

Ubuntu.

R.E.D.

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This is america.

UnEarthly: The Beauty of Blackness

Student Documentary Filmmakers on Visual Storytelling, Activism, and Worlding

Interview with Kimberly Flint-Hamilton

MAKING ROOM FOR FAITH TRADITIONS

“...It is a scientific fact that gratitude reciprocates.”
—Matthew McConaughey, Oscars, 2014.

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State of Affairs.

Shedrack Bogonko '22

Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson is set to become a Supreme Court Justice—the first black woman to sit on the hallowed bench. Her nomination and confirmation are monumental to the affairs of the United States to say the least. Whereas the expected display of bad politics was witnessed during her confirmation hearings, I would like to direct your attention to the impact of her role in the Supreme Court.

Judge Jackson grew up in Florida alongside her parents who were teachers and leaders at Miami-Dade Public School system. Her parents had attended segregated primary schools then went on to attend historically black colleges and universities. In a 2017 lecture, Judge Jackson traced her love of the law back to sitting next to her father in their apartment as he tackled his law school homework—reading cases and preparing for Socratic questioning—while she undertook her preschool homework—coloring books. Judge Jackson was always a high achiever growing up. She completed her education with magna cum laude degree from Harvard University, then attended Harvard Law School, where she graduated cum laude and was an editor of the Harvard Law Review.

More than qualified, Judge Jackson's professional career is just as decorated as her academic one. She started her service in the judicial system as Justice Breyer's law clerk and went on to become a public defender. Later she would serve as a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. One would assume given her past achievements, decorated career, and her unique appreciation for an impartial justice system, that Judge Jackson would get overwhelmingly ap-

proved. Yet, her nomination went through with 53 YEAs and 47 NEAs; the voting results symptoms of a still polarized political landscape.

As already pointed out, Judge Jackson is the first black woman confirmed to the Supreme Court. While we could ask why it took so long, one cannot help but appreciate the moment itself. This confirmation comes two years removed from an election that saw the United States elect its first female African American woman of South Asian descent as Vice President. Whatever one's opinion on diversity and inclusion may be, we can agree that it is wonderful for us to be witnesses at such a time when children of color can watch the news and see leaders who look like them take up positions of power and influence. While this does not erase large components in the United States past motivated by racism, it still inspires hope. It is hope that with representation on the bench, issues of black and brown people will at the very least have a sounding board—an intelligent mind that cannot just understand the plight of the racist systems that plague America, but also a heart that can empathize with struggles and circumstances of people of color. A hope that soon enough more people of color will get to be represented in spheres of influence and not have to worry about having to be discriminated against.

The first test of such hope will be later in the year when the U.S. Supreme Court will decide whether race-conscious admissions programs at Harvard and the University of North Carolina are lawful, raising tensions about the future of affirmative action in higher education. The Supreme court has previously



upheld affirmative action in different forms, but the bench's membership has leaned conservatively over recent years and its new conservative supermajority is almost certain to view affirmative action with skepticism endangering more than 40 years of precedent that said race could be used as one factor among many in evaluating college applicants.

The possibility of a ruling by the Supreme Court that would either restrict or prohibit race as a consideration in admissions would echo across other institutions of higher learning and could fundamentally reshape the future of college admissions. A ruling of such kind would likely reduce the number of Black and Latino students in higher education.

As such, Judge Jackson's confirmation holds so much of America's hope I would argue. There is the hope by African Americans that now the path has been blazed and that more black leaders will occupy spheres of influence to represent the needs and perspectives of a community that has lacked it so often. There is the hope that the parity of genders will finally be reflected in our institutions. There is the hope for future students, wherever they come from, that just like Judge Jackson, they can overcome the obstacles in their lives in pursuit of their dreams. Lastly, there is the hope that instead of hindering such opportunities, the American judicial system is paving way to more people of color, and that Judge Jackson will not be the only black woman on the U.S. Supreme Court.





this is america.

Noah Weekes '22

this is america

this is america
the land of the free and the home of the brave
where in God we trust and all men are created equal, one nation. Under God.
Indivisible. With
liberty and justice.... for some

there is a different america

My America
an America where black men and women were enslaved for 200 years and mercilessly sold like
cattle.

an america where segregation forced us into black only hotels, black only schools,
even down
to black only water fountains

this is an america where black students are thought of as uneducated simply because of the
color of their skin
a place where racism runs rampant and hatred abounds.

this is america.

the land of the free for those the color of milk. for those with 6 figure pay stubs. for
those who
believe in God the father, son, and holy spirit. not for those that habla español,
sprechen
deutsch, parle frane. not for those that pray 5 times a day to Allah Subhana Wa
ta'Ala.

this is america where in God we trust to deport everyone whose language we don't
like and all
men who are white are created superior.
this is america where we are all brothers unless you don't look like, dress like, talk
like, walk like,
act like, and think like me.
this is america.



