



# OHANA Newsletter

Office of Multicultural Affairs  
A Diverse Community of Scholars Achieving Excellence

January/February 2019  
Volume 11, Issue 3



## 2019 Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. City of Dayton March

On January 21st, students and staff attended the MLK City of Dayton March. This event provided participants with an opportunity to learn more about the contributions of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to the advancement of social justice and inclusion. Participants joined local community supporters and organizations in the commemorative annual march and rally.

The expectation was for students to become more aware and exposed to the impact of Dr. King's work and our responsibility for fulfilling his mission.

# Letter from the Executive Director



Greetings and welcome to the new layout for OMA's OHANA Newsletter. **Special thanks to Paola Ortiz (OMA graduate assistant) and the OMA Staff for everyone's efforts to creatively connect with our OMA community, friends and family.** It is a true example of our endeavors to connect as a diverse community of scholars achieving excellence.

The start of 2019 has been full. As students have begun a new course load and continue to navigate life outside of the classroom, OMA remains a space for students to explore, share, learn, and be challenged in a supportive environment. Students, remember to take advantage of all of the resources campus has to offer including the academic success strategies available through Cynthia Payne, assistant director for academic success and OMA's student leaders, our academic success ambassadors. Learn more about your culture and others as Sam Ortiz, associate director for campus and community engagement, will shepherd the OMA community through several cultural programs including celebratory events for Black History Month and Asian and Pacific American Heritage Month. Look to Mérida Allen as her role as the director for multicultural education and student leadership uniquely situates her to provide social justice education both in and outside of the classroom, and as she is a wealth of leadership resources for students individually and to the variety of student organizations OMA supports. OMA's student engagement assistants and graduate assistants, Paola Ortiz and Joia Mitchell-Holman, are also ready to assist you as you navigate your curricular and co-curricular journeys. We are your team!

Keep a special eye out as there will be exciting announcements towards the end of the semester, and opportunities for you to collaborate with us. We are particularly looking forward to making plans to celebrate OMA's 50th anniversary in 2020. We want to make sure students are a part of our celebration.

Whether it is to catch up with a friend or to take advantage of the resources we offer, be sure to stop by OMA. It is our hope that together we make your journey an #OMAZing one.

See you soon...

**Dr. Daria Graham**

Associate Dean of Students and Executive Director for Multicultural Affairs

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## Editor's Note



**Heather Ashley**

Hi everyone! To begin with, Happy Black History month! I hope everyone is staying warm and holding on until Spring Break is here (we're so close!). As we come to the end of Black History Month there are still a few events to attend 1850 if you want to immerse yourself in culture and learn about Black History. Don't forget as we approach Spring Break that we have midterms coming up, and if you ever need help with a subject come into the OMA study sessions where there will be professors to help tutor you on hard subjects. We've got this! Let's get through this mid point together!



**Roberto De La Rosa-Finch**

Hello everyone! Classes are back in full swing, spring is around the corner, and it's Black History Month! As many of you already know, these 28 days have been filled with a ton of great events. The Black History Mystery Bus, the "Sorry to Bother You" screening, the MAAFA Commemoration, and the list goes on and on. If you're reading this, I'm sure you already know about some of these events, so I encourage you to get someone new to come along. Invite friends, invite a classmate, invite a stranger. Not everyone knows all the great stuff OMA has to offer--like I tell everyone, it took me a semester and a half to cross the street from Founders freshman year.

## Leading the Way

**Merida Allen**

Director for Multicultural Education and Student Leadership



**"Courage starts with showing up and letting ourselves be seen."**-Brené Brown, [Daring Greatly](#)

The Spring semester provides many opportunities for a fresh view on your journey. My advice is to begin thinking about what experiences you want to invest in next Fall. If you are already involved in an organization, look into leadership roles; contact Student

Leadership Programs for information on leadership development programs; or do your research on how experiential learning will complement your academic and career preparation. The time is now, to plan for your next steps and future. I would love to meet with you to review options or talk about anything on your mind. We are here to support your success! Stop by the Office, Alumni Hall 108 to talk through leadership opportunities for now and next year!

### **Student Organization Involvement and leadership Opportunities**

Look into joining a great multicultural student organization to increase your level of involvement, service, leadership, through educational, professional, political and/or social interaction. Email [ortizp1@udayton.edu](mailto:ortizp1@udayton.edu) for info on joining an organization!

