

Access



Preparing Students
for a New World
of Work



think beyond the classroom. Its offerings include a yearlong undergraduate course and a three-day startup for high school students. Led by Director of Inclusive Innovation and Entrepreneurship Rubén Cantú, the institute teaches students how to create, launch and bring a product to market. By dispelling many of the myths around entrepreneurship, startups and venture capital, Cantú is creating the next generation of CEOs.

Students can also innovate their future through our more traditional College-to-Career programming, such as Explore Law and the University Co-op Internship, which are highlighted in this issue.

Finally, we are pleased to announce the launch of the Heman Sweatt Center for Black Males. It is named for Heman Marion Sweatt, the Black postal carrier who filed a lawsuit against the university to gain admission into law school. His case, *Sweatt v. Painter*, was heard before the Supreme Court in 1950. As a result Sweatt became the first African American admitted to the UT School of Law. The determination and courage Sweatt displayed during the lawsuit and his first year on campus are legendary. Building upon the success of its predecessor, the African American Male Research Initiative, the Sweatt Center will embody the spirit of Heman Sweatt as we prepare Black males to be globally competitive in the 21st century.

Leonard N. Moore
Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement
George W. Littlefield
Professor of American History

Over this past year, we have been sending a message loud and clear to all our students: “Innovate Your Future.” The stories in this issue of Access illustrate how we are helping students innovate their futures and take charge of their own learning through groundbreaking programming.

We begin with middle school students through our 100 Passports initiative. An offshoot of our award-winning study abroad programs, 100 Passports is helping Austin-area students think about global travel and the ways it can influence their lives. This summer, our first group of ninth graders will travel to Beijing and Shanghai, where they will experience a series of “firsts”—from riding an airplane to climbing the Great Wall of China to speaking a new language in a foreign land. I will be excited to hear about their trip when they return, and how they believe it will change their future.

The Product Prodigy Institute is also showing students how to

Members of the Advisory Council

The DDCE Advisory Council is tasked with providing strategic guidance and recommendations to the Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement, Dr. Leonard N. Moore.

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Darrell Windham



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Illustration by Robert J. Harrington



A HISTORIC MOVE

Photo by Marsha Miller, University Communications



President Gregory L. Fenves highlighted the Texas Advance Commitment at the Sept. 18 State of the University Address, declaring it to be a truly historic moment for The University of Texas at Austin. The new financial aid commitment will cover tuition and fees for any student whose family income totals \$65,000 or less beginning in fall 2020.

“If a student can’t afford to live in Austin, that’s a barrier to their success. And as a university with a history of denying equitable access to qualified students, it’s our responsibility not to allow barriers but to create opportunities for students from all backgrounds.”—UT Austin President Gregory L. Fenves

Access

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The Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin publishes Access for its community of scholars, alumni and friends.

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Q&A

Global Leadership director prepares middle schoolers for world travel

by David West



During the fall 2018 semester, Devin Walker, director of the Global Leadership and Social Impact program, launched the 100 Passports initiative, which provides free passports to eighth graders in Austin-area Title I middle schools that partner with the DDCE's Neighborhood Longhorns Program.

We sat down with Walker—a seasoned world traveler who recently led the 2019 summer abroad cohort in Beijing—to learn more about his passion for world travel and how he is preparing students for their big overseas trip to China in 2020.

I want to help them better understand who they are in this world—not just in America.

What inspired you to launch the 100 Passports initiative?

I wanted to start a program that could build off the great work the DDCE is doing at UT and leverage some of the university’s resources for the students in the community. A passport is an incredibly powerful document, but most kids don’t understand its value or know many folks who have one. I figured if they can identify and connect with me, I can help expose them to internationalization, traveling abroad and getting out of their comfort zone. The impact of study abroad on college students is so positive in terms of higher GPAs, higher graduation rates, higher self-efficacy and more self-confidence.

Why did you target eighth graders for this initiative?

If the idea is that students do better academically when they study abroad, why are we starting with college students? Let’s reach out to kids when they’re about to enter high school. It’s not just about the passports; it’s about creating a culture where young people start to see themselves as global citizens. When we take the kids to China, they’re going to be about 14 or 15 years old, and I’m wondering what that’s going to be like for them when they come back and engage with their peers in high school. They’ll be able to speak about the other side of the world from personal experience. They will have traveled to places that their teachers and most Americans have never been to. That’s capital that will serve them as they navigate high school, the college admissions process and their futures.



*Devin Walker
visiting the sites in
Beijing, China.*

A group of Manor Mustangs raise their horns at a 100 Passports event held in October 2019.

“Everybody tells you to go to college, but not everyone tells you to go to Africa.”



What kind of feedback has the initiative received?

The feedback has been really positive. People are thanking me for doing the work. We have great partnerships in the community. Texas GEAR UP has been really supportive and has taken the lead in helping me establish a positive relationship in the schools. Now the students are starting to get their passports, so they're excited. It's amazing for their confidence. It's great to see the ripple effect this experience can have on the students, their families and hopefully their communities.

Did you travel or study abroad during your upbringing?

Growing up in a Los Angeles neighborhood, often-times you only know what you see—and you don't know what you don't know. When you see the same things every day, you start to think this is what life is and this is all life can be. But my parents found ways to expose me to other things. They took my brothers and me camping and skiing. Just seeing different people and being in different environments and social climates gave me more confidence.

When I got to the University of Wisconsin, I studied abroad three different times. My third time was

in Cape Town, South Africa. I remember climbing this mountain called Lion's Head, and when I got to the top, a lot of emotions hit me. I think it was the fact that I had finally reached the goal that I set for myself. Going to college and graduating college was a goal, but it's more of a social or communal goal that your family wants, your community wants and your school wants. Everybody tells you to go to college, but not everyone tells you to go to Africa. That was my goal, and that was the first time I had ever reached one of my huge goals. It really hit me when I got to the top of the mountain. That's the time when I set a new goal of helping young Black and Brown students travel the world.

What advice would you give to these eighth graders as they continue their education?

