

News

Second Annual CLASP Black History Essay Contest presents winning essay, Through the power of words, change will come: Honoring Zora Neale Hurston

By ZAKIA HAUGHTON
CLASP CONTEST WINNER

Black History Month has been celebrated for many years throughout schools all over America. When I was asked to do this essay, I automatically thought of the typical well-known African Americans: Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and Harriet Tubman. But what about all the others who were influential, the others who fought for social justice, the others who sat in the front of the bus, and the others who fought for our freedom.

They too deserve a voice. As I sat here thinking about what African Americans influenced my life, none came to mind. So, I decided

to do some self-analysis. What is something I do in my life that I absolutely love? I know, writing! In writing, one can express themselves through the power of words while thoughts, memories and ideas are turned into poetry. Continuing to brainstorm, I remembered a book I read in English class during my senior year of high school. The book that forever changed the way I thought of writing; that book was called *Their Eyes were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston.

This was the first time African American literature was introduced into the curriculum at my school. During my experience with this book, my perception of writing had been changed, my

knowledge of African American literature had shifted, and my writing found its home.

In the midst of my realization, empowerment became my new motivation to educate myself more on this phenomenal woman who had such an influence on the love of my life. Shortly after browsing the internet and finding nothing, I decided to go straight to the books. Amazingly to me, the library had everything I was looking for. As I scrambled through each shelf, I stumbled across an autobiography titled *A Biography of the Spirit* by Deborah G. Plant. This book was written in honor of Hurston and comprised her life in the words of someone she influenced. While reading, I embraced her life story and developed a newfound appreciation for her as well as her writing.

In my life, writing gave me a voice in which my actual voice could not project. Growing up as a child, writing allowed me to express myself in ways that were not verbally accepted or understood. In Hurston's life, expression through words was not yet deemed a freedom for women, especially not black women. Throughout the beginning of the eighteenth century, woman writers were not accepted nor were they acknowledged.

During this time, women would hide their writings or dispose them so that they could not be

found; they had no voice. Yet, despite the ongoing struggles of social injustice and racism throughout the South, Hurston decided to become that voice and make a breakthrough. Her influence during the early eighteenth century and the Harlem Renaissance has forever changed woman writers of the past and the present. She created a future for woman writers and has earned acceptance by African American scholars as well as American scholars today. Her work has now been implemented into high school curriculums and is also being studied in African American studies classes in many Colleges and Universities.

Hurston is not just an African American writer, but also a folklorist and a founding foremother of woman writers and African American anthropology today. She has inspired so many young women, as well as me, to deny race as a clutch and allow their words to become the manuscript of their life. With words, one can define life in ways teaching cannot do. With words, individuals can self-educate themselves and break the idea that education is only through schooling.

In *A Biography of Her Spirit*, the author explored Hurston's motivation which came through her inner spirituality: "She considered race consciousness to be the scourge of humanity and observed such dispositions as the

preoccupation of little minds. She was inspired by the possibilities of greatness within the human spirit, and how that greatness might be achieved, and focused her attention accordingly."

Hurston encouraged me to not see race as a setback, but to focus on the power within the human spirit and to know that greatness is possible if one can look within themselves. I know that African Americans have suffered a great deal in the past and are still suffering today, but it is time to change our perspective to become a better people; we must attack our suffrage in a positive light.

In the words of Alice Walker, "...we can turn our attention away from our oppressors – unless they are directly endangering us to our faces – and work on the issue of our suffering without attaching them to it." If wholeness and healing are to be achieved, WE as a people must work together and stop blaming our oppressors for being oppressed, and strive towards finding an active nonviolent solution to coming out of oppression and creating a truly equal reality. Not just a better reality for us, but raising the standards for generations to come. Through the power of words, one can define a world much deeper than what we see on the surface; for surface minds did not gain us freedom, nor will they shape our future.



Pictured above is Zakia Haughton who won the Second Annual Chancellors Leadership Access Student Program (CLASP) Black History Essay Contest

Twenty-nine Penn State Harrisburg students inducted into NHS

By CHARLOTTE SPECTOR
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Twenty-nine undergraduate students were inducted into Penn State Harrisburg's Theta Iota Chapter of Alpha Sigma Lambda, a national honor society for adult students in higher education, on Sunday afternoon February 28, 2010. This was the 18th year for the campus' annual ceremony honoring the outstanding academic achievement of its adult undergraduate students.

Students who were invited to become members met the national organization's eligibility

requirements of being age 24 or older, having at least 24 graded credits in a Penn State bachelor or associate degree program, and being in the top 20% of that group. Ninety students initially met those eligibility requirements and twenty-nine accepted their invitation to membership.

The new members received their membership certificates and pins from: Charlotte Spector, Career Services Specialist who serves as the chapter's advisor; Donna Howard, Assistant Director of Campus Life and Cultural Affairs; and Dr. Libby Tisdell, Professor of Adult Education in the School of Behavioral Sciences and Education.

Dr. Tisdell discussed with the students and their guests her own research into learning styles and encouraged everyone to be aware of the different ways of acquiring information and to use them all to enhance their lives and education.

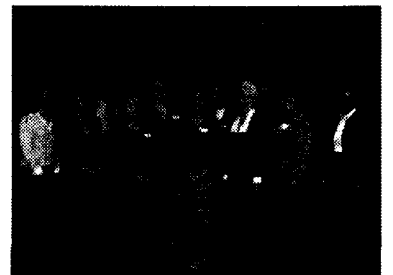
Also participating in the new member induction ceremony was Tianna Segneri, chapter President, a Communications major who was inducted in 2007. Ms. Segneri welcomed and congratulated the new members and encouraged their participation in chapter and campus events.

The new members were also informed by Ms. Spector of some of the ways ASL participates on

campus, including sponsoring the upcoming "Web, Sizzle and Roll" event March 15- 18 from 5 -6 pm. The event will feature hot snacks and hot career website information. In addition, ASL sponsors and awards several book grants to adult students annually.

The Book Grants program is funded by the group's ongoing participation with Karns Markets "1 for the Schools" program, where they rebate 1% of the value of purchases made and tied to Karns' Fresh Rewards card. Participation in this fundraiser is open to everybody simply by registering their Karns Fresh Rewards card and designating "PSU-Alpha Sigma Lambda" as

the recipient organization. Questions may be referred to Charlotte Spector at cxs1@psu.edu.



Pictured above are the new ASL members
Photo submitted by Charlotte Spector