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# SYRACUSE Manuscript

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY'S AFRICAN AMERICAN AND LATINO ALUMNI MAGAZINE

REMEMBERING  
MLK  
50 YEARS

AFTER HIS  
ASSASSINATION





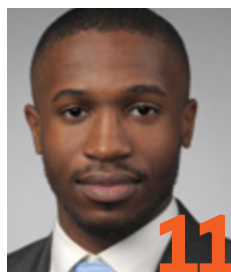
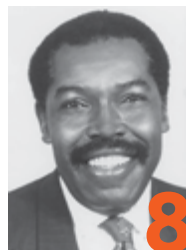
Brandyn Munford '18 and Anjana Pati '18 presented Angela Rye with a ceramic platter created by Professor Emeritus David MacDonald at SU's 2018 MLK Celebration.

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ON THE COVER:  
Martin Luther Jr. Memorial in Washington, D.C.

## SYRACUSE Manuscript

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## FROM THE 'CUSE Work to Do

**O**n a recent trip to Los Angeles, I turned on the radio in my rental car and heard our esteemed alumna Vanessa Williams '85 singing, “I, I got work to do... I got a job, baby...” which made me smile as I drove down the freeway to an alumni gathering. How apropos!

That evening, the Office of Program Development was hosting a dinner for a group of entertainment industry alumni. Our guests were very accomplished individuals with insane schedules who were taking the time to connect with the University and one another. During dinner, we each shared stories about our SU experiences—in the middle of Beverly Hills! The conversation made me realize that Syracuse is indeed a special place to launch from, a place you never forget no matter how far you go. As the alumni shared their current projects, professional opportunities, business cards, and promises to connect again soon, it was evident that there is always a hunger for the SU connection. When we do our work together, our accomplishments can happen in bigger, faster, and more joyful ways.

In the Orange Nation, past successes are never enough. We always have work to do. This April, the University unveiled a plaque in the Shaffer Art Building commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s visit to campus in 1965. Dr. King had an urgency about his work because he had dreams to bring into reality. Once he forever changed this country by achieving civil rights legislation, he moved on to the Poor People's campaign tackling poverty in America—unfinished work that is relevant today. Fifty years following Dr. King's assassination, we still have work to do. We must do more to ensure that we push for positive change and help those in our community who need a hand.

In this issue of *Manuscript*, you'll see many examples of black and Latino alumni success and, time and time again, there was a helping hand involved. Within the Office of Program Development, we pride ourselves on being that helping hand for many alumni and students.

As esteemed alumni of Syracuse University, I urge you to take full advantage of all that comes with that accomplishment, that gift. Whether you're a recent graduate or starting your second career, we're here for you. Allow us to be your helping hand, your connection point to the University and to other alumni for the information, funding, or relationships you may need to find your next success. And as esteemed alumni, remember to give back in any way that you can—time, talent, or treasure. Give to OTHC, become a mentor, return to campus to speak with students. Contribute whatever you can offer. Participate however you can. We're here for it!

As Dr. King once said, “Everybody can be great because anybody can serve.” Let's honor him by doing just that—for the next generation of SU students of color and the greater community. That is the beauty and the privilege of our alumni connections at SU. We have work to do!

With Orange Love,

Rachel Vassel '91  
Assistant Vice President, Office of Program Development



Charles V. Willie G'57 with his Morehouse undergraduate classmate Martin Luther King Jr. at Syracuse University in 1965.

## Morehouse Men

College classmate Charles V. Willie G'57 provided a vital link between Syracuse University and Dr. King.

**A**pril 4, 2018, marked 50 years since the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., an occasion, like the annual observance of his birthday in January, which prompted broad reflection on his impact and legacy.

King's death is still most deeply felt by those who knew the man personally, a number that decreases with each passing year. One of those is Charles V. Willie G'57, King's classmate at Morehouse College in Atlanta, the nation's lone historically black college and university for men.

Both King and Willie came to Morehouse younger than typical college students, the result of a recruiting plan by Morehouse President Benjamin E. Mays to keep the all-male college afloat while much of the population of 18- to 22-year-olds was serving in World War II. King was just 15, having skipped his senior year of high school. Willie, who started school at the second-grade level because his mother had taught him how to read, was 16. King and Willie were friends as undergraduates and shared many classes, as both were sociology majors. And both men shared gifts as prolific writers and powerful speakers.

Mays urged Morehouse men to be "sensitive to the wrongs, the sufferings, and the injustices of society" and to "accept responsibility for correcting these ills."

"Mays made us think we had something in the world to do," Willie told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* earlier this year. "It was a wonderful experience."

Morehouse men were encouraged to pursue graduate degrees. King, whose father was pastor of Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church, graduated from Crozier Theological Seminar in Chester, Pennsylvania, and earned a doctorate from Boston University. Willie, who was class president during his junior and senior years, earned a master's degree from Atlanta University and a Ph.D. in sociology from Syracuse.

Willie, now 91, joined the Syracuse faculty as a sociology instructor in 1952 while a doctoral student. In 1960, he was named assistant professor of sociology and anthropology and senior research associate of the University's Youth Development Center. Willie's groundbreaking research encompassed issues of social justice—including desegregation, poverty, housing policy, and the experience of black students at "white" colleges.

King, by then co-pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church and

president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, had become an activist, leading nonviolent integration efforts across the South.

In 1961, Willie reached out to King on behalf of Syracuse University to invite him to speak on campus. On July 13, 1961, King spoke at the 10th annual Summer Sessions dinner. Hailed by *The Daily Orange* as “the South’s Gandhi,” King gave a talk titled “The American Dream,” a foreshadowing to his iconic “I Have a Dream” speech two years later in Washington, D.C.

“I choose this subject because America is essentially a dream; it is a dream of a land where men of all races, of all nationalities, and of all creeds can live together as brothers,” King told those at the dinner.

Regarding racism and segregation, “There are those people who argue that time alone will solve this problem. And so they say, ‘You must not push things, you must be patient, you must sit down and wait,’ and sometimes they decorate it in even larger terms: They say cool off for a while. ... Well, they forget to realize that time is neutral. It can be used constructively or destructively. ... It may well be that we will have to repent in this generation, not just for the vociferous words and vitriolic words of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people who are sitting around, waiting on time. ...

“Even though there are the difficult days ahead, even though before the victory is won, somebody else will have to get scarred up, somebody else will have to go to jail, maybe some will have to face physical death. ... But even in the midst of that, the struggle must go on, knowing that the victory can be won.”

In a letter to his former classmate the following month, Willie hailed King’s remarks as “a fresh interpretation of the meaning of our contemporary efforts to eliminate oppression ... designed not only to set a people free but redeem a nation. I think Syracuse got the message.”

King returned to Syracuse four years later, by then a Nobel Prize winner, to speak at the same event at Willie’s invitation. In his introduction of his old friend, Willie described King as both a “suffering servant” and, prophetically, as “a marked man.”

He told the audience that if he ever had a son, he’d name him Martin—in honor of philosopher and activist Martin Buber, whose life was devoted to reconciling peace in the Middle East, and Martin King, “whose life is devoted to reconciling Negroes and whites.”

In a message titled “The Time Is Always Right to Do Right,” King railed against the evils of discriminatory housing and employment policies and proposed ending the scourge of poverty with a national bill, modeled after the GI Bill, that would provide a minimum level of subsistence to every family in America. “All families earning less than subsistence would be required by law to receive in direct payments the gap between a family’s actual annual income and the subsistence floor,” King proposed to the sold-out crowd. “In addition, there must be a program of free quality education and training plus broad health services so that the limited family income would not be expended for these essential needs.”

Afterward, Willie and his wife, Mary Sue, drove King to the



airport. As they waited for his plane, Mary Sue Willie recalls King looking over and asking if she was pregnant. She was, although she hadn’t yet told her husband. And their son was named Martin Charles.

Willie was chair of SU’s Department of Sociology in April 1968. News of King’s assassination rocked both the campus and the Syracuse community. Two days later, more than 2,000 mourners filled Syracuse’s First Baptist Church to eulogize King. Willie spoke out against those who would seek revenge for the death of King. “Revenge can only desecrate the memory and dissipate the spirit,” Willie told those assembled. “One can learn how to love more.”

