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SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY'S BLACK AND LATINO/A ALUMNI MAGAZINE



Our Time Has Come
alumnus Nahnsan Guesh '19, G'20



Syracuse Manuscript

Rachel Vassel '91
Assistant Vice President
Multicultural Advancement

Angela Morales-Patterson
Director of Operations and Partnerships
Multicultural Advancement

Adrian Prieto
Director of Development
Multicultural Advancement

Miko Horn '95
Director, Alumni Events
Multicultural Advancement

Maria J. Lopez
Assistant Director of Scholarship Programs
Multicultural Advancement

Ariel Maciulewicz
Administrative Specialist
Multicultural Advancement

Angela Morales-Patterson
Editor-in-Chief

Renée Gearhart Levy
Writer

Kiefer Creative
Design

Jennifer Merante
Project Manager

Office of Multicultural Advancement
Syracuse University
640 Skytop Rd., Second Floor
Syracuse, NY 13244-5160

315.443.4556
f 315.443.2874

syracuse.edu/alumniocolor
suma@syr.edu

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Office of Multicultural Advancement

On the Cover: Ernie Davis statue on the Shaw Quad in front of the stadium.

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FROM THE 'CUSE

Resilience!

Orange Family,

I hope you are doing well during these unprecedented times. According to our May alumni survey, 65 percent of respondents report being personally impacted by COVID-19 through loss of job or income, having someone in their household contract the virus, or the passing of a loved one. On top of that, the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and others—as well as the Chris Cooper incident in Central Park and other acts of bias against African-Americans—have caused additional horror and distress. Please know that your Syracuse University family is thinking of you and looking forward to better times ahead. We know that those of us who bleed Orange have the resilience to overcome any challenge. And we expect that the Orange community will work together to ensure that justice prevails.

Based on your feedback, and that of our alumni co-chairs and the Multicultural Advancement Advisory Council, we have made the decision to postpone the Coming Back Together 2020 reunion until Sept. 9-12, 2021. Those who have registered will have the option of transferring their registration to the CBT 2021 reunion, donating their registration fees to the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholarship Fund or receiving a refund. While we would have enjoyed hosting you this year, we feel strongly that the joy of the CBT reunion would be diminished by current events as well as social distancing protocols, alumni travel concerns and the financial impact of the virus.

With our on-campus reunion being pushed to 2021, we will offer an abbreviated, virtual reunion on Oct. 16. This event will include a career session, book talk, panel discussion, and a 150th anniversary celebration and OTHC fundraiser—all in one day! There will be no cost to you, so please join us. And thanks to those of you who have remained connected with us via the CBT Virtual Connection Series. These sessions have included everything from cooking demonstrations and financial planning to mental health, politics and dance parties. Like or follow us on social media, or visit our website's event page to learn about future digital programming from the Office of Multicultural Advancement.

Finally, I ask you to join me in congratulating the 2020 class of OTHC Scholars, whom we celebrated during a virtual event back in May. Resilience was the theme, and it was a beautiful ceremony, amplified by remarks from Chancellor Syverud, a keynote address from OTHC donor and Multicultural Advancement Advisory Council member Shawn Outler '89, who is chief diversity officer at Macy's, as well as a surprise appearance from Kevin Richardson of the Exonerated Five. After a really tough year for our students, it was wonderful to be able to recognize their achievements together with their families and supporters. We are particularly proud of the six OTHC Scholars achieving a 3.9-4.0 GPA: Alex Aguirre '20, Nathana Murray '22, Myles Morgan '20, Symone Andrews '20, Dakota Chambers '22 and Cameron Gray '22.

These are the students you are supporting with your gifts to OTHC. These are the young people who are going to change the world. Thank you for continuing to donate, especially during these difficult times. Your ongoing commitment to the Our Time Has Come Scholarship Program makes me incredibly proud of our community and what we can do together.

With Orange Love,
Rachel Vassel '91
Assistant Vice President
Office of Multicultural Advancement



Same Time Next Year: Coming Back Together Postponed Until 2021

Based on the continuing widespread impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Syracuse University's Office of Multicultural Advancement has made the difficult decision to postpone CBT 2020 until Sept. 9-12, 2021.

"We worked very hard to develop a four-day weekend celebration that honors our traditions while introducing exciting new events and programming," says Rachel Vassel '91, assistant vice president of multicultural advancement. "As much as we were excited to welcome alumni back to campus, we also didn't want our 150th celebration diminished by lowered attendance and social distancing protocols. We look forward to a great CBT at the same time next year."

A May survey of alumni found that 65 percent of respondents had been personally impacted by COVID-19, either through loss of job or income, illness or losing a loved one to the virus. That feedback, as well as consultation with the Multicultural Advisory Committee and CBT co-chairs, led to the decision to reschedule. Eighty-five percent of respondents said they would attend CBT if rescheduled for September 2021.

But alumni won't have to wait an entire year to come back together. In addition to the CBT Virtual Connection Series this summer, a virtual CBT will be held on Friday, Oct. 16. Please join us for this daylong event, which will include a career session, book talk and panel discussion, as well as a 150th anniversary celebration and OTHC fundraiser. The virtual CBT event is free of charge, and registration will open in August.

"Despite COVID-19, this is an important year in the life of Syracuse University, and we're working hard to help alumni stay connected, honor our traditions, and support our students," says Vassel.

Herbert Byrd Pays Back Career Success With Support for Engineering Students

Despite the passage of time, Herbert L. Byrd Jr. G'95 well remembers the financial struggle of getting his education. "I remember my last year as an undergraduate working part time and taking 10 classes to graduate," he says.

And as a master's student in electrical engineering at Syracuse University's College of Engineering and Computer Science, he was floored by the cost of engineering textbooks.

Nearing the end of a successful career, Byrd wants to give back by helping young Black students pursuing the field of engineering. Byrd is president and CEO of MOJA, a Virginia-based information technology and intelligence analysis company that supports the U.S. intelligence community and national-level decision-makers with custom software solutions and intelligence analysis.

"Knowing the hardship that I experienced, I felt that if I can help someone get that book they need to so that they can be prepared for class, that's something. I've received letters of appreciation from students saying it helped them graduate."

—Herbert L. Byrd Jr. G'95

In 2005, he established the MOJA Book Fund in the College of Engineering to help defray the cost of textbooks for needy students. "Knowing the hardship that I experienced, I felt that if I can help someone get that book they need to so that they can be prepared for class, that's something," Byrd says. "I've received letters of appreciation from students saying it helped them graduate."

Nagged by statistics showing low numbers of Black students pursuing STEM fields, Byrd wanted to do more. Recently, he and his wife set up a \$1 million bequest in their estate plan to establish the Herbert and Beverly Byrd Scholarship, with a preference to support Black students enrolled in the College of Engineering and Computer Science. Because the gift was created as part of Syracuse University's Invest Syracuse program, the University created a second five-year scholarship that is currently active. "It gives me a lot of pleasure to know that I am helping students achieve their professional goals," he says.



Beverly and Herbert Byrd at home in Virginia

Byrd got his own start working for IBM, first developing large mainframes and later in software development and management. After transferring back to his native Virginia, he started his own company providing software development services and systems administration to the federal government.

In addition to running a successful company, Byrd is an avid historian and enjoys writing about little-known aspects of history. His research on the enslavement of the Irish in the early British colonies resulted in the book *Proclamation 1625: America's Enslavement of the Irish*, published in 2016. The book shares the mostly untold story of how the Irish were the primary source of slave labor in the British American colonies and the British West Indies, including many Virginia plantations, for nearly 180 years. "At the time, the Irish were classified as 'colored,'" Byrd says.

More recently, he researched the origin of streets that bear Union names in his hometown of Hampton, Virginia, located in the heart of the Confederacy. "The interesting thing about studying history is that you often find things aren't what you thought they were," he says.

Black History:

Hampton's Union, Lincoln and Grant Streets

The following is an excerpt of an essay by Herbert L. Byrd Jr.

As a teenager growing up in Hampton, Virginia, I wondered why the streets in our neighborhood had the names Union, Lincoln and Grant streets. After all, it was the South and Richmond, Virginia, was at one time the capital of the Confederacy.

It turns out there is a story behind how those streets acquired their names, and the story is an important one.

On April 17, 1861, the Virginia convention voted to secede from the Union. Even though Virginia was now a member of the Confederacy, Fort Monroe—located in Hampton at the eastern tip of the peninsula—remained in the hands of the Union Army. The Commander of Fort Monroe was Brigadier General Benjamin F. Butler, a lawyer by profession and a strong opponent to slavery.

Across the Hampton Roads waterway from Fort Monroe was Sewell's Point, a construction site controlled by the Confederate Army under General Benjamin Huger. Sewell's Point was used by the Confederacy to construct defense batteries. Three slaves, Frank Baker, James Townsend and Sheppard Mallory, were contracted out to the Confederate Army by their owners to provide labor.

Rather than remain at Sewell's Point providing labor to the Confederacy, the three slaves decided to escape, rowing a skiff at night across the Hampton Roads body of water to Point Comfort, where they hoped to seek asylum at Fort Monroe. The Confederate states considered slaves to be chattel. Under U.S. law, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 required that escaped slaves, when captured, be returned to their owners.

Confederate Major John B. Cary met with General Butler on the banks of Mill Creek and requested return of the slaves. But Virginia had seceded from the Union. Butler took the legal position that if Virginia had considered itself as foreign power at war with the U. S., then the slaves were "property" confiscated during war. He felt he had no obligation to return the slaves; they were contraband.

On May 24, 1861, General Benjamin F. Butler declared all fugitive slaves at Fort Monroe as "Contraband of War." Baker, Townsend and Mallory were freed and worked for the U.S. Army at Fort Monroe at minimum wage.

President Lincoln and Congress were aware of the event and enacted the U.S. Confiscation Act of 1861 to clarify the issue of slave status during the war. It declared that the Union Army could seize and hold any property of the Confederate Army to include slaves.

Word travelled fast about freedom at the fort. Slaves from across Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee escaped and made their way to "Freedom Fortress." Having the status as contraband did not fully free them but was better than living under their current slave conditions.



A view of the historic Black neighborhood Slabtown in Richmond, Virginia, before it was raised by the National Park Service in the mid-1970s. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Population at the fort became overcrowded. Whites in Hampton became concerned about the large influx of slaves and started to leave Hampton and the surrounding area. Brigadier General John B. Magruder, the Confederate military leader on the peninsula, was concerned the Union Army would soon occupy Hampton. He ordered Captain Jefferson Curle Phillips to assemble 500 soldiers and torch the town.

At midnight, on Aug. 7, 1861, Captain Phillips and his soldiers set fire to homes and buildings in Hampton, which was left in ruins. The contrabands made use of the ruins left in downtown Hampton to build homes and used a large strip of vacant land that lay next to downtown for their new settlement, which they called the Great Contraband Camp, and later, Slabtown.

Like any developer planning a community, they created the streets they would travel. The street names they chose were Union, Lincoln, Grant, Liberty (now Armistead Ave.) and Hope Street (now High Court Lane). They were nothing more than dirt paths, but those dirt paths over time became paved streets. Up until the age of 18, when I left for the Air Force, those streets were my world.

At the end of the Civil War, the more than 4,000 contrabands in Hampton were freed. The Grand Contraband Camp remained, and the community established schools, businesses and religious institutions that exist today. Some historians claim this was the first self-contained Black community in the United States.

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Monica and Charles Houston Create Scholarship To Support Students of Color in Accounting

As chief auditor for Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Monica Houston '90 is charged with identifying and mitigating financial risks within the county government. "It's like working for a conglomerate," she says. "There's a whole gamut of divisions: public safety, public works, taxes, information technology and then typical processes like payroll and human resources."

