

State University of New York  
College at Cortland

Welcome to  
2021  
Virtual Kente Celebration

Hosted by  
The Multicultural Life and Diversity Office

Karibu Karamu  
Ya Wahitimu

Friday, May 21, 2021

6 p.m.  
Via WebEx



Dear Kente Graduates of 2021,

It is with bittersweet feelings that I write this letter to you. Every year, the Multicultural Life and Diversity Office and the Kente Committee members diligently work to host an exceptional Kente Celebration, to honor our graduating seniors and their accomplishments. It broke our hearts that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to commemorate you, our honorees, in person. In addition to living through a pandemic for over a year now, we have watched as the civil unrest and activism in this country to combat racism and police brutality increased; many of you who participated in the fight for justice. We know this has been a very difficult year for you all, yet you have persevered and shown us your power and grit. We are so proud of your many achievements over the years.

We encourage you to not let this unfortunate circumstance dim your light, because we know you have bright futures ahead. This is only the beginning to a new chapter in your lives. A chapter that may have some challenges awaiting you, but I strongly believe you will overcome them through the knowledge and skills gained at SUNY Cortland. Although it is always our goal to help support and teach you about diversity and inclusion, we also have learned so much from you. Know that we will continue to incorporate your ideas and insights to support the students who come after you.

We are very proud to have worked with such extraordinary students and look forward to seeing you excel in your career paths and contribute back to your communities. Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world," and I am confident you are each well equipped to make a positive impact and change the world for the better!

Yours in Inclusion,

AnnaMaria Cirrincione

Director of Multicultural Life and Diversity Office

## The Kente Stole

The Kente stole is a rich, multicolored, hand-woven style of cloth that originated in Ghana, West Africa, and is revered throughout the Africana World. It is traditionally worn during important national ceremonies. The colors, patterns, and ideogramatic images of the Kente stole impart important information about the wearer and highlight the importance of an event or ceremony. The Kente stole is relatively new to commencement ceremonies in the United States and signifies and symbolizes higher education's connection to the rich cultures, intellectual traditions and academic achievements of the Africana World.



## The Kente Ceremony

The Kente Ceremony symbolizes and commemorates the rite of passage for learners and scholars who are transitioning from institutions of higher learning to the next chapter of their lives. Here at SUNY Cortland we celebrate all students who made this journey despite and in addition to their marginalized identities, experiences of social exclusion, under representation, historical and current inequities in education, and those here who stood as allies and advocates.

# **2021 Kente Program**

## **Welcome**

AnnaMaria Cirrincione, Director of MLDO

## **Black National Anthem**

**(Lift Every Voice and Sing)**

Sang by: Nya Brizill and Rebekah Barrett

## **Keynote Speaker**

Titilayo Morgan '99

## **The History of Kente**

Shaneya Simmelkjaer '21

## **Honorary Stole Presentations**

Dr. Seth N. Asumah

## **Kente Stole Presentations**

AnnaMaria Cirrincione, Lima Maria Stafford, Cali Young, Dr. Vierne Placide

## **Calvin Louis Juste '09 Memorial Award**

Joseph Mannion '09, Jessica Worrell '09, Kenneth Young '09

## **NAACP Award**

Lorraine Lopez-Janove, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer

## **Closing Words**

Dr. Erik J. Bitterbaum, President

## Keynote Speaker

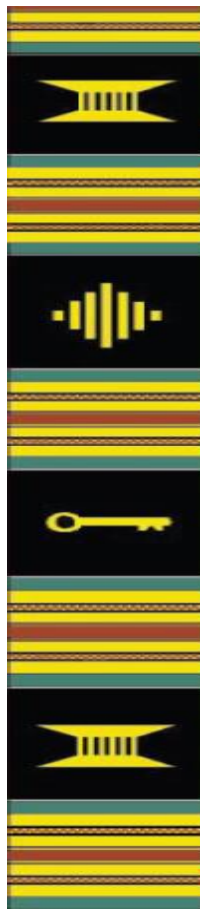
# Titilayo Morgan '99



Titilayo Morgan graduated from SUNY Cortland with a major in Psychology and a minor in Sociology in 1999. While at Cortland, she participated in various clubs including the Black Student Union (BSU) and the ADOWE Dance Group. After Cortland, Titilayo completed graduate studies at Fordham University. She obtained a Master of Social Work and is a Licensed Social Worker in the State of New York. She currently works for the City of New York/Administration for Children's Services (ACS).

During her career with ACS, she has served in various roles including investigating cases of abuse and neglect. In her current role, she supports and monitors the implementation of programs for children and families. She recently received a Distinguished Service Award for her work in helping to reduce the number of children in Foster Care. Titilayo currently sits on the SUNY Cortland Alumni Board of Directors where she served as President from 2018-20. During her tenure as President, she implemented a board recruitment process that will allow for diversification of the board. Titilayo is a native of Harlem, NY where she still resides. She enjoys acting and traveling.

## The Kente Honorary Stole



The kente stole presentation goes to an administrator who has shown great commitment to the persistence and success of underrepresented students at SUNY Cortland. As the Kente Celebration honors the student journey, we also want to make sure that those who supported that journey are visible as well. We hope that those receiving stoles will wear them in solidarity at the graduation commencements. This presentation is in its 10th year with the inaugural 2011 recipient being President Erik Bitterbaum.