Dream big, reimagine possibilities and think bigger than your current circumstances. Seek out greatness, seek out passion and try to make it happen. Think beyond your current circumstances. Understand why you'd want to do well in high school; there's more out there for your future. Understand why you'd want to do well in college—not just to get a degree, but to provide yourself with opportunities that maybe aren't available to people who don't go to college. Write your own ticket to your future.



Keys to the World

Special education junior shares how study abroad opens doors to new opportunities, personal growth

by Jessica Sinn

Kellen Foyt takes in the sights at the Great Wall of China during his study abroad excursion in 2019.

Within the short span of two weeks, Kellen Foyt gained decades of life wisdom while studying abroad in the colonial town of San Joaquin de Flores, Costa Rica. Perhaps his biggest aha! moment happened haphazardly when he tipped over a glass of water at his host family's dinner table.

"I was frantically apologizing and wiping down the table when they stopped me and said, 'Tranquilo,' which essentially means 'Calm down; it'll be OK,'" says Foyt, a junior majoring in special education at UT Austin. "In that moment, I felt a lot better and instantly relaxed. Now whenever I get overwhelmed with school, projects and essays, I just say to myself, 'Tranquilo.'"

After returning from Costa Rica with a renewed sense of calm, Foyt decided to sign up for the DDCE's four-week summer course Entrepreneurship in China and the U.S., in which students live and work in Beijing, China. Both trips are signature programs offered by

the Office of Global Leadership and Social Impact that are designed to give diverse populations of students access to life-changing overseas experiences.

"I didn't feel as nervous in Beijing as I did in Costa Rica," Foyt says. "Because of that experience, I just felt ready. My time in Costa Rica—and 'Tranquilo'—gave me the confidence to do this."

Throughout his Eastern world journey, Foyt and his fellow undergraduates learned how to adapt to a different way of life, from questionable bathroom facilities to curious, camera-toting villagers to language barriers in restaurants and subway stations.

"It can be pretty scary finding your way in a place where you don't know the language," Foyt says. "The locals kept taking photos of us because we really stood out, which was fun at first but later got tiring. Whenever I felt overwhelmed or mentally

drained, I'd take a deep breath and remember what I learned in Costa Rica."

The trip included volunteer work at local schools and visits to historical landmarks, rural villages and big cities. Hong Kong, however, was not on the itinerary due to the political upheaval in the streets.

"It was an interesting time to be in China," Foyt says. "The protests paired with the tension of the U.S.-China trade war added some challenges to our daily activities."

Amid the looming tension, Foyt found a moment of solitude while exploring Tiananmen Square, the site of the 1989 student democracy protests that led to hundreds, if not thousands, of casualties.

"I've only seen this place in photos, and there I was standing in the very spot where so many Chinese students were fighting for their rights," Foyt says. "That's when I felt the privilege of being able to attend school in the U.S., where I have so many freedoms."

Those feelings of gratitude reached a crescendo while he hiked along the Great Wall of China—a bucket-list destination that he scratched off for both himself and his father.

"While hiking up the Great Wall, there was a point where I didn't see anyone, which is pretty rare since it's such a crowded place,"

Foyt recalls. "In that moment I felt like my family and best friends were right there with me. I felt my father the most since he always wanted to climb the Great Wall. He even wrote me a note saying, 'I can't do it, but I'm going to live this dream through you.'"

Now well into his junior year in the College of Education, Foyt is paying it forward by inspiring more students who, like himself, never considered the possibility of studying abroad. As a fellow of the DDCE's Global Leadership and Social Impact program, he has visited local schools, including his alma mater Webb Middle School, to promote the 100 Passports initiative. Launched in the fall of 2018, the program provides free passports to Austin-area eighth graders so they can study abroad—along with the UT Austin group—in Beijing in 2020.

"If you can get this passport, that opens doors," Foyt says. "I didn't think about traveling the world until I got to UT, and I think that's a problem. If more students in less affluent neighborhoods can get the key, the door will open."

Foyt hopes his experiences overseas will inspire more family members and friends to grab their passports and travel the world.

"When I landed in China, I remember thinking to myself, 'My future's going to change because I'm here right now,'" he says. "I got to be the first person in my family to leave the country, which is really huge."

"Whenever I felt overwhelmed or mentally drained, I'd take a deep breath and remember what I learned in Costa Rica."



Foyt (back center) with his fellow travelers in Costa Rica



Front center: Kealing Middle School students. Back left: Raising Cane's CEO and founder Todd Graves; Patrick Patterson, DDCE assistant vice president, Celina Ruiz-Snowden, NLP director

SOMETHING TO CHEER ABOUT

The Neighborhood Longhorns Program happily accepted an oversized check for \$10,000 from Todd Graves, CEO and founder of the Raising Cane's restaurant chain. During the mini pep rally—complete with Hook 'Em and the Texas Spirit Squad—Graves recognized the program's efforts in helping underserved students get on the path to college.

VIRTUAL REALITY

Move over, Siri and Alexa! A new virtual assistant has arrived, and its name is ADVi. This chatbot armadillo is ready to help people get back into school and complete their degrees. ADVi also helps high school students make decisions about college. Launched in June 2019, the free virtual advising program is a partnership between the DDCE and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.



ask ADVi

TAKING IT TO CHURCH

To eliminate mental health disparities for Austin's African American community, the UT School of Nursing has partnered with the DDCE on a new program that brings mental health services, on-site clinics and educational classes to local churches. The African American Church-Based Mental Health and Wellness (AMEN) program launched in July 2019.



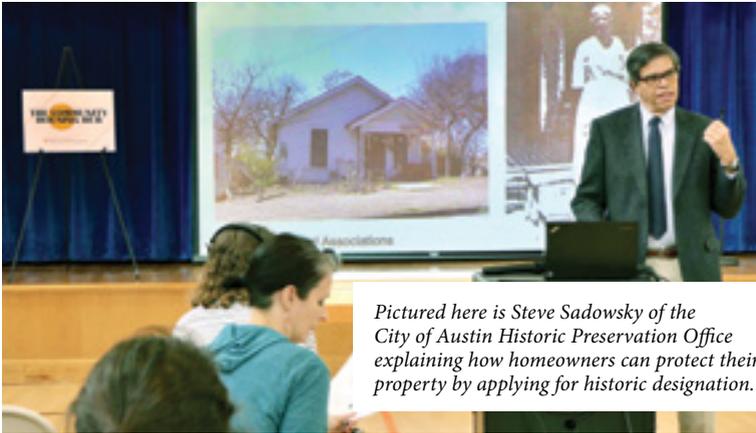
In this photo: School of Nursing faculty, staff and students meet with the Rehoboth Baptist Church administrator of health ministry (back row, far left) and pastor (far right).