### **Active Multicultural Student Organizations**

- **Student Organizations:**

- African Student Association (ASA); Asian American Association (AAA); Black Action Thru Unity (BATU); El Orgullo Latino (EOL); Hispanic Business Student Association (HBSA); Multicultural Association of Premedical Sciences (MAPS); National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE); Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE); National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC); South Asian Society of Engineers (SASE), Women of Remarkable Distinction (W.O.R.D.).
- **Fraternity and Sorority Life:**
  - National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO): Alpha Psi Lambda Fraternity,
  - National Panhellenic Council Organizations: Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.

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## **Academic Success Corner**



### **Cynthia Payne**

Assistant Director for Academic Success

### **SPRING Break... SPRING Clean...**

SPRING Break is just around the corner! Which means mid-terms are here or coming! Which means you are nearly halfway

through this semester!!

Since SPRING is coming, it is a good time to take inventory of where you stand in the semester – do a SPRING cleaning of sorts – think about what you need to keep doing and consider what you might need to get rid of or change.

Here are some things to consider in this coming season...

**S – Seriously Study** – Are you putting in time studying outside of the classroom? Your professors don't tell you everything you need to know while you're in class... you have to put in the time and effort to learn the material!! Find the places that allow you to focus and get work done. Put in the work you need to in order to succeed.

**P – Pause** – Take some time for self-care. If you aren't at your best, you can't give your best. Make sure you are getting good rest. Make sure you are eating good food. Take some time to exercise or do something else healthy to release stress. College is hard! Pause. Breathe. Take some time for you.

**R – Resources** – Are you utilizing them? There are SO many resources on this campus that are here to help support you. There is [tutoring](#) in Marianist. The [Write Place](#) can review your papers. There are [academic coaches](#) that can help you to make sure you are getting the most out of the times that you study. Take advantage of all of these resources!!

**I – Intentional with Your Time** – Time management is an important tool with being successful in your academics. Everyone gets 24 hours in their day. What you choose to do with your 24 hours is up to you. If you find you don't have enough time to get everything done, take inventory of how you actually spend your time each day, and then be intentional about how you spend it.

**N – Now** – Do these things now!! NOW is the time to make changes. NOW is the time to recognize you are doing great things and keep doing them! The weather will get warmer soon and it will be easier to be distracted. Establish good study habits now that will help you to stay focused!

**G – Grades** – Do you know your grades in all of your classes? Know where you stand now and figure out what you need to do for the rest of the semester to earn the grades you want to achieve in your classes. If you don't know where you stand, talk with your professors. If you are really struggling in a class figure out a game plan and keep in mind the last day to withdraw is April 5<sup>th</sup>.

I wish you all the best with achieving your goals this SPRING semester! As you move into SPRING break, I encourage you to do some SPRING cleaning with your academics. You can do it!! Please know I am always here to help.

## Super Sam's Galaxy

### Sam Ortiz

Associate Director for Campus and Community Engagement



Hello again!

I've been at UD for over three months now and I'm starting to feel like a veteran. The more time I'm here the more I feel validated that I made the right decision to move to Dayton and join the OMA team. The past few months have been a growing and learning experience for me. I continue to learn everyday all the ways in which the OMA community impacts those who engage with it. We at

OMA continue to gather feedback and thoughts on all of our programs and I appreciate the many things already shared with me about P.E.E.R.S. and the Cultural Heritage Months that I oversee. I'm interested to hear from you all what about P.E.E.R.S. or the Cultural Heritage Months you have come to enjoy and don't want to see changed; what you like about those programs but have some tweaks or changes you'd like to see; and what are some things you aren't seeing happen that you would like to see happen. There are several ways you can share your ideas with us. We just had two town halls, we will be sending out a survey soon, but you can always just stop by and chat.

Lastly, as I write this I'm wrapping up at the Latinx LEADS conference; a conference for supporting the growth of Latino/a/x students at university campuses across the country. One of the things I'm very excited to engage with is supporting in building the Latino/a/x community at UD. There has already been great work done and attending this conference with a few students is another step in building momentum and creating a diverse and inclusive Latino/a/x community at UD that will enrich all of OMA.

Much love,  
Sam



**Joia Mitchell-Holman**

Hi Friends!

Two more weeks until spring break! Can you believe that it's almost March? After we return from spring break, we will only have 7 weeks until the end of the semester which will swiftly pass. I know that you may be exhausted with a busy schedule but HANG IN THERE! You have been doing great this semester, so let's finish off these two weeks, rest and return rejuvenated



**Paola Ortiz**

Hey there!