Houston has worked in internal audit for most of her career, holding senior positions in organizations such as Home Depot and Delta Airlines, or for governmental entities. Most recently, she served as chief audit officer for the South Carolina Retirement Investment Commission, which manages the \$30-billion portfolio for the South Carolina retirement plan, and then as manager of compliance for the National Futures Association in Chicago, where she handled fraud investigations and regulatory examinations of registered firms.

Houston says she was one of three Black accounting majors while studying at Syracuse University. Having achieved a senior level in her profession, Houston wants to help pave the way for accountants of color. Through the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholarship Program, Houston and her husband, Charles A. Houston '90, have created the OTHC Accounting Alumni Endowed Scholarship. In addition to providing scholarship support to Black and Latino/a accounting majors, Houston intends to facilitate mentoring and apprenticeship opportunities for those students to give them the support and encouragement they'll need to succeed.

"All the big public accounting firms have programs geared toward recruiting and retaining minorities," says Houston, who got her own start out of college in the training program at Ernst & Young. Nonetheless, the industry remains culturally homogeneous. "The challenge is, most of the people you work with won't look like you. They don't come from the same place as you. Understanding how to navigate the cultural aspects is important."

Houston is a member of the Office of Multicultural Advancement Advisory Council and an active mentor to students. She believes she can offer insight on the many career tracks available to accountants, as well as ways to fast track in the profession. She'd also like to tap other senior accounting professionals for their participation. "A large part of this is not just about what you know or who you know, it's about who knows you," she says.

Houston's motivation for supporting Syracuse accounting students of color is based on personal experience. "Syracuse

has a top accounting program. It's very rigorous. I worked two jobs while trying to maintain my grade point average, so hopefully I can help another student succeed by taking the pressure off," she says.

Charles Houston is associate pastor of counseling at World of Faith Family Worship Cathedral in Atlanta. He says that although he was fortunate to have parents that supported him financially while at Syracuse University, there are a number of minority students at Syracuse whose parents or guardians do not have the means to support their children as they would like.

"We believe in supporting and promoting African American and Latinx excellence in all professional fields," he says. "There are not enough students of color in the accounting field, and we wanted to take action and create the opportunity to help support them."

Houston wants to stress that you don't have to be an accountant to support this scholarship. "There is not one measure of a person's life that is not touched by accounting," she says. "If you work for someone, you get paid, and that is being facilitated by an accountant. By helping sponsor an accounting student you'll be helping yourself in a variety of areas while making sure we are properly represented in the profession."

TYNICK PHOTOGRAPHY



Charles and Monica Houston

BENARDETT JNO-FINN '06

Healthy Skin, Healthy Lives

As a native of the Caribbean, Benardett Jno-Finn found that her most difficult transition coming to Syracuse University as an undergraduate was acclimating her skin to the harsh Syracuse winters. “I had extreme issues with dry patches on my face and arms,” she recalls. “At the same time, I had to walk to class in the blistering cold.”

A dermatologist diagnosed Jno-Finn with eczema, dermatitis and keratosis pilaris. After a costly and largely disappointing search for effective products to treat her ailments, she began exploring natural alternatives.

It helped that Jno-Finn was a biochemistry major. Born on the island of Dominica and raised on St. Croix, she grew up drinking “bush tea” made from native herbs and using homemade remedies, aloe for cuts and noni leaves for sprains.

Jno-Finn spent a few years being her own guinea pig, researching natural ingredients and creating products that addressed her needs. “These products worked very well for me, and the difference was immediately noticeable,” she says. “I shared my creations with family and friends who made recommendations on how I could improve the products.”

A Ronald McNair Scholar, Jno-Finn spent a summer in Graz, Austria, conducting research with the National Science Foundation after graduation. In 2007, she moved to New Orleans to take a job with the Mayor’s Office of Health Policy working on HIV/AIDS initiatives.

At the same time, she founded Sénica, turning her passion for creating natural bath, skin and haircare products into a business. Within two years, she was pursuing it full time.

“Sénica” combines the prefix “Sé” (say), Dominican Creole for “it is” or “to be,” with the suffix “nica” (neeka), which refers to her native Dominica. Known as the nature island of the Caribbean, Dominica is a country of lush forestry, boiling lakes, black sand beaches and 365 rivers. All Sénica’s products are handmade with natural ingredients, including bay leaves, jojoba oil, sweet almond oil and essential oils of lavender, orange and tea tree.

Initially, Jno-Finn sold her products through retailers like Whole Foods, but she has transitioned to a wholesale model, supplying beauty salons and spas and selling direct to consumers through her website, senicanaturals.com.

Each Sénica product is made by Jno-Finn from scratch using premium natural butters, herbs, oils and essential oils. Through the years she has developed more than 70 products but maintains a core inventory of 24.

“The beauty of the products is they work from head to toe and can be used by anybody, not just someone who has a skin issue,” says Jno-Finn, who won the 2011 Small Business Administration Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award for the State of Louisiana. “They can be used by everyone in the family.”

Over 13 years, Jno-Finn has developed a loyal customer base that includes an active user Facebook page, “Sénica Family.” In the course of counseling those customers and friends about their skin care issues, she found her role expanding from product consultant to wellness coach.

“The conversation may start with talking about someone’s acne, but expands holistically. How are you eating? Are you drinking water? Are there stresses in your life? My goal is to help people slow down, look at their lives, and really focus and move forward in ways that are intentional,” she says.

Many women put themselves on the back burner because they’re always taking care of others, Jno-Finn says. “A lot of the work I do on the wellness front has to do with helping people work toward their ideal life, whether that’s helping them with their moisturizing routine or in setting up a vision for their life and developing a plan to move forward in achieving it.”



Benardett Jno-Finn

ZACK SMITH

GEZZER ORTEGA '03 | OSWALDO ORTEGA '05

Brothers Promote Pipeline for Bringing Underrepresented Students Into Their Professions

When he set out to become a surgeon, Gezzer Ortega imagined helping patients, one procedure at a time. Today, Ortega is definitely helping patients, but on a much larger scale.

Ortega is the lead faculty for research and innovation for equitable surgical care at the Center for Surgery and Public Health at Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School. Rather than providing direct patient care, he's focused on research to mitigate or eliminate disparities and inequities in surgery.

"Different population groups have different surgical outcomes, which can be impacted by factors ranging from unconscious bias to a lack of insurance," says Ortega.

Currently, he is developing a curriculum for surgical residents called the Provider Awareness and Cultural Dexterity Toolkit for Surgeons. "Through this curriculum, we're focused on teaching surgical residents the skills that they need to have cross-cultural encounters, which includes differences in race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation," he explains. "By improving communication, we hope we can improve outcomes."

The new curriculum is in the trial phase at eight academic medical centers. Feedback will be used to enhance the program, which Ortega hopes will be expanded to other sites and other specialties around the country.

Ortega's career direction was influenced by medical school mentors, surgeons who focused on health disparities research. After earning his medical degree from Howard University College of Medicine, Ortega earned a master's degree of public health from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health before returning to Howard for his surgical residency.

While he maintains his clinical skills as medical director of a primary care clinic in Bethesda, Maryland, Ortega believes he can make a broader impact through his research. "I can only see so many patients in a day or a week, so having the opportunity to impact policies and drive improvements in access and outcomes is a lot more rewarding," he says.

Ortega, the son of immigrant parents from the Dominican Republic, is equally passionate about serving as a mentor and role model for students from underserved backgrounds. While an undergraduate biochemistry major at Syracuse University, Ortega was a member of the Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP), designed to increase the number of underrepresented students in STEM fields. He also had the opportunity to participate in summer research opportunities,

including the Weill Cornell Travelers Summer Research Fellowship Program, which was influential in cementing his desire to pursue medical school.

As a surgical resident, he co-founded the Latino Surgical Society to help build and cultivate the pipeline of Latino/a surgeons.

Today, Ortega is involved as a mentor for CSTEP students and through the organizations Tour for Diversity in Medicine and Building the Next Generation of Academic Physicians. He was honored by the latter with the National Health Professional Leadership Award in January. This May, he received the National Hispanic Medical Association Young Physician of the Year award.

"A lot of my own opportunities arose through the mentorship I had, which continues to be a vital part of my own success," says Ortega, who was recently featured in an article about workplace mentorship in the *New York Times Magazine*. "That's why I dedicate a significant amount of time to continuing the cycle by mentoring students and residents."

Across the country, in another profession, Ortega's younger brother Oswaldo is similarly motivated.

Oswaldo Ortega followed his brother from Brooklyn to Syracuse University to study architecture. Like Gezzer, he pledged Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. But instead of hours in the lab, Oswaldo spent late nights in the School of Architecture's design studios developing a second fraternity among his fellow architecture students.

Today, he is a project architect in the Chicago office of Gensler, the world's largest architecture firm, and is considered a rising star in the industry. In 2019, he was recipient of a Society of Architectural Historians Architectural Excellence Award, as well as the American Institute of Architects Young Architect Award, given to those who have demonstrated exceptional leadership and made significant contributions to the architecture profession early in their careers.

Oswaldo was the project architect for Johnson Controls' Asian Regional headquarters in Shanghai, coordinating efforts between the firm's Chicago and Shanghai offices. He was also the project architect for The Garage at Northwestern University, a 12,000-square-foot tech incubator space constructed within an existing garage on its campus, and he was a team member for the

repositioning of Chicago's iconic Willis Tower. Currently, he is design manager on a series of retail projects for one of Gensler's global clients.

Like his older brother, Oswaldo is committed to diversifying his profession. While a Syracuse undergraduate, he founded the Society of Multicultural Architects and Designers, known as SMAD. As vice president (2015-16) and then president (2017-18) of the Illinois chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects, he initiated the organization's Project Pipeline Architecture Camp, which provides underserved students the chance to work with architects and other professionals in the building industry.

The program attracted 150 middle school-aged participants last summer. "It may propel some of them to careers in

architecture, but at the very least, it shows these students that they can be active participants in their own environments and neighborhoods and have a positive social impact on their communities," Oswaldo says.

The success of that program led to the development of workshops at 20 local schools and a 16-week program for high school students that allows them to be actual participants in designing and renovating a space for a local nonprofit. More than 2,000 students have been impacted by Project Pipeline since 2015.

"It's one thing to be exposed to a profession and another to be comfortable in the space," says Oswaldo of his motivation. "I want the students I work with to feel there's a place for them in this industry."

Brothers Gezzer (left) and Oswaldo Ortega. Their sister, Rosslyn Ortega '05, and cousin Velia Salinas '05, are also first-generation Syracuse University graduates.



LIA MILLER '99, G'03

Representing American Interests Abroad

In her 15 years as a foreign service officer for the U.S. Department of State, Lia Miller has lived and worked in locales ranging from Washington, D.C., to Oman, Nicaragua, Tunisia, Bolivia and—since August 2019—Armenia.

As chief of the public affairs office of the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan, Miller is responsible for cultural programming, public messaging and engagement on behalf of U.S. government agencies in Armenia.

“It’s an interesting part of the world, given its geopolitical location,” says Miller of the landlocked country, which is bordered by Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Georgia and Russia. “The United States’ history and relationship with Russia and Iran is very different than Armenia’s, which is part of what makes this such an interesting place to live and work.”

Becoming a diplomat wasn’t Miller’s original career path. As an undergraduate at Syracuse University, she was an Our Time Has Come Scholar majoring in social work and African American studies, and she participated in a gamut of extracurriculars, from performing with the Black Celestial Choral Ensemble and the Creations Dance Company to serving in leadership for the Student African American Society and as the student representative to the Board of Trustees. She went on to earn a master’s degree in social work from Columbia University, which placed her in a community center in the Bronx working with underserved youth, many from immigrant and often culturally isolated families.