Pictured here are WIELD advisory board members with students and staff at a WIELD Wednesdays event.

BOARDROOM BOUND

The Office of Inclusive Innovation and Entrepreneurship recently launched the Women’s Initiative for Entrepreneurship and Leadership Development (WIELD) Texas, a career incubator designed to prepare juniors and seniors for the executive-level path. The program offers mentorships, speaker events, networking opportunities and more.



Pictured here is Steve Sadowsky of the City of Austin Historic Preservation Office explaining how homeowners can protect their property by applying for historic designation.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

During the fall 2019 semester, the Center for Community Engagement announced two new programs designed to provide valuable resources to underserved Austin residents: the Community Housing Hub, which offers resources and workshops on affordable housing and the Community Language Lab, an undergraduate course that connects students with community members in need of language-brokering services.

BOOKING IT

Fearless Leadership Institute Director Thaïs Bass-Moore recently published a new book titled “A Syllabus for Black Women: 110 Life Lessons for Sistahs in College.” She spoke about her personal challenges as an undergraduate at UCLA during a book talk at the Student Activity Center on Oct. 3.



PITCH PERFECT



New Product Prodigy
Institute sets students
on the CEO path

by Jessica Sinn

A diverse group of young professionals dressed in their business best stands before a panel of judges to deliver a startup pitch. One team member steps forward and points to a PowerPoint slide that shows the contents of a beauty toolkit designed specifically for African American hair.



Rubén Cantú, executive director of the Office of Inclusive Innovation and Entrepreneurship



“You don’t quit;
you pivot.”

TEXAS

Rubén Cantú provides expert advice to D'azhane Cook as she prepares to launch her product into the market.

The kit, she explains to the judges and the audience behind them, will be the start of a new beauty line called ReMane that promotes confidence and self-love for Black women with natural hair.

“This product is marketable because it’s coming from two Black women who share the same pains and challenges,” says D’azhane Cook, a senior in the McCombs School of Business. “This is something we could use ourselves because we are part of the target market.”

After delivering their pitch, the team members answer a battery of questions from the judges—all of whom are experts in Austin’s robust startup industry. This scene may sound familiar to fans of “Shark Tank” but it is actually a “Demo Day” presentation for the DDCE’s newly created Product Prodigy Institute.

“We’re teaching product management and entrepreneurial thinking so we can create the next generation of diverse executives,” says Rubén Cantú, executive director of the Office of Inclusive Innovation and Entrepreneurship, which prepares traditionally underserved students for the new world of work.

FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE BOARDROOM

Launched in spring 2019, the course is offered to undergraduates of all disciplines who want to make a positive impact on society through innovation. Unlike other entrepreneurship programs at UT Austin, this class is designed specifically for students—many first generation—who come from diverse backgrounds.

On the first day of class, Cantú instills an important lesson in his students: They don't have to be on the honor roll, come from money, or have family connections to make it big.

"I want to give all students the chance to think of new ways to uplift their families and their communities," Cantú says. "I tell them, 'I can't pull you all up at once, but I can throw the rope down and teach you how to climb so you can show others how to follow suit.'"

Throughout the course, students learn about every aspect of social entrepreneurship, from identifying a need in the community to conducting market research to drafting vision and mission statements. Broken up into four teams, the aspiring moguls must build a watertight business model that addresses a specific social need.

Their work begins before they ever step foot into the classroom. The first requirement is to pass a panel interview.

"It was a hard interview," says Ariel Lee, a studio art/government senior and co-founder of the ReMane haircare line. "I was given this scenario of working in Silicon Valley and having to explain my budget and my marketing strategy to investors. They really made me think on my feet and come up with innovative ways to solve real-world problems."

Cantú also accepts community members into the course, thereby offering a wealth of university resources and expert knowledge to those who are willing to put in the work.

"It doesn't matter if you're a college student or a high school dropout," Cantú says. "If you're hungry, I can see it in your eyes. If you have that hustle, I'm going to give you a shot."

The bar is set high for all students, no matter their academic background or experience. By the end of the fall semester, their products must be fully developed and ready for judging at the second and final "Demo Day" event in December.



"They don't have to be on the honor roll, come from money, or have family connections to make it big."

"I envision them getting their first dollar by the second semester when they test their products in the market," Cantú says. "I want the community to see how we took these students with no experience and turned them into CEOs."

ONES TO WATCH

Despite their inexperience, Cantú sees that many of his students have what it takes—the drive, the determination, the grit—to land themselves on the next Forbes "Ones to Watch" list. What gives them the edge, he says, is their drive to improve communities in ways that have never been done before.

Lee believes she connects with her target consumers on a much deeper level than the average beauty-line executive. She aims to usher in a whole new standard of diversity and inclusivity within the haircare industry.

"We want to innovate in an area that hasn't been innovated in quite a while," Lee says. "This is a human-centered design made by Black women for Black women. We want to be confident, to feel professional, to feel beautiful—and all of that is coded in our hair."

Sally Doan, a recent College of Natural Sciences graduate, also poured her lived experiences into her new venture. While delivering her startup pitch, she spoke briefly about her father, a former small-business owner from Vietnam who now struggles to make ends meet as a low-paid utilities worker.

"Seeing him sacrifice years of his life to work as an electrician—even though he always wanted to be a businessman—made me very passionate about helping immigrants who, like my dad, have a dream to make a better life for themselves," says

Doan, who earned a degree in mathematics in spring 2019.

As the co-founder of Emigrant, Doan and her team aim to connect immigrants with the resources they need to start their own businesses in the United States. The app-based platform will provide connections with



From left: Product Prodigy students and Emigrant cofounders Sally Doan, Michael Villarreal and Rane Prak

professionals within their communities, from accountants to lawyers to small-business owners.

