

BEREA COLLEGE
BLACK CULTURAL CENTER

STUDENT
NEWSLETTER

The ONYX

Volume 7 Number 1

Spring 2005

Special Issue

A focus on
graduation with
words of
encouragement
to our graduates,
and comments
from the grads
themselves.

Plus...
Poetry, News and
more!



For our GRADUATES

The Onyx

**Volume 7 Number 1
Spring 2005**

A Student Publication of the
Black Cultural Center

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EDITOR'S COMMENT

Bidding Adieu

All these years I have held the position of the Public Relations Manager and the editor of *The Onyx* here in the Black Cultural Center, I don't think that the readers have really gotten to know anything about me. This is my senior year and I will be graduating May 22, Oh, yes, the day my life will change.

Throughout the pages of this issue, you will hear our other seniors tell you a bit about themselves in their profiles. This is *my* contribution:



Major: Biology

Hometown: Cincinnati, Ohio

Quote: "To climb steep hills requires a slow pace at first. Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

Plans after graduation

After graduation I plan to go to that place where I call home (Cincinnati) and start my career; I plan to work at the University of Cincinnati's Genome Institute, where I will conduct research dealing with genetics in discovering medical unknowns and working with some of the top Geneticist in the country.

Who influenced you the most here at Berea and why?

The persons that have influenced me the most since I have been here at Berea are Professor Andrew Baskin and Ms. Paula McGhee. Professor Baskin helped me learn that when you speak, make sure you speak well. When I first arrived here at Berea the way that I spoke was considered to be "ghetto" because I spoke a lot of slang and I didn't use proper English. From taking a class with Baskin I quickly learned. Every time I would open my mouth and slang would come out, he would tell my neighbor (Samantha Stowers) to hit me. I am not saying that I don't speak like I used to, but I have come a long way. Ms. Paula was like my second mom away from home. I could go to her when ever I needed anything no matter what it was, she would try to help me the best way possible. She was down to earth, open and always tried to simile. Ms. Paula McGhee, you are truly missed!

Before I go, I'd like to leave my successor some words of encouragement: things are not as easy as they seem to be, but work at it you'll get it soon.

DANIELLE SAUNDERS
Editor

ALUMNI REFLECTION

Calling all seniors!

A Berea alum offers his words of advice to the graduating class



By **ANTONIO MELTON**

As this Berea College chapter of your life comes to a close, if I am trusted to rely on my once keen memory, I can recall the mixed emotions of anxiety, excitement and fear to leave what had become comforting in college. Leaving me exposed to do what it I had longed to do—see the world and to be “grown”. I quickly recognized that being “grown” wasn’t as carefree as I had imagined. My mother’s wise words linger, “what’s the rush to be grown? You better enjoy your youth”. Now that I have cracked open a can of 30 years I am enjoying my youth.

Although I am physically no longer on Berea College’s campus I will always have fond memories of the place and a sweet sense of nostalgia when I think of home. So I gratefully take this opportunity to offer some words of advice to you, Berea College graduates of 2005:

- Seize opportunities to make them a part of what you want to become.
- Be mindful of the bridges you burn; you will never know when the shoes change feet.
- Trust the knowledge and experiences that Berea has afforded you with confidence (you are prepared and ready to take on the next chapter.
- Find joy in knowing that your frustrations with college professors and sleepless nights have now been willed to a new generation of Bereans and the still sleepless nights for you will be replaced with the demands of a new career and/or family.

NEWS BITES

Con-grad-ulations to the Class of 2005!

