The Grapevine

African American Resource Center Monthly Newsletter

QUOTE OF THE DAY"

"An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity."

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Welcome to AARC's Newsletter!

This is the renewal of an older "Grapevine" in paper form. The Grapevine is back in business and better than ever! In each edition, you'll find upcoming events, opportunities for networking engagements on Penn's campus that are co-sponsored by AARC, and other affiliated resources. If you ever have anything of interest you would like to share, please feel free to contact us @aarc@upenn.edu

To connect further with AARC and stay informed about our upcoming events, please:

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From the Director's Office

Dear Family and Friends,

The events surrounding the killing of Mr. Walter Wallace in West Philadelphia on Monday evening (10/26/2020) have once again created hurt and pain for all of us. It is another trauma for Black people in America. Every incident brings up the pain of the previous one. At this time, as we social distance, we must find ways to hold each other from a distance. We hold you in our minds and in our hearts. When we are able, we will hold each other in our hugs.


Below are some additional resources.

Please know, AARC is here, as we have always been, to listen to you and to support you. We think the best of you and want the best for you!

A Luta Continua,
Valerie Allen

Resources:
Penn Wellness and Worklife: https://www.hr.upenn.edu/PennHR/wellness-worklife
Penn Employee Assistance Program: https://www.hr.upenn.edu/PennHR/wellness-worklife/counseling-and-employee-assistance-program
Calm Breathe Bubble: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxayUBd6T7M
Women of Color at Penn
"VIRTUAL KICK-OFF EVENT - SHOWCASING INSPIRING WOMEN OF COLOR AT PENN"

On Wednesday, September 16, 2020, Women of Color at Penn and its Executive Planning Committee held its first meeting of the semester entitled, “Virtual Kick-Off Event” Showcasing & Inspiring Women of Color at Penn. The program started off with a welcome from Colleen Winn and was followed by the introduction of Thalia Mangan as the 2021 Women of Color at Penn Executive Planning Committee Chair. Thalia eloquently and thoroughly outlined her vision and theme for 2021 which is “Legacy Building – reimagining what it looks like to be prosperous. A series of workshops and events will be held throughout her tenure that will delve further into this topic.

Since the program was held in the late afternoon, ladies came dressed for a “social” occasion and echoed the sentiment that they were glad to have a space to connect with women who looked like them. During the event, breakout rooms were used for small group conversations on fun topics of interest. This event provided a space for networking and bonding and participants were encouraged to join Women of Color Planning Sub-committees. We all are very certain that under the guidance and leadership of Thalia Mangan, WOCAP will be taken to great heights.

Men of Color

Men of Color meeting, “Do Our Votes Matter?”:

On October 16, 2020, the Men of Color hosted their monthly “Huddle” section, where men throughout Penn’s campus and beyond, come together to discuss issues and provide emotional support.

In this Zoom session, we analyzed and discussed the following: “Will Our Votes Matter?” Some of the questions posed during the session was, “Will our collective votes make a significant impact on this year’s election?” and “Do the presidential candidates represent our best interests?”

This year's presidential election is hotly contested, with incumbent Donald Trump (R) going against long term politician Joe Biden (D). This election might turn out to be the most consequential of the 21st Century for Americans. Most notably, the murder of George Floyd, in conjunction with the Black Lives Matter Movement has given Black voters more of a reason to vote, protesting for immediate changes with unlawful policies and practices. Many believe the changes should start at the top: the president’s office.

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Men of Color cont.

There are a number of issues that come into play with regards to who to vote for and why. Since the 1960s civil rights era, Blacks have largely supported the democratic nominee. And while a number of voters have recently threatened to withdraw their support due to lack of tangible results that directly impact Blacks (e.g. reparations). Even still, some have remained steadfast in their commitment to the democratic party. The support, however, by Blacks towards the GOP has increased, but numbers suggest the increase is minimal.

In their book Steadfast Democrats: How Social Forces Shape Black Political Behavior, authors White and Laird (2020) stated that, while the historical antecedents of black Democratic party support are rather straight forward, black Americans have been able to remain unified in their support for the Democratic Party.