“I realized very quickly that the time those children were in my care were the only moments I knew for certain they were safe,” Miller says. “As soon as they went back out the doors of the community center, they were immediately vulnerable and potentially unsafe in the difficult circumstances and environments they lived in.”

Deciding she wanted to pursue her profession in a way other than as a frontline social work practitioner, Miller was inspired to go back to graduate school to make a difference through policy. And as a proud Syracuse alumna, she was well aware of the top-ranked public administration program at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. As she explored financing options, Miller learned about the Thomas R. Pickering Fellowship Program, which supports education to prepare students from historically underrepresented groups for careers in the foreign service. Miller’s grandfather had been a contractor for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and her mother grew up in Indonesia and Brazil. Her grandparents opened a travel agency in their retirement, and Miller spent many days there as a young child learning and dreaming about the world beyond her



Serving as a foreign service officer has allowed Lia Miller and her family to travel the world.

own. She became intrigued by the possibility of an international career.

The Pickering Fellowship funded Miller’s dual master’s degrees in public administration and international relations, and she now moves from post to post with her husband and two school-aged children.

In addition to numerous State Department performance awards, Miller has been named Regional Foreign Policy Expert-Women of Color Advancing Peace, a Black American National Security and Foreign Policy Next Generation Leader, an Excellence in Government Fellow, and a Center for American Progress Leadership Institute Fellow, among other recognitions.

As a woman of color, Miller feels a responsibility to model the foreign service as a possible career path for others. That’s a big reason she’s stayed committed to the field. “As I rise, I am holding the door open so others can come behind me and make the foreign service truly reflect the best of what American society has to offer, to show different faces and perspectives, and to share all of America’s stories and experiences,” Miller says.

The views expressed are Ms. Miller’s own and not necessarily those of the U.S. government.

Kenyona Chaney

Kenyona Chaney '20 was attracted to Syracuse University from her hometown of Memphis, Tennessee, by the top-ranked S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. In her four years, the aspiring public relations professional has made the most of her education, securing high-level internships to gain real-world professional experience.

The summer after her sophomore year, Chaney interned with Ampro Industries, a hair-care company based in Memphis, where she helped promote events, write press releases and weekly email marketing campaigns, and manage social media. "I found a popular influencer who was using one of their products and now she has her own line within the company," says Chaney, who remotely continued managing the company's social media through the middle of this year.

Chaney spent spring semester 2019 in New York City, where she was a public relations intern at M&C Saatchi Sport and Entertainment during the day and took classes at night. Her internship allowed her to help high-visibility clients such as Oakley, Reebok, Blundstone and Anheuser-Busch with press and social media. She also served as a PR/social media assistant for Syracuse University's Fisher Center.

While she was in New York City, Chaney was selected to participate in the TIME 100 Summit, a live-event extension of the annual TIME 100 list of the most influential people in the world. The daylong summit convened leaders from diverse sectors, ranging from former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to businesswoman and lifestyle guru Martha Stewart. "It was an amazing experience to hear the speakers and network with the other people attending, who were top notch," she says.

Back on campus this academic year, Chaney served as a Newhouse Ambassador and as president of the Syracuse University Juvenile Multicultural Program, better known as JUMP Nation. Chaney previously served as public relations chair and vice president of the organization, which provides tutoring and mentoring for students at Nottingham High School and Clary Middle School in the City of Syracuse with a goal of keeping them on track for college. "My experience with JUMP Nation has really shaped me to be the leader I am today," she says.

Chaney drew from her professional and leadership experiences to contribute to the #NotAgainSU protest, helping to coordinate public relations for the movement. "In addition to protesting and wanting change, I feel like I was able to execute the skills that I've developed through the years to combine personal activism as sort of a professional launching point," she says.

While Chaney pursues work in public relations, she is thankful to the Our Time Has Come program for helping her get there. "The scholarship eliminated my need to take out loans for my last two

years of school," she says. "That in itself is significant. But the programming turned out to be just as meaningful. I appreciate the networking opportunities and alumni helping instill skills to make us the best we can be in the workplace."

Kenyona Chaney



Diamond Cole

Having grown up in Syracuse, Diamond Cole '20 says her college transition was eased by her familiarity with Syracuse University—she's worked in the Office of Multicultural Affairs since she was 16 through the SummerWorks program. And as an undergraduate, she has been able to make the most of internship opportunities because of her connection to the Syracuse community.

Cole is a public health major in the David B. Falk School of Sport and Human Dynamics. After she earns her bachelor of science degree, she plans to attend graduate school for public health with a goal of working with underserved populations, perhaps someday as a state health commissioner.

She's currently interning at the Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection, which assists Syracuse youth who are at risk of not graduating from high school. Cole is facilitating a health intervention program to help students understand that healthy eating leads to better educational success, and she has written successful grant proposals to Wegmans and the Food Bank for donations to increase students' access to healthy food options.

Previously, Cole helped tutor adults for their high school equivalency exam so they could maintain their monthly Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits. She also worked on a youth awareness campaign for the Upstate Poison Control Center and conducted a health intervention initiative through the Onondaga Health Department's Women, Infants, and Children program, giving out coupons at the Central New York Regional Market.

"I think these agencies trust me because I'm local, and they know I'm in touch with the community here," Cole says.

On campus, Cole participated in 'CuseEats, an initiative that gives students a say in the food options they see in the dining halls. "We introduced more vegan and vegetarian food options, educated students on different meals they can create with the food that is present, and gave them different hacks that they can use in the dining halls," she says.

This year, she continued to work as an office assistant at the Office of Multicultural Affairs and participated in the fullCircle and Dimensions mentoring programs.

Cole is a Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP) ambassador and has recruited more than 30 students into the program. "My role is to be the face and spokesperson for CSTEP and help with recruitment and student engagement through events that CSTEP hosts," says Cole, who has been an invited presenter at two CSTEP statewide conferences, presenting



Diamond Cole

public health research on "Addiction in the African American Community," "Access to Healthy Foods Through a Health Initiative for High School Students" and "Education of Social Inequalities to Increase the Quality of Life of African Americans and Other Marginalized Groups Within Onondaga County."

Cole is also program lead for the Science and Technology Entry Program for high school students, leading tutoring sessions on Saturdays. "We help students prepare for Regents exams and SAT and ACT tests, and we take them on college tours," she says. "I participated in the program while in high school, so now I can give back and have students see me as an example."

In addition, Cole was a peer-to-peer mentor with InclusiveU, a program that serves students with intellectual disabilities, partnering with five Orange After Dark events. "I was able to create a space for students with intellectual disabilities to feel like they belong and are accommodated in a college environment," she says.

Cole emphasizes the importance of mentorship, something she's benefitted from through the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholarship program. "Having adults who look like me set an example and actually care that I succeed has given me the confidence to get out there and do things," she says. None of this would have been possible without the scholarship itself. "My financial aid and OTHC Scholarship truly broke down the barrier to being able to afford Syracuse University.

"College is a time to find yourself and know yourself beyond academics and GPA," says Cole. "I've learned a lot about myself through the OTHC program, and I am thankful for every opportunity that has been presented."

Myles Morgan

As an undergraduate student researcher in biologist Sandra Hewitt's lab, Miles Morgan '20 explored the role of the glutamate transporter x_c^- . The research, ongoing since his first year at Syracuse University, investigates how loss of that transporter impacts the seizure threshold in mice with a genetic mutation.

"I'm trying to document if and how mice without the transporter seize differently from mice with the transporter," he explains. "A seizure happens when there is an imbalance in neurotransmitters in the brain. This transporter helps regulate one of those, so we're looking at what role that transporter plays in the seizure threshold."

Morgan, a biology major, came to Syracuse University with the intent to become a physician. Knowing that research is an important component of a medical school application, he got involved the first semester of his first year. "It's definitely increased the depth of how I study biology, both in terms of technique and in learning neuroscience I wouldn't have learned in the classroom," says Morgan, who grew up in Marietta, Georgia, but attended high school in Delaware.

Morgan later joined the Renée Crown University Honors Program and wrote a thesis based on his research. He's also attended scientific meetings, a neuroscience conference in Canada last summer, and another neuroscience conference in Missouri in April. "This research has been a major part of my college experience," he says.

Outside of class and lab, Morgan volunteers in the Emergency Department at Upstate University Hospital. He also serves as president of Qolor Collective, an organization that fosters community for queer and trans students of color on campus, and he is a mentor with both the Undergraduate Research Office and the Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program.

He became an Our Time Has Come Scholar in his sophomore year. "The professional development and networking opportunities have been outstanding," says Morgan. "Having the opportunity to speak with alumni physicians in particular has been very motivating and helpful."

Morgan intends to spend several months after graduation studying for the MCAT, and he plans to enter medical school in the 2022-23 academic year. In the meantime, he hopes to work in a research lab.

"Being involved with all of these different programs has really made me more comfortable with who I am and what I need to do my to pursue my career," he says of his Syracuse experience. "The opportunity to do research and mentor students has allowed me to really step out of my comfort zone. I've made great friends too."



Myles Morgan

Ahone Koge

Ahone Koge '20 is on the path to medical school, and all of her efforts at Syracuse University have been intended to move her forward on that path.

The psychology major from Silver Spring, Maryland, is secretary of the Minority Association of Pre-Health Students, a member of the Alpha Chi Sigma chemistry honor society, and a student researcher in the Close Relationship and Healthy Living Lab in the Department of Psychology.

Koge is assisting Professor Brittany Jakubiak on research assessing attachment patterns and communication styles between couples. “We interview couples and observe their dynamic when they’re put in different circumstances that we give them,” she explains. “We try to see how touch influences their interaction, and we also observe how communication influences their interaction during a given time period.”

Last summer, Koge was a research institute intern with the Epilepsy Foundation, working on research related to preventing sudden death from epilepsy.

During the summer after her sophomore year, Koge was fortunate to participate in the prestigious Summer Health Professions Education Program at the University of Iowa, a six-week summer program for undergraduate students interested in health professional careers. Koge spent her time shadowing an OB-GYN/family medicine doctor who was also the chair of her department. “It was deeply influential,” she says. “I made great connections when it comes time to apply for medical school and also with current medical students there who gave me great advice about developing a medical profile.”

Despite her drive and successes, it hasn’t all been smooth sailing. Koge entered Syracuse University as a biology major and found herself struggling. “I like biology, but it wasn’t my passion,” she says. As a first-generation student—her parents are from Cameroon—Koge struggled with wanting to make her parents proud by following the path they expected. Ultimately, she changed her major to psychology, which better reflected her interests.

Mentorship she received through the WellsLink Leadership Program and elsewhere helped her to persevere. “My advice to younger students would be to take advantage of all the resources available,” she says. “Try to refrain from comparing yourself to



Ahone Koge

peers who came in from more competitive schools. It does get better.”

At the start of her junior year, Koge became an Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholar. “OTHC helped me expand my friend group through this community of people who are very intelligent and come from different majors and different class years than mine,” she says.

With medical school on the horizon, she is grateful for the financial support that reduced her loan burden. Koge plans to pursue either a master’s degree or medical post-baccalaureate degree to enhance her academic profile and then apply to medical school.

“It’s a long road, but Syracuse University was a good place to start,” she says.

Izmailia Sougoufara

In January, the Syracuse University community observed Identity Week with programming that celebrates diversity on campus while helping students draw the connection between identity and mental health.

“Identity Week is a conversation catalyst surrounding topics of identity and intersectionality, while also hosting a safe space for self-expression and education,” says Izmailia Sougoufara ’20, a Barnes Center at The Arch mental health peer educator and creator of the event. “Self-understanding builds a foundation for connecting with others. It provides the opportunity to be aware that someone’s experience, for a multitude of reasons, may be very different from yours.”

