Who am I?
by John Chenault, MA, MS, Associate Professor, Reference Department, Kornhauser Health Sciences Library, Instructor, Pan African Studies Department, College of Arts and Sciences

Every spring semester I teach Survey of American Diversity (PAS 227-50), an undergraduate course offered in the distance education program of the Pan African Studies Department. The course introduces students to the history of the settlement of the United States by immigrants of diverse backgrounds from across the globe and the challenges they faced on their road to citizenship. Because the course is taught online, I generally don’t meet with students in person and would not be able to recognize them if our paths somehow crossed on campus or elsewhere. I learn about them and they learn about me through the medium of our cyberspace classroom. The process starts in the first week of class when each student writes a brief introduction describing their interest in the topic, their academic and professional goals, hobbies, tastes in music and literature, and anything else they care to relate about themselves. Some students volunteer information about family and children. Some discuss their experiences encountering other cultures through travel or military service abroad. A few will refer to their ethnic backgrounds and ancestry, especially if they were born in another country. Since my introduction appears first, many simply follow my lead in choosing what to relate and how to identify themselves.

The class has taught me a lot over the years. I learned, for example, how to create a “safe space” in which to navigate the treacherous waters of the topic of “race” on a discussion board in an online classroom despite not having the option of communicating with body language. In this situation, trust must be built entirely without the gestures and facial expressions that perform essential roles in conveying meaning in face-to-face encounters. Relying on text alone requires far more effort and demands a certain focus and precision when presenting complex topics fraught with controversy (colonialism, slavery, genocide, and racism in the history of the nation’s founding, settlement, and expansion). The instructional challenges are formidable, but the results are well worth the time and energy expended.

Teaching and learning about the development of ideas of human differences, how they change over time, and their impact on human relations, has been central to the coursework. In certain sectors of academia, this topic is referred to as the social construction of race. It pertains to how our nation has defined human differences and social status based primarily on false ideas about human biology, and how those notions have been refuted by science but nevertheless remain (Continued on page 7)
A Purpose
by Brandon Stapleton, DMD
Prosthodontics Resident

When I graduated from Pres-tonsburg High School in 2003, I wasn’t at the top of my class. I did-n’t have a lofty full-ride scholarship waiting for me. I was just Brandon, son of teenage parents who did the best they could to provide for their son and give him the best life possible; better than what they had themselves. I wasn’t raised with things handed to me- I always had to work hard for anything I got. I knew who I wanted to be and what I wanted to do with my life. I wanted to help people, give them something that was given to me - a smile. I wanted to be a dentist. As a kid, I had very unique teeth problems. Mostly jaw problems that later required jaw surgery to correct skeletal issues that were affecting my bite. Because of the dentists, orthodon-tists, and surgeons who put me back together, I knew early on that I wanted to help people similarly. Thanks to a program at the University of Louisville designed to help students from under-served communities pursue healthcare careers, I was able to complete the Professional Education Preparation Program (PEPP) the summer between graduating high school and beginning my educational journey into college. That summer I re-affirmed my goals and future career in dentistry. These were such lofty ideals seeing that other than my Aunt, a middle school teacher, no other immediate family members had graduated from college, much less a professional program in the medical field. Obtaining my Bachelors of Sci-ence in Biology from Alice Lloyd College in Pippa Passes, KY is something that I’m exceptionally proud of. While there my outlook on the world broadened and my work ethic soared. Not only did I participate in the school’s work study program, I volunteered hundreds of hours in community and world service, traveling to Haiti and Peru to provide medical and dental aid, and also organized a week with fifteen other students to provide relief aid from Hurricane Katrina in Biloxi, Missis-sippi. Along with the other stu-dents, I was nominated for and re-ceived Kentucky Colonel recogni-tion for our time served in Missis-sippi. Building those leadership skills early on was vital to my suc-cess today.

(Continued on page 9)
Obstacles are Merely Hurdles, Never Fences!

by Jonathan Greer
1st Year Medical Student

"Success is determined not by whether or not you face obstacles, but by your reaction to them. And if you look at these obstacles as a containing fence, they become your excuse for failure. If you look at them as a hurdle, each one strengthens you for the next."

– Dr. Ben Carson.

Looking back on my life, I have encountered numerous obstacles, both academic and financial, nevertheless despite my challenges; they have never served as a fence. I feel tremendously blessed to be a University of Louisville medical student, yet as I wear my short white coat, I can’t help but reminisce on the challenges and struggles that I went through prior to arriving at this point.

I was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan to two loving parents as the oldest of four children. As a child, I was always interested in medicine, yet if you told anyone in my past that I would eventually become a doctor no one would have believed it. I struggled immensely in school eventually receiving the unspoken label as the “dumb” student among my peers. I can remember having difficulty with even the most basic of reading assignments and couldn’t seem to keep up with the rest of my classmates. I continued to struggle academically through 4th grade; this is when my mother decided a change was needed. At that point my mother pulled my three siblings and I out of school and began homeschooling us.

One of my most vivid childhood memories is of my mom and me sitting on the couch taking turns reading aloud. With tears in my eyes I remember saying “I can’t do it”; however my mom refused to accept such a fate for her son. Sitting in the living room each afternoon, studying Hooked-On-Phonics and reading word by word.

(Continued on page 11)

From Football Jersey to White Coat

by Daniel Barlowe, 4th Year Medical Student

Fall of 2002, I received a phone call from Bobby Petrino and Mike Summers from U of L; they asked me to make an official visit to the U of L football program. I traveled to Louisville, met with the coaches and a few players and was offered an athletic scholarship, and I committed to them. I arrived to Louisville in August of 2003 as my dad dropped me off to campus on the day my coach told me to report for fall camp. I was officially a college football offensive lineman, but even at 6’5” and 280lbs I was only seen as an eighteen year old “pencil-neck” kid surrounded by stronger, faster and older teammates. During the camp, which was a little under three weeks of nothing but football practice, meetings, film sessions, weightlifting, etc., I also met with the academic advisor to discuss my academic schedule. I redshirted in 2003 (meaning I was on the team, but didn’t play in games) and this gave me another year to pursue school while on an athletic scholarship.

