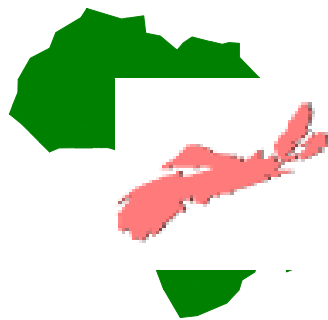




Editor in Chief

AFRIC VOICE
NEWSLETTER**Informing, Inspiring and Empowering Black Students at
Dalhousie, Kings, SMU, MSVU and the Halifax Community.****February is Black History
Month***From "Ghana Review" Vol 1. No. 6
Friday 27 January 1995*

A full appreciation of the celebration of Black History Month requires a review and a reassessment of the social and academic climate that prevailed in the Western world, and especially in North America before 1926 when Black History Month was established.

It is important to recall that between 1619 and 1926, African Americans and other peoples of African descent were classified as a race that had not made any contribution to human civilization. Within the public and private sector, African Americans and other peoples of African descent were continually dehumanized and relegated to the position of non-citizens and often defined as fractions of humans. It is estimated that between 1890 and 1925, an African American was lynched every two and a half days.

The academic and intellectual community was no different from the bulk of mainstream America. Peoples of African descent were visibly absent in any scholarship or intellectual discourse that dealt with human civilization.

African Americans were so dehumanized and their history so distorted in academia that "slavery, peonage, segregation and lynching" were considered justifiable conditions. In fact, Professor John Burgess, the founder of Columbia University graduate school of Political Science and an important figure in American scholarship defined the African race as "a race of men which has never created any civilization of any kind..."

It was this kind of climate and the sensational, racist scholarship that inspired the talented and brilliant African American scholar, Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson to lead the struggle and search for the truth and institutionalize what was then referred to as "Negro History Week". A Harvard trained Ph.D., Dr. Woodson dropped out of mainstream academia to devote his life to the scientific study of the African experience in America, Africa and throughout the world.

Under Woodson's direction and contributions from other African American and white scholars, the "Negro History Week" was launched on a serious platform in 1926 to neutralize the apparent ignorance and deliberate distortion of Black History. Meetings, exhibitions, lectures and symposia were organized to climax the scientific study of the African experience throughout the year in order to give a more objective and scholarly balance in American and World history.

Today, this national and international observance has been expanded to encompass the entire month of February. The expansion, of course, has increased the number of days for celebration, but its strength and importance lie in the new meaning that has emerged. As Ralph L. Crowder points out in an article in the December 1977 issue of the Western Journal of Black Studies, "it is no longer sufficient to devote the entire month to the celebration of great Negro contributions to the American mainstream."

I believe, like Dr. Crowder, that it is necessary to use the occasion to examine the collective ingenuity, creativity, cultural and political experience of the masses of Africans and peoples of African descent. In North America,

*(Continued on page 2)***Interview with Barb
Hamilton-Hinch, Black
Students Advisor****We are starting a new term, how would you rate the last one both in term of academic and social / professional achievements?**

I feel it was a success. Based on what students told me, some have had some difficulties with some of their instructors; we are working on that in meetings. Overall, there is a higher ratio of racially visible students on campus, even if it is not as high as I would like it to be. I have noticed that there are better relations between Africans from the continent and African Canadians, but more can be done. I wish there would be better interactions between all people of African descent (African, Caribbean, Canadian).

You have certainly been aware of the reorganization the DSU wanted to implement on its council late last year / term, how did you feel about it?

Very surprised and disappointed. It shows, once again, the confusion that still exists in some minds about culturally diverse groups. Specifically, I think it is a misunderstanding about people of African descent. The DSU was attempting to group all students of African descent under the same etiquette. However, they do not realize that students of African descent all have different origins, different backgrounds, and different way of handling problems, our stories, though similar are different.

Have you been contacted by the group this operation was going to harm, and if yes, how did they intend to react?

Yes, we called a general meetings with some of these groups (Black Canadian Students, Black United Students, Aboriginals / First Nations, African Students, etc.) in the form of an information sessions, with a representative of the DSU. I think they were really proactive in dealing with the situation, prompt in the way they reacted and took actions.

How long have you been operating as Advisor for BSAC, and how would assess your job and the Centre since you have been in office, i.e. did you meet your expectations, are you disappointed or happy?

I have been in office for almost three (3) years now. I was a student when this whole structure (BSAC) was being created. At the time I was already very active politically with the launching activities. Now, I am glad the Centre has continued to grow, but I wish for more improvement, that we had more space, and I certainly look forward to having the Centre be more inclusive (everyone is welcome). I am happy because students of African descent now have a place of their own; the center provides space for social meetings and computing. Moreover, the center is a place where they feel safe, and it provides employment for international students. We have noticed that more students feel more welcomed than in the past and it is great; in fact, my wish is to know all students of African descent enrolled at Dalhousie; unfortunately it is not yet the case.

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Franklin Fezeu

Barb Hamilton-Hinch

Paul John

Special points of interest:

- The next edition of AfricVOICE will be published soon!
- **Put in submissions every last week of the month!**

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**Black Student
Advising Centre**

February is Black History Month

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a variety of programs - including lectures, exhibitions, banquets and a host of cultural activities are presented throughout the month of February to commemorate the occasion. It is not uncommon, during these weeks in February, for African students in the U.S. to receive a number of invitations to speak at gatherings, schools and in community churches.

In Ghana, it is the W.E.B. DuBois Center for Pan African Culture that has been in the forefront of programs developed to mark the observance. The intention of the founders was not and is still not to initiate a week's or a month's study of the universal African experience. Instead, the observance portrays the climax of a scientific study of the African experience throughout the year.

