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## York Participates in Selma March

By **TERANDEROSE RUSSELL**, York Journalism Student

A contingency of York College students, faculty and staff members recently took part in the recreation of the "Bloody Sunday" march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the famous Civil Rights march.

Led by Dr. Ron Daniels, a York distinguished lecturer, nearly 30 students, four faculty members and numerous staff and administrators—including Ronald C. Thomas, vice president for Administrative Affairs—helped to mark the golden anniversary of the 1965 freedom march.

Dr. Daniels had taken other York students to Selma to previous Bloody Sunday anniversaries before. Indeed, Dr. Marcia V. Keizs, president of York College had even taken the pilgrimage with Daniels and a group of students one year.

"I wanted to take a larger group of students for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary," said Daniels, who had faculty colleagues such as Dr. Selena T. Rodgers, Dr. Ian Hansen

and Jonathan Quash along for the ride this time. "This is a dream fulfilled with the blessing of President Keizs and many other people."

The York participants had the opportunity to march alongside a number of civil rights icons, activists and politicians from across the United States. Among the attendees were President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama, Representative John Lewis, actors Danny Glover, Harry Belafonte and Ms. Amelia Boynton-Robinson, one of the "foot soldiers" who also participated in the march 50 years ago.

Selma March 2 ▶

## Deadline!

All items for the **May 2015** issue of **Academic Affairs Update** should be submitted in MS Word to [AcademicUpdate@york.cuny.edu](mailto:AcademicUpdate@york.cuny.edu) by **April 30, 2015**.



Successful crossing of the Edmund Pettus Bridge

# Selma March

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John Lewis was one of the original activists who led the Bloody Sunday march on March 7, 1965. He was among those beaten by police that day 50 years ago.

Amelia Boynton-Robinson was another original member of the 1965 marches. At age 103, she might have been the oldest person to participate in the 50th year anniversary.

York students also had the opportunity to interact with students and faculty from other colleges and universities.

“I felt like I was re-living the moment walking across the bridge,” said Rachelle Antione, a Social Work major who got to take a photo with Congressman Lewis, who was beaten almost to death on the

bridge 50 years ago. “I felt nervous. I felt ‘Oh my God, I’m meeting them!’”

The original march supported a petition to the State of Alabama for voting rights for African Americans in that state. African Americans had to go through a series of unfair procedures just to have the right to vote. They were subjected to great indignities such as literacy tests, economic intimidation, and physical violence.

The initial attempt to march across the Pettus Bridge on March 9th, 1965, failed due to the brutality of Alabama state troopers and local police on horseback who had beaten the marchers with billy clubs and almost trampled some to death. Altogether there were three marches, but only one got all the way to Montgomery.

Many people around the United States were moved. Thousands of people, white

and black, traveled to Selma to take part in the next attempt to march two days later. The march now had more high



Dr. Daniels and Anthony Browder



Rev. Jesse Jackson addresses the crowd



Dr. Selena T. Rodgers, Dr. Ian Hansen and some York students with George Patrick Evans, Mayor of Selma at center



Assembled group of original “foot soldiers” who participated 50 years ago



Some members of the York delegation pause at the Freedom Flame Awards Gala



Dr. Ian Hansen and students, faculty and administrators were moved by the experience

profile figures take part, like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and took five days to complete. It started in Selma and ended in Montgomery, the state capitol. It was a great success and eventually moved President Lyndon B. Johnson to sign the Voting Rights Act in August 1965.

The York students attended many of the Jubilee events. These included the Freedom Trail historical tour, the Jubilee Street Festival and Freedom Flame Awards Gala. They also took part in several discussions and a unity breakfast.

“I am very grateful I got to see how much people sacrificed their lives and fought for their rights,” said Shaikh

Amin, York Student Government president who was on the trip. “I see students at York take certain opportunities for granted, but going to Selma showed us we should appreciate the little things. Not only did we touch history, but we’re now part of it, too.”

The experience literally brought Fatima Mabrouk to her knees.

“To be there first of all meeting the foot soldiers was such an honor,” said Mabrouk, an Egyptian-American majoring in Social Work. “There was an 86 year-old woman...I couldn’t even stand up to talk to her. I was kneeling. I told her ‘Thank you!’ She started to cry. She

took my face in her hands. I was in the moment. Now I have to take on issues.”

The honor of capturing the five-day trip in pictures was given to York Communications Technology major/Studio Art minor, McAlexander Ciceron, and he was both thrilled and humbled by the experience.

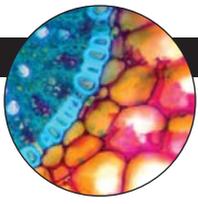
“The last picture I took was of John Lewis,” he said. “Goose bumps happened to me. Goose bumps happened to me the whole trip. Everything we went through to get there was working. We didn’t have to worry about getting beaten, getting killed. We got there on buses with toilets...!” ■



Hoisting York’s name at the march



York Student Rachelle Antoine with Civil Rights icon Rep. John Lewis



# Spotlight on Biology

## York Students Gain from College's Membership in the Genomic Education Partnership

For the past seven years there has been a quiet revolution going on in biological research at York, and the instigator is none other than Dr. Gerard McNeil, one of York's many outstanding biology professors.

Dr. McNeil, whose expertise includes developmental genetics, cell biology and molecular biology, has been involved in an educational and scientific collaboration called the Genomic Education Partnership (GEP) since 2007. That partnership puts York in the company of over 100 other participating undergraduate schools across the United States and Puerto Rico that now participate.

