

Headliner Release Party

NICK CIMILLO '26
STAFF WRITER

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ICJ and Black Liberation

SARAH DAJANI '26
OPINION EDITOR

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Gombey Dancers Visit

JULES BOURBEAU '25
MANAGING EDITOR

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ANNIKA DYCZKOWSKI '25
SPORTS EDITOR

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Celebrating Black Legacy: Francesca Borges Gordon '82 Keynotes Trinity's BHM Gala

FAITH MONAHAN '24
IQRA ATHAR '26
CORNELIA EHLEBRACHT '25
NEWS EDITORS

On Feb. 29, Trinity College's Multicultural Affairs Council, in collaboration with the Black History Month Committee and Alumni Relations Office, celebrated the legacy of Black excellence on campus with a gala titled "S.O.U.L.: Solidifying Our Unified Legacy," featuring Francesca Borges Gordon '82 as the keynote speaker. Held in the grand ballroom of the Manuel and Maria Luisa Lopes Borges Admissions Center, the event underscored the lasting impact of one of Trinity's most distinguished families at the College and their commitment to the legacies that Black students and

alumni have built. The admissions center was recently renamed in honor of the Borges family thanks to Francesca Borges Gordon's generous donation to the college which will support the education of future generations.

Francesca Borges Gordon, who currently serves as the Director of Development, Outreach, and External Relations at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, brought to the Gala not just her professional acumen, but also her deep personal and familial ties to Trinity College. According to the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, since joining the Foundation in 2016, she has played a crucial role as a member of the donor-advising team focused on cultivating major gifts to nonprofits and



FRANCESCA BORGES GORDON '82
(PHOTO COURTESY OF HARTFORD FOUNDATION FOR PUBLIC GIVING)

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BlackOut: Enchanted Gala Transforms Trinity College into a Magical Night

CORNELIA EHLEBRACHT '25
NEWS EDITOR

Trinity College's Imani Black Student Union (BSU) took center stage on Friday, March 22, 2024, as they hosted their highly anticipated event, the "BlackOut: Enchanted Gala." The BlackOut: Enchanted Gala was a black-tie affair that aimed to celebrate and uplift Black culture, while also providing a space for students to come together and create lasting memories. The event created a space for students to showcase their fashion and style, as the black-tie dress code added an air of sophistication to the event and attendees arrived in their finest attire. As guests entered the Washington Room, they were transported into a fairytale. The night was nothing short of magical, and meticulous attention to detail was evident in every aspect of the event ensuring that attendees felt immersed in a truly enchanting experience. The venue was adorned with stunning floral arrange-



MRS. BLACKOUT BRIANNA ANDRADE '24
(LEFT) AND INDIA BRACEY '24
(PHOTO BY SABRINA CODRINGTON '25)

ments tastefully intertwined throughout the room. The lighting was deliberately subdued, casting a soft glow and creating an intimate ambiance that perfectly complemented the theme, enriched by a color palette of pink, emerald, blues and greens.

The highlight of the evening was a captivating perfor-

mance by the renowned and accomplished artist, Frank E. Brady. Brady is not only an award-winning poet, but also an esteemed educational consultant and a passionate mental health advocate. According to his website, frankebrady.com, his talent has been recognized and showcased on various esteemed platforms

such as BET, Soultrain.com, The Source Hip-Hop Magazine and most recently ABC Networks. In addition to his impressive artistic endeavors, Brady has an unwavering commitment to the

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"Now then-Trinity!"

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The *Trinity Tripod* has been published by the students of Trinity College since 1904. Its staff members are committed to the reporting and distribution of news and ideas that are relevant to the College community. The *Tripod* is published weekly on Tuesdays during the academic year. Student subscription is included in the Student Activities Fee (SAF). For non-students looking to subscribe, a one-semester subscription costs \$10.00 and a one-year subscription costs \$20.00. Please address all correspondence to:

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CORRECTIONS

Letter From the Editor

Black History Month in March

Welcome to our Black History Month, part 2 E-Edition. If you have not read our March 5 editorial addressing the major shortcomings of our first BHM edition, and the subsequent reparations in place – please take a few minutes to do so in order to situate yourself in this BHM E-Edition. (For your convenience, we have reprinted parts of it below.) As we stated in that editorial, after our much-needed meeting with the Multicultural Affairs Council, we knew that our first edition could not stand alone as the only coverage of 2024's Black History Month at Trinity. At this meeting, we agreed on a "part 2," which would do a few things: cover events that our first edition lacked, such as the keynote speaker Francesca Borges Gordon '82; focus solely on the Black community of Trinity and Hartford, rather than generalize the community as "people of color"; and consistently communicate with MAC and other historically Black Trinity

organizations/events. While this part 2 does not mean we are finished with this work, we hope this marks a stronger relationship between the Tripod and cultural organizations going forward. Our mission is to publish a paper that reflects all corners of this campus, not just ones that are easily accessible, always comfortable or just plain white.

I want to highlight a few stories that particularly stick out. Of course, the news coverage of Ms. Gordon's speech was the pinnacle of Black History Month, and I hope our work reflects the importance of such an event. Also in the news section is a story on the recent Hip Hop Festival's Headliner Release Party at The Mill, which increased my excitement for the upcoming Hip Hop Festival even further. In the features section, one piece highlights the history of Black organizations at Trinity; in the coming weeks and months, we hope to enrich this history with organization-specific stories and first hand

interviews. The arts section of BHM part 2 truly shines: if you missed the Gombey dancers' performance, you can read all about it there, along with a review of Cassidy Willie-Lawes '24's thesis presentation called "The Pipeline." Finally, we encourage all Black athletes to take our sports equity survey, which is a continuation of our recent push to gather data directly from the student body.

Overall, I am incredibly proud of our staff for taking much-needed feedback and making changes accordingly. I am also incredibly grateful to MAC for taking the time and energy to correct our mistakes and make this e-edition a reality.

This is where I'll stop – please take the time to read each and every story in this edition. I hope you enjoy this part 2 and take it as a sign to celebrate Blackness all year round.

-OPS

March 5, 2024 — Last week, several representatives from the Multicultural Affairs Committee (MAC) came to us with concerns regarding our recent Black History Month edition. They expressed that many Black members of the Trinity community did not feel represented by the issue and that it did not provide an adequate picture of the month, neither in content nor in spirit. We agree with them. We must acknowledge that we failed to produce a quality BHM edition, regardless of our intentions. That something that we published caused pain and hardship among not only Black students at Trinity, but also faculty, staff and alumni, is unjust, and we apologize for it.

By focusing on more generally-affiliated organizations and events for students of color, we failed to center Blackness, as our last editorial discussed. This is part of a larger problem of Black erasure, in which the joys, struggles and experiences unique to Black people are subsumed under one "nonwhite" existence. While it is undeniably important to celebrate all people of color, it was an egregious mistake to fall into this trope in particular as part of our BHM edition. This is not to say that we universally denounce the work of our

authors or interviewees featured in the issue – besides, we as leaders must take the highest responsibility – but only that we have lots of room for improvement.

We are deeply grateful for the students and faculty of the Multicultural Affairs Council (MAC) for not only having this discussion with us, but being generous enough to provide insight into how we can improve. In addition, we thank any students, faculty, staff, alumni and others who did not speak to us directly, but who provided feedback through MAC. That they trusted us enough to bring their concerns to us is incredibly meaningful. While they never should have had to be our educators in the first place, we appreciate their dedication to envisioning and working towards a better future for the Tripod. As three white editors, we have plenty of blind spots. It is clear to us that we need more robust communication between ourselves and the MAC organizations, and student organizations in general.

Of course, no apology is worthwhile without action to rectify our mistakes. We plan on creating a new, digital BHM edition that will aim to better center and represent Black history and organizations at Trinity. At the request of MAC, we have decided to

keep the old edition online, as we do not wish to sweep our mistakes under the rug. Its position in comparison to the upcoming improved edition is also part of the story we, as a paper, are telling, even if we would rather that it had not ever caused harm in the first place. We cannot undo it; we can only move forward in the hopes that we do not repeat our mistakes...

As the participants in our conversation with MAC continually expressed, the Tripod is a vital resource not just for the Trinity of today, but for the Trinity of tomorrow. We agree wholeheartedly. In some of our other special editions, we have highlighted pieces written as long as a century ago, and we similarly hope that our work can remain relevant and meaningful a century from today. Our previous edition is not how we wish to represent BHM 2024 to our readers of the future. If our coverage is all that is documented of an event or series of events, then our words come to represent the entirety of what happened. If said coverage is inaccurate or inappropriate, then we have effectively rewritten history. It is imperative, therefore, that we get it right....

To read the full editorial, please visit trinitytripod.com

NEWS

Temple of Hip Hop Hosts Festival Headliner Release Party At The Mill

NICK CIMILLO '26
STAFF WRITER

The Mill bumped to the beat of hip hop music spanning decades this past Saturday night, March 23, when Trinity's chapter of the Temple of Hip Hop held a headliner release party for its upcoming annual Hip Hop Festival. The event was planned and carried out by Temple's production and showcase coordinators, Thao Vy Duong '26 and Anaya Depina '25. The Tripod met with Depina to discuss her role in the release party, Temple's plans for the Hip Hop Festival and its headliners that the party aimed to promote.

"Myself and my partner, Vy," Depina begins, "we both coordinated the entire thing... we found the DJ, put it in with the Mill; [we] basically did everything that was in the background." She went on to add that "the [purpose] of this party was to promote not only our festival, but to promote our headliners: Maiya the Don and MC Soffia."

