

Empire State College Celebrates Black History with art exhibition
My Color is Beautiful

*Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave, I am the dream and the hope of the slaves.
I rise I rise I rise.*
Maya Angelou

(BROOKLYN, N.Y., Feb. 6, 2017) – In celebration of Black History month, SUNY Empire State College presents My Color is Beautiful an exhibit of works by current students and alumni. The exhibit was designed to reflect on quotes written by blacks in history. The artists were asked to create works inspired by the chosen quotes while reflecting on the theme of the show. Visual art faculty and SUNY Empire alumnus, Raúl Manzano, Ph.D., is the curator. Julia Primus, B.A., also an alumna, is the assistant curator.

The opening reception is Wednesday, Feb. 8, from 5:30-7:30 p.m., at the Livingston Gallery, 177 Livingston Street, 6th floor, Brooklyn. The exhibition will be on display through March 30, Monday through Thursday, noon to 5 p.m. or by appointment at 718 907-5740. Admission is free.

Since the introduction of the annual Black History Month art exhibitions to the college in 2012 by Manzano, many students have had the opportunity to express themselves celebrating the contribution of their ancestors, as well as their own, through their artwork.

“The beauty and richness of this exhibit is the artistic talent shown by our students, as well as the teaching by our faculty,” Manzano said. “Bringing art and African-American history together elevates not only the mind and soul, but the spirit in which Empire State College embraces its students, regardless of their race, color, sex or religion.

“Our gallery is also a training venue for our students in curatorial practices, providing them hands on experience producing and designing an exhibition,” Manzano said.

“This is my first curatorial exhibition working as assistant curator,” said Primus. “When I told Dr. Manzano that I would like to learn the different roles curating an exhibition, he took me under his wing and showed me all the different roles in curating an exhibit. He asked me to create a theme for the exhibit. I thought about quotes by African Americans from all walks of life. Since I am a colorist artist, I came up with the title, My Color is Beautiful. The selection of artists and works was another exciting process, as I

had the opportunity to review all the works and the artists' statements, concluding with the installation of the show. Many of these topics I learned throughout my studio art classes and art history studies at SUNY Empire, but now, I have the opportunity to put theory and practice together, which is an incredible opportunity," said Primus.

About the Artists and Their Work

Natural Langdon's documentary photography and films (www.naturallangdon.com) are a testimony to the struggles many black communities face around the world. Through his work, he aspires to give voice to the voiceless. He says, "by exploring the contributions of people of African descent around the world, I've discovered the untold stories of communities in Cuba, Haiti, Bahia, Brazil and Ghana."

With two collages based on the quotes and life of civil rights activist Marcus Garvey and poet Maya Angelou, **Vanessa Moore** '14 depicts how history has been unjust for blacks seeking rights and freedom, and how the beauty of a poet's words helps overcome the hardness life sometimes presents.

With a playful colorful scroll as a unifying expression, textile artist **Julia Primus** '16 shares her vision of harmonic societies where teamwork is not just a job, but a human bond. Colors celebrate diversity, honors creative expression, and encourages radical self-acceptance.

New York-based documentary photographer, **Daryl Tillman** '16, specializes in capturing the nuances of the human spirit that go unseen. He follows independent performers throughout New York City and selects photographs that will match quotes of prominent figures of African-American history. The color of the images, and the rhythm of the quotes combine in a way that speaks to the soul. His work can be viewed at www.dtp photography.biz.

April Simmons '14 presents her poem, "I am the Rainbow," written for this exhibition. Her poem incorporates quotes by Maya Angelou and Langston Hughes. She will read her poem during the opening night. In her poem, Simmons compares the hues of the rainbow to a multitude of stages she has experienced in life. "I am the Rainbow," is meant to show that everything experienced in time becomes beautiful, like the calm of a rainbow after the storm.

About Black History Month

Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, noting the absence of recognition of black accomplishments in the U.S., founded Black History month in 1926; then known as Negro History Week. His contribution helped highlight African-American accomplishments as a part of this country's history.

About Empire State College:

Empire State College, the nontraditional, open college of the SUNY system, educates more than 18,000 students worldwide at eight international sites, more than 35 locations in the state of New York, online, as well as face to face and through a blend of both, at the associate, bachelor's and master's levels.

The average age of an undergraduate student at the college is 35 and graduate students' average age is 40.

Most Empire State College students are working adults. Many are raising families and meeting civic commitments in the communities where they live, while studying part time.

In addition to awarding credit for prior college-level learning, the college pairs each undergraduate student with a faculty mentor who supports that student throughout his or her college career.

Working with their mentors, students design an individual degree program and engage in guided independent study and course work onsite, online or through a combination of both, which provides the flexibility for students to choose where, when and how to learn.

Students have the opportunity to enroll five times during the year.

The college's 78,000 alumni are active in their communities as entrepreneurs, politicians, business professionals, artists, nonprofit agency employees, teachers, veterans and active military, union members and more.

The college was first established in 1971 by the SUNY Board of Trustees with the encouragement of the late Ernest L. Boyer, chancellor of the SUNY system from 1970 to 1977.

Boyer also served as United States commissioner of education during the administration of President Jimmy Carter and then as president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

More information about the college is available at www.esc.edu.

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Directions: #2, 3 trains to Hoyt Street or A,C,G to Hoyt-Schermerhorn Streets.