We here at the Black Cultural Center would like to recognize the following graduating seniors:

Sonya Ofunne	BIO
Danielle Saunders	BIO
Mohammed Aiyegbo	BIO
Michael Olaopa	BIO
Morrisa Benberry	BUS
Brooks Burnett	BUS
Jamaco Grady	BUS
Christina Hamilton	BUS
Crystal Hampton	BUS
Brooke Leeth	BUS
Yusuf Muhammad	BUS
Jamie Ness	BUS
Samantha Stowers	BUS
Hussene Youssouf	BUS
Janice Dail	CFS
ElBonita Hawkins	CFS
Cielita Lewis	CFS
Natalie Martin	CFS
Jon'Nita Smith	CFS
Jami Rogers	CHM
Rosemary Ndolo	CHM
DeJuana Thompson	COMS
LaTara Clayton	EDS
Janet Garrison	EDS
Calvin Maddox	EDS
Sarah Poole	ENG
Andrea Enoch	HIS
Wendell Garnett	IND
Sharonda Griffin	IND
Reta Bogale	MAT
Ojja Kulusika	MAT
Peterkin Quagraine	MAT
Joseph Kimeu	MAT
Ashley Miller	NUR
Omeshia Mitchell	NUR
Monica Oden	NUR
Shelly Smith	NUR
Aster Minani	PED
Christopher Awosika	PSY
Renata Jones	PSY
Edith Ndei	PSY
Beverly Taylor	PSY
Moriah Washington	SOC
Larry Collins	TECM
Shameka Lewis	TECM
Ramon Williams	TECM
Omosefe Abbe	TECM
Dina Haines	THR
Janelle Hunnicutt	THR
Melenia Jackson	WOMN

POET'S CORNER

Fill the Space

For the Seniors

Though your college years are near an end
The rest of your life will soon begin
So embrace that unknown empty space
With a willful mind and a smiling face

Continue to fill the space...

Fill the space with the knowledge
You persevered
And always remember the paths you cleared
Hold old friends dear
Be dear to the new
Above all else
To yourself
Be true

Continue to fill the space...

Fill the space with the grace only God can give
Forever seize the day,
Don't ever forget, but learn to forgive
Through the kindness and care you display
Be diligent, forthright, courageous and bold
As you seek your given path
Fill the space with your warmth when times seem cold
And always remember to laugh

Fill this empty world with love anew
With wisdom you *can* succeed
Fill the vacancies left by fore-fathers past
With a spirit destined to lead

Continue to fill the space...
Continue to be who you are...
Continue to soar through uncharted skies
A black and beautiful star!

STEWART LEE STONE

**GUEST
COLUMN**

**THE
WORD**

Fearless Black Leaders

An Underclassman's message to the Seniors

By **JAMAR BROWN**

The time has come for you to embrace your "empowerment". Time is only an essence that will lead you to achieve greatness. It is now that you allow the prosperity you have obtained over the years to run free into a world thirsty for passion and entity. Bold and daring are the courageous efforts you will apply to life's next level of challenge. Captivating and witty is the persona you have acquired and will share with such stonehearted individuals unbeknownst to universal character.

Remain adamant in the values instilled into you from those great leaders you have allowed to enter into your heart and mind. Stand strong for the righteous who fall short in impact and become the voice for the generation many believe is destined to fail.

You have come upon this campus from all different walks of life and accepted a challenge society says is impossible for the non-Anglo American citizen to accomplish. Through trial and error you have prevailed excellence to a nation dead. Boast the beauty that lives in you to inspire non-believers. You are phenomenal women and men of honor. Take heave to the rich tradition our ancestors have paved in defining just what it means to be who we are.

Never forget where you came from and above all, remember that anything is possible through Christ who strengthens you. My black brothers and sisters, the world is yours. Lead today's youth into the successful streams of tomorrow.

May God continue to bless you all!

Jamar Brown is a Junior Communications major at Berea College.

Underclassmen: What are you hoping to do during your senior year?



"Job seraching, loan repayments and more responsibility. Nothing!"

Patrick Bradford
Sophomore
Birmingham, Alabama
Art



"Finding a good law school and going to Florida on Spring Break with my boys."

Jamal Williams
Junior
Atlanta, Georgia
Black Studies



"I'm looking forward to pursuing my other careers in Culinary Arts and Cosmetology. If God be willing, find a Godly man that may become my husband."