Maiya the Don is a rapper from Brooklyn, New York, known for her break-

out 2022 song "Telfy" and for being featured on a remix of Flo Milli's "Conceited." Her debut mixtape, "Hot Commodity," released in October 2023. MC Soffia, born in São Paulo, Brazil, has been singing and rapping since the age of seven, rising to fame for her performance at the opening ceremony for the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. Influenced by her mother's fierce activism for racial equality in South America, she incorporates her experience as an Afro-Brazilian woman into her music as a means of advocacy.

In coordinating the event, Depina cites some difficulties that arose along the way: "I think the spring semester proved to be very, very busy, especially [the time around] spring break... I think with everyone traveling for spring break, it was kind of hard to... do outreach and things like that." Despite their constraints, Temple's efforts proved to be very worthwhile, culminating in a fun and well-received party. "I feel like [we've] got a lot of good feedback," Depina said. "When I was leaving, there were a lot

of students outside saying 'That was a great party'... the DJ did such a good job, it seemed like everyone was enjoying themselves, everyone was mingling. I got to meet a lot of new people."

The Temple of Hip-Hop's 18th Annual Hip Hop Festival will kick off Thursday, April 4 and will conclude Saturday, April 6 with a concert featuring the co-headliners. When asked what Temple has planned for the Festival this year, Depina listed a wide array of events: "We have a bunch of different showcases... [we'll] I have a beat making workshop with students, we're doing a panel discussion, we're having a DJ showcase [with] DJs battling... all the elements of hip hop will be introduced in some form."

The theme for this year's Hip Hop Festival is "highlighting underrepresented voices", and Depina discussed how the headliner release party and the Festival aim to do just that. "One of the main things we really wanted to emphasize this past Saturday... was women. We tried to make sure that our DJ played a lot of women[s'] music... and [mu-

sic] queer people as well... [we aimed to] incorporat[e] all those artists and all those different backgrounds."

Depina concluded with a note on Temple's emphasis on community, a value that motivated the Mill release party to be open not just to Trinity students, but Hartford as a whole. "One of

the main things with Temple is really just connecting with the community... I think not enough people [on campus] know about Temple... [so] come to the Fest, come join us. Get to know us. It's a great way to connect not only with Trinity students, but people around the campus as well."



DJ KENNEDI AT THE MILL



THE AUDIENCE AT THE HEADLINER PARTY
(ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF ANAYA DEPINA '25)

Borges Gordon, Continued

continued from page one

and community leaders. Borges Gordon's professional journey encompasses diverse sectors, including corporate and non-profit realms, such as banking, higher education and hospitals in the area. In addition to her professional pursuits, Borges Gordon is deeply engaged in the Greater Hartford community, as she actively participates in volunteer activities and serves as a member of the Connecticut Women's Council. She is also president of the Trinity Club of Hartford reflecting her commitment to Trinity's strong alumni network.

A graduate of the class of '82 with a bachelor's degree in political science and a member of the prominent Borges family, Borges Gordon and her siblings have been instrumental in fostering a culture of philanthropy and academic excellence at Trinity. In November 2021, the Borges siblings, including Francesca Borges Gor-

don, Francisco L. Borges '74, H'20, a former Trinity trustee and a former Connecticut State Treasurer, his wife Luisa, Peter L. Borges '80, Maria Borges Correia '85 and Joaquina Borges King, a Wesleyan University alumnus, collectively donated a remarkable \$10 million to Trinity College. This transformative gift was dedicated to providing financial aid to exceptional students to support their pursuits in higher education. The Borges siblings, united in their desire to pay forward their success, endeavor to provide as many young students as possible with the chance to pursue academic studies and opportunities at Trinity College, just as others once did for them. As a token of gratitude, Trinity College decided to rename its admissions center after their parents Manuel and María Luisa Lopes Borges, first-generation Cape Verdean immigrants who emphasized the importance of a strong work ethic instilled

through their heritage.

The gala, marking the conclusion of Black History Month, served as a vibrant celebration of Black heritage and the Borges family's contributions to Trinity College. Sydney Cross-Watts '24, who co-lead the Black History Month Committee alongside Dansowaa Adu '24, highlighted the significance of the event in an interview, noting that "Choosing the 'Solidifying Our Unified Legacy' theme and celebrating Black history through the gala focused on the Borges family's legacy of honoring those who have paved the way for students like me... Borges was the first family that came to our mind, and it felt right to celebrate them."

Cross-Watts elaborated on the collaborative efforts behind the month-long celebrations, which involved reaching out to multicultural organizations and various departments on campus to support and participate in Black History Month events. This year's

theme centered on celebrating legacies was reflected in the gala's atmosphere, described as a safe space for students and alumni alike. The event saw a significant turnout of Black alumni, underlining the Trinity community's engagement, support and strong network.

The gala, which took place on Feb. 29 during a leap year, offered a symbolic moment to conclude Black History Month, Watts noted. The evening began at 6 p.m. with a cocktail hour, setting the stage for a night of recognition and reflection. Borges Gordon's keynote address underscored the importance of experiences and stories. The Black History Month Committee presented Borges Gordon with an award, thanking her for her involvement and impact, further solidifying the event's theme of legacy and unity and honoring those who have significantly contributed to the Trinity community.

The gala not only served as a moment of celebration

but also as a call to action. Cross-Watts expressed hope that the event would be continued as a tradition to provide recognition of the individuals and families that have contributed to Trinity's success as an educational institution. She stressed the need for more student involvement and institutional support to overcome the challenges of organizing heritage month celebrations, noting that stronger support from pre-allocated funds could facilitate these events.

The event is further signified in its inspiration from the Black Alumni Organization Gala previously held at Trinity, aiming to reintroduce and solidify the legacy of Black alumni. Through Francesca Borges Gordon's keynote and the collective efforts of the Trinity community, the gala encapsulated a vision of unity, legacy and the continuous effort to celebrate and recognize the contributions of Black individuals and families to the College's history and future.

Imani, Continued

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the growth and development of young individuals. As a former high school teacher, he possesses a deep passion for promoting literacy and nurturing social-emotional development among students. His mission is to “use his God-given gifts to inspire & impact people dealing with adversity.”

During an in-person interview at the event, Frank E. Brady shared his personal journey, highlighting his transition from a former high school teacher to fully immersing himself in the realm of poetry and music. Reflecting on his early exposure to the art form, he revealed, “I got into poetry and performance when I was 17. My mother is a poet, and I grew up watching her practice her craft. As I grew older, I realized that poetry is a language that people can understand and communicate with.”

For Brady, poetry and performance hold profound significance. He emphasized that poetry serves as a vehicle for connecting with others. He firmly believes that everyone possesses a unique story, and sharing that story can have a positive impact

on yourself and those around you. “It’s about self-expression, being able to connect with people,” Brady said. “Everybody has a story, and when you tell your story, it’s great for mental health and overall wellness.” To ensure his performances remain relevant and engaging, Brady incorporates popular songs from artists such as Sexyy Red and Ella Mai. By infusing these well-known tracks into his work, he maintains a dynamic and captivating presence that resonates with his audience. In addition to his performances, Brady actively conducts workshops and showcases his talents at colleges, working closely with younger children and teenagers. He expressed that the work he does keeps him connected to the community, allowing him to engage and interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds. He perceives these workshops and performances as opportunities to bridge cultural gaps and transpose the essence of experiences. Using the medium of poetry, he translates cultural experiences into relatable narratives, inviting individuals from all walks of life to engage, appreciate, and

celebrate the diverse tapestry of human existence.

During the event, Brady affirmed that “enchantment is about flipping and reversing things,” encapsulating the transformative nature of his artistry. He conveyed a powerful message to college students, stating, “You are magical and you are enchanting just as you are,” emphasizing the innate value and uniqueness that each individual possesses.

The evening culminated with well-deserved recognition for two outstanding students, the Mr. Blackout and Mrs. Blackout awards. Mrs. Blackout was granted to Bri Andrade ‘24, celebrated for her contributions to queer, Black students. As a co-captain of the Elemental Dance Crew and a member of the Trinity College Black Women’s Organization, she has played a pivotal role in promoting artistic expression and fostering inclusivity. Her work at the Queer Resource Center has been particularly noteworthy, as she has created safe and welcoming spaces for queer and Black students, ensuring that their voices are heard and their experiences are validated. Andrade has demonstrated exception-

al leadership and dedication and her contributions have not gone unnoticed.

During an in-person interview at the event, Andrade expressed her joy and appreciation for being acknowledged. “It feels really good to be recognized,” Andrade stated. “I’ve been in Black organizations my whole time at Trinity College, and to be recognized for the queer work that I do is really special.” This recognition validates her efforts and dedication to promoting inclusivity and understanding within the Black community.

Looking ahead, Andrade expressed excitement about the future of BlackOut and the impact it can have. She shared, “After this, I’m excited for more people to come to BlackOut and keep recognizing Black organizations for the work that they do.”

Mr. Blackout was awarded to Ayouba Swaray ‘24, honored for his contributions to theater production. His dedication and talent were evident in his work on plays such as “Pillowman” and his exceptional management of the recent production of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s “Cinderella.” In addition, he showcased his creative

prowess through his thesis production titled “Tu Colo, Ca Jele Lolu Luh - Through the Woods, and Up to the Stars.” Swaray was an active member of the BSU for three years and served as a senator for two of those. Although he could not attend the event due to his attentiveness to managing “Cinderella,” Swaray commented on his achievement after the event. “Just a year ago, I was on the BSU committee, actively involved in the process of deliberating who would receive the award. Little did I know that I would soon find myself in the same position,” Swaray revealed. This realization added an extra layer of significance to his achievement, as he had firsthand experience in evaluating the exceptional individuals who were considered for the honor. Swaray expressed, “There is nothing more satisfactory than being crowned alongside my best friend, my day 1, Brianna Andrade - another outstanding, selfless pillar of our community who without, I wouldn’t have been able to survive these long four years.” The bond shared with Andrade underscores the power these organizations have for students.

