

## Student Spotlight: Rainesha Williams-Fox

By Allison Roman, Assistant Director



New to the Grand Valley community as a transfer student, Rainesha Williams-Fox, better known as Rai, has truly jumped right in campus life. Williams-Fox is a member of the

Multicultural Cohort Program through the Office of Multicultural Affairs and serves on the Student Senate-Diversity Affairs Committee. She is the promotions director for WCKS-The Whale Radio.

Born and raised on the eastside of Detroit, Williams-Fox graduated from University Preparatory High School in Detroit in 2012. She said she transferred from Bowling Green State University because of Grand Valley's unlimited resources and its inclusiveness. With less than a semester under her belt, Williams-Fox has said her brief time on campus has already helped her grow as a person.

Williams-Fox is a double major in criminal justice and psychology. She chose her major because she is fascinated with criminals and why they commit crime, and she wants to learn how to prevent crime from happening, especially with juveniles. She is passionate about helping others in need, particularly those who are incarcerated, parolees, juveniles, people from low-income urban neighborhoods and veterans. Williams-Fox doesn't have a job title for what she ultimately would like to do, but she knows she would like to start her own nonprofit recreational center in a low-income urban area. She hopes to provide children with resources to reach their dreams and through tutoring programs and recreational activities.

Williams-Fox also shared some unique facts about herself. "I love to speak in front of crowds, I can cook, I am a very good listener, and I love Transformers," she said.



**Y**ou've heard the saying, "The grass is greener on the other side?" It is truly greener here in Ireland!

My name is Irma Ramirez, and I am a junior studying sociology and participating in a semester abroad program in Limerick, Ireland. For the past two years, I have volunteered and worked for the Office of Multicultural Affairs. (Insert shameless plug about the financial support OMA gave me to study abroad) Here are some lessons I have learned while studying abroad:

- Everything in Ireland is *grand*. (e.g. How are you? I am grand.)
- I can travel to many European countries for less than \$100! Also, hostels are actually fun, not sketchy.
- Locals love calling me their "American friend," especially when they found out about the "wrecking ball incident."
- The grading system is based on a 75-point scale that is actually graded from 100 points. Confused? Professors are *really tough* on grading, especially for the humanities and social sciences.
- Even though Ireland is technically not a part of the United Kingdom, it still uses the same outlets and driving rules as the UK. Cool fact: pedestrians ALWAYS have the right of way, not just on campus.
- There is no way to avoid homesickness. However, it is easy to make friends with other international students (who are not American). Think about it: you are all in the same boat of unfamiliarity. I am going to cry when I leave all my wonderful European friends in December.
- The weather here is sporadic. It "rains" (drizzles) from time to time. However, this is nothing in comparison to Michigan weather/snow.
- Given the huge classroom sizes (typically 100+ students), I have come to appreciate what Grand Valley has to offer: small classroom sizes and multiple support offices. I guess you truly do not realize what you have until you get away from it. Cheesy, I know.

Overall, this experience has been and continues to be life-changing. As cliché as this may sound, I cannot tell you the immense gratitude and love I have for this experience. If you have considered study abroad, do it. Research and questions will get you a long way, especially if financial aid or fear is your biggest concern.

For more on my Irish experience and photos of Ireland, feel free to follow my blog ([www.irmainireland.blogspot.com](http://www.irmainireland.blogspot.com)).

# Office of Multicultural Affairs Graduate Interns Spotlight

During the fall semester, the Office of Multicultural Affairs had the privilege of providing practicum internships to four College Student Affairs Leadership Program graduate students. Here are their reflections.



**Kyle Martin**

I am a second-year graduate student in the College Student Affairs Leadership program. I currently serve as the graduate assistant for Fraternity and Sorority Life in the Office of Student Life. In addition, I am a graduate intern for the GEAR UP program in the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

Being a part of the GEAR UP program was a very rewarding experience as I was able to positively impact high school students and help them think about their future in college. I worked with a diverse group of students at Union High School weekly. This has opened my eyes to issues and challenges that underrepresented students face, and has helped me understand how I can serve them better as they enroll in college.

I worked as a traveling consultant for my national fraternity, Alpha Kappa Lambda, and have been heavily involved in Greek Life as an undergraduate at Eastern Michigan University. My passion in student affairs, thus far, has focused on Fraternity and Sorority Life. However, working with GEAR UP helped me to recognize other ways I can impact students and recognize the barriers and challenges they may face. I am thankful to Bobby Springer and OMA for giving me the opportunity to work with this program and look forward to continuing our work in the winter semester.



