

BUILDING BRIDGES

BUILDING BRIDGES TO DIVERSITY AND EQUITY RESOURCES & EVENTS



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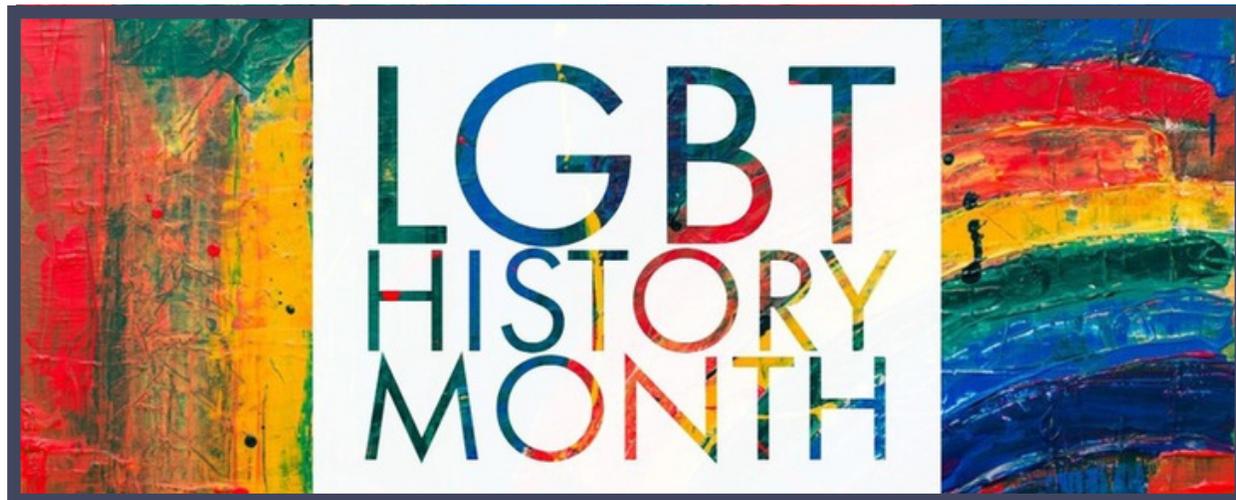
COFFEE BREAK

BY JERRELL W. ROBINSON, DIRECTOR OF THE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM

How I view the world and how I view my life experiences as a Black man, have been shaped, in large part, by my environment, my childhood, my education, and my professional career. I was born and raised in Harlem, NY during the 1970s and 1980s; a time when the community was plagued with crime, drugs, and violence. Most young Black boys raised in Harlem did not have the support to escape the harsh realities of poverty, unemployment, or imprisonment. As a single parent, my mother was my greatest support, impressing upon me the importance of earning an education, working hard, taking care of myself and believing in myself, and respecting others. My father taught me patience, showed me how to build relationships, and always challenged me to think strategically. Growing up in Harlem, was nothing short of challenging and I faced many obstacles, but it remains one of my greatest experiences and has taught me invaluable life lessons.

My journey to becoming a higher education professional began with Head Start. Head Start is a U.S. federal comprehensive early childhood (Pre-K) education program for low-income children. Following Head Start I went on to kindergarten and then catholic school. I attended Our Lady of Lourdes School located in the Hamilton Heights (Sugar Hill) section of Harlem, from first to eighth grade. The summer before I entered eighth grade my mother died, and I moved to West Harlem with my father. I decided to attend Cardinal Hayes High School, in the Bronx, NY after graduating from eighth grade. I chose Cardinal Hays because it had a good academic and sports reputation and I liked the building's architecture. An anonymous donor paid my tuition for part of my time in high school which allow my father to keep me in the school. Going to college was not something I considered until later in my junior year of high school. My family could not afford to send me to college, and I did not do my best academically while in high school. I had no plan after college and for a brief period considered joining the Navy.

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FOCUS ON...

BY MARVIN JOHNSON, ALUMNI

My name Marvin Johnson. Known to most on the campus of Old Westbury as Mocha. I started at Old Westbury in 2017 and graduated in 2019. As a Junior and Senior at Old Westbury, I have gained numerous leadership roles such as SGA VP of Programming and Operations, Head Chair of Campus Activity Board and Resident Assistant for Hall 1. During my time at Old Westbury, diversity was never a problem but something that everyone was working on including others. Old Westbury, out of two schools I went to, had the highest amount of diversity when it came to campus life and school room settings. As part of the SGA and CAB Board, I made it my purpose to find programs and events that catered to different types of groups on campus. I did programs dedicated to comic book fans, movie lovers, etc. But the most important program to me was the 1st Annual Drag Show at Old Westbury.