As the year progressed, I grew in admiration for a few of my teammates and the way they conducted themselves in the sport. Jason Spitz and Will Rabatin were older linemen who were excellent players and probably the toughest guys I’ve ever been around. They did what they were coached to do using flawless technique and great

(Continued on page 12)
School of Nursing

The Influence of our Roots on the People we Become
by Marianne Hopkins Hutti, PhD, WHNP-BC Professor

When I was a little kid, I remember asking my Dad about our family tree for a school assignment. My Dad always told us that he thought his family was originally from Wales, but his father was an orphan – so he really did not know for sure. My Dad’s family name – and my maiden name – is Hopkins. According to Ancestry.com, my early American Hopkins relatives from the 1700’s were farm workers and house servants.

My Mom’s family was from Switzerland, with an original family name of Tschudi. My mother’s family name was changed to Judy when they immigrated to the US. Ancestry.com is quite an amazing family tree tool. I have been able to trace the Judy family back to the 1600’s and many, many of them have been teachers. Apparently it is in my genes! My grandfather had a master’s degree in education in the early 1900’s, and my mother was educated as a teacher as well.

However, what I find even more amazing is the effect that one woman can have on her family. When my father was a small child, my paternal grandfather became an asthmatic invalid. My Grandma and Grandpa Hopkins had three sons in the midst of the depression. My grandfather passed away before I was born, and my Grandma had to take over the financial responsibility of my Dad’s family shortly after he was born. My Grandma Hopkins was not a well-educated woman. Like many of my ancestors, she was a house cleaner. However, my Grandma was extraordinary in other extremely important ways. She taught my father and my uncles to be responsible, resilient, and extremely hard-working. All of them had jobs that contributed to the family’s income, and my grandmother expected all of them to go to college. My father ended his career as executive vice-president of a large paper manufacturing and business forms corporation; my uncles ended their careers as a school principal and as a CPA and partner/owner in a successful accounting firm.

When I was a little kid, we had very little money. I had 2 older sisters and 1 younger brother, and for years the only clothes I wore were the ones I received as “hand-me-downs” or the ones my Mom sewed for me. However, like my grandparents, my father and mother always challenged my sisters and brother and me to assume we WOULD go to college, rather than IF we went to college. This had a hugely positive effect on all of us... maybe particularly for me, since in 1972 very few nurses were going to college.

About a year ago, I continued working on Ancestry.com, looking into the Hopkins family history. After some work, I found the census data for my father’s and grand-
I had no idea that I would find myself in the US as I contemplated my life and my career many years ago. I was born in Freetown, Sierra Leone to a Jamaican mother and Sierra Leonean father. My mother’s grandfather was Scottish and had moved to Jamaica many years earlier but she wanted to be a nurse and went to England to train. My father had followed his father’s footsteps to be a physician when they met and got married in Middlesex, UK. They later made their home in Sierra Leone where my twin brother and I were born, with me leading the way 1 hour and 20 minutes before him. We had different birthdays, which was always a source of great confusion. He maintained he was older! At least when it was convenient for him! He was older according to the Yoruba tradition since it is believed that he sent me ahead to see the world! I have no idea why this was his mantra. Maybe it was because our great grandfather went to Sierra Leone from Nigeria and made his home there and my grandfather worked in Port Harcourt fromlices from Nicaragua to Jamaica to Sierra Leone many years and returned to Freetown when my father was a child. In any case, in my understanding, the twin who was born first was older, and I stuck to that. After all, unlike most other twins we celebrated our birthdays on different days, me (Taiwo) on the 5th and him (Kehinde) on the 6th. My sister’s birth followed ours 18 months later. We made a fabulous 3-some! We played together and had a lot of fun.

In our early years, our parents lived in many parts of the country as dad was assigned as the Medical Officer to work in Bo, Kenema, Makeni, etc. We returned to live in Freetown and not long after we left for Jamaica. We had the opportunity as children to live in Jamaica for a year and go to school, Catholic School no less! During that year our younger brother was born and so we were four. The ten-day trip (Continued on page 14)

My friend (A.L.) frequently has conversations that go like this:

Acquaintance: “Where are you from?”
Acquaintance: “No, really I mean, what are you?”
A.L.: “I’m, uhm American.”
Acquaintance: “No, you know, what country did you come from?”
A.L.: (nervously laughing) “I was born in AMERICA.”
Acquaintance: “C’mon, you know what I mean, where are your ancestors from?”
A.L.: (sighing....) “I’m genetically Chinese.”
Acquaintance (satisfied with having gotten an acceptable “answer”), “Oh! Cool.”

Some people frequently encounter conversations like this. The inquirer may seem inquisitive at best, or perhaps even ignorant or rude. To add to the confusing perceptions, the number of people who classify themselves as...
Diversity- A Personal Story
by Ron Welch, BSBA, Administrative Associate

I was shopping with my mother during the Christmas season 20 years ago and as we sat down for lunch, I found it the perfect time to share my deepest secret. I had nothing to be ashamed of, but still felt apprehensive about how my news would be received by my mother. I told her the man I was living with was “more than just my roommate”, and that I was in a relationship with him and I was gay. “Coming Out”, wasn’t easy. I was scared how my family would accept me as well as society in general. Luckily, my family loves me enough to accept me for who I am.

