



## BLACK FACULTY AND STAFF ASSOCIATION

### Spotlight:

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**“The mint makes it  
first, it is up to you to  
make it last”**

*Evan Esar*

# BFSA— The Voice

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 6

DECEMBER 2013



## WHAT'S GOING ON?

Family,

As always I hope this finds you well and enjoying the blessings of the day even if it is unusually cold for us So. Cal folk!! When you consider the snow storms hitting the East right now, what we have here really is a blessing, comparatively speaking :-)

On another note, the holidays are upon us and with this time of year we sometimes find ourselves in the mix of what can be an emotional rollercoaster. We are thankful for the upcoming break, but are also prone to be stressed about any number of things. Perhaps we struggle with thinking about gifts, and what to get whom, or how many folks we need to buy for. Or maybe we stress about finances in general, and how we are going to get through this holiday season. For others, perhaps some family dynamics come into play as some folks may be spending the holiday without a loved one for the first time. There are any number of scenarios that we play out in our lives that have an impact on our emotional state. Let me offer up that nothing is as bad as it seems. If we change our mindset to think about and be thankful for all of the things we do have, the time we spent with those who have transitioned, and how everyday is another opportunity for us to be better, to appreciate all of the blessings that come our way that we sometimes take for granted, then I believe it will be a good time. I know I will certainly try to focus on the more pleasant and positive things in my life. Part of how I get to do that is by engaging in an activity that allows me to be in greater touch with my cultural roots. I'll be celebrating Kwanzaa.

Kwanzaa, celebrated December 26<sup>th</sup> – January 1<sup>st</sup> is an African American and Pan-African holiday which celebrates family, community and culture. There are seven governing/guiding principles, called the Nguzo Saba. Dr. Taisha Caldwell, (a friend and former staff person here), reminds us of the second principle, *Kujichagulia* (self-determination). She shared that it ...”is a call to define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves. It teaches us to define and understand ourselves by the good we do and bring in the world, and by the truth we speak, the justice we do, and the loving kindness, care and concern we show towards each other and the world”. She also reminded us of the sixth principle, *Kuumba* (creativity). Here we are asked, “to always do as much as we can in the way we can in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it. When we do good for the world, we also do it for ourselves”.

I know it can sometimes be challenging, but think of all you do as an investment in yourself, in your happiness and think, (like I do), that you are absolutely worth it. May your holidays be safe and blessed. May you return in January with a renewed commitment to be the best you can be. I'm looking forward to it!

Hotep, (Peace)

**G**



# Spotlight: Howard Croom



Hello everyone. As a new member of the Anteater family I am proud to be a part of an institution of this caliber. I was born and raised in Long Beach, CA, and I went college in Oregon for six years. I made my way to UC Irvine primarily through athletics (in one capacity or another) and at UC Irvine I am a part of the Athletics Department.

I attended Long Beach Wilson High School where I played football and basketball for four years. I didn't have an appropriate appreciation for academics at the time; I was primarily focused on staying academically eligible to compete in my sports. I graduated from Wilson and went on to play football at Oregon State University (Go Beavs!) from 2006-2010. At Oregon State I received a bachelor's degree in Sociology with a minor Ethnic Studies (with an African American studies focus). After playing football for four years I decided to pursue a master's degree in Public Policy with a focus on social policy. My thesis was titled "Race/ethnic Differences in Substance Abuse: Examining the Differential Impact of Access to Health Insurance on Drug-related Outcomes".

I have been with UC Irvine since April of 2013. I work in the Athletics Department as an Academic & Life Skills Coordinator. I oversee all matters related to academics for six of our NCAA athletic teams here at UCI as well as coordinate the CHAMPS/Life Skills program. The Life Skills program is aimed at developing student-athletes in areas of their life that may fall outside of the realm of athletics. The Life Skills program promotes the well roundedness of student-athletes by also focusing on personal development, academic development, community service and career -building.

I previously held a position as the Program Coordinator for the BEST Bridge Program at Oregon State University. The BEST Program is an intensive orientation program for incoming student-athletes that is aimed at introducing students to campus, community, and college life. The BEST Program also incorporates support services for transition issues, stress management, time management, academic focus and problem resolution. I was a student in the first cohort of the BEST Program and later became the second program coordinator. In addition to the BEST Bridge Program I worked as an Assistant Academic Counselor for the Football and Gymnastics teams for two years. It was during these two years that I had an opportunity to formally work with students for the first time.