Doan's team member Rane Prak, a humanities honors junior, knows from experience how valuable this service can be for those who are navigating legal issues while assimilating into a new country.

"My mom was deported when I was 13, so I relied heavily on people in the community to take care of my aunt and me," Prak says. "Now that I have overcome those hard times, I want to give back and serve others who are facing the same struggles."

The students' stories are unique and varied, but themes of sacrifice, determination and survival are common to most. Cantú, the son of an immigrant father from Mexico, can certainly relate. Growing up, he watched his father—a talented culinary innovator—work a thankless custodial job for decades to pay the bills.

"He made the most amazing salsas and could have patented so many products, but he didn't have the resources, support and education to pursue a career in business," Cantú says. "I refused to let this happen to me and learned to train my mind so I wouldn't give up when things didn't go my way."

RISKY BUSINESS

Like Cantú, Vi Nguyen refused to give up her entrepreneurial pursuits and overcame a number of obstacles while starting up her new business Homads,

an online personal relocation specialist that streamlines the moving process for busy people.

Her journey to becoming a CEO wasn't an easy one, but she forged onward, finding creative solutions to keep her business alive. She credits much of her success to her experiences growing up in a Vietnamese-American immigrant family.

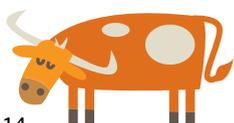
"Early into my career an adviser told me, 'You don't quit; you pivot. If you fail, if you run out of money, there is still a way to make it work,'" says Nguyen, who launched her business in 2016 with her co-founder Lan Chu. "There were moments when our company should have died, but we found a way to keep it afloat. I believe my low-income upbringing prepared me to be a better entrepreneur."

Perhaps her biggest setback was securing funding from investors—a daunting task for a rookie entrepreneur. Factor in her race and gender and the challenges were threefold.

"Trust that you can get money, trust your market, and trust your users."

"Early on, there's a lot of failure, so investors are more likely to go with someone who's established," Nguyen says. "Then I have two additional strikes against me: I'm female and a minority."

Although diversity trends are slowly on the uptick, statistics show women and minorities have long been woefully underrepresented in the land of startups. According to a report by Pitchbook, of the \$40-plus billion of funds raised by the predominately white venture capital firms, less than



3% was allocated to Black- and minority-owned startups. Even more alarming, this percentage decreases if startup founders fall into more than one minority group.

Meeta Kothare takes these statistics into account while conducting her research at the McCombs School of Business' Social Innovation Initiative, where she serves as managing director.

"Historically, women minorities have difficulty accessing capital—that's the biggest barrier," says Kothare, who teaches Social Entrepreneurship and Impact Investing courses at McCombs School of Business. "A lot of people are trying to change that with career accelerators, but this is still a huge systematic barrier."

Until more minorities and women enter the venture capital industry, the startup sector will continue to have a diversity problem, Kothare notes. According to a report by the National Venture Capital Association, 89% of partners at venture capital firms are men, the vast majority of whom are white.

"When you don't have that racial and social economic diversity in the funding system, minority entrepreneurs are less likely to be funded," Kothare says. "It's a double whammy."

Despite the funding pitfalls, Nguyen advises all fledgling entrepreneurs to find creative solutions and keep the momentum going. With a trusted, dedicated team and a solid mission, she says, everything else will fall into place.

"Don't focus all your efforts on chasing the money," Nguyen says. "Just keep showing up and making sure your business survives. Trust that you can get money, trust your market, and trust your users."

While serving as a judge at Product Prodigy's "Demo Day" event, Nguyen played the role of investor, asking some tough questions and

offering critiques. Although it can be hard putting students on the spot, she knows from experience that much can be gained from a little tough love.

"If I didn't listen to criticism, I wouldn't have learned more about my market and my users," Nguyen says. "It's the investor's job to say no; they'll poke holes in your product, and then you have to figure out how to solve them."

COMMUNITY FIRST

As they navigate the ups and downs of their entrepreneurial journeys, students will learn about the inevitability of failure. And though failure is often seen as a stepping stone to success, Kothare advises students to exercise caution before setting the wheels in motion.

"When you fail, you have to ask yourself if you did it in a way that placed a burden on the community you're serving, which is a miserable way to fail," Kothare says. "You have to ask yourself how much you're willing to fail those who will be affected by your actions."

As social entrepreneurs, Cantú's students learn to focus on one main objective: the total well-being of the people they seek to serve. Rather than providing unwanted or unnecessary services or, worse, crowding out mom-and-pop businesses with big-box stores, he wants his students to provide a good public service while maintaining a healthy bottom line.

"Businesses can turn into invasive species that destroy all the local businesses," Cantú says. "To a degree they have to be competitive, but at what cost? I show my students that we are doing this to create communities, not destroy them—because when they do better, we all do better."

"I show my students that we are doing this to create communities, not destroy them."



Vi Nguyen discussing her career journey at the DDCE's spring 2019 Heman Sweatt Symposium on Civil Rights



Hundreds of new and incoming Longhorns connected with student organizations and campus partners at a fall welcome event hosted by the Asian Desi Pacific Islander American Collective (ADPAC) on Sept. 6.

01



02



Students enjoyed the last few days of summer break at New Black Student Weekend (Aug. 24-27), a time-honored event hosted by Afrikan American Affairs.

03

An Explore Law student smiles for the camera before delivering her oral argument during the fourth and final week of the annual summer program hosted by the Longhorn Center for Academic Excellence.



04



Students had a memorable start to the fall semester during the First-Gen Longhorns Kick-Off Weekend (Sept. 7-8), which included a tour of President Fenves' office!

More than 400 visitors from schools across the state came to the Forty Acres to attend the sixth annual Texas Male Student Leadership Summit hosted by Project MALES (Mentoring to Achieve Latino Educational Success) on Aug. 8-9.

05



06



A group of aspiring entrepreneurs pause for a snapshot while visiting several corporate tech offices during the inaugural UT Outreach Startup Week (July 15-19) hosted by the Office of Inclusive Innovation and Entrepreneurship.



