

Volume 1 | Issue 1
Spring, 2021
BLACK
HISTORY
MONTH
EDITION

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND
 Department Of
AFRICANA STUDIES

“We stand on the shoulders of great men and women, beckoning our children to come and take their place on ours.” Alfred Haynes II



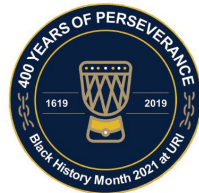
Professor and Author,

Dr. Ibram Kendi, keynote speaker for the 2021 URI Academic Summit. For Spring, 2021, the URI Community will read Kendi’s New York Times Bestseller, *How To Be An Antiracist* (One World, 2019). Another recommended reading by Kendi is the highly acclaimed, *Stamped From The Beginning* (Nation Books, 2016)

URI Africana Studies Newsletter is a publication of the URI Africana Studies Department.

Published twice during the academic year and once in the summer- The “Welcome Back To Campus” Edition Staff...
 Editor – The Current Africana Studies Chairperson
 Student Editor
 Staff Writers

Dr Carol Parks, Associate Professor of Community Health Education at Temple University, Philadelphia, PA was the URI 2021 Black History Month Keynote Speaker. The virtual Lecture was livestreamed through the URI College of Arts & Sciences. Posting on YouTube, Facebook & Twitter, the presentation reached an online audience of over 600, the largest for a URI Black History Month event. The feedback for Dr. Parks’ lecture was overwhelmingly positive.



Lecture Title: Covid-19 And The African American Community
 May also access at uri.edu/africana

AFRICANA STUDIES GAINS DEPARTMENTAL STATUS

(See Full Story on page 5)

Grappling With The Shift To Antiracist Policies..... “The University of Rhode Island is experiencing an awakening of sorts.” Provost Don DeHayes spoke at the virtual Annual Academic Summit of Faculty & Administrators (January, 2021) emphasizing the theme, ‘Antiracism’. Guest speaker, Dr. Ibram Kendi spoke to the audience of more than 650 Faculty and challenged URI to “get serious about becoming an antiracist institution”. Dr. Kendi explained the difference between being a racist – someone who discriminates based on color and race; a non-racist – someone who does not discriminate directly, but does not intercept acts of racism in his/her milieu; an antiracist – someone who actively refutes racist thinking and actions in his/her personal life and in the community in which they live and work.

While Antiracism is a paradigm that many White institutions can embrace, some scholars are wary of the quick fix approach and critique Dr. Kendi for disconnecting Antiracism from a genuine root system. They believe his model does not give credit to the generations of freedom fighters who have gone before him to lay a foundation for justice and equity. Nor does his book, *How To Be An Antiracist* pay homage to the orthodoxy of Black literary and socio-political thinkers who have consistently fought upstream against an incessant current of inequity and injustice throughout the history of this nation. Other critical reviews suggest that Dr. Kendi blankets “all forms of discrimination” with an equanimity that erases the origin of racism against Blacks and People of Color in this nation. Even so, the University community is talking about race – a lot - and in terms of implementing sustainable change. In this environment, Africana Studies can lead and we are taking steps to drive the discussion and hold the University accountable. One of the steps was to make Black History Month a campus-wide event. We offered a virtual program that was globally accessible and explored the following: Our present reality – **The Impact of Covid on the Black Community**: A critical moment of our past, **Who Killed Malcolm X?**: And, **Embracing Our Future – The Next Generation Panel Discussion with Africana Studies Alumni, Dr. Wilson Okello moderator.**

*My Mother would
look at me and say,
'Kamala, you may be
the first to do many
things, but make sure
you are not the last.
Vice President
Kamala Harris*

Africana Studies Launches Search For New Chairperson

Fresh with *new* credentials as a department, clarified goals and a *renewed* vision statement, Africana Studies is poised to start a *new* chapter that will hopefully include a *new* chairperson. Yes, it is a *new* day for Africana Studies but not without a great deal of work ahead.