On the day of King’s funeral, classes were canceled at Syracuse University and at Syracuse city schools. Charles and Mary Sue Willie flew to Atlanta to attend the funeral, held at Morehouse College. “It was a funeral unlike any funeral I had seen before,” Willie wrote of the crowd of 150,000 that assembled in Atlanta. “Truly, it was a festival.”

Looking back, Willie says that while King was a “good student” in college, he never dreamed King would become leader of the civil rights movement, demonstrate such courage, or would become one of history’s most honored figures. “He taught me to recognize that greatness comes not from striving to achieve it but from giving up advantages,” Willie said in 1984.

Willie had his own illustrious career. At Syracuse, he was the

*“Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.”*

—Martin Luther King Jr.

first African American department chair, first African American full professor, and first African American vice president, serving as vice president for student affairs from 1972 to 1974.

Throughout his tenure, he supported and advocated for students of color, and counseled faculty and administration in negotiation of controversial issues, including the student takeover of the administration building in 1970 and the boycott of the Syracuse Eight.

In 1974, Willie left Syracuse for Harvard, becoming the first African American full professor in the Graduate School of



Education. Retired from his post as the Charles William Eliot Professor of Education, he remains professor emeritus.

Willie, who holds 12 honorary degrees, wrote more than 100 articles and 30 books on race, education, and urban communities during his career as an applied sociologist who focused on solving social problems. He also served as a consultant, expert witness, and court-appointed master in major school desegregation cases

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*“Everything that we see is a shadow cast by that which we do not see.”*

—Martin Luther King Jr.

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in the United States and once was the highest lay official in the Episcopal Church in America, stepping down in 1974 to protest the church’s refusal to recognize women as priests.

Chuck and Mary Sue raised three children: Sarah, professor of sociology and anthropology and provost at Swarthmore College; Martin, an architect; and James, who earned an M.P.A. from SU’s Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs in 1998, works in government, and serves on the Maxwell School’s Board of Advisors.

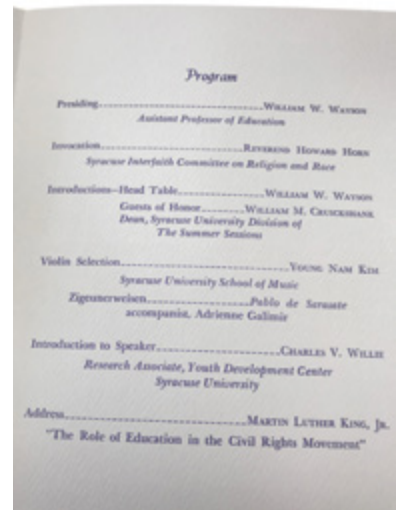
At SU, Willie’s legacy lives on through the Charles V. Willie Distinguished Lecture series, founded by the Department

of Student Affairs in 2003. He also received a George Arents Pioneer Medal in 2000, and last year, was honored by Chancellor Kent Syverud with the Chancellor’s Citation for Lifetime Achievement.

The Syracuse University community observed the 50th anniversary of King’s assassination with the unveiling and dedication of a plaque on April 4 commemorating King’s 1965 visit to campus and affirming SU’s commitment to foster and support a diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus community.

“Dr. King’s visit to Syracuse came at a pivotal time in the history of the country and the civil rights movement,” says Syverud. “It was just a few weeks after that visit that President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law. This plaque is a testament to Dr. King’s faithful pursuit of justice, and it affirms the University’s own commitment to access and opportunity for all.”

As we remember King, look to Willie’s own Martin Luther King Day speech given at Harvard in 2002, when he cautioned against mythologizing the civil rights giant. “By exalting the accomplishments of Martin Luther King Jr. into a legendary tale that is annually told, we fail to recognize his humanity—his personal and public struggles—that are similar to yours and mine,” said Willie. “By idolizing those whom we honor, we fail to realize that we could go and do likewise.” ☩



## MLK Day at SU

**M**artin Luther King Jr. Day was signed into law as an American federal holiday by President Ronald Reagan in 1983 and first observed three years later.

The first Martin Luther King Jr. Day observance at SU was held in 1985, started by the Rev. Richard Phillips, former dean of Hendricks Chapel.

“King was a religious figure, first and foremost,” says Phillips. “We had 18 different chaplains at SU. I wanted to create an atmosphere of what we could all join together in doing.” The first observance included a dinner with a keynote address by Dr. Paul Smith, who would go on to become the first African American pastor within the First Presbyterian Church. According to Phillips, “Those modest first sessions were held in the chapel and the Ernie Davis Room at the Carrier Dome.”

Beginning in 1989, due to efforts by students and the Black Faculty and Professional Staff Association, MLK Day was observed as a University holiday for employees with no classes scheduled. Through the years, the University’s MLK Celebration has grown substantially, becoming the largest on-campus event in the United States to honor King’s legacy.

The dinner program fills the floor of the Carrier Dome and includes presentation of the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Unsung Heroes Awards, which recognize individuals in the Central New York community and at Syracuse University who have made a positive difference in the lives of others, but are

not widely recognized for their efforts, and a distinguished keynote speaker. This year, SU welcomed acclaimed political commentator Angela Rye.

Rye, who was introduced by OTHC Scholar and SU Class Marshal Gerald Brown ’18, spoke on the theme of “From Intention to Impact.”

“Our intentions can be very pure, but if our intentions never move us to real action, we’ve not done much,” she told the crowd. “If you want to honor Dr. King’s legacy, don’t just dream—work,” she challenged the audience. “If you want to honor Dr. King’s legacy, don’t just say woke—work woke. If you want to honor Dr. King’s legacy, don’t just fight for equality—fight for equity. If you want to honor Dr. King’s legacy, don’t just pursue justice and love—pursue power and love. All power to the people.” ☩

*To listen to an audiotape of King’s 1965 speech at Syracuse University, along with Willie’s introduction, visit <https://vimeo.com/197430094>*

*To watch Angela Rye’s speech at SU’s 2018 MLK Celebration, visit <https://vimeo.com/253315356>*



## Melvin T. Stith G'73, Ph.D.'78 Named Interim President at Norfolk State

**W**hen he stepped down as dean of Syracuse University's Whitman School of Management in 2013, Melvin T. Stith G'73, Ph.D.'78 was content to serve on corporate and nonprofit boards and enjoy retirement with his wife, Patricia.

That retirement was abbreviated on January 1, when Stith became interim president of their alma mater, Norfolk State University in Virginia.

"I would not have accepted this position at any other university," says Stith.

"Norfolk State University is very special to Patricia and me, and I would assume any position that helps create a better NSU."

Stith has a long history of involvement with Norfolk State, one of the nation's largest historically black colleges, having served as a member of the University's Foundation Board, as a member of the Board of Visitors since 2013, and as vice rector at Norfolk State since 2016. He graduated from Norfolk State in 1968 with a B.S. in sociology. The Stiths have provided financial support for the Melvin and Patricia Stith Alumni House and the Obie and Mildred Lynch Endowed Scholarship at Norfolk State, and in 2015, Stith surprised his wife with a donation to name the Dr. Patricia Lynch Stith Success Center, used for tutoring and advising undergraduates at the school.

Stith says he is focusing on four specific goals during his tenure: creating a student-first environment; enhancing philanthropy; creating an atmosphere of shared governance with faculty; and making sure Norfolk State's economic contribution to the

Hampton Roads area is understood and appreciated.

He will draw from his experiences at the Whitman School and as dean of the business school at Florida State University.

"I learned how to build and trust teams to bring assigned tasks to successful conclusions and that students are the essence of any university," Stith says. And most importantly, "Be positive and keep smiling."

Stith was a member of Army ROTC at Norfolk State and served in the U.S. Army Military Intelligence Command during the Vietnam War, achieving the rank of captain. He earned an M.B.A. and Ph.D. from SU's former College of Business Administration, which he would come back to lead as the renamed Whitman School of Management in 2005. In his nine years as dean, he substantially increased philanthropy to the school and is credited with providing the support to start SU's Institute for Veterans and Military Families, which grew out of the Whitman School's Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities. He and Patricia, former assistant provost for equity and inclusion at SU, are longtime generous donors to the Our Time Has Come Scholarship fund. In 2013, they were awarded SU's Orange Circle award in recognition of their altruism. ☸



# Grateful for Her Own Scholarship, Dr. Linda Fuller '76 Creates Endowment

**M**ore than most, Linda Fuller '76, D.O., M.P.H., understands the impact a college scholarship can make on someone's life. She attended Syracuse University on a full-tuition scholarship and then earned a Health Professions Scholarship from the U.S. Navy to attend medical school at the Oklahoma College of Osteopathic Medicine and Surgery.