Sougoufara got involved as a volunteer with the Peer Education team as a sophomore and was promoted to team leader last year. “We have a lot more visibility now being in the Barnes Center,” she says. “It’s a really fun way to be involved and connect with other people.”

A double major in neuroscience and biology, Sougoufara says participating in the Paris Noir program the summer after her sophomore year had a major impact on her understanding of her own identity. “Studying the African diaspora in Paris taught me a lot about my culture and heritage that I didn’t understand,” she says. “It connected me with a lot of other students of color and had a significant impact on the way I see myself and navigate a space.”

Paris Noir is one of three Syracuse Abroad programs Sougoufara has participated in. She spent her first semester in Florence through the Discovery Program, and in her junior year spent a winter break in India. “I’m interested in international medicine and want to be as culturally competent as possible,” she says.

Although Sougoufara came to college with an associate degree (her Cleveland high school had a joint program with a local community college), she wanted a full four-year experience to make the most of opportunities she wouldn’t have been able to fit into just two years. She was able to do that through the support of financial aid and scholarships, including Our Time Has Come (OTHC). “The scholarship is a big reason I’ve been able to stay here for four years. It has actually increased over time, which has been super helpful,” she says.

Sougoufara is a McNair Scholar and was named a Remembrance Scholar as a senior. She has also participated in the Biology Distinction Program, working as a lab assistant in the biology department as a sophomore and junior. Currently, she is conducting research on the dynamics of proteins in ciliated cells at Upstate Medical University with Professor Peter Calvert, her mentor through the program. She spent last summer conducting research

full time through the McNair Summer Academy. “I was able to collect a lot of data and really advance my research,” she says. Sougoufara has applied to master’s programs in biomedical engineering, which she plans to follow with medical school.

As she closes out her Syracuse University journey, Sougoufara reflects on her scholarship experiences—particularly OTHC—as a highlight. “When I got back from studying abroad my first semester, I felt really isolated,” she says. “This was my first experience at a predominantly white institution, and particularly as a woman of color in STEM, I was really searching for community.” She found it at her first OTHC gathering. “Coming into a room and seeing a bunch of people who looked like me, who were welcoming me, really made me feel like I belonged,” she says. “The OTHC scholarship program provided more than just financial support over my four years. The program’s investment in personal and professional development resources largely impacted my retention.”



Izmailia Sougoufara



OTHC Scholars Honored fo

Six Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholars have been honored by the Office of Multicultural Advancement with Academic Achievement Awards, recognizing their superior academic performance and commitment to volunteerism. All six have GPAs ranging from 3.9 to 4.0.



ALEX AGUIRRE '20

Hometown: Phoenix, Arizona

Major: Biochemistry and neuroscience

What's Next: Attending medical school at Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, University at Buffalo.

How OTHC Has Helped: "I credit my successes on campus and beyond to having the financial and moral support from OTHC donors and peers. The program provides an environment that makes you feel at home with students who look just like you and encourages collaboration to advance minority status on campus and in professional settings."



SYMONE ANDREWS '20

Hometown: Providence, Rhode Island

Major: Political science and forensic science

What's Next: A gap year, followed by attending Johns Hopkins University School of Education to obtain a master's degree through the Urban Teachers program.

How OTHC Has Helped: "It's important to feel as if you have a support system away from home and OTHC always provided that. Thank you for fostering a comforting, supportive and stimulating environment."



MYLES MORGAN '20

Hometown: Marietta, Georgia

Major: Biology

What's Next: Studying for the MCAT and applying for the 2021 medical school cycle.

How OTHC Has Helped: "The weekend workshops were great experiences—valuable for networking purposes and also seeing the opportunities available after graduation. These helped give me motivation to keep studying and working toward my goals."

r Academic Achievement



DAKOTA CHAMBERS '22

Hometown: Columbus, New Jersey

Major: Sociology and television, radio and film

What's Next: Junior year and beginning her honors thesis project, which will be either a feature film script or TV show bible (a document used for show pitches that gives information on the program's characters, setting and other important details).

How OTHC Has Helped: "The support of the OTHC program has been invaluable. Being around other high-achieving students and connecting with successful alumni of color motivate me to be the best student I can be."



CAMERON GRAY '22

Hometown: Washington, D.C.

Major: Film

What's Next: Building her artistic portfolio, making films and writing screenplays, including development of her senior thesis project, which will explore cross-cultural education and engagement.

How OTHC Has Helped: "I have met countless alumni who have imparted wisdom and been great encouragers and been introduced to successful mentors in the fields of entertainment and communications. But most importantly, I was welcomed into a strong support system of amazing people who continually inspire me to use what I have to also make change."



NATHENA MURRAY '22

Hometown: Ossining, New York

Major: Biology and neuroscience

What's Next: Participating in a summer program (now virtual) through the Wake Forest School of Medicine, as well as the Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (LSAMP) and McNair summer programs, followed by junior year.

How OTHC Has Helped: "Being an OTHC Scholar has instilled a drive to succeed and be the best I can be. As an OTHC Scholar, I walk with my head held high, knowing that I have a network of individuals supporting and rooting for me no matter what. The unwavering support keeps me going."

If you'd like to support Our Time Has Come Scholars, please give to OTHC at alumni-of-color.syr.edu/give-now/. If you'd like to mentor a student, visit alumni-of-color.syr.edu/connect/othc-mentor-application/.

Our Time

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Manny Zapata '18

Board of Trustees Special Committee, Independent Panel of National Experts Continue Work on University Climate, Diversity and Inclusion

In mid-December, Syracuse University's Board of Trustees announced the formation of an Independent Advisory Panel composed of nationally recognized leaders in the fields of diversity, inclusion, safety and higher education. The panel is working in conjunction with the Board of Trustees Special Committee on University Climate, Diversity and Inclusion to review the existing framework for inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility and to make recommendations for how to strengthen this work in the future.

Before the University suspended residential instruction in March due to the COVID-19 outbreak, members of the advisory panel participated in more than 22 listening and dialogue sessions, during which much of the discussion focused on campus safety, residential life, communications and curriculum. As a result of those early conversations and informed by the work of the special committee and advisory panel, Chancellor Kent Syverud announced an independent, expedited review of the Department of Public Safety and an independent review of the University's Student Experience function.

Simultaneously, the University continues to advance existing programs and new commitments made to multiple groups of students last fall, including taking dozens of actions over the last several months. Examples include:

- Syracuse University has added multicultural living learning communities, including an upperclassmen community available starting this fall.
- The Code of Student Conduct has been revised, based on student input, to state that violations of the code that are bias-motivated—including conduct motivated by racism—will be punished more severely. The University also revised the Code to make clear when bystanders and accomplices can be held accountable.
- The Department of Public Safety (DPS) posted its code of ethical conduct to its website, and, as Chancellor Syverud announced in his June 9 message, DPS will also release and publicly post standard operating procedures for police conduct in the use of force.
- Syracuse University has reinvested \$5 million for scholarships and programs like the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), Student Support Services (SSS) and Our Time Has Come.
- The Office of Student Living (OSL) improved the housing and roommate selection process through use of enhanced software.
- The OSL budget will be increased by \$500,000 to support creating more inclusive living environments and the hiring of a new assistant director of diversity and inclusion within OSL to oversee these efforts.
- Paid student positions have been established in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to contribute to proactive improvements of matters associated with our campus climate.
- New faculty are now required to complete diversity training within one year of hire.
- Seven new counselors representing diverse identities have been hired to support our students at the Barnes Center. The new counselors will be on board by the fall semester.
- All incoming students are required to complete mandatory anti-racism and anti-Semitism training, which was recently updated to reflect feedback received from students.
- The University has allocated \$600,000 for volunteer programming in the City of Syracuse. Hendricks Chapel, the Office of Community Engagement and the Division of Enrollment and the Student Experience held a virtual session on community engagement in the greater Syracuse area.
- The external review of DPS conducted by former U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch will explore the question of disarming campus safety officers. This evolution has been informed both by student advocacy and events occurring in communities across the country.
- Syracuse University is establishing a Public Safety Citizen Review Board to hear, review and recommend action to the DPS chief regarding complaints made by campus community members. More information on the Review Board's charge, composition and application process is forthcoming.
- The University Senate continues work to evolve and dramatically strengthen the first-year experience as it relates to diversity, discrimination, bias and social justice issues. In particular, the SEM 100 course will include the history of student activism at Syracuse University. The University continues to encourage faculty colleagues to expedite the approval process for the revised first-year experience curriculum.
- Syracuse University is working to finalize a policy that better clarifies support of peaceful protests, recognizing failures learned from engagement with #NotAgainSU.
- The Office of Diversity and Inclusion hosted conversations with noted authors and activists Bakari Sellers and Melissa Harris-Perry to continue the dialogue about racism taking place in our community and country and the need to operate with a humanitarian focus on equity.

Due to the global public health emergency, the University and committees are redefining the timeline for key actions, including the pulse survey of campus climate, the diversity, inclusion and equity inventory and the timeline for the Board of Trustees Special Committee's report.

Noting that the University feels a sense of urgency, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Keith Alford says, "Our collective work matters, particularly how we can—together, although physically apart—continue to work on the challenges that confront us, our university and our communities."

To learn more about the special committee, the advisory panel and the progress toward advancing the commitments made to the campus community, visit syracuse.edu/commitments.

University Community Honors “A Living

The Rev. Raphael Warnock, senior pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, was the featured speaker for Syracuse University’s 35th annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration.

Warnock embodied the event theme, “A Living Legacy,” as the youngest person to serve as senior pastor of the historic church, which was founded in 1886. Known as “America’s Freedom Church,” it was home to the Rev. Martin Luther King Sr., senior pastor from 1931 to 1975, and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was co-pastor from 1960 until his assassination in 1968.

According to Syracuse University junior Ashley Laird, co-chair of the event, the celebration theme was selected in response to the rash of race-related incidents on campus this academic year and intended to express the University’s commitment to creating an inclusive and accessible campus environment.

In his opening remarks, Chancellor Kent Syverud referenced King’s 1965 visit to Syracuse, when more than 1,000 people packed the dining hall in Sims Hall to hear King’s message about economic disparities and inequality in education.

“In the last few months, our community has been exposed to hate and fear and racism and anti-Semitism,” said Syverud. “In the face of this...I am so thankful to so many who have come forward with courage and with voice and with action to express our values.

We must all reaffirm the values of Syracuse University and our region to do the right thing for all of our students and all who live here.”

Following with his keynote address, Warnock exhorted the more than 2,000 in attendance to come together in unity to fight bigotry and hate, saying, “Let’s not turn on each other, but turn toward each other.”

At a time when open bigotry and racism have become rampant in America, “It’s not enough to be non-racist,” Warnock said. “We have to be anti-racist. We have to stand up and say, ‘No, never again.’”

Held annually since 1985, the University celebration is the largest on-campus event in the United States to honor King’s legacy. The event also included performances by Dominique’s Dance Creations, and the Syracuse University’s 2020 MLK Community Choir singing with gospel group Heaven’s Fire and the Black Celestial Choral Ensemble.

Unsung Hero Awards were presented to local community members who make a positive impact in the lives of others, though their efforts may not be widely recognized. This year’s awards went to Keri Courtwright, Lemir Teron, Justine Hastings ’21, Jack Ramza ’22 and Pedro Abreu G’02.

Dexter McKinney Performs *Transcending Race and Adversity*

As part of programming to explore race and identity in conjunction with the University’s Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration, Dexter McKinney ’09, G’13 returned to campus to perform a one-man show, *Transcending Race and Adversity*.

McKinney’s autobiographical performance provided a view into his own journey, growing up biracial on the South Side of Syracuse, his peer pressures, challenges related to race and identity, and how that adversity transformed his life and helps him navigate the world.