We are honored to present this years Kente Honorary Stoles to **Dr. Kathryn Coffey, Dr. Vierne Placide, and Dr. Bekeh Ukelina.**

# Calvin Louis-Juste '09

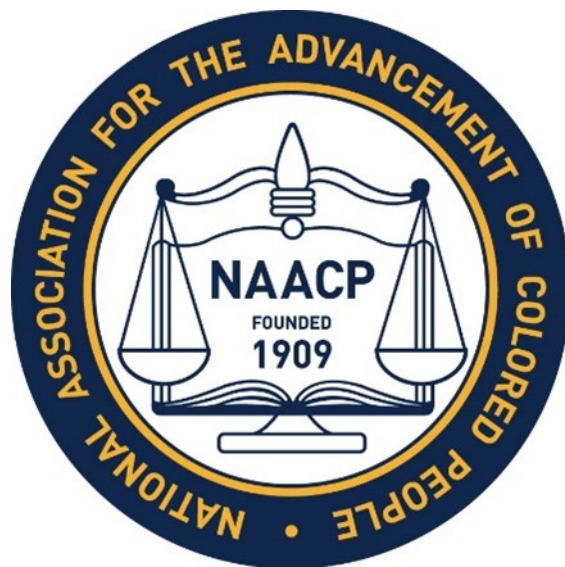
## Memorial Award



### Criteria for award

- ✓ Must be a graduating senior and participating in Kente
- ✓ Be an example of high academic achievement (3.0 GPA or higher)
- ✓ Committed to doing community service
- ✓ Be a leader on campus and be in extracurricular activities
- ✓ Be passionate about continuing to improve oneself
- ✓ Advocate for equity and inclusion on campus

# SUNY Cortland NAACP Award

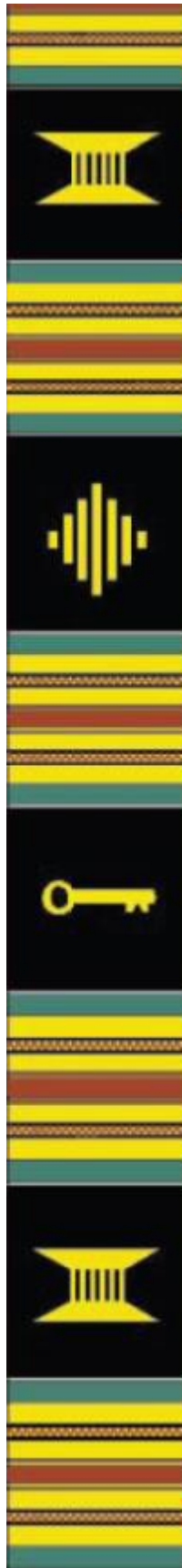


## Criteria for award

- ✓ Must be a graduating senior and participating in Kente
- ✓ GPA requirement of 3.0 or higher
- ✓ Active in promoting diversity, inclusion and social justice matters in support of the Black community and racial equity, either individually or as part of their work within a student organization



# Class of 2021



Vanessa Acheampong-Tieku —Bachelor of Arts: Political Science: Double Minor: Economics & African American Studies

Ava Adams—Bachelor of Science: Biology

Tazmara Anderson—Bachelor of Science: Community Health

Jade Molly Antoine—Bachelor of Science: Healthcare Management

Michael Armstrong—Bachelor of Arts: History

Gloria Baez—Bachelor of Arts: Adolescent Spanish Education

Joslyn Barrera—Bachelor of Arts: Criminology

Rebekah Barrett—Bachelor of Arts: African American Studies and Sociology

Aissatou Barry—Bachelor of Science: Physical Education

Scarlet Batista-Rosario—Bachelor of Arts: Adolescence Education—Spanish

Nyssa Bell—Bachelor of Arts: Criminology and Political Science with a concentration in Law and Justice

Heven Beltran—Bachelor of Arts: Sociology with a concentration in Criminology

Sacesha Bennett—Bachelor of Science: Psychology

Tereen Beretervide—Bachelor of Science: Biology

Amiya Bogart—Bachelor of Arts: Social Philosophy

Jordan Bonaparte—Bachelor of Arts: Communication

Kyle Bonilla—Bachelor of Arts: Adolescence Education—Social Studies and History

Gabriel Bowen—Bachelor of Arts: Graphic Design and Digital Media

Deanna Braithwaite—Bachelor of Science: Exercise Science

Katherine Breton—Bachelor of Arts: Psychology

Nya Brizill—Bachelor of Science: Exercise Science

Anastasia Brown—Bachelor of Arts: Criminology

Shiana Brown—Bachelor of Science: Childhood & Early Childhood Education

Adolis Burgos—Bachelor of Arts: Sociology

Aaliyah Camp—Bachelor of Science: Community Health

Atrinette Casas —Bachelor of Arts: Adolescence Education—Mathematics

Samantha Castro—Bachelor of Arts: Psychology

Cyndy Chouloute—Bachelor of Science: Biology

Diavian Collier—Bachelor of Arts: English

Jesslyn Corniel—Bachelor of Science: Early Childhood/Childhood Education

Morgan Costello—Master of Science: Recreation—Environmental & Outdoor Education

Jose' Cruz—Bachelor of Arts: Criminology

Danielle Darby—Bachelor of Science: Sport Management

Kiara David— Bachelor of Arts: Communication

Emily De La Fuente—Bachelor of Science: Speech and Hearing Science

Sonia Devora Vellejo—Bachelor of Arts: Sociology and International Health

Jose Diaz Duran—Bachelor of Science: Physics

Jordania Dorville—Bachelor of Science: Early Childhood and Childhood Education

Evelyn Escobar—Bachelor of Science: Early Childhood and Childhood Education

Liane Espino— Bachelor of Arts: Psychology: Minor: Women’s Gender & Sexuality Studies