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Kimberly Flint-Hamilton

Associate Dean of Diversity and Inclusion, St. Lawrence University

Ubuntu spent time with Dr. Kimberly Flint-Hamilton to discuss her career at SLU. Kimberly has spent five years as the Associate Dean of Diversity and Inclusion. She gives us a glimpse about her journey to St. Lawrence University, what is unique about her role, and the work we still have to do as a community regarding diversity and inclusion.

Edited by Shedrack Bogonko '22 & Ayana Hartley '22

Share with us a little about yourself, and your journey to St. Lawrence University.

Kimberly: I have been at St. Lawrence for almost five years now. I have to say it seems like yesterday that I set foot on campus. I come from a faculty background. I was a faculty member for almost 18 years at Stetson University in Florida. Moving into my current position was a real change for me; not only moving from Florida to upstate New York, but also going from a faculty position where most of my dealings had to do with either other faculty, or with courses, or with my students.

I'm a classical archeologist; I got my Ph.D. in classics. I have dug at several sites in Greece. As an undergraduate, I majored in Biology and the classics, and then went on to graduate school. I had a narrow focus on what I was doing. It was all about the 'life of the mind', that's what college was supposed to be about, and that is accurate to a degree. It's about more than the mind. It is about positive social outcomes, it is about contributing as a leader, and having a vision for moving your community and the world in a direction that is more equitable for everybody. But I did not know that when I was both an undergrad, and in graduate school. I had not made those connections yet. Things changed when I started teaching and started interacting more with other graduate

students. Then, when I got my first position as an administrator and then as a faculty member, my focus was less on the Homeric world, Greek, Latin, and archeology, and more on my immediate surroundings.

Could you tell us what ideas or issues drew more of your focus and attention?

Kimberly: I had a couple of guiding questions at the time such as: How do I deal with people? How do I deal with my students? What's the most effective way to build community? That is when I noticed the challenges that people of color in general, particularly black faculty and administrators face. I began to notice the inequities. Maybe some part of me was aware before, suddenly, I found myself coming up against brick walls. I began seeing my friends who were also black faculty and administrators not have access to the same kinds of resources and opportunities for advancement and professional development that other faculty and administrators had. I found myself in groups where other members of the committee or the working group would question the credentials of people of color more than they did, and to a much greater degree, of white colleagues. I found myself more and more attuned to inequities in academics in general, particularly in the places I was.

How did you go about approaching those situations and how did you develop your response to those issues?

Kimberly: When I found myself in faculty committees, I would ask questions like why were we not tenuring faculty of color at the same rate as white faculty? Or why was our retention of students of color, particularly black students, measurably lower than other groups? What did we need to change? I had these conversations over and over with people. Of course, I was met with a lot of resistance at times. However, even after getting tenured, I never stopped asking such questions on committees I served. On some of those committees, I was the very first person of color.

Over time, we started seeing progress. I became more dedicated to the cause and asked my then institution to create an official position dedicated to the work of diversity and inclusion, like my current position. Unfortunately, that too was met with strong resistance every time. It was frustrating. I felt confident in the good work I had done thus far but felt there was more work I could do. So, I applied to St. Lawrence and never regretted my decision. I love it here. I love the students, I love the faculty, and I love the staff.

My professional path led me here [SLU] because even as a graduate student I was interested in the voices of the people who lived at one time who are now mute; they cannot speak for themselves. How do you learn about their lives and understand what their experiences were? Well, it's buried, and you must dig it up (describing archaeology). That was a passion and there still is. Yet, the work of Associate Dean of Diversity and Inclusion has a lot of overlap with it. Some voices need to be elevated. They are not mute, but they need to be heard and paid attention to. It's the same idea just manifested differently.

One of the things you mention is the idea of having conversations. Part of your work on campus has been encouraging difficult conversations on campus. Are you able to talk about how best you've seen that translated here? How best do you think students and faculty can go about having difficult conversations?

Kimberly: I'm glad you asked that question. As I think back to the 4-5 years I have had here, most of that energy has been spent in getting groups of people to get together to connect, and have an open and honest conversation where they respectfully listen to one another. It is hard work. One challenge is that from 2015 until now, people are isolating themselves more and more into different camps. Mainly, but not exclusively, isolating themselves into political camps. So, if one individual identifies as politically conservative and the other as politically liberal, and they find out about each other's political beliefs, they might be distrustful and not want to have a conversation with each other, even though in reality they have a lot of values in common. We might vote differently, but let's talk about why we vote the way we do. We may find that we care about the same issues and only differ in our interpretations of them.

It's not just conversations across political identities, it is religion, it is social identity, it is socio-economic status, it is so many different things. The same is not just true for students, it is also true for faculty and staff. We are afraid. We did a series of focus groups before the University shut down at the start of the pandemic, and one of the things we found in the focus groups was fear. People are afraid to engage across differences, they are afraid to talk honestly. Part of that apprehension is the fear that they are going to say something in the wrong way and that they are going to look stupid. Nobody wants to look stupid. That kind of fear erodes the potential to do this difficult

work because it does all begin with having difficult conversations.