CALLED TO ACTION

**NEW COMMUNITY
CLASSROOM
EMPOWERS FUTURE
CHANGEMAKERS**

by Jessica Sinn



When Lauren Lluveras, a doctoral student in the Department of African and African Diaspora Studies, talks about her advocacy work, she often recites a powerful statement that has fueled the disability rights movement over the years: “Nothing about us without us.”

This rallying cry—which highlights the importance of including those affected by a policy in discussions about that policy—also applies to other movements, she says, because the beneficiaries of social programs must be front and center during policy debates so they can share their voices and experiences.

“I don’t think we can build good policy, programs and interventions without getting the people who are directly impacted at the table,” Lluveras says. “We see how women are locked out of conversations about their own health; this is just one of many examples.”

To bring the most vital changemakers to the table, the Center for Community Engagement recently launched the Community Classroom, a series of eight-week courses that offer advocacy training and resources for concerned residents in low-income neighborhoods. Tuition is \$50 or less (depending on financial circumstances), and there’s only one prerequisite: a passion for making a difference.





“We are giving community members relevant content, organization, research materials and—hopefully—inspiration to advocate for themselves and their community.”

*Virginia Cumberbatch,
director of the Center for
Community Engagement*

“We are giving community members relevant content, organization, research materials and—hopefully—inspiration to advocate for themselves and their community,” says Virginia Cumberbatch, director of the Center for Community Engagement.

During the spring 2019 semester, the inaugural class focused on social welfare systems with a concentration on economic and political problems faced by vulnerable populations. Co-instructed by Lluveras and Michele Rountree, associate professor of social work, the class pulled from the lessons taught in Rountree’s undergraduate course on the U.S. social welfare system.

Rountree’s goal, in large part, was to explain the legislative process and empower her students to take action.

“The way I teach at the university is to demystify individual opportunity to contribute to social change,” says Rountree. “Many of the issues addressed in this course weren’t new to the community members, but the lessons they learned heightened their understanding of the solutions.”

Throughout the course, participants learned how to take action in a variety of ways such as writing op-eds, organizing advocacy groups and corresponding with elected officials.



“I like that this course demystifies the idea of what policy is, who makes it and where it comes from,” says Lluveras. “Toward the last week, people started to feel empowered to be social policy leaders. That was the best, most rewarding part of the experience.”

The interactive classroom discussions covered some of our nation’s most pressing social issues, including injustices in the U.S. prison system and affordable housing challenges amid rapid gentrification.

The topic of education was of particular interest to Tiffanie Harrison, a Round Rock High School teacher who completed the spring course. An avid education rights advocate, she brought a group of her students to the class to show them that they, too, could make a difference.

“Teachers are the first civic leaders students get to meet in a lot of cases,” says Harrison, who teaches marketing and other business courses. “I always seek new ways to encourage students to use their voices because they are the experts in their own experiences.”

Harrison was especially moved by a talk given by one of several guest speakers, Lewis Conway Jr., an activist, author and entrepreneur who spent eight years in Texas prisons and 12 years on parole.

“He made the inequities of the criminal justice program all too real,” she says. “When I hear about these problems, it’s more about the numbers, not people. I will never forget this beautiful person talking about how the systems were brought up to work against him.”

Although Harrison is well versed in the realm of education—and the many barriers students face in underserved schools—she discovered there is still much to learn about the other factors that contribute to the cycle of poverty.

“I feel like I have a good understanding about social injustices, but it was illuminating to learn about the many other problems across different systems,” she says. “This class helped me see how all of these things are interconnected.”

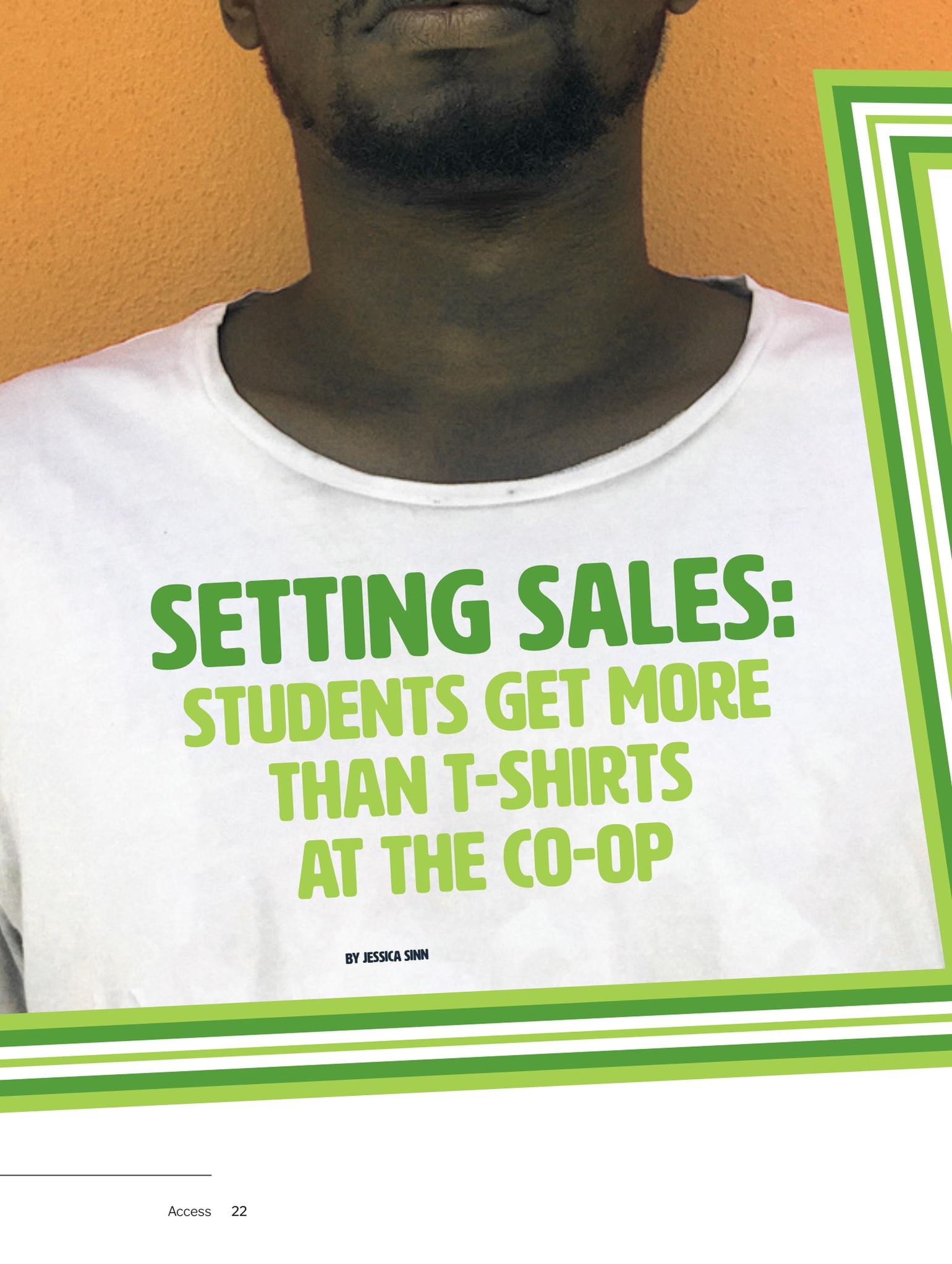
Now she feels even more inspired—and better equipped—to work alongside her fellow community members to combat the systematic barriers that are so deeply entrenched in American society.

