What’s News

This Week in Black History Month

SANKOFA
QUEENS COLLEGE CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2021
All events are free and open to the public

Andrene Bonner
Bettina Love
Mikal Amin Lee
QC’s Black History Month virtual events resume today—Tuesday, February 16, at 6 pm—with a book talk featuring educator, playwright, and author Andrene Bonner, founder of the Literacy Gateway Institute. Carol Douglas (School of Social Sciences) will serve as moderator. Questions may be sent in advance to lgiforsuccess@gmail.com. On Wednesday, February 17, from 12:15 to 1:30 pm, Bettina Love (University of Georgia) will talk about her work as co-founder of the Abolitionist Teaching Network, in a conversation moderated by Limarys Caraballo (SEYS). To attend, register here. Noted hip-hop emcee Mikal Amin Lee will perform and present a workshop on Thursday, February 18, from 4 to 5:30 pm; register here. This week’s lineup also includes spoken word and musical performances and a film screening. For the complete schedule, click here.

The lunar new year started on Friday, February 12. Here’s hoping that the holiday has ushered in a time of health and happiness for all. To mark the occasion, explore the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s virtual celebration of the Year of the Ox.

Mustering Veterans for a Meeting

Student veterans and members of the college’s military community will have the chance to voice opinions and ask questions on Wednesday, February 17, at 12:30 pm, at a Zoom town hall held by QC Veterans Support Services (VSS). President Frank H. Wu, Assistant Vice President Jennifer Jarvis, VSS Associate Director Dennis Torres, and representatives of the Veterans Health Administration and Veterans of Foreign Wars will be present to discuss topics such as campus reopening and continuity of health care services. Register here to receive instructions for joining the event.
**Modest in Size, Large in Impact**

Good writing often comes in small packages. That’s the impetus for the **CUNY Chapbook Festival**, a three-day virtual event celebrating a cherished, time-honored format: slim poetry collections that range from stapled photocopies to hand-lettered presses and digital productions.

Presented by the CUNY MFA Affiliation Group—comprising the MFA programs at Brooklyn, City, Hunter, and Queens Colleges—and Benjamin S. Rosenthal Library, the festival opens this Thursday, February 18. Matvei Yankelevich, poet, translator, and executive director of nonprofit publisher Ugly Duckling Presse, will give the keynote, followed by a reading and performance by the Cornelius Eady Trio. The festival’s remaining dates, on March 18 and April 15, will feature a panel discussion, readings, and presentations. All three sessions are open to the public free of charge; reserve seats by registering.

No registration is necessary to enjoy the festival’s asynchronous programming, which will include a virtual book fair and guides to making chapbooks. CUNY Distinguished Professor Kimiko Hahn (English) planned this festival for March 2020, only to have it postponed by the pandemic. A fan of chapbooks, she acquired many over the years and just donated more than 200—including ten she wrote herself—to Rosenthal Library’s Department of Special Collections and Archives.

---

**“Big Ideas” Hits the Small Screen**

To publicize significant research conducted by QC faculty, the Office of Communications and Marketing has created the online video series **Big Ideas**.

Tune in this Thursday, February 18, to hear John Dennehy (Biology) explain how he monitors the presence of the SARS coronavirus in New York City’s wastewater. Subsequent episodes will air on Thursdays at 7 pm through May 6—with the exception of April 1—on the college’s YouTube channel and Facebook page.
New Director Leads BALA

Schiro Withanachchi (Economics), a faculty member for more than 11 years, has been appointed director of QC’s Business and Liberal Arts minor. Withanachchi holds a BS in Aerospace Engineering from Syracuse University, an MBA in Decision Sciences from St. John’s University, and a doctorate in Business from Baruch College. Drawing on her experience of living in Asia and the Middle East, Withanachchi has developed an innovative pedagogy using globalized curriculums and international alliances; her distinctions include an award from the Center for Career Engagement and Internships’ as Faculty Campus Champion of the Year. She is also well acquainted with BALA—she joined its faculty advisory board in 2020.

Knights News Talks to Powers

The Knight News’s Visiting Journalist Series will feature journalist Ann Powers next Monday, February 22, at 12:15 pm on Zoom. As critic and correspondent for NPR Music, Powers writes for its music news blog, The Record, and can be heard on its newsmagazines and music programs. She previously held positions at the Los Angeles Times, the New York Times, and the Village Voice. Her books include Weird Like Us: My Bohemian America and Good Booty: Love and Sex, Black and White, Body and Soul in American Music. Powers can be sent to info@theknightnews.com no later than Friday, February 19. Zoom link.