During your time at St. Lawrence University, what are the growths you have witnessed the institution and the community go through, regarding Diversity and Inclusion? What are some of the challenges you have faced? What are some of the things you feel we need to keep working on?

Kimberly: I can tell you that when I first came here, I knew right away that there was a lot of goodwill. Almost everybody wanted St. Lawrence University to be the community that we imagined it to be. However, there weren't a lot of people on campus that I interacted with, who had a sense of how to do that work. Even for me, some of that work was new. Remember that I come from a faculty background. I had done a lot of work in my previous institution, but not in a role of a Chief Diversity Officer or as an Associate Dean of Diversity and Inclusion. I went to a lot of conferences; I did a lot of leadership work at leadership institutes as well. But a lot of the work is arriving at the institution, looking at the data, pointing out the problems, and trying out solutions.

So, the first thing I did before I came to St. Lawrence was read the President's Commission report on Diversity. Once hired, I was able to go through the report and talk to people and figure out what work had been done concerning the recommendations made in the report. There had been a fair amount of work done. For example, there were all-gender restrooms, and THELMO [student government] had passed a resolution for students who are trans to not have to pay the single room fee should they need to live in a single room on campus.

We also worked on the campus climate survey. The climate survey revealed in many ways, the challenges that students and the community faced. The data was not unexpected, but it was still heartbreaking to see. When I saw the disparities with respect to race, national identity, and sexual orientation, my heart sank. We had to do some work and do it soon.

The bias incident reporting process is another one of the very first projects we worked on. We have a team of seven people who meet regularly and review bias incidents and trends. We then submit a report each year to student life and academic affairs committees. For the three years that we implemented the process, the aggregate data from the bias incident reports, in their nature, mimicked what we saw in the climate survey. Of all the bias reports we have had thus far race was the biggest factor. The second biggest factor involved sexual orientation, closely followed by national identity being the third. In addition to the bias incident reporting process, every year we have refined our onboarding processes such as student orientation. I still think there is work to do in that area. It is hard to come up with an engaging process for 600 plus incoming students. It is working around engaging such many students in a way that is memorable and meaningful to them, within the short period they have during orientation. I think this past year was better than previous years, but we still have some ways to go.

We also have a mandatory online diversity and inclusion course that incoming students have to take before arriving on campus. We are pushing for the same course to be made available to student leaders as well. We do workshops and extensive training as well as book club events. We are planning on

launching another campus climate survey in the spring of 2023. I hope that what we will see from that survey is that some of those gaps in experiences of inclusion have started to shrink.

Your office has always been open to students who have initiatives or would like to work with you on matters of diversity and inclusion; could you expound on that? How has it been working with students?

Kimberly: It has been amazing. I love the energy and the enthusiasm of our student body. I have my ideas and visions, but my vision may not always be 20/20. Sometimes I am working from my perspective, and my intersectional identities inform that. However, I haven't been 20 years old in a long time, and I certainly have never been a student in this [current] culture. And so, if a student comes up to me and says, "I have an idea for a program, could we talk it through? Could you provide some support?", I say yes. I love those conversations. We have had several positive outcomes from those kinds of conversations. Students bring perspectives and backgrounds that I do not have. The most effective collaborations that I have had with students have been ones where students come to my office with a vision, and we have an exchange of ideas where we share ideas and plans and build together.



How can you speak to your positionality? How do you think your positionality has influenced your work at St. Lawrence University and your role in the Laurentian community?

Kimberly: I think in a lot of ways and in some ways that I cannot see. Having come from a faculty background, it was easier for me to connect with faculty when I arrived on campus. I think that being a person of color, being African American, has made a difference. It's like how W. E. B. Du Bois said, "It dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil". Du Bois was talking about how people of color, particularly black people have a kind of double vision where they can see the world through the eyes of people who are white because they are constantly treated in certain ways. But they also see the world through the eyes of a person who is black, and they see things that people who are

white might never be able to see. I think that has been true in my case. I see positives and I see some negatives that I think white colleagues and white students cannot see because of my background and the things that I have seen and experienced. I care about people. I care about systems that advantage people and disadvantage certain others, and how we can deconstruct them to create a world where we all have equal access.

What is your concluding message to the readers?

Kimberly: My office continues to develop programming while working more intentionally and directly with student groups. I also love working with faculty and staff as well. If you have an idea or would like to work with my office, my doors are open. I want to work with you on your ideas and will offer help as much as I can. I want to help foster a community where we can all thrive. Also, be gentle with one another.



CA 01 F 21
at 21
at 28 2:00-4:00
Nov 4 Carnegie 07
Nov 11

Faculty

→ what would/should you do?

- Challenging Classroom Content

- Mel
- Alvin
- Clara
- Natalia
- Sarah G.

