On January 30th, actress and activist Yara Shahidi spoke to Pomona College Professor Carolyn Ratteray about her career experiences, her values, as well as the familial influences that have grounded her in her career. Shahidi also spoke about her passion for political activism and its importance in this current moment. She commented on the importance of diverse perspectives and executives in Hollywood, and also provided advice for college students and aspiring BIPOC artists entering the industry.

Shahidi served as this year’s MLK Commemorative Lecturer, presented in partnership with the Office of Black Student Affairs (OBSA), Scripps Presents, the Katharine A. Miller Endowed Speaker Fund, the Pitzer Diversity Committee, and Pitzer Office of Student Affairs.
Dear IDAS Family,

After a hiatus of a few semesters, the Africana Studies Newsletter is back! The return of the Newsletter comes at a critical time, as our public discourse is now—as ever—in desperate need of the unique contributions that can be offered by students and faculty who work in Africana studies.

Thanks to the excellent editorial efforts of Marie Tano, our IDAS student representative, this issue of the Newsletter showcases a diverse range of student and faculty commentary on topics that deserve deep consideration as we open the 2021 spring semester. Remember, you can strengthen the bonds of our community by reading through the Newsletter and reaching out to contributors.

Some of the topics addressed in the Newsletter are sure to figure in two important events that IDAS is sponsoring this month. We hope that you’ll join us for a (Feb. 24) virtual forum on “Black History Now,” spotlighting the perspectives of IDAS faculty. And, you’ll want to attend our 2021 Sojourner Truth Lecture (Feb. 26), which will feature sisters Alison and Lezley Saar, both visual artists with wide-ranging projects anchored in Africana subjects.

Enjoy the Newsletter.

Derik Smith
Chair, Intercollegiate Department of Africana Studies
It’s so fantastic that the newsletter for Africana Studies is back! I just want to send my greetings to all of our students and to say congratulations to graduating seniors.

The students in my classes, both this semester and last, have made me feel connected and helped me to continue to find purpose in these trying times. In a given week, Africana Studies students are often my main intellectual collaborators (which was also the case when we were in-person).

Presently, I’m working with an online educational provider on a Civil Rights Movement case study series featuring primary sources. The intent of the series is to give educators a well-curated set of materials to spark student engagement with the dynamic history of the Black Freedom Movement.
Student Perspectives

Current Senior Thesis Projects

Yaquana Williams, Pitzer

“Finding the Future in the Soil: Black Radical Farming and the Black Freedom Movement across the African Diaspora”

Yaquana’s project examines Black farming collectives across the African Diaspora—in South Africa, Jamaica, and the United States. She will explore how Black Radical Farming Strategies are being practiced on Black farms, and how the work of Black farms are contributing to the ongoing Black Freedom Movement. She will be touching upon subjects of Black Fugitivity and Disposability, and illustrating how, in a world depending on the existence of anti-Blackness, Black farming Collectives across the African Diaspora create spaces of Black life, survival, and freedom.

Tselot Akilu, Scripps

Tselot’s project looks into how maroons, enslaved Africans who escaped their plantations and established independent communities, have identified flight as an avenue through which Black folks can move from bondage to liberation. Drawing from the works of Saidiya Hartman, Frank Wilderson, Fred Moten, and the Afro-Pessimist school of thought at large, my research works to investigate the legacy of maroon resistance on the Black radical tradition to understand how Blackness has been ontologically figured as a site of refusal which is antithetical to statehood.

Fred Zucule, Pomona

Fred is currently writing about the portraits of Nigerian-British photographer Rotimi Fani-Kayode. He is interested in the ways Fani-Kayode captures images of Black masculinity and queer intimacy - beautiful, confrontational, fantastical. He is "looking forward to ruminating on photography with professors, and taking my own work out to the world."

Check out the project at: https://kulzu.com
Interview with Khadija Jallow
PO '22

How was 2020 for you?