Now, she wants to pay that forward through the Linda Fuller Scholarship in the Our Time Has Come program. "I'd always thought this was something I'd do through my estate, but I realize how much harder it is for low-income students to achieve a Syracuse education and so I made the commitment to do it now," she says.

After a 30-year career as a Navy psychiatrist, Fuller is on staff at the National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE) at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, a unique, multidisciplinary center opened in 2010 to treat traumatic brain injury and the psychological health of active duty service members.

"I believe post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) manifests differently in individuals who have been deployed multiple times," says Fuller. "Those in combat areas have witnessed otherworldly events and lost many friends, so grief management has complicated the treatment of PTSD in a way I had not seen in the first 20 years of my Navy career."

Active duty service members who have suffered all kinds of head injuries are referred to NICoE, where they undergo a comprehensive four-week evaluation from an interdisciplinary team of physicians and other providers, including sleep specialists, social workers, audiologists, physical therapists, art and music therapists, recreation therapists, and mind-body practitioners.

"The goal of the NICoE assessment is for every service member to leave with extensive understanding of the condition of their different body systems, a treatment plan to further assist them in returning to their full health, as well as the mind-body tools that can help their nervous system heal," says Fuller. She provides a psychiatric assessment to diagnose conditions such as anxiety,

depression, and PTSD, as well as to help patients address and cope with stress and grief.

"This is really my dream job," she says.

When it came time to think about medical school, Fuller says it was natural for her to look toward the military to make it happen. Having grown up in a military family—her father was a Marine—military medicine was what she knew.

But when Fuller went to her local recruiting office, she was discouraged from applying. "The white Navy petty officer I encountered basically told me that the Navy didn't need any female physicians," she says.

But Fuller had never been one to let hardship or obstacles stand in the way of her dreams.

"When I left for college, my family didn't even have the money to take me," Fuller recalls. "One of my high school teachers and her husband packed up their car and drove me to Syracuse."

Once she got here, she hit the ground running. Despite being a pre-med major at Syracuse, Fuller had a well-rounded campus experience. She was a varsity cheerleader for two years—traveling to the NCAA men's basketball Final Four in San Diego—a resident advisor for two years, and was on the charter line for Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority.

"My college years were so rewarding. I have always been grateful to Syracuse," says Fuller, who was honored with a Chancellor's Citation at CBT in 1992. "I hope to help others afford the education that Syracuse can provide and would encourage everyone to do what they can to give back." ❖

# Cohen Family Honors Vincent H. Cohen Sr. '57, G'60 with Named Scholarship

A native of the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, Vincent H. Cohen Sr. '57, G'60 came to Syracuse University on a basketball scholarship and was always acutely aware of the opportunities afforded him by his SU experience, both personally and professionally.

Cohen met his wife while in college, Syracuse native Diane Hasbrouck Cohen, and after graduating cum laude in 1957, turned down the opportunity to play in the NBA to attend law school at Syracuse on a full academic scholarship. He went on to become a



Vincent H. Cohen Sr. '57, G'60

is establishing the Vincent H. Cohen Sr. Scholarship at Syracuse University through OTHC. "I think he would be very pleased with the fact that we are helping other minorities achieve the education that was so critical for him to be successful," says son Vincent Cohen Jr. '92, G'95.

Throughout his life, Cohen stressed the importance of education to his three children. "He was a first-generation American—his mother was from St. Kitts and his father from Jamaica. His mother stressed education to him and he often said the only difference between him and some of the guys that grew up on his block was the fact that he was able to go to college," says Vincent.

It was a message that stuck. All three Cohen children are high achievers: Robyn Cohen Hudson, holds a B.A. from the University of Virginia, and an MBA in finance from American University. She is senior manager of curriculum and training at NeighborWorks America, a national nonprofit that focuses on affordable housing and community development. Professor Traci Cohen Dennis '90 is director of undergraduate teacher education at American University, where she received a master's in journalism and public affairs in 1999, and will complete a doctorate in educational leadership and management at Drexel University this spring. Vincent followed in his father's footsteps, earning a law degree at SU and making his own big footprints in the Washington, D.C., legal community. In 2016, he left his position as Acting United States Attorney to join the international law firm Dechert LLP as a partner in the trial, investigations, and security group. In his worldwide practice, he represents corporate clients in sensitive government and internal investigations, securities enforcement matters, Congressional inquiries and complex civil and criminal litigation.

"Syracuse was very important to my father," says Vincent. "This scholarship is the perfect way to immortalize his name and to give back to the University that he loved." ❖



Vincent Cohen Jr. '92, G'95

prominent Washington, D.C., attorney, becoming the first African American partner at Hogan & Hartson and serving on boards ranging from the Washington Convention Center to the American Civil Liberties Union. He passed away in 2011 at age 75.

Cohen had been a longtime supporter of the Our Time Has Come Scholarship Fund and was chair of the 1992 Coming Back Together alumni reunion. To honor his memory, the Cohen family

# Paris Noir Endowment Aims to Expand Study Abroad Opportunity for Students of Color



The 2014 Paris Noir cohort after a Black Paris tour with Monique Wells



Mark Clennon

Natasha J. Benjamin '09, 2009 Paris Noir cohort and 2014 program teaching assistant

In the summer after her sophomore year at Syracuse University, Natasha Benjamin '11 traveled to Paris as part of SU's Paris Noir: Literature, Art and Contemporary Life in Diaspora, a unique study abroad experience that focuses on black culture in Paris, both historically and today. The experience changed her life.

Paris Noir was created in 2001 by Janis Mayes, associate professor of African American studies. During the five-week program, a cohort of 12 to 15 students stays at an apartment hotel, meets daily at the historic Café de Flore (a favorite of author James Baldwin and philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre), visits historical and cultural landmarks, and meets with artists, entrepreneurs, and other black Parisians about their life and identity in the City of Light.

"What does the 'noir' in Paris Noir mean as a metaphor, a concept, and an everyday experience? In what ways is it expressed in literature, the arts and the streets; and where does it swing throughout the world?" asks Mayes. Those are questions she challenges her students to consider during their time in Paris and beyond.

During her own time in Paris, Benjamin came to realize that her personal and academic journey in the program was about how she could share what she learned with others. "How would I pass on the teachings of this lived experience to my Jamaican-born parents, to my next-door neighbor, to the students after me?" she says.

In an effort to make the Paris Noir experience accessible to more students, Benjamin spearheaded efforts to create an

endowment to support students of color looking to study in Paris. In preparation for Coming Back Together 2017, she formed an endowment committee, including Paris Noir alumnae Na'Tasha Webb-Prather '11 and Kishauna Soljour '13. Their goal is to raise \$50,000 by 2019.

Studying abroad is not a financial reality for many students. "As a student who attended Syracuse on scholarship, I know firsthand that without outside resources, traveling abroad while in college may not have been feasible," says Webb-Prather, now the equity compliance investigator for the University System of Georgia. "Study abroad experiences are critical, especially for students of color as they compete in the global marketplace. This endowment will serve as an economic pipeline for students to experience the same life-changing summer I experienced in Paris."

The lasting impact of this program is a shift the students make upon their return. Soljour participated in Paris Noir in 2012. She's currently a doctoral candidate in the history department at the Maxwell School of Citizenship at Public Affairs at SU and has served as the teaching assistant for the program over the last three summers. "I watch young men and women grow intellectually, socially, and personally from this academic and cultural journey. They return to the SU campus critically engaged in their own academic work and community activism," she says.

More than 175 students from SU and other institutions have participated in Paris Noir since its inception. "While alumni of Paris Noir have been directly impacted by the program, it has been their 'passing on' of the knowledge gained that continues to broaden the legacy of the program," says Benjamin, now a digital media professional and adjunct faculty at New York University.

