike any other minority in this country. Because of that historical difference, its modern implications and subtle manifestations, they can never be compared to any other minority. Next, being a minority comes with myriad disadvantages among them including the control of one’s identity by the majority.

Janet Ruscher notes in her book, *Prejudiced Communication*, that “On a larger scale dominant groups can use the mass media to protect their social power by portraying outgroups in a stereotypical fashion. The dominant group also may give trivial attention to outgroup concerns and issues, or may only discuss outgroup concerns when they are linked to negative stereotypical qualities.”

In those words, Ruscher captures the necessity for a Black Cultural Center, Black Student Union or even a Black Entertainment Television channel. The establishment of those institutions is an attempt by a minority struggling to control its identity and give guidance to its destiny. Blacks live in a cultural structure that decides their place without consulting them. It is a structure that literally predetermines what their opportunities would be, how far they would go, and what their greatest achievements would ever be. In a culture that mainly ignores their concerns unless it is linked to stereotypical qualities, they strive to convince each other that they are more than what they are portrayed to be.

This writer strongly believes that the ultimate quest of human existence is the search for meaning. It is the pursuit of activities and endeavors that give meaning to one’s life that overarch our time spent on earth. It is in those activities and that quest that people feel moored and find identity. When they no longer control that pursuit and must accept what is dictated to them as their identity and as the only meaning their lives would ever have, they feel the need to resist. By establishing those institutions that are distinctly Black, they are in a life-threatening situation to preserve a positive identity that they can in turn teach to younger generations and pass on to posterity. Blacks do not want *special* rights, they want to be *equal*—in opportunity and life chances!



*Gyude Moore is a Junior Sociology major at Berea College.*

# It's "Cool" to serve!

## A look at the 2004 Cool Conference

By **MARKIAS LITTLEJOHN**

This was my first Cool Conference, and it was an eye opening experience. It was nice to see other students from various places around the USA with similar ideas.

I attended "Letting Your Idealism Work for You," a forum on Friday afternoon. This forum was very informative because many people believe that if you take a non-profit job, it means giving up luxuries and living from paycheck to paycheck. We learned that there are jobs in which you can make a comfortable salary. Also, we discussed that in preparing for these jobs, you have to ask yourself, "What are my values?" "What kind of change would I like to be apart of?" "What do I want to learn?" "What environment do I want to work in?" and "What do I need?" In asking yourself these questions you are prepared for the job interview and have direction.

"Agents of Change," was the second event that I attended. This workshop focused on college students making the "change". Students should get together and discuss the community and its needs. Students have to set reasonable goals to have direction and a way to measure effectiveness. This workshop really empowered the student to go out and make change, because it only takes one person.

The next workshop I attended was, "Where is the love?" Dorms can team up with the greater community. This session influenced me the most, since I am on my dorm's house council. I learned in this session that each student has

ability, and if you assess it and get to know people within the dorm, you will know your dorms strengths. After you assess your dorm, you then assess the community's needs and resources. Once you have this figured out, the next step is finding creative ways to keep students as well as the community involved in the programs. In making this a joint effort, it is an equal reciprocity where it is benefiting both parties. In closing this workshop, we learned that there is money out there for programs like this, but you have to look for it.

The next event that I attended was "The Perception and Manifestation of the Lives of African American Male College Students." In this session spirituality was the inner self and we learned that using our inner strength could manifest change in our community. There are many avenues to bring about change, and you have to find the one that works for you. In closing, we were told we have a mandate to help others understand the inner soul and the strength they have and use that to bring about change.

This conference has awakened the inner helper in me and I feel that I have the power to affect the world. I feel that each person has a place in changing injustices and changing the world in a positive way. We must

know our strengths and abilities and tap into the avenue that is most successful for us. This trip was really mind blowing and I would like to experience this event again because it really has touched me. Thanks for the opportunity.