I was raised in a Catholic family. In the 3rd grade, my parents made a decision to place my brother and I in a catholic elementary school so that we would not have to be bused across town because of desegregation. My parents weren’t rich or racist; they just wanted me to attend a good school close to my home. After grade school, I attended a catholic high school, and it was there that I was first exposed to people with diverse life experiences. They were different from me. In that environment, I realized it was acceptable to be an individual and it was okay to be different. There were kids from different socio-economic backgrounds. There were “jocks”, “nerds”, and “bookworms”. This was the early 80’s and being different wasn’t anything unusual. Music was changing, fashion was changing, and society seemed to feel as though it was becoming more tolerant. On the other hand, the “Gay Plague”-HIV/AIDS was becoming more prevalent and more misunderstood and that was hurting the overall acceptance of who I was permitted to be.

After high school, I enrolled at the University of Louisville as an undeclared major. I would go on to graduate from the Business School and become the first person in my family to complete a college degree. I felt happy, accomplished, but there were things in my personal life that kept me from feeling equal to others. College was about learning how things in life should be. Diversity, acceptance, individualism and success are all concepts that make intellectual sense, but applying these terms to your everyday life can be difficult.

In 2001, I met my partner and we have enjoyed life together ever since. There have been challenges of making the “right choices” when it comes to life decisions such as which job to take or what house to buy. Essentially, we share the same life challenges as any other couple out in the world. We just aren’t granted the acceptance afforded to other couples. Hopefully things will change.

While I could never compare the challenges of acceptance that other minorities have endured, I certainly recognize that not only can I not get married to the person that I love in the state that I live, but if I went elsewhere, where it is legal, it still would not be recognized here in Kentucky. I have to admit, it would be nice to be able to get married. It is not something that is defining for our relationship, but it would be nice to know that option exists. Right now, married couples in the state of Kentucky enjoy over 1,000 legal and financial benefits that my partner and I are ineligible for. Even though we pay the same taxes as married couples, we are not eligible for the same benefits. Kentucky voters adopted a constitutional amendment in November 2004 that defined marriage as the union of a man and a woman and prohibited the recognition of same-sex relationships under any other
decisive in our social relations. On our journey in class to understand human diversity in the context of these ideas and how they functioned throughout US history, we travel a road that leads us past Indian wars, slavery and abolition, the Chinese Exclusion Act, and the struggle against Jim Crow for civil rights and equal opportunity. The road passes through Ellis Island in the east, and on the west coast it curves around San Francisco Bay. But when we arrive at the present, after having witnessed key events that define and unite us as a nation, we find we still must check off little boxes on census forms, employment forms, school applications, etc. to divide ourselves into “racial” and other groups that owe much of their social identity, meaning, and value to the legacies of white privilege and social injustice in the United States.

It is my contention the theories and practices that have been developed and deployed around the concept of diversity by institutions seeking to promote inclusion and equity in employment and college admissions are based on the false idea that diversity can be programmed into institutional life and measured by the demographic boxes checked on various forms. Unlike “race”—the false concept that underlies the creation and promotion of diversity initiatives—human diversity is real. It is an ongoing process of nature that distinguishes human beings not as members of artificial groups (racial categories, etc.), but as distinct individuals. Accordingly, efforts to capture our complex identities in little “boxes” are reductive to the point of absurdity (as so-called bi-racial and mixed individuals have noted in their criticisms of census and other data forms). This brings me to my working definition of diversity, which should be kept in mind as we move forward: Diversity is the normative condition of human existence; it defines the complex nature of human society at the level of the individual.

According to the standard definition of diversity widely embraced in the US, the term denotes the inclusion in the workforce of people of different ethnicities, religions, nationalities, age groups, sexual orientations, and physical abilities. Its adoption and use in higher education can be traced to Regents of California v. Bakke (1978), a lawsuit that sought a remedy for the plaintiff’s claim he was denied admission to medical school due to affirmative action policies at the University of California. It was the first case against affirmative action to reach the US Supreme Court. Justice Lewis Powell, writing the judgment of the court, confirmed such programs were constitutional, and argued that an educational interest in promoting a diverse student body in undergraduate and professional schools was just as important to the quality of the educational experience as a fine faculty, libraries and laboratories.

The concept of diversity thus entered into institutional life through the judiciary—the institution that continues to define it according to the adjudication of ongoing court cases pertaining to affirmative action. The escalation of legal assaults on affirmative action programs in recent years has led businesses and academic institutions to develop diversity programs as alternative means to “race-based” remedies to achieve equal opportunity in employment and college admissions. While the expansive nature of the concept—the inclusion of gender, religion, nationality, sexual preferences, etc.—moves it closer to recognizing the complex reality of human identities, typical approaches to its implementation, however, seem trapped in the moribund thinking about “group differences” that have dominated recent efforts to address historical discrimination and injustice. The cultural stereotypes that have been built up over centuries and that pervade our collective consciousness constitute a major hindrance to progress. In fact, we have been so conditioned by stereotyping that proposed solutions like diversity initiatives often perpetuate—in new guises and disguises—the problems they are intended to remedy. Stereotypes allow us to pre-judge others instantly. They also are reflected in the officially-sanctioned check-off boxes within which we are disciplined by society to self-identify according to society’s pre-conceived ideas about group identities and differences. And, most importantly, stereotypes prevent
us from transcending the “group” identities they reify and represent to allow us to be seen and treated as individuals. Thus they prevent us from recognizing that diversity is determined at the micro-level of the individual in society.

An example I give my students—who you should recall have never seen me in the flesh—is often when I enter a room full of strangers I am asked, as a conversation starter, if I played basketball. These days the question is posed in the past tense because in addition to noting my above-average height, my age is another visible characteristic. The assumption is, of course, a tall, black man must have shot hoops at some point in his youth in high school or college. Understandably, the thought does not occur to the questioner that I might have played ice hockey because that idea goes against the stereotypes to which we have been conditioned. The reality when I walk into a room is that I bear with me all the characteristics that comprise my individual “identity.” Those collective traits distinguish me from every other human being including those in my family: first born, native born, male, brown-skinned, above-average height, English-speaking, college educated, medical librarian, historian, playwright, librettist, composer, poet, college professor, musician, married, childless, sixty-something, African American, Kentucky resident, etc.