“I really loved all the people I met, and it was amazing having the opportunity to collaborate with a diverse group of people in the community,” Harrison says. “Hearing their perspectives and their experiences really motivated me to continue my advocacy.”

Rountree says the course was a growth experience for both the students and the instructors. And though the topics and instructors change every semester, she would happily come back and teach another course.

“I was very proud to be a part of this initiative that does exactly what the university seeks to do: change the world,” Rountree says. “It increases our legitimacy as a world-class institution that strives to contribute to the good of the community.”





SETTING SALES: STUDENTS GET MORE THAN T-SHIRTS AT THE CO-OP

BY JESSICA SINN



Uriel Castro (left) and Amaya French (right) learn how to work the salesfloor as part of the LCAE's comprehensive UT Co-op Internship program.

Just across from the main entrance of UT Austin is the flagship University Co-op, the go-to retail shop for textbooks, game-day attire and Longhorn-themed gifts. Now it's also a one-stop-shop for students looking to get their feet wet in the retail industry.

The Co-op is adding a new twist to the standard semester-long internship experience: In partnership with the Longhorn Center for Academic Excellence (LCAE), the nonprofit retailer is offering a two-and-a-half-year internship program that introduces students to a variety of fields, from ac-



counting to product merchandising to online marketing. The paid internships are part of the LCAE's College to Career initiative, which is designed to prepare students for the new world of work.

"I love that this program is giving students the opportunity to narrow down their field of interest while adding to their resumes in the process," says Co-op President and CEO Cheryl Phifer. "This is a unique opportunity to expose students to so many different fields and to help them become more marketable when they enter the workforce."

Launched in the fall of 2018, the first leg of the program incorporates job shadowing and classes taught by LCAE and Co-op staff. Participating students then rotate through different departments, where they are able to discover the nuances of various jobs within the retail industry. They later work on the retail floor before moving into a department that more closely aligns with their career goals.

"The staff are truly invested in the students' success and it shows, which makes the workplace a fun and enjoyable environment."

Unlike the typical short-term internship, this new program allows students to develop and hone their skills over the course of two years. By the time they finish, they will have a nuanced understanding of business operations in both the retail industry and the nonprofit sector.

"We are excited to give a group of students more specialized work experience," says Co-op Store

Director Kelly Hanks. “When they discover what they love, that’s how we truly benefit from this program.”

Right from the start, the interns learned an important rule of thumb in the business world: All decisions must revolve around one overarching mission. For the Co-op, that means putting UT Austin students, faculty and staff above all else.

“Since this is a nonprofit, making a profit isn’t the No. 1 goal,” says Patrick Chukwurah, a business freshman. “It’s about giving back to the university and to the students. That goal affects the Co-op’s day-to-day decisions.”

After wrapping up a job-shadowing stint at the store’s distribution center, Chukwurah is more excited than ever about entering the world of business. The job shadowing alone, he says, has taken the learning experience to a whole new level.

“I love that the internship is so interactive and so hands-on,” Chukwurah says. “It’s one thing when they’re teaching you in class, but it’s a whole new experience when you’re working with them on-site. The best part of this internship is having all of these skills under your belt and applying them to everything you do.”

For Arquala Davis, an undeclared sophomore, the most exciting moments happen when she’s watching brainstorming sessions unfold in the boardroom.

“I’ve really learned a lot just by sitting in on the meetings and seeing how everyone communicates,” Davis says. “It’s been helpful to see that everything they do ties into their mission to serve students. When I become a doctor, I want to use these skills to make sure my patients have a positive experience.”

Amaya French, a political communications sophomore, also enjoys working behind the scenes, where she has developed an interest in online marketing. The

internship, she says, has given her a glimpse into the technological side of business.

“I’m interested in working in communications and the tech industry, but there’s a learning curve since I came to UT from a small town in Texas that is not tech-oriented,” French says. “Here, I’m getting to see how data analytics works and how websites are managed.”

Perhaps one of the greatest aspects of the internship, French says, is working alongside LCAE and Co-op staff members, who are all committed to creating a rewarding experience for students.

“I appreciate the time and effort every individual puts into making this a successful program,” French says. “The staff are truly invested in the students’ success and it shows, which makes the workplace a fun and enjoyable environment!”

Uriel Castro, a neuroscience sophomore, also plans on entering the business arena when he opens his own dental practice. The Co-op internship, he says, has provided valuable insight into how to run and manage a small business.

“It has exposed me to the nitty-gritty details of a successful business, and I plan to implement what I’ve learned into my private practice in the future,” Castro says.

The learning experience goes both ways, says Hanks, who co-teaches classes with Phifer and several LCAE staff members. Because the Co-op must evolve with the changing tides of marketing and merchandising, she encourages the interns to share their perspectives and ideas.

“At the end of the day, we’re here to serve students,” Hanks says. “We need to be listening to them because they are our priority constituents.”



Students meet with a member of the store’s creative team to learn more about retail marketing.