"The purpose of this program is to expose undergraduates to the area of genomics and to provide them a real research experience in the classroom," said Dr. McNeil. "We have published four papers in the area of research education on the benefits of this program since 2008, including two in 2014."

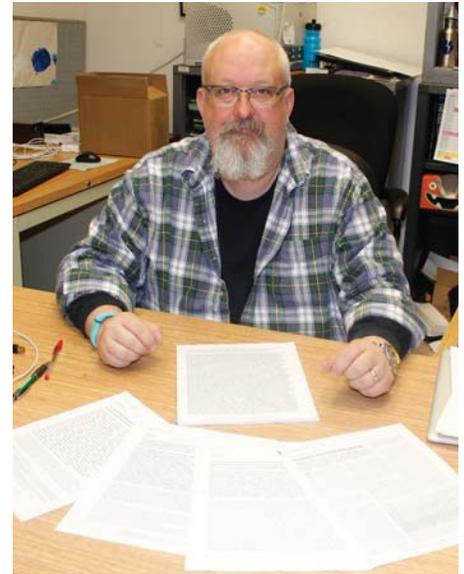
McNeil now proudly shows off the first scientific paper from the collaboration. The paper, "Drosophila Muller F elements maintain a distinct set of genomic prop-

erties over 40 million years of evolution," was published in the journal *G3: Genes, Genomes, and Genetics*; it has more than 900 student and 100 faculty authors (including McNeil), with 25 York students as contributors and 12 as co-authors.

The lead author is Dr. Sally Elgin, the head of GEP, from Washington University in St Louis, a scholar in genomics research.

"Some of our most successful recent graduates are co-authors [on the paper] including **Kirk Haltaufderhyde** (now a doctoral student at Brown University), **Joanne Hays**, a recent graduate from Princeton University now doing post-doctoral work at USC, **Adeola Adebayo** (doctoral student at Brown University), **Christopher Wilson** (doctoral student at Brandeis University), and **Anika Toorie** (doctoral student at Brown University)," he explained.

"The idea was, 'Can we give our students a research experience in the classroom that is similar to what we give them in the research lab?'" said McNeil. "Using an assessment survey we found that we have been successful. What we give them in the classroom is equal, in the student's



Professor McNeil displaying the first scientific paper from the collaboration

view, to what they experience in the laboratory. And the nice thing about this program is that it's all computer-based and can be done anywhere."

But not to worry, traditional lab research is also here to stay.

"Classroom research is a complement to lab research and allows us to reach more students," he said. "At first the students find classroom research difficult because they're not being told exactly what the outcome is going to be because we don't know. They must think critically to find the answer and they are not used to this. However, as they work through the problem they become very



Students from the first class in the Genomics Education Program



In 2015, the classroom research still continues

excited and proud that they accomplished something novel on their own.”

According to Professor McNeil, what makes this collaboration really valuable is that the data generated by all the students in the partnership is combined; and a real biological question is addressed resulting in a scientific publication with the students as contributing co-authors.

Dr. Donna Chirico, acting dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at York is thrilled with the program.

“There is a press to engage women and other under-represented groups in the STEM disciplines,” said Chirico, a psychology professor. “In order to broaden inclusion, there needs to be faculty mem-

bers who are not only good researchers, but good teachers and mentors who encourage engagement in the sciences.”

Asked how York is doing compared to other member institutions in the program, McNeil beamed.

“Doing very well,” said McNeil, who earned his own PhD in Biomedical Sciences from the University of Massachusetts Medical School. “Our students perform as well or better than those at other institutions across the country. It’s about education – how can we better train our students for jobs and graduate work? We do it by bringing research into the classroom and teaching them how to think critically.”

Dr. Chirico agrees.

“The classroom is the entry point and Dr. McNeil is someone who continually works to strengthen his pedagogy, experimenting with new methods to bring students beyond the basic science courses,” she noted. “His passion for his own research is communicated and draws in students to work in areas they might not have previously considered. York has proudly seen the results of Dr. McNeil’s efforts in the papers he has published with students, conferences attended, students sent off to Ph.D. programs and those who have received prestigious awards and scholarships because of their work with him.” ■

## Dr. Elizabeth Alter Finds Biological Questions and Answers, Even in the Subway

When Dr. Elizabeth Alter (Biology Department) was completing her doctoral research in California at Stanford’s Hopkins Marine Station in Monterey, getting out into the field was one of her favorite parts of the research. Her dissertation on whale genetics provided plenty of opportunities at sea. But when she moved to New York City, she realized she would need to make some adjustments to her research program in order to be able to do local fieldwork. “I wanted students to be able to experience marine fieldwork the same way I got to—there is no substitute for getting up close and personal with the ecosystems and organisms you’re studying.” To pursue this goal, Dr. Alter developed a project called BREAM: Bridge to Research in Environmental and Applied Metagenomics. Last fall she received funding from NSF to carry out the project.

The overarching twin goals of the BREAM Project are to improve retention and academic success in STEM among undergraduates at York by giving them a real-world research experience, and to simultaneously improve our state of knowledge about a pressing local en-



Professor Alter (front center) with BREAM students in Jamaica Bay, holding the molt of a horseshoe crab.

vironmental issue: the restoration of Jamaica Bay in New York City. Many students (and perhaps faculty and staff) do not realize that York is about a ten-minute drive away from Jamaica Bay, one of the East Coast’s largest urban estuaries. Students engaged in the proj-

ect learn to use cutting-edge scientific tools, such as applied environmental metagenomics, to investigate ecosystem function and the restoration of urban estuaries. Underpinning these open-ended

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## Spotlight on Biology

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investigations are training in core competencies in the sciences including experimental design, science communication and specific quantitative skills.

