This month's cover photo is an image of the Hernando de Soto Bridge in Memphis, TN. It is the site of a 2016 Black Lives Matter protest against police brutality and violence against the city's Black citizens. Memphis is also the site of the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Strike in which the city's mostly-Black sanitation workforce advocated for living wages and better working conditions. Memphis is where Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his 1968 "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech before he was assassinated at Memphis' Lorraine Motel which is now the site of the National Civil Rights Museum.
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BLACK HISTORY MONTH PLAYLIST
GREETINGS
FROM THE ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT
& CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER

To say that Black American history and American history are separate would be a miscalculation, because Black American history and American history are the same history.

When battles were fought and wars were won, Black Americans were there. When profits were made and mansions were built, Black Americans were there. When inventions were made and cures were found, Black Americans were there. Black American culture is woven so tightly into the fabric of American history that without it progress would not be the same.

Oppression, marginalization, isolation and incarceration are devastating to the human being, but they cannot reach the depths of the human spirit. Exaltation, acclamation, adoration and lionization are enriching to the human being, but they cannot reach the depths of the human spirit.

Although grammatically incorrect, the Black American spirit does not shout, “I am,” it shouts, “I be” – “I Be America.” Know that etched into the fabric of American history from enslavement to contemporary times Black Americans will continue to make American history alongside Americans of every hue, and together let us all be reminded of the words of Rev. Sharon Washington Risher, “Bring Change Where You Are.”

This edition of OID’s newsletter contains contributions by some of our campus’ finest Black faculty members. Topics explored in this issue include the African Diaspora, the contributions of African American soldiers during World War II, Charleston’s connection to jazz music and the work that remains following the 50th anniversary of the College’s desegregation.

I hope you enjoy.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rénard Harris
Dr. Rénard Harris
Associate Vice President/Chief Diversity Officer
Office of Institutional Diversity
Call Me MiSTER Faculty Advisor
Introducing...

Shamone comes to OID by way of the REACH Program where she served as a program assistant. In her new role with OID she is responsible for assisting the department with its day-to-day operations and providing logistical support for programs and workshops. She is always willing to give a helping hand to everyone. She holds an Associate’s Degree in Human Services from Horry Georgetown Technical College and is currently completing her Bachelor’s Degree in Applied Behavioral Analysis from Kaplan University.

January Recap

Workshops

OID’s Spring workshops are off to a great start!

Topics addressed so far are micro-aggressions and race, spared injustice and micro-aggressions and the LGBTQ community.

To learn more about OID’s workshops and how to attend visit diversity.cofc.edu!
To honor Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., OID asked students, faculty, and staff to share their dreams for a better campus community.

Many thanks to the College’s Religious Life Council, Center for Civic Engagement, Office of Multicultural Student Programs and Services, Jewish Student Union/Hillel and BSU President, Lanasa Clarkson for a great evening featuring Rev. Sharon Washington Risher on January 31.

Risher is the daughter of the late Ethel Lee Lance – one of nine parishioners killed at Emanuel AME Church in July 2015. Her speech was entitled "Addressing Race Through a Loving Lens."
OLD, Civic Engagement, and MSPS teamed-up to host "Addressing Race through a Loving Lens" on January 27 in honor of MLK. The interfaith workshop was led by local leaders Rev. Bill Stanfield (CEO of Metanoia), LaVanda Brown (Executive Director of YWCA of Greater Charleston), Cicely McCray (Vice Chair of the Royal Foundation), Greg Surratt (Founding Pastor of Seacoast Church), Treva Williams (Lead Organizer for CAJM) and Jeff Leinberger (Executive Director of North Charleston Dream Clinic). Topics explored were economic development, health equity and coalition building—all in-line with King's principles of the Beloved Community.
SPECIAL FEATURE

In honor of Black History Month, OID caught up with Dr. Kameelah Martin, the new Director of the African American Studies Program, and Michael Owens, Adjunct Professor of English specializing in oral history, to learn more about their contributions to the College.

1. Can you explain what African Diaspora is? How did you develop an interest in it?

The African Diaspora is a term used to describe the dispersal of people of African descent across the globe. It includes people who identify as Afro-Latino, Black British, African American, Caribbean, and Africans living in places outside of the African continent.

As I tell my students, I have a passion for “all black everything.” After learning and studying the history and culture of African Americans as an undergraduate, I realized that there are so many cultural connections to black people across the globe that I would be short-hanging myself if I only focused on the experience of black folks in the United States.