A major turning point for McKinney came early in high school when a teacher heard him casually singing in the hallway and encouraged him to try out for the high school play. McKinney was cast in the lead, a first for a freshman, fueling a love for acting and giving him the confidence to achieve academically and eventually become student government president.

At Syracuse University, McKinney explored and developed other interests. He majored in information management and technology and earned dual master’s degrees in public relations and international relations. He’s worked in Congress, at Nike and in the Office of the Onondaga County Executive Joanie Mahoney ’87, L’90.

But McKinney is always conscious of straddling multiple worlds. That was eloquently portrayed in a vignette about a trip with high

school friends to New York City during college. One of those friends was on parole, and when the group became involved in a fight as bystanders, that friend ended up on Riker’s Island. McKinney, with his Syracuse University ID, was treated entirely differently and ultimately released.

McKinney has returned to his first love of acting, most recently performing in the Netflix series *When They See Us* and the FX on Hulu series *Mrs. America*.

“Hopefully we carved out some space for everyone to be heard, to belong, and to just be,” he says of the performance and dialogue following. “Wishing more healing and growth for my SU community.”



Dexter McKinney

Legacy” at MLK Celebration

OTHC Scholar Honored as Unsung Hero

Our Time Has Come Scholar Justine Hastings, a junior majoring in English education and English and textual studies, was honored at this year’s Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration for her commitment to inspiring youth in her community through filmmaking, education and compassion.

Hastings is involved in numerous tutoring and mentoring capacities on campus. She is a volunteer academic coach for the Center for Learning and Student Success, helping students become expert independent learners by introducing them to effective study strategies. She is a peer facilitator of the Syracuse Reads Program/SEM 100, a peer mentor with the InclusiveU program, president of the English honor society Sigma Tau Delta, and a resident advisor in Sadler Hall.

Hastings also works at the University’s LGBT Resource Center, where she facilitates a biweekly discussion group for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning and asexual people of color.

As a student research mentor at the Syracuse Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Engagement (SOURCE), Hastings helps undergraduate researchers with the process and content behind conducting research.

Hastings, who was elected Student Association president in April, was recently awarded her own grant from SOURCE to create a documentary filmmaking program at the North Side Learning Center, a nonprofit organization that helps immigrants and refugees with literacy development. While Hastings’ program offers a space for youth to learn different aspects of filmmaking, her goal is to show English teachers the influence of using different multimodal literacy practices, such as filmmaking, with students in the classroom.

The project was inspired by her experience as a summer intern working at the Writopia Lab, a nonprofit organization in New York

City that holds creative writing workshops for children. Hastings recalls working with a student who was creating a film about being Chinese American, portraying his isolation and the xenophobia he faced as an immigrant. She says creating the film helped him process those experiences. “That’s when I realized filmmaking could be a positive creative outlet young people can use to express important things about their identity, their lives and communities,” says Hastings, who is also a Ronald McNair Scholar and a member of the Renée Crown University Honors Program.

Hastings began her project in late February, working with five high school students who are all native Somali or Arabic speakers to come to a consensus on a topic and make a film together as a group project. “Part of my research is looking at the students’ literacy,” she says. “I’m observing how they communicate with one another and why they decide to make whatever they decide to make.”

Hastings grew up in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, which she describes as a low-income, predominantly Black neighborhood. While her own parents have advanced degrees and were supportive of her education, she says many of her peers did not grow up with the same expectations or support.

“I’m passionate about helping others because I understand that not everyone is as fortunate to have individuals in their lives that are able to help them,” she says. “And I’m specifically involved in these peer programs to help students transition to Syracuse University and be successful.”



Justine Hastings

Black History Month Kicks Off With Black Lounge

On February 1, Syracuse University kicked off a month of activities celebrating the contributions, history and traditions of the African diaspora, with the annual Black Lounge dinner and music celebration.

This year’s Black Lounge was co-sponsored by Office of Multicultural Affairs, Caribbean Student Association, Black Graduate Student Association, Syracuse University Multicultural Advancement, Student African American Society, Haitian Student Association and Black History Month Committee. The event was co-hosted by Anthony Obas ’20 and Nathana Murray ’22 and featured entertainment from headliner Leah Jenea, and performances by singer Shanice Manning ’24—otherwise known as Shan.X.—slam poetry champion Joel Francois G’22, the Black Reign Step Team and dance music by DJ Maestro.

The offices of Multicultural Affairs and Multicultural Advancement presented the annual Trailblazer Award and Distinguished Alumni Excellence Award.

Biko Mandela Gray, associate professor of religion, was nominated by students for the Trailblazer Award, recognizing his scholarship on contemporary racial justice movements and his support for student activists.

Melanie Littlejohn G’97, vice president for New York customer and community management at National Grid, received the Distinguished Alumni Excellence Award.

Other notable Black History Month events included the Commemorative Lecture given by writer, artist, poet and transgender activist Andrea Jenkins, who spoke on “Cultural Fluidity: Black Queerness in the 21st Century”; a lecture by Emmy-winning broadcaster Lee Thomas; and the annual Sankofa Alumni Lecture, which featured a panel of young alumni who shared their experiences transitioning to the professional world and navigating life beyond the bounds of campus. Panelists included Kavell Brown ’16, Courtnee Futch ’15 G’16 and David L. Jackson ’17. The moderator was Abigail J. Covington ’19, G’20.

Increased Funding Earmarked for Faculty Diversity

Hiring diverse faculty members is highly competitive, with top candidates often receiving multiple offers for faculty positions. In an effort to successfully hire, retain and develop a diverse faculty—which Syracuse University leaders say is critical to the University’s mission—increased funding has been designated to accelerate the pace and more strongly incentivize hiring of faculty from underrepresented groups.

The Diversity Opportunity Hires initiative will provide a rotating fund to support cost-sharing through the Office of Academic Affairs for recruiting underrepresented faculty into open positions across all schools and colleges. The program will support 10-15 new positions, with funding split equally between the Office of Academic Affairs and the school or college, and will fully renew approximately every three years.

Additional central funding is being earmarked to support interdisciplinary cluster hiring when a faculty member from an underrepresented group is hired for the second round of cluster hire positions.

Cluster hiring involves hiring multiple scholars in at least two schools/colleges in related areas, based on shared, multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary research interests, and was prioritized as part of the launch of the Invest Syracuse initiative in 2017. A first round of cluster hires was held in 2018; the second round is currently underway.

The new funding builds on the University’s Signature Hires initiative launched in mid-2018, which aims to strengthen teaching and research capacity through the addition of high-caliber new faculty members. The Signature Hires initiative also included financial incentives to schools and colleges for diversity hiring.

“The composition of our faculty should reflect our commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility,” says Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Keith A. Alford. “A diverse faculty signals future possibilities to our underrepresented students and further affirms their presence on campus. Diversity brings different perspectives and understandings and inspires new ideas and innovations.”

Carrie Mae Weems Is First University Artist-in-Residence

Internationally renowned artist Carrie Mae Weems H’17 brings her talent, experience and wisdom to Syracuse University as the inaugural University Artist-in-Residence, a three-year position that began in February. A MacArthur Fellowship recipient and the first African American woman to have a retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum, Weems uses multiple media (photography, video, digital imagery, text, fabric and more) to explore themes of cultural identity, sexism, class, political systems, family relationships and the consequences of power.

“Carrie is one of the most influential visual artists of our time, who uses the power of her art to confront subjects that force us to think, to feel uncomfortable at times, to ponder our own biases and beliefs,” says John Liu, interim vice chancellor and provost.

Weems is represented in public and private collections around the world, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate Modern, London; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; National Gallery of Canada; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

As University Artist in Residence, Weems will engage with Syracuse University faculty and students in a number of important ways, including the design, planning and preparation of major exhibitions in Madrid, Los Angeles, New York and other venues.

Weems has a history with Syracuse University. She previously was artist-in-residence at Light Work (1988) and the College of Visual and Performing Arts (2005-06), and was a University Lectures speaker in 2014.

Weems is the recipient of numerous honors. In 2012, she was awarded one of the U.S. Department of State’s first Medals of Arts



Carrie Mae Weems

JERRY KLINBERG

in recognition of her commitment to the State Department’s Arts in Embassies program. In 2013, she received the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation’s Lifetime Achievement Award. She was one of four artists honored at the Guggenheim’s 2014 International Gala. Syracuse University bestowed her with an honorary doctorate in 2017.

“I am thrilled and delighted to return to Syracuse University as its first artist-in-residence. It’s an incredible honor,” Weems says. “My hope here is to engage some of the important issues of our time through the role of the artist in contemporary society. It’s going to be fun, fascinating and hard. I welcome students and faculty interested in social justice to join me.”



Meredith E. Davis Named Associate Vice President of Student Engagement

Meredith E. Davis, Ph.D., joined Syracuse University in February as associate vice president of student engagement. She will oversee the offices of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs, Multicultural Affairs and Student Activities, Student Centers and Programming Services, the Center for International Services, the Disability Cultural Center and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Resource Center.

“Meredith brings an incredible depth of experience spanning student life,” says Rob Hradsky, vice president for the student experience. “Her deep commitment to building community and supporting student achievement in and out of the classroom will help us continue to elevate the engagement, leadership and identity development of our students.”

Davis joined the University from Rhodes College, where she served as the associate dean of students, divisional strategy, inclusion and involvement. In this inaugural role, Davis developed greater connections and intersections across the student experience in areas of student involvement, Greek life, orientation, diversity and inclusion. She also supported the college’s creation of a first-year experience seminar, bias education response, student programming board activities and intercultural and cross-cultural training.

Previously, Davis served as the manager of school programs and instructional relations at the National Civil Rights Museum, cofounder and associate director of the Office of Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, director of the Upward Bound program at Coppin State University and director of the African American Cultural Center at Towson University.

“I look forward to working with students, faculty and staff to advance our student engagement model and the multidimensional approaches toward inclusion and community so that we can support student success, co-curricular satisfaction and personal development,” she says.

Davis earned a Ph.D. in women’s and gender studies from Rutgers, an M.A. in African American studies from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and a B.A. in sociology from St. Mary’s College of Maryland.

New Multicultural Living Learning Community Created for Upperclass Students

In response to student feedback, Syracuse University has expanded its Living Learning Communities (LLC) for the 2020-21 academic year. A new Upperclass Multicultural LLC for sophomores, juniors and seniors has been created and the Indigenous LLC, International LLC, and LGBTQ+ LLC have been expanded to include students from all class years.

The Upperclass Multicultural LLC will focus on multicultural education, cross-cultural dialogue and community building and will be located on floors five and six of Ernie Davis Hall. It was created and designed in alignment with recommendations received from more than 220 students via survey and in-person conversations, which helped the Office of Learning Communities establish the Upperclass Multicultural LLC’s purpose, location, room type and activities and in identifying potential faculty/staff advisors.

Syracuse University’s 24 Living Learning Communities provide the opportunity for students to live together on residence hall floors based on common academic interests and engage in a variety of academic and social experiences, from potentially taking classes together to participating in programs and events on and off campus.

The original Multicultural LLC was created in 2000, following a request by students interested in a residential living experience where students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds would learn about their diverse cultural backgrounds as well as skills that would help them facilitate discussions on campus about multiculturalism and the impact of race on identity and life experiences. Open to all first-year undergraduates, the Multicultural LLC became the first community on campus to intentionally create an ethnically diverse community for residents to live and learn in a multicultural environment.

The Office of Learning Communities also expanded Living Learning Communities to include sophomores, which now include the MORE in STEM LLC, Whitman Leadership LLC, and Substance Free Theme Housing as well as the four identity LLCs above. Details about each of the upperclass LLCs are available on the Learning Communities website at lc.syr.edu.