Through the BREAM Project, Dr. Alter also began several collaborations with other researchers in New York City examining different aspects of urban microbes, or what one researcher termed “the metropolome.” One of these collaborations is with the Pathomap project

([www.pathomap.org](http://www.pathomap.org)) which seeks to characterize environmental DNA throughout New York City, with an initial focus on microbes found on the subway. The Pathomap project published its first findings in the journal *Cell Systems* in February, with Dr. Alter as one of the coauthors. They found an extraordinary wealth of diversity on the New York subway system, including much that has never been described (~48% of sequences did not match any known organisms). Several pathogens were also discovered, such as the species responsible for plague and anthrax, though the team notes that they

were found at very low levels and did not match known highly virulent strains.

Dr. Alter continues to work with the Pathomap project, currently sequencing microbial and eukaryotic diversity in the Gowanus Canal and other highly polluted areas in New York. “One of the larger goals of both Pathomap and the BREAM project is to help New Yorkers to appreciate our city as a living ecosystem. We are surrounded by life’s diversity, including so many species that are adapting to the tough ways of the city the same way that we do. It’s time we all stopped to take a closer look.” ■

## York’s New Salk Scholar Heads to Medical School

Professor Louis Levinger called it a long time ago when he predicted that then-sophomore Kyla-Gaye Pinnock would go places as a Biotech major in his class. She is now headed to medical school and has just been awarded the prestigious Salk Scholarship.

True to prediction, Pinnock, who graduated in 2013 but remained as a researcher in her mentor’s lab, has just accepted an offer to attend medical school at SUNY Downstate Medical Center.

“Right now I’m looking at [studying] orthopedic surgery and some kind of outreach in minority communities,” said Pinnock, a native of St. Catherine, Jamaica, who came to the United States at the age of 13.

Levinger prepared her well.

“Our current project includes mutations in the tRNASE Z enzyme that causes mitochondrial diseases,” said Pinnock. “We try to figure out how these mutations affect the enzyme’s structure and function. In research there is a lot of problem-solving and Dr. Levinger is just always telling you to ‘look at it from different perspectives, there’s a solution, you just have to find it.’”

And find it she has. Pinnock, who as a student served on the college’s Curriculum Committee, has presented at the RNA Society Conference at the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for



Kyla-Gaye Pinnock

Minority Students (ABRCMS). And it’s “all because of Dr. Levinger.”

“He definitely advocates for us to go out and see what other researchers are doing,” said the former York Honors Program student. “The whole Biotech major is a small major so you get lots of one-on-one and lots of hands on research [opportunities] from him.”

Levinger, a copious grant writer, has received funding from national science institutions such as a National Science Foundation Grant award of \$248,894 for a three-year period for the project, “Regulation on Substrate Binding and Catalysis in tRNase Z.”

“Kyla was supported as a student on research fellowships and is current-

ly supported on a research grant,” he explained. “She will be a co-author on several research papers and will be first author on at least one.”

Asked what she would advise other students at York, the future Dr. Pinnock encouraged a well-rounded experience.

“You have to be more proactive to find out what’s going on and take advantage of as much as possible,” said Pinnock, daughter of a school teacher and a limousine company employee. “It’s not just about academics, but about social and the total college experience.”

Pinnock is definitely one to talk. In addition to her former roles on the Curriculum Committee, she was on the college’s inaugural soccer team and was a member of the soccer club; tutored in the former YES program and participated in CUNY’s “alternative winter break” for the project, “Rebuilding Together New Orleans.” Along with other York students, faculty and an administrator and fellow- CUNY students, she helped to rebuild homes damaged by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

One could say that the Salk Scholarship is the “cherry on top” for Pinnock’s York experience. Named for Dr. Jonas Salk, the physician who developed the polio vaccine, the coveted Salk Scholarship has been won by numerous York Biology students over the years. ■

## York Journalism Major ‘Writes’ Impressive Future as CUNY J-School Scholar

Journalism major Khorri Atkinson has been a busy scholar throughout his four years at York and, for his efforts, recently received acceptance and a \$12,000 scholarship from the CUNY School of Journalism.

“The competition for this class was rigorous,” the letter from Admissions tells Atkinson. “Those admitted constitute a very talented and diverse group of individuals.”

The Admissions director could also have added, “hard-working go-getter” to the letter. Atkinson, who came to the United States from Jamaica in 2010, enrolled at York in 2011 and excelled not only in his classes, but as a reporter/editor on the college’s student newspaper, *Pandora’s Box*. Knowing the importance of professional organizations in one’s field, Atkinson was a founding member of the York College Chapter of the National Association of the Black Journalists (NABJ) and secured an internship with NBC, where he was involved in writing for the network’s website and those of its affiliates.

He has also served as the student representative on the Board of Directors of the NABJ, a spot he won by besting a Columbia School of Journalism graduate student as well as students from the Universities of Missouri and Georgia State University.

His work ethic has impressed his professors.

“Khorri Atkinson truly blossomed as a journalist in his senior year here at York,” said Professor Glenn Lewis, Director of the BA in Journalism Program. “He published about 35 bylined articles in a fall 2014 fieldwork placement with the *Queens Chronicle*. Then he had another highly successful fieldwork stint this Spring semester doing a number of major stories for NBC-owned stations. And he finished the academic year off by receiving the \$12,000 scholarship to pursue an MA at the CUNY Graduate School in Journalism starting in the fall. He truly made the most of all the opportunities the York Journalism Program strives to provide.”