Guest Speaker Alex Manevitz ‘09 Discusses Hidden Histories in New York and Connecticut

RAJSI RANA ‘26
NEWS EDITOR

On March 27, an event titled “Power and the Possibilities of Remembering: Unearthing Hidden Black Histories in NYC” brought guest speaker Alex Manevitz ‘09 to Trinity. This event was held in collaboration with the Hidden Black Connecticut Research Cluster, Trinity Social Justice Institute, American Studies and History Departments. During this event, several important pieces of history were covered, including those of the land and its people focusing on New York City and Hartford. In addition to historical events being discussed, current and ongoing projects at Trinity relevant to the conversation were brought up, including The Primus Project and the research cluster Hidden Black History in CT and Hartford, as part of the Social Justice Initiative at Trinity led by American Studies Professor Christina Heatherton. Professor Heath-

erton introduced the event, acknowledging that Trinity’s campus sits on stolen land.

Manevitz, a historian, educator and public scholar, began the event by discussing some of New York’s history, starting with the past of Seneca Village now known as Central Park. Seneca Village was a community of free African-Americans and Irish immigrants, many of whom were property owners with high rates of income and literacy in the 1850s. On that land, they lived, farmed and buried their loved ones, as well as attended school and church. Through eminent domain (the law that allows the government to take private land for public use with compensation paid to the landowner) the city acquired this land and forced residents out in 1857. The public was under the impression that people were living in unsafe and unhygienic conditions. From that point on, the land was developed into what is now known as Central Park.

Manevitz dug deeper, discussing past stories of in-

dividuals who lived on that land. Sarah Wilson was one of three Black homeowners in New York at that time. Women as property owners had several restrictions until 1878. From there, Manevitz transitioned to telling contemporary tales. He described the exhibit “Before Yesterday We Could Fly: An Afrofuturist Period Room” as an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art that showcases a “fabrication of a domestic space” and embraces the idea that the past, present and future are interconnected. Manevitz said, “The way we talk about our past affects our present.”

From there, Manevitz dove into hidden histories at the College. Trinity, previously known as Washington College, has had several prominent people in its history, many of whom lived unethically and benefited from immoral happenings and systems. The Primus Project is a research project on the topic of slavery, race and reconstruction at Trinity. The project “aspires to tell a truer and fuller story

of Trinity’s history than most people know.” The project has conducted research on several prominent figures of Trinity’s past, including Nathaniel Wheaton, Charles Sigourney, George Washington Doane, Samuel Seabury, James Williams and John J. Mccook. Additionally, the project researches confederate symbolism at Trinity College.

From there, students Ifunaya Obidike ‘27 and Nicole Ankrah ‘26 asked Manevitz questions. Obidike asked a question regarding the identity of Manevitz and if it played a role in his research interests. “Being a non-Black man, why are you fascinated by the lives and stories of Black people compared to other groups of people?” Manevitz answered, “I’m trying to figure out why things I care about today happened,” expanding on how, for the most part, throughout his schooling, there were several untouched topics in American history, separating American history and Black history as if one could be taught without the other. “It was the most

important part of history I didn’t know about.” He found that there were many ‘erased topics’ in history education.

The event ended with a few questions from the audience. One audience member brought up the global quality of Central Park, and its place as a tourist attraction. They asked if Manevitz could discuss the global audience that ties in with his research. Manevitz replied by saying that his research and arguments were limited to the United States thus far. However, he brought up other similar patterns around the world such as U.S. imperialism and its effects in the Philippines.

This talk was incredibly informative, bringing to light some of the cruelest events in history. Manevitz, in addition to providing the audience with the quiet events in the history of the New England area, also discussed information from several important ongoing research projects at Trinity, displaying the importance of understanding present events in addition to the past, to look to the future.

OPINION

A Lesson from Octavia Butler's "Kindred": Afrofuturism Liberates Black Narratives from Trauma Porn

CORNELIA EHLEBRACHT '25
NEWS EDITOR

Octavia Butler's groundbreaking novel, "Kindred," not only captivates readers with its compelling time-travel plot but also serves as a trailblazing work in the realm of Afrofuturism. Through her ingenious storytelling, Butler empowers Black authors to explore narratives that transcend the confines of trauma porn, which all too often depicts slavery through a lens of graphic abuse without granting agency to its Black protagonists. Works such as the film "12 Years a Slave," a film adaptation of Solomon Northup's memoir recounting his harrowing experience as a free man who was kidnapped and sold into slavery, have been accused of utilizing trauma porn, which is gratuitous violence that shocks the viewer for entertainment more than it moves the plot forward, especially to gain critical acclaim. In "Kindred," readers seeking voyeuristic torment will be disappointed, as the novel breaks free from the shackles of trauma porn.

Butler skillfully navigates the complexities of history, time and race, breathing life into a narrative that challenges the conventions of slavery. While Butler may not have possessed a physical time machine, her imaginative prowess and thought-provoking narratives allowed her to transcend the confines of time. She became a conduit, transporting readers across temporal boundaries, awakening their consciousness and challenging them to confront uncomfortable truths. Her literary contributions have left an enduring impact, serving as a means for readers to engage with and reflect upon the complexities of the human experience throughout different periods. Afrofuturism, a genre that fuses elements of science fiction, fantasy and magical realism with African diasporic experiences and perspectives, often envisions alternative futures and reimagines historical events from a Black lens, offering a powerful platform for Black authors to explore their narratives on their own terms. While Afrofuturism often addresses the harsh realities of racism and oppression, it does so while centering on Black agency, empowerment and the possibility of a better future. Through her pioneering work in "Kindred,"

Butler paved the way for other Afrofuturist authors to explore Black narratives beyond the narrow confines of trauma porn. Afrofuturism offers a space for authors to delve into themes of identity, culture, spirituality and futurism, while still acknowledging the historical struggles of Black people offering Black authors a platform to challenge the dominant narratives that perpetuate stereotypes and diminish the complexity of Black lives.

In "Kindred," Butler transports readers into a

deeply prejudiced society. In order to survive, they assume the roles of a slave and a slave owner, playing a dangerous game of make-believe. However, the facade cannot shield Dana from the harsh realities of slavery, as she endures the dehumanizing treatment inflicted upon enslaved individuals. Meanwhile, Kevin must adopt the language and mannerisms of a slave owner, blurring the boundaries between fiction and the painful truths of the past. Through Butler's remarkable exploration of

ing moments do not dwell on the pain itself. Instead, they serve to shape her character gradually throughout the narrative. Butler's narration eschews sensationalism, allowing the story to speak for itself, resulting in a heart-wrenching impact. Instead of focusing solely on the physical abuses suffered by enslaved individuals, Butler delves into the psychological, emotional and moral complexities of the characters. By employing time travel as a narrative device, Butler provides a unique perspective that challenges the conventional slave narrative, allowing readers to witness the complexities of survival in the face of oppression. The impact of her experiences in the past is intense, molding Dana from a carefree young woman into a perpetually vigilant individual, always wary of potential threats, a transformative journey from intellectual awareness to a visceral understanding of slavery's horrors.

Dana's initial assimilation into the role expected of her is marked by a sense of unease, as she acknowledges the disquieting ease with which people can be conditioned to accept the horrors of slavery. She watches enslaved children play overseer and slave, instead of house. The realization of this unsettling truth serves as a catalyst for her transformation. As Dana and Kevin first find themselves transported back in time, they become passive witnesses to the unfolding historical events. They observe the oppressive system of slavery as if watching a show, keenly aware that they are both participants and actors in this

that they are merely acting.

This awareness of their own pretense, coupled with Dana's growing understanding of the realities of slavery, sparks a profound shift within her. She realizes that she cannot stand idly by, merely observing history happen around her. The complacency that once frightened her now fills her with a sense of urgency and responsibility. Dana decides to take control of her own narrative and becomes an active agent of change within the Weylin plantation. Despite the risks involved, she commits herself to teaching others to read, empowering them with knowledge and the potential for liberation. She helps with escape plans, offering assistance to those who seek freedom, challenging the accepted roles and risking her own safety. No longer content to be a passive observer or a poor actor, she embraces her agency and dedicates herself to making a tangible difference. Her actions embody a refusal to accept the ease with which people are trained to accept oppression, and instead, she becomes a beacon of hope and resistance in a time of darkness.

Dana's ability to navigate the past while maintaining her sense of self is a testament to the resilience of the Black community throughout history. Butler challenges the notion that Black characters in narratives centered on slavery must remain passive victims. Instead, she highlights their power, emphasizing their ability to navigate treacherous circumstances and make choices that shape their destinies. Afrofuturism, as exemplified by "Kindred," not only reclaims history but also envisions new futures that transcend the limitations of the present. Butler skillfully blends historical accuracy with speculative elements, enabling readers to engage with the past while challenging the status quo. In "Kindred," Dana's experiences in the antebellum South force readers to confront the horrors of slavery and the enduring legacy of racism. By juxtaposing the past and the present, Butler prompts readers to question the systems and structures that perpetuate inequality. Through her work, she encourages readers to imagine a future where these systems are dismantled, and racial equality can become a reality.