Hannah Fitzgerald—Bachelor of Science: Biomedical Science

Pearl Fletcher—Bachelor of Science: Physical Education

Tara Fort— Bachelor of Science: Inclusive Early Childhood

Nicole Garcia—Bachelor of Arts: Spanish; Minor: Speech Science and Sociology

Genesis Gomez—Bachelor of Arts: Criminal Justice; Minor: Psychology

Shnaldo Gonzalez—Bachelor of Arts: Sociology

Karlee Goode— Bachelor of Science: Biomedical Sciences

Chelsea Grate—Bachelor of Arts: Political Science and Communication Studies

Keaona Gray-Outlaw—Bachelor of Arts: Professional Writing

Maria Guardado—Bachelor of Science: Community Health/Allied Health

Tameika Guity—Bachelor of Arts: Political Science

JoDee Hall—Bachelor of Arts: Musical Theater

Jabreel Harrell—Bachelor of Science: Business Economics

Edith Hernandez—Bachelor of Arts: Sociology and Spanish

Sakara Hester-Torres—Bachelor of Science: Coaching

Shana’zha Hobbs—Bachelor of Science: Psychology

Erika Janny—Bachelor of Science: Speech and Hearing Sciences

Joshua Jean—Bachelor of Science: Fitness Development

Melissa Jean-Baptiste—Bachelor of Science: Early Childhood/Childhood Education

Bianca Jemmott—Bachelor of Science: Community Health

Nathalie Jimenez— Bachelor of Science: Psychology

Leah John-Quaccocoo—Bachelor of Science: Fitness Development

Nakeesta Langton—Bachelor of Science: Early Childhood/Childhood Education

Aliyah Locke—Bachelor of Arts: Criminology

Jennifer Lopez—Bachelor of Arts: Sociology

Geovanny Louis—Bachelor of Science: Exercise Science

Gloryangeliz Lugo Vazuez—Bachelor of Arts: Communication Studies

Josie Maldonado—Bachelor of Science: Selected Studies

Jonathan Mariani—Bachelor of Science: Community Health

Marco Marrero—Bachelor of Arts: Sociology

Hendrick McCaskill-Bourdeau—Bachelor of Science: Sport Management

Timothy McDermitt-Wise—Bachelor of Arts: Sociology

Katherine Melendez Diaz—Bachelor of Science: Early Childhood and Childhood Education

Nathalia Melo—Bachelor of Science: Community Health

Enyonam Mensah—Bachelor of Arts: Political Science and African American Studies

Genesis Minaya—Bachelor of Arts: Psychology and Sociology

Theresa Mintz—Bachelor of Science: Selected Studies

Jennifer Mitchell—Bachelor of Arts: History & Adolescent Education in Social Studies: Minor: African American Studies

Jada Moore—Bachelor of Science: Healthcare Management

Meghan Morales—Bachelor of Science: Fitness Development: Minor: Sports Studies

Alyssa Moreno—Bachelor of Science: Early Child/Childhood Education, Minor: Teaching English as Secondary Language

Jamie Myers—Bachelor of Science: Mathematics

Lisa Nembhard—Bachelor of Arts: Art Studio

Ashley Nicolas—Bachelor of Science: Community Health

Savannah Pearson—Bachelor of Arts: English, Minor: Professional Writing

Melissa Peralta—Bachelor of Arts: Sociology

Daniela Pinto—Bachelor of Science: Biological Sciences

Jackeline Ponce-Mejia—Bachelor of Arts: Sociology

Tatiana Reyes—Bachelor of Arts: Sociology

Lauren Ricks—Bachelor of Science: Sports Management

Shania Robinson—Bachelor of Arts: Psychology, Minor: Forensics

Claritza Rodriguez—Bachelor of Arts: Graphic & Digital Media, Minor: Communications Studies

Madison Sesselman—Bachelor of Science: Healthcare Management

Brittany Sharps—Bachelor of Science: Childhood Education

Azaley Silva—Bachelor of Arts: Criminology

Shaneya Simmelkjaer—Bachelor of Arts: Criminology, Political Science and African American Studies

Jania Sims—Bachelor of Science: Physical Education

Maxwell Smith—Bachelor of Science: Sport Management

Merin Smith—Bachelor of Science: Physical Education

Aitza Soto—Bachelor of Science: Biology

Alexandra Steinburg—Bachelor of Science: Physical Education

Gaelle St. Hilaire— Bachelor of Science: Community Health

Aleksandr Strekalov—Master of Science: Sustainable Energy Systems

Katherine Tenempaguay— Bachelor of Arts: Criminology

Safiya Tónico—Bachelor of Science: Psychology

Veronica Ulerio—Bachelor of Arts: Anthropology and Sociology

Norcaris Ulloa—Bachelor of Science: Speech and Hearing Science

Jasmiri Valerio—Bachelor of Arts: African American Studies, Minor: Political Science

Jaleesa Ventura—Bachelor of Arts: Sociology

Austin Voorhees—Bachelor of Arts: History and Adolescent Education—Social Studies

Jaya West—Bachelor of Science: Early Childhood/Childhood Education

Demani Williams—Bachelor of Science: Physics

Ashlee Yearwood—Bachelor of Arts: Criminology

Natalie Yoder—Bachelor of Science: Anthropology, Minor: International Studies



***It takes a village. The increase in diversity of our student population means the MLDO did not support these graduates alone. The students were asked to tell us about one person, either faculty, staff or fellow student, who made a positive impact on their experience here at SUNY Cortland. This is what they had to say:***

**Vanessa Acheampong-Tieku**—A person who has made a positive impact on my experience here at SUNY Cortland is alumni, Chris Venant, because of his dedication and ambition. Chris was the person who told me to try out for Pyro Dynasty freshman year. Chris was my RA freshman year and also my mentor and a friend. He would give me the best advice and as a freshman, he pushed me out of my comfort zone to try new things and opportunities. We still keep in contact to this day and it would mean a lot to me, for him to see me walk across the stage.

**Ava Adams**—Dr. Eiermann has become one of my mentors. She is intelligent and strong and has taught me so much over the years. Instead of asking how my classes are going, she asks how I am doing and what I'm doing to take care of myself.

**Tazmara Anderson**—Dr. Alexis Blavos was the first professor to make SUNY Cortland feel like home to me. She has been an amazing advisor and professor during my four years at SUNY Cortland and has always made me feel accepted.

**Jade Molly Antoine**—One person who has had a great impact on my experience at SUNY Cortland is Dr. Vierne Placide. She has always been a great source of support and helps point me in the right direction. Although she was not my advisor, she always helped me with my academics. She also shares so many resources to help me find the right career path.

**Michael Armstrong**—Professor Randi Storch was not only a professor for my HIS 307 class, but she stepped in as my advisor while Professor Sheets was out and helped guide me to graduation, giving me the tools I needed to make it happen. She went above and beyond to make sure all of us as her students in class were doing well academically, mentally and emotionally during the pandemic.

**Gloria Baez**—A person that has made a positive impact in my experience as a SUNY Cortland student was Professor Colleen Kattau. It was my pleasure taking multiple classes with Professor Kattau. She did not only motivate me to always be a good student, but she also inspired me to continue learning with her amazing teaching style. Professor Kattau was very good at giving advice and made me feel better every time I felt like giving up.