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...ations for
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...programming?

issues
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ESTABLISHED IN 1981

New BLI Course Development

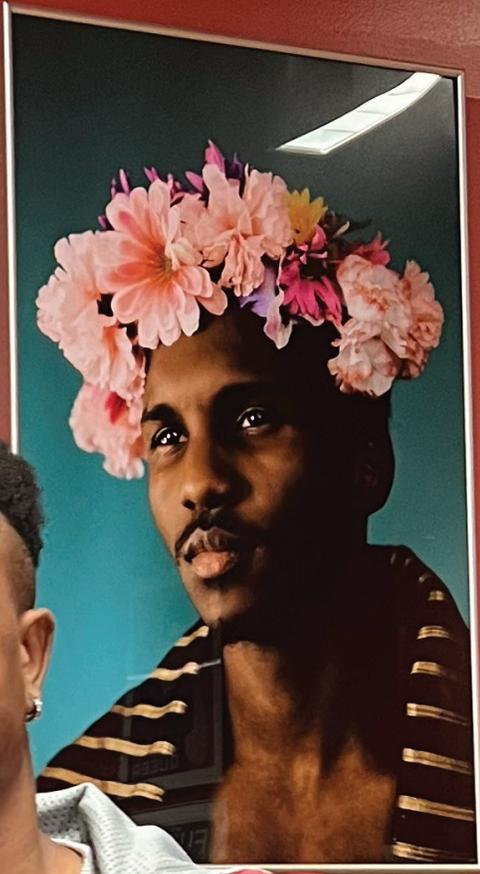
PHOTOS: NOVEMBER 8, 2021

BLACK LAURENTIAN INITIATIVE

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 7

...the Black Laurentian Initiative (BLI) is a student organization that provides a safe space for Black students to share their experiences and concerns. The organization was founded in 2018 and has since become a vital part of the Laurentian community. BLI offers a variety of programs and services, including mentorship, academic support, and social events. The organization is committed to promoting the well-being and success of Black students at Laurentian University.







Utopia







Making Room for Faith Traditions

Ayana Hartley '22



PHOTO: Tara Freeman/St. Lawrence University

“Giving us a space in ODY is a big deal; we have a prayer room that is somewhere easily accessible to everybody,” says Noah Weekes ’22, a senior from Franklin, Georgia, and member of the Islamic Culture Club (ICC). Weekes is referring to a newly designated open space on the lower level of Owen D. Young Library, where Muslim students can find mats for daily prayer and where all students can find space for quiet meditation.

According to Laura Lavoie, director of Wellness Education and Student Engagement, faith traditions can be critical in helping students feel at home, and Muslim students did not have adequate space to pray. That changed in November 2021, when ICC President Aida Gueye ’22 and members of the club worked with Lavoie, Director of Counseling Services Tara Tent, and International Student Advisor Megan Putney to identify better options for students to practice their daily and weekly prayer traditions. John Payne, director of Libraries, was eager to oblige and work with the students to meet their needs in ODY.

The new space has some advantages. It is centrally located on campus, easily accessible, close to running water necessary for ritual cleaning, and devoid of religious iconography or symbolism. “I see it as a space that could be potentially stable, if we are able to work on the issues of privacy,” says Gueye. “Other than that, it’s a great space.”

“I’m hopeful that the space is an improvement over the space the students were previously using,” says Lavoie. “I still think there’s a need, however, to keep searching for that perfect space. I want to continue looking into better options, advocating for the group, and helping in any ways that I can.”

When Weekes and Gueye first came to St. Lawrence, they explained that there was not an ideal space to pray. Even though it’s not perfect, they know ODY is a step in the right direction and will give them a place where ICC can invite all students to learn more.

“The club is a safe place for Muslim students, as well as a place where non-Muslims can discover the diversity of cultures within the Islamic world,” explains Gueye. “We don’t limit ourselves to certain people, we want to reach out to everyone.” Gueye says that St. Lawrence has always supported the club but knows there is more St. Lawrence can do to foster more student engagement and awareness. ICC does its part by holding campus events such as Henna Fest and Movie Night to educate students on the rich variety of cultural practices and the meaning that comes with them.

Moving forward, Gueye and Weekes hope ICC and the University will continue to partner on supporting Muslim students: a designated time for noon prayers on Friday or providing a University shuttle to the mosque in Potsdam so that practicing students can more easily attend weekly services.