*Markias Littlejohn  
is a Junior Nursing  
major at Berea  
College.*



## POET'S CORNER

### Revelation

My eyes are open but do I really see  
 All the things that are right in front of me  
 When I walk down the street, camera in hand  
 Do you wonder my intent, do you even understand?  
 My wonder and amazement at how you live  
 My shame and pity even my feelings to give  
 To show my gratitude and help you out  
 Because I know you need it without a doubt  
 Not once did I stop to see just how much you look like me  
 How your smile curves up tight on the right  
 How your big brown eyes give you sight  
 Your wonderful dark skin baked just right in the hot sun  
 The games you play, the way you have fun  
 You are beautiful no matter what you don't have  
 My big house, fancy cars, and enormous bank account. What do I really have?  
 As I look into your life and the struggles you go through  
 The people in your life and how they treat you  
 Your foreign tongue, the way you shout  
 Your wife, your children, and how they scurry about  
 To me you are different in many ways  
 Even though I don't see how you live your days  
 Four hundred years ago I was stolen from you  
 Oh how sad because there was nothing you could do  
 So here I am back in the swing of things  
 Full of love and joy and all that they bring  
 Mother Africa I am here with my arms held out  
 Not to help but just to shout  
 Way up to those heavens where our God lives  
 One who loves, one who gives  
 I am me, and that is all I can be  
 Though you may think so, I am not wealthy  
 In America I am a young African American woman who loves God and all He stands for  
 And to me your life is a total bore  
 So as I stand here with my arms stretched to my Lord  
 I pray that He sends down to you all things He has stored  
 Keep us all, from the U.S. to China, in love and peace as we encounter  
 Each other's cultures and ways of life, so all of our living will not be in strife  
 My prayer is that you love us all very dearly  
 And your purpose for us you show very clearly

LA'TARA CLAYTON

## THE WORD

**Question:** If you could travel to any country in Africa (or of predominantly African descent), which would it be and why?



"South Africa, because you receive the best of both worlds."

**Tony Sutton**

Sophomore  
Child and Family Studies



"South Africa, because a lot of racial struggles are similar to those of the past in the U.S."

**Leonard Fields**

Sophomore  
Communication



"I would travel to Haiti. I am interested in the dynamics between voodoo and Christianity."

**Sarah Poole**

Junior  
English



"I desire to do mission work in Africa, I would take a trip to any part of Africa."

**Ebony Walker**

Freshman  
Nursing

# 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, programs, 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

## Chinua Achebe

Achebe is a writer, teacher, editor and diplomat. He published his first novel *Things Fall Apart*, two years before the British left Nigeria. This novel is a

landmark: it is printed in 40 different languages and has sold millions of copies across the world. After college and teaching for a year, Achebe spent twelve years as a television producer.



He discovered that almost all books about blacks were written by white people and that encouraged him to write. He felt that no white man could get under the skin of a black man like a black man. Chinua Achebe was offered the presidency of his home country of Nigeria, but refused. His works are unbelievable in insight of language and place has had a great impact on many.

—AAWC

# Identity

Continued from p. 2

When confronted with such questions, there are those who have a difficult time describing the African component of their identity. The American component has been much easier to characterize because of the lifestyle, history and culture assimilated over the years from mainstream society.

Unfortunately, there is a loss of consciousness within the Black community in America, for much less is known about being African than American. How does Black America then recover from this loss? During the Short-term of 2004, I was blessed with an opportunity to travel to Ghana, West Africa with a class entitled *Reclaiming Wisdom through Music, Religion and Philosophy*, where I served as an administrator. As the title of the class implies, we all had a unique opportunity to discover a portion of African music, religion and way of life through dialogues, readings and experiential learning. Among the people, I felt the intense pride of their birthrights; listening to the rhythm of the drums, I heard the legacy of their forefathers; and at the shores of the slave dungeons, I experienced an awakening in the cradle of my heritage. It was there that I realized more than ever who I am. It was there that I confirmed my self-awareness as an African American.

Through the middle passage to slavery, Africa is a part of all Americans' history and should be integrated into each of our lives, particularly those of African descent. The encounters I had in Ghana was nothing short of a profound spiritual, cultural and African connection filled with honored tradition and proud heritage. What was lost, found; what was once removed, now reclaimed.

*Jonathan L. Johnson is a member of the Residential Life Collegium at Berea College.*