**Joslyn Barrera**—Professor Elizabeth Bittel is someone who has made a positive impact on my experience here at SUNY Cortland. I took Methods of Social Research with her in the Spring of 2019. In this class, I gained the confidence that I needed to be successful in my future endeavors. I had just changed my major from a B.S. in Biology to a B.A. in Criminology when I started taking this class with her. I have always been a science student, so transitioning into this major that requires more writing and analyzing made me worried. I was still wary of whether or not I had made the right decision. One day Dr. Bittel pulled me to the side and commended me on my amazing writing skills. She expressed how excited she was to read my final paper which made me gain all the confidence I needed. For the rest of the semester, I would go to office hours and we would work on my writing together. The confidence I gained in this class showed in my writing in proceeding classes. Ever since this class, I have gotten various comments from professors commending me for my writing skills. This newfound confidence is something that will follow me into my career and future endeavors.

**Rebekah Barrett**—If it weren't for my advisor Dr. Seth N. Asumah, I wouldn't have decided to have a dual major in African American studies and Sociology. Being a young African American girl, raised in a predominantly white neighborhood and being mis-educated on the history of African Americans, Dr. Asumah has helped open many doors throughout my experience in SUNY Cortland. I was able to receive the proper education about the injustices Black and Brown people face in America and was informed on the rights I am entitled to as a Black woman. Having the advisement of Dr. Asumah has allowed me to find my part in the resistance of Black and Brown people fighting for the rights they're entitled to, through educating people in my music of Black feminist thought, and intersectionality.

**Aissatou Barry**—One staff member that had a positive impact on my experience as a SUNY Cortland student is Jennifer Miller. She was a graduate assistant for the CURE program. My first semester at Cortland was quite difficult considering that I had to adjust to being away from home, and then coming to find out that I had to spend an extra semester at Cortland because I was a transfer student. I was going through the motions and I didn't want to stay at Cortland anymore. I went to talk to her and she assured me that it will be okay. It may seem like a long time right now, however, maybe that is what is best and that time would fly. Fast forward to now, where I am applying for graduation and graduate schools, while also getting ready to student teach, those words still linger in my head. These words are what got me through Cortland and many other conversations that I had with Jennifer. I am still in contact with her now even after she has graduated. She has and still is great to me, and I will forever be grateful for her being in my life.

**Scarlet Batista Rosario**—Christopher Gascon, showed me determination and patience in learning the language. Mecke Nagel, she's a strong, intelligent woman that inspires me to do it all.

**Nyssa Bell**—Dr. Elizabeth Bittel has overall made my experience at SUNY Cortland worthwhile. She has pushed me to hold myself accountable for my mental health, she has inspired me to expand my knowledge on the current social and political climate, and she has been a mentor to me. She continues to inspire me to work hard and achieve my goals. She has brought awareness to social injustices in all the classes I have taken with her and has pushed me to practice social praxis.

**Heven Beltran**—Lima Stafford has made a positive impact on my experience as a SUNY Cortland student. Lima and I met my freshmen year because she was my COR 101 instructor. Ever since then, Lima has been around to always provide a helping hand, be a resource to me and all my peers, as well as an advisor for all students including myself in so many aspects.

**Sacesha Bennett**—Alice Luo. She saved me from dissolving into myself. She came into my life as a close friend when I could not distinguish reality from mental fixations. As a chronic compulsive over thinker, I can easily become my own worst enemy mentally by engaging in habitual behavior. My sophomore year showed me how I could twist my mind for or against me, and when all seemed against me, Alice came along. Unbeknownst to her, I was drowning in myself, her effervescence pulled me to the surface and showed me newness. If you don't know Ms. Luo, she embraces and explores herself fully, progressively, and confidently and her presence nourishes those around her. Her thirst for knowledge and deeper, analytical understanding reminded me of similar qualities within myself. I lost my individuality in the overwhelming waves of college, but with the help of Alice and a few other noteworthy guides, I was able to recognize and reshape myself. I'm humbled to say despair was integral to my growth and development - and so was Alice.

**Tereen Beretervide**—My best friend Oscar Velasquez, has made my time here very manageable. He is constantly supporting me.

**Amiya Bogart**—One faculty that has made an impact on me and I think almost every student in Cortland is Mecke Nagel. She goes above and beyond her job description as a professor and always gave me advice. She strongly believes in my goals and helps support them in any way possible. With things such as books, internships, and reaching out to people in the field I want to pursue.

**Jordan Bonaparte**—Christopher Venant class of 2018 made a huge impact on my time here at Cortland. He was a role model and big brother I never had who helped me become the leader I am on campus today.

**Kyle Bonilla**—My Spanish professor, Patricia Martinez, who I have had for every semester since sophomore year. My minor is Spanish. I made sure to have her every semester because she truly cares about her students and wants them to learn the language. She has always been there whether I just want to talk or if I needed help with work. I appreciate that she has always encouraged academic honesty and is overall a great role model.

**Gabriel Bowen**—As much as I hate to say it, art professor, Bryan Thomas. He showed me that nothing is going to be given to you in this world, no matter who you think you are, you have to work harder than the next to get what you want. Even though I failed the class, thank you because now I know how to chase success.

**Deanna Braithwaite**—Lima Stafford has made a positive impact in my experience as a SUNY Cortland student because she gave me a purpose on this campus. My freshman year was a challenge for me and Lima encouraged me to become involved on campus. With Lima, I wouldn't have found my family in the Caribbean Student Association and Gospel Choir.

**Katherine Breton**—I would say the alumni have made my experience in Cortland the best and the most positive because when I had breakdowns and feelings of giving up, they inspired me to pick myself up and keep working hard. Madeline Brito, Kathleen Altamirano and Fanny Turbi.



**Nya Brizill**—Professor Christa Carsten has made such a positive impact on my SUNY Cortland experience. She is a professor in the Math Department, which also happens to be the subject I have the most trouble in. Besides the fact that she teaches so well, her aura and energy are always great. Coming from a high school where every seat filled is a minority and then going to a college where you are one of the only minorities that fill the seat, can be a challenge at first. But she treated every one of her students fairly and she is super personable. You can tell she's one of the few professors that care about her students succeeding and understanding if they aren't comprehending the work as fast as everyone else. I appreciate her for making me feel comfortable in her class and always having the bright personality she has because it made the class that much sweeter.