I made it my business to study different cultures that derived from the Trans-Atlantic slave trade because of the shared history of trauma and displacement.

I’m still learning, in fact! I approached my studies and research by reversing the middle passage—focusing first on the United States, then the Caribbean, and finally the west coast of Africa.

Kameelah L. Martin, Ph.D.
2. Tell me about some of the books you’ve written. Do you plan to write more and if so, what will they focus on?

I have written two academic books to date. Both books are a reflection of my research and teaching interests: Literature of the African Diaspora and African Diaspora religion and spirituality. My first book, Conjuring Moment in African American Literature: Women, Spirit Work & Other Such Hoodoo (2013) is a study of the conjure woman as a folk hero and literary archetype in African American Literature.

I was struck by the amount of texts that I was reading and studying as a graduate student that used the conjure woman as a central character. Two of my favorite novels with conjuring female characters are Ntozake Shange’s Sassafrass, Cypress, & Indigo (1982) and Arthur Flowers’ Another Good Loving Blues (1992).


“Voodoo” is largely misunderstood and certainly demonized on film. My book tries to unpack why there is such a negative stigma against African spirituality and it critiques the use of black women to emphasize the negative connotation in film. I write about such films as Pirates of the Caribbean, Princess and the Frog, and Eve’s Bayou.

I do anticipate writing more books in the future. My interests have turned to genealogical research. I’m discovering new family ties right here in South Carolina. My paternal great-grandmother was from a large family that was enslaved in Kingtree, South Carolina.

3. I see that you have lived in various places growing up. What are you most fond of here in Charleston?

Yes, indeed! I have never lived anywhere more than five years! I am most attracted to the water—both the rivers and the ocean. Particularly the fact that Charleston sits on the Atlantic coast and is the entry point for about 40% of all enslaved Africans in this country makes it a very special, spiritual place. I think the water is a constant reminder of that.

I love the history—-as tumultuous as it is—because it reminds me every day that what I teach is tangible and meaningful. Living in Charleston and teaching/researching black culture and history is as close to being in the belly of the beast as one can get on this continent. I feel closer to the “slaves who were ourselves” here, to quote Ntozake Shange. It is both a site of horror and a site of home.

And the food isn’t half bad either!

“I noticed a trend and decided I would focus my attention on it to reveal what, if anything, this meant for the ways and reasons black folks tell stories.”

- Dr. Kameelah Martin -
2. What is the content of the special topics course that you teach here at CofC? What do you hope the students in this course gain from it?

I teach a special topics course that centers on various aspects of oral history. The specific focus varies from writing about oral history to analyzing oral history interviews, etc. There can be numerous interpretations of the same historical event.

History is often viewed through the lens of those in power, but what about the regular everyday people? They have valuable voices, opinions, and perspectives too.

This is one of the lessons I want my students to learn in my class.

3. What are some books that you've written in the past and most recently? Do you have plans to write more? If so, will you continue with the subject of WWII veterans or venture into something else?

My most meaningful work is a book that came out last year called “Burned: Conversations with a Black WWII Veteran.” It follows the life of a local WWII veteran and his struggles during and after the war.

I became great friends with Mr. Rollins Edwards in the process. Sadly he passed away recently. I may write a follow up book. However, I’m always working on projects.

One day I plan to write about disabilities in America, for example.

**Michael Owens, MA English**

NOTE: Learn more about Owens’ work when he sits down for a public conversation with Dr. Anthony Greene on February 28, in Alumni Hall at 4 p.m.

1. What exactly is “Voices Speak”? What are some of the current projects they are working on?

VoicesSpeak.org is a nonprofit organization I founded with the mission of helping marginalized individuals get their stories told on various platforms.

Although everyone has a voice in our society, not everyone is equally heard.

We’re hoping to change that. For example, were working on an African American WWII oral history project. Over a million African Americans served in the war but you never really hear their perspectives.
In honor of the College's 50th Anniversary of Desegregation, OID asked Dr. Anthony Greene, Assistant Professor of African American Studies, to share his thoughts on this milestone and offer insight on what he believes the College must do to move forward regarding race.

The fight for social justice, inclusion, and humanity by African Americans is analogous to a quest. The black experience in the U.S., particularly in the south, is rifled with inhumane treatment, no show of respect or dignity, and overall treatment as second-class citizens. Voting and pursuits of equitable education are two social institutions where African Americans wielded a significant amount of blood, sweat, and tears. From the time of formalize public education, blacks encountered laws that prevented them from acquiring a quality education.