I knew the program had never been done before so I decided to take a leap and go with my heart. At first I was worried that my peers at Old Westbury wouldn't enjoy the or programs but still decided to go with my gut. I called every person I knew that either did drag or part of the world of charisma, uniqueness, nerve and talent. After a few weeks, I found 6 drag queens and our special guest, Shea Coulee. Shea Coulee was not an easy person

to get a hold of. I called a lot of people and places and finally got the answer I wanted, Shea Coulee agreed to supply us with her talents. During the process of getting the show ready the day of can be stressful and if you ever helped run an event, the day of can be cool or annoying. Luckily, I had amazing advisors and a team behind me that had my back if anything went wrong. For a weekend event, you usually don't get a lot of students. The rate is usually 50 students for a weekend event and I exceeded that by making 150 students come out to the event. The event went great and made me think more about my resident and commuter community at Old Westbury. The event was either going to make or break us as a program and ended up having students come up to us asking for more events like this. Unfortunately, with COVID happening this year, the event could not take place.

Overall, me bringing more LGBTQ+ life to OW was a great experience for me because being part of that community and someone who is always about change, put me in a great position to do so with just one event. Since then, I have seen more events cater to this community since being an alumni and I have to give credit where it's due. If it wasn't for people like Denee, Sam, Suzanne, and Jaime, events like this would have happened. They help push for more events like this and hopefully we see more in the future.

COFFEE BREAK

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had a passion for learning and for helping others, but I did not want to stay in Harlem. I wanted a new experience. If I was going to college, I needed a less stressful environment allowing me to focus. SUNY Oswego became that place for me. I earned my bachelor and master degrees from SUNY Oswego. I was accepted as a new freshman into the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) designed to support underserved students who showed promise but did not have the academic and financial means to otherwise attend college. Attending SUNY Oswego, a predominately white institution (PWI), was a culture shock for a kid coming from Harlem. It was my first real experience with diversity and interacting with people who were much different than people I was accustomed to interacting. I was open to embracing and learning how people different than me experienced life, however I was also eager to expand my knowledge of self as a young Black man. Three key experiences shaped my time while attending SUNY Oswego: joining Phi Beta Sigma, a historically Black fraternity with the motto, Culture for Service and Service for Humanity; serving as president of the college's Black Student Union (BSU); and being mentored by two Black male administrators on campus. These experiences also helped me expand my understanding of diversity and inclusion and ultimately helped me decide on pursuing a career in higher education - supporting, empowering, and advocating on behalf of students.

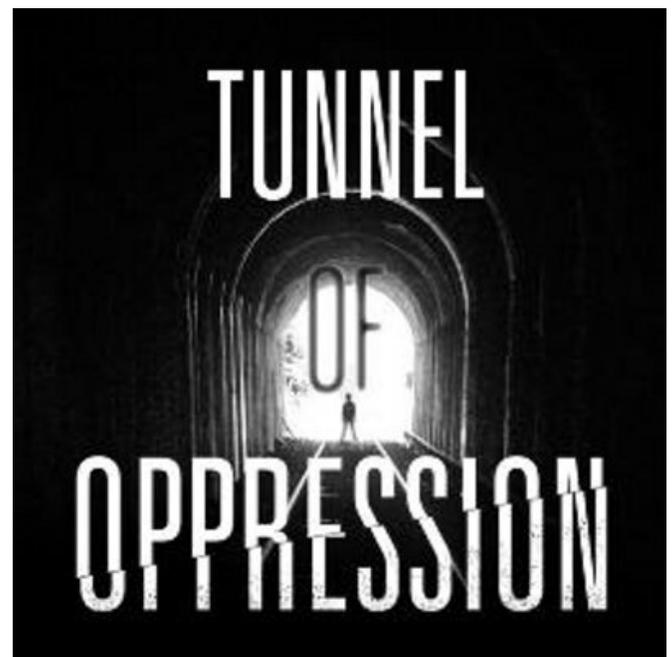
As I reflect on my overall experience leading to a career of serving students, I am reminded of two African American literary classics impacting my worldview. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and W.E.B. DuBois' *Souls of Black Folks* focus on understanding one's identity, particularly, as an African American in the United States. Both writings deal with the complexity of understanding and sometimes negotiating between your true self and how the world may perceive you. Both writings provided a blueprint in helping me understand that my identity and my reality are shaped by how I interpret my experiences with other people. I have been fortunate, interacting with students in various capacities, at multiple and diverse types of institutions throughout my career. Some of my most valuable lessons as a leader and as a professional have resulted from those student interactions. Those student interactions were pivotal in helping me decide to return to college and earn my doctorate. Those student interactions helped me in obtaining my most rewarding professional experience, as the EOP director at SUNY Old Westbury. Those student interactions are reminders that continue motivating me to strive for excellence and to find joy in serving students.