**Anastasia Brown**—Throughout my experience here at SUNY Cortland, one of my sociology professors, Dr. Elizabeth Bittel, has had a profound impact on my college experience. As a sociology professor, her position on many of the social issues that exist in our society has always been one that speaks of inclusivity, activism, and the determination to make a noticeable change in our social climate. In taking each of her classes, I have adopted similar standpoints, and have seen my knowledge expand on so many of the social issues that plague our society, and how to be an advocate for change, something that is extremely important in today's social climate. Going out into the world, I feel as though her teachings while at SUNY Cortland have prepared me to face adversity with the mindset to create social change and to use my voice as a tool to do so.

**Shiana Brown**—My advisor Krystal Barber has made a positive impact on my experience as a SUNY Cortland student. Going to college was always my goal and my escape from my home situation. When I first got here, I was nervous and scared and she helped me be more open to new experiences and opportunities. She pushed me to do a concentration in mathematics and that was the smartest decision I have ever made. She helped me throughout all 3.5 years and is now helping me with the graduate school process.

**Adolis Burgos**—John Susana taught me what it is like to be selfless. He showed me that there is more to life than just receiving and the true blessing of giving.

**Aaliyah Camp**—Dr. Coffey in the Health Department had a massive impact on my smooth transition into the Community Health major. Her classroom was always a safe space and I learned so many skills from her beyond the syllabus.

**Atrinette Casas**—Dr. Anne Burns Thomas. She is the CURE coordinator but she has got to know me on a personal level. She has pushed me so I can see my strengths and she has motivated me to keep going even when I want to quit.

**Samantha Castro**—AnnaMaria Cirrincione has made a tremendous impact during my time as a student at SUNY Cortland. Beginning with the EOP summer institute program to the very end, AnnaMaria has always been a rock for me. She guides me in the right direction and gives the best advice when it comes to calming any chaos. She made Cortland feel at home.

**Cyndy Chouloute**—Kathleen Reilly. She was my Resident Hall Director in Glass Tower Hall when I was an Resident Assistant. She showed how loving and caring the SUNY Cortland community can be and is. I owe a lot of my success in SUNY Cortland to her.

**Diavian Collier**—Dr. Karla Alwes changed the direction of my college career. On the first day of her class, I was uninspired, struggling academically and insistent on transferring back home. Her reverence for great romantic writers of the past revived my once dormant love for English. She spoke to my writing with words of endearment, whereas other professors suggested I give up, as writing simply was not for me. Dr. Alwes helped me to refine my skills, subsequently giving me the confidence I needed to pursue the career I've always desired.

**Jesslyn Corniel**—Jennifer Steiner was a Graduate Assistant in the C.U.R.E program and has made a positive impact in my experience at SUNY Cortland. We were required to speak to the graduate assistant every week as first-year C.U.R.E students but it became something that I would look forward to and continued to go after we didn't have to anymore. Jennifer gave me a safe space to talk about school life and my personal life. She has helped me move forward and enjoy my time not only in the C.U.R.E program but in college as well.

**Morgan Costello**—Dr. Anderson Young has been my academic advisor, thesis committee chair, professor, mentor, and friend throughout my time at Cortland. He is incredibly smart, kind and has consistently been available to dream and brainstorm with me ways to pursue my education. I appreciate Andy's willingness to adapt my academic program to meet my needs and interests. His belief in me and my ability and work ethic have made all the difference in my grad school experience. I am better for having known Andy!

**Jose Cruz**- If there was one person who has impacted my experience at SUNY Cortland in a positive way, it would have to be my mentor and friend Timothy Bennett. I met Timothy my freshman year and since then he has been one of my closest friends and someone who I truly look up to and respect a lot. When I came to SUNY Cortland, I was very ignorant, stubborn, and very excited to be away from home and experience the typical "college life." As my time as a student went on, unfortunately, I made my fair share of mistakes and they came with consequences. These were moments where Tim would sit me down and have long and deep talks with me about life, my actions, and most importantly my future. The only reason I do not regret those mistakes is that they helped shape me into the young man that I am today. Talks with Tim, especially throughout my college career, helped shape my mindset on my actions because as he always stated: "Work hard now, and you can live the life you want in the future. Sacrifice things now and they will only come to you in abundance in the future." He would also always reiterate to me that I am the first person in my family to be in such a blessed position and that I have to take full advantage of the situation. That I am in a position to not only change my life but also my mother's and my family members' lives. Tim is by far one of the people in my life who I am extremely grateful for and will always look to for advice, whether it is about school or life.

**Danielle Darby**—I am torn between two people who I believe both deserve recognition as they have both positively impacted my experience as a SUNY Cortland student. First, I'd like to recognize Professor George Vazenios. I met Professor Vazenios at the Fall Open House in 2018. He was friendly and supportive of all my questions and needs. After my acceptance to SUNY Cortland for the following Spring semester in 2019, Professor Vazenios remembered me from the open house. He helped to guide my insight on my studies at Cortland. Second, I'd like to recognize Mrs. Christine Bartoszek. When my brother passed away in February 2019 during my first semester at SUNY Cortland, she was there to help me every step of the way. I needed to submit paperwork to request for a leave of absence. I've never had to do something like this before and she empathized with everything that I was going through at the time. Throughout the whole month, I was in and out of her office in the Professional Studies building checking in on her as she checked in on me. She was a lovely face to see whenever I was in the building, whether it was before or after class. I would come by just to say hello.

**Kiara David**—One person who made a positive impact on my experience at SUNY Cortland would be Dr. Asumah. He has played a key role in assuring that those of the Black community have a voice when they're too scared to have one themselves. Dr. Asumah has been involved in many inspiring events held on campus such as "The Art of Criminalization," which was a discussion on the criminalization of young Black men, where a member of the Central Park Five came to speak, helping raise awareness to our SUNY Cortland community about the malpractice of our justice system.

**Emily De La Fuente**—One person who has made a positive impact on me as a SUNY Cortland student is one of my Communication Disorders and Sciences professors, Regina Grantham. She is the only professor in the major who is a person of color. She has always told her students about her struggle and her story of becoming an SLP as a person of color in a white-dominated field. Being a Hispanic woman, I resonated with and admired her stories. It helped me realize that being in this field will not be easy, but it will be worth it.