"While Afrofuturism often addresses the harsh realities of racism and oppression, it does so while centering on Black agency..."

world where time travel intertwines with the complexities of race and history. The protagonist, Dana, a young Black woman living in 1976 with her white husband Kevin, experiences uncontrollable time shifts that thrust her into the 1800s. Dana's initial encounter with time travel occurs when she suddenly finds herself in an unfamiliar place, witnessing a white boy on the brink of drowning. Driven by her innate sense of compassion, she intervenes and saves the boy's life. However, her return to her present time leaves her and Kevin bewildered, as he recounts her sudden disappearance and reappearance in a different part of their home. The inexplicable nature of these events only deepens as Dana is repeatedly drawn back in time whenever the boy's life is endangered. Subsequent time jumps bring Dana face-to-face with Rufus Weylin, the boy she saved, only to realize that he is her own ancestor. This revelation sets the stage for a captivating exploration of ancestry, autonomy and the struggle for survival in a hostile society. Despite his father's despicable nature as a slave owner, Dana recognizes the potential to influence Rufus's character positively, hoping to instill kindness in him as he grows older. The complex dynamic between Dana and Rufus allows Butler to explore the moral dilemmas arising from Dana's familial ties to an oppressive system.

As Dana takes Kevin on one of her time jumps, the couple must navigate the treacherous terrain of a

slavery and how her characters navigate its harrowing realities, Dana undergoes a stark evolution when she is abruptly thrust into its midst. Witnessing the suffering of those she befriends, she confronts the agonizing hardships endured by enslaved individuals, their perpetual struggle for freedom and the immense impact it has on their lives. In comparison to the other enslaved individuals on Weylin's plantation, Dana experiences a comparatively privileged position due to her partnership with Kevin. While she is spared the grueling physical labor endured by her fellow slaves, she witnesses the brutal treatment they endure — the scars of relentless whippings, the toll of backbreaking toil etched into their postures. While "Kindred" centered around the pain experienced by Black

"Butler challenges the notion that Black characters in narratives centered on slavery must remain passive victims."

individuals, Butler's skillful use of language resists the trappings of such categorization. Neither her choice of words nor her protagonist's perspective descends into a morose spiral fixated on the suffering depicted. Instead, Butler employs a narrative approach that avoids overwhelming depictions of agony for mere shock value. As readers, we are transported alongside Dana, feeling the sting of each whip, yet her descriptions of these chill-

dark chapter of history. While they wait for an opportunity to return to their own time, they reluctantly play their parts, pretending to conform to the expectations placed upon them. Dana carefully chooses her words and diligently performs her duties to avoid drawing attention, all in an effort to evade further punishment. However, their performances are lacking, for they can never fully immerse themselves in the roles. They cannot forget

Remember the Government's Duty to Fight for Civil Rights and Racial Justice

KASH JAIN '24
OPINION EDITOR

Sixty years ago this year, following a monumental effort by civil rights activists, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson. The following year, Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA), continuing a flurry of legislation to enshrine equal protection and combat racial discrimination in the public and private spheres.

Over the following decades, Congress would amend both laws to expand their scope and strengthen the protections that they offer. The Civil Rights Act has become a cornerstone of modern protections against discrimination in public accommodations and the workplace. The protective capacity of this law has largely persisted and, in some instances, expanded. This was the case with the Supreme Court's 2020 ruling in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, in which it held that employment discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

At the same time, however, there has been backsliding on civil rights, including those that are meant to be protected by these two laws. Some of this has happened at the Supreme Court, where rulings in *Shelby County v. Holder* and *Brnovich v. Dem-*

ocratic National Committee have limited what the government can do to defend voting rights and empowered states to continue to limit voting rights. Inconsistent enforcement and more conservative approaches by the Department of Justice, both intentional and otherwise, have also contributed to this; the Trump Administration sought to restrict certain prohibitions so that they would only cover intentional discrimination. This move ultimately went nowhere, but the Department of Justice under Attorney General Bill Barr also did little to defend voting rights and even backed away from suing over unnecessarily restrictive voting laws. Congress's failure to take action to combat racial gerrymandering or attacks on voting rights has also exacerbated the problem.

Fundamentally, the conversation about the government's role in protecting the rights of marginalized groups, particularly Black Americans, has shifted. It's true that rights-focused arguments are not as persuasive as they once were, and that there is a significant and persistent effort to limit voting rights across the nation based on unsubstantiated fears of massive voter fraud. However, perhaps there has also been a decline in imagination and a willingness to respond; despite loud calls

for federal action, there are many who do not see a significant governmental interest or role in fighting for these core rights, such as freedom from discrimination and the right to vote. There are some who genuinely believe that the government does not have a role in limiting private discrimination, and there is also a persistent belief that racism is somehow solved and that there is no need to continue to combat it. The general elimination of explicitly discriminatory laws (at least on the basis of race; it would be rather bold to suggest that explicit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is not something that exists within both state and federal policy) has led some to believe that the issue is gone. To many legislators, the idea that racism may persist without an explicit targeting of people of color seems like a myth. The data on policing and voting restrictions, the evidence that a lot of policies have a disparate impact on Black Americans, the simple reality that a history of marginalization and segregation is not simply undone because the practices are no longer mandated by law — there is evidence, undoubtedly, but some simply do not see it. If they do, they do not think there is anything that the government can or should do about it.

There is no doubt that nongovernmental organizations and the general public can act to support civil rights. Groups like the NAACP and ACLU have played an instrumental role by securing legal victories, especially in equal protection cases, that have protected and expanded legal protections for marginalized communities. After all, it was Thurgood Marshall, as President of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, who defeated the asinine “separate but equal” legal fiction. Activists and the groups they led made the charge to end explicitly discriminatory policies and push Congress to take action. But, fundamentally, the government has the most power to determine both its policies and the lines that define rights enforcement. Judicial decisions and mass mobilization have power, but the ability of the state to make and enforce the law in response is necessary to secure these rights. Eisenhower and JFK used their power as president to address resistance to desegregation, clearly helping to secure the rights of those who were being deprived of them, but they and other presidents of the era have been criticized for failing to take enough action to ensure that the Court's ruling in *Brown* and broader desegregation were followed. Civil rights legislation was passed because the calls of

millions were heard, finally, by the receptive ears of Lyndon Johnson and congressional leaders who were willing to fight. Government action is frequently necessary to allow positive change, especially on an issue like civil rights where there needs to be protection for those who have been deprived of their rights and a response to resistance.

Race was intrinsic to the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. The basic concept of freedom from discrimination may not involve race, but these laws were created with the goal of defending the rights of people of color, especially Black Americans. This nation had failed for centuries to uphold a value espoused in its Declaration of Independence — that all men are created equal — both within its democracy and outside it. Finally, its government took action to realize that value. Decades later, while much progress has been made, enforcement and action on both voting rights and antidiscrimination protections are not what they could be. There is an innate duty within the American system, a basic expectation that the government acts to defend the rights of all of its people. Far too many of the political leaders in this nation have forgotten that duty, but it certainly is worth remembering, as it could and should inform action at every level.

South Africa Charges Israel with Genocide at The ICJ: Centering Black Liberation for the Liberation of All

SARAH DAJANI '26
OPINION EDITOR

For weeks, protesters have chanted “Yo Joe Biden you can't hide, we charge you with genocide.” Mainstream Western media, institutions and even academics were predisposed to claiming that Israel's acts do not constitute genocide and that mass slaughter and the deliberate infliction of bodily harm does not necessarily signal genocide.

In defiance of the white supremacist application of international law and Western nations' impunity, South Africa instituted proceedings against the State of Israel with regards to its “Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip” and request-

ed the court to indicate provisional measures in a hearing on Jan. 11, 2024 at the International Court of Justice. In a stark agreement, the ICJ concluded that Israel's actions in Gaza are plausibly genocidal and has indicated provisional measures on that basis. But what interest does South Africa have in antagonizing the world's big bullies?

On the day of the ruling, Cyril Ramaphosa, the president of South Africa stated that “We, as South Africans, will not be passive bystanders and watch the crimes that were visited upon us being perpetrated elsewhere. We stand on the side of justice.” As a Palestinian first, and an economics major second, I know it is hard to believe in altruistic human rights pleas, which is exactly why this piece argues to center Black libera-

tion, for the liberation of all.

Drowning in an abundance of diamonds, gold, iron ore, platinum, manganese, chromium, copper, uranium, silver, beryllium and titanium, South Africa was essentially “asking for” the abuses carried out by the Dutch East India Company, and, later, the British rule. One might argue that South Africa was expressing gratitude to the Netherlands by highlighting that it is home for the International Court of Justice in its case against Israel. The Dutch will barely get enough credit for the popularity of South Africa. As after the abolition of slavery, indigenous South Africans were still under racial segregation enforced by law, but after 1948, Hendrik Verwoerd, a Dutch-born politician, rebranded this system and called it ‘apartheid.’ This

literally means ‘to set apart,’ making it the country's policy rather than simply a series of legally binding obligations. Apartheid was the law until 1994, which saw the installation of Nelson Mandela as president. Mandela's influence extends beyond his fight to dismantle apartheid. Mandela called for transnational solidarity, and an end to authoritarianism and ethnic nationalism. He remains one of the founders of the long South African-Palestinian solidarity that extends well beyond South Africa's most recent case against Israel in the ICJ. Mandela recognized the existence of an oppressive structure in Palestine analogous to that in apartheid South Africa well before the Human Rights Watch 2021 report “A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the

Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution.” In 1997 while still president of South Africa, Mandela stated that “we know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.”