Successful Alumnus Gives Back to His Alma Mater

“Queens College turned out to be the best educational decision I ever made.” Those are the words of Mark Rosentraub ’71, MA ’72, the Bruce and Joan Bickner Endowed Professor of Sport Management and director of the Center for Sport and Policy at the University of Michigan.

Rosentraub has published more than 100 articles in peer-reviewed journals and over ten books on sport business, public administration, and urban policy. At the Center for Sport and Policy, he advises professional teams and cities on leveraging construction of a facility to generate substantial positive effects for
“What makes a city unique and can’t be replicated elsewhere in a region? There’s only one thing—sports,” notes Rosentraub. “If I told you we have a unique asset, and I’m going to bring several million people to this asset, how do I develop the area around it to maximize tax revenues?”

Rosentraub’s books and publications have provided blueprints for how cities can profit from sports. His book, *Major League Losers*—first published in 1997; second edition in 1999—highlighted the mistakes that many major cities made when investing in facilities for professional teams. The book was read by the San Diego Padres’ leaders and helped from how they developed the area around Petco Park, which debuted in 2004. The East Village/Ballpark District surrounding the park was transformed from a declining and ignored neighborhood to a vibrant community that now is home to thousands, attracts millions of visitors each year, and serves as a model for other sports organizations and cities.

“There’s an energy around sport, and if we compliment it with the right real estate, it can make money for the owner and it can make money for the city,” adds Rosentraub.

**Giving Back**

Ever since he graduated from QC, he has been dedicated to giving back to the school that he credits for his successful career. Notably, Rosentraub played an important introductory role in establishing the Kessler Scholarship—which provides four years of academic, financial, and social support to exceptional first-generation college students—at Queens College.

The Kessler Scholarship is financed by Fred Wilpon, former majority owner of the New York Mets, and his wife, Judy Wilpon. After launching this program at their alma mater, the University of Michigan, in 2007, the couple has been expanding it to a select handful of prestigious colleges and universities.

Rosentraub developed a relationship with Wilpon while working as a consultant for the New York Mets on plans to develop real estate surrounding Citi Field. During dinner with the Wilpons one evening, Rosentraub suggested bringing the Kessler Scholarship to Queens College and helped arrange an initial meeting with the college and Fred Wilpon. This meeting eventually led to the establishment of the Kessler Scholarship at QC last year (*as reported in QView 77*). President Frank H. Wu is the official emcee for a February 19 program with representatives of the prominent schools that are now sponsoring Kessler Scholars.

**Honoring Dr. Marilyn Gittell**

Rosentraub reports that he was highly influenced by the late Marilyn Gittell (Political Science), who taught at QC in the 1960s and early 1970s. “She was the mentor of my life,” he says.

After earning a bachelor’s degree in political science and a master’s degree in urban studies at QC, Rosentraub went to the University of Southern California for his PhD, on Gittell’s recommendation. He taught urban policy and economic affairs at such major universities such as Cleveland State University, Indiana University, and University of Texas at Arlington before joining the University of Michigan faculty in 2009.

Following Gittell’s death in 2010, Rosentraub wanted to find a way to honor her. He became co-chair for a project to endow a chair in her name. In 2014, the Marilyn Gittell Endowed Chair of Urban Studies at the CUNY Graduate Center was established.
“I try to carry on the traditions that Marilyn Gittell taught me,” observes Rosentraub. “She taught me how to be an academic. She taught me how to create opportunities for students. I stayed close to her until her passing. I’d think she’d be proud of the centers that I created because it’s the exact same models she used . . . Everything that I became is tied to her and Queens College.”

Peer counseling is available all semester to students; services are free and confidential.

Taking Care in the Cold

With the weather keeping many people indoors, individuals may feel tempted to break their household’s safety bubble. QC reminds members of the college community to wear a mask and practice social distancing outside their homes—and inside homes where anyone has been exposed to COVID-19. New York City runs a program that enables people with coronavirus to isolate themselves in hotels for free.

To be informed of your exposure to those who have tested positive, load COVID Alert NY on your cellphone. COVID Alert NY is available in several languages to anyone 18 or older who lives, works, or attends college in New York or New Jersey and can be downloaded from the Google Play Store or Apple App Store. Complete details are available here.