This is my “diversity fingerprint,” so to speak. Like anatomical fingerprints and DNA fingerprints it distinguishes me as an individual member of a diverse society and defines who I am well beyond the narrow confines of those silly little boxes.

To drive this point home in class, I include information about my genetic ancestry. I have had three DNA analyses done by three different organizations for differing purposes. In 2005 I submitted a DNA sample to the Human Genographic Project to support the creation of a global database to advance the study of human origins and migration patterns. The project looked only at the deep ancestry of my male ancestral line, and traced the origins of my Y-chromosome to a region near the Egyptian-Sudanese border dating back approximately 60,000 years ago. In 2012 I submitted a DNA sample to 23andMe, a California-based genetics firm conducting health research and providing genetic ancestry analysis. Their analysis of my mitochondrial and Y-chromosome DNA traced my father’s ancestral line to Nigeria and my mother’s to Senegal. Also, according to what they refer to as an admixture test, they determined 63% of my ancestry came from Africa, 32% from Europe (England, Ireland, Scandinavia), 1% showed Asian (Amerindian) origin, and roughly 4% was left unassigned (my wife insists it is Martian DNA). Last year I submitted a DNA sample to Ancestry.com to see what their autosomal testing methods would identify. The results from Ancestry slightly differed from 23andMe as follows: 66% West African ancestry (with 30% from Benin/Togo); 33% European ancestry (with 19% coming from Great Britain); and 1% Asian ancestry (Amerindian).

Who am I? Like every other human, I am a unique individual. No one else in the world is exactly like me. When I add all my characteristics together (familial, social, and biological) they comprise my diversity fingerprint. However, I am more than just the sum total of these parts. I both encompass and transcend these defining personal traits because they constantly change. Our identities are not fixed or static. Change occurs because change is the one constant in life. Although we generally are not conscious of it, we are still evolving in nature and in society. I was an infant who became an adolescent who became an adult (AARP reminds me a new category of “senior citizen” awaits—although I am not as enthusiastic about this next phase as they seem to be). One day, if I am lucky, “retired” will be added to the list of my characteristics, and still there are other ways my biological, social or familial situation can change over time.

Who am I? By every measure, like every other human being, I am a work in progress. What I have in common, what I share with other humans, is the fact we are all different—not different as groups, but different as individuals. In my opinion, this is where we should begin the search for common ground to solve the problems of
social inequality and injustice. The recent effort within institutions of higher education to recognize and celebrate diversity takes a step in that direction. It recognizes our differences will not vanish and that we should not be expected or required to assimilate to an arbitrarily defined “social norm” based on the prerogatives and preferences of a socio-politically dominant group. I am not by any means naïve about the formidable obstacles that exist in the struggle to deracinate “race” and the other stereotypes and social barriers pertaining to gender, religion, age, etc. that prevent us from recognizing the true meaning of human diversity, but I would not be an educator if I did not believe in the power of human knowledge to confront and solve our critical societal problems.

(Continued from page 8)

Chenault- Who am I?

During my final year of college I had the privilege of attending a second program at the University of Louisville, the MCAT-DAT Review Summer Workshop to help me prepare for the admissions exam. After taking the DAT and proceeding through the interview process I had the honor of accepting admission to the University of Louisville School of Dentistry class of 2011. Following my dental school graduation, I spent one year at University of Louisville Hospital in a General Practice Residency. During that year, I was able to grow my skills, broaden my understanding and left me eager to learn more. I then chose to further my career aspirations by becoming the first of two students admitted into a new specialty program in the field of Prosthodontics at the University of Louisville School of Dentistry. My classmate and I will finish our program June 2015.

I am reminded every day how fortunate I am, and I know I wouldn’t be where I am today without my undergraduate college, but professionally the guidance and encouragement from Dr. Bryan Harris who is currently serving as the co-director of my residency program in Prosthodontics. Dr. Harris has taught me more than anyone in regards to dentistry and I am indebted to his devotion to educating young dentists. Because of these amazing experiences in life I know I want to give something back to my community—local, regional, country and world! At Alice Lloyd College, I was introduced to a philosophy that I and many of my fellow alums have embraced and followed. It was called The Purpose Road Philosophy and was written by George Herbert Palmer, a professor from Harvard University. The founders of Alice Lloyd College desire was that each student would catch a vision of their purpose, which would eventually manifest itself in world service. The Purpose Road Philosophy manual includes the following passage that I have held close to my heart since I read it many years ago.

By an inexorable law, What we expect tends to come to us, Facing life in the right way, we must have A Purpose

A Goal

A Vision.

Then hold the thought and work toward it; It will come as dawns the day.

I have my Purpose, I know my Goal and I am following the Vision of my future and working towards that, day in and day out.

(Continued from page 2)

Stapleton- Purpose

Dr. Brandon Stapleton (seated) and Dr. Bryan Harris demonstrating CAD/CAM dentistry

During my final year of college I had the privilege of attending a second program at the University of Louisville, the MCAT-DAT Review Summer Workshop to help me prepare for the admissions exam. After taking the DAT and proceeding through the interview process I had the honor of accepting admission to the University of Louisville School of Dentistry class of 2011. Following my dental school graduation, I spent one year at University of Louisville Hospital in a General Practice Residency. During that year, I was able to grow my skills, broaden my understanding and left me eager to learn more. I then chose to further my career aspirations by becoming the first of two students admitted into a new specialty program in the field of Prosthodontics at the University of Louisville School of Dentistry. My classmate and I will finish our program June 2015.