Despite the environment, the conditions, and low expectations, African Americans were diligent in their pursuit of excellence. Long before the Brown vs. Board of Education decision, black students were overcoming insurmountable odds to finish primary and secondary school to pursue higher education. Due to Jim Crow, African Americans in the south were denied the right to attend white universities, therefore they attended historical black colleges and universities (HBCUs). These pursuits did not waver in the attempts of blacks to dismantle Jim Crow in southern white institutions of higher education.

Beginning in the early 1960s, southern white universities continued to feel the pressure from African Americans to desegregate. Although in 1954 the Brown vs. Board of Education decision ruled that legalized segregation in public schools was unconstitutional, many schools in the south didn’t adhere to the federal legislation. The deep south maintained its belief of complete segregation between whites and blacks. This belief remained as a practice in all social institutions, especially within public schools.

Nonetheless, southern blacks continued to advocate for full integration in k-12 and institutions of higher education, yet was met with racial hatred. Individuals such as Aurtherine Lucy, who in 1956 was admitted to the University of Alabama, unsuccessfully matriculated in her studies due to mass riots as a result of her enrollment. She was expelled for her “own safety.” In 1958, the University of Florida Law School admitted its first black student, George Starke, Jr. Six years after the Brown decision, the University of Georgia admitted its first black students, Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes, resulting in mass riots and protests from its white students. The disturbances resulted in Hunter and Holmes suspension, again for their safety, until court orders allowed their return. In 1962, James Meredith enrolled in the University of Mississippi as its first black student.
Federal troops were ordered to the campus by President Kennedy to ensure Meredith’s entry and protection. Similar to the University of Georgia and Alabama, riots occurred on and around the University of Mississippi’s campus resulting in two deaths. Again, in 1963, the University of Alabama would make headline news regarding black student enrollment. President Kennedy sent troops to Tuscaloosa to protect two black students, Vivian Malone and James Hood, after they enrolled. These students showed a tremendous amount of courage and perseverance during their tenures at their respective universities.

Their work was challenged by professors; they couldn’t live on campus; couldn’t join organizations; forced to sit in the back of classes; and often had to eat alone in dining halls. Despite these isolationist tactics, they were expected to perform at a high level academically. Their “failure” would justify these universities, its students, faculty/staff, and to society as a whole, that African Americans were not intellectually capable of handling the rigor of those institutions.

Despite the racial hatred, the rioting, the isolation in every aspect of student life, these students endured it all and successfully completed their degrees. They were (are) trailblazers as the first graduates of those institutions. Yet, many other southern institutions didn’t admit their first black students until the latter part of the decade, while others didn’t admit them until the early to mid-70s, almost 20 years after the Brown decision.

The College of Charleston, like other southern institutions, rejected admission attempts of black students long before the Brown decision. In 1944, the College received thirty-three applications from local black students, all of whom, were not admitted. It would be another twenty-three years before CofC admitted its first black students. In the fall of 1967, Carrie Nesbit (’72) and Angela Brown (’72), with Eddie Ganaway (’71) enrolling the following spring term, the College of Charleston open its doors to African American students. Mr. Ganaway would go on to be its first black graduate with a bachelor’s degree in History in 1971. Between 1967 and 1977, the College witnessed several African American firsts: Dr. Owilender Kennedy Grant was the first black faculty member (’72); Hon. Lucille Whipper was the first black administrator in 1972, serving as the Assistant to the President and the Director of the Office of Human Relations.

The acknowledgment of these firsts must be given, but it also must be placed in proper historical and present-day context. As we honor and celebrate those groundbreaking students and the college’s openness to admit black students, we must continue to highlight the College’s black student enrollment has not significantly increased over the last several decades. The African American student population at CofC was approximately 8% (835) at the beginning of Fall 2017 academic year. Although the African American student population has increased numerically, the percentage of the population has not changed considerably when compared to 25 years ago.

I began at the college in the Fall 2012 semester. During my orientation, representatives from the Office of Institutional Diversity gave some startling statistics. They indicated that in 1993, there were a total of 600 African American students at CofC. The fall 2012 enrollment numbers showed that there were only 600 African American students at CofC. Despite the overall growth of student enrollment between fall 1993 and fall 2012, the black student enrollment remained relatively the same.