To learn more about the endowment and how you can contribute, visit [www.facebook.com/suparisnoirendowment/](http://www.facebook.com/suparisnoirendowment/).

## STUDENTspotlight:



### Anita Benn '18

**A**s a high school student in the Bronx, Anita Benn '18 visited the United Nations and became interested in working on girls' rights at the global level. She had never heard the term "international relations," but the first-generation college student found her calling as a first-year student at Syracuse University in the course MAX 123 Global Community.

"The course was taught by four professors from four different departments. They would present an issue and then discuss it from different perspectives," she explains. "I really engaged with that."

After declaring her major, Benn set her sights on a study abroad experience. Her parents are from Ghana and she was particularly interested in experiencing the African diaspora outside of Africa. After a semester of Portuguese, she settled on Brazil.

"It was a real immersion experience," says Benn, who studied at a Brazilian university in São Paulo and lived in an apartment with Brazilian roommates and other cultural exchange students. She volunteered at a nonprofit, teaching English to low-income students.

On campus, Benn has been a resident advisor for three years (including two summers) at Marion Hall, an experience she says has been great for "developing leadership experience and learning campus resources." She's also a McNair Scholar, a C-STEP Ambassador, and a peer educator for the Office of Health Promotion, working on sexual assault programming and dialogue surrounding the It's On Us campaign.

Benn, the middle child in her family, followed her older brother, Stephen Benn '17, to Syracuse. Stephen was an Our Time Has Come Scholar, something Benn admired and looked up to. "My first semester at SU was CBT, and my brother took me with him to all the events as his guest," she recalls.

It was particularly meaningful to fill his shoes, being named an



Our Time Has Come Scholar for 2017-18.

"So this year I was able to experience CBT as a scholar myself," says Benn, a recipient of the Delta Sigma Theta Scholarship.

"Coming back from being abroad, the financial support was particularly helpful, especially since my mother is disabled and unable to work," says Benn. But just as important to her is being part of the OTHC community. "OTHC is beyond a scholarship, but provides a support system and professional development opportunities. There's a bond between us."

Benn says attending Syracuse has made her more ambitious. "After I was accepted, it lit something in me, like, what else can I do?" she says. "There are so many opportunities."

After graduation, Benn plans to return to a Portuguese-speaking country to do development work.

She's proud of the footprint she leaves behind. "I think my brother and I have made a big mark at SU as the Benn Family." ✦

To make a gift to the OTHC Scholarship Fund, visit [programdevelopment.syr.edu](http://programdevelopment.syr.edu) and click on the Give Now tab.

## Ensonn Morris Jr. '18

As consumers increasingly purchase clothing and other goods online, architecture student Ensonn Morris Jr. '18 is attempting to redesign the marketplace we call shopping, by looking at the online experience and bringing it into the store.

"I view architecture as something that should reflect the cultural values of daily life and be the design of human activity," says Morris of his thesis project, the culmination of his five-year program that will lead to licensure in architecture. "Human endeavor is what fuels my design goals."

As a kid growing up in Philadelphia, Morris loved to draw and capture thoughts on paper. To balance his interest in sports, Morris's mother enrolled him in Philadelphia's Charter High School for Architecture and Design. The school's college preparatory curriculum was augmented by a daily two-hour art studio.

"By senior year, there was a focus on industrial design, graphic design, and architecture," says Morris, who was thrilled to be admitted to Syracuse's architecture program, the only specific architecture program he applied to.

He admits it was a tough adjustment. As a first-generation college student, he wasn't aware of architecture's reputation as an all-consuming discipline. "Coming in as an inner-city student without any credits to transfer, and having to take 18 credits per semester, the workload started to eat me up."

Morris credits mentors for making all the difference. He says it was the example set by Ronald Taylor '15, who showed him that he could pursue academic excellence and find balance with extracurricular activities. Morris pledged Alpha Phi Alpha, which he says helped him strive to be a better person while serving the community. He also got involved with the Cultural Project Rejuvenation, a community service initiative to get young men off campus into local neighborhoods to serve as mentors, and helped establish a chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA), serving as its president for two years.

Morris says he hopes his Syracuse education and leadership experiences and internship experiences will help him land a job after graduation.

Morris spent a summer interning with the Philadelphia Housing Authority, while volunteering in Project Pipeline through NOMA, where he worked with another mentor, Tya Winn '09, serving as a studio assistant at Temple University in a weekend program intended to introduce young boys and girls to the built environment.

Last summer, Morris interned in the Washington, D.C., office of Gensler, the world's top architecture firm in size and revenue. "It was an amazing experience," he says of the firm's culture.

And he's thankful to the Our Time Has Come Scholarship program for helping him get there. Morris was named an OTHC Scholar in the fall of 2016, particularly good timing.

"I didn't have to limit my thesis design for financial reasons," he says. "Although the School of Architecture is very diverse, OTHC is a good way for me to stay in touch with the minority community." ✦



To make a gift to the OTHC Scholarship Fund, visit [programdevelopment.syr.edu](http://programdevelopment.syr.edu) and click on the Give Now tab.

# Our Time Has

## Scholarship Program

### LIST OF DONORS

Gifts received for Our Time Has Come from  
November 21, 2017 - February 21, 2018

#### Giving Level of \$5,000-\$9,999

##### Class of '74 Endowed Scholarship

Mr. Wesley C. Dias '74  
Ms. Gwynne A. Wilcox '74

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Ms. Jasmine Bellamy '92

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Mr. Tenzer V. Cunningham '74

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Ms. Dorothy Mae Givens  
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Col. Casper P. Jones III, USA Ret., G'89  
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##### Allman-Manning Vocal Music Memorial Endowed Scholarship

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Mr. Don C. Vassel '89 and  
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##### Angela Y. Robinson Endowed Scholarship

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Ms. Michelle Waites '84 and Ms. April Holder

##### Helena Mitchell Scholarship

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##### Syracuse 8 Endowed Scholarship Fund

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Ms. Rachel A. Williams '04

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Ms. Donine M. Carrington '91  
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Mr. Michael Askey '70  
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Ms. Sylvana Bonner '96  
Mr. James N. Brown '57 and Mrs. Monique Brown  
Ms. Carolina Chavez '00  
Ms. Melanie N. Crawford '94  
Dr. Sabrina N. Crouch '92

# Come

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Mrs. Michelle C. Walker-Davis '83, G'85  
Miss Paula J. Davis '76  
Mr. Marion Ervin '68 and Mrs. Linda R. Ervin '69  
Mrs. Brenda S. Finch '75  
Mr. Daryl G. Ford and Mrs. Sherine D. Ford  
Ms. Michelle L. Frankson '84  
Mr. Aaron R. Ganaway III '87  
Dr. Bernard F. Gipson Jr. '70  
Ms. Geraldine Greig '72, G'73  
Dr. Keith A. Hairston '82  
Mr. Jason A. Jackson '05  
Mr. Demetris B. Jordan-Downs '99  
Mrs. Gilda Harris Lambert '69, G'70  
Ms. Valerie Lewis '80  
Mr. Fernando G. Lopez '92  
Dr. Clifton E. Marsh G'77  
Ms. Delita M. Marsland  
The Hon. Langston C. McKinney G'71, L'71 and  
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Ms. Tasha E. Neumeister G'03  
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Ms. Clarybel Peguero '97  
Mr. Brent A. Penny G'03  
Mr. John W. Plummer G'02  
Mr. David B. Porter G'99 and Ms. Elizabeth A. Moore  
Mr. Joseph Reddick and Ms. Lee M. Gatta '73, G'75  
Mr. Kevin Richardson '88 and Mrs. Monica Richardson  
Ms. Lisa M. Ruiz  
Ms. Fatima A. Saliu '98  
Mrs. Constance H. Sturgeon '74  
Mr. Cedric P. Taylor '84  
Mr. Colomb Thomas-Petit and  
Ms. Aisha N. Thomas-Petit '98  
Mr. Victor Vega '74  
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Dr. James M. Walsh and Dr. A. Lynn Bolles '71

## Giving Level up to \$99

**Alpha Kappa Alpha Iota Upsilon Chapter Alumnae  
1975 Legacy Graduate Endowed Scholarship**  
Ms. Thelma Garrett '76

**Alpha Kappa Alpha Iota Upsilon Chapter Alumnae  
Endowed Scholarship**  
Mr. Jonathan Williams '08 and  
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Miss Mary A. Royal '75

**Alpha Phi Alpha Delta Zeta Endowed Scholarship**  
Mr. Justin K. Frazier '07

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Mr. Juwan Thompson '18  
Dr. Willie L. Tobias Jr. '72, G'77  
Mr. Stanley E. Tolliver Jr. '87 and  
Mrs. Marilyn C. Tolliver '87  
Ms. Sarah Isabel Valenzuela '16  
Dr. Kadesha DeFrance Washington '93  
Dr. Omar Peyton Woodham G'10 and  
Ms. Ann-Marie Woodham

# Support for DACA

## Advancing Diversity and Inclusion

At the recommendation of the Chancellor's Workgroup on Diversity and Inclusion, Syracuse University has created this portal to provide easy access to programs, initiatives, services, offices, groups, and other resources available on campus. We look forward to updating this website, bringing you fresh new content, and providing you access to new and helpful resources.