OW PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

BY ASHLEY VELTRI, RESIDENCE HALL DIRECTOR; ADVISOR FOR RESIDENCE HALL ASSOCIATION

Tunnel of Oppression is an annual event the RHA puts on in order to help educate the students on the SUNY Old Westbury campus. Throughout the years different clubs and organizations have supported this event by taking charge of their own room, each dedicated to educating students on the different kinds of oppression that students on this campus may face. The intent is to help students understand what their fellow students on campus may be struggling with and finding ways to support their friends and classmates. It is also a great way to help bring awareness to the micro aggressions or subtle ways that students may be feeling oppression that are not always obvious. In doing so we hope more students get pick up on these subtleties and calling them out. This year given our unconventional semester, RHA decided to continue the tradition through a social media campaign. We have created a number of social

posts that we're posted starting from September 14th going until September 25th with each post focusing on a different form of oppression. It is hard to encompass all we would like to, but we did our best to include relevant information that would be useful to our students and strategies on how to help your fellow classmates who may be facing these kinds of oppression. Please follow OWRHA on Instagram to see all of the posts that have been made!



WANT TO BE FEATURED?

For events, submit [here!](#)

For a newsletter feature, submit [here!](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

School of Business Retreat 2020-Diversity Panel

October 2 | 10:00 AM | [Zoom](#)

SOB Retreat 2020 The SOB has identified two topical issues of importance to be addressed in this Retreat: (i) Diversity, Inclusion, & Equity, and, (ii) Post-Pandemic Visioning beyond the Inflection Point. The Diversity Panel will include OW Chief Diversity Officer Usama Shaikh, other panelists are Steven Lindo (Founder, Springboard), Kalief Metellus (President, SGA), and Mary Koshy (Associate Director, Diversity & Inclusion Mount Sinai Health System) -The Inflection Point Strategic Panel will include Ms. Makhijani, the other panelists are Bryan Alexander (Futurist in Higher Ed), Rebecca Pope-Ruark (Author of “Agile Faculty”), and Patrick Stines ‘98 (Chair, SOB Advisory Board).

Desi Kahoot: South Asian Student Association

October 9 | 7:00 PM | *Virtual Student Union: MPRs*

Join SASA as they spend the evening of Bollywood movie trivia.

National Coming Out Day: Center for Student Leadership & Involvement

October 9 | ALL DAY | @SUNYOWCSLI on Facebook and Instagram

CSLI providing arts and crafts, meditation spaces and more to help with the stress associated with the coming out process.

Dance Workshop: Nazakat

October 15 | 7:00 PM | *Virtual Student Union: MPRs*

Learn more about our South Asian culture that is expressed through dance, learn about our unique dance techniques, and have a glimpse into what its like to be a part of our Nazakat family.

National Coming Out: PRIDE

October 15 | 8:00 PM | *Virtual Student Union: Rotunda*

Join Pride for an evening to play video games remotely. Contact pride@oldwestbury.edu

Spirit Day: Center for Student Leadership & Involvement

October 16 | ALL DAY | @SUNYOWCSLI on Facebook and Instagram

Post a photo of yourself in your Spirit Day purple to Facebook or Instagram using hashtag #SpiritDay and tagging CSLI.

Días Los Muertos: Alianza Latina

October 20 | 2:40 PM | *Virtual Student Union: Conf. RM 311*

Watch Immigration Nation and then afterwards join in on a post documentary reflection.

Pronouns Day: Center for Student Leadership & Involvement

October 21 | 12:00 PM | @SUNYOWCSLI on Facebook and Instagram

A workshop on how to share and ask about pronouns, and how to recover from mistakes.

Can We Talk: Center for Student Leadership & Involvement

October 21 | 2:30 PM | *Virtual Student Union: MPRs*

A diversity round table discussion about critical issues facing the LGBTQ+ community.