Atkinson shares credit for his success with the outstanding faculty at York College.

“The professors here are very supportive,” he acknowledged. “They don’t spoon-feed you, so you learn a lot. Professor (Claire) Serant is my mentor; and she always pushes me to ‘go for it.’”

Serant, a lecturer with the program, is a former *Daily News* reporter and encourages her students to be the professionals they are going to be, while they are still students. Atkinson is one of the many who took the advice to heart.

“What makes Khorri a great student is that he actually listens to the advice given to him and he is not afraid to take on new challenges,” said Serant. “He does not hoard information. He shares what he knows with his peers. That is why he worked hard to establish the York College Association of Black Journalists (YCABJ) so that all journalism majors and minors, regardless of their race, could network with professional writers and editors. Khorri’s on and off-campus activities caught the attention of the *Amsterdam News*, *The Online News Association*, NBC and CUNY Graduate School of Journalism. I’m so proud of him.”



Khorri Atkinson

Atkinson is proud too – of his graduate school choice.

“I have confidence in the CUNY J-School, said Atkinson. “I wouldn’t go to Columbia (University) just for the name. The CUNY J-School aligns more with my career interests and is way more affordable.”

Among Atkinson’s many clips from his internships at the *Amsterdam News*, *The Queens Chronicle* and NBC, is an extensive piece on the 50th anniversary of Selma’s Bloody Sunday anniversary, available at the following link:

<http://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/national-international/Youth-Activists-Launch-Petition-To-Rename-Historic-Bridge-295389401.html> ■

### Kudos!



Congratulations to **Robert Johnson**, long-time assistant track and field coach and adjunct professor at York College! Coach Johnson will be inducted into The Penn Relays Wall of Fame as part of the 2015 induction ceremony. The event took place during The Penn Relays on the weekend of April 24-25. Coach Johnson was part of the 1965 North Carolina College 880-yard relay team, along with Terell Amos, Edwin Roberts and Norm Tate, which set a Relays record of 1:24.4. He became York’s first track and field head coach in 1971 and held that position until 1978. In 1995, he returned as an assistant coach to work with long-time friend Thomas Pope, who was the head coach at the time. Together, they coached the Cardinals track and field teams to 23 CUNYAC Championships. Johnson officially stepped down as paid assistant coach in 2006 but has served as a volunteer assistant coach since then. He also still teaches physical education part-time at York.

# York's Honda All-Stars Team: Winning is Not the Only Prize

The Honda Campus All-Star Challenge (HCASC) is always looking for a few good scholars and they can always count on York to provide some.

For the last several years the college has been participating in the college-level game show, which plays like the TV game show “Jeopardy,” complete with buzzers. The show was created for students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

And while York is technically not an HBCU, its predominantly African-American student population qualifies it as a competing institution. But make no mistake, York does not choose its contestants just along racial lines. The contestants are diverse and well-versed.

This year's participants ranged in experience from never having gone to the Honda All-Star Games, to one veteran of four trips. Unfortunately, team York was eliminated early on in the process during the games held in Los Angeles in March.

Looking at the bright side, York had the most points of those who did not make it. The college also received \$3,000 in scholarship funds just for participating and an additional \$1,000 for a team member's dance-off participation on a winning team of six colleges against the other 42 institutions.

Dr. Farley Mawyer, a veteran Mathematics professor at York, has coached the students for as long as York has been participating in the games.

“We went to Orlando in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010,” said Mawyer, referring to the original destination of the challenge. “We did not go to the finals in 2011. We went to Los Angeles in 2012, 2013, and 2014, although I did not go. As you know, I was the official coach again at the 2015 finals. Although we never made it to the quarter-finals, in round-robin competition, we often gave some of the ‘favorites’ quite a scare. We also had some good results at pre-NCTs.”

Practice questions at York run the gamut from “Who is the US Secretary of Defense who succeeded Chuck Hagel?”

(Ashton Carter); to “Who played Martin Luther King, Jr. in the movie Selma?” (David Oyelowo) and “Which European nation voted to remain in the European Union in 2014?” (Scotland).

There were also questions about which “Batman” star was recently nominated for an Oscar (Michael Keaton); and who is the commissioner who said the NFL had not seen the Ray Rice domestic abuse video (Roger Goodell).

But according to Mawyer, it's not all about what you know, but how fast you are at the draw – as in pressing the buzzer so you can deliver your answer or best guess.

“A lot of it is the luck of the timing,” said Mawyer, who takes time off a very busy schedule to train his team.

Using a TV screen for one final rehearsal, Mawyer drilled his students one last time before the trip. Categories included “Presidents of the United States” and “Take me to the Greek.”

“Who delivered the shortest presidential inaugural speech?” Mawyer asked. The answer is “George Washington in 1793.”

One category, “Take me to the Greek,” included, “Achilles died when an arrow hit what body part?” The answer, of course, is “the heel.”

Tess Mercer, the veteran of four trips and this year's captain, explained that while winning would be nice, the experience is worth the trip however it turns out.

“It's an experience like nothing else,” said Mercer, a psychology major and graduating senior. “This is the only reason I get to leave the east coast; and you get to meet amazing people from across the country.”

Kimberly Barnes, a Clinical Laboratory Science major, was competing nationally for the second time, but she's already hooked on the experience.

“Once you've competed nationally it becomes close to your heart,” she explained. “Forty- eight schools, one giant Marriott Hotel and we all get along. You're in a room with some pretty tough teams. Morgan State won two years in a row.”