Alexis Rush
Junior
Greenville, South Carolina
Elementary Education



"Graduation, Spring Break and a good job, as well as finding that special someone."

William Cook
Junior
Cincinnati, Ohio
Technology and
Business Administration

Letters from the Seniors

I remember when I came home from school knowing I had to repeat the third grade all over again; I felt stupid because everyone was advancing to the next grade and I was not. What you are about to hear is a part of my life that is very personal and heart wrenching. You wonder why I am sharing this with you. Well, through the storm came a beautiful testimony that I hope you will be blessed by.

Graduating from college for me is a personal triumph. I can remember moving from Chicago Illinois to Battle Creek Michigan and realizing everyone was smarter than me. I was twelve years old and was afraid to read out loud because I knew I didn't know half of the words on the paper. I struggled but made it through junior high with good grades and entered high school. In high school, I became a part of the Upward Bound program which introduced me to the possibility of going to college. Growing up in Chicago, especially on my side of town, surviving each day was much more important than college. I began to work even harder in high school because once I heard I can go to college, I was excited and ready to leave right then and there.

College life for me did not start here at Berea College. In 1997, I was enrolled at Oakland University in Rochester Michigan. After my first semester, I was called into the financial aid office and was told in a cold, thoughtless way that I could no longer go to the school unless I paid \$1,500 for the rest of the semester. At this time I had no financial guidance and came from a family without the resources to pay my way through school. I thought with financial aid I would not have to pay for school...well, that's what I was told. I can remember leaving the financial aid office confused and upset. Something told me to go to Stephanie's room; Stephanie was a freshman at Oakland who was very strong in the church. I can remember walking into her residence hall room and not able to speak

because of my crying so much. She didn't ask me anything; she just grabbed my hands and started praying. Once she finished praying, without me telling her what was wrong, she asked me if I ever thought that maybe Oakland was not the school for me. I looked at her confused; I really did not understand what she meant. I worked so hard to get there. Why should everyone else have this opportunity over me?

I left Oakland and returned home to Battle Creek Michigan where I began to work and get my own apartment. I was determined to work and save enough money to pay my way through school, but there was another plan for me that I had yet to discover. A few short months after I returned home, I received information from my doctor saying that I was pregnant. This was a very difficult time for me. Immature and uneducated about the whole sexual experience, I just could not understand how—on my first time ever having sex—I ended up pregnant.

Seven months later I gave birth to my first son Emmanuel Brooks. Emmanuel's father was this smooth talker I went to junior high school with. Although I did not love this person as a husband, we both felt since we had a child together that marriage would be the right thing to do. Within the first year of Emmanuel's life, his father was shot and killed by the police.