There is always a point in our lives where we need encouragement, especially when we are going through a stressful time. This moment for most of us right now is midterms, there are many assignments and exams on the way. However, never forget what you came to UD for, complete your degree and find a job that makes your soul happy. I BELIEVE IN

to end this semester and school year on a high note!  
Please come and talk with myself or any of the staff if you need support with anything. We are here for you! Let's get through the next two weeks and please enjoy your spring break! I am looking forward to hearing about your break when you return!

YOU, BELIEVE IN YOURSELF!  
If you need words of encouragement or a hug, come by.  
Exito, you got this!

See ya soon!

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## Student Engagement Assistants



**Brandyn Hunter**

You are getting closer to the end of the semester. Continue to work hard and go to all your classes. Your moment is what you make it, so make the **most** of it. As things begin to pick-up more and you become busier, stay focused on your goals and you will achieve them.



**December Lee**

This time of the year it can be very stressful, so just remember to BREATHE. Do whatever you have to do to assess the situation, slow down your thoughts, then just breathe.



**Gabriela de Leon**

It always seems impossible until it's done! Keep your head up, you're right in the middle, you can do this! It's going to be over soon so always maintain positive vibes.



**Jordyn Mitchell**

WOW! Is it midterms already? IT IS!! Spring Break is coming up in a few short weeks but before we can have our class-free week, we have to ace these midterms!! Get good sleep, eat your breakfast, study hard, and pass these tests. But always remember, your mental health will ALWAYS trump your GPA. Take care of yourself FIRST!! Take the time to shower, eat, sleep, rest, take some alone time, listen to calming music, do what you can to be the best you can be!

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## Abayomi Doll Workshop

For Black History Month the Office of Multicultural Affairs, Campus Ministry and other partners at UD are collaborating to put together a Maafa Commemoration Series. This series of events has already included a trip to the Freedom Center in Cincinnati to learn about the Middle Passage and slavery in the Americas and the Abayomi Doll Workshop. You can learn more about the Maafa [here](#). For those who are descendants of African slaves the Abayomi Dolls are part of a larger way of connecting to those who came before us. Abayomi means 'precious meeting' in Yoruba. During the voyage from Africa, mother's would sometimes take

pieces of cloth from their skirts and make these dolls to remember their children and as a way to help keep hope. The dolls became symbols of resistance. We will be able to use the dolls created during the workshop at an upcoming Commemoration event on February 28 where we will honor and remember those who were lost during the Middle Passage.



## BATU's 2019 Black Excellence Ball

Black Action Through Unity (BATU) hosted their annual Excellence Ball on February 2nd. They provided current students and alumni with a night filled with good music, history, refreshments, a photo booth and fellowship in celebration of Black History Month. The ball will culminate BATU's 50th Anniversary celebration and kick off Black History Month. A brief recognition ceremony was also a part of the night. Good job BATU!







## Colors of Leadership Connections: Designing your Legacy



On February 23rd, OMA hosted the Colors of Leadership Connections (COLC): Designing your Legacy.

Colors of Leadership Connections (COLC), a combination of collaborative and inclusive mini-workshops designed for students interested in advancing their leadership development. Focus is placed on how identity impacts experiences, and identifying specific pathways to focus on leadership. The goal of COLC was to provide opportunities to share resources with unique, special and brilliant individuals who are UD alumni and other leaders on campus.

We had Mrs. Phillitia Charlton as a guest speaker, she talked about her experiences and how to overcome everything life throws at us. Something that students really liked was her focus on putting themselves first and then working with others and achieving your goals. Mrs. Charlton received her Principal Licensure from UD. Thanks to everyone who made it!

## Student Organization Spotlight

*February*  
**SUNDAY**  
**TAKE OFF**  
CHURCH & BRUNCH  
MT. PISGAH @ 10AM  
1 DIAMOND AVENUE, DAYTON OH

**MONDAY**  
**BAGGAGE CLAIM**  
MONEY MONDAY  
125 MEDICAL SCIENCES  
(WSU) @ 7:08PM

**TUESDAY**  
**CHECK YOUR BAGS**  
A DISCUSSION ON  
MENTAL HEALTH  
IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY  
UD KU 311 @ 7:08PM