The month of February is significant and recognized in African American history for the birthdays of great African American pioneers and institutions. These include the birthdays of Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, Eubie Blake, NAACP and the first Pan African Congress.

Historians may also recall that the first African American Senator, Hiram Revels took the oath of office in February 1870. Black History Month takes on a paramount significance as we approach the 21st century. Civil rights laws and celebrations such as Black History Month have exposed the legal consequences of overt discriminatory practices and racial harassment. The struggles for, and achievement of independence by African countries in the 20th century have shown the strength, the humanity, the ingenuity and the contributions of the African to the human civilization.

However, these revelations have not neutralized the prevalence of prejudicial attitudes which generate discriminatory acts both on a national and in the international arena. Behavior may be controlled by laws, national and international, but attitudes can only change through education and the elimination of ignorance. I believe strongly that Black History Month should be the reaffirmation of struggle and determination to change attitudes and heighten the understanding of the African experience. In the words of Ralph Crowder, "the observance must be a testimony to those African pioneers who struggled to affirm the humanity of African peoples and a challenge to the present generation to protect and preserve...the humanity of all peoples of African descent."

Happy Black History Month

Yaw Boateng
Professor of Education
Eastern Washington University

Interview with Barb Hamilton-Hinch

Now that the DSU has finally decided not to get rid of the BSA, how do you see the future?

I think students have to see it as a wake up call; they have to realize that they have to be more political, more involved, more organized, and they shouldn't be afraid of it. As the Black Student Advisor I cannot do all that for them, the students have to take the lead. My position requires that I am there as a resource and to help ALL students not students societies but I will lend my support when possible.

Do you believe that the BSAC can contribute to the uplifting of Black Students Associations, if yes How?

This is a difficult question to answer. I offer space, I am more than happy to do printing, and help with the promotion of any even. I can offer storage, a volunteer, make the BSAC staff available to help them. But, I cannot recruit, or actively run the societies. I am an advisor, just like the International Students Advisor, and I don't have a word in students' societies: I can advise but not interfere in their affairs. Having said that, all societies are welcomed to ask for help or support or advice; I have already done that for the African Students Association (DASA), and I can and will do that again others.

How do you see the future of BSAC, both in short and long terms?

I am confident. I believe in people to do what they can. I love my job, and do not mind working morning till dusk. BSAC is growing; we are having a higher ratio of students coming in. I really like creating links between African Nova scotians and other students of African descent. I do not like seeing people leaving just because there is not enough space to accommodate everyone or they feel they don't fit in .

Any final thought about this interview or any subject of your choice?

I believe the success of AfricVoice is important. AfricVoice is intended to express our thoughts; it is import because it raises our issues, and help students to enhance their experience.

Thank you for your support and for this interview.

Franklin Fezeu

Interview with Paul John, president of the Black Students Association

Can you tell us in few words what is the mission of the Black Student Association?

To build and maintain unity among Black Students on campus, to teach and inspire them as they are not only students, but they are also Black.

Do you feel that Black Students respond to your?

That is the problem because you see they have different backgrounds, some are indigenous, they grew up and went to primary and high school as a minority. The way they will respond will differ from someone from the Caribbean or from Africa who has a different experience. As for now I do not feel that they know they are unique or special, which is precisely the reason we have the association.

Let's move now to the main meal; How did you feel or react last year when you heard the DSU was about to get rid of your voting seat in their council?

Alarmed, concerned, not angry, no not angry, but ready to address the issue.

Why did you think the issue was so important?

I am just realizing that I am Black with all the history behind that. You see, I am taking Black Studies courses and I relearn about our history, the slavery, the discrimination and all those things; it made me think about how I have lived up till now. To loose that seat would have mean taking several steps backward and I do not believe we should take any step backward.

So now that you will keep your seat, what's next for you?

Well, I am done!! I mean, the seat is still there, which was my intent and my goal is now to maintain an effective representation to the DSU council every two weeks.

Judging from the last meeting I have attended, it seems to me that even though anyone is welcome to attend the council meetings, you will likely be the only Black person there; so how can you influence it?

The intention is not to influence the council, or at least not now. The aim is to take care of the society, we are in the process of being ratified and we nearly lost our seat. I think the focus is now to protect the society.

Precisely, how do you intend to have your issues properly addressed by the DSU council, for instance if you need a grant, the council has to approve it, how will you proceed?

I do not think there will be different than what any other society like Law or Science will do. To influence a vote, i.e. to have many members of the council voting for you, you need to talk to each of them individually, you need to lobby.

Alright, during your fight to keep your seat, did you have any contact with other groups which were also supposed to loose their seat?

Oh yes, we had meetings with the women society, the Gay Lesbian & Transgender society, and the First Nation or Aboriginal society. Aside from that I had personal contact with the DASA president and some other executives.

Do you feel confident that those contacts will be in the future natural allies in the council?

You know, the societies represent groups of people with common interests. It might happen that our interests are alike just as it might happen that they are not. I can not foretell what the future will be but hopefully we will have more common grounds than divergent ones.

Finally, after this shockwave, how do you see the future?

We will have to be cautious, careful not to slip into oblivion. The society need to be alive, to be steer up, and we (the members) have to do that. In my opinion, we are still on the edge of the cliff, fighting to get away from it and avoid falling down. There is so much at stake and we can so easily loose everything, we really have to be alert. We need to learn from what has just happened, take it as a warning and do not neglect the society any more.

Thank you for your time Paul, any final thought or comment?

We have to realize that sacrifices are important in order to move forward with the society. We will always have many things to do, many responsibilities at the same time, but we shouldn't take that as a reason to neglect our society.

Thank you again for this interview.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to express myself.

Interviewed by Franklin Fezeu