**Sonia Devora Vallejo**—One person who has made a positive impact on my experience here has been Professor Alexandru Balas. I first met Alex during my freshman year when he taught one of my classes. I eventually took more classes with him after he convinced me to switch my major. He later became my Academic Advisor as well. Alex made the class very enjoyable not only by his teaching style but by relating class topics to the real world. He not only saw potential in me my first year when I didn't even see potential in myself, but continued to push me, encourage me, and support me all four years here.

**Jose' Diaz Duran**—One person that has made a positive impact in my experience as a SUNY Cortland student is Judy Stoddard, because without her I do not think I would be where I am right now. She always encouraged me to do better and even when things weren't going my way, she always encouraged me to keep a positive mindset, believe in myself, and do the best that I can. I had many doubts about my abilities during the beginning of my college career, but she always believed in me, and I'm thankful she was there every time I needed her.

**Jordania Dorville**—Professor Kimberly Wieczorek is one of the only professors in my major that I feel cares about her students. She goes above and beyond to make sure her students are set up for success.

**Evelyn Escobar**—Anne Burns Thomas, she made a positive impact on me since the beginning of the school year. She always pushed me to strive harder and correct my wrongs. I would go into her office crying about my workload and problems I was having, and she always listened. She always went above and beyond to make sure I was okay and that I was receiving all the help that I need it at that time.

**Liane Espino**—One person who I can say has made a positive impact in my life as a SUNY Cortland student has to be my line sister, Maria Guardado. She has not only helped me academically but has pushed me to be a better student and person.

**Hannah Fitzgerald**—Adam Gerritsen is a Genetics and Cell Biology professor as well as a lab director in the Biology Department. Being in Gerritsen's lab section was coveted and I was privileged enough to be his student twice during my time at SUNY Cortland. Not only was he a tremendous professor that enhanced my skills about lab technique, tools, and procedure, he also made time to educate his students about life. The lab is 3 hours and usually ends early, but he would use the full time to teach or talk about important subjects. For example, financial advice and investments. He made templates and thoroughly described how to start our retirement funds, savings, and investments before we left college, and what financial securities can be provided/what to look for in a job in the future. Another example is travel. Mr. Gerritsen has traveled, taught, and worked all around the world. His stories and the opportunities to work/live abroad that he shared prepared me and many others for abroad experiences. This was a unique learning experience and his dedication to his students was unparalleled. Mr. Gerritsen also created an inclusive environment, which is sometimes hard to find in STEM, making every student feel welcome and appreciated. His class not only left a positive impact on me but so many other STEM students at SUNY Cortland. I am so grateful for his guidance, advice, and counsel throughout my college years.

**Pearl Fletcher**—Someone who has made a positive impact on my experience in Cortland would be my Resident Assistant (RA) from my freshmen year, Briana Kranz. The reason I choose Briana is that she inspired me to pursue the leadership role of becoming an RA myself. My entire freshmen year, she took me in and mentored me, helping me in not only academics but with mental and physical advice. She was a friend to me. I wanted to be that for all of my residents and make an impact on people's lives.

**Tara Fort**—Noah Brown, a fellow Education major, and student manager for the football team, was my first friend when I transferred to Cortland. He took the time to teach me about the campus and help me with classes. He has become a trusted friend. My experience at Cortland wouldn't have been the same without him.

**Nicole Garcia**—One of the people that has made a positive impact in my experience as a SUNY Cortland student is Judy Stoddard, an EOP Academic Counselor. She has guided and supported me through my journey in Cortland. Primarily the times that I have doubted myself, she believed in me. She is also an inspiration to me with her dedication and support that she gives to the EOP students.

**Genesis Gomez**—The entire EOP staff has made a huge impact on my experience at SUNY Cortland because they were always a consistent help and provided assistance with anything I needed. They became my home away from home with me coming to this school so far away from home. They guided me and I trusted them throughout the entire process.

**Shnaldo Gonzalez**—Christine Bartoszek is one person at Cortland who made a positive impact on my experience at SUNY Cortland. During my first semester at Cortland, my grandmother passed away from cancer. Christine always made time to speak to me and she made sure I was doing okay during that semester through email. She was the one who comforted me during that hard time in my life. I would go see her at her office every once and a while and she always gave me words of encouragement and always greeted me with a smile. It was as if my grandmother was talking to me through her, and if it was not for her I would have most likely withdrawn from Cortland.

**Karlee Goode**—I believe that Tatiana Reyes is the one person who impacted my SUNY Cortland experience in the greatest and most positive way. I believe this to be true because without her I would've never been exposed to any multicultural life on campus. I would never have been given the opportunities and experiences that have opened my mind and heart exponentially.

**Chelsea Grate**—Dr. Caroline Kaltefleiter (also known as Dr. K) has made a huge positive impact during my SUNY Cortland experience. She has shown me how impactful student voices can be when it comes to making positive changes in our communities. I first met Dr. K in her Mass Media & Society class during the Spring 2020 semester. In that class, she made me feel comfortable expressing how Black people are negatively portrayed in the media and made sure that my points were heard when we discussed the Black Lives Matter movement about the media. Her support made me feel confident to express my opinions on these topics, even though I was the only Black student in the room. Dr. K was also very understanding about student struggles throughout the coronavirus pandemic. She would set time in class for students to express their feelings about the transition to remote learning and was more lenient with assignment due dates. As the advisor to WSUC.fm the Dragon, Dr. K has helped give students a platform to express their concerns to SUNY Cortland administration through the "Candid Conversations" about various decisions they made regarding COVID-19. Even though I wasn't an executive board member of WSUC, Dr. K allowed me to help moderate one of the panels. I know that I will benefit from these experiences long after I graduate from SUNY Cortland.

**Keaona Gray-Outlaw**—One specific professor that has made an impact on me at a SUNY Cortland is Professor Heather Bartlett. She is not only a courageous and uplifting professor but also someone who inspires her students to be better tomorrow than they were today. As her student, you are consistently challenged and motivated by the amazing work she helps to create. She cares and does so much for her students in the classroom. It's a blessing to be able to witness and be transformed by her impact.