Current Chairperson, Dr. Vanessa Wynder Quainoo will complete the first year of her appointment as Chair in May, 2021. She has served for nearly ten years, navigating Africana Studies through many difficult seasons. In her words, her great desire was “*to see Africana Studies gain departmental status and be secure on solid ground in order to thrive in the years ahead. If I have been able to contribute to Africana’s stability, I am humbled and thankful. I see a bright future for Africana Studies. I plan to continue teaching and writing and give support to the new Chair.*” After the many years of advocating for a national search, Africana Studies was granted the ‘go-ahead’ for the launch of a national search for a Chairperson. Dr. Marcus Nevius (History and Africana Studies) is chairing the search committee, and the report is that there are several strong candidates. In preparation, Africana Studies Faculty have been working diligently to refine goals and determine their strengths and potential. Toward that end, Africana Studies Faculty worked together to create a vision statement for the URI Africana Studies Department:

Africana Studies at the University of Rhode Island will provide leadership in Rhode Island and New England for teaching, outreach, and advocacy of the Black American experience within the context of the African Diaspora.

Outstanding Africana
Studies Students.....

Senior **Franchesca Campos**, Recipient, The 2021 URI Student Excellence Award in Africana Studies

Senior, **Wila Matos**, Fulbright Finalist To Teach in Brazil

Sophomore, **Joseph Amaral**, Africana Student Service Award

Congratulations to all of our deserving Students!

BLACK HISTORY MONTH @ URI

URI Africana Alumni Symposium: The Next Generation
A conversation with several AAF Alumni discussing Black progress from the perspective of the next generation.
Friday, February 26 8:00-9:00PM

MODERATOR
Dr. Wilson Okello

PANELISTS

Steph Oliveira, Matt Quainoo, Tim Quainoo, Alice Odhiambo, Luckson Omaregbo, Dami Animashaun

THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

SPONSORED BY:
College of Arts and Sciences
Department of Africana Studies,
Multicultural Student Services Center

EVENT WILL LIVESTREAM ON:
URI Arts & Sciences Facebook, Youtube, and Twitter
<https://web.uri.edu/artsci>

Facilitator - Wilson Okello, '13, Ph.D. Miami U (Ohio), Steph Oliveira, '19, MBA Student, FAMU, Matt Quainoo '16, Ph.D. Student, Howard, Tim Quainoo '13, M.A., Anderson U, Alice Odhiambo '16, M.A. '18, Luckson Omaregbo, Oluwadomilol (Dami) Animashaun '16, J.D. Student, Howard,

AFRICANA STUDIES HOSTS AN AAF ALUMNI SYMPOSIUM

In a filled virtual “room”, URI Africana Studies’ Department began what they hope will be a tradition of welcoming back alumni as guest panelists to address the race-related issues of the day. This inaugural panel did not disappoint. Eloquently facilitated by Dr. Wilson Okello (class of 2013), now Assistant Professor, University of North Carolina, the panelists demonstrated command of knowledge on a wide array of issues facing the African American community, including race brutality, institutional racism and the colonization of intellectual thought. One URI students’ observation summarized much of the audience response, “They were so well-spoken and wise beyond their age group. They gave me hope for us as a nation...this generation of young leaders is ready (to lead)”.

Local News Impacting Communities of Color...



RI Governor Nominates First Woman of Color For Position of Lt. Gov.

Governor Dan McKee announced his nominee for the position of Lt Gov, **Sabina Matos**, the first woman and the first Person of Color to be nominated for the second highest position in state government. The Providence City Council President was immediately congratulated by many of her colleagues on being selected as the nominee for Rhode Island's next Lieutenant Governor.

Matos would bring many years of experience in local and state governmental service to the position. In her acceptance speech, Matos commented on the impact of Covid and her commitment to all Rhode Islanders, including Rhode Island Residents of Color, "We must continue to step up our effort and make sure vaccines are reaching our Communities of Color...". Key legislators indicated that Matos' nomination is most likely to pass the Senate without delay.