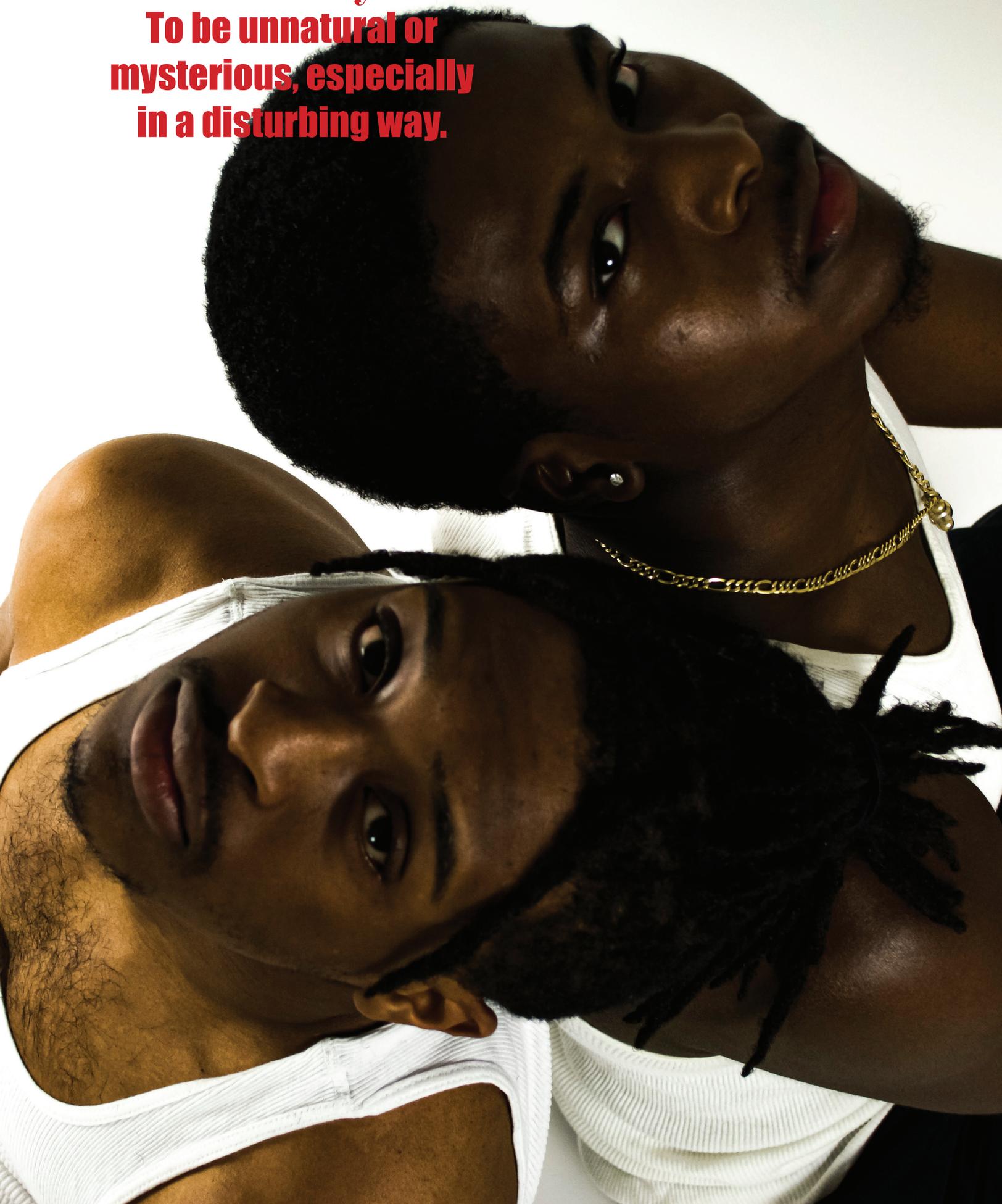
“My goal is to advertise the space more and to have it also be a place for students to come to learn about Islam and the culture,” says Gueye, “as well as being a space for everyone.”

Unearthly: The Beauty of Blackness

Kalila Calame '22

These words have often been used by oppressive powers to disparage, belittle, and underestimate Black people for centuries. There has always been an extensive history of referring to the Black body as an alien type being, one that should forever be placed at the bottom of racial hierarchies. In this project, I wanted to address the idea of Blackness as alien. I want to express that although it is seen as primitive or unnatural to oppressive powers, these various brown hues, kinky hair, and rich culture are a beauty not meant to be analyzed by the white gaze. It is alien because the natural beauty of Blackness is indescribable, never meant to be hidden or made insignificant.

Unearthly :
To be unnatural or
mysterious, especially
in a disturbing way.







The photographic series will consist of photos both depicting Blackness as otherworldly, while also drawing inspiration from their testimonies. The photos will also draw from afro-futurism concepts to further depict the concept of Blackness as alien.





U n e a r t h I y



With this project, I hope to encourage our St. Lawrence community and others outside our community, to acknowledge a new way of interpreting Blackness. The topic of Blackness has always been a taboo subject on this campus, that we almost never discuss. I believe this project will confront some of the biases many have towards Blackness and depict that it is not something to fear, but rather embrace. Black students should not have to hide who they are in order to make their white counterparts more comfortable. I would also hope for this project to help diminish the feeling of alienation that Black students feel on this campus. I'm aiming for Black students to be able to look at some of the art or testimonies from this project and immediately feel acknowledged.

















Interview: Student Documentary Filmmakers on Visual Storytelling, Activism, and Worlding



Seemingly endless applause graced student filmmakers Daniil Kim and Sara Christensen when the projection screen turned black. Their documentary, presented in a class showcase, brought to light the reality of international student employment on St. Lawrence University campus. Using artistic elements and creative camera angles, the duo gave voice to a campus issue that, before this, was never discussed beyond the international community.