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS +



### History

An interactive timeline



### Academic

Explore academic options



### Resources

Identify resources on campus



### News

Related news and events



### Our Community

Learn about our community

In an attempt to support DACA and undocumented students, Syracuse University has added a webpage of campus resources and support contacts to its Diversity and Inclusion website, [diversity.syr.edu](http://diversity.syr.edu), under the resources tab. The webpage was created by the University's Ad Hoc Committee on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)/ Undocumented Students, established by Chancellor Kent Syverud in February 2017.

The committee's charge is to explore best practices in higher education and make recommendations on how Syracuse University can best support and provide resources to its DACA and undocumented students. The committee is also working to address the concerns of students from "mixed status" families, students who may be citizens themselves but who have family members who are undocumented.

Dolan Evanovich, senior vice president for enrollment and the student experience, and Rebecca Reed Kantrowitz, interim senior associate vice president and dean in enrollment and the student experience, met with self-identified undocumented students enrolled at the University to learn about their experiences and concerns and to offer support.

"Meeting with the students provided important insights into their Syracuse University experience, and we will use this information to improve our services for DACA students," says Evanovich. "We are committed to providing a safe, welcoming environment for all students that supports them in succeeding inside and outside the classroom and will continue to work to provide our students with the support and resources they need in this uncertain time." ☪





# CBT COMING BACK TOGETHER

Save the Date:  
September 10-13, 2020



Rosann Santos '94



Fatimah Moody '90

Mark your calendars: CBT 2020 is planned for September 10-13, 2020. “The Office of Program Development is already hard at work planning an unforgettable weekend for alumni,” says Rachel Vassel '91, assistant vice president of program development. “We want to build on the outstanding participation we had in 2017 and encourage alumni to plan now to attend.”

Alumni co-chairs for the reunion are Rosann Santos '94 and Fatimah Moody '90. “I love SU and I know my classmates do to,” says Santos, who is director of strategic initiatives for student affairs at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, an adjunct faculty member in the Latin American Studies Department, as well as a motivational speaker and success coach. “The Latino population isn’t huge at SU but we are loyal and we love our alma mater. I am so honored to co-chair CBT 2020 and impress upon my community how important we are to the students of color coming after us, including my 10-year-old son. He already knows I would love for him to attend SU. So I am ready to dig in and do what I can for the cause.”

Moody, who earned a bachelor of science degree in finance, is the owner of LinkVisum Consulting Group, a management consulting firm that provides consulting to a broad range of public and private organizations and information technology. “Syracuse University has given so much to me. I’ve made lifelong friends, met my husband Keith Moody '90, and learned how to follow my dreams, be a leader, and take risks,” she says. “Serving as CBT 2020 co-chair allows me yet another way to give back. It affords me the opportunity to connect with students and alumni of color and work to ensure that the next generation of students has the opportunities that I had and more.”



## Athletes and Activism: Etan Thomas '00 Speaks At SU

Former Syracuse basketball star and social activist Etan Thomas '00 returned to campus in February as the guest of the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs to give the school's annual Tanner Lecture on Ethics, Citizenship, and Public Responsibility.

Interviewed in front of a large crowd at Hendricks Chapel by Maxwell political science professor Grant Reeher, Thomas talked about his own history of social activism as well as his conversations with other high-profile athletes about their choice to stand up for social justice issues.

Those conversations comprise Thomas's latest book, *We Matter: Athletes and Activism*, published in March. Long inspired by the actions of athletes such as Muhammad Ali, John Carlos, and Tommie Smith, Thomas says the book was spurred by the increase in activism among athletes after the police killings of Terence Crutcher, Eric Garner, and Philando Castile, as well as public backlash to those athletes.

"It's important to remember that Colin Kaepernick took a knee in response to police brutality," says Thomas. "It was made into something about the flag and patriotism, but that's not what it was about."

Thomas, who played nine years in the NBA, interviewed dozens of athletes who've taken a stand about controversial issues, ranging from Kareem Abdul-Jabbar; to Dwayne Wade, who led his Miami Heat teammates in wearing hoodies in honor of Trayvon Martin in March 2012; to Carmelo Anthony, who marched in Baltimore to protest the death of Freddie Gray in April 2015. He also spoke with numerous coaches and sports executives to get their perspectives.

Perhaps most notably, Thomas spoke with family members of Martin, Garner, Crutcher, and Castile—victims of shootings that received widespread attention from prominent athletes. "Those were the hardest interviews," Thomas said.

Thomas, whose last book was on the subject of fatherhood, has obviously instilled his own values in his children. A highlight of the evening was the performance of a poem about Kaepernick, performed by Thomas's 12-year-old son, Malcolm, which received a standing ovation.

Thomas himself is a published poet and commentator. His writings have appeared in *The Washington Post*, Huffington Post, CNN, ESPN, Hoopshype.com and Slamonline. He is a special correspondent for MSNBC and co-hosts a weekly radio show, "The Collision," where sports and politics collide. He received the NBA's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Foundation Legacy Award in 2009 and in 2010 won the NBA Players Association Community Contribution Award.

Thomas shared that he received valuable advice from Orange Coach Jim Boeheim, after photographs of Thomas at a campus protest against use of pepper spray by campus police appeared in the media during his first week on campus. Boeheim told him to make sure he knew his facts, advice that holds to this day.

"When you speak out about something, you have people who will try to discredit you, and you have to be able to defend your position," Thomas says. ☺





## Adrian Prieto Joins Office of Program Development

**A**drian Prieto has joined the Office of Program Development as director of development. In this capacity, Prieto will work to secure major gifts from black and Latino alumni and increase overall giving among diverse alumni generally. He will also work on corporate partnerships for the Coming Back Together reunion and the endowed scholarship fund, and on fundraisers and donor events.

Prieto comes to Syracuse from Cornell University, where he established a strong record of success in a range of fundraising and relationship-building roles with increasing levels of responsibility. He most recently served as assistant director for external relations for Cornell's College of Business and assistant director for corporate relations for the School of Hotel Administration. For the last two years, Prieto also has chaired the Alumni Affairs and Development Diversity Council at Cornell, a body dedicated to building awareness of and promoting diversity and inclusion at the university.

"I've had a wonderful time getting to know Syracuse University and the black and Latino communities that are such an important part of our alumni," he says. "Moving forward, I plan to focus on growing the number of scholarships we award every year. With support from our alumni, companies, and friends, we will be able to help our black and Latino students excel and complete their SU education, further adding to our already-strong community." ❖



## Johnson-Willis Appointed Chief Equal Opportunity and Title IX Officer

**F**ollowing a national search, Sheila R. Johnson-Willis has been named associate vice president and chief equal opportunity and Title IX officer. She has served in that position on an interim basis since June 2015.

"Sheila has already demonstrated her agility, sensitivity, compassion, and professionalism in handling a myriad of equal opportunity, Title IX, disability, and related issues," says Andrew Gordon, senior vice president and chief human resources officer. "She has earned the respect and trust of students, faculty, and staff, and has done a stellar job of leading the office through some challenging times over the last few years. I look forward to working with her in partnership as we strengthen our services related to these complicated and vital issues."