In Rhode Island Black History - The 108th Observance of the Rhode Island Dorr Rebellion

(By Dr. John McCray, Professor of Africana Studies & Economics)

This is the one hundred and eightieth anniversary of the Dorr Rebellion. In 1841 Thomas Wilson Dorr organized resistance to the State of Rhode Island's law, limiting the right to vote to white men who were native born and own property worth at least \$134. They based the law on a 1663 colonial charter that functioned as the State's constitution. The charter disenfranchised African Americans, Narragansetts and immigrants. The charter benefited the rural communities since most of the population that satisfied the law were farmers and others living in these areas. Industrial revolution demand for mill workers increased. The demand was in part met by the flow of Irish immigrants fleeing the potato blight. Upwards to 2 million Irish migrated to the east coast of the USA and Canada. In Rhode Island they moved into houses rented from mill owners in Cranston and Pawtucket where they were paid with scrip issued by the owners and were required to pay their rent using scrip. Since they did not own property and were not native born, they could not improve their position by democratic means. Cities of the state were under-represented in the legislature. Though he was from an elite nativist family, Thomas Dorr organized workers to petition for a new state constitution. The sitting legislature and governor refused, and Dorr and his supporters rebelled and established a charter committee to write one. Initially, Dorr supported rights for African Americans to vote, since they had assisted him in the rebellion. He later rescinded his position after objections from white workers supporting him. History is not without ironies. Governor Samuel King of the opposition chartered a new constitution allowing more universal voting among whites and giving African Americans limited voting rights. The new constitution maintained the disenfranchisement of Narragansetts.

THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF AFRICANA STUDIES DISTINGUISHED FACULTY

TENURE TRACK FACULTY

Dr. Rae Ferguson History & AAF
 Dr. Emmett Goods Music & AAF
 Dr. Gitahi Gititi English & AAF
 Dr. James Haile III Philosophy & AAF
 Dr. Shanette Harris Psychology & AAF
 Dr. John McCray Economics & AAF
 Dr. Marcus Nevius History & AAF
 Dr. Vanessa Wynder Quainoo AAF & Communication
 (Chairperson)
 Dr. Rob Widell History & AAF

ADJUNCT FACULTY

Dr. Paul Anderer Psychology & AAF
 Dr. Norman Barber Education & AAF
 Dr. Angel Green English & AAF
 Dr. Carnell Jones Director of Enrollment Services & AAF
 Professor Barry O'Connor AAF
 Rev Dr. Joseph Quainoo AAF
 Dr. Joanna Ravello, Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
 Assistant Dean Earl Smith, College of Arts & Sciences & AAF
 Professor Gerald Williams, Director Talent Development & AAF

Ms. Leslie Dancy, Administrative Assistant

*AAF – Joint Appointment in Africana Studies or Instructor of an Africana Studies course

AFRICANA STUDIES FACULTY NEWS



Dr. Norman Barber, Coordinator, 2021 URI Black History Month- Keynote -**Dr. Carol Parks**, Temple University, Africana Studies Alumni Symposium, Facilitator, **Dr. Wilson Okello**(*Class of 2013*).

Dr. Emmett Goods was featured in an international symposium, “*Music in the Freedom Struggle: Comparing the Civil Rights Era to the ‘Black Lives Matter’ Movement*” The Online Lecture Series for BA and MA Students of American Studies at the Amerika-Institut - LMU Munich.⁵

“*From Motown to Hip Hop: Black Protest Music*, (April, 2021) for The Diversity, Equity & Inclusion 365 Symposium. Dr. Good’s well-received presentation explored the use of Black Popular Music as a means of protest.