Staff Changes in the Office of Multicultural Advancement

Angela Morales-Patterson has been named director of operations and partnerships in the Office of Multicultural Advancement. In this role, Morales-Patterson will lead corporate and foundation partnerships for the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholarship and Leadership programs, as well as administrative operations for the unit.

Morales-Patterson has been part of the multicultural advancement team for 21 years, most recently serving as assistant director of alumni and donor engagement. She has managed the OTHC Scholarship program, mentored hundreds of students and built solid relationships with alumni and parents. She has helped plan several CBT reunions and executed numerous student events and regional alumni gatherings, resulting in increased loyalty and giving to Syracuse University among multicultural populations.

Morales-Patterson serves on many University committees, partnering with colleagues to ensure that the engagement of diverse communities is represented.

Maria J. Lopez '05, G'12 has joined the Office of Multicultural Advancement as assistant director of scholarship programs. Lopez has oversight of all facets of the OTHC Scholarship



Angela Morales-Patterson



Maria J. Lopez '05, G'12



Ariel Maciulewicz

program, plans and executes all multicultural advancement student and on-campus events, supports the grant application and donor management process and manages social media.

Ariel Maciulewicz has joined the Office of Multicultural Advancement as administrative specialist, supporting the multicultural advancement team with all functions of the office, including scheduling and coordinating programming, managing event registration and making travel arrangements.

Iconic New Campus Building Opens Doors

Construction has been completed on the Daniel and Gayle D'Aniello Building, home to the National Veterans Resource Center (NVRC). This iconic new campus facility, located at the corner of Waverly and South Crouse avenues, builds on Syracuse University's long-standing commitment to the veteran and military-connected community.

The NVRC will enable class-leading innovative academic research and actionable programming in support of our nation's service members, veterans and their families on campus and around the world. It will also be home to the Institute for Veterans and Military Families, the Office of Veteran and Military Affairs and a regional student veterans' resource center, serving as a one-stop shop in support of the educational needs of the region's veterans and families.

The multi-use facility was purposefully designed as a community-convening hub and will be accessible to community organizations, as well as local and state government partners, for the purpose of facilitating programs, trainings, events and initiatives.



National Veterans Resource Center (NVRC)



Stadium Roof Construction on Track for Completion this Fall

Although most construction projects in New York state were halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the stadium roof replacement project continues and is expected to be completed by mid-September.

According to Sarah Scalese, Syracuse University senior associate vice president for communications, construction was allowed to continue after a professional engineer engaged by the project's general contractor determined it would be unsafe to stop work on the partially completed steel structure that will support the new roof.

The University deflated the stadium's air-supported fabric roof on March 16 in preparation for replacing it with a cable truss roof held up by a steel structure. The new tension-membrane roof, along with a new video board, lights and a sound system, is on track to be in place for the currently scheduled opening of the football season. A second stage of renovations is scheduled to include enhanced concessions, restrooms and ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) upgrades by 2022.

Construction on the roof project is conducted by two crews working 24 hours a day, according to Pete Sala, Syracuse University vice president and chief facilities officer. Because construction occurs over a large space, the crew is able to maintain social distancing guidelines.

The roof replacement is part of a \$118 million initiative designed to create a new stadium experience. The 49,250-seat stadium serves as the home of the University's football, basketball and lacrosse teams, and hosts concerts and other events. The building opened in 1980 and is the largest domed stadium on any college campus. The current roof has been on the building since 1999, when it replaced the original roof.

The University has made portions of the roof available to fans for purchase as memorabilia. Members of the Class of 2020 are also receiving a piece of the roof at Commencement, which was postponed due to COVID-19 and will be held at a later date in the renovated stadium.

Bea González to Retire After 36 Years

During her 36-year student affairs career at Syracuse University, Bea González says her focus has always been about creating opportunities, helping others achieve their educational goals and promoting access and equity.

“I’ve seen it over and over again,” she says. “If you change the trajectory for an individual, you can change the trajectory for their entire family.”

González, who has served as vice president of community engagement and special assistant to the Chancellor since 2015, leaves a legacy of lives changed for the better when she retires this summer.

“Bea has been a champion of our community and of students from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences for nearly four decades,” says Chancellor Kent Syverud.

When González joined the University in 1984, she had the choice of two academic advising positions, one at University College, the other at the Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP). She chose University College because she had seen the impact it had on her own parents, who were able to take English language classes there in the 1960s, even though they had not attended high school. “I understood the value of what continuing education provided my parents and my family,” she says.

González was named executive director of HEOP and community and public services in 1991. After serving as director and associate dean of student support services, she was appointed interim dean of University College in 2004 and dean in 2007, the University’s first woman dean. She developed a national reputation as a leader in the field of continuing education, serving as president of the University Continuing and Professional Education Association.

González was first set to retire in 2015, at age 62. But after the Chancellor asked her to reconsider other opportunities, she decided putting her focus on the University’s community engagement activities was a good fit for her experience and interests.

A nearly lifelong resident of Syracuse—her family moved from Puerto Rico when she was 3—González has been a longtime community servant. Concurrent with her professional life at the University, she was elected to the Syracuse City School Board and served two terms as president of the Syracuse Common Council. The first Latina in both roles, she brought a new voice to the table and sought to infuse inclusion into those organization’s efforts and activities. A self-described “connector,” González set out to leverage institutional resources to address community challenges in the City of Syracuse and build a climate of economic inclusion.

Under González’s leadership, the University has streamlined the hiring process for entry-level jobs in facilities and dining, working with such community organizations as the Salvation Army, Catholic Charities and Jubilee Homes to recruit for positions. She also worked with key community partners to recruit for 102 new residence hall officer positions, more than half of those hired from underrepresented groups.

“If we take someone who’s been unemployed or underemployed and move them into full-time employment here, then we’ve started to change the trajectory for that person and that person’s family,” she says. “That was what inspired me about University College and I brought that same philosophy to community engagement.”

The University also initiated a process to hire women and minority contractors on campus construction projects. And in an effort to buy local when possible to boost the Central New York economy, the University reassessed its procurement process and has increased its spending with local small businesses.

González says she’ll continue her civic involvement in retirement. A longtime board member of the Syracuse Stage, she also serves on the boards of the Community Foundation and the Onondaga Historical Association, and was appointed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo to serve on the State of New York Mortgage Authority Board.

“I’ve had so many wonderful opportunities,” she says. “I have to say thank you every day for my blessings.”



Longtime Faculty Member Alejandro Garcia to Retire

When Alejandro Garcia retired at the end of the semester, Syracuse University lost a longtime advocate for campus diversity and multicultural relations. Garcia, the Jocelyn Falk Endowed Professor of Social Work and faculty associate of Syracuse University's Aging Studies Institute, has made major contributions nationally in the fields of gerontology, social policy and social work.

But Garcia says he's most proud of his contributions at the campus level, working with multicultural students and the LGBT population and teaching human diversity. "Often, when teaching diversity we teach students about other people. My sense is that we've got to teach students about themselves—how they've been socialized, their racial group, their understanding of their sexuality and how they relate to others," he says. "Once they understand themselves and what they bring to the table, they'll have a better understanding of how they relate to others. That is critical to get students to understand one another, to respect each other, to celebrate one another and to leave no one out."

Garcia has served as chair of the gerontology concentration and director of the School of Social Work. A valued contributor who has served on the editorial boards of the *Encyclopedia of Social Work* and numerous national journals, he is the co-editor of three books and author of numerous articles and book chapters. A Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America and an elected member of the National Academy of Social Insurance, he was elected vice president/secretary of the Council on Social Work Education in 2012. He has held national leadership positions with the National Association of Social Workers, the National

Board and Commission on Accreditation of the Council on Social Work Education, the National Policy Council of AARP and the National Hispanic Council on Aging. On a national level, he is known as a strong advocate for Hispanic populations, especially the elderly.

Garcia has been the recipient of numerous honors, including lifetime achievement awards from the New York State Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers and from the New York State Social Work Education Association. He was named a Social Work Pioneer by the National Association of Social Workers, and honored by the National Hispanic Council on Aging with its Special Recognition Award for outstanding leadership and advocacy on behalf of older adults, as well as with membership in its hall of fame. He is a recipient of the Andrus Award, the highest recognition that AARP New York awards for community service, and received the Distinguished Service Award from California State University at Sacramento, where he was a graduate student. He has received several outstanding teaching awards at Syracuse University, including the Scholar/Teacher of the Year. He has also been honored by the University's LGBT Resource Center with the Foundation Award for Outstanding Faculty Member.

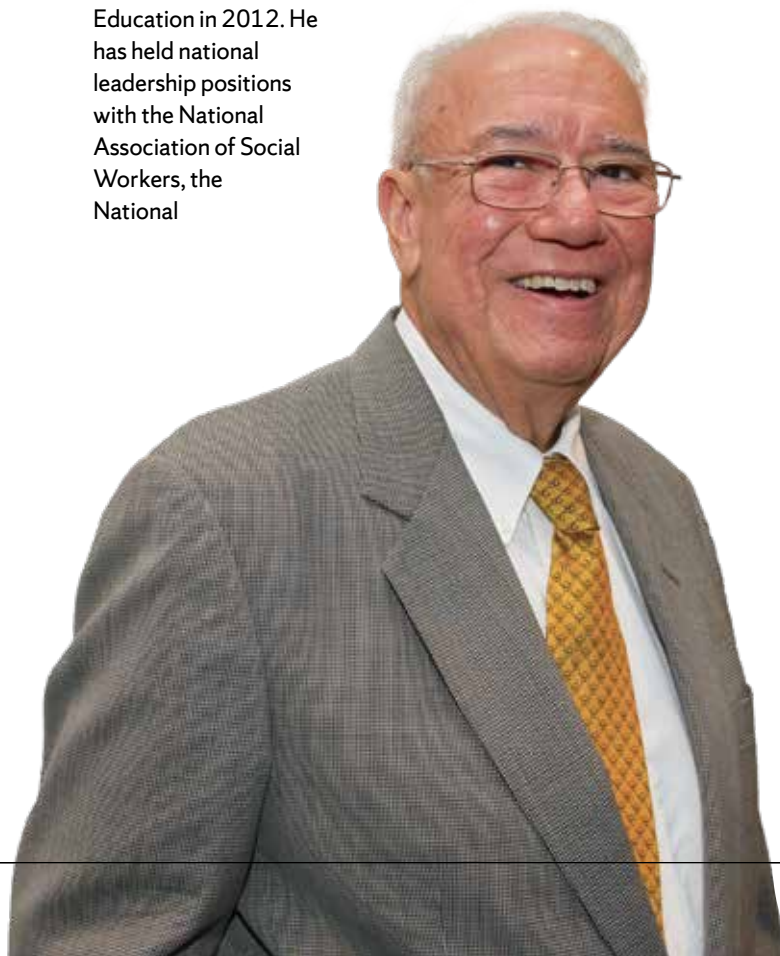
Garcia is a first-generation American, born to parents who emigrated from Mexico. His family was very poor, and he and his brothers worked in the cotton fields in the summers and sold newspapers on the streets of their South Texas hometown during the school year. Garcia was the first in his family to attend college, earning a bachelor's degree at the University of Texas and then master's and doctoral degrees at California State at Sacramento and Brandeis University. "I could not have done that without help from others and that is why I am engaged in reaching back to other Latinos who may need some help in realizing their dreams," he says.

When Garcia joined Syracuse University's School of Social Work in 1978, he recalls being among very few Latino/a faculty members. Over his 42-year tenure, he worked to help increase those numbers among faculty, staff and the student body.

"There are now more than 60 million Latinos in the United States. We are the largest minority group, yet we don't get the attention that other groups do," says Garcia. "It's important that the young cohort of Latinos goes to college, gets professional degrees and participates fully in American society. Here at Syracuse University, we need to try harder to recruit Latinx students and provide scholarships so they are able to attend."