Campus Collaboration Improves the Digital User Experience

With the pandemic forcing people to do much of their interacting with the rest of the world online, a collaboration between the Tech Incubator at QC (TIQC) and QC students studying the design of digital applications took on even greater relevance.
Two Interaction Design classes taught during the fall semester by Henry Martes (Art) in UX/UI (user experience/user interface) were tasked with coming up with innovative solutions to assist three clients—two based at QC—in providing better digital user experiences, including better ways to interact with their clients/visitors. It’s a challenge Martes knows well from his position as an associate creative director at Frog Design, a leading developer of digital product development services. Of his teaching role at QC, he declares on his website, “I see an opportunity to bring greater diversity to the design industry.”

The three clients were the Sociology Department’s Hellenic American Project, Premier Merchant Consulting Services, and TIQC itself. Martes divided the students into small teams, each assigned to assess the needs of one of the clients and come up with tech solutions. Over two days in early December, the groups presented their proposed solutions online to the clients, Martes, and TIQC Executive Director Ying Zhou.

Voluntary Testers Pitch In

As part of the development process, the students recruited volunteer “testers” who provided feedback on what they liked or didn’t like about their experience with the solutions. The groups then worked to revise their solutions, incorporating testers’ concerns into their final product. Testers’ observations became part of the presentations.

Premier Merchant Consulting Services helps companies find technology solutions for their business needs. The solutions devised by the student groups included a personalized chat bot to assist it in the onboarding process for new clients. The bot was user-tested on one business owner and two non-businesspeople; the pool included one student’s mother, a deli owner in lower Manhattan with limited English ability. The aim was to make the bot user-friendly for those who aren’t tech-savvy and accessible for those with language barriers. Another solution was an automated proposal-generation tool that allows clients to submit all their information online easily and accurately.

Commenting on what she saw, Premier Merchant Consulting Services Founder and President Melinda Reyes said, “This has given me a lot of insight on how I can chat with them [clients] and ask the proper questions.” She noted the particular challenge of working with clients “who aren’t tech savvy and who only focus on their bottom line.”

Martes and Zhou offered their comments, as well. Martes, for example, suggested that one student team’s incorporation of dollar signs in its solution could be misinterpreted by a prospective Premier Merchant Consulting Services user.
The Virtual Art of Storytelling

For the Hellenic American Project, the solutions included an immersive virtual reality experience that created a virtual museum and gallery space to showcase Greek artists and their works, allowing the project to reach a wider audience, even during the pandemic. An immersive web storytelling experience enables the Hellenic American Project to connect visitors to its trove of interviews with Greek Americans and the historical photographs and objects in its collection. The virtual gallery featured the exhibition, 9 Women Artists of the Diaspora, part of the Hellenic American Project’s Life-Giving Art Series.

“This is amazing, amazing,” said Nicholas Alexiou (Sociology), the project’s founder and director, noting that he appreciated the design, its efforts to engage young people, and the way the team responded to user feedback to improve upon their design. “I’m very, very impressed.”

At the conclusion of the first day’s presentations, Zhou asked the students, “Where did you get all the wonderful testers?” referring to the individuals who volunteered to provide feedback. She also observed that she was very impressed with the methodology that the students devised to achieve their results. “I learned a lot from this process just listening to you.”

The second day’s presentations were all devoted to creating new services for TIQC. The proposals included an app and website to allow students to earn money or class credit by pairing them with real-world clients who need their skills; an app creating a program of “TIQC verified skills” for internships; and a digital community service where different companies can market services and products to each other.

As the client’s principal representative, Zhou had many specific observations and criticisms of each proposal but concluded overall, “I’m very happy to see all the suggestions and ideas and all the hard work that you put into helping us [TIQC] do our work better. Some of the ideas have started to influence the staff at the incubator. So, your work definitely has an impact on what we do to make us better.”

In the Real World

Martes observed to the students that the team approach used for their assignments was a reflection of the way design projects are handled “in the real world.” “There’s nothing more valuable on a resume than to be able to show some real work that has been done—not just student work.”

The desire to give his students hands-on projects that would provide “real-world” experience, he says, emerged from the first time he taught Interaction Design at QC in 2019. “I got a very distinct impression from the students that the concepts were not getting through to them fully... When the semester wrapped up, it seemed very obvious to me I needed to give students the ability to work on something real and help them to get through that work.”

He noted that in his professional experience as an interaction designer, the student interns who spoke with the most conviction came from institutions such as Pratt where they had been given real-world assignments. “Consequently,” he observed, “they had work to show.”