Dr. Shanette Harris - Congratulations on her recent publication, *Critical Race Theory in the Academy (2021)* and *Invited Guest Speaker* for Episode 3 – *The History of Disability Rights in Rhode Island* Podcast (2021)

Dr. Brendan Skip Mark “*Unpacking Black Violence Narratives: BLM Protests, Outside Agitators.*” URI Office of Community, Equity & Diversity, (November, 2020)

Dr. Marcus Nevius recently gave an outstanding symposium session about his recent book, *City of Refuge: Slavery and Petit Marronage in the Great Dismal Swamp, 1763–1856 (2020)*, in conjunction with the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion 365 Symposium, sponsored by the URI Office of Community, Equity and Diversity & Congratulations on recent publications....
"New Histories of Marronage in the Anglo-Atlantic World and Early North America"

Featured: "Book Breaks," hosted by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, January 2021;

Featured: "The Legacy of Racial Hatred in the January 6 Insurrection," in JSTOR Daily, February 24, 2021

Dr. Vanessa Wynder Quainoo facilitated *The Virtual African American Ladies Mental Health Forum* - A joint venture with The Dr. Eloise Morgan Mental Health Center, Kissimmee, Fla, Cheryl Clarke B.S, M.S., Director.

Guest Speaker, “*Out of Many Waters: The Role of The Black Church in the Civil Rights Movement*” Community Focus on Black History, Peace Dale Congregational Church (RI).

Speaker, “*Antiracism and Communication*” Black History Month Workshop, URI Admissions Staff.

For More Information on URI’s initiative to implement Antiracism see the URI News....

(Adapted from URI News....)



Academic Summit

The 13th Academic Summit, **Antiracism at URI: Academic Culture and Curriculum**, took place on Jan. 21 and welcomed its largest audience to date, with 640 participants at the opening session featuring award-winning author Ibram X. Kendi.

The summit included a discussion breakout and closing session that focused on an *Academic Affairs Agenda for Change*. This agenda for change will be used to implement strategies in the immediate future and college diversity accountability plans will assess progress. Resources will be allocated to accomplish several of the agenda initiatives.

If you would like more information about the summit and its related follow-up activities, visit the [Office of the Provost website](#).

AFRICANA STUDIES GAINS DEPARTMENTAL STATUS

(Staff writer/ Africana Studies, 2021)

October 2020 will forever be a landmark month for Africana Studies at The University of Rhode Island. During the summer of 2020, an interdisciplinary committee of URI Faculty worked around the clock to put together a comprehensive proposal for departmental status. The document required specific and detailed information that demanded research and verification of dates, statistical and historical facts. The committee members complemented one another in their strengths and areas of expertise.

Dr. Norman Barber (Africana Studies) brought a wealth of knowledge from his twenty plus years of teaching in both Africana Studies and Education. His understanding of educational policies in Rhode Island was a tremendous contribution. **Dr. Jody Lisberger**, (Gender & Women's Studies) contributed her knowledge of the petition process as she had worked with Gender & Women's Studies several years earlier to prepare a proposal for departmental status for their program. She is also a published writer and offered great editorial assistance. **Ms. Ann Salzarulo**, (Adjunct Professor & Administrative Coordinator of The Harrington School of Communication & Media) was quite skilled in grant writing and how to access university data about racial and ethnic populations at URI. And **Dr. Vanessa Wynder Quainoo** (Africana Studies and Communication Studies) provided the context of the past and vision for the future of Africana Studies. Africana Studies Administrative Assistant, Leslie Dancy worked with them to help with administrative duties. As a team, they divided the tasks and worked on their assignments and then met weekly to pull their reports and research together into a cohesive proposal.

Dr. Jen Riley, Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences and Associate Deans, **Nedra Reynolds** and **Brian Krueger** 'led the way' by Keeping Africana Studies abreast of the deadlines and expectations of the Faculty Senate. The support of the Dean's Office coalesced with a wave of antiracism sentiment that stemmed from several major events that were taking place during the summer of 2020. One of the events was the tragic death of George Floyd. The national conflict around police brutality against People of Color intensified and came to a head when George Floyd died under the unrelenting knee of the police officer on his neck. The protests that followed brought people together from many different ethnicities. The Black Lives Matter Movement was significant in articulating the collective voice of many people in our nation who were outraged about Floyd's death and sickened by the continuation of institutionalized racism. This wind of change blew across our campus communities. At URI, we identified tangible goals and specific institutionalized practices that needed to change immediately. On that list was the inequitable ways that Africana Studies had been treated, systemically rendering Africana Studies ineffective and almost unable to sustain the major.