Daniel Lashley-Smith, a Journalism major, and Jocelyn Schantz, a Nursing major, rounded out the York team with each of the four students taking on categories they are most comfortable with during rehearsal.

Lashley-Smith is the sports, space science and entertainment expert; Barnes is strong in history, geography and “some science”; Mercer is partial to anatomy, physiology and pop culture; while Schantz goes for the miscellaneous, such as science fiction and Harry Potter. ■



Dr. Farley Mawyer center with from L-R Daniel Lashley-Smith, Tess Mercer, Kimberly Barnes and Jocelyn Schantz



# The Empress Has No Clothes: Conquering the Imposter Syndrome

by Selena T. Rodgers

On March 25, 2015, Dr. Selena T. Rodgers, Assistant Professor of Social Work, was invited by Ms. Ebonie Jackson, Manager of the YC Women's Center, to join the 2015 Women's History Month Colloquium, *The Imposter Syndrome*. Joyce M. Roché, featured keynote and author of *The Empress Has No Clothes: Conquering Self-doubt to Embrace Success*, CUNY Trustee & President CEO of Legal Momentum Carol A. Robles-Roman, and journalism student Allyson Gill engaged the packed room of attendees in a lively discussion.

Psychologists Dr. Pauline Rose Clance and Suzanne Imes coined the term "im-

poster phenomenon" to designate an internal experience of intellectual phoniness which they identified as particularly prevalent in high-achieving women. Dr. Rodgers emphasized the importance of changing the empirical language to emphasize positive narratives to overcome feelings of the

"imposter syndrome." She also discussed additional barriers which can foster feelings of extreme self-doubt, eloquently discussed in Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs and Yolanda Flores Niemann (Eds.) book, *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersection of Race and Class for Women in Academia*.



From left to right: Joyce M. Roché, Carol Robles-Roman, Ebonie Jackson, Selena T. Rodgers and Allyson Gill

## York 'Woman in STEM' Host Symposium

By **TERANDEROSE RUSSELL**, York Journalism Student

This year's Women's History Month provided many opportunities to focus on women and careers. It is to this end that a group of York College women professors in Science, Technology, [Engineering] and Mathematics (STEM), recently conducted "The Woman in STEM Symposium," an event geared toward encouraging more women to choose the path of STEM occupations.



Dr. Yolanda Small



Dr. Elizabeth Alter

Speakers at the March 26th event—held in the African American Resource Center—included Dr. Freya Pritchard, a mathematics and computer Science specialist at York College; Dr. Yolanda A. Small, a chemistry professor at York and the CUNY Graduate



Dr. Shweta Jain

Center; Dr. Elizabeth Alter, who teaches biology at York and the Graduate Center; Dr. Shweta Jain, a mathematics and computer science specialist at York and the Graduate Center; and guest speaker Dr. Susan L.

Epstein, professor of computer science at CUNY's Hunter College and The Graduate Center.

Dr. Epstein specializes in research using various fields of interest such as psychology, geography, robotics and urban planning in her research and problem-solving methods.



Dr. Susan Epstein

Epstein brought a level of excitement by explaining her research in artificial intelligence. She ex-

plained how she used the simple commonly known game tic-tac-toe and how it led to discoveries about robots and people.

Dr. Jain also explained the lack of persistent engagement by women in STEM. "STEM is like a leaky pipeline, for women," said Jain. "We start early in elementary school and middle school; then by early retirement most of us leave."

According to the U.S. Department of Labor and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Women in the Labor Force: A Datebook, 2014*, women make up 47% of the workforce, but are greatly under-represented in STEM occupations.

Women make up 39% of chemists and material scientists, 27.9% of environmental scientists and geoscientists, 15.6% of chemical engineers, 12.1% of civil engineers, 8.3% of electrical and electronics engineers, 17.2% of industrial engineers, and 7.2% of mechanical engineers.

STEM is also a feature of President Barack Obama's policy on immigration and a focus of economic growth and stability since the decline in US manufacturing jobs. ■



# Physics Major/Aspiring Physician Accepted into Early Medical Education

Salim Gnabode is an aspiring medical student who is taking a slightly different route to his dream.

Rather than the usual physics or biology major, Gnabode, a junior at York, is majoring in physics and is being mentored by two of York's finest in that department. Dr. James Popp and Dr. Kevin Lynch have nurtured Gnabode, who has the special opportunity of going to Fermi Lab, where Popp, later joined by Lynch, have been guest scientists at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (FNAL) in Batavia, IL. According to Dr. Popp, being at Fermi Lab has offered him (Popp) a major opportunity to advance the Muon-to-Electron Conversion Experiment (MU2E). As for what Gnabode will do at Fermi Lab this summer, Popp says they have plans to work "on our primary proton beam line design using computer simulations."

Gnabode is a true initiative taker. Rather than wait for his last semester of undergraduate education to start applying to medical school, he applied to SUNY Downstate Medical Center for acceptance into their Early Medical Education (EME) program, which he will attend simultaneously with York College.

"I'm so happy to announce to you that I have been accepted into the Early Medical Education at SUNY Downstate, which gives me guaranteed acceptance to their

School of Medicine entering class of fall 2017 upon satisfaction of the conditions," said Gnabode in an email. "This has been a great year for me."



As a native French speaker from Benin, West Africa, Gnabode arrived in the United States in 2011 with little or no English Language skills, so he first enrolled at York in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program as well as the CUNY Language Immersion Program (CLIP). Although his original intent was to major in biology, Gnabode fell in love with physics and has excelled there. But biology is still important to an aspiring medical student so he is also mentored by Dr. Gerard McNeil, one of York's premiere Biology mentors, as a member of the college's Honors Program.