Garcia has established a book fund within the School of Social Work to assist students who can't afford textbooks, as well as the Alejandro Garcia Excellence in Social Work Scholarship for Latino/a students at the master's level. He's also set up a \$50,000 bequest to support scholarships for Syracuse University students, with a preference toward Latino/a students.

"I believe Chancellor Kent Syverud is working hard to improve our University and make our campus more diverse," says Garcia. "Even though I'm retiring, I hope to continue to contribute to those efforts."



Lambda Upsilon Lambda Becomes First Latino Organization to Launch Endowed Scholarship

In 1991, six Latino students at Syracuse University established a chapter of La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity Inc., founding the school's first Latino fraternity. Although they came from varied backgrounds—Dominican, Puerto Rican and Ecuadorean—each of them sought to fill the void of their Latino culture missing from their college experience. “We were looking to create something that felt like home,” says founding member Ken Kuilan '96.

In December, a group of Lambda Upsilon Lambda alumni signed an agreement with Syracuse University to launch an endowed scholarship, the first Latino Greek organization at the University to do so.

“We lead from the front,” Kuilan says.

Although their agreement with the University is to create a \$50,000 endowment, the group has greater ambitions. “We hope to someday be able to fully fund a Latino student's education,” says Jason Olivo '95.

According to Frances Gonzalez '13, the scholarship reinforces the fraternity's mission to support Latino students in achieving a four-year college education. “This is what we do as a fraternity, so creating this scholarship is a way to continue to support that mission as alumni,” he says. “COVID is only going to increase the scholarship need for first-generation students, and that has ignited the fire for us to give back.”

Although the scholarship fundraising effort was launched prior to the pandemic, organizers say that COVID-19 has actually

strengthened their effort. “COVID has pointed a spotlight on the increased need for student scholarships,” says Jesse Mejia '97, who served as Coming Back Together co-chair in 2017. “The economic downturn has had a devastating impact on low-wage earners. Those low-wage earners are our parents, and this pandemic, through the lens of the scholarship fund, has reinforced our belief in our fraternity's mission to support the Latino community.”

Kuilan says that communication among the organization's brotherhood—from founding members to current brothers—has increased dramatically during the pandemic. “We have our 30th anniversary coming up next year, so along with COVID and CBT in 2021, there's a lot of energy devoted to staying connected, which only helps our fundraising effort,” he says.

Creation of the scholarship fund was spurred in part by the philanthropy of Zhamyr “Sammy” Cueva '93, a founding member who donated funds in 2017 to place benches on the Syracuse University Quad honoring the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations groups on campus. Cueva is also a member of Syracuse University's Office of Multicultural Advancement Alumni Council and a mentor in the Our Time Has Come Scholarship Program.

At the same time, Olivo was engaged in conversations with Rachel Vassel '91, assistant vice president of multicultural advancement, about making a major commitment to Our Time Has Come. He wanted to give back in a way that was personally meaningful to him, and after soul searching about the impact he wanted to make for Syracuse University students, he joined forces with Cueva, Kuilan, Gonzalez and Mejia to launch the La Unidad Latina-Theta Chapter Endowed Scholarship fund. “Collectively, we share the desire to lead from a position to support a Latino cause, and we are proud to carry the Syracuse University flag to help our community prosper,” Olivo says.

Cueva adds that the scholarship is a way to thank the University that “took a chance on us,” he says. “Now we have the opportunity to take a leadership role in supporting others.”



Vincent H. Cohen Jr. Elected to Syracuse University Board of Trustees



Vincent H. Cohen Jr.

Washington attorney Vincent H. Cohen Jr. '92, L'95 has been elected to the Syracuse University Board of Trustees.

Cohen, who serves on the Office of Multicultural Advancement's Advisory Council, is a partner at Dechert LLP, where he focuses on high-stakes litigation on behalf of individuals and corporations. An experienced trial lawyer and investigator, he represents clients in sensitive government and internal investigations, government enforcement matters and complex civil and criminal litigation. Cohen is the former acting U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia. Prior to leading the largest U.S. attorney's office in the nation, he served as the office's principal assistant U.S. attorney for five years.

Cohen has been widely recognized for his professional accomplishments. He is listed by Chambers USA as a leading lawyer in the area of white-collar crime and government investigations for the District of Columbia and by Legal 500 US for corporate investigations and white-collar criminal defense. He was named a Rainmaker by the Minority Corporate Counsel Association in 2019 for being an exceptional diverse attorney whose business

acumen and dedication to proactive client development set him apart as a leader in the legal profession. In 2018, he was named one of Savoy Magazine's Most Influential Black Lawyers in America and was also listed as one of the 500 Leading Lawyers in America by Lawdragon. In 2014, he received the Presidential Star Award from the National Bar Association for his contributions to the field of law and, in 2010, he was identified as one of the Nation's Best Advocates: 40 Lawyers Under the Age of 40. Cohen has also received the Director's Award from the U.S. Secret Service for his contributions and commitment to the principles of responsible law enforcement, and the Public Service and Humanitarian Award from Walker Memorial Baptist Church for his work in ensuring equal justice for the people of Washington, D.C.

Cohen serves as an instructor at the Trial Advocacy Workshop of Harvard Law School, where he is also a frequent lecturer as well as at Syracuse University and Georgetown University law schools. He has served as general counsel and remains an active member of 100 Black Men of America Inc. (Greater Washington).

As an undergraduate at Syracuse University, Cohen was a member of the Orange men's basketball team. He earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from the College of Arts and Sciences in 1992, then enrolled at the Syracuse University College of Law, earning a juris doctorate in 1995.

Cohen is a former member of the Syracuse University Law Alumni Association Board of Directors. In 2008, he received the Chancellor's Citation for Distinguished Alumni Achievement in Law, and in 2015 received the inaugural Syracuse Law Honors Award from the College of Law for his distinguished achievement.

Part of a renowned Syracuse University family, Cohen—along with his sister Traci Cohen Dennis '90—endowed an Our Time Has Come Scholarship in honor of their late father, Vincent Cohen Sr. '57, L'60, who was an All-American basketball player at Syracuse University before attending the College of Law and becoming a successful corporate attorney in Washington, D.C.

Milestones

Lori Leavelle Brown '89 has been named chief equity, diversity and compliance officer for Seton Hall University.



Kishauna Soljour Wins National Dissertation Award

Kishauna Soljour '13, G'19 is no stranger to achievement. As an undergraduate at Syracuse University, Soljour was named a Remembrance Scholar and a University Scholar, and she served as Senior Class Marshal, graduating magna cum laude. In May 2019, Soljour became the first Black woman to earn a Ph.D. in history from Syracuse, winning the University's top dissertation prize for *Beyond the Banlieue: French Postcolonial Migration & the Politics of a Sub-Saharan Identity*. In December 2019, Soljour received the nation's most prestigious award for doctoral dissertations, the Council of Graduate Schools/ProQuest Distinguished Dissertation Award in Humanities and Fine Arts. She is the first Syracuse University recipient of the award.

Soljour's dissertation research explores the Black presence in Paris, France, from post-World War II to present. She spent four summers in Paris conducting archival research and also lived in Paris for 18 months under a research grant, conducting interviews for the 35 oral histories included in her dissertation.

"The hallmark of my dissertation is the focus on oral histories that examine the triumphs and challenges of migrating and navigating daily life as immigrants," says Soljour. "I've been able to capture stories of ordinary people that are not often considered." Her research reveals that entrepreneurs, activists, artists, authors and teachers have contributed to contemporary French society in spite of shortcomings in state policy toward immigration and acculturation.

Soljour's interest in Black Paris began the summer after her sophomore year, when she participated in Paris Noir, a Syracuse Abroad program that explores the African diaspora in Paris and includes independent research projects. Soljour, a dual major in television, radio and film and African American studies, chose to focus on Black journalists.

She continued to expand on that research for her senior capstone project in the Renée Crown University Honors Program and ultimately decided to pursue it in greater depth at the graduate level. She chose to continue her studies at Syracuse University because the history department faculty embraced her vision for a synergy between academia and

public service. "My work brings the two worlds together in ways that other universities wouldn't have let me do both at the same time," says Soljour, who also served as a teaching associate for the Paris Noir program for four summers.

To help inform her understanding of the migrant experience, Soljour ran community engagement programs with migrant communities through Refugee and Immigrant Self-Empowerment

(RISE) Syracuse. "I wanted to have that proximity to communities that I was talking with on a research level, but also to give back," she says.

Soljour, who was named a 2019 Forbes Under 30 Scholar last October, is currently a senior program manager for Working in Support of Education, a national educational nonprofit based in New York City. She runs a social entrepreneurship project that has students—many of them immigrants—examine a community issue they care about, write a proposal with a plan to implement change, and then compete for \$30,000 in scholarships.

Soljour is also continuing her research, actively collecting interviews with plans to turn her dissertation into a book. "The immigration debate is dominating political campaigns and popular commentary. My research brings a new lens to the transnational conversation by looking at contributions made by immigrants in ways that are often overlooked," she says.



Kishauna Soljour

Rob Edwards Joins Multicultural Advancement Advisory Council

Screenwriter/producer Rob Edwards '85 has joined the Syracuse University Office of Multicultural Advancement Advisory Council. In this capacity, he will help inform strategy and advocate for Syracuse University and its alumni and students of color.

"Rob is a longtime University volunteer and has always been motivated to support students of color," says Rachel Vassel '91, assistant vice president of multicultural advancement. "We appreciate his support of Our Time Has Come and look forward to having his input on the Multicultural Advancement Advisory Council."

Edwards has been writing for film and television for more than 30 years. He has written two classic animated films for Walt Disney Feature Animation, the Academy Award- and Golden Globe-nominated *The Princess and the Frog* and the Academy Award-nominated *Treasure Planet*. He also consulted on *Tangled*, *Wreck-It Ralph* and *Frozen*. Currently, Edwards has a pilot at Showtime, and features with Sony, Paramount, Wise-Blue, Mofac and Chris Rock.

During 20 years writing for television, he wrote and produced *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, *Full House*, *A Different World*, *Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip*, *Roc*, and *In Living Color*, and he was the creator of *Out All Night*.

Edwards is generous in sharing tools he has developed during his successful writing career. He is a frequent Sorkin Week lecturer and taught a course called *The Writer's Journey* at Syracuse University in Los Angeles during the Spring 2020 semester.

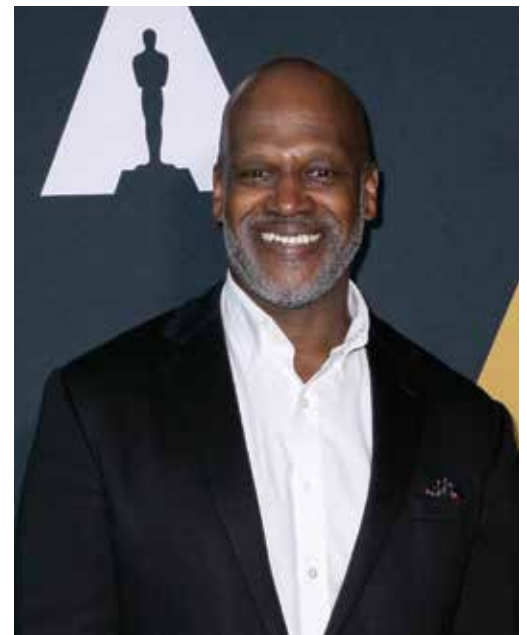
As former president of the Syracuse University Alumni Club in Southern California, Edwards was involved in initiating a program for new graduates called *Soft Landing*, which connected them with alumni from their fields of study, provided practical resources about Los Angeles—such as banking and housing information—and offered opportunities to socialize with other alumni. "We won a national award, and I understand the program became the basis for what is now *SUccess in the City*," he says.