Although we were in the full grip of the Covid pandemic, we were still teaching and interacting with our students. We created online opportunities to talk with our students and invited them to speak into the urgency of the petition. We received many letters of support from students and alumni. Some expressed outrage that Africana Studies had not yet become a department. Others called on the University to demonstrate their commitment to equity and "grant departmental status without delay". The committee also worked with the Africana Studies Faculty, getting their input on curriculum and learning outcomes. Their most critical contribution was crystallizing the Africana vision statement which gave direction and focus to the committee. In addition to speaking with the Africana Studies Faculty, **Dr. Quainoo** spoke with members of FSAAD (Faculty & Staff Association of African Descent) and they offered their assistance to write letters of support, share narratives of their interactions with students and to stand organizationally with Africana Studies during this major undertaking.

Unsolicited letters of support came from "every corner" of the University. From the Humanities to the STEM disciplines, individual Faculty and entire Departments expressed their support. Some wrote letters to **Dr. Quainoo**. One example is the statement of support issued by The Harrington School of Communication & Media; a statement that represents several Departments. Some Faculty and Departments wrote to the President, Provost and Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences. Others sent their statements of support to the Rhode Island Board of Governors. On behalf of the Chairperson and Faculty of Africana Studies, thank you to everyone who expressed support.

The successful gaining of departmental status is the result of the action taken by many colleagues and their individual and collective decisions to take a stand. This is a major victory not just for Africana Studies but for the entire University. Departmental status for Africana Studies is an important step forward in the dismantling of repressive marginalization and is part of the re-focus necessary for embracing a progressive future.

**(Capitalization of certain terms such as 'Faculty' is intentional)*

What Can I Do With A Major In Africana Studies?

I Could Be

A

Lawyer **Journalist** **Historian**
Educator/Professor **Community Developer**
Health Care Provider **Urban Planner**
Senator **Entertainer** **Filmmaker** **Artist**
Africanist **Designer** **Diversity Trainer**
Law Enforcement Officer & More

**Today's Headlines Call For Cross-Cultural
Competency
Growing Demand For African American Studies'
Graduates...**

Headlines Of The Day
Covid & The Black Community
Michael Brown
Trayvon Martin
Breonna Taylor
George Floyd

-Critical Race Theory Banned In The Classroom
-Dr. Cornel West Denied Tenure At Harvard
-Voter Suppression Laws Pass in Georgia
**-January 6th Insurgency on Nation's
Capitol/Racism A Factor**

Kamala Harris
First Woman Black/Asian Vice President

WHO MAJORED IN AFRICANA STUDIES?

Michelle Obama, Attorney & Former First Lady (BA in Sociology with minor in Africana Studies, Princeton)

Angela Bassett, award-winning actress. (BA in African-American Studies from Yale.)

Rakim H. D. Brooks, Rhodes Scholar and C. Edwin Baker Fellow in Democratic Values at Demos. (BA in Africana Studies from Brown.)

Megan L. Comfort, Senior Research Sociologist, Urban Health Program at RTI International and Adjunct Asst Professor of Medicine, UCSF. (BA in Black Studies from Wellesley.)

Jendayi Frazer, Distinguished Professor, Carnegie Mellon University and former US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. (BA in African and Afro-American Studies & Political Science from Stanford.)

Brian L. Harper, Medical Director and COO of the Ralph Lauren Center for Cancer Care and Prevention. (BA in Afro-American Studies & Biology from Brown University.)

Mae Jemison, Physician and NASA astronaut on the Endeavor in 1992. (BA in Afro-American Studies from Stanford.)

Gloria Naylor, Educator and novelist. Winner of the National Book Award in 1983 for The Women of Brewster Place. (MA in Afro-American Studies from Yale.)

Claudia Thomas, author and first black female orthopedic surgeon in the U.S. (BA in Black Studies from Vassar)

(Adapted from The Ohio State University Department of Africana Studies)