I am reminded every day how fortunate I am, and I know I wouldn’t be where I am today without my undergraduate college, but professionally the guidance and encouragement from Dr. Bryan Harris who is currently serving as the co-director of my residency program in Prosthodontics. Dr. Harris has taught me more than anyone in regards to dentistry and I am indebted to his devotion to educating young dentists. Because of these amazing experiences in life I know I want to give something back to my community—local, regional, country and world! At Alice Lloyd College, I was introduced to a philosophy that I and many of my fellow alums have embraced and followed. It was called The Purpose Road Philosophy and was written by George Herbert Palmer, a professor from Harvard University. The founders of Alice Lloyd College desire was that each student would catch a vision of their purpose, which would eventually manifest itself in world service. The Purpose Road Philosophy manual includes the following passage that I have held close to my heart since I read it many years ago.

By an inexorable law, What we expect tends to come to us, Facing life in the right way, we must have A Purpose

A Goal

A Vision.

Then hold the thought and work toward it; It will come as dawns the day.

I have my Purpose, I know my Goal and I am following the Vision of my future and working towards that, day in and day out.
istrator of a Youth Services Organization. I quickly came to realize that I most often thought of who I was by whatever job title I held at the time. I was a Social Worker...

With that option off the table, my mind focused on my parents and family of origin. I am one of two daughters born to parents who have lived their entire lives in Campbellsville, Ky. I was the first of their four children to attend college. I was a small town girl.

Defining myself by describing my birth family was off the table too so I moved on to thinking about myself as a wife, having married my high school sweetheart after 9 years of courtship. After receiving his undergraduate degree from U.K., my husband then graduated from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. He was a Presbyterian minister in Lexington. Was I to define myself as a minister's wife? Too much baggage with that and thankfully that option was also off the table.

Who am I? Who am I as a person rather than a plant, a rock, an insect or some other type of animal? Many properties have been suggested as being necessary for being a person: Intelligence, the capacity to speak a language, creativity, the ability to make moral judgments, consciousness, free will, a soul, and self-awareness. The list could go on almost indefinitely. Which properties did I think were individually necessary and jointly sufficient for being a person? As I came at last to ponder these aspects of who a person, my person, is I began to define myself as someone with a certain amount of intelligence, as someone who could definitely speak a language, sadley, only English. I was somewhat creative. My ability to make moral judgments was a work in progress, especially once I left my parents house, where the foundation for moral judgments had been laid. As I began to take responsibility for my own actions as an adult I built upon this foundation by learning from both the legal end of moral questions from the jobs I held in the court system to the religious ends of the spectrum by attending our church in Lexington.

I knew I possessed a soul or a conscience because my free will had at times led me down some dangerous and not too pretty paths. I felt bad about that, but of course, after it was too late. My free will, something my self-awareness, along with the process of aging, taught me that exercising my will was not always free. There was a price to be paid for my bad decisions.

My extrovert self needed tempering. Nothing did this for me quite like losing a child. I had finally become pregnant after repeated and expensive attempts at in vitro fertilization only to lose the child in my fifth month of pregnancy. Two years later my husband and I were fortunate to adopt an 11 day old infant son who was love in the flesh. He captured our consciousness, our souls, our creativity, as well as our wallets. We were temporarily rendered unable to speak the English language. We spoke in ga, ga, goo goos and suddenly found ourselves referring to one another as mommy and daddy as if we were each other’s parent.

All that to say this... Who am I? I am someone who is passionate about life and who loves deeply. I love my parents, my siblings, my spouse, my child, my pets, and my friends. I love the world with all its complexities. I am someone who loves nature, art, science, and literature.

Who am I? While I may not ever be fully capable of answering this question, a blessing given to me by a student on the occasion of my resignation as the manager of
the out-patient AIDS medical clinic on HSC speaks volumes to me about who I want to be:

“May God bless you with restless discomfort about easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may seek truth boldly and live from the depth of your heart;

May God bless you with holy anger at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people, so that you may tirelessly work for justice, freedom and peace among all peoples;

May God bless you with the gift of tears to shed with those who suffer pain, rejection, starvation or the loss of all that they cherish, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and transform their pain into joy; and

May God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you really can make a difference in this world, so that you are able, with God’s grace, to do what others claim cannot be done.”

Let it be so!

became a norm. During this period, I experienced one of my first tastes of the fruits of perseverance and diligence, qualities that I have continued to carry throughout my life. I returned to school two years later a changed student, receiving all A’s from that point on until my freshman year in college.

While things began improving for me academically, a storm of financial struggles began to brew. During February of 2006, my family and I moved to Tennessee from Michigan in hopes of starting a better life. However, unlike many re-locations this transition was not smooth. My dad was forced to stay in Michigan in order to support my family as a dislocated worker for several years. Shortly after the move, our home in Michigan was foreclosed on, resulting in additional financial strain. We lived in an unfurnished house in Spring Hill, TN and slept on air mattresses, occasionally rearranging the boxes lined up against the wall. The first year was the worst; beans, cornbread, and oatmeal were frequently on the menu. The second year was better, but by then I had moved onto campus as a freshman, only to be reminded of my “special circumstances” during the holiday breaks.

This situation was challenging because, aside from being hungry and uncomfortable at times, it created a feeling of inescapable hopelessness. However, over the years, I discovered that this hopelessness resulted from what I valued in life at the time. This experience prompted me to reevaluate my priorities and to cherish my family and people even more than I did before. I learned to be thankful and appreciative for what I do have and to remain positive despite the circumstances, taking one day at a time and, above all, praying and trusting God. Knowing what I know now, I would not change a thing. The lessons that I learned through our financial struggles have strengthened me, making me able to handle not only that situation but also obstacles that presented later in life.

Despite my financial struggles, I chose to focus on the areas of my life that were within my control which included doing well in school and upholding my responsibilities as a Division 1 student-athlete. My experiences as a collegiate athlete continued to teach me the benefits of hard work, perseverance, and time management, qualities that I continue to uphold even today. However after two years at Belmont, I transferred to Vanderbilt University for the sole purpose of challenging myself even further academically. During my second semester at Vanderbilt, I struggled academically and had...
to adjust my study habits to accommodate the heavier workload which often meant studying longer, going to office hours, praying more and removing distractions from my life. It wasn't easy but after making those changes, I began to excel at my new school.