One of the main things that stayed with me was how academically underprepared many collegiate athletes are when they get to college. Working with students everyday who had the willingness to succeed but lacked the resources, (tangible and intangible), necessary to do so, gave me somewhat of a "calling". Being able to bridge the gap and provide support to students to help them succeed in ways that they didn't think were possible is something that I have become very passionate about. My responsibility to social justice, my love for athletics, and my dedication to working with students has brought me to the UCI Athletics Department.

I hope I get a chance to meet and work with each of you at some point. Please reach out via phone or email if you would like to talk or if I can help you with anything!

Blessings to you all.

## Health and Wellness



The holiday season can be difficult for allergy sufferers. Seemingly innocuous decorations such as Christmas trees, poinsettias or scented candles can kick off allergy symptoms or trigger an asthma attack.

If you're playing host to the family this year, make sure to keep a lid on allergens in your home with this advice.

Pine- or peppermint-scented candles and plug-in air fresheners may make your house smell great, but they can be harmful. About one-third of people with asthma report health problems from air fresh-

eners, which contain [volatile organic compounds](#).

Get a handle on your home's non-human inhabitants. Pets leave dander, saliva and urine that can cause allergic reactions and asthma attacks; dust mites and [mold spores](#) can cause coughing, itchy eyes and breathing difficulty. Give your house a thorough cleaning before guests arrive. Vacuum, clean hard surfaces and replace air filters to remove dust and dander. Eliminate visible mold in the bathroom and kitchen (don't forget the rubber seal on your refrigerator). Keep Fluffy in another room while you have visitors.

- Some foods and drinks cause allergic reactions, including spices (black pepper, cinnamon, garlic, vanilla) and alcohol. Talk to your guests about any food allergies they may have, and serve sparkling cider or a non-alcoholic punch instead of wine or beer.

### Reduce Exposure to Allergy Triggers

To reduce your exposure to the things that trigger your allergy signs and symptoms (allergens):

- Stay indoors on dry, windy days—the best time to go outside is after a good rain, which helps clear pollen from the air.
- Delegate lawn mowing, weed pulling and other gardening chores that stir up allergens.
- Remove clothes you've worn outside; you may also want to shower to rinse pollen from your skin and hair.
- Don't hang laundry outside; pollen can stick to sheets and towels.
- Wear a dust mask if you do outside chores.

(info taken from BlackHealthMatters.com)

### Above All Else...

Remember that this season is also a very emotional time for many of us. Just as we take precautions to manage the allergies that come, so too we must take time to manage and nurture our mental health as well. It is important that we stay connected to family and friends during this time of year. If you know of someone having a difficult time, emotionally or otherwise, take a moment to be a friend. It could be as simple as "hello" or "have a great day". The options are limitless, if we just take a moment. It is an amazing gift that doesn't cost anything but a moment in time. I'd appreciate it...wouldn't you?

# December 2013

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18 BfSA General membership mntg.	19	20	21 <a href="#">100 BMOC Kwanzaa Celebra- tion</a>
22	23	24	25 Merry Christmas	26 Kwanzaa Begins	27	28
29 <a href="#">NAACP Kwanzaa Celebration</a>	30	31				

## Special Events:

For additional events or specific event information please click the link of the event or visit the calendar page on our website at <http://sites.uci.edu/bfSA/calendar/>. You can also find out more about what's happening around the OC community by clicking on the links below or visit our Community resources page.

<http://www.100bmoc.org/events/>

<http://www.meetup.com/Black-In-Orange-County/events/73879372/>

# Campus and Community Resources

## Campus

Black Faculty and Staff Association: <http://sites.uci.edu/bfsa>

[http://www.facebook.com/uci.bfsa?ref=tn\\_tnmn](http://www.facebook.com/uci.bfsa?ref=tn_tnmn)

Cross Cultural Center; <http://www.ccc.uci.edu/>

Employee Assistance: <http://www.cascadecenters.com>

Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity: <http://www.oeod.uci.edu/>

Ombudsman: <http://www.ombuds.uci.edu/>

Teaching, Learning, Technology Center: <http://www.tltc.uci.edu/>

## Community

NAACP: <http://naacp.org>

OC Black Chamber: <http://ocblackchamber.com>

100 Black Men of Orange County: <http://www.100bmoc.com>

THE Greenlining Institute [www.greenlining.org/academy](http://www.greenlining.org/academy)

National Coalition of 100 Black Women of Orange County

<http://www.nc100bwoc.org>

Christ Our Redeemer <http://www.corchurch.org/>

Black In OC [http://www.blackinoc.com/Home\\_Page.php](http://www.blackinoc.com/Home_Page.php)

The Black Market <http://www.theblackmarket.com/index.htm>