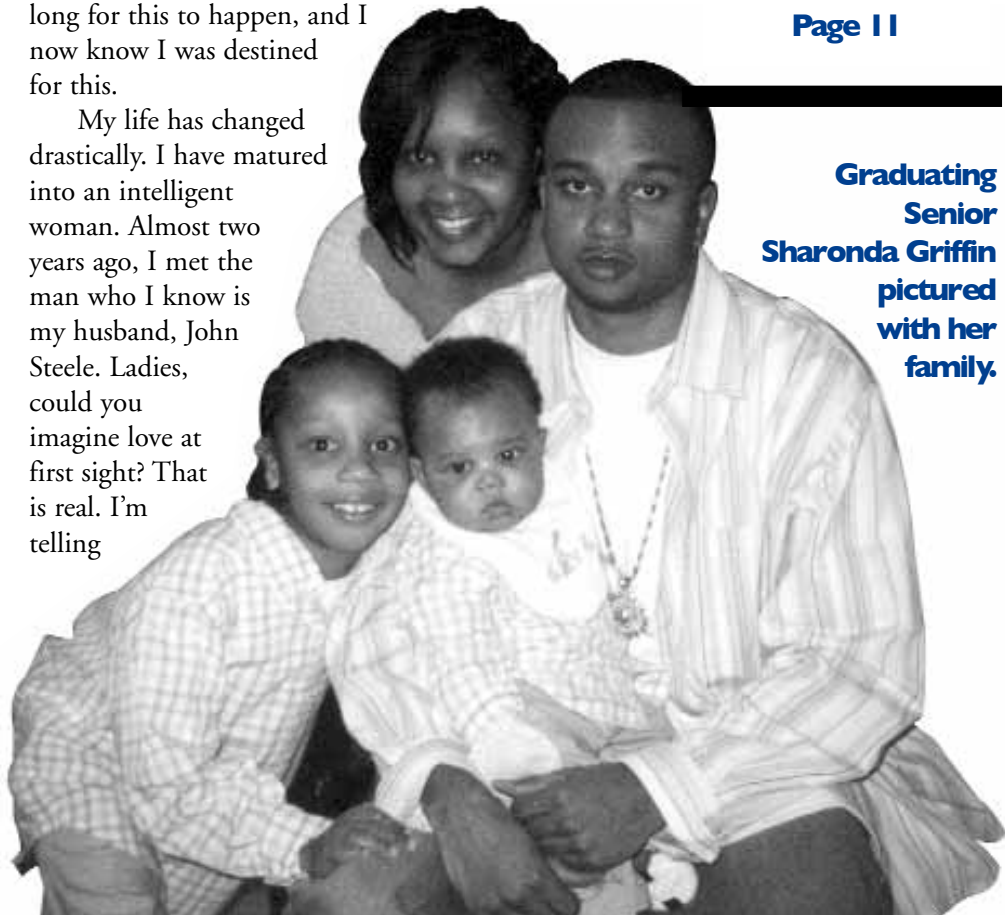
Two weeks after my 22nd birthday, I had no future husband and my child had no father. At this point, I was more confused than ever. I can remember being pregnant and praying to God and apologizing for doing such a wrong deed. As I stood there, clear as day, I heard a voice say, "why are you still apologizing? I have already forgiven you, and that this child would never have need for anything." I believe having a father is a need so I could not understand why my son's father was taken away at such an early age. My confusion of his death made me more and more depressed by each passing minute. I no longer wanted to be in Battle Creek because the memories were unbearable so I quit my job, sold everything from my apartment, and with our clothes and my brand new 27 inch TV, Emmanuel and I moved to South Carolina.

**COVER
STORY**

Four members of the graduating class share their thoughts and experiences with the underclassmen

It was in South Carolina that I heard about Berea College. At first I was excited, yet still had disbelief, but the blessings flowed so easy when it came to getting into the school. I could not deny this wonderful opportunity I had sitting right in front of me. Once again, Emmanuel and I moved; I never knew that the path I went down would lead me to such a marvelous light. I am now a graduating senior. Who would have thought: a little girl from the west side of Chicago who could barely read and write is now graduating from college. For me, the experience goes beyond just graduating. I have waited so long for this to happen, and I now know I was destined for this.

My life has changed drastically. I have matured into an intelligent woman. Almost two years ago, I met the man who I know is my husband, John Steele. Ladies, could you imagine love at first sight? That is real. I'm telling



Turn to Page 8 for more letters.

This letter concludes on Page 11

Graduating Senior Sharonda Griffin pictured with her family.

PROFILES:
TODAY'S STUDENTS,
TOMORROW'S LEADERS

Larry Collins



Major: Industrial Arts and Technology
Hometown: Cincinnati, Ohio
Quote: "Me, myself at my very best all of the time."

Plans after graduation
I plan on going to graduate school at the University of Cincinnati.

Who influenced you the most here at Berea and why?
Dr. Gary Mahoney, because he was always been there when I needed suggestions. Ever since I stepped on Berea College campus he has been there for me.