But financial challenges continued to follow me throughout my collegiate career. During the spring semester of 2011, I found myself feeling lightheaded in one of my classes due to hunger. As a means of reducing the financial burden on my family I felt it best to select a smaller meal plan and poor meal planning had gotten the best of me. That semester I worked part-time in addition to working on two research projects, volunteering in the emergency room, and taking 18 credit hours of advanced science and language courses. To many this might have seemed ridiculous, but for me it was necessary. Quite simply, I had to eat and I had to excel in my courses in order to reach my goal. Through much prayer and discipline, I was able to manage such a vigorous schedule. The following year I graduated from Vanderbilt University on the dean’s list with a double major in Chemistry and Spanish and a minor in Managerial Studies:

(Continued from page 3)

Daniel Barlowe and wife, Sarah, at Papa John’s Cardinal Stadium

(Continued on page 11)

Greer - Obstacles

Corporate Strategy.

As I put on my short white coat, I wear it not with pride or arrogance but with a sense of humility and gratitude. I can’t help but look back and thank God for my obstacles and struggles because they made me stronger, they gave me an unyielding determination to excel, and they allowed me to truly recognize and value what is important in life. As I near the completion of my first year in medical school, I can’t help but think back on Dr. Carson’s words and smile. I can honestly say my obstacles are merely hurdles, never fences!

(Continued on page 13)
ble to see how we would react. I feel it was good training for a career in medicine.

After college I signed a contract to play in the Canadian Football League for the Edmonton Eskimos. During training camp I competed as hard as I could, but was cut on the last day of camp, which was also my birthday. That took the wind out of my sail. I felt as if I was done playing football and I entered the job market in 2008 when the recession began; job prospects were extremely limited, so I took a job in food service managing a smoothie shop. Going from college athlete to serving people food was the most humbling experience of my life. I learned how to manage a business, handle scheduling, perform weekly inventory, create daily sales and labor reports, and most importantly I was introduced to managing employees. I found myself wondering how I was going to pursue medical school, which had been my goal since college. I made a trip back to Louisville and met with Dr. Toni Ganzel, who at the time was the Associate Dean for Medical Student Affairs. She told me about U of L’s MD/MBA program, and I applied.

The application process was long and strenuous, but I felt like my GPA and MCAT numbers were decent, and I had some great people write letters of recommendation for me. I was granted an interview at ULSOM, and gratefully accepted. I also interviewed for the MBA program, and thanks to the help of Dr. Bruce Kemelgor, I was encouraged by the MBA program. My experience so far has been excellent at the University of Louisville. I’m currently in my fourth year of a five-year MD/MBA program, led by Dr. Brad Sutton and Dr. In Kim. Thankfully, I’ve got a beautiful and supportive wife, Sarah, who has been an encouragement throughout this whole process of medical school. Much like the older teammates who excelled on the field and took the time to help me develop, I have developed an admiration for some of my attending physicians, including Dr. Timothy Heine and Dr. Michael Heine, brothers and anesthesiologists who have taken the time to talk about medicine, the business of medicine, as well as just being someone further along on the path willing to help a medical student develop personally and professionally. I’m thankful for my previous opportunities and experiences and am looking forward to what the future holds.

(Continued from page 12)
Barlowe - Football

name. Ten years later, on February 12, 2014, a federal judge ruled that Kentucky must recognize same-sex marriages from other jurisdictions, a ruling that is on hold pending review by the Sixth Circuit.

When my father died in an untimely manner, my mother received his Social Security benefits. Without being married, if my partner or I were to die, the other would not be eligible to those same benefits. Yet, my partner’s sister who has divorced and married three times in those same 14 years enjoys all of the benefits simply by virtue of being in a recognized heterosexual marriage. That is only one of the challenges....we own a home together. Our rights in passing are not the same there either.

Furthermore, we happen to live in a state where we could be terminated from our employment simply for our sexual orientation and nothing more. Fortunately, at UofL, our leadership has policies to prevent that from happening in our institution.

In my professional life, over the years, I have enjoyed working at the University of Louisville. I have held positions in the Ophthalmology department, the Anesthesiology department, the AHEC office and now currently in the Diversity and Inclusion office. I have always felt that my personal life has not impacted my professional life. I have been lucky enough to work with people that see me for who I am and not just a label or a stereotype. I chose to move to the Diversity office when the opportunity arrived last February, because I was excited to see what diversity initiatives the HSC campus could provide. I am excited to be involved in a department that can educate and make people think twice about others around them and how they interact with people that are different from themselves.  

(Continued from page 6)
Welch - Diversity
spent the next 12 years of my life, first in Bideford, Devon then in London. I grew into adulthood in the UK, far away from my parents but under the watchful eyes of aunts, uncles and caring guardians. Mum and Dad would visit periodically. I remember Dad’s first visit to see us at school was to make sure we were happy. How could we not be happy? Yes, it was boarding school but we had made friends and there was ice-cream for the asking!! Two years later and A-levels behind me it was time to think about college. Once that was done, it was getting a job, a driver’s license, and then buying my first car, and then my first apartment. I was growing up!!

I got married, and I thought I was destined to live in Africa. I had prepared for this and very much wanted to raise my children in Africa. In 1983 we had a son and not long after our family moved to Liberia. It seemed the beginning of another chapter in my life. What I did not know at the time was that it would be a short chapter, albeit an exciting chapter. Another son was born in 1987 by which time things in Liberia had changed considerably and it was not the place I have visited my twin brother in 1980, when everybody was so hopeful and life seemed to hold so much promise. My sister and her husband joined us in 1985 and her daughter was born in 1986. It all seemed so perfect, but not for long.