The inspiration, according to Christensen, came from seeing a poster. “The documentary happened right after Pub workers hung up a poster saying, ‘McDonald workers get paid 15 dollars, Walmart workers 15, while SLU workers get paid around 11 dollars,’” she said. “That act inspired me to have conversations with workers I knew when I worked at the Pub, and with my international peers about how we’re trapped in a system in which earning between 8 to 10 dollars is very much unfair yet normalized.”

As an international student who works multiple 8-dollar jobs on campus, when gotten the chance to sit down to chat with Kim and

Christensen, thanking them was the first thing on my agenda. In a half-hour interview filled with laughter and introspection, the two shared the meaning behind the film, the importance of documentary filmmaking, and what it means to be grateful as an international student. Below are the edited excerpts from that conversation.

Thao Nguyen (TN): Tell us something about yourself and some updates on your “abroad” semester in NYC!

Sara Christensen (SC): I’m a junior from Denmark majoring in Global Studies and minoring in Public Health and Gender & Sexuality Studies.

Daniil Kim (DK): I’m a senior from Russia. I’m majoring in English and my minor is Film Studies. To answer the second part of your question, New York City is crazy! It’s no exaggeration when they say, anything you can find in the world, you can find in NYC. It’s a lot to process sometimes, though I really like the excitement of waking up every day to find something new and

different.

SC: I agree. I think we broke a little bit away from the bubble that international students can't really get out of unless they have a car ride (and most of us don't). For me, one of the main reasons I applied for this program was to regain the freedom of mobility and a level of independence, which I haven't had for two and a half years.

I'm still getting used to the complexities of the program in general since finance and professional sphere-oriented aren't always my thing. However, like Daniil said, being here is like discovering a new world, and this new world is very cool.

As mentioned before, I really appreciate the chance to see the documentary film that you two put together. For those who weren't there for the showcase, can you summarize the film and share the inspiration behind it?

SC: After we saw the posters around campus, we wanted to address the normalized reality of working for \$8-\$10/hour that student workers face. I reached out to Thelmo, Thelmo pointed us to some other people, but overall, there was a resistance to having the conversation or addressing it as an issue.

Sometimes, when you keep speaking yet no one hears you, you take matters into your own hand. That's what we did with this documentary.

I'm not going to lie, this film was just for a class, but it felt therapeutic. Daniil and I, through it, tackle the stressful assignments and turn them into something important to our private lives; that goes to show that the school part and the life part cannot be separated. We also addressed this in the film. A lot of us work 15 hours on the side of school, so being able to merge those worlds, even for a little, was healing and powerful. It created solidarity between the two of us and a lot of the people we had conversations with.

DK: Absolutely. Sara inspired me and is the reason why we started this film. During my time at SLU, I have a sense that the values of integrity and inclusion, the ones that we advocate for as an institution, we don't really do well with.

So, seeing and addressing the student wages and the socio-economic layer of university life is not just an opportunity to make a documentary film, but also a chance to speak out finally. This visual medium allows us to let other people know and understand the struggles that a lot of domestic students, local workers in Canton, and international students go through.

I also want to say that this issue we're addressing is debatable. I'm not saying that there shouldn't be any conversation. In fact, we should try to listen to both sides. The thing is, we didn't receive the support and the cooperation needed to make any conversation, either public or private, happen. That, the fact that we weren't given a chance, disappointed and saddened me.

SC: I would have to disagree with Daniil and say that it's not debatable or a matter of discussion on whether or not people should be paid properly. I think that's just something that we've sort of normalized and systemized. Paying employees properly should be an inherent part of any organization.

We are, however, not on equal footing with Thelmo or the administration. Not only are we students, but we're also internationals. When I posted on my Instagram story about campus wages (which is how the whole thing spiraled and started), I remember my conversation with some of the Thelmo people where they said, "we can promise you that this is not going to affect your future employment at SLU, or your future opportunities." I said, but you can't. You can't make me this promise. You can't tell me that it's not going to sit in the heads of the



administration that Sara was the person that started speaking about some of these things.

I think that's what makes it also complicated for the film or even for the administration. These are not conversations they have had before. But for us, and the many generations of international students that preceded us, we've been having this conversation forever. It's just scary to start having them outside of our group. One, because it's hard to get the administration to listen and two, because even when we do sit down and chat, we're not the ones constructing the solutions. That's fully up to them.

DK: Conceptually, I agree with Sara. Student wages must be raised, there's no other way. I just wished we were given the chance to speak and be listened to. We wanted to see the values that we advocate for at play.

Daniil, I know that you have experience with filmmaking and that your prior productions are more fictitious and dramatized. How does the documentary side of the film industry differ? What do you think of the differences?

DK: Alfred Hitchcock once said, in narrative and fictional films, the director is God, and in documentary films, God is the director. The two genres are just two different playgrounds, and I find the documentary genre generally hard. You have to stay objective. You take your camera, and you show what you see, no matter how bad, how good. You can't play with it the way you do a fictitious piece. Of course, part of it is still fictional. Any film, performing as a medium to tell stories,

is to some extent fictional. But with this genre, the heart of it is to be able to show others what you see in its rawness, make them believe in it, understand it. For me, it's just harder.