Reporting to Gordon, the associate vice president leads the Equal Opportunity and Inclusion Resolution Office (EOIRS) and is responsible for aligning all its functions, including training and investigation of equal opportunity claims, affirmative action planning, and disability rights guidance and investigations. During her tenure as interim leader, Johnson-Willis has expanded services and staff, adding an experienced investigator and obtaining the resources necessary to hire two additional investigators. She also enhanced disability services and outreach to students to make them more aware of their rights and the support available.

"I am grateful for the support of the University in providing the resources critical to ensuring that we are a welcoming and inclusive campus committed to equal opportunity," says Johnson-Willis. "As we move forward, my priorities include increased education and communication campus-wide on issues related to accessibility, equality, sensitivity, and safety for all members of the Orange family." ❖



Ana Gabriela Urizar '13



Ana Lucia Urizar '13, L'16

## Urizar Sisters Are Legal Advocates for Immigrants

Immigration has been one of the most pressing issues of national policy during the Trump presidency. Few people are as attuned to the issue as Ana Lucia Urizar '13, L'16 and her twin sister, Ana Gabriela Urizar '13.

The Urizar sisters both work as immigration attorneys in New York City. Lucia is a staff attorney for Sanctuary for Families, an organization that advocates for survivors of domestic violence. She has worked for the nonprofit since finishing her law studies at SU, for the last year as an attorney on the Immigration Intervention Project.

“Undocumented immigrant women face added obstacles” in leaving abusive relationships,” says Lucia. “They don’t speak the language. They often don’t trust police and are worried about being deported. Gaining citizenship is a path to leaving that abusive situation.”

Ana Gabriela, who earned her law degree from Benjamin N. Cardozo College of Law in 2017, works in corporate immigration law, assisting corporate clients that want to hire specialized personnel for the IT industry (mostly from India) get the work visas required.

“People think this cohort hasn’t been impacted by current policies, but it’s so much harder to get the visas and takes so much longer,” she says. “We really are hiring the best from other countries and bringing that talent here, but [President Trump] is preventing that, which really doesn’t make sense. These people are making our country better, helping us be competitive with China in technology and science.”

The Urizar sisters’ interest in immigration law stems from their own experience as immigrants. Natives of Guatemala, they moved to New York City at age 15. Their mother had come 10 years earlier, working and saving money until she could successfully sponsor her daughters.

“She became a citizen when we were 17, so we automatically

became citizens,” says Gabriela. “Having to go through the process and becoming part of the immigrant community in the U.S., immigration really was a huge part of our lives.”

Although they spoke no English when they arrived in the United States, the sisters worked hard, excelled in high school, and came to SU, where they received support from the Our Time Has Come Scholarship Fund.

“It wasn’t just money. It was a package—a support system, a mom on campus in Angela Morales-Patterson, assistant director of Program Development, events, speakers, the opportunity to meet the Chancellor,” says Gabriela. “You really felt like someone was watching out for you.”

Lucia adds that being an OTHC Scholar provided “a sense of self-confidence that a lot of students of color who come from low-income families might not have,” she says. “The scholarship made it feel like we made it to Syracuse for a reason, that we can accomplish whatever we want.”

Lucia works with low-income Spanish-speaking women, primarily from Latin American countries. “As an OTHC Scholar I was given a lot of opportunities, so in doing this work, I feel like I am paying it back in a small way,” she says.

Working in business immigration, Gabriela says she had to reconcile that she didn’t have to do public service to give back.

“Everyone should have the right to live where they want to live and pursue the dreams they want to pursue. The border where you are born shouldn’t dictate your future,” she says. “If I can change one person’s mind about immigration and the laws that we have, then that’s a huge success.”

# Evelyn Hoskins Carter '90 Helps Wegmans Make a Difference in Central New York

As Wegmans' director of consumer affairs for the Central New York region, Evelyn Hoskins Carter '90 has oversight of approximately \$1 million that the grocery chain invests in the Central New York community annually.

"Wegmans has a commitment to make a difference in every community we serve, and we make sure we do that," says Carter, who estimates that 75 to 100 requests for funding or donations cross her desk each week. "I am empowered to make decisions that best represent Wegmans."

Company priorities include helping youth, so support of SU's Office of Program Development and the CBT reunion was a good fit.

"As an alum, I recognize that the opportunity to help students attend college and graduate from college by defraying costs is significant," she says. "Wegmans has other programs that help students graduate from high school and go to college, so being able to support CBT, from a scholarship perspective, is part of that effort."

In addition to community engagement, Carter's role encompasses managing public relations for the Central New York market, a task she says the national press often does for her, as Wegmans is consistently cited in the media as one of the nation's top employers.

"Wegmans really cares about its employees. The culture here is such a family atmosphere, I feel like my last name is Wegman," she says. "That culture makes you work even harder because you feel invested in what you do and is why many of our employees have been with the company for many, many years."

*Carter majored in public relations at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications and earned an MBA from Le Moyne College, focusing on human resources. When she joined Wegmans in 2008, she had been hired for a role in human resources when she was asked to move to a community relations role.*

That was 10 years ago, and she hasn't looked back. "It doesn't even feel like it's work," says Carter.

"This position fits my skill set so well. I like interacting with people and building relationships with organizations and community partners. Having the resources to provide assistance is a good feeling. We're helping these agencies make a positive impact in our community for people in need, whether they are providing food and clothing to those in need or providing assistance to children with special needs."

Carter further represents Wegmans in the Central New York community with active participation in numerous organizations. She serves on the board of directors for Centerstate CEO, the Central New York Community Foundation, Hillside Work Scholarship Connection, the Jim and Juli Boeheim Foundation, the United Way of Central New York, the Salvation Army, and WCNY Public Broadcasting. She also serves as chair of the



Hamilton White Society of the United Way, helping secure major gifts for the organization, and served as chair of the American Heart Association's Go Red for Women campaign in 2015 and 2018.

"It's great representing a company that has such an excellent brand and makes such a positive impact in the community," she says. ✦

*Wegmans*

## Hervens Jeannis '09 Brings Awareness to the Accessibility of STEM Laboratories

Although the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in 1990, Hervens Jeannis '09 says that hasn't reached academic STEM laboratories. As a doctoral student in rehabilitation at the University of Pittsburgh, Jeannis conducted a major survey to identify barriers students with physical disabilities encounter in science and engineering laboratories.

"My survey found that most of the labs were inaccessible," says Jeannis. "This was during the years 2013 to 2017, more than 20 years after passage of the ADA."

Jeannis, who successfully defended his dissertation in February, says the point of his research is to raise awareness as well as to give voice to those impacted. "This is an underrepresented group in science and engineering, largely because laboratories do not accommodate those with disabilities," he says.

To help colleges and universities across the country make their laboratory courses more accessible for students with physical disabilities, Jeannis turned to those students (and former students) for input.

"I've worked for companies in the past where millions of dollars went to waste because the client wasn't involved in the process and ultimately didn't find the outcome useful," he says. "I wanted to keep the user in the loop, to hear their voice, what challenges they have and what solutions work for them."

Jeannis says most instructors are willing to make accommodations but don't know what's needed. He hopes his research can help inform engineering and science professors and deans across the country.

Jeannis's own engineering career started at SU, where he



earned a bachelor's in computer engineering in 2009. As a first-generation college student—his parents hail from Haiti—he says his college years were a transformative experience. He was a member of the Wellslink, the African American Male Congress, and the National Society of Black Engineers, and spent his junior year studying in London. He was also an Our Time Has Come Scholar and the speaker at the OTHC Reception his senior year. "It was an honor to address my peers and speak about my experience, especially with the Chancellor in attendance," he says.

Before starting his doctoral studies in 2011, Jeannis earned a master's in systems engineering at the University of Maryland-Baltimore County, where he became involved with Bethel Campus Fellowship, a nationwide interdenominational Christian campus ministry group. Since 2012, he has served as the organization's lead program evaluator, developing, distributing, and analyzing survey results for its annual national conference.