In December 1989 when my parents came to spend Christmas with us we heard the first gun shots ring out. That was the start of the long civil war (1989-1996) that would leave Liberia a shadow of its former self. We left Liberia in the spring of 1990 on one of the last planes to leave Monrovia for Sierra Leone. The main airport had already been destroyed by the rebel incursion. My Dad had many anxious days before we arrived and had somebody looking out for us on every plane that came to Freetown from Monrovia. Communication in those days is not what it is now and folks outside Monrovia knew much more about what was happening than we did. I left Liberia in May 1990 with two children and two suitcases, one full of toys. I expected we would be in Freetown for about 2 weeks! That was wishful thinking. My husband followed a week later. Everything the family owned bar my son’s baby books, a few photographs, and my certificates were destroyed during the war. My son complained about a boat he had been given which I dared not give him as an 18 month old. I had no doubt he would have tried to sit on it and they would both have gone sailing away down the creek. No, it was tucked away in a store room with everything else until our house was ready. Like everything else this was lost too. My certificates were in my office when I was leaving and I could not go back for them. My research assistant held on to them for 5 years until we got a chance to go back and he handed them over. Everything else including the house was gone, roof and all! Hey, those
were only things. We had our lives, we were in Sierra Leone, we had returned home to the rooms we had left behind when we left to go to England. Dad was there to catch us and he recalled when he and my twin brother had to leave Uganda similarly in a hurry as that war took its toll.

The next five years, I relied on not what was on those papers, but what was in my head! I got the chance to start again and to prove what I could do. I know it is a long story, and you would be forgiven for not continuing. I did not want to do this, but have never even told myself this story, so maybe I need to hear it too.

Anyway, fast forward to 1995. I was in the UK, not long after my older son said to me, “mummy I am not ready to die.” Sierra Leone’s war had started five years earlier, and it was time to go. Had it not been for a chance meeting with the then chair of the School of Public Health at the University of South Carolina the year earlier, our lives would have been very different. I left Sierra Leone in August 2005, again with two children and two suitcases. This time without the toys, they had grown up. The fact that I can now easily fill two 40 foot containers with the “stuff” I have acquired since then is maybe a testament to resilience, foresight and providence! Whatever it was I am grateful for the experiences it has afforded me and my family. It all started with that visit to South Carolina in May 1995 when I completed the application form so I could take advantage of the time I had on my hands and return to school to complete a master’s degree. After all I had been working as a public health professional to all intents and purposes, but with no formal training in public health. It seemed the right time to make good on a promise that my mother said I made to myself years earlier. If not now, when? The months between May and August were a series of occurrences that I least of all can explain. “All things happen together for good,” is an expression I heard my mother and my grandmother say repeatedly, and I had come to believe it was true.

In August 1995, I attended a USAID meeting in Washington DC. I had started the Sierra Leone chapter of the Society for Women and AIDS in Africa (SWAA). I was the president of this organization and as a result made many trips to the US. One of my portfolios was advocating for the development of a microbicide for the prevention of the spread of HIV among women. It was a global health initiative with participants from the US, UK, South America and Asia. I was representing SWAA.

I called Dr. Richter as I had not heard from South Carolina. The war was getting closer to where we lived and my son was becoming increasingly nervous. I had not realized the impact the war in Liberia and later in 1992 during a coup in Sierra Leone had on him. I needed to get them out, and quickly. I called her and she assured me that the papers that I needed to apply for a visa had already been sent to Sierra Leone. I had left Sierra Leone three days earlier, and they had not yet arrived. A compatriot who I had met a year earlier was also at the University of South Carolina and between them they had copies of all the documents sent by courier to me in DC. They arrived the day before I left.

I arrived in Sierra Leone on Saturday morning, expecting that I would be leaving again the following week. We went house to house on Sunday after church saying goodbye to all the aunts and uncles as such was the practice at home. There was only one problem, the boys did not have a visa, and besides that they were in Liberia, visiting for the first time since the war. As if that was not enough, I was to discover on the Monday I arrived at the embassy to get our visas to travel to the US that Sierra Leone had not had a consul general for 3 months, which meant that no visas had been issued for 3 months.

There was a long line outside the US embassy!! I had no hope of getting to the front of the line and getting a visa, not if I joined that mile-long queue. I had to think of a strategy! After all I had to leave that weekend and the embassy only accepted applications on Monday and Wednesday. The boys would return to Sierra Leone on Wednesday. I took a deep breath and after many attempts to talk to other people I knew in the Embassy and failed, at 8:00 it was too
early to find people at their desks, I asked to speak to the consul general. It turned out we had been on the same flight the previous Friday. I was in luck! God certainly moves in a mysterious way! After I talked to her on the phone, I waited my turn, at least until 4 hours later when the security guard gave me permission to go into the consulate. I went in, had a brief conversation with the consul-general which started with, “were you the person I talked to earlier?” I waited, and an hour later I left the US embassy armed with three visas, one for me and one for each of my sons, all stamped in my passport. Our plans were back on track, or so I thought. The next hurdle was getting onto a plane bound for the US and South Carolina. There were no seats on the plane, or rather, none in the part of the plane for which I was prepared to buy tickets for all three of us, but no fear, a couple of people got bumped up to Business Class and we got their seats! We were on our way. Stop overs in Amsterdam and Atlanta later we arrived in South Carolina, just in time for orientation and to register the boys in school. One semester later I discovered my children were 12-18 months younger than their peers. When I went to the district to enroll them in school I got asked how long they had been in school. Well they had both started school at 2 ½ years, and in Sierra Leone children were in 1st grade at age 5 but little did I know that in the US children start-
ed 1st grade at 6 years. It’s amazing how one question changes everything! They survived. The next 10 years had their trials and tribulations. I completed both a master’s and a PhD; both boys finished high school and went on to University. In the years that followed, they both completed bachelor’s and master’s degrees. They are both working now. My older son in Newhaven, CT and my younger son is here with me in Louisville, an alumnus of UofL. We have an expression that is used when our children grow up which is, “pekin nor to yes.” I know I am blessed.