Since this piece highlights the relationship between South Africa and Palestine, it might read like the romance you wish for, but it is much bigger than that. South Africa's support for Palestine is one out of endless examples that is used to show that anti-Blackness is the strongest fuel for white supremacy. Centering Blackness “acknowledges the historical root of this racial hierarchy that has intentionally placed Black people at the bottom of society and gives us the opportunity to see the world through the lens of the Black experience” (Alicia Walters, 2020).

FEATURES

The Key Bookstore's Approach to Community-Building Through Reading and Technology

NICK CIMILLO '26
STAFF WRITER

Of the various Black-owned businesses in the Hartford area, there is one hidden gem that might tend to evade peoples' radars for one simple reason: it is entirely digital. Khamani Harrison, founder of The Key Bookstore, discusses the history of her business, the challenges she's faced and the importance of the power of reading with today's technology.

Harrison's initial idea for the bookstore stemmed from the murders of Sandra Bland and Trayvon Martin in the early-mid 2010's. "That was [some] of the most patriotic civil unrest and international unrest I've ever seen regarding Black lives," she recalled. "And I was just coming out of college and... finding self, and I turned to books." After reading many books from a Black-owned bookstore, she realized: "These books are already here... I had to [physically] go into a bookstore, whereas a lot of us are technology-driven."

Harrison understood how technology could be used to increase readers' accessibility to books they previously did not know existed. "Your favorite bookstore — you have to go there; it's somewhere far, maybe, or it's only open so many hours... And so now you're disconnected. So my idea was to rip the four walls off and make it omnipresent."

The bookstore's website features digital mediums such as e-books and audiobooks, as well as physical copies to be shipped directly to readers. And there is much more to it than that: The Key Bookstore also utilizes spatial technology in various ways. "For Black History Month, there's a filter that we have on Instagram [that] randomizes a book, any [of which] is good to read for Black history." There is even an entire digital storefront built with augmented reality technology that customers can access with their phones. In addition, plans are in motion for a mobile app where users can shop and have book-specific in-

teractions with other users.

Harrison and her bookstore have faced many changes and obstacles to get to this point, especially in 2020, with a powerful new wave of Black Lives Matter activism and the pandemic. "[In] 2020, [we] shifted to anti-racist literature," Harrison remarked. "So that was more [for] education for people outside the Black community. A message for the Black community is different than a message for the white community... in that regard, we need to read different resources." The pandemic took away opportunities for in-person events, which helped the virtual business go viral. "I had so much traffic to the website that it crashed," said Harrison. "We had over a hundred thousand views a day."

Despite these challenges, The Key Bookstore is still thriving and actively building a community of thousands of readers. For this Black History Month, they held a fundraiser to raise money for new technologies to implement, in-

cluding NFC for use in their mobile app. They were also featured at UConn's Black Excellence Summit this past weekend. Whether at an in-person event or online, The Key Bookstore emphasizes people coming together

and expressing their truths, with literature as the foundation. "I don't know why it's reading," Harrison concludes. "I don't know why it's books that are so revolutionary and life-changing... It's the key to anything".



KHAMANI HARRISON, FOUNDER (PHOTO COURTESY OF LIBRO.FM BLOG)

Spotlight: Hartford's Black Heroes Trail

ABBEY O'LEARY '24
FEATURES EDITOR

In February of 2023, the city of Hartford opened the Black Heroes Trail. The project was originally developed by a local advocate in Hartford, Bridgitte Prince, and her office. They collaborated with Hartford History Center at Hartford Public Library, the Hartford Department of Public Works and Office of Equity and Opportunity, a number of different local neighborhood organizations, and it was sponsored by Councilwoman Tiana Hercules. Additionally, Hartford Council Majority Leader TJ Clarke and Councilwoman Shirley Surgeon also supported the organization and establishment of the project. The initiative was conceptualized and created with the goal of honoring local Black heroes who made their mark on both local and national history. The trail courses throughout the city and includes sites at the Hartford Public Library Downtown Branch, Central Row, Dunkin' Donuts Park, Hartford City Hall, the Women's League Inc. Child

Development, Hartford Fire Department Engine Co. 2/ District 2, Old North Cemetery and St. Monica's Episcopal Church among a number of others. Overall, the trail incorporates 19 installation sites, each of which honors a Black hero and details their history, background, description and accomplishments.

The project is advertised with the slogan, "Honoring Hartford's Black History, for generations to come" (hartfordct.gov) and was launched to celebrate Black History and the impact of leading Black figures on our modern world. The information provided along the Black Heroes Trail is based heavily on the information compiled by the Hartford History Center's "Changemakers" program and is connected with this resource which aims to honor new heroes annually and build an expanding collection celebrating Black history. Hartford Changemakers is a comprehensive online resource center comprised of reference materials on Black heroes as well as Latine and Indigenous Hartford historical figures

who have contributed to Hartford's local history as well as larger historical events, including national undertakings. The Hartford Changemakers initiative itself is based largely on information presented in the 2016 Black History Month "More than a Month" project in combination with the 2017 Hartford based local community art project "Draw a Hartford History Maker." This project has compiled various resources and references to create a database intended to be ever changing and expand-

ing, gradually including more materials, figures and their stories. Hartford Changemakers is dedicated to diversity not only in race and background, but has dedicated its attention to a diverse array of heroes in multiple professional fields and lines of work. It celebrates the work of individual changemakers in the fields of art, business, athletics, social advocacy and community leadership.

Originally designed to celebrate Black History and the impact of Black leaders throughout histo-

ry, Hartford's Black Heroes Trail not only celebrates the accomplishments of Black individuals but has created a growing network of knowledge and cultural history. With clear foundations in community engagement, the Trail is open to the public and welcomes active participation and celebration within the Hartford Community. As stated in the project's slogan, the Black Heroes Trail will stand as a testament to history and will be a landmark in the city of Hartford for future generations.



PHOTO COURTESY OF REGISTERCITIZEN.COM

Organizing Student Voices: A History of Black Student Organizations and Cultural Houses

ABBEY O'LEARY '24
FEATURES EDITOR

Student life and campus culture are undeniably some of the most critical aspects to consider when appraising a college. Since the beginning, Trinity College has had a long history of reforming and expanding its campus culture to address the needs of its students. Especially since the mid-twentieth century, Trinity students have embarked upon a journey of diversification and has committed themselves to advocating for social issues and creating a diverse campus and student body. Of course, this is an ever changing process and requires a persistent commitment to the betterment of the community. However, this diversification and empowerment would not be possible without the voices of Trinity students and the ability for students to express themselves and fight for change.

In a paper written by Cameron Wooster for Trinity College's course with Professor Jack Dougherty, "Education 300: Education Reform, Past and Present," entitled "African American Experiences of HBCUs After Integration Period," social culture and student life on college campuses changed dramatically following the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to desegregate schools in 1954. Wooster noted that education has historically been associated with status, and after the legal ruling in favor of desegregating schools, many of the elite and previously white colleges witnessed a distinct rise in the enrollment of Black students. Wooster states, "The resulting change that came from the *Brown* decision 'opened the doors to higher education for many African American students,' as tons of TWIs [traditionally White institutions] began to change their admissions standards to be fair to all students- regardless of race." Wooster also notes that by the year 1975, roughly 75% of Black college students were enrolled at previously all white institutions. Even though there was a notable change in student demographics, Wooster comments on the fact that many Black students felt alienated in their school environments and faced various forms of racism and bigotry, often to the detriment of their mental and emotional health. In

light of the contentious social environments on many traditionally white college campuses, Black students began to form groups and organizations to come together as students and express their grievances to fight for change.

In 2023, Robert Cotto, Jr., PhD, with the assistance of students Momo A. Djebli '25 and Naiya M. Roe '25, conducted research and put together their "Brief History of Cultural Houses at Trinity College: A Public Humanities Collaborative Project," which discusses the shift towards a more diverse student body and campus culture at Trinity College and details both the transformations of the original Trinity Association of Negroes (TAN) and the change they brought to Trinity's campus. In the spring of 1967, students Robert Washington and Stuart Hamilton wrote three essays addressed to The Trinity Tripod intended to reflect their personal experiences after attending a conference in Princeton, New Jersey, entitled "The Future of the Negro Undergraduate," in which Black students from various colleges and universities throughout the eastern United States spoke about their experiences and opinions. These essays have been noted by both Cotto, Djebli and Roe's research as well as the "Encyclopedia Trinitiana" as a turning point in student life across college campuses, addressing pertinent social issues and incurring change. As noted by Cotto, Djebli and Roe, "They addressed issues of staying connected to the broader Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, tokenism versus real integration, and the tensions of individual status and collective struggle." The letters, while they did not directly request or demand the establishment of cultural houses and organizations on campus, paved the way for the inclusion of more organizations and houses to be formed and space to be provided for diverse groups on campus. Again stated in Cotto, Djebli and Roe's research, "Rather than a simple binary of racial integration versus separation, Black students at Trinity and around the country sought new forms of greater recognition and support as a [...] group on campuses with mostly white students, professors, and administrators."

Regarding the presence and purpose of such groups on campus, the spokesperson

of TAN, Michael Williams '68, argued that the organization was meant to bring awareness to the heritage of Black students on campus and educate the student body. TAN went on to lead a sit-in in which members demanded change from Trinity's administration. They listed 12 points in particular, including increasing Black faculty members, the involvement of Black students in the admission process, the establishment of integration and matriculation programs designed for Black students, the appointment of Black faculty in each academic department and a minimum percentage of Black students in future incoming classes. Trinity College President Lockwood responded to the demands and implemented a number of the proposed changes, despite not addressing or facing an inability to comply with a number of others.