"There are lots of opportunities at York College," said Gnabode, the nephew of a Benin physician. "People inspire you here, there are scholarships available and the small class sizes are great."

According to Popp, physics is as logical a major as any other for a pre-med student.

"Physics teaches you how to think; and how to solve problems quantitatively," explained Popp of his mentee's alternate route to a potential medical career. "A doctor has to be a logical problem solver with good analytical skills and have a

firm foundation in applying those skills to solving physical and practical problems. Physics, above all other disciplines, prepares young people to think on their feet. Students well-prepared in physics will find doors to a wide variety of graduate careers open to them: science, engineering, medicine, business, etc."

Prof. Lynch agrees.

"I have no doubt that Salim can succeed in any field he chooses to enter," said Lynch. "He has the technical background, the work ethic and dedication to succeed, and the grades to match. Assuming he keeps it up, he should have little trouble being accepted to either medical school or graduate school in any number of STEM fields."

Lynch added that Gnabode could also have an advantage on the test for medical school.

"Physics teaches you to think, and that's not limited to the physics lab," Lynch explained. "The main goal of a physics program is to teach not facts, but rather problem solving skills: how to look at a problem, formulate a model of the system, break it down to its component parts, identify the relevant issues, and synthesize a solution."

Gnabode, who is a United Student Senate (USS) delegate in York's Student Government and president of the college's Pre-med Club, says he feels prepared for the rigors of medical school. ■

## Dean's List Reception

Dr. Panayiotis Meleties, Dean Lynne Clark and Acting Dean Donna Chirrico, and faculty and administrators recently presided over the annual Dean's List Reception in the Health and Physical Education Complex. Emceed by Dr. Mychel Namphy of the English Department, the event honored outstanding students from across the college. ■



Dr. Mychel Namphy (English Department) emceed the Dean's List reception

# CUNY Diplomat-in-Residence Visits York for Classroom Discussion

To add a practical element to the theory of his International Relations class, Political Science Professor Michael Sharpe is wont to bring in CUNY Diplomats-in-Residence to address students, giving them advice on professional opportunities in the Foreign and Civil Services.

The topic of the latest discussion, “Interested in Becoming a Diplomat? A Talk about Careers with the United States Department of State,” featured Diplomat Ana Escrogima, an engaging speaker, at the March 9th event.

“How many of you in this room speak more than one language?” Escrogima queried the diverse group of students. “Good, you’re my perfect target audience,” she responded at the show of more than a dozen hands.

To demonstrate to the students that just about anyone can have an exciting career as a Foreign Service officer, she referenced her own background.

“I am a Lower East Side girl,” said Escrogima. “And my work has taken me all over the Middle East.”

Escrogima told the students that the doors to a career with the State Department are wide open to them.

“There are 250 embassies overseas that must be staffed by Foreign Service folks,” she said. “And it’s good to be a jack of all trades. We define diversity very broadly and you don’t have to be a political science major. You can also be a math major, science major, all are welcomed. We want to see more students



Dr. Michael Sharpe (center in suit) and CUNY Diplomat-in-Residence Ana Escrogima (to his immediate left) flanked by students following a discussion on careers in the Foreign Services

from CUNY taking the Foreign Service Exam.”

In addition to her CUNY assignment, Escrogima, who is fluent in three foreign languages—Spanish, French and Arabic—has served as deputy director of Syria in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, where she advised senior State Department leadership and managed Foreign Service and Civil Service officers responsible for implementing US policy on Syria.

Her dizzying list of assignments and roles have included serving in domestic assignments, which included a tour as a special assistant to the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, advising on Middle East issues, and serving as a member of the US delegation to nuclear talks with Iran.

She also told the group that working for the State Department is not only about living overseas. For those who prefer to serve their country on U.S. soil, they have the option to sign up for civil service positions.

Dr. Sharpe has been inviting diplomats-in-residence to interface with his students for the past several years.

“Students get to witness the real world applications of the concepts and theories of international relations and political science they study in the classroom,” Sharpe has said. “They are able to meet women and men involved in diplomacy and learn of their experiences. Moreover, they are able to see that career opportunities in international affairs are not beyond their reach; they are available to them.”

Escrogima who noted that on her way into the Academic Core Building she saw the banners congratulating York’s latest Fulbright Fellows (Drs. Selena Rodgers, Vadim Moldovan and Dr. Linda Perry) congratulated the college in its participation in the program.

“Fulbright service is part of the Foreign Services,” she said. “I’m glad to see York faculty doing that.” ■

## Kudos!



**Christina Miller** (Assistant Professor, Library) and **John Drobnicki** (Professor, Library) co-authored a chapter, “York College Library’s School Media Specialist: A New Library Model for Easing the Transition from High School to College,” in Bradford Lee Eden (ed.), *Enhancing Teaching and Learning in the 21st-Century*

*Academic Library: Successful Innovations That Make a Difference* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 91-102.



**Anamika Megwalu** (Assistant Professor, Library) published a peer-reviewed article, “Encouraging Transliteration Through Reference Instructions,”

in the *Reference Librarian* 56, no. 2 (2015): 157-160.