**Bianca Ortiz**

I am a second-year graduate student in the College Student Affairs Leadership program. For the past two years, I have served as the graduate assistant for the Women's Center. This past year I joined the Office of Multicultural Affairs team as the GEAR UP graduate intern. I have had an amazing time working with the program, both autonomously and as part of a team with Kyle

Martin and Bobby Springer.

I have worked as a translator for English Second Language students at Union High School in the classroom, and that experience has provided me with insight about the challenges of underrepresented students and the impact of this program. Developing relationships with the students has been so rewarding and serving as a role model to them has impacted their educational endeavors. Being able to relate to the diverse group of students and serve as an access point to higher education has brought me a lot of satisfaction as a student affairs practitioner.

This internship has given me an opportunity to work with underrepresented youth and help prepare them for college, which is tied into the work I do as coordinator for the Niara women of color mentoring program on campus. These experiences have come full circle as my goals include working to create a more inclusive and diverse environment that would allow all underrepresented students to thrive.

Being able to intern with GEAR UP has given me hands-on experiences to help students invest in their educational future. I am thankful to both Bobby Springer and to the Office of Multicultural Affairs for allowing me to work for the program.



**Jazzmin Weathers**

I absolutely loved my experience working in OMA. I had the privilege of working with the Wade McCree Scholars through my practicum. These students have reminded me why I wanted to work in student affairs. I have a passion for helping students of color matriculate at predominately white institutions and this experience allowed me to do that. I enjoyed my time so much that I

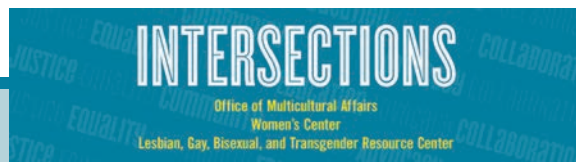
plan on continuing to work with this student group next semester.



**Chelsea Pulice**

My practicum in the Office of Multicultural Affairs gave me experience working with students from diverse backgrounds. I have been lucky enough to form meaningful relationships with a few students, one in particular who is looking into a career in higher education.

This practicum gave me skills to work with underrepresented students and an experience that brought me out of my comfort zone. These skills will be important for any future career in our global society and have grown to be key values in my life.



*Intersections Presents*

## **We Who Believe in Freedom Cannot Rest: Lessons from Black Feminism** **Patricia Hill Collins**

The LGBT Resource Center, Office of Multicultural Affairs, and the Women's Center have enhanced our collective work through the development of "Intersections" programs and initiatives. The purpose of Intersections events is to help students look at their complex world through multiple dimensions, including race, gender, sexual orientation, class status, etc.

The Intersections partners will bring Patricia Hill Collins, distinguished professor of sociology at University of Maryland, to Grand Valley in February. Collins is a social theorist whose research and scholarship have examined issues of race, gender, social class, sexuality and/or nation.

### **Winter 2014 Intersections Program**

Wednesday, February 26, 2014

Patricia Hill Collins

6 p.m., Kirkhof Center, Grand River Room

LIB 100 & 201 Approved





L-R: JaMar Ragland, Bobby Springer, Coach D, and Mr. Jason McGhee, Dean of Students

## MI Michigan GEAR UP Hosts Motivational Speaker

By Bobby J. Springer, Associate Director

To celebrate GEAR UP National Week (September 23–27, 2013) Grand Valley’s chapter invited motivational speaker and author Darrell “Coach D” Andrews to speak to more than 700 ninth graders from Grand Rapids Public Schools.

Andrews’ speech, “Purpose and Passion,” relayed how important dreams are to students. He said a student with a dream is a student with a future.

Andrews continued: “Your dream can become your reality. If you have a vision for accomplishing your dream and are willing to work diligently towards achieving it, one day you will be living it. It will become a reality.”

He told the students that their family history and backgrounds do not limit the ability to live dreams. “I am living proof of that,” he said, and reminded the audience of professional athletes, entertainers and entrepreneurs who overcame poverty to rise to success.

Andrews also said a student’s self-esteem does not limit their possibilities.

“Don’t let your mind steal your dreams away from you. Tell it what you want out of life and it has no choice but to conform. It is your mind, you own it, it does not own you,” he said.