In 1969, TAN was renamed as Trinity Coalition of Blacks (TCB). TCB continued to demand change at Trinity College and fought for open Black admission, financial aid, funding for TCB and the establishment of a Black Studies program among other issues. Aside from taking a stance against the administration, the piece "Imani: Trinity College Black

Student Union" in the "Encyclopedia Trinitiana," notes that TCB was also responsible for lectures, social events and annual BHM events on campus. Furthermore, TCB "played a major role in calling attention to racism displayed by the school."

TCB, known today as IMANI, is still active on Trinity's campus, alongside a number of other Black student organizations, including Trinity College Black Women's Organization (TCBWO) and Trinity African Student Association (TASA), to name only a few. In the 1970s, TCBWO and IMANI (then TCB) came together to "set out to appreciate Black culture and make the campus more welcoming for minority students" by forming the Umoja House. The name "Umoja" comes from the Swahili word for "unity" and is one of the principles of Kwanzaa. In 2020, the Umoja Coalition (formed under the House) was established, including MAC orgs like TASA, Caribbean Students Association (CSA), Men of Color Alliance (MOCA), Temple of Hip Hop and Athletes of Color Coalition (ACC) as well as Imani and TCBWO. In 2020, these organizations (under the Umoja Coalition) signed a list of demands for the College, including sections directed towards

administration, athletics, the Counseling Center, Career Development, Campus Safety and the faculty. The demands called for a wide variety of necessary changes in the College, including: more Black faculty, counselors and staff members; reevaluation and adjustment of hiring processes; increased resources for Black students, specifically in regards to mental health, athletics and funding for Black organizations; and increased communication between Black organizations and the Board of Trustees/administration. While many of the Coalition's demands have not been met four years later, a slightly controversial change involved the renaming of buildings – many of whom were historically named after owners of enslaved people.

Trinity's Office of Multicultural Affairs states that "If one of our goals at Trinity is to produce critical thinkers who will be leaders and problem-solvers in the urban-global age - who will attempt to change a world scarred by ethnic and religious intolerance, violence against women, and political dogmatism - we need to 'be the change' at home" and that the office is committed to the success and well-being of Black students and the open address of social issues on campus.



23-24 IMANI EBOARD. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, TOP: MARC LAMPKIN JR. '26, MIKE BRICE '25, INDIA BRACEY '24, SARAI DAVIS '26, MA-LYKE DAVIS '25. BOTTOM: SAMIYA JOHNSON '27, SEKAI IMBAYARWO CHIKOSI '27, ASHLEE SIMPSON '25, HERMONIE DIXON '25, SHAIRAI RICHARDS '25, JADE BURNETT '26. (PHOTO COURTESY OF @IMANIBSU ON INSTAGRAM)



UMOJA COALITION
OF TRINITY COLLEGE'S BLACK ORGANIZATIONS

TRINITY COLLEGE DEMANDS 2020

MEMBERS OF THE UMOJA COALITION. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, TOP: JEDERICK ESTRELLA '22, CHIDINMA NWODO '23, NATALIE MILLINGTON '20. BOTTOM: JORDAN LEWIS '22, DAKOTA FOSTER '21. THIS SUMMER (2020), THE COALITION PRESENTED A LIST OF DEMANDS FOR THE COLLEGE WHICH WERE ADDRESSED BY THE ADMINISTRATION IN JULY. (PHOTO BY JEDERICK ESTRELLA '22)

Arts & Entertainment

“The Pipeline” by Cassidy Willie-Lawes ‘24 Searches for the Line Between Education and Incarceration

SAVANNAH BROOKS '26
MANAGING EDITOR

On Tuesday, March 26, senior Theater and Dance major Cassidy Willie-Lawes '24 premiered her senior thesis, “The Pipeline,” a 10 minute play about the school-to-prison pipeline for Black youth. Directed, written and designed by Willie-Lawes, “The Pipeline” draws on her experience growing up in the Bronx school system.

“The Pipeline” is a short collection of scenes depicting the life of the main character, Anthony, through the characters Big Anthony (Chris Cooper '23) and Little Anthony (Ahlon Moye) and their interactions with Teacher/Correctional Officer (Alex Garrian '27). In this production, the audience enters by walking across the stage itself, watching Big Anthony sit across from them, forcing them to understand their role in the “pipeline” the title references. Once the play begins, Big Anthony watches as Little Anthony receives numerous rebukes from Teacher and is even suspended, all for relatively minor offenses such as coloring during

class. These school scenes are punctuated with scenes in a prison, showing arguments between Big Anthony and Correctional Officer that directly parallel the offenses Little Anthony is scolded for.

The play ends with a scripted conversation between Cooper and Moye in which they discuss how the events in the show directly connect to events they, as Black youth, experienced in school growing up. The conversation then led to Willie-Lawes herself taking downstage center and, after pausing for applause, asking rhetorically: “Any questions?” before the lights went down.

“The Pipeline” demonstrated a deeply nuanced understanding of the psychological effects of primary school discrimination on Black youth in America. The production was quick-paced and sharp, with deep emotional beats happening almost on top of one another. Willie-Lawes' writing, clever and provocative, shone through the actors' deliveries, evoking a series of hushed noises from the audience at different points in the play. Willie-Lawes' lighting design also lifted the produc-

tion from its meager setting in the Performance Lab; at one point, Little Anthony sits, forlorn, as lights resembling prison bars strike his figure, condemning him to his future.

The production was grounded by a series of great performances, with Cooper in particular standing out as the contemplative Big Anthony. Cooper, a recent Trinity graduate, often searched Little Anthony visually as if begging for a change in circumstances or some kind of intervention. The actors were quick to respond to one another, forcing the audience to follow the action keenly or risk falling behind. The script, however, seemed to yearn for

more emotional beats; times when the audience could consider the situation unfolding before them and digest Willie-Lawes' ideas about the prison system and educators.

The pacing was the production's largest pitfall; scenes began and ended so quickly it was difficult to consider how they impacted one another. Willie-Lawes built an extraordinarily compelling character in Anthony and placed him in a challenging setting, leaving the audience wanting more time with him as a person. While the ending scene that broke the fourth wall certainly left space for the audience to consider their role in educa-

tional race relations (especially considering the amount of white educators in the room), it seemed to take time away from Anthony's life.

“The Pipeline” stands as a testament not only to Willie-Lawes' immense skills as a writer and creator, but as a reminder of the criminalization of Black boys at a young age that ultimately pulls opportunities away from youth. Even while fighting against a technologically subpar space in the Performance Lab, Willie-Lawes was able to build an immersive, tender production that seemed to beg the audience to hear the Black youth who are so often left (or, perhaps, pushed) behind.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LILY MCMAHON '24

Ayoubu Swaray '24 and His Journey Into the World

HANNAH LORENZO '24
A&E EDITOR

Ayoubu Swaray '24 remembers how he was exposed to theater and dance at Trinity College. Through the Trinity/La MaMa Performing Arts Program, he became immersed in the variety of shows and workshops and took charge of his own art works, inspiring him to pursue his theater and dance major.

“My first real production was at Trinity, and it changed my life. Being at La MaMa, we had to write all of our own stuff and it made me realize that I could just use this vessel. I do not have to restrict myself to being an actor even though it is my best or most skilled craft,” Swaray said. “I got to a place where I am with dance where I would have never thought that I would get here.”

Swaray decided to reshape his education at Trinity after initially being a sociology major and even having an English and political science degree in mind. “I had the chance

to actually have dance in my body and know what it means to be a dancer through my own lens and give me the confidence to start doing things,” Swaray said. “I know if I had stayed with sociology, I would have resented as opposed to having dropped it, but I am so grateful for the sociology path I took because it still changes the way I look at things as a writer and artist.”

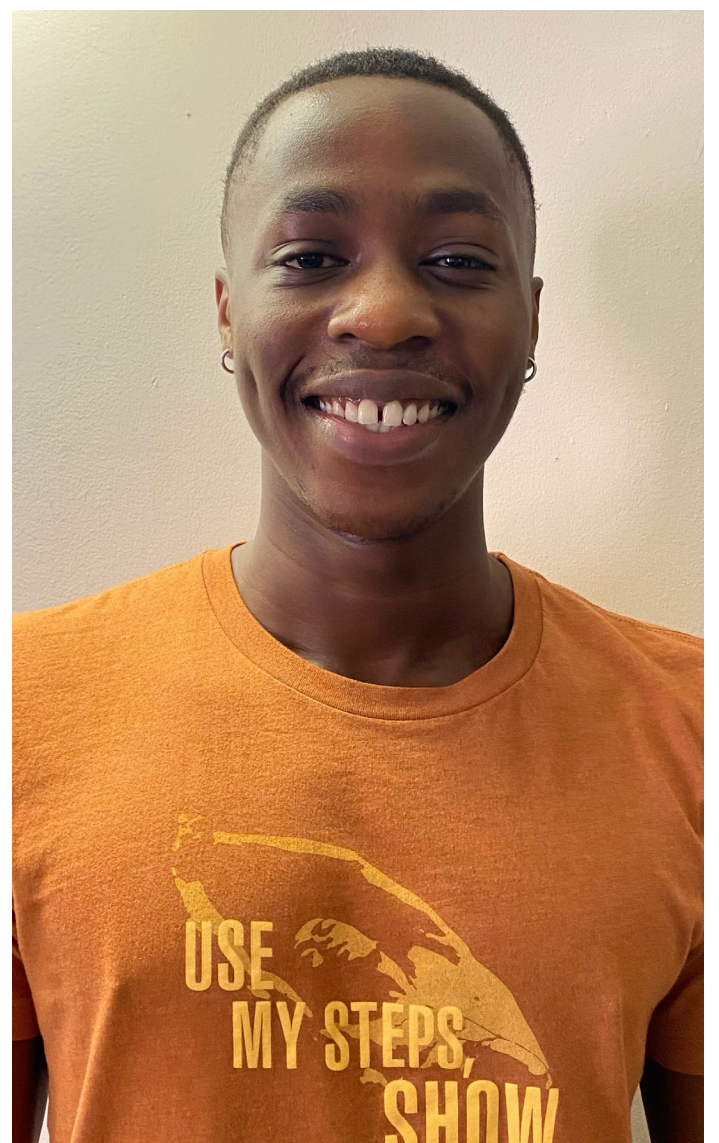
Along with building his career as an actor and writer, Swaray finds a plethora of opportunities to diversify his dance skills, from exploring genres like hip hop and American modern dance to performing for the Spring Theater and Dance Concert.