# Social Work Paves the Way for Change

by Selena T. Rodgers

In 1984, The White House officially established March as National Professional Social Work Month. Each March, Dr. Selena T. Rodgers, an Assistant Professor of the Social Work Department and Faculty Advisor for the Social Work Empowering and Encouraging Together (S.W.E.E.T.) Club, joins together with student scholars and colleagues to organize diverse activities that recognize, celebrate, and promote social work. In honor of the National Association of Social Workers 60th anniversary, the 2015 Social Work Month theme is “Social Work Paves the Way for Change.” This year’s events focused on opportunities in which student scholars were able to enrich their knowledge and skills in areas embedded throughout the Code of Ethics Preamble of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 1996; 2008)—service, importance of human relationships, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, and competence. In service, Dr. Rodgers and S.W.E.E.T. club members volunteered their time on Saturdays to engage older adults who attend the Technology Learning Center at Rochdale Village. It is aimed at helping the technology users gain digital knowledge and improve cognitive functioning, as well as restore and strengthen inter-

generational human relationships using social media.

On March 3, 2015, 32 York student scholars, social work faculty, Professors Rodgers and George-Moses, and York College President Dr. Marcia V. Keizs participated in the Social Work Annual Legislative Day in Albany, NY to advocate for social justice with several honorable elected officials—New York State (NYS) Assemblywoman Vivian E. Cook, NYS Assemblywoman Michele Titus, NYS Senator Leroy Comrie, NYS Assembly Member William Scarborough and NYS Assemblywoman Bar-

bara Clark. During scheduled meetings with elected officials, student scholars advocated for social justice initiatives, including an increase in New York City and New York State minimum wage and loan forgiveness for social workers. The York delegation also urged NYS elected officials to restore and allocate funding for critical resources identified as York College/CUNY 2015-2016 State Budget Priorities—the Black Male Initiative, childcare, and the York College Academic Village/Conference Center to support state-of-the-art space for students.

On March 12, 2015, S.W.E.E.T. held its annual Social Work Graduate School

*continued on opposite page* ▶



9th Annual Social Work Lobby Day with Assemblywoman Vivian Cook, Albany, NY, March 3, 2015



Social Work Selma Scholars, Bridge Crossing Jubilee, Selma, AL, March 4 - 9, 2015



MSW Graduate Fair at York College, CUNY, March 12, 2015



Intergenerational Technology Learning at Rochdale Village, Inc., March 21, 2015

Fair. The event included representatives from Social Work graduate schools in the Tri-state area, who offered brief highlights about their academic establishments and enrollment guidelines to prospective student scholars. The fair was well attended by baccalaureate student scholars who diligently strive to enhance their level of competence and expertise and the faculty members from the Department of Social Work. The Department is proud to report that several student scholars have been accepted into M.S.W. programs at Hunter College, CUNY (Silberman School of Social Work), NYU Silver School of So-



32nd Annual Social Work Day at the United Nations, March 23, 2015

cial Work, Fordham University School of Social Work, Stony Brook University School of Social Welfare and Adelphi University School of Social Work.

On March 23, 2015, U.S. Fulbright Scholars, Specialist Program—Dr. Linda Wermeling (Associate Professor, Northern Kentucky University) and Dr. Selena T. Rodgers (Assistant Professor, York College/CUNY)—along with 11 student scholars enrolled in Introduction to Social Work, Social Welfare Programs and Social Work Generalist Practice III—attended the 32nd Annual Social Work

Day at the United Nations, New York, NY. Student scholars, social workers, and educators filled a large meeting room at the United Nations. The well-attended themed event—“Advocating for Dignity and Worth of All People,” a half-day of panel discussions—celebrated the accomplishments of social workers globally as well as raised awareness about critical issues and initiatives worldwide. York attendees had the opportunity to meet and take a picture with National Association of Social Workers Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Angelo McCain. ■

## President Keizs Feted on 10th Anniversary

It was a misty spring evening when faculty, staff and friends gathered at Resorts World Casino to salute Dr. Marcia V. Keizs on her 10th anniversary as president of York College.

Emceed by Jacqueline Arrington, a former York Foundation Board member, the event, held in the Casino complex, gave President Keizs the opportunity to acknowledge founding and early faculty members such as Dr. Robert Parmet and Dr. Howard Ruttenberg (both from History and Philosophy), as well as newer faculty scholars.

Introduced by Jonetta Moody, a York student fresh off a trip to commemorate Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama, Presi-

dent Keizs noted that among her most important achievements are her graduates.

“In 10 years’ worth of graduations we have sent nearly 10,000 students into the job market; to medical schools, law schools, schools of social work; journalism schools, MBA programs; and so much more,” said Dr. Keizs. “Some have returned to visit and share their success; others write or connect with us on Facebook, but these last 10 years have been among the most rewarding of my career.”

Among the guest speakers at the March 25th event, were CUNY Chancellor James B. Milliken; the Rev. Dr. Floyd H. Flake, senior pastor of Allen AME Church; and Carlisle Towery, out-going president of



Michelle Stoddart, Jonetta Moody, Rev. Floyd Flake, Chancellor James Milliken, Jacqueline Arrington, and Carlisle Towery during the celebration for Dr. Keizs’ 10th anniversary as president of York College

the Greater Jamaica Development Corp. Several York Foundation Board members were in attendance as well. ■



# Community Health Scholar Studies Abroad and Envisions Global Health Career

Among York's busiest and brightest seniors this year is Community Health major Malika Jones, who recently returned from a study-abroad experience in the Dominican Republic.

Jones, who studied there under the temporary mentorship of Dr. David Simmons, a professor based at the University of South Carolina, is glad she took advantage of the resources of international research.