Sonya Ofunne



Major: Biology
Hometown: Atlanta, Georgia
Quote: "Listen more than you hear; think more than you speak;

treat others how you want to be treated; One never appreciates that which is special until it is gone forever."

Plans after graduation
Work in corporate company as a scientist and earn a master's degree in Environmental Biology.

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Who influenced you the most and why?

Although I am away from home and have been away for four years, the values that my mother has instilled in me still shine through. I feel more fortunate than most people to have a mother who taught me the importance of self-respect, self-control, self-restraint, and discipline. For it was here at Berea College that I found those elements in my personality most needed.

Renata Jones



Major:

Psychology

Hometown:

Dandridge,
Tennessee

Quote: "God has a purpose for me

and no devil in hell is going to keep me from fulfilling that purpose and manifesting into what God has designed me to become."

Plans after graduation

Take some back classes then go to a Pham program.

Christopher Phillips



Major: Business Administration

Hometown:

Lexington

Quote: "Stick to drums, you can never go wrong."

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More Letters from the Seniors

As I reflect over my past four years at Berea College, I have an abundance of memories; many are good, yet many are bad. It took a long time to decide on something that I wanted to leave behind, a poem, a theory on surviving life at Berea, a quote...none of those quite fit the occasion, so I decided to leave a letter with a few words of advice.

In life, especially in college, everyone makes decisions; some good, some bad. In my life thus far, I have made some wonderful decisions and some horrible decisions, but looking back, I have no regrets. To me, life is too short to sit back and wish we could undo mistakes that we have made; a wise friend once told me that life is a learning experience and I cherish that thought. It is important to me that as I walk across that stage in May, I know that my college experience has not been flawless, but I have learned many lessons about life and left here a more "seasoned person" than when I arrived in August of 2001.

At times, I looked back over my childhood and regret my parent's drug addiction. I've regretted the days when we didn't have food or electricity or water, but thank God we found a way. I've regretted relationships, friendships, wasting priceless time being upset about pettiness, you get the picture...But I have come to the point in my life where I realize that every hardship, every battle fought was worth where I am today. I now appreciate my past because it has shaped my future; it has made me who I am and I am thankful.

Basically, I said all that to say *this*:

- Never let anyone tell you who or what you can't be in life
- Be comfortable with who you are and always be yourself because no matter what you do to try to please people, they will find some fault in you
- Surround yourself with people that have the same goals that you do
- Don't waste time saying you won't make it, look to all those who have walked before you and be encouraged, get your work done
- Oh, did I mention to have a little fun every now and then...
- **Never live to regret anything, learn from everyday you live**

ASHLEY MILLER

Snapshots for us to remember...



To all underclassmen,

Berea College, no matter what some people think, is a good school. Academically, it is highly ranked nationally among all of the colleges and universities. Socially, the experiences that you gain here will benefit you in life. Take advantage of the “free” education that you receive because it is priceless. Enjoy it while it lasts. Get involved and make a difference on campus. Some of my funnest moments were participating in intramurals, Berea Buddies, psychology club, writing for the pinnacle, and the Black Student Union.

Don't just remain content in any situation you are in. As a graduating senior I feel like time has just passed by so quickly! My advice to you is to work hard but also have a balance. Set your priorities and don't waver. Have fun, but like I always say, “keep it holy”. There will be times in which you will feel like giving up but remember where you came from.

Our ancestors have fought very hard and some were even killed to give us an opportunity to have what we have today. “You can do all things through Christ which strengthens you.” Encourage one another and don't beat each other down but build each other up in love and kindness. We are all in this together. Let God lead you and direct you in all that you do. Even though you may not know it someone is watching you. Be an example for others to follow. Watch your actions and your conversation.

Yes, we all make mistakes but don't let that be an excuse for not striving for excellence in all that you do. As stated earlier, build each other up and don't tear each other down. We are already disadvantaged. We don't need our brothers and our sisters to bring us down any further. Let us bear one another's burdens and help each other make it through.