**Maria Guardado**- A faculty who has made a positive impact in my experience as a SUNY Cortland student would be my advisor, Dr. Kelechi Ibe-Lamberts, for his efforts and hard work to help me believe in myself as a minority student and help plan out my college career, as well as give endless advice on how to succeed and be a better student.

**Tameika Guity**—A staff member who has made a positive impact in my experience as a SUNY Cortland student is my EOP advisor, Amy Dahlman. She is amazing. Amy was there for me in the beginning and has always continued to encourage me to do well throughout my entire SUNY Cortland experience. I also cannot help but mention another faculty member, my academic advisor, Dr. Seth Asumah, who is also a great professor. Dr. Asumah pushes his students to achieve their full potential. Not many professors care to even do that. My college experience has not always been the brightest, but these two faculty/staff members helped make it a bright experience.

**JoDee Hall**—It is very hard to pick just one person to talk about since I've made a host of good friends but one person who has made a positive impact on my experience as a SUNY Cortland student would be my voice instructor, Lynn Craver. She has pushed me to be more than I thought I was capable of and supported me in the journey it took for me to become a more disciplined student. Because she believed in me so much, it forced me to have to be comfortable with the process of growing.

**Jabreel Harrell**—Amy Dahlman, Judy Stoddard, and Lewis Rosengarten all believed in me from the start, and helped to instill stability in college for me. Academically, they always told me what I needed to hear, and also as a man growing up what it takes to be successful in college. Words go a long way.

**Edith Hernandez**—Judy Stoddard, my EOP counselor has made a positive impact on my experience as a SUNY Cortland student because I was able to confide in her when I was struggling my first year of college. Judy would motivate and reassure me that I am meant to be at SUNY Cortland and to not give up because I have a lot of potential. Through the multiple conversations we had over my time as a student at SUNY Cortland, I can say I am a much more confident student who strives for my best and doesn't give up easily. I have Judy to thank for this because without having her being there for me, listening, and giving me advice, I don't think I would have become the great student I am today. Judy continues to reach out and check in to make sure all is well and that means a lot to me because it shows the investment she has in the students that are in her life.

**Sakara Hester-Torres**—One person that helped/ influenced me a lot was my advisor, Brian Richardson. He helped guide me with my classes such as which ones to take.

**Shana'zha Hobbs**—Dr. Katherine Bonafide has made a significant impact on my experience here at Cortland. She is the only clinical psychologist here on campus, and that is the field I want to go into. She has helped me narrow down my career path and guide me through the ins and outs of the psychology field. Whether it would be me crying because I was unsure of what to do once I graduated, or just checking in with her to see how her family was doing over the summer, she has always been there for me and never hesitates to help a student in need.

**Erika Janny**—My Resident Assistant, Gabi Botero, talked me into getting involved on campus here at Cortland. She influenced me to try new things and to get involved in any way I could. Her advice was, "make it the best four years of your life." Through trying new clubs, attending fun events that the school held, and through the outreach of students in my classes, I knew Cortland would be my home for the next four years. There are so many things that Cortland gave me: an education, a home, lifelong friends, opportunities, Speech Conferences to attend, the Diversity Conference, RA trainings, and memories that I will hold on to.

**Joshua Jean**—Alex Pleitez 20' is a student and now friend who has made a positive impact on me. I was a transfer student, didn't know much about campus and didn't know anybody, but he helped me make the transition by introducing me to people and making my stay at Cortland more comfortable. He is still a great friend of mine today.

**Melissa Jean-Baptiste**—Margaret Gichuru is a faculty member at SUNY Cortland that has made a positive impact on my experience here. She is such a sweet individual that is willing to work with her students. After getting to know her on a personal level, she inspired me to never give up on my goals despite any major risks, twists and turns it might have.

**Bianca Jemmott**—My friend Dennielle Phillip, who graduated last year, motivated me a lot throughout my time attending SUNY Cortland and helped me be more confident in my capabilities.

**Nathalie Jimenez**—Tameika Guity would be one of my closest friends. Despite all of the obstacles she has faced, she has always motivated me to keep pushing myself, despite all of the challenges that come my way.

**Leah John—Quaccio**—Anastasia Brown is a fellow student in the Criminology Department that has made a positive impact on my experience because she has been my friend in Cortland since we were freshmen. We have gone through ups and downs together, but the thing that made it special was that we always had each other's backs and stayed together. Thank you Ana for being one of my first friends here at SUNY Cortland and sticking by me all these years.

**Nakeesta Langton**—Cheryl Smith has been an anchor for me since transferring to SUNY Cortland. She has helped me navigate the tough issues that can arise for a student that is trying to balance course work while also having to maintain a job and care for a family. When I was facing an issue, Cheryl was there for me, even if she had her plate full already. If she did not know the exact answer, she, without hesitation, would seek it out. Not only did she support my learning, but was a club advisor. It can be difficult as a non-traditional student to feel a part of the campus community with our outside responsibilities. With her guidance as the club advisor, Cheryl has helped to facilitate events and activities that fit into our schedules and included our families, making it easier to feel like a part of the campus community and like a real college student. I do not know what I would have done or what my college experience would have been without her. Cheryl is a gem that embodies the true spirit of being a Red Dragon.

**Aliyah Locke**—One person that has made a positive impact on my experience as a SUNY Cortland student is Dr. Elizabeth Bittel. She has empowered me as a student of color who is used to being silenced, while also pushing me to accomplish more as a student. She has made me feel comfortable and helped me solve problems regarding school and personal issues. She has opened my eyes to the systematic oppression that consumes our world while also helping me analyze and find solutions to them.

**Jennifer Lopez**—Elizabeth Bittel has been a professor I have been able to grow a close relationship with throughout my last two years here at SUNY Cortland. Her advice and support have helped me both grow as an individual, and pushed me to finish strong with my degree. Dr. Bittel has made my experience at SUNY Cortland very meaningful.

**Geovanny Louis**—A person who had a positive impact on me is Dr. Larissa True. She helped me a lot with the options I want to do with my future. Every meeting I had with her, she helped me with the best option and listened to me. She always made sure that I did better than my previous semester. I am very grateful for her.