“I started as a writer and poet, but I have too much energy, so theater was the perfect marriage of that,” Swaray said. “I view dance as the most immediate expressive art form, so while I came in as an actor, I realized I am much more interested in being a creator and creating things. The fact that I am learning

dance, acting and writing, I hold space for all of them.”

Looking to the near future, Swaray reflects on the fluidity of his liberal arts education in theater and dance. While creating his own written productions and choreographies, he expands his network in the arts community, whether that is collaborating with students on their theses, supporting his fellow dancers in the Elemental Movement Dance Crew, or connecting with fellow artists all over Trinity. With these experiences, Swaray is determined to create as he pursues his next projects.

“When you have a project you are working on, things you are inspired by start to funnel in. I think if you are an artist or creator, you are already living an unconventional life, so you literally have to build it,” Swaray said. “You have to build in real time and have faith in what you are building in order for it to grow and prosper into fruition and tangibility. I think that reflects both your life and art.”



AYOUBA SWARAY '24 (PHOTO COURTESY OF SWARAY)

The Dazzling Bermudian Gombey Dance Tradition Visits the Gruss Music Hall

JULES BOURBEAU '25
MANAGING EDITOR

Inspired by her ongoing research on the Gombey dance tradition in Bermuda, Visiting Scholar in Residence Dorothea Hast invited four members of the Warwick Gombey Troupe to perform and give a lecture titled “Call of the Drum: The Bermudian Gombey Tradition” at the Gruss Music Hall on Thursday March 21. The event was co-sponsored by The Center for Caribbean Studies, the Music Department, the Department of Theater and Dance, and the Community Learning Initiative. Irwin Trott is the troupe director and lead drummer, and was joined by bass drummer Alan Looby and dancers Khani Place and Omar Barnett.

After a brief introduction from Hast, the event exploded into color and sound almost immediately, as a sharp whistle and snapping drum beat urged the performers into the room. Their presence felt huge – literally, as the dancers gracefully ducked under the doorway to make room for their towering headdresses topped by brilliant peacock feathers. The troupe formed a whirlwind of dazzling tassels and shifting capes that soon stopped and stood at attention as abruptly as they had begun.

Gombey, as Trott explained, is an art form that takes influence from West African, Caribbean and Native American traditions. The dance dates back over 200 years, with one of its first mentions being a newspaper advertisement from the 19th century offering a bounty for two escaped enslaved Africans. According to the story, they are thought to have ran off with the Gombey, never to be seen again. Indeed, the history of Gombey is deeply embedded in the history of slavery. The West Africans and Indigenous Americans (which are not, it must be noted, mutually exclusive identities) who were forcibly transported to Bermuda developed the dance as a means of resistance against British colonial forces. In fact, the full-body regalia of the dancers, including masks, was meant to help shield them against the legal persecution of those who openly practiced their culture.

Each part of the regalia serves a purpose or has a meaning. The masks are inspired by West African dance costumes, which often incorporate masks. The frills on

the skirts and pants of the dancers originate from the grass skirts and cuffs worn by West African dancers, but are also reminiscent of clothes worn by Indigenous American performers such as the frilled fabric on the regalia worn for the Grass Dance. The capes and headdresses are handmade and decorated with intricate imagery that varies by dancer. Barnett was dressed in a rainbow of colors with a lighthouse motif, a map of Bermuda and a native bird, the white-tailed tropicbird. Place was covered in greens and blues, but Indian-inspired floral designs added a pop of gold to his ensemble.

After this lesson from Trott, the troupe danced once more. This was an artful combination of the three main types of Gombey dance: Freedom Dance (also called “Fast Dance”), Junkanoo (also spelled as “Jonkanoo” or “John Canoe”) and Masquerade.

Freedom Dance is characterized by its rapid movement and beat, and this rendition was performed by Place. Place is only 20 years old, but is already what Trott considers a “master dancer” This is because he has been dancing since he was two, and many Gombey dancers share a similar timeline. Most of them start around age three. Nevertheless, Trott emphasized that the tradition is “a journey for life.” He gave his own brother as an example, who is currently 63 years old and still dancing as a master.

Barnett performed Junkanoo, full of movements low to the ground and a drum beat that mimics the dancer’s footwork. He held a whip, which seemed to writhe with life as he worked through his steps. At one point, he cracked it over his head, producing a sound loud enough to rival the overpowering snare drum played by Trott.

Finally, both dancers joined together to perform the Masquerade. The two circled each other, pulling in closer and closer until they met, nearly touching. Kneeling on the ground, Place “fired” his bow and arrow at Barnett, winning the conquest. This section of the dance was a reenactment of the tale of David and Goliath. It is not uncommon for Masquerade dances to be based on Biblical stories, since the British colonists brought Christianity to Bermuda. The Gombey dancers turn this historical imposition into a moment of power, choosing to place themselves at the



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, STARTING WITH LEFT DANCER: KHANI PLACE, OMAR BARNETT, IRWIN TROTT, ALAN LOOBY PLACE AND BARNETT TEACH AUDIENCE MEMBERS GOMBIE DANCES (ALL PHOTOS BY JULES BOURBEAU '25)



center of stories of resistance and triumph over seemingly insurmountable odds.

After the three-part performance, Trott turned to a discussion of how the history of Gombey and Bermuda is still being discovered today. For centuries, the residents of Bermuda knew that they and many of their community members had ties to Native American groups in the mainland United States. However, mistaken British colonizers had described them as “Mohawks,” an Iroquoian group. Through archival research conducted in the early 2000s, Trott and others discovered that it was actually Pequot (an Algon-

quian people based in modern-day Connecticut) people whom the colonizers sent to Bermuda. In celebration of their newfound connection, the Warwick Gombey Troupe performed at Schemitzun, an annual Mashantucket Pequot celebration. In turn, several Pequot tribal members traveled to Bermuda. The connection between the two groups remains to this day.

Before closing out, Trott invited several audience members forward to learn some simple Gombey steps of their own. Place and Barnett guided them with the help of Looby’s drumming, providing what Trott called “the heartbeat of the rhythm.”

After the newly-initiated dancers returned to their seats, Trott emphasized that Gombey is, above all else, “a people’s culture.” Every Boxing Day, among other holidays, the Gombey dancers will dance and drum through the streets of Bermuda for as much as twelve hours straight with a crowd of impassioned people behind them. “We truly get tired,” Trott admitted. “But what gives us our energy? The audience.” While Gombey troupes may sometimes perform for tourists or corporate groups, as a uniquely Bermudian tradition, Trott concluded that, “At the end of the day, it’s for our people.”



SPORTS

Revisiting the Archives: A Survey for Black Athletes on Their Experience at Trinity

ANNIKA DYCZKOWSKI '25
SPORTS EDITOR

This article was printed in the sports section of the *Tripod* on April 14, 1970. It reflects the harsh stereotypes and racist rhetoric surrounding Black athletes, which at the time was quite pedestrian. There is almost a complete absence of accessible media noting the successes or even existence of Black athletes at Trinity until the early 2000s. Ralph Davis, mentioned in the article, was a dual sport athlete at Trinity (track and swimming) and was the first Black athlete to wear a letter for his team (track). John Norman was captain of the basketball team for the 1961-1962 season.

The historical representation of Black athletes at Trinity is few and far between, and these crass characterizations of Black athletes at Trinity was an unfortunate commonplace. As such, the *Tripod* felt the need to take steps for better representing the Black athletic student body. Please feel free to take the attached survey by scanning the QR

code for research on a follow-up piece going forward.

The Tripod decided to not publish the full article due to racist stereotypes it perpetuated. However, this history should not be swept under the rug, hence our revisiting of this story. To read the full article, visit the digital repository.

“The Dilemma of the Black Athlete at Trinity”

The Black people of America today are a new nation born out of a bitter past. They have known 350 years of oppression and have tried to combat it with both peace and fire; both have failed. They are a people who have completely changed their goal from one of forced integration to one which TIME magazine calls, “separate identity.” They are a people who no longer beg for equality but practice it, who no longer ask for respect but demand it.

Like their people, the Black athletes at Trinity have changed too, from men who attempted to achieve whiteness like John Norman and Ralph Davis, to

men who are proud of their blackness like Al Floyd and John Gaston. The Black athlete at Trinity now is a new man. In order to understand today's Black athlete one must understand his background and his relation to his people and their movement.

Gene Coney, star freshman football halfback, spent most of his life in Philadelphia's Black ghetto. Says Gene of those days, “it was very tough to excel academically where I lived. My friend would tease me and pick on me. You've got to be able to take care of yourself physically, in Philly if you want to succeed academically.”