**WEDNESDAY**  
**A DIFFERENT WORLD**  
125 MEDICAL SCIENCES  
(WSU) @ 7:08PM

**THURSDAY**  
**THE LAYOVER**  
R TACO ON BROWN STREET  
(ALL DAY EVENT)

**FRIDAY**  
**THE LANDING**  
THE IMMACULATE IOTA MU CHAPTER  
OF KAPPA ALPHA PSI FRATERNITY, INC  
GALA

THE ILLUSTRIOUS EPSILON CHI CHAPTER  
OF  
ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY, INCORPORATED  
PRESENTS

**FLIGHT**  
**1908**  
SKEEWEEK 2019

FOR FLIGHT UPDATES, PLEASE VISIT  
@EPSILONCHI\_AKA

### Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Hey guys! Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. was founded January 15, 1908, at Howard University and our mission is to serve all mankind. We would like to invite everyone to join us **February 24th - March 1st for Skeeweeek**, and the opportunity to witness and join in serving mankind.

Help us celebrate community, building wealth, scholarship, health, and most importantly service.

Sisterly,

The Women of Alpha Kappa Alpha, Epsilon Chi Chapter

# An Open Letter Regarding the Ebony Heritage Singers



In 1990, the University did a national search for a full-time, tenure-track faculty member to develop what had been a student/community-run gospel chorus. I wish I could adequately describe how cutting edge it was for a predominantly White institution to see the value in this endeavor. Truthfully, it would have been cutting edge for any institution of higher education; gospel music was not considered a music worthy of study in music degree programs. Yet, UD believed this to be a critical area of support for African American students. At the end of the search, I was selected to fill this role.

Next year will mark the 30<sup>th</sup> year I've been on the University of Dayton campus and much has happened with the choir. During my first year on campus we moved the ensemble into the Department of Music so students could earn academic credit for their participation. Parenthetically, it continues to be a free credit! The name was changed to the Ebony Heritage Singers (EHS) to reflect the core value of celebrating Black cultural heritage. Over the years we became a strong presence on campus and in the community. Membership grew to an average of 60 students, mostly African American. At the same time, I established the University of Dayton as THE place in the Midwest to come to learn about African American sacred music through annual gospel music workshops. Several colleges in the Midwest explored either moving existing gospel choirs into the music curriculum or starting one. We were used as a model for gospel choirs developed at Kent State University and Berea College in Kentucky. EHS was the first ensemble in the Department of Music to perform at state and national professional music conferences. We have an amazing history and legacy!

In the late-90s I noticed the start of a phenomenon that occurs at most predominantly white institutions, that of gospel choirs slowly transitioning to a largely predominantly white population. I wrote an open letter to African American students through the Diverse Student Populations newsletter (one of the former names for OMA) asking people to consider the importance of the gospel choir in propagating Black culture on the University campus. My comment then was that I would happily teach any student who was a member of EHS. At the same time, I wanted students to take ownership of their culture, to not simply abdicate it by non-participation. Over the years, what I suspected became true. The racial diversity of the group has become a growing concern. We've had fewer and fewer diverse students choosing to participate in EHS. Particularly, in the past two years there have been little to no Black student presence.

I realize students are very busy. That's not likely to change for any of us; there will always be competing opportunities. Many students will say they can't sing; EHS has always been a non-audition ensemble. However, I hope students will consider the importance of the gospel choir for being a supportive, energizing community. I hope students will consider the many ways the ensemble teaches and celebrates African American culture – both to participants in the ensemble and to those who choose to attend concerts. For many years, *EHS belonged* to the African American community at UD. It still

does; it just does not visually represent the African American community.

Your voice is needed. Your presence in the ensemble is needed. I will close now as I did those years ago: the culture is yours; don't give it away.

Dr. Donna Cox  
Department of Music

**EHS rehearses on Tuesdays, 6-8pm, in the rehearsal room in Fitz Hall.**

**SIGN UP for OMA After Hours Access in Alumni Hall  
View and RSVP for OMA EVENTS**

## **Our staff**

**Daria-Yvonne J. Graham, Ph.D.**  
**Associate Dean of Students and Executive Director**

**Mérida Allen**  
**Director of Multicultural Education and Student Leadership**

**Sam Ortiz**  
**Associate Director for Campus and Community Engagement**

**Cynthia Payne**  
**Assistant Director for Academic Success**

**Sherry Williams**  
**Administrative Assistant**

**Graduate Assistants**  
**Paola Ortiz**  
**Joia Mitchell-Holman**

### **Student Engagement Assistants**

**Gabriela De Leon**  
**December Lee**  
**Brandyn Hunter**  
**Jordyn Mitchell**

### **Student Office Assistants**

**Royal Smith**  
**Alyssa Mims**



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