In Memoriam

David Alsop
QView only recently learned of the death of David Alsop (Biology), who passed away on July 25, 2020, at his mountain retreat in North Carolina.

A native Canadian, Alsop grew up in northern New Jersey, where he got the insect “bug” early, gathering specimens from the woods. He studied entomology at Cornell University, completing his BA in 1964 and his PhD 1970, and joined the QC faculty that year. His research specialty was cockroaches; colleagues recall encounters with examples of Gromphadorhina portentosa—the Madagascar hissing species, significantly larger than the varieties familiar to most New Yorkers—that escaped from his lab. He was so fond of roaches that he gave his name to a tropical species he identified in 1993: Paramusoa alsopi.

Alsop published 15 peer-reviewed papers and in 2002 received the President’s Teaching Award for Excellence in recognition of his work in developing course guides and resource materials for invertebrate zoology and parasitology. He served his department as chair and member of its P&B committee, among other significant contributions, and was deeply involved in the Academic Senate as well as university-wide bodies on which he represented QC.

Retiring after nearly 37 years on campus, Alsop moved to North Carolina, setting up black-light sheets on his porch so he could continue collecting insects; he mounted more than 700 moth and butterfly species he found on his over five-acre property. Predeceased by his wife, Barbara, whom he met on an ecology field trip, he willed his collection to the Highlands Biological Station, a multi-campus center of Western Carolina University comprising research, teaching, and residential facilities, a natural history museum, and a 12-acre native plant botanical garden.

Alsop is well remembered for the numerous times he expressed his thoughtful views to the Queens College Academic Senate. This article is derived from the heartfelt obituary Professor Emeritus Peter Chabora (Biology) wrote to honor his late colleague; for the complete text, click here.

Donald Stone

The Queens College community mourns Donald Stone (English), who died last month at the age of 79.

As Glenn Burger (English) recalled in a campus-wide mailer, Stone held a bachelor’s degree from the University of California-Berkeley and a doctorate from Harvard University, and focused on the Victorian novel. A QC faculty member for several decades, he also taught at Beijing University, maintaining that relationship for years after his retirement from Queens.

Stone was devoted to art as well as literature. He went to great lengths to support the Arthur M. Sackler Museum of Art and Archaeology at Beijing University, eager to see it develop western holdings similar to the Chinese collections at prominent educational institutions in the United States. As
reported by Shanghai Daily, and China Daily, he purchased French and British prints that he gave to the museum and acquired others for it on commission. China recognized his efforts by giving him the National Friendship Award at a ceremony in the Great Hall of the People in 2014.

Heard Around the Virtual Campus

Tarry Hum (Urban Studies), Francois Pierre-Louis (Political Science), and Michael Alan Krasner (Political Science) and former QC faculty member Ron Hayduk (Political Science) edited Immigrant Crossroads: Globalization, Incorporation, and Placemaking in Queens, New York. Their book, an interdisciplinary study of the social, spatial, economic, and political dynamics that stem from fast-growing urbanization, will be released by Temple University Press next month . . . Ammiel Alcalay (Classical, Middle Eastern and Asian Languages and Cultures) has a new book out, A Bibliography for "After Jews and Arabs", issued by the Dead Letter Office imprint of Punctum Books. Omitted from the 1993 release of Alcalay’s After Jews and Arabs due to space limitations, the bibliography is accompanied by three additional texts by the author . .

. . Alan Nagel appears on the Intercollegiate Tennis Association’s list of Division II’s top ten “winningest” women’s tennis coaches of all time . . . Michael Newman (Linguistics) gave a virtual presentation on “The Rise and Fall of Jewish New York Speech” to the Museum of Jewish Heritage on February 4 . . . President Frank H. Wu wrote the forward to the newly released Asian American Bar Association of New York (AABANY) report, “A Rising Tide of Hate and Violence against Asian-Americans in New York During Covid-19: Impact, Causes, Solutions.” He was quoted in media outlets, including South China Morning Post’s coverage of the report. The AABANY Academic Committee is holding a small reception today—Tuesday, February 17, at 7 pm—to honor and welcome Wu and his wife, Carol Izumi, a Sullivan professor of law at UC Hastings College of Law, and professor of clinical law emerita at
The Q View is produced by the Office of Communications and Marketing.

Comments and suggestions for future news items are welcome. Send them to jay.hershenson@qc.cuny.edu.