"We'll see what doors open ahead," says Jeannis. "I look forward to helping organizations and institutions run more effectively as well as helping underrepresented groups become better represented." ❖



## Larry Thomas and the AAMC: 20 Years Later

As a graduate student in higher education administration, Larry Thomas G'99, MBA'10 set out to make a positive impact for male African American undergraduates at SU. In 1998, he developed a 10-week leadership institute, including forums on communication and team-building skills, conflict resolution, negotiation, stress management, and networking, which he called the Talented Tenth Institute. On the day after Frederick Douglass's birthday, he invited 50 first-year male students to participate and create an honor society. Ten showed up, forming what would become the African American Male Congress (AAMC).



Larry Thomas G'99, MBA'10

“My goal was to provide African American males with leadership training, professional development, and preparation for success in careers and graduate school,” says Thomas of the AAMC, which became a recognized and funded SU organization, active until 2010. The organization's annual baccalaureate event featured esteemed speakers including Donna Brazile, Cornel West, and Tavis Smiley.

“The AAMC evolved from an honor society to a lifestyle for a select group of high-achieving, African American male undergraduates and scholar-athletes at Syracuse University,” says Thomas, who directed SU's CSTEP program for nearly a decade and served as associate director of the Office of Graduate Preparation Programs.

Today, those AAMC alumni are thriving professionals in a wide range of fields. For example, Zuri Blount-Tate '01 is a psychotherapist in private practice. Robert Ford '01 is a sports broadcaster who provides play-by-play for the Houston Astros. Paul Dimoh '05, L'08 is an ethics attorney. Tyrone Saunders '07 is a product engineer. Daniel Elmore '10 is a New York City architect.

“The African American Male Congress helped me acclimate to SU,” recalls Ford. “Not only did I get to meet and spend time with others who look like me, but we also had similar goals and aspirations of making an impact in our communities and of being the best of the best. There was an instant bond among us.”

Twenty years later, Thomas is still mentoring and providing leadership training. As the founding director of the award-winning Frederick Douglass Distinguished Scholars Program at American University, Thomas leads initiatives to prepare first-generation and low-income undergraduate students for leadership and success in what he calls the “ESTEEMed” professions: entrepreneurship, science, technology, engineering, education, and medicine. “Blacks, in particular, are almost 14 percent of the population, but much less than 14 percent of those are in ESTEEMed careers,” he says.

Thomas's newest endeavor is Prosperity365, which builds off his years as a trusted advisor and strategist for undergraduate and graduate students. “Now that my former students are entering mid-level management and mid-life, they're not only hiring me to help figure out what's next for them personally and professionally, but also to advise their teams and their organizations,” says Thomas, also a member of the Aspen Institute's Vanguard Leadership Board. “Prosperity365 represents a new opportunity to help people make their very best decisions and achieve their very best results.”

# Taye Diggs Shares Talents with Alumni at Play Reading and Book Signing

Stage and screen star Taye Diggs '93 celebrated his directorial debut with a reading of the new play *Thoughts of a Colored Man* at Syracuse University's Lubin House February 21 for alumni and invited guests.

*Thoughts of a Colored Man* focuses on eight men as they struggle to find their identity beyond the limitations, stereotypes, and obstacles that the world attempts to place on them based on the color of their skin. It fuses poetry, dance, and storytelling to explore "perspectives from different kinds of black men who are from all different walks of life," says Diggs, who began industry readings of the play in November. "I personally was dealing with all of [those questions of identity] and still am to this day," he says.

The show, featuring music by Madison McFerrin (daughter of acclaimed artist Bobby McFerrin) and choreography by Jenny Parsinen, is still in developmental stages. Presenting the reading

for alumni at Lubin House provided a meaningful audience for the novice director.

"I grew socially at Syracuse," the musical theater graduate told *Playbill*. "There were a lot of other people that looked like me, spoke like me, behaved like me, which I was not used to, so it was a place where I felt comfortable, accepted, and was allowed to grow."

Diggs is best known as an actor, having starred in the original cast of *Rent* and played leading roles in *Wicked*, *Chicago*, and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, not to mention numerous feature

films and the popular TV series *Empire*. "When I was coming up, you were either a stage actor, or a TV actor, or a movie actor, or a TV host, or a game show host, or a singer. Everyone is doing everything now, and I think it's great," he says. "I'm learning from them."

He's also the author of two children's books, *Mixed Me!* and *Chocolate Me!*, created in conjunction with SU classmate and illustrator Shane Evans '93. The two will participate in a book-signing event on April 19 at Coca-Cola headquarters in Atlanta, a program hosted by Syracuse University's Office of Program Development in partnership with Coca-Cola's African American Employee Resource Group (a partnership coordinated by SU parent Terez Thompson, vice president of Global Supplier Diversity) and the SU Atlanta Regional Council. ☪



Taye Diggs '93







Elizabeth F. Cohen



## NYC Alumni Attend DACA Event

New York City-area alumni and friends enjoyed a thought-provoking presentation and discussion on DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and the future of immigration in the United States with Elizabeth F. Cohen, associate professor of political science in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. The event, sponsored by the Office of Program Development, was held April 5 at Lubin House.

Cohen's research focuses issues of immigration, citizenship, and political thought. In March, she made a presentation to the Congressional Progressive Caucus at its annual strategy summit. This group includes members of Congress, including Sen. Bernie Sanders and Rep. Nancy Pelosi; thought leaders such as Colin Kaepernick and Van Jones; and activist organizations including MoveOn.org, Black Lives Matter, and Planned Parenthood. Cohen is a frequent media contributor and the author of *Semi-Citizenship in Democratic Politics* and *The Political Value of Time*. ✦



## D.C.-Area Alumni Visit African American Museum

Washington, D.C.-area alumni celebrated Black History Month with a visit to the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. Approximately 20 alums came out for the event February 10, which was followed by a networking reception at the Hamilton. The program was sponsored by the Office of Program Development in conjunction with the Syracuse University Alumni Club of Washington, D.C. ☎

*The African American experience is the lens through which we understand what it is to be an American.*

Lonnie G. Bunch III  
Founding Director, NMAAHC

## Are you a Syracuse University “Best,” “First,” or “Only”?

If you are the first or only person of color in your field to have accomplished something distinctive, please let us know. The Office of Program Development is planning a special edition of *Syracuse Manuscript* for CBT 2020 and would like to recognize SU’s best and brightest alumni of color. If you are a first, best, or only, please reach out to us with the following information by July 1, 2018.\*

**Information to include:**

**Name**

**Title**

**SU graduation year**

**SU major and school/college**

**All advanced degrees earned**

**Industry**

**Describe your best, first, or only professional or academic accomplishment**

**List any athletic achievements and awards:** records set, e.g., most points, fastest times, most yards, etc.

**List any academic achievements and awards:** Rhodes, Truman, Goldwater Scholar; Phi Beta Kappa, etc.

**List any professional memberships or affiliations:** National Academy of Science, Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Arts and Sciences, etc., invited memberships for professionals.

**List any national or international awards/prizes:** Oscar, Grammy, Toni, Emmy, etc.; Nobel Prize, Pulitzer Prize, MacArthur Award, etc.; and Olympic Medal, NBA championship; Super Bowl; and World Series.

**University awards:** If you are an SU Arents, Chancellor’s Citation, or Chancellor’s Medal awardee, please indicate which and the year awarded.

**University-related distinctions:** If you are the first or only alum of color to graduate within your school, college, unit, or major, please indicate the academic program and year. ☎

*\*submission of information does not guarantee inclusion*



## CBT Martha's Vineyard



It's not too late to make plans to join alumni on Martha's Vineyard for a summertime CBT reunion August 12-18. Connect with SU alumni, family, and friends during a week of cultural activities, including three Syracuse events. This reunion will sell out, so register today.

The Office of Program Development is not managing accommodations. This is a busy week on the Vineyard, and we recommend making reservations immediately. You can find links to information for hotels, rental homes, and ferry reservations at [programdevelopment.syr.edu/events/cbt-marthas-vineyard/](http://programdevelopment.syr.edu/events/cbt-marthas-vineyard/).