It started out well as I was hanging out with my friends but then COVID snuck up on us, caused us to be kicked off campus in a very abrupt way. I had to spend so much time by myself at home, but I really did realize a lot about myself, and spent time doing what I loved as much as I could inside. I read, listened to music a lot (like actively) and got into yoga.

How did you feel about the BLM movement becoming so popular, over the summer?

I was already pretty politically active and doing my own radicalization during that time, but it definitely accelerated my political education and got me to join The Black Youth Project, an abolitionist organization. The summer also showed me how fake woke, anti-Black and apathetic people are and value performative activism. Most annoying part was how much people watering down the original intent of Black movements

And, how do you feel about online classes?

I wish professors were more accommodating. At the beginning, professors were not being nice and asking for too much while students were advocating for grades, housing, etc. I have three siblings to take care of and I don’t have time to do the same level of work that I used to. I wish professors had more of an emphasis and focus on teaching and learning” instead of grades and penalizing students.

If we do go back to campus, I think we will have a more hybrid system. I think that things will be pretty different as professors and students have shown how much more accommodating school can be. Especially in terms of resources for courses that “had to be paid for” or even how grading is perceived works.
What interests you about Africana Studies?

I am interested in Africana Studies because my entire life has been shaped around my racial identity. When people see me, the first thing they see is a Black man and with that being said I am interested in learning more about the study of Africana. Additionally, I am interested in Africana Studies because I want to take classes that will liberate me and appeal to my own life experiences as that keeps me engaged inside of the classroom.

Can you talk about your research interests?

At my public high school on the Southside of Chicago, we had metal detectors, x-ray machines, police officers, and the occasional guard dog. We were also subjected to prejudiced policies and it often felt like being in prison. Given my educational experience and passion for equitable educational opportunities for all, I would like to study the effects of surveillance and disciplinary policies on the relationship students of color have with the education system. I want to research how increased instruments of surveillance in schools and disproportionately applied disciplinary policies led to the school-to-prison pipeline within the Black and Latinx student populations.

Anything that you're looking forward to?

This year I look forward to securing some summer plans, research awards and more fellowships offers. As someone whose very interested in research, I am actually very excited about this year and what it has in store for me. I do not like to shape my entire identity around academe so outside of the academy I am just looking forward to possibly seeing my friends again and hopefully partying because I miss my social life.
Upcoming Events

February 2021

all featured times are in PST

OSBA Presents

Black History Month Trivia

For more information:
www.linktr.ee/obsaclaremont

Watu Weusi Presents

Black Women in Media & Sports with Drs. Courtney Cox & Philana Payton

For more information:
www.instagram.com/watu.weusi/

PASA Presents

Trivia Night!

For more information:
www.linktr.ee/PASAClaremont

Hack for Black Lives!

For more information:
www.bit.ly/h4blhome

OSBA Presents

The Black Intersections Conference

Get involved:
www.surveymonkey.com/r/B5PPP56

OSBA Presents

Trap [Q]araoke!

A Black Intersections Conference Event
In collaboration with the QRC
## Upcoming Events

### February 2021

_all featured times are in PST_

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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| **Fri. 26th** 12pm | **Pitzer BSU Presents**  
Black History Month Paint By Numbers  
_For more information:  
https://linktr.ee/PitzerBsu_ |
| **Fri. 26th** 3:30pm | **Alison Saar & Lezley Saar**  
34th Sojourner Truth Lecture  
_For more information:  
https://pitzer.zoom.us/j/86371574322_ |
| **Fri. 26th** 6pm | **Watu Weusi Presents**  
A Celebration of Black Women  
_For more information:  
www.instagram.com/watu.weusi/ |
| **Sat. 27th** | **OSBA Presents**  
[B]laughter: On Black Laughter  
_A Black Intersections Conference Event  
Featuring Professor Carolyn Ratteray & colleagues_ |

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Please contact the organizations associated with each event, for more information!

Email Marie Tano PO '21 at mtaa2017@pomona.edu if you are interested in being featured in the next issue of the Newsletter.