TN: Sara, any thoughts on documentary filmmaking as a genre?

SC: I differ from Daniil on the idea of seeking objectivity because I think, no matter how hard you try to stay objective, everything has a perspective and agenda. Whether or not it's considered neutral, it must come from something. The fact that we have certain wages comes from something. The fact that I want another type of wage also comes from something. So, I don't think there's an objective truth, and neither did I seek to tell an objective truth when I was shooting this documentary. I wanted to tell a specific story that amplifies the voice of international students who are not heard at this institution.

What you said reminds me a lot of Weave News and its message that you can't really be an objective writer because your background and biases shape you and your voice. I'm not at all surprised then to know that you are involved in the organization and have contributed greatly. So, how does the knowledge in documentary filmmaking add to the field of studies that you're pursuing, and the future works you will be creating?

SC: For me, speaking to you, speaking at you, speaking with you can't always convey the full experience or the entire scope of a story. I think what came across in the documentary and



people, we have a lot to say, a lot of experiences that cannot be conceptualized by merely talking. It has to be witnessed.

One of the most powerful things, at least for me, is that you take people with you on a documentary journey. In one scene, it was a Sunday morning, 9:00 AM, I was going to work. Daniil woke up at the time to film me, people witnessed me waking up at that time, walking over to the library. The audience understood a part of my experience at SLU based on that scene. I am a talker, talking is what I do, but sometimes it's not enough. So, I appreciate and seek future opportunities to convey wholeness, fullness with few words.

DK: There's a synergy that comes with filmmaking and there was a synergy with us working together as a team. She was my encyclopedia – doing research and giving me different viewpoints to consider. She has a way unlike any other international friends I have on campus, and I value it greatly.

Now let's talk about the international student life at SLU. I remember in the documentary, Amanda talked about the need for international students to be "grateful" – to be appreciative of all the opportunities that we are given and have access to. What do you think? Do you feel the same need, having to always be grateful, during your time at SLU?

SC: I am a straightforward person – I think I got it from my mom! So, to be honest, there is a

cloud over me at SLU. Sometimes, that cloud is the toxic positivity or toxic generosity that I have to feel all the time because I've been awarded this opportunity. That, to me, is incredibly dangerous because if we acknowledge the fact that we don't live in an equal world and that accommodations or scholarships are needed because we grow up in an unequal world, the power imbalance wouldn't be there.

That's something I critique a lot in my head, though it's really hard to perpetually remind myself of. SLU, for three years, has been my reference point. And when it's my only reference point, then it can reshape my reality. I think it has been reshaping my reality because for so long, I was constantly worried about producing great work in school, working for money, and making sure that I didn't offend the institution by saying the wrong thing.

And at some point, I lost myself. This documentary, then, was a part of getting myself back and standing by what I truly believe in.

I also want to stress that there's so much beauty in our community because we have so many different backgrounds, perspectives, and so many ways of approaching reality. All my best friends are international students, but I do think it can be scary sometimes when we get lumped into this state of intense gratefulness all the time.

DK: I agree with a lot of what Sara said. We are giving in to this concept of gratitude and being grateful for all the things we are given. And we are grateful, very much so. I am grateful for all

the people that I've met at SLU. We in the international community have such a sweet and tight knitted family – I love it. We share the universal struggles, and the universal happiness. But gratefulness doesn't mean that I can't criticize the socioeconomic layer, the issues, and the struggle that we face when we're at SLU.

SC: Our group dynamic, I think, is conditional and dependent. As an international student, my being a Laurentian is dependent on me making changes in specific ways or criticizing something in specific ways. And when we are in a liminal space, a place that's called home but not really home, it becomes difficult to speak out. Especially when so many futures depend on what this institution thinks about us.

As you said, I'm also grateful for the family I've made here, but I find the separation after graduation hard to come to terms with. Will I see you again in the future? Or will life keeps us moving in separate circles? My mind recently has been bound with uncertainties like that.

DK: Thao, the world is huge, but it's actually so tiny. So, of course we will graduate, we will move away from one another, but I'm optimistic. The revolving world is so small that I, unfortunately, ended up in the same abroad program with Sara (laughs)! I think if we're your people, even if we don't talk every day, you find your way back to us in some shape or form. Or we will find our way back to you. We'll always be a part of each other's lives, it's non-negotiable.

For my final question, I want to ask for your advice. Now that you've done and experienced so much of life at SLU, what would you like to say to your future international Laurentians?

SC: Don't feel like you have to go the route that the institution said you have to. You're your own person. Just because you live on campus doesn't mean that they get to control your life. Fuck some shit up! Start a revolution!

DK: You got it in you. You have it.



El Carnaval

La Sociedad | La Casa



Spring semester of 2022 saw the return of El Carnival! A La Sociedad & La Casa. A beloved event, Ubuntu interviewed some members of their Executive Board to learn about what the event meant this year.