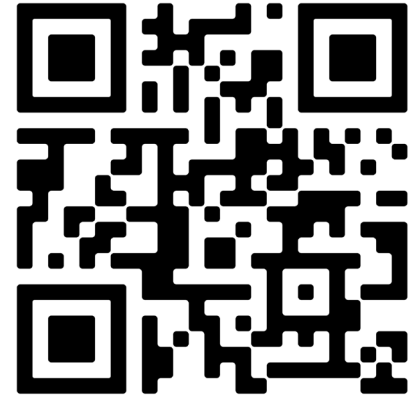
“At home it was tough to study because there was a lot of noise and besides that my friends were always saying, “Man, come on out and play some ball! Academics were all up to me. My parents wouldn't give me any big slap on the back if I got good marks; they were more interested in checking on my attendance. Also, the overwhelming majority of the teachers at my school were white even though the students were al-

most entirely Black, and they didn't relate or understand the Black kids. They'd pass you just to get rid of you.”

Because of situations like those described by Coney, Black children turn their energy into other areas, usually athletic. Baseball, football and especially basketball are the sports which Blacks almost exclusively focus on, “Basketball is a game where a Black can show all of his ability,” says Nat Williams, freshman basketball co-captain. “It's a sport which Blacks can play all the time because all it takes is a hoop and a ball, no other equipment is needed. Other sports you have to

go much further before you can get exposed.” Adds John Taylor, freshman lacrosse player: “basketball is an ideal sport for the city, where you don't need giant parks to play it in; it can be played in a very closed area on concrete.”

For a variety of reasons, almost all of the Blacks interviewed thought that Black athletes are better than White athletes. “We should be better,” said Stirling Eeese,” because our environment is tougher. You prove yourself in the ghetto not by how intelligent you are, but if you can beat a guy in basketball one-on-one...”



Rising Above the Rim: Spotlight on Men's Basketball Player Jarrel Okorougo '26

ASHLEY MCDERMOTT '26
SPORTS EDITOR

Many athletes here at Trinity often express their devotion to the sport they play, and the love they have for the people they play it with. Student athletes on campus spend an insurmountable amount of time working on their skills and bonding with their teammates. This commitment to college athletics has revealed itself through the successful seasons of multiple teams on campus. The men's basketball team specifically has proven that the components of victory come from team camaraderie and individual perseverance. One of those individuals that exemplifies this idea is guard/forward, #22 Jarrel Okorougo '26.

Okorougo is an athlete who recognizes that true sportsmanship comes from dedication to the game and a level of gratitude for the opportunities presented on and off the court. Recognizing that the lessons and levels of

discipline that come from playing a sport can be applied to daily life has set Okorougo up for success as a student, and as an individual. He is a leader, on and off the court, and sets the example for how athleticism, discipline and love for the game and its players are all attributes to being a well-rounded player. The *Tripod* sat down with Okorougo to ask some questions about how being an athlete and team player has affected his character and morale.

T: How has basketball impacted your life?

JO: Basketball has always meant everything to me. The game has given me many opportunities, and created relationships that I will cherish for the rest of my life. It has taught me structure, discipline and the price of hard work which I apply daily.

T: How have your teammates impacted your life?

JO: My relationship with my team is different than others I've had in the past. Off the court we're

probably the most unserious/goofy team around, but as soon as we step on the court all that goes away. Every day we strive to make each other better by competing and holding each other accountable, and that's part of the reason why we're such a tight knit group. They impact me by making me a better player on the court and an even better person off of it. They continuously support me whether it's with my brand, school or just day to day life.

T: What obstacles have you faced in your entire career as a basketball player?

JO: The biggest obstacle in my career would have to be Covid. It was hard not being able to play during my junior high school season. I went from being certain of my future to not knowing where I would end up for my college career. It was a struggle that many in my class went through. Thankfully, I was fortunate enough to be accepted by the Trinity athletics community.

Okorougo has played a

total of 626 minutes. While playing Tufts University on Feb. 10, he scored a total of 18 points. For the whole season, he has scored a total of 274 points, with 28 assists and 22 blocks.

Watch Okorougo and other Bantams from the men's basketball team this Saturday, Feb. 24 against Tufts University. For more information, visit the Trinity athletics website.



MBB AT TUFTS, FEB. 10 (PHOTO COURTESY OF RSE.MEDIA ON INSTAGRAM)

Trinity College

Inside Sports:

Survey for Black Athletes

President of the Athletes of Color Coalition Maya Carnes '26 Speaks on "Bridging the Gap"

ANNIKA DYCZKOWSKI '25
SPORTS EDITOR

The *Tripod* had the opportunity to sit down with Maya Carnes '26, president of the Athletes of Color Coalition (ACC), and discuss her experience as a member of the coalition, the role that the ACC plays on campus, and looking ahead for student-athletes of color at Trinity.

In addition to being the interim president of the ACC, Carnes is a member of the women's basketball team, the DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging) Committee, and the NESAC CoSAoC (Coalition of Student-Athletes of Color). In the spring of her freshman year, Carnes decided to join the ACC after former teammate and member of the ACC E-Board Frankie Silva '23 encouraged her to join. "I didn't do much except printing and doing small stuff for the E-Board members." This past fall, Carnes served as vice president of the ACC, working closely with former President Mike Brice '25. "He was sending emails, and I was doing behind the scenes work." This semester, however, there was a leadership change that led to Carnes doing much more for the ACC. Brice is studying abroad this semester, leaving Carnes with the responsibility of the coalition.

"Being the interim president is a lot of responsibility, we have a younger board, so everything is really new." Carnes continues, "Brice has been really helpful texting me and helping me with any questions I have." She elaborates on her new responsibilities this semester

that she had no experience with prior to serving as president, "Sometimes I might have to schedule a meeting with the career center," she laughs, "I didn't know how to do that before but now I know how to do it." Carnes continues, "[Now] anytime we need to have a meeting, plan an event, or collaborate with anyone, my responsibility is to organize that and delegate responsibilities."

In planning events on campus, Carnes works closely with Denver Williams, assistant football coach, and Kristen Noone, associate athletic director and senior woman administrator responsible for compliance and student-athlete welfare. Other clubs and committees on campus that the ACC collaborates with for events includes the Multicultural Affairs Council (MAC) and Imani, the Black Student Union's club. "We'll do tailgates, movie nights and anything else like that when we colab with Imani," Carnes says. The ACC also has experience with community work in the Hartford area, such as their annual Community Day with the Boys and Girls Club. Carnes shares, "there were athletes of all different teams playing games with the Boys and Girls Club and we ended with a big picnic." For Black History Month, the ACC has been quite occupied, with events including Black History Month Trivia and game nights. "For Black History Month, we try and do as many events as possible, and we make our events open to everyone." As the ACC plans so many events on campus, Carnes emphasizes how she and her

fellow E-Board members curate a supportive environment for student-athletes of color. "We work to promote a safe space, bringing awareness to what it's like being a POC at a PWI [predominately white institution] and just being another community for athletes of color on campus."

Carnes was hesitant to accept the position at first, but she concludes that it was the right decision. "I didn't wanna do it at first, but there was a learning curve." She alludes to the experiences that being ACC President has afforded her, saying "it's given me the opportunity to connect with a lot of people on campus, especially the administration." She shares that working with the athletic administration is something she was not familiar with prior to serving as president. "We work with Kristen Noone pretty closely, and Kristen and Drew [Galbraith] are really good at helping."

Carnes elucidates how the Career Center is at the core of the ACC's work on campus, collaborating on events such as free headshots for members of the ACC. The Career Center is often a valuable resource that some students may not take advantage of, and she describes the importance of offering headshots and hosting similar events, saying "most athletes have resumes, LinkedIn pages, Handshake, and they sometimes don't even know how to work with those platforms." She continues, explaining the significance of the Career Center and its close relationship with the ACC, "it's important to host these events, like bringing alums to talk to us about life after college because

most times having connections with alums is how students here get jobs."

The ACC works according to their mission statement: "Bridging the gap between athletes, students of color and the greater Trinity College campus community one step at a time" (via @TrinityCollegeACC on Instagram). Carnes describes why the coalition's mission statement is so significant to her, saying that being a student-athlete of color has its own challenges. "There's another dimension, another layer of challenges and obstacles." She acknowledges that everyone faces struggles, but that the ACC exists to reflect exactly that. "What we really wanna focus on is that you're never going through anything alone, and that we are so much more than just our sport and being an athlete at Trinity." She concludes, "We want to

make our presence known and we want to connect with everyone on campus."

Carnes shares that the biggest focus for the ACC right now is student body involvement. "We usually have good turnout at events, but we are looking to branch out into more sports [teams]." She also shares that they are looking to increase their female presence in membership and at events; although she acknowledges that not every team holds the same amount of diversity, "getting other sports and other perspectives involved is important." The ACC's next event is a Resume Building Informational Session in coordination with the Career Center on March 21. If you are a student-athlete of color interested in being involved with the Athletes of Color Coalition, you can contact Maya Carnes at maya.carnes@trincoll.edu.



COURTESY OF BANTAMSPORTS

Coming Up This Saturday, March 30...



Men's Tennis vs. Wesleyan, 10 a.m.

Men's Track @ Tufts, 10 a.m.

Baseball vs. Bates, 12 p.m.

Women's Lacrosse

Softball vs. Bowdoin, 12 p.m.

Men's Lacrosse @ Bates, 1 p.m.

Softball vs. Bowdoin, 2 p.m.

Women's Tennis vs. Wesleyan, 2 p.m.

Baseball vs. Bates, 2:30 p.m.