Edwards says his decision to join the advisory council was easy. He related an incident that occurred in his Syracuse University residence hall as a first-year student when a drunken group of white students went floor to floor looking for Black students to beat up. Although protected by his roommate and others, they

"affectionately" referred to him with the n-word in the process.

"It's been more than 30 years since that night, and it still stings when I think about it," says Edwards. "It saddens me to see that, decades later, students are still going through the same challenges."

Edwards says he's had decades of experience solving problems and building consensus when the stakes are high. "I know these problems don't go away over time if we ignore them, and I know that the challenges won't be easily solvable," he says. "I can't wait to help make this great institution get even greater."



Rob Edwards

Milestones

Kenneth O. Miles '92, G'99, G'11 joined the University of Michigan as executive senior associate athletic director.



Kappa Alpha Psi Alumni Group Exceeds \$50,000 Goal— Now Hopes to Raise \$150,000

When the Delta Beta Executive Alumni Foundation (DBEAF) of Kappa Alpha Psi at Syracuse University was established in 2013, one of the group's first initiatives was to launch a fundraising campaign to raise \$50,000 to create an endowment within the Our Time Has Come Scholarship by Coming Back Together 2020. The brothers have surpassed that amount and now say they have the potential to triple their initial goal.

The turning point came last summer. As the group closed in on achieving its \$50,000 goal, a challenge was issued from an anonymous donor: If the group could raise an additional \$50,000, the donor would match that amount, bringing the Kappa's gift, and their endowment, to \$150,000.

"We're very close," says Phil Bauknight '76, DBEAF president. "This is a tremendous opportunity for us to impact future students. We need everyone to do what they can to make this happen."

Bauknight says the funds have been largely raised by individual gifts from Syracuse Kappas (and in some cases, matching gifts from their employers), as well as fundraising events sponsored by groups of brothers. For instance, a holiday gathering in New York City hosted by recent graduates yielded \$2,000.

From the beginning, the goal was to have 100 percent participation. "We'd like to have a minimum \$100 gift from

every member of every line," says Kevin Jones '80, DBEAF vice president. "We're 95 percent there."

"It's a way of motivating and holding brothers accountable while also providing some friendly competition and bragging rights," says founding member Tony Martinez, a member of the Sentinel Force of Five Spring 1987 line. "You know, 'My line gave good.'"

The Delta Beta chapter was founded at Syracuse University in 1951 and has inducted 30 lines during its history. In January 2013, following the funeral of influential member Wayne Brown '78 in October 2012, a group of Kappa alumni came together to organize DBEAF.

The organization has two major goals—to preserve and promote its brotherhood and to fund educational scholarships for high-achieving African American and Latino/a students in need of financial assistance at Syracuse University.

"We didn't want the only time we got together to be at funerals," says Bauknight. "Our goal is to use our expertise, energy, time and enthusiasm to try to make the world a little better for students of color coming through Syracuse and to be a support and a force for positive change."

Both efforts are clearly a success. The group's members convene monthly via conference call and at events around the country held several times a year. They look forward to awarding their first scholarship in fall 2020 and, depending on the final outcome, the potential to impact more than one student per year.

"As a fraternity, our motto is 'achievement in every field of endeavor and training for leadership,'" says Martinez. "And if we're going to be leaders on campus and in the alumni community, then this is one way to practice what we preach."



Members of Delta Beta Executive Alumni Foundation

IN MEMORIAM



Tanya Heidelberg-Yopp '85, of Detroit, Michigan, died on November 13, 2019, from brain cancer.

Heidelberg-Yopp earned a degree in telecommunications management from Syracuse University, a law degree from New York University School of Law and a degree in management development from Harvard Business School. She excelled in an array of fields, most recently serving as

interim chief executive officer of United Way for Southeastern Michigan after having served as its chief operating officer. She also held executive positions with Motown Music, MTV Network and Nickelodeon Movies, and she served as a senior vice president for Compuware Corporation.

With her husband Roger, she was also part-owner of the downtown Detroit restaurant Savannah Blue, named in honor of their daughter, Savannah.

Heidelberg-Yopp's numerous accolades included *Black Enterprise's* Top 50 Power Brokers in the Entertainment Industry; *Ebony* magazine's Women at the Top of the Entertainment Business; National Association of Minorities in Cable Hall of Fame; the Syracuse University Chancellor Citation for Outstanding Young Alumni and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund Award of Excellence.

Heidelberg-Yopp was a member of The Links and Delta Sigma Theta sorority.

"Her faith allowed her to bravely face her health challenges without fear, but with grace and courage," says her sister, Karen Heidelberg Barnwell. "She knew that faith is stronger than fear and demonstrated this to her family."

Heidelberg-Yopp is survived by her husband, Roger; her daughter, Savannah; her mother, Vera Heidelberg; her sister; and numerous other family members and friends.



Jacqueline Wilson '93, Emmy-winning producer of the television show *RuPaul's Drag Race*, died on September 11, 2019.

Wilson joined the series as a supervising producer in its second season and was promoted to co-executive producer. She had finished production on season 12 of the series shortly before her death. Wilson was nominated for three

Primetime Emmy Awards for her work on *RuPaul's Drag Race*, winning two.

"I could never express in words her invaluable contribution to the success of *Drag Race* and to all the lives of those who were fortunate enough to have worked alongside her," says RuPaul Charles. Days later, when Charles won his fourth consecutive Emmy as Outstanding

Host for a Reality or Competition Program, he dedicated the award to Wilson.

Prior to her decade with *Drag Race*, Wilson's credits included *Basketball Wives*, the short-lived competition series *I Want to Work for Diddy*, and *The Rebel Billionaire: Branson's Quest for the Best*.



Uchechukwu "Uche" Chukwuma '18, of Woodbridge, New Jersey, died on December 20, 2019, in a car accident.

Chukwuma graduated from Franklin Township High School in 2014 as vice president of her class. At Syracuse University, she earned a bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in African American studies and was also the founder of Light on Ebony. She was a

student at Atlanta's John Marshall Law School and planned to become an entertainment lawyer. Chukwuma worked at Walker & Associates in Atlanta from late summer 2018 to fall 2019, starting as an intern and gradually working into a paid position as director of legal and hip-hop affairs.

Chukwuma loved hip-hop music and played the violin and flute. She was also an avid traveler and was known as a mentor, great friend, loving sister, caring daughter, budding entrepreneur and social butterfly.

She is survived by her parents, Oliver and Gloria Chukwuma; her brother, Obumneme Chukwuma; her sister, Ekeoma Chukwuma; and a host of cousins, aunts, uncles and extended family.



Allan González, a senior from Union City, New Jersey, died on January 30 after accidentally falling into Onondaga Creek in downtown Syracuse.

González came to Syracuse University as a recruited lacrosse player. He was a systems and information science major in the College of Engineering and Computer Science, on schedule to graduate in May

2020. Gonzalez was also a talented musician who enjoyed singing and played guitar, piano and saxophone.

He is survived by his parents, Jeffrey González and Maria Delgado-González; sisters Amber Rose González and Alyssa Marie González; and grandparents Elvia Jara and Jorge Delgado.

continued on page 36

Dear Members of the Syracuse University Community:

These last two weeks have revealed hard truths about ourselves, our institutions and our country. These are truths that Black Americans know all too well. Anti-Black racism has created economic disparity, health inequity, toxic environments in many schools and workplaces, and policing that has at times been unjust and, at its worst, deadly for Americans like George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and countless others. I am sickened by it. It is on all of us to end it.

These last two weeks have also given some signs of hope. I am inspired by the passion from protesters around the country, and in our own city. Their powerful message is simple—that the lives of our Black friends, neighbors, co-workers and strangers must matter. To all of us. We haven't lived up to that basic ideal. We need to acknowledge where we have fallen short and where we must change. That work needs to happen at Syracuse University, and I want to share with you how we are moving forward to create meaningful and lasting change.

Public Safety Review

This summer, former U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch has begun an independent review of our Department of Public Safety (DPS). Ms. Lynch served under President Barack Obama and is respected for her work in the area of police-community relations. I have asked her to evaluate how DPS operates and what changes we need to make to protect all of our students, including our Black students, who report being treated differently than their white peers. We are asking the hard questions that universities and cities must grapple with. The answers may be difficult for some to hear. For example, how do we create a model where the focus is truly on public safety and not policing? Do we need to rethink how we train our officers? To what extent do DPS personnel need to be armed on campus? The review will include interviews with students, DPS personnel at all levels, University leadership and other members of our campus community. It will be fair and comprehensive. I expect it will lead to recommendations for significant change.

I am also directing the following immediate steps by our Department of Public Safety:

- freeze the hiring of five approved officers within DPS pending the independent review;

- form a Public Safety Citizen Review Board, composed of members of the Syracuse University community, to hear, review and recommend action to the chief of DPS regarding complaints made by University community members; and
- release and publicly post standard operating procedures for police conduct in the use of force, as previously requested by students.

Commitments to Change Our Campus

This summer, we continue to fulfill our campus commitments, making consistent progress to meet the expectations of all our students. In the last several months, we have achieved many milestones. They include an updated and approved Code of Student Conduct with new guidelines for perpetrators and bystanders of racist incidents and crimes; investing \$5 million for scholarships and programs like the Higher Education Opportunity Program, Student Support Services and Our Time Has Come; increasing the Office of Student Living (OSL) budget by \$500,000 for resident advisor diversity programming and hiring a new assistant director of diversity and inclusion within OSL; hiring new and diverse counselors at the Barnes Center; implementing mandatory diversity training for faculty and staff; requiring all first-year students to undergo a newly updated anti-racism and anti-Semitism training program; and allocating an additional \$600,000 for volunteer programming in the City of Syracuse. There is more work to do. Not only are we committed to fulfilling our previously made promises, we plan to take this work even further.

In addition to our campus commitments, the Board of Trustees Special Committee on University Climate, Diversity and Inclusion continues its work that began in December. In recent months, hundreds of students, faculty and staff have engaged with this Special Committee and with the Independent Advisory Panel working on behalf of the Special Committee. Input from students will directly inform their recommendations. I anticipate their updates and preliminary recommendations to be delivered this summer.

Important Conversations

As we take action, we need to be engaging with one another in difficult and critical conversations. This week, our Office of Diversity and Inclusion will be hosting a virtual discussion with renowned politician, commentator and attorney Bakari Sellers that will be open to members of our community. We will have an open conversation about racial inequality, institutional racism and how the killing of Black Americans has led our country to this moment of significant change.

In this unique time in our country's history, we must look within ourselves and to one another to expect progress and action. We have an opportunity before us. Let's resolve to make progress together.

Sincerely,
Chancellor Kent Syverud

IN MEMORIAM *continued*



Helena Kibasumba Sekarore, a first-year student from Syracuse, died on March 7.

Born in Congo, Sekarore was a graduate of Nottingham High School and majored in policy studies in the College of Arts and Sciences and Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs.

She is survived by her parents, Olivier and Mariam Sekarore, and six siblings.





Office of Multicultural Advancement

640 Skytop Rd., Second Floor
Syracuse, NY 13244-5160

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

COMING BACK TOGETHER / 2020

A Virtual Gathering



Mark the date on your digital calendar: October 16.

A time to visit with fellow alumni, honor traditions and learn new things, all while supporting today's students. It's a free day-long virtual event that includes:

- Book talk with a nationally known author
- Career Development Workshop
- Community Forum on COVID-19 and Social Justice
- Our Time Has Come fundraiser
- Virtual CBT after party

Registration for this virtual event will open in August. For additional information please visit alumni-of-color.syr.edu/events or call **315.443.4556**.