La Sociedad Executive Board

Rafael Escoto (President)

Andrea Guinanzaca (Vice President)

Berenice Gervacio (Secretary)

Evelyn Villanueva (Treasurer)

Kimberly Bravo (Event Co-ordinator)

Pedro Yupa (Thelmo Representative)

Kelsey Tejada (Social Media Chair)

Nat Arroyo (IBUV Representative)

Carnival first started in the Spring of 2019 here at SLU. That spring, the La Sociedad Executive Board hired traditional dancers who performed dances from the Dominican Republic. A lot of people were also dressed colorfully and wore traditional masks and accessories. That was the last in-person event as well.

This year was especially difficult in bringing back El Carnival because we were not sure how the event would look like in a post-pandemic campus. So we decided to plan the event from scratch this year. We planned different activities for the day that represented how different latin american countries celebrate the day. We had color powder similar to what they use to celebrate in Ecuador and Piñata to represent Mexican celebrations, games and some traditional foods. We also had a DJ who played latin american music to celebrate the day. We had about 400 people come to the event this year which was a great turnout considering the spring weather.

We hope to make next years Carnival even bigger. We also want to hold other events in collaboration with other clubs of color on campus. We hope by doing so we can help increase the representation and appreciation of students of color on campus.

Membership to LaSociedad is not restricted to students who identify as latin american, the club welcomes all interested students. You are welcome to meet new people, have fun, and learn about different experiences.





The Support & Care of Carefree Black Girls

Guest Contributor: Teal Borden '22



PHOTO: Tara Freeman/St. Lawrence University

“We want to let people know this is for you, not just for us. This is for everyone,” says Sealina Marryshow ’22, president of Carefree Black Girls, a student club that was established in 2016 to provide a safe space for women of color to feel supported in the St. Lawrence community.

“A lot of our members come from different urban environments,” says Marryshow, “and there are a lot of international students who haven’t experienced a predominantly white, remote setting before. When we come to St. Lawrence, we are not familiar with how to navigate these spaces.” Marryshow says that it is important that the club be seen as a resource, as she says, “a space to have the conversations that students may need and want to have.”

Marryshow, a government major from Brooklyn, New York, acknowledges that the words “Black girls” may be intimidating to some because they might think the club is limited to only Black women.

“It’s not,” she explains. “It’s a club for women of color and allies as well.”

While the club has a range of goals, from self-development to mental health and learning how to express oneself on campus and beyond, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has created a shift in the club’s conversations and focus. Marryshow explains that, due to COVID, the school has seen a decline in active club participation across campus, particularly in underclassmen.

“This semester, we did a little rebranding, and we have been focused predominantly on mental health,” says Marryshow. “With COVID, we weren’t allowed to participate in our clubs actively for a good two years. A lot of people didn’t have that space that they needed to talk about what was going on.” The club changed that and has worked with Morolake Odetoyinbo, one of St. Lawrence’s licensed psychologists in the Diana B. Torrey ’82 Health and Counseling Center, to facilitate discussions on mental health.

“With our health center, they do what they can, but they are often overbooked,” says Marryshow, “and until students can access those resources, we need to be the resource for them.” The club has hosted self-care discussions asking members to share what they are and aren’t doing to take care of their mental health.

Carefree Black Girls has also had multiple events and activities to tackle student stress. One example was a plate-breaking event in which participants wrote down their stressors on ceramic plates and smashed their plates while affirming their power and agency.

“We also have destress days where we don’t talk about anything unless someone wants to . . . just having the presence of other members and knowing you are supported or you have someone in your corner if you need it,” says Marryshow.

“Before COVID, we had an array of members,” says Marryshow, who acknowledges there is more work and recovery to do. “But now, a lot of our older members left, and that diverse setting hasn’t really been seen as much.” For Marryshow and the members of Carefree Black Girls, now is the time to remind students that there is a welcoming space where they can come together; learn, grow, and be supported—whatever they are.

Dear Reader...

as Ubuntu, we are grateful for your audience.

R.E.D. is a project where we aimed to present you with not just quality articles and amazing photography. It is the collaboration of an amazing group of students who have grown over the years. Following the tremendous support and feedback from the first issue, we challenged ourselves to produce even better. That meant soaking in all the joys and pains of life, wallowing in different perspectives, sifting through the quagmire, and finally birthing ideas. Many of them were left on the editorial table but what we have compiled and presented is a product of effort and care.

My gratitude to the amazing editors who took up the challenge of beating deadlines, reworking projects, and enduring chains of emails to finally have R.E.D. A special thank you to the Senior Editor, Thao Nguyen, a real life SUPERHERO!! Thank you to Barlin Osman, our cover model in this issue. Thank you to all the collaborators and interview guests. Thank you to A.C.E and THELMO for supporting our projects and allowing us to spread our wings.

The larger editorial board consists of seniors who will be graduating in May 2022. To them and the rest of the class of 2022, CONGRATULATIONS! You did it.

Most importantly, goodbye, from us to you. Thank you for giving us a read.

Shedrack Bogonko '22