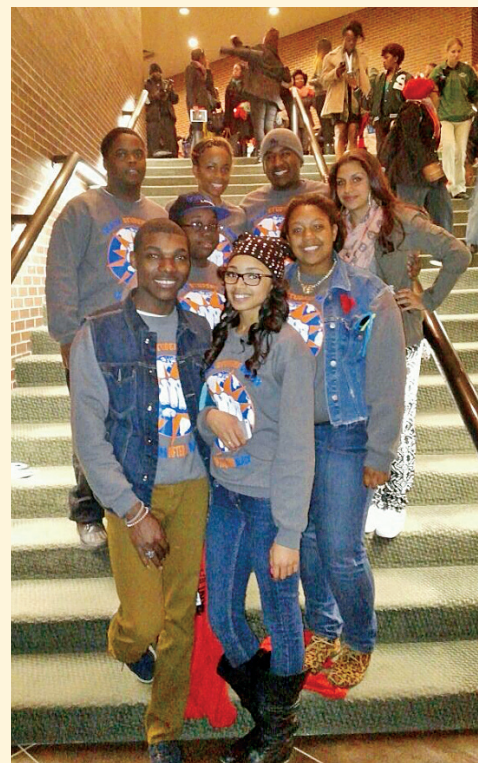
## Black Student Union Shares Stories About the Importance of Being Active Students

Members of the Black Student Union mentored Michigan GEAR UP students and shared with the high school students the importance of becoming involved in their communities, schools and future college campuses.

Panelists included members from African Student Council, Black Student Union, Office of Student Life, and Women’s Center.

The GEAR UP students participated in many campus activities, including a volunteer event, tour of the Mary Idema Pew Library Learning and Information Commons and one-on-one meetings with mentors.

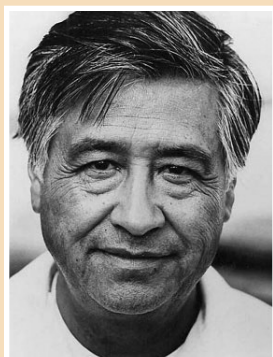
Black Student Union members were challenged by leaders to take the time to mentor students who are planning to attend college. Cecil Johnson said: “It is important that younger students of color are aware of the many possibilities a college education holds. Visiting our campus is a memory the GEAR UP students will never forget.”



## The Teachings of César E. Chávez: An American Hero

Come and learn about the life and legacy of César E. Chávez and how his contributions as a farm worker and civil rights activist impacted the nation.

Wednesday, March 26, 2014  
2263 Russel H. Kirkhof Center  
4:00–5:30 p.m.



# Winter 2014 Schedule of Events



## Office of Multicultural Affairs Staff

Connie Dang, Director  
Bobby J. Springer, Associate Director  
Allison Roman, Assistant Director  
Kristie Scanlon, Assistant Director  
Oliver Aguilera, Multicultural Assistant  
Linda Ray, Office Coordinator  
Kayla Jones, Graduate Assistant

For the latest news and events, check us out online at [www.gvsu.edu/oma](http://www.gvsu.edu/oma)  
Archived copies of OMAs newsletters can be accessed via the above website.

## About Us

The Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) fosters a respect for and an appreciation of the history, tradition and culture of different ethnic groups and empowers all students to be active participants in Grand Valley's community through programs that promote academic, social and cultural development for students.

OMA's vision is to promote acceptance and appreciation of an inclusive campus community that values the diversity of people, backgrounds and perspectives of each individual.

## Guiding Principles:

- Fosters a campus climate that respects and appreciates the history, culture, and traditions of various ethnic groups.
- Empowers students to be active participants in the Grand Valley community.
- Stimulates and encourages intercultural awareness and dialogue among university members.
- Takes an active role in promoting academic, social, cultural, leadership and professional development for students.

The OMA staff serves as a resource for students, faculty and staff members on issues of inclusion, diversity, multiculturalism and interculturalism.

## Our Contact Information

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Design and Production: Ruth Oldenburg,  
Rainstick Studio

January 20–25

**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration Week**

Visit [www.gvsu.edu/mlk](http://www.gvsu.edu/mlk) for complete details.

January & February

**Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Celebration**

Visit [www.gvsu.edu/oma](http://www.gvsu.edu/oma) for complete details.

February

**Black History Month**

Visit [www.gvsu.edu/oma](http://www.gvsu.edu/oma) for complete details.

February 4

**Professionals of Color Lecture Series: Beyond Math  
Geeks and China Dolls**

Cook DeWitt Auditorium  
4–5:30 p.m.

February 6

**Professionals of Color Lecture Series:  
Effective Leadership and Service**

Cook DeWitt Auditorium  
4–5:30 p.m.

February 26

**Intersections: We Who Believe in Freedom Cannot Rest:  
Lessons from Black Feminism with Patricia Hill Collins**

2250 Russel H. Kirkhof Center  
6–8 p.m.

March 22

**R.I.C.E Conference: Realizing and Addressing Issues in  
Our Culture and Education**

DeVos Campus  
9 a.m.–5 p.m.

March 26

**The Teachings of César E. Chávez: An American Hero**

2263 Russel H. Kirkhof Center  
4–5:30 p.m.

Visit [www.gvsu.edu/oma](http://www.gvsu.edu/oma) or call 616.331-2177 for details.

Find us on:



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