"This experience has definitely strengthened my resolve to pursue a career in global public health and [to work] to improve communities in underserved areas," said Jones. "My research is "The Global Challenge of Water and Public Health." When I visited the bateyes [Haitian ghettos in the Dominican Republic] where Haitian migrant workers live, I was able to interview many people to test their knowledge of what is clean water. They told me, 'clear water.' But that doesn't take into account any microbes that could be in the water."

Jones, York's Thurgood Marshall College Fund ambassador, visited five different bateyes, comprised of "very, very

poor people," many of them hold-overs or decedents of Haiti's immigrant workers from the island's sugar plantation past. Many of them were born there but still don't enjoy full citizenship due to discriminatory laws.

"Everybody should get this experience," said Jones of her international experience. "It is socially, academically and personally enriching. There is no substitute for experiencing a new environment. It is enriching in all aspects and forced me to grow beyond my comfort zone."

Jones got other bonuses from the experience as well.

"It has allowed me to see the value in what I am studying," said Jones, who is president of York's Health Promotion Club. "I'm studying in a global context and learning (or enhancing) another language. My Spanish has really improved."

Jones' study abroad was funded in part by York College and allowed her to see the problems of the community where she did her research through the eyes of another young person.

"You speak to a community leader and you find out what they don't want,"

she noted. "I spoke to a young man, an activist, and he told me, 'we don't want to be given food nor clothes. We want education.' It is the only thing that is going to produce sustainable change. You empower them to exercise their own personal agency."

Dr. David Ajuluchukwu, Chairperson of Health and Physical Education and Gerontological Studies and Services in York's School of Health and Behavioral Sciences, is pleased with his star pupil's success.

"Malika Jones is exceptional as a leader both in academics and in service," said Dr. Ajuluchukwu. "She has also turned out to be an excellent researcher, who is very dedicated. I strongly believe that she will be an asset to her discipline and will be making tremendous contributions to her community and the world. She is the kind of student who will always be an ambassador for York College."

Jones, who is president of the York College chapter of Eta Sigma Gamma, Epsilon Lambda, started a partnership with the Society of Public Health Education (SOPHE) for York and will graduate in May 2015. She plans to postpone graduate school for a year so she can pursue a research fellowship and study to pass the certification test in community health. ■

## Selma Revisited

Upon their return to campus, Dr. Ron Daniels, who organized and led the York contingency on the Selma anniversary march, conducted a debriefing session for the college community. Titled "Selma: Beyond the Bridge," the event gave participants the opportunity to reflect on their experience. Participating students invariably expressed gratitude for having had the opportunity to go to Selma and experience the 50th anniversary observance. They all in one way or another said it was a transformative experience that will impact their lives and community activities for the rest of their lives. ■



On Tuesday, March 31, Selma pilgrimage participants discussed how to extend their trip experience into the future.

# 2015 Innovators of Change

On March 18, 2015, J. Walter Thompson New York held the 5th Innovators of Change Documentary Screening and Awards event in celebration of Black History. Dr. Selena T. Rodgers, assistant professor in the School of Health Sciences and Professional Programs, Department of Social Work, was one of the five invited cast members. "To be an innovator of change you must be willing to change yourself and what's around you to make impactful change in others. All of the 2015 Innovators of Change have done this with incredible grace, style and courage. I am eternally grateful to these individuals and for the position I'm in to highlight the achievements and stories of positive people of color," said Keni Thacker, Executive Producer for Differenter at J. Walter Thompson. The 2015 Innovators of Change Documentary is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-EtOLpJWYE> ■



Innovators of Change Cast: Francis Carrero (Torch Program), Dr. Selena T. Rodgers (York College/CUNY), Quentin Walcott (CONNECT), Manoj Raghunandan (Johnson & Johnson), Meschida Philip (J. Walter Thompson) and Keni Thacker (J. Walter Thompson)

## Kudos!

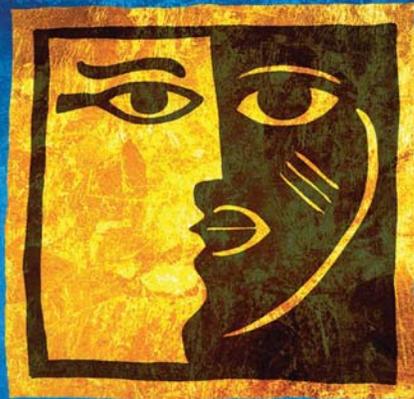
To **Earl Simons** on the successful completion of his doctorate degree. He is now Earl Simons, Ed.D.



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## Dr. Ron Daniels aka “The Professor” Returns to the Airways

Ron Daniels, Distinguished Lecturer at York College/CUNY and President of the Institute of the Black World 21st Century, will return to the airways as host of *Vantage Point*, an issue-oriented talk show, 10:00 am – 12:00 Noon on WBAI 99.5 FM. Dr. Daniels, whose radio handle is “The Professor,” previously hosted an evening show on WBAI called *Night Talk*.

He also hosted a show on WWRL 1600 AM and was a frequent Guest Host for the *RL Morning Show*, the *Warren Ballentine Show* and *Keeping it Real* with Rev. Al Sharpton. He continues to serve as Guest Host for *Make It Plain* with Mark Thompson on SIRIUSXM Progress 127 and does a weekly segment for that show. *Vantage Point* is being produced in collaboration with YCRadio. YCRadio will simulcast the show, which will originate from its studio on campus. Dr. Daniels hopes the collaboration will be mutually beneficial by opening up opportunities for students and faculty at York to be on-air guests and expanding the listening audience of YCRadio and WBAI. ■