A BEACON OF HOPE

Explore Law graduate pursues the American dream at Yale Law School

by Jessica Sinn





When Evelin Caro Gutierrez came to the United States by way of Havana, Cuba, she didn't know the English language and had to catch up quickly in her high school English as a second language (ESL) classes. While assimilating into a new culture, she and her family bounced from one home to the next until they settled into a permanent home in Houston, Texas.

Despite the setbacks she faced along the way, Gutierrez put in the work, applied for every scholarship and grant she could find, and got accepted into UT Austin. Upon arrival on the Forty Acres, she set just one goal for herself.

"During my freshman year, my first and only question was, 'Is it possible to pass college?'" says Gutierrez, who graduated in spring 2019 with degrees in government and philosophy. "I had this idea that college was an unreachable goal, so all I wanted to accomplish was to finish school."

Now a Yale Law School student, Gutierrez has accomplished more than she could have ever imagined. In addition to getting accepted into the Ivy League, she was recently named a Dean's Distinguished Graduate, the highest honor awarded to students in the College of Liberal Arts.

"UT has given me so much access to so many things," says Gutierrez, who served as president of Minority Women Pursuing Law. "Even in my classes, I didn't feel like I had less of a chance to succeed because of my background."

In a word, Gutierrez is grateful. She seizes every opportunity that comes her way and has made it her mission to inspire others to do the same.

"Here, we have so many opportunities that so many people would die to have," Gutierrez says. "I've learned to take nothing for granted and to help others as much as I can."

Early into her undergraduate career, Gutierrez discovered her strengths when she learned how to speak her voice—a freedom that she didn't have back in her home country.

"At first it was hard for me to challenge other people's ideas or something we were reading in class," Gutierrez says. "Growing up, I learned to not question authority, and it's taken a while for me to break out of this mentality of just accepting everything I hear as the truth."

Now Gutierrez is devoted to helping more refugees who have escaped political oppression. As a Rapoport Service Scholar, she interned at several nonprofits, including Sewa International and Refugee Services of Texas. She also spent a semester in Washington, D.C., where she interned at the Organization of American States as an Archer Fellow. Through this work, she grew more passionate about giving back to the refugee community and ultimately making improvements to the U.S. immigration system.

"I want to help people who are victims of social problems and political oppression," Gutierrez says. "I can see myself doing a range of things to help underserved communities, but I'm not sure where I'll end up just yet. As long as I'm helping people, I'll be happy."

After completing a challenging yet rewarding five weeks of training

in the College to Career Explore Law program, Gutierrez is ready to become a Yale Bulldog and study at the highest-ranked law school in the nation. She is one of many Explore Law graduates who have been accepted into top-tier law schools. A signature program within the Longhorn Center for Academic Excellence (LCAE), Explore Law offers UT Austin, Austin Community College and Huston-Tillotson University students a wealth of knowledge and resources in a fast-paced summer course. By the time they earn their certificates, students have all the skills they need to pass the LSAT and get into the law school of their choice.

Of all her experiences in the program, Gutierrez is especially grateful for her mentor and instructor Meg Clifford, who motivated her every step of the way.

"I value the people who see things in me that I don't see myself," says Gutierrez, who participated in the 2016 cohort. "Meg Clifford helped me see that it really is possible to be a lawyer—and that this profession can be used as an avenue for change."

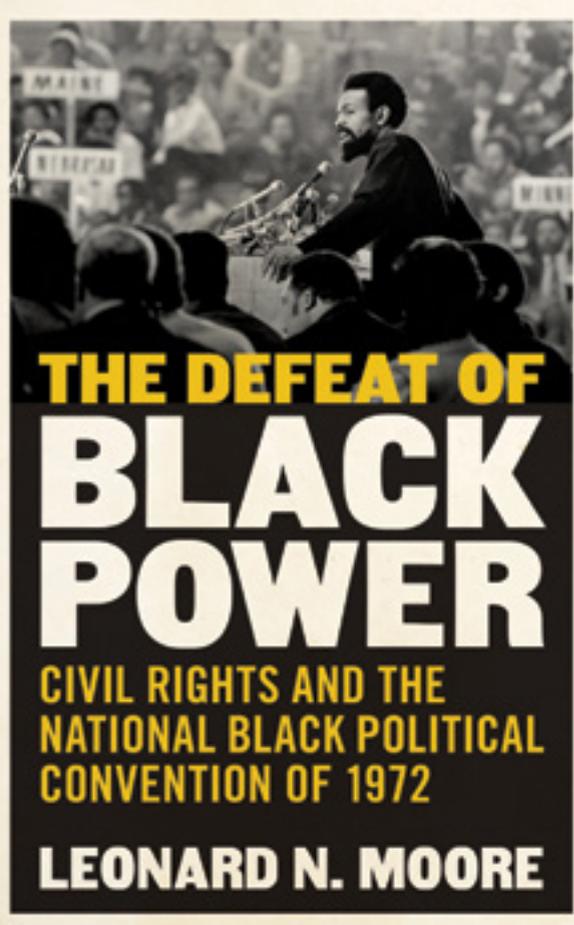
Many years from now, Gutierrez will continue to look at the university's iconic tower as a beacon of hope for future generations of immigrant students.

"I'm really thankful for this university and the resources it has offered me," Gutierrez says. "It has truly changed my life and my family's life. I also want to say thank you on behalf of all first-generation students who have benefited from all of these empowering professors and staff members."

1972 and 2020

“Defeat of Black Power” author shares striking comparisons

by Leslie Asher Blair



Leonard N. Moore's book "The Defeat of Black Power: Civil Rights and the National Black Political Convention of 1972" is set in an election year that eerily parallels the upcoming 2020 presidential race.

Back in 1972, Richard Nixon ran for reelection after having been elected president four years prior in a backlash against Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society, which included passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. More than four decades later, Donald Trump is running for reelection in 2020 after running his first campaign in backlash to Barack Obama's eight years in office.