During the Zoom session, the questions was asked, Do our votes matter?” A number of people responded, saying they were still voting for the democratic hopeful (Biden), but overall support was starting to dwindle in the gathered group due to what they expressed as the “lack of tangibles” offered by either of the candidates – particularly as it relates to the Black community. Some participants felt that “Blacks are only used for votes.” Some articulated how they harbored negative feelings about Biden being the architect of the 1994 Crime bill which led to a large contingency of Black men being incarcerated. The question was asked, “What will he (Biden) do differently now than Trump?” Other participants mentioned how President Trump’s lack of preparation led to the deaths of thousands of people due to COVID-19.

During the session, another interesting topic discussed was rapper Ice Cube’s appearance on CNN to discuss the “Contract with Black America” which strikes at the heart of racism and presents a blueprint to achieve racial economic justice (Hamilton and Cohen, 2020, para 1). After the video clip was shown, some participants believed it was a great idea, while others believed Ice Cube was in support of the GOP. A few participants verbally expressed their displeasure because Ice Cube only met with GOP incumbent Donald Trump and not Biden. The video clip showed where Ice Cube mentioned how he reached out to the Biden camp, who agreed to meet with him— after the election. In the video, Ice Cube also clarified that his ‘Contract’ is expected to garner bipartisan support. Unfortunately, a number of participants voiced their displeasure about meeting with Trump.

Overall, the session was great and a number of people articulated the importance of voting and that our voice is definitely needed if we want to amend laws that negatively impact Black and brown people.

Citations
List of this month's AARC Events:

- **12:30 PM Thursday, November 5th** - *Welcome Reception for Dean James*
- **12:00 PM Wednesday, November 11th** - *Relax, Relate, Release*
- **12:00 PM Friday, November 13th** - *Women of Color at Penn Virtual Awards Luncheon*
- **12:00 PM Wednesday, November 18th** - *Women of Color at Penn Noontime Lunch Series: How Fitness and Exercise is Key during COVID-19*
- **12:30 PM Thursday, November 19th** - *Welcome Reception for Mamta (VPUL)*
- **1:00 PM Thursday, November 19th** - *Men of Color (Monthly Huddle Meeting)*
- **12:00 PM Friday, November 20th** - *Community Lunch Program - Open Forum with AARC and PWC*

Link to calendar: [click here](#)
Ahlam Goran is a sophomore pursuing a double major in Political Science and Economics. She joined AARC as an intern last year because she is interested in social advocacy. Specifically, she is passionate about criminal justice reform as well as immigration reform. Ahlam is involved in social justice groups on campus such as Penn SLAP and Penn Fems. She is also involved in other Penn organizations such as Social Impact Consulting and TedxPenn.

Make the Effort and Vote!

Your vote matters. You may think your vote is a drop in the ocean, but it is more influential than ever. Pennsylvania’s status as a swing state could determine this entire election and the course of the country for the next four years. Back in 2016, Pennsylvania was won by only one percentage point. ONE percentage point determined the election, and in 2016, FORTY percent of Pennsylvania’s eligible voters could not be bothered to vote. Your vote matters more now than ever.

I know getting involved in politics has become less than appealing as of late. Nowadays, it feels like even scrolling through the news takes a heavy toll on your mental health. However, the way to protest this and to change the system is not by abstaining from voting. Tackle the issues you care about by getting educated and voting this November (or earlier if possible). Think about the people around you who will be affected by policies around issues like health care access, immigration, COVID relief, etc. Think about how you will be affected. Research the topics you care about and make an informed decision. Then, please, get out and vote!
Jonathan Hanson is a junior studying PPE, which is short for Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. He joined AARC as an intern last year after all the love that he received as a freshman whenever he randomly walked in. Jonathan is involved in God’s Property, My Brother’s Keeper, and BWUA Consulting. He is also a C.A.N. Student Advisor.

Isaiah Williams is a sophomore who is interested in studying Communications and minoring in American Sign Language. His hobbies include painting and running. He decided to apply for a work study position at AARC after visiting the office during a tour of Penn's campus. This is his second year working at AARC.