Pray for one another so that we all may be at peace and get to know God on a personal level. Even when you don't have anyone there, Jesus is still there to help you through. There were many times in which I didn't know what to do but Jesus has been my friend in the time of need. Build your relationship with Christ. He will give you peace through the storm and victory and deliverance if you persevere. If you don't remember anything else remember the two greatest commandments. “Love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength” and “love your neighbor as yourself.”

God Bless and stay strong.

CHRIS AWOSIKA

...as the years go by.



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Plans after graduation

Sit out a semester, work at a corporate place. Get married and save up to go to graduate school.

Who influenced you the most here at Berea and why?

Joel Wilson. He showed me the ropes to the school, introduced me to excellent professors, and gave me advice about the school and life. He made my first year here enjoyable.

Moriah Washington



Major: Sociology
Hometown: Seneca, South Carolina
Quote: “Hold onto your dreams for if there are no

dreams life is like a broken-winged bird that can not fly.”

Plans after graduation

I plan to work in serving young people and/or families. Whatever God leads me to follow, I want.

Who influenced you the most here at Berea and why?

Ms. Paula McGhee, I learned from her that without true compassion your work for others won't be very effective and in order to give your all you must have compassion for all and you must use the wisdom appointed by God when making decisions.

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Continued from p. 8

Janet Garrison



Major: Education Studies

Hometown: Miamisburg, Ohio

Quote: "Never doubt that a small group of

thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

Plans after graduation

Not planned, but would like to participate in social change regarding sustainability & global connections.

Who influenced you the most here at Berea and why?

Libby Jones. She saw potential in me and valued my contributions enough to encourage me to pursue several life changing experiences.

EIBonita Hawkins



Major: Child and Family Studies

Hometown: Lexington

Quote: "Hakuna Matata," because if God is for me

who can be against me.

Plans after graduation

Hopefully to go into a nursing program at Eastern Kentucky University or graduate school.

Who influenced you the most here at Berea and why?

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More Letters from the Seniors

I have to say that I didn't think I was going to make it this far. There have been times when I had wanted to hang in the towel and quit because I thought this wasn't the place I needed to be. My first semester here was an unpleasant one, if I must say. I was ready to transfer to Georgia State University. I had gotten sick from the food at the Café, the classes seemed to be ridiculous and I thought the people here were crazy. But something or should I say some people convinced me to finish out the year. It was that short term of 2002, when I had adapted to the lifestyle and the atmosphere here at Berea College. I hate to quit on things, and this school was not going to be one of them.

My friends had begun to drop one-by-one out from my class. People that I did not like or considered a brother or sister were disappearing in my classes. I begin to notice the different trends of how they live their lives, which was causing them to get into a trouble. It was the same way with some of the underclassmen that came after us (Class of 2005). It was like watching a tape or scary movie, and you know what is going to happen next. But as much as you scream and yell, that person is going to keep on doing what they are doing until something bad happens. I remember there were times when I had tried to take the blame to help those that were about to get kicked out.

Sometimes I felt like this school was determined to admit anyone that was Black, but was ready to kick that person out once that first strike came. Then, I think about the people who were allowed to stay. These people are the lucky ones, as am I, to still be here to be honor with a college degree. To those behind me: Sticks, Tone, Mac, Mel, Clutch, Jamal, Jay R., Nisha, and the others that I try to look out for. I wish you all the best of luck and to "Keep on trucking." Hey, I know its country and corny, but when you think about the saying, it works.

HUSSEN YOUSOUF

*More snapshots,
from semesters
gone by...*



Continued from p. 7

you it is one of the best feelings in the world. We now have a five month old son, Jalen Steele, who has added to the love we have for each other.