### EVENTS

- **Opening Reception and Clambake with special guest**  
Hosted by Karin "Karina" Wilkinson G'88  
Sunday, August 12, 2018 | 6 p.m.  
\$110 per adult
- **Pool Party *SOLD OUT***  
Hosted by Keith Brown '82  
Monday, August 13, 2018 | 2-5 p.m.  
\$90 per adult
- **Martha's Vineyard Heritage Bike Tour and Brunch at The Black Dog Tavern (with bike tour refreshments at the home of A. Lynn Bolles '71)**  
Tuesday, August 14, 2018 | 9 a.m.  
\$75 per adult ☎

## Alumni Milestones

**Howard Woolley '80** published *Soar: A Memoir*, a posthumous memoir written by his wife, **Gail Campbell Woolley '79**, about living a life with purpose although diagnosed with sickle cell disease as a child. She died in 2015 at 58.

**Shahid M. Allah '86** (formerly Jay Chisholm) and **Karen Ravenel Thomas '91** are engaged to be married.

**Colline Hernandez-Ayala '89** has joined the School of Architecture Advisory Board.

**Tony Martinez '89** married Olga Mizgireva on December 22, 2017.

**Charles Willis Jr. '90** and his wife, Lisa, welcomed a baby daughter, Alena Rose Willis, December 14, 2017.

**Anthony Otero '96** and **Zulay Olivo '06** are engaged to be married. Otero contributed an essay to *Puerto Rico Strong: A Comics Anthology Supporting Puerto Rico Disaster*. The graphic novel is available on Amazon.

**Sinhue Mendoza '08** is a consultant for Major League Baseball on its Spanish social media platforms as part of MLB's Latin American strategy and lives in Chicago.

**Lawrence K. Jackson '13** has joined NBC News as the co-host of *Stay Tuned*, the network's twice-daily news show on Snapchat. ☎

# IN MEMORIAM

## Joseph O. Lampe '53, L'55



Joseph O. Lampe '53, L'55, of Phoenix, Arizona, died January 25. Former chair of the Syracuse University Board of Trustees, Lampe was a tireless ambassador for SU. His philanthropic support of the University includes funding for the Joseph O. and Shawn Lampe Athletic Complex, which provides primary training facilities for the University's student athletes, and widespread scholarship

support, including the Our Time Has Come Scholarship Fund and establishment of Iris L. Pérez Celis Fund in the College of Visual and Performing Arts to support studio arts majors from traditionally underrepresented groups.

Lampe earned a degree in speech and dramatic arts from Syracuse in 1953 and continued his education at the College of Law. While at Syracuse, he served as a member of the Air Force Reserve at Hancock Field and, after completing his law degree, was called to active duty. He remained in Arizona after the service, establishing a law practice in Phoenix. He developed a specialty in real estate law and, sensing the coming population boom, launched his own real estate business. Since 1979, he served as chairman of Lampe and Company, a diversified real estate development and management firm.

In honor of Lampe's contributions to the University and its students, Syracuse recognized him with numerous awards, including the SU Alumni Award in 1984, the Distinguished Service Award from the College of Law in 1991, the George Arents Award for Business and Service to Alma Mater in 2003, and an honorary doctor of laws degree in 2004.

Lampe is survived by his wife, Shawn; four children, Anthony, Scott, Mark, and Stryker; and four grandchildren.

## Kermit Lee '57



Kermit Lee '57, of Syracuse, died January 16. Lee was the first African American graduate of SU's School of Architecture, graduating magna cum laude. He pursued graduate study at Technische Hochschule in Braunschweig, Germany, as a Fulbright Fellow. While in Europe, he also served as Chief of Architecture, a civilian post with the Seventh Air Force AFEX. Lee came

back to Syracuse to join School of Architecture faculty and is credited with mentoring countless students through his career, particularly those of color. He was also a partner, with the late Louis Skoler, of Skoler and Lee Architects in Syracuse. A stroke

ended his teaching career in 1994.

Lee's professional accomplishments include chairing the New York State Board of Architecture; charter membership on Governor Mario Cuomo's Cultural Advisory Committee for Times Square and 42nd Street; and investiture as a Fellow in the American Institute of Architects College of Fellows.

Lee is survived by his wife, Lore; daughter, Karin George; son, Jason A. Lee; two grandchildren; and four siblings, Ronald, William, Judith, and Deborah.

Gifts can be made to the Kermit Lee Scholarship Fund at [www.givetosu.syr.edu/kermitlee](http://www.givetosu.syr.edu/kermitlee).

## Sandi Russell '65



Sandi Russell '65, of Great Britain, died June 23, 2017, after a long battle with kidney disease. Born in New York City, Russell grew up in Harlem during the civil rights era. Her gift for music gained her scholarships to the New York City High School of Music and Art, where she worked with the composer Leonard Bernstein and performed at Lincoln Center, and then to Syracuse University, where she was

trained to sing the classical western repertoire.

She taught for eight years in the South Bronx and at age 30 became a professional jazz singer, performing in Manhattan's finest venues. In 1984, she moved to England, where she continued to perform and record with other outstanding musicians while developing a parallel career as a journalist and writer. Her highly praised book *Render Me My Song: African-American Women Writers from Slavery to the Present* was the basis for an acclaimed one-woman show that she performed throughout Europe and the U.K. She also wrote *ELLA!*, a one-woman show about the life and music of Ella Fitzgerald. Her major recorded albums *Incandescent* (2001) and *Sweet Thunder* (2007) demonstrate her vocal range, rich musicality, and exceptional scat singing. Russell won awards for her writing and was an honorary fellow of St Chad's College, Durham University, UK. The college intends to commemorate her with a named scholarship for black and ethnic minority women students.

She is survived by family in New York City and Virginia and a host of friends in the United States and United Kingdom.

# IN MEMORIAM

## Heather Vincent Holley '81



Heather Vincent Holley '81 of Atlanta died March 22 after suffering a heart attack.

After earning a bachelor's degree from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Holley began her award-winning journalism career in New York City at ABC News' *Nightline*, where she worked directly with

Ted Koppel '60 to book guests for the late night program. While there, she covered a wide range of stories, including Nelson Mandela's release from prison, the anniversary of the fall of Saigon, and the intifada in Israel. Holley later worked on the news magazine show *20/20* and the hidden camera program *What Would You Do?*, also produced by ABC News. Following her tenure at ABC, she served as a senior supervising producer of the news magazine *Dateline* for NBC News; as vice president at MSNBC, where she created shows, specials and overall programming content; and covered Republican and Democratic conventions for CBS News and BET.

After relocating to Atlanta with her family in 2009, she involved herself with the arts community, serving as a board member of ArtsATL, the National Black Arts Festival, the Alliance Theater, and the AIDS Memorial Quilt. She was an avid art collector and patron of the theater.

Holley is survived by her husband, Kenny Holley; their twins, Cary and Robbie; and her brother, Dr. Chuck Vincent.

## Christopher J. Gedney '92



Christopher J. Gedney '92, of Syracuse, died March 9. As an All-American tight end for the Orange, Gedney helped lead the SU football team to four straight bowl games. In 1992 Chris set the record for receptions by a tight end in a season (34) and in a career (91).

After graduating from SU with a bachelor's degree in speech communication, Chris was drafted by the Chicago Bears, for whom he played four seasons, then played three seasons for the Arizona Cardinals. In the seven seasons in the NFL, Chris appeared in 73 games, caught 83 passes for 914 yards and eight touchdowns. Chris was the recipient of many awards, including both the Ed Block and Gene Autry Courage Awards, induction into the Greater Syracuse Hall of Fame, 2000 Finalist for the NFL Man of the Year Award, and ACC Legend Award in 2015, and named to Syracuse's All-Century football team.

Gedney was the first professional athlete to return to a contact sport after having a full colectomy due to a long battle with ulcerative colitis.

After retiring from pro football, Gedney returned to Syracuse with his family, where he served as senior associate athletic director for major gifts for Syracuse University and as the color analyst for the Syracuse football team. He also served on the National Down Syndrome Society Board of Directors, the Imagine Syracuse Executive Board of Directors and was actively involved in the New York State Special Olympics and the Southwest Chapter of Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America.

Gedney is survived by his wife, Seely Anderson Gedney; his children, son Chase and daughters Annaleigh, Montanna, and Ellianna; his father, Tom Gedney, and his mother, Dorothy Gedney; his brother, Al Gedney; and sister, Lisa Wicks. ☩



The Black Celestial Choral Ensemble and Syracuse University's 2018 Dr. King Community Choir performed at the MLK Celebration.

# SYRACUSE Manuscript

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