My younger son moved to UofL with me in 2005 as an undergraduate student and a proud Cardinal fan. He was an international student with a major in Communication and I was an international faculty member in the Department of Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences in the School of Public Health and Information Sciences. Louisville was a new experience for us. It was a positive experience and I can recall my son saying after he went back to South Carolina for the first time, “go ahead mum and sell the house, I don’t think I will be going back there to live!”

My role in addressing issues of diversity has grown over time and expanded beyond our School to contributing to the University’s diversity efforts in Louisville and abroad. My role in meeting the diversity quota has also changed. After many years of explaining to students and colleagues alike how my international status did not qualify me to check the “African American” box, it did allow me to check the “Black” box. More importantly I can now proudly check both the African American and the Black boxes. In fact, I can now check many different boxes as I can truly say I represent Diversity! My son once said to me after a discussion of race and diversity at school, “am I a quarter white”? The only box I really and truly cannot check is “Hispanic!” I know this does not make me special, but it does shed a light on the challenge of discussing diversity, and a diverse campus.

What does diversity really mean anyway? Is it not our culture and the experiences that we have had throughout our lives that give us that diversity, that uniqueness, that difference that transforms our world? I offer, that it is not that I check a particular box that makes me unique, it is what I can contribute to the conversation, the perspectives I bring and the values I share.
what she cares about and creating her own identity in the United States. Maryam’s looks are exotic, and she laughed when asked how others see her ethnicity. “I get a lot of random guesses,” she said, “I’ve been greeted with “Namaste,” told that I look Egyptian and Egypt’s not in Africa, so I can’t be African. People think all Africans look just alike.” As far as how her and other’s perceptions of her ethnicity affects her, she feels a constant conflict in respecting her parents’ strong desire that she not lose appreciation of her culture, yet trying to integrate to her new home in the US. She senses a tension within herself between remaining bound to her native home’s culture and fitting in to new home in a new country, on her own. We wish Maryam all the luck in finding peace in this process.

Peter, an epidemiology doctoral student from Ghana, describes himself as a friendly man (this interviewer concurs!), with lot of friends, including several friends retained from childhood. He and his wife, who is in medical school in Ghana, have a 5-year-old son. Peter’s wife visits when she can, and the rest of the time Peter takes care of his son. Extremely academically motivated and an active Christian, he does not have much leisure time between school, church and his son. He has always felt that he “had what it takes” to pursue a doctorate, and is extremely serious about doing this. He self-identifies himself as a black man, a Ghanaian, though naturalized. Others assume that he is African American, until they hear his accent. US blacks see him as a foreigner. Peter said that there is a distinction felt between native Africans and African Americans that is subtle but present.

Peter’s characterization of himself is not influenced by his race, rather his sense of confidence in himself. Peter said (paraphrasing), “As a black man, people have preconceived notions about me and my abilities. I am aware of my own abilities, so I am not influenced by what other people think.” We agree that Peter will be quite capable in any endeavor he chooses.

I had the distinct pleasure of asking these questions of Dennise, a thoughtful and extroverted MPH student. She characterizes herself as a female, straight, and biracial (Jamaican and Chinese). When younger, she and her sister would jokingly refer to themselves as “the Others” because self-designations for race prior to the 1980’s did not include their biracialness, so they always had to mark themselves as “Other.” Dennise is a church-attending Anglican. She self-identifies as biracial, as mentioned above, but most others assume that she is Black. “Except in New York City,” Dennise said, “there, they will just come up to you and say, ‘What ARE you?’” When questioned as to whether or not that directness bothered her, she said no – that she found the frank question to be refreshing, rather than people making assumptions, which are often incorrect.
students, Trinidad stopped by my office and we discussed ethnic identity. He said that he characterizes himself as a “young black (African-American Latino) guy”, and quickly remarked that he is easily stereotyped. He then went on to say that he has Latino, Native American, and White (French Creole) heritages in his lineage as well. Trinidad hesitates to discuss his white heritage, as it was probably historically a result of coercion and is not a topic most people (particularly White) are comfortable with, nor accept. A passion of his is social justice, so it is not surprisingly that he selected public health as his career path. He described himself as “coy”, but understands that given the work style that goes hand-in-hand with health promotion, he knows the need for and is able to be sociable. He describes himself as a spiritual person, and is in touch with most of his family of origin. Trinidad is always cognizant that he is composed of the different facets of his cultures. Many people are quick to make superficial impressions, and then are surprised at his appreciation of Latin music, for example or the variety of friends that he has. I appreciated Trinidad’s frankness, and look for more conversations to come during his student days at SPHIS, and after.

I greatly enjoyed my conversations with these students, and to be frank, I’d like to read more of the great body of literature that exists on the topic of ethnic identity. Research indicates that gender, ethnic, sexual and class identities are fluid and multidimensional, and reflect the individual’s past and current experiences, and that of their friends and family. Perhaps more culturally sensitive conversations on these topics would be illuminating to us all.

What’s YOUR Story?

Like what you’ve read in this special edition? Would you like to share your story? The Office of Diversity and Inclusion is looking for additional article submissions of personal essays from HSC faculty, staff, and students to feature in future newsletter editions and/or on our website. We ask that the authors reflect on who they are as a person, sharing their background, life experiences, perspectives, and thoughts, and how this contributes to the individuals that they are today. The idea is to highlight the many unique people that comprise the Health Sciences Center population. Essays should be personal in nature with a measure of reflection (not just listing accomplishments like a resume). The article should be submitted in word document with a title, not to exceed 1,000 words. Authors should submit at least one (preferably more) picture with caption included (but not on the actual picture file). Submit your story!