



Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Transforming the Springfield College Community in Spirit, Mind, and Body

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As the Springfield College community continues to create a more socially just, inclusive, and equitable campus, this online publication will highlight our efforts at addressing issues of difference and marginalization in our community.



RA by Day, Activist Artist by Night

Springfield College student and resident assistant Nadia Salett is a talented artist and a passionate activist. Taylor Alston, community director for the Office of Housing and Residence Life, took the opportunity to speak with Salett about her efforts to pay homage to the African Americans who've laid a foundation of excellence and achievement before her. Says Alston, **her "ABC's of Black History"** is a wonderful combination of historic value and modern digital artistry. In this project, she chooses people to feature using the alphabet to come

up with names. Some of her digital artwork includes drawings of Rosa Parks, Queen Latifah, and Jackie Robinson.

Alston: What is your process? Do you draw whatever comes to you or do you pick a name and go from there?

Salett: It's all about picking a person. It takes a while for me to pick a person. I'm trying not to pick famous "everyone knows" type of people, but it's getting kind of hard to do. Granted, by the time I get to the harder letters, I'll find more people that I haven't heard of. I found one YouTube video that goes through some people. I also use Wikipedia and, it's funny, but they have a list

of African Americans by letter! That helped me as well as a website that lists the 44 most influential Black Americans.

Alston: *Did you come up with the name 'Thing-A-Day' or was that the project?*

Salett: No, so that's the project [the final for her Advanced Digital Web & Multimedia class]. There are a couple of other artists...five of us in my class who are doing it, and then a group of graduate students who are also doing art pieces. Everyone has different themes, or some just do random art pieces.

Alston: *Is digital art your primary? Is that what you normally go to?*

Salett: I'm thinking about doing some painting for these but it's just about getting some good lighting or a good photo.

Alston: *Do you usually pick a photo and then do your interpretation of that or do you create art from memory?*

Salett: I usually have a photo up in the corner as a model. Otherwise it is going to look off.

Alston: *Is there a reason you chose this specifically?*

Salett: Like the topic? Well, Black History Month; so it felt right. Also, I'm the president of Art for Activism. So, I figured it could be something nice to use and maybe we could post around campus after I'm done.



James Orange by Nadia, February 17, 2021



Ida B. Wells by Nadia, February 11, 2021

Alston: *How has your experience been on campus as a woman of color?*

Salett: Generally good. When I first came to campus, I did Cultural Connections, so I was here a little early and all the people I met from that have been my friends throughout. So that's been very helpful.

Alston: *I just want to know more about you! What else are you involved in? And not just on campus but off campus as well!*

Salett: I'm a part of Vagina Monologues. We're doing digital this year. I'm doing "Couchie." Normally, our school does it with four people, but I'm the only one doing it this year so I'm nervous. It's a very, very long piece. Then I'm doing "Where" and "Say" with two other girls.

Alston: *What are your preferred pronouns?*

Salett: She, her.

Alston: *What are you like when you're home?*

Salett: I laser cut my own earrings when I'm home. I'm also trying to get into other things. I made my dad a custom domino's set which is pretty fun. It looks pretty cool! Sometimes I volunteer with Mycom, which is a small community group. I volunteer with the art department so I'm the leader for that. We do murals. We just had one put up that they've been working on for two years. It's a really huge one!

Closing note from Alston: During our conversation, I recommended [PushBlack.org](https://pushblack.org) as a resource for historically Black figures who are more obscure. The site uses social media platforms such as Instagram ([@wearepushblack](https://www.instagram.com/wearepushblack)) and Twitter to educate and activate followers to build personal, economic, and political power.



Latinx Student Organization a New Place of Belonging on Campus

At the beginning of this academic year, with the focus on issues of diversity and inclusion on campus, Robert Yanez, director of Housing and Residence Life, and Ben Morales, assistant director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs and coordinator of YMCA initiatives, recognized a need on campus: Following the success of newly formed groups like the Black Student Union, they decided it was time to create a place of belonging on campus for Latinx students—and all students wanting to learn more about and support the initiatives of the Latinx community.

In this video, Morales and Evelyn Aguilar Duarte, vice president of the new Latinx Student Organization and a junior psychology major, share their thoughts about the group. If you would like to know more about the organization or get involved, please email Morales at bmorales@springfield.edu or Aguilar Duarte at eaguilarduarte@springfield.edu. You also can follow the group on [Instagram @sc_iso](https://www.instagram.com/sc_iso).

Contributors to this article: Ben Morales, assistant director of Multicultural Affairs and coordinator of YMCA initiatives; Evelyn Aguilar Duarte, Class of 2022, and vice president of the Latinx Student Organization; and Nicole Gauthier, assistant director of career advising, student outreach, innovation, and generation

Famed Antiracist Scholar to Deliver Arts & Humanities Lecture

“Denial is the heartbeat of racism, beating across ideologies, races, and

nations. It is beating within us.”
— **Ibram X. Kendi**, author of *How to be an Antiracist*

Famed antiracist and author of *How to be an Antiracist* Ibram X. Kendi, PhD, will deliver the esteemed Arts & Humanities lecture to the campus on March 25 as part of the Arts & Humanities Speaker Series. The bestselling author, historian, and antiracist scholar is the founding director of the Boston University Center for Antiracist Research. In 2020, *Time* magazine editors named him one of the 100 most influential people in the world. Many of us have heard his name or are familiar with his nonfiction book *How to Be an Antiracist*. The hard work of securing him as a guest began with Martha Potvin, PhD, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs, and then was carried through by James O’Brien, PhD, interim dean of the School of Arts and Sciences.



PHOTO: STEPHEN VOSS

As I was doing my research into how this opportunity came to fruition, I was led in an unexpected direction. The generation of the idea to host Kendi led me straight to Sheona Douglas, community director for the Office of Housing and Residence Life. Vice President for Student Affairs Patrick Love had been listening to the audiobook on his runs and was quickly “caught up in its energy.” He found it to be “transformative” and “one of the best books he had read on the topic in years.” Love then recommended the book to his staff and bought everyone interested in reading it a copy—if they were willing to participate in book discussions at the beginning of the spring 2020 semester. Douglas was immediately interested. “I was intrigued to read it. The term ‘antiracist’ was new to me, so I wanted to learn more. After reading the first chapter I was blown away! I had never heard an explanation about racism told so creatively, so eloquently,” she said.

Douglas, who felt strongly that Kendi should speak to the campus community, successfully pitched the idea to Love who encouraged her to reach out to his agent. The pandemic delayed his lecture, originally planned for fall 2020, but the campus community is excited to welcome him, albeit virtually, this spring. Love notes this would not have been possible without Douglas “planting the seed.” He encourages all employees to continue to think creatively and bring forward innovative ideas that can help move our campus forward.

Douglas believes that Kendi’s visit will be valuable because “He will highlight to the students, staff, and faculty that racism is something that can be stopped if we take accountability and work to stop it. The Springfield College community will gain understanding of the importance of working together despite racial differences and begin to celebrate our differences together.”

Contributor to this article: *Nicole Gauthier, assistant director of career advising, student outreach, innovation, and generation*

**If you have questions or comments, please contact the
Office of Student Affairs staff at studentaffairs@springfield.edu.**

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