



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.



Behind the Scenes: How Yusef Salaam Came to Speak at Springfield College

This year has been marked by rising calls for truth and justice on issues of race and social equity, and by a vibrant campus response to the issues of social injustice. Among many programs this year, the Springfield College community was fortunate to welcome entrepreneur, author, trainer, and leader Yusef Salaam as part of a memorable webinar in April titled, "Stepping in Activism: A Conversation with Yusef Salaam." This webinar was free and open to the Springfield College and local communities. [View the recording](#) of Yusef Salaam's discussion with our students.

The idea to bring Salaam to campus began last year with two students, K'ylah Flynn '20 and Nia Greenidge, Class of 2022, and soon grew with support from a number of student groups and members of campus offices. Today, we peek behind the scenes to see how this program came into being.

Q. What first sparked your idea to bring Yusef Salaam to Springfield College?

Nia Greenidge: It was a little over a year ago when K'ylah Flynn and I were resident assistants and we were supposed to do an educational program. As Black students on campus, we noticed that Black History Month was not as celebrated as much as we wished. We both had watched *When They See Us* previously, and were moved by the series. Through our conversations, and because of certain interactions K'ylah had faced, we had the idea of screening *When*



Nia Greenidge

They See Us on campus. [K'ylah] then brought the idea of showing the series as an educational RA program to me and we were both interested. We began to meet with our community directors, the staff of the Office of Residence Life and Office of Multicultural Affairs and secured their collaboration as part of the program as well. Once they did, we booked Judd Gymnasium and got funding for snacks and drinks. We held a four-part series program showing the story of the Central Park Five [now, the Exonerated Five] and having a small talkback after each session.

Q. While the Yusef Salaam discussion was positive and well attended, your first programming was not initially successful out of the gate. How did you develop interest on campus for the issues and the programs?

Greenidge: All in all, at the end of the series program, K'ylah, President Mary-Beth Cooper, and I talked about bringing one of the five to our school to speak. We all decided that Yusef Salaam would be the best fit – both for his experience and the wisdom he drew from it. We were planning to move forward when the pandemic hit and turned our world upside down as the College was forced to shut down and we all had to go home. We still planned for Yusef to come next semester when we thought the pandemic was going to end and were planning to have K'ylah flown in so that we could introduce and proceed with our program with him but then the pandemic continued and we had to put aside any idea of hosting him on campus.

David McMahon, director of Spiritual Life, contributed to this article.



Middle School Mentors

Site Leaders: Mia & Lindsay

Middle School Mentors Program Fills a Community Need

A long-standing program of the Springfield College Center for Service and Leadership, the Partners Program pairs our students as partners with elementary school students in Springfield to provide mentorship, homework help, and social-emotional support. As the school children progressed through the program and left elementary school, there was still a need and a desire by students, parents, and the College partners to continue the relationships that had been formed through the Partners Program.

This led to the creation of the Middle School Mentors Program.

"Kids and their parents would ask how their fifth grader, who was graduating from elementary school, could stay with the program during middle school, particularly since it was such a big transition," said Charlene Elvers, EdD, director of the Center for Service and Leadership. Responding to teary parents and students, Elvers recalls, "I had no answer for them."

When the Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement opened, Elvers saw an

opportunity to create the mentoring program so that some fifth graders could continue through middle school if they chose. With most of the Partners Program families living in the neighborhood of Springfield College, the Center for Service and Leadership space at 385 Eastern Avenue was ideal.

Now students can maintain relationships with a Springfield College mentor through middle school. Elvers is very pleased with the program's success so far, and knows how far-reaching its impact can be.

"One woman's neighbor told her about the program and she came to talk to me in person. Turns out she was in the Partners Program when she was in elementary school and now was looking to get her sixth-grade daughter in our program. She told me that she still remembered her SC mentor, and that the time they spent together was so amazing," Elvers said.

Learn more about the program and its impact on Springfield College students as well as the students they serve. [Watch interviews](#) with Emily Woznick, G'21, graduate assistant for the Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement; Jennifer Charlera, Class of 2022, Middle School Mentors site leader; and Kait Bonsignore, Class of 2021, Middle School Mentors site leader.

Nicole Gauthier, assistant director of career advising, student outreach, innovation, and generation, contributed to this article.



Women of Power Club Seeking More Members

Students, faculty, and staff who self-identify as women had the opportunity to gather and discuss relevant topics each Wednesday at 6 p.m. during the academic year. These meetings, hosted by the Women of Power club, were conceived as a nexus for BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, and People of Color] women to connect in a safe space to meet new people, but quickly evolved into a meeting grounded by women of all shapes, colors, and backgrounds. I attended the last meeting at which I saw the diversity reflected in the attendees and their interactions.

The club president and student facilitator, Sabrina Williams, asked pointed questions about various topics, including relationship expectations, social media influence on the female form and psyche, and modern-day dating norms. In responses to those questions from attendees, no two were the same.

The group has sponsored a number of events this year in collaboration with other

clubs and organizations. Some of those sponsored events were helping to plan the March on Alden Street event, and coordinating a drive to collect donated sanitary products to distribute to local organizations.

Members of the Women of Power executive board, its president, and others serving in prominent positions in the group would like their group to be viewed as open to all community members who identify as women. They are proud of their work to foster open conversations but would really appreciate more members of different races, backgrounds, trans, non-cisgender, and non-gender-conforming women to also feel welcome. The ideas allude to the group's mission which begins:

"Women of Power is a club that highlights and thrives off the cultural, ethnic, and racial differences of women on campus. This club is an opportunity to allow all women a comfortable place to be their authentic selves so they may thrive in their future occupations in addition to preparation for further endeavors leading to success."

"Come to our meetings and keep an open mind!" is what members say when encouraging others to join. Their group has received a lot of attention this year and they would like to continue to recruit new members to join their conversations. For anyone interested in getting involved, email womenofpower@springfield.edu.

"You'll never run out of ideas to talk about with more voices in the room," said member Paris Lizana, Class of 2023.

Taylor Alston, community director for the Office of Housing and Residence Life, contributed to this article.

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

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