Nixon won the popular vote in the 1968 election by a slim 0.7% margin, but he won the electoral college by a landslide, as did Trump in the 2016 election. Promising to decelerate racial progress with overt appeals to white voters and vowing to take a hard line on violence and crime, Nixon appealed to the "silent majority" as the New Left and hippie culture took hold and the Black Power movement became a global and cultural phenomenon. Nixon received approximately 10% of the Black vote in 1968. Trump received 8% of the Black vote in 2016, more than John McCain and George W. Bush had received in previous elections.

Against the backdrop of Nixon's reelection campaign and in an effort to bring together factions in the Black freedom struggle, the National Black Political Convention (NBPC) was born. Held in Gary, Indiana, the convention was an attempt to

develop a Black political agenda that bridged the philosophies of the Black nationalists and the Black moderates. About 10,000 people attended the convention, including iconic leaders such as Julian Bond, Barbara Jordan, Amari Baraka, Charles Diggs, Richard Hatcher and Jesse Jackson. So did 18-year-old Al Sharpton, who had established the National Youth Movement a year before and was appointed to the Platform Committee. Unbeknownst to those in attendance, FBI informants swarmed the convention, infiltrating nearly every major state delegation.

A preamble to the convention was released called "Black Politics at the Crossroads," drafted by Vincent Harding and Bill Strickland of the Institute for the Black World. Harding and Strickland argued the NBPC was coming to Gary "in an hour of great promise for Black America." Maintaining that the white nation stood on the brink of chaos and that white politicians offered "no hope for real change," they believed the Black community was faced with an amazing opportunity and a "frightening choice: We may choose in 1972 to slip back into the decadent white politics of American life, or we may press forward, moving relentlessly from Gary to the creation of our own Black life. The choice is large but the time is very short."

In the end, the time proved to be too short. The nationalists and moderates could never reach agreement, and delegates left the NBPC without forming a new political party (the desire of many attendees) or developing a clear agenda. Nixon won reelection that year—with 18% of the Black vote. →



→ **We checked in with Moore to learn more about the parallels between 1972 and 2020 and his thoughts on the upcoming presidential race and Black voter issues.**

Why couldn't the Black nationalists and the Black moderates come to agreement on an agenda in 1972?

Looking back, one must realize that the goals of Black nationalists and the goals of Black moderates were at opposite ends of the spectrum. Black nationalists believed in working outside of the system to achieve Black liberation, whereas Black moderates and Black elected officials believed that reforming the system was a more practical approach. Both sides agreed, however, that despite their strong support of the Democratic party in past elections, going back to Roosevelt's New Deal, Black voters received nothing in return.



The Black community does not seem to have a clear agenda for 2020. Are the reasons similar to those in 1972?

Their reasons are somewhat similar. Part of the problem is that the Black community is unable to agree upon what should be the most pressing issue. While the community is not divided along Black nationalist/Black moderate lines, it is divided to a great degree by class. For instance, the reason police brutality is such a salient issue in the Black community is because it is one of the only issues that has the potential to affect all African Americans regardless of socio-economic status.

In 2016, the number of Blacks who voted fell by 765,000—the first time Blacks, as a share of voters, has declined since 2004. Did the Democratic party fail Black voters in 2016, and is the party neglecting Black voter issues now?

Having Barack Obama as the presidential candidate contributed to high voter turnout in 2008 and 2012. About 11% of Black voters stayed home in 2016. Eight percent voted for Trump. Some believe that Blacks stayed home instead of voting for Hillary Clinton in 2016 because of the crime bill that former President Bill Clinton passed that sent more Blacks to prison for nonviolent crimes than during any other administration in history. But we must realize that the level of Black turnout for President Obama's two elections will largely never be matched again.

One of the positive things that came out of the Gary, Indiana, convention was that the number of Blacks who ran for office surged. By the end of the 1970s, the number of Blacks holding public office had quadrupled. Do you foresee anything that significant coming out of the 2020 election?

Trump's election has ushered in a movement across Black America as thousands of ordinary, everyday people are running for office at the local level: city council, school board, various boards and commissions, and judgeships. I believe that this trend will continue for the foreseeable future.

We can't discount Trump's Black supporters. Will we see his Black support increasing as Richard Nixon's did in 1972?

I wouldn't be surprised at an increase in Black Trump supporters in 2020. He has been good for Blacks in terms of low unemployment. The Black middle class is thriving. He has also increased support for historically Black colleges and universities, and there is a segment of the Black community that agrees with his hard line on illegal immigration.



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MORE PRESIDENTIAL TOURS

Visit our Flickr album to view photos of our Neighborhood Longhorns touring the campus, meeting with UT Student Government representatives and taking in the sights from President Fenves' office in the tower. Find the album here: <https://bit.ly/2pOfMVp>.

MORE STUDENT ADVOCATES

Just before spring commencement, we caught up with Kate Strickland (Plan II Honors/Government '19) to learn about her DisABILITY advocacy and awareness efforts on campus and in the community. Read all about her good work in the DisABILITY Advocacy Student Coalition and the Student Government Disabilities and Inclusion Agency.



MORE ACCOLADES

Read about Nathaly Batista-Morales, an award-winning student mentor in the Intellectual Entrepreneurship Pre-Graduate Internship Program, who aims to provide access to quality bilingual education to immigrant students.

TOP TWEET 21K IMPRESSIONS

Our Twitter followers loved this promo for the much anticipated Austin Pride Fest & Parade, where our friends at the Gender & Sexuality Center join in on the celebration with a float and lots of sparkles!



CONTACT US!

Have questions, comments or story ideas? We would love to hear from you. Please email: ddce@utexas.edu.



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UT DDCE

Quỳnh- Hương Nguyễn

Assistant Director, Gender
and Sexuality Center

“I have met so many students with so many strengths and expertise in various fields of study. They have challenged me to grow and expand our programs and resources because there is no singular Longhorn experience. I want to make sure they are equipped with the skills they need to continue to learn and be the leaders they want to be. They are remarkable and have so much passion.”





The University of Texas at Austin
**Division of Diversity and
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110 Inner Campus Drive, Stop G1050
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New Name, New Era for Black Male Student Excellence

In honor of Heman Marion Sweatt, a civil rights icon who broke the color barrier at the University of Texas School of Law in 1950, the African American Male Research Initiative has been renamed the Heman Sweatt Center for Black Males. diversity.utexas.edu/sweattcenter



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