Also, one cannot discount the African American student experience at CofC. African American students overwhelming love their college experience, more importantly, the College of Charleston experience. There are immense levels of pride and school spirit, as evidenced during our annual commencement ceremony.
However, too many African American students continue to articulate that they’re social, and often times, their academic, experiences have not been the most inviting. Many incoming black students experience a culture shock once they step on campus. The college tours, visits with admissions, and specialized summer programs often provide an insulated, yet false reality, of the lived experiences of black students, and other students of color.

Many African American students articulate racism on and around campus. Just in the last academic year, there have been numerous occurrences on campus that have left African American students feeling uncomfortable, have reservations about their safety, feelings of lack of support by administration, and often question whether they should transfer to another institution. Additionally, several black student leaders discuss their mental and physical exhaustion of having to constantly address racial and sexist encounters throughout campus.

African American students have questioned the why there are so few black students on campus relative to their white counterparts. They’ve also questioned why there are so few black faculty members and other faculty members of color. As a black faculty member in African American Studies, I recognize that I am privileged in that I get to encounter a disproportionate number of black students on campus. As a result, I have the unique experience of engaging with our African American students.

Many students reveal to me that outside of African American Studies, many black students do not have other African American professors. When, and if, they do it has been a rare occasion and most likely in a course dealing with black history/cultural content (e.g., African American Literature; Psychology of Prejudice). Furthermore, taking AAST courses are the only times where they, as black students, are the overwhelming majority of the students in class. It’s disheartening to know that for many of my students, both black and white, I have been one, if not the only, African American professor they’ve had during their college careers. For black students majoring in non-social sciences and humanities, their probability of having an African American professor declines significantly.

The College of Charleston’s first African American students did not have the luxury, or safe haven, of an African American Studies program or a Black Student Union. They experienced the majority of their classes with all white classmates, all white professors, and all white administrators. Nonetheless, they had the courage and tenacity to endure and successfully matriculate through the college. Fifty years later, its without question we can point to some measures of progress at the College, within society overall, but it remains clear that black students today proudly stand on the shoulders of those who come before them, but also the burdens of being African American students at predominantly white institutions.
Booker T. Washington and Reverend Daniel Joseph Jenkins knew each other. Who was Jenkins? In 1891, he founded Charleston’s Jenkins Orphanage and created the Jenkins Orphanage Bands by training orphans to play musical instruments. They played in the orchestra pits for many of the black Broadway shows that opened in the early 1900s.

Time Magazine wrote a story on Jenkins and the wealth he amassed for his orphanage. Jenkins was so successful that he had a Harlem, NY office, and his bands toured with a manager, valet and cooks. His obituary was published in the New York Times and his funeral in Charleston drew nearly 2,000 people. He is someone some historians now say should be written more about. Many of his orphans became popular sidemen with the big bands of Duke Ellington and Count Basie.

They are the main characters in a Charleston jazz story that’s yet to be fully told. Stories like...Langston Hughes dedicated his autobiography, The Big Sea, to Geechie Harper, a Jenkins Orphanage Band musician...Freddie Green, who was born in Charleston, studied music at Jenkins, and went to Morris Brown AME Church around the corner from our campus was Count Basie’s rhythm guitarist for over 50 years...Charleston native Chippie Hill was a bandleader and vocalist on many 1920s recordings and was accompanied by a very talented cornetist – Louis Armstrong...and James Jamerson, an Edisto Island, SC native was the innovative bass player for the Funk Brothers, the Motown studio band that was the musical engine behind those great Motown hits.

Overlooked no more. Charleston’s jazz story is an American jazz story.

**PLAY LIST**

America’s catalogue of Black music is full of songs that inspire, uplift and console. In honor of Black History Month here’s a list of songs compiled by OID and some of the College’s students, faculty and staff.

Happy Listening!

- Glory          John Legend and Common
- New Slaves      Kayne West
- A Change is Gonna Come  Sam Cooke
- Lift Every Voice and Sing  Black American National Anthem
- You Must Learn  KRS One
- We Are One  Frankie Beverly Feat. Maze
- Redbone          Childish Gambino
- Alright          Kendrick Lamar
- To Be Young, Gifted & Black  Donny Hathaway
- Letter to the Free  Common
- How I Got Over The Roots
- Wish I Knew  How It Would Feel to Be Free  Nina Simone
- Say It Loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud  James Brown
- Blk Girl Soldier  Jamila Woods