I am grateful for everyone in my life that has been with me throughout this entire period of my growth. To Stephanie, wherever you are, thank you for those wise words. I now understand what you meant. To my family, I love you all and am proud to say I have a family as supportive as you all are. To my close fiends who have been there when I was good to be around *and* not so good, thank you for being my second family and support system who I know I can depend on. To my children, I pray that God continue to guide and teach me to be the mother He has for me to be. You have kept me going and I am proud to be a "baby mama". Last but not least, to my love, words can not express how grateful I am to have met you. Thank you for being a great positive force in our son's lives. I look forward to us growing old together and continuing to fall asleep to every movie we rent. To all of my Berea College friends who I can now say family, thank you for allowing me to be apart of such a great institution, I look forward to visiting and continuing to support students in the future.

And for any future or perspective student who may read this letter, the phrase "the sky is the limit" is not an untrue statement. Whatever God has for you, name it, claim it and run with it like you have never run before. Look at Berea College as a lifejacket you wear in a large body of water. No matter how far you continue to journey in that water, as long as you have that jacket on you will not sink. In other words, take what you learn from Berea and use it as a survival tool in the outside world, believe me, it will work. I hope to visit and meet many of you in the future. God Bless.

SHARONDA GRIFFIN



...Good friends, great times!



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Moriah Washington. She is a strong woman of God. No matter what the situation she would tell me the truth and what was right. She helped me stay on my toes and kept me encouraged even when I thought I could not go on. She has been my best friend and even if we don't always talk I know she will be there. I am blessed to have her in my life (Moriah, don't suck your teeth at me).

DeJuana Thompson



Major: Speech Communication

Hometown: Birmingham, Alabama

Quote: "Before I was formed in my mother's womb, God knew me. Therefore I am destined for greatness."

Plans after graduation

I will be working at the City Council of Birmingham on campaigning for the Novovember Electors. After that I will be pursuing a career in Washington D.C. at the D.C. Chamber of Commerce.

Who influenced you the most here at Berea and why?

Laura Crawford. From my first day—freshman year—she taught me about my heritage and helped me define myself by my own standards. That has stuck with me ever since.

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

Susan McKinney Steward 1848-1918

Steward was the first black female to practice medicine in New York State and the third in the nation. She was the president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union Number 6 in Brooklyn. Dr. McKinney gave lectures to the public about health, nutrition and medicine. She often spoke about women's rights and the progress of Black women. In 1881, she founded the Memorial Hospital for Women and Children.



She cared for senior citizens at the Brooklyn Home for Aged Colored People. This dedicated physician died at the age of 71 on March 7, 1918. The Susan Smith McKinney Junior High School, in Brooklyn, New York, was named in her honor on September 25, 1974. Later, the Susan Smith McKinney Steward Medical Society was founded by a group of African American women doctors.

—Civil Rights Movement Cards

Calling all seniors!

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- Don't be satisfied with doing a *good* job but the *best* job you can do. Include an attitude and open-mindedness toward new adventures. I have learned that in many situations in life we cannot change what happens to us but we can change the attitude we will embrace in our regular dealings and that attitude can be contagious.
- Finally, use the tools you have learned to become change agents in your world. Stay abreast of current events (local, national and global) and read to a child; they are 20% of our population but 100% of our future (hey, social security is running out!).

Granted, I do not know every graduate that reads this, but I do know that you are graduating from one of the best institutions in the world (believe it now or later) and for that I am extremely proud of you. Congratulations and I wish each of you the best!

Antonio Melton a December 1999 graduate of Berea College was a Middle Grades Education Major from Birmingham, Alabama. Antonio worked as a Black Studies department teaching assistant, hall coordinator and tutor counselor for Upward Bound. He managed to participate in just about every activity available on campus where he met his wife, Cindy Hsieh (class of 2001). Antonio and his wife lived in Lexington for five years while he taught middle school and completed his Master's degree in Counseling from Eastern Kentucky University. They are now relocating to the Birmingham area, where his wife is completing her Master's and Antonio will be working as a school guidance counselor at Homewood Middle School.