**Gloryangeliz Lugo Vazquez**- One person that has made a positive impact on my experience as a SUNY Cortland student is Dr. Kaltefleiter. She demonstrates how passionate she is about situations regarding SUNY Cortland and the students. Also, she has made myself, as well as other students, aware of how everything in society affects us even if we do not believe it does. One of my favorite things about her work is that even when I am not taking a class with her, she keeps me and other students who show interest, engaged in important conversations. One example is the way COVID-19 has been affecting us since it first began to spread up to where we stand as of today.

**Josie Maldonado**—John Franco, former VP of Student Affairs, and my unforgettable President Judson Taylor were always great supporters of all of my ventures at Cortland.

**Jonathan Mariani**—I cannot narrow this down to just one. Two professors who have made a positive impact on my experience at Cortland are Dr. Ibe-Lamberts and Dr. Blavos. They both have guided me on the right path and have pushed me to be the best student I could be. They were both positive role models/mentors who believed in me as well as allowed me to feel more comfortable in the community.

**Marco Marrero**—There is a professor who has supported my success while being in college. This professor has guided me through the hardest moments and managed to lead me in the right direction. This gave me more of a reason to pursue the career I want to pursue and become an educator to those who come from communities without many opportunities.

**Hendrick McCaskill-Bourdeau**—The Black Student Union E-Board. I could not pick one person because I feel like each member had a positive impact on my Cortland experience. When I first transferred to Cortland, BSU was one of the clubs that was open to me and made the transition comfortable. They taught me how to stick up for myself and others. If you want change, TAKE THE INITIATIVE! No one else is going to pursue it for you. Also, BSU motivated me to do better in academics and we tried to set a standard within our club.

**Timothy McDermitt-Wise**—Professor Elizabeth Bittel, who is a sociology professor. From the moment I stepped into her classroom, she was always there to help, even outside of class. I learned many great things in her classes, and we hope to stay in touch post-graduation!

**Katherine Melendez Diaz**—One professor that has made a positive impact on my experience at SUNY Cortland was Kimberly Rombach. She was my professor for my educational internship in the fall semester of 2020. Despite the challenges influenced by the pandemic, her support and guidance reinforced my passion for teaching. Dr. Rombach encouraged me to apply my pedagogy teachings to all aspects of my life as a lifelong learner and future educator.

**Nathalia Melo**—One person who has made a positive impact on my experience here at Cortland would be Dr. Chatfield. When thinking about a person who had a large impact on my experience here, I was surprised that Dr. Chatfield was the first person to come to mind. She is my microbiology professor, but the reason why she has made such a large impact on me is just her nature as an individual. She truly demonstrated her passion for what she teaches, her care for her students, and her values as an individual. She constantly inspires me to continue with my education, and to always be unapologetically myself.

**Enyonam Mensah**—Professor Asumah made a very positive impact on my college experience. As a freshman, he became my advisor after I had a class with him and he helped make me see college for what it was. I was only going to get the effort that I put out and he helped shape me up and realize that. Not to forget his constant support and encouragement for me to keep trying my best. Without him, Cortland could have never felt like home and I do dearly appreciate it.

**Genesis Minaya**— One person who has had a positive impact throughout my college career is Marinda Souva. Marinda has been my mentor for the NUFP fellowship for the past 4 semesters, not only has she helped me throughout my time here at Cortland but she has also helped me prepare for after graduation.

**Theresa Mintz**—The person that made a positive impact in my experience is every professor in the health department, specifically Dr. Kate Coffey and Dr. Donna Videto. These women have shaped me to be the person I am now. Looking back on my freshmen year, if I had never met these women I would have given up on my college life a long time ago. I'm happy to say these women gave me the drive to keep going.

**Jennifer Mitchell**—Dr. Bekeh Ukelina has had a tremendous impact on my time here at SUNY Cortland. Towards the end of my freshman year, he encouraged me to take a 400 level course of his as a sophomore. Although terrified, I trusted him when he told me I could handle it. That course was difficult, but due to determination and some assistance, I was able to do well in the course. Since then, I have taken a total of five courses with Dr. Bekeh. He has taught me how to properly research, and how to write excellent papers. Despite my many emails threatening to drop out of college from stress, he would always respond by telling me that he knew I would succeed.

**Jada Moore**—My advisor, Dr. Placide, made a positive impact on my experience at Cortland. She was always so motivating and encouraging. She always gave me feedback, whether positive or negative, to help me grow as a student and as an individual. Anytime I needed help, she was there and always made herself available.

**Meghan Morales**—During my time here at SUNY Cortland one person who has had the most positive impact on me would be Professor Helene Schmid. Professor Schmid was my professor for a course called Health Related-Physical Fitness back in my sophomore year. I met Professor Schmid in my early years of Cortland and instantly connected with her. Due to her vast experience in the world of health and fitness, she became a mentor to me and a woman I could look up to in my field which is a male-dominated industry. When I first thought of creating a club at SUNY Cortland, I knew she had to be the advisor. As she had once inspired me, she would do the same for many others at SUNY Cortland. She was my number one fan when it came to the journey of creating the club and establishing it, and still is! She was always available to talk when I dropped in randomly to her office and still is present and available for not just me but all members of the Female Force. She has not only inspired me to become a better student and student leader, but also a better person. Female Force would not be possible without her. During COVID-19, she has attended every Female Force meeting via WebEx. She cares for every member as if they were her own student or advisee. She is absolutely the best! Throughout college, I had always wondered if I would have a professor that I would connect with and be a mentor figure to me and now I know, it is Professor Helene Schmid. I would have to say SUNY Cortland is very lucky to have a professor that goes above and beyond for ALL students.

**Alyssa Moreno**—There are so many faculty members that have made a positive impact on my experience as a SUNY Cortland student. However, Dr. Margaret Gichuru is a professor that has left a lasting impression. Dr. Gichuru is a Kenyan-born professor who teaches EDU 333: Children, Families, and Communities. The class entails exploring families and communities as dynamic systems and focuses on theories of family patterns and interactions as they affect problem-solving and communication among educational and childcare programs and families. Margaret was very welcoming and honest when talking about culture, race, and communities around us, especially in regards to teaching. She further taught me strategies on how to be a culturally responsive educator who is comfortable talking about the uncomfortable in a classroom. Being that our classroom was not diverse, she made all of us understand the perks of talking about cultures and families relating it to herself and what we may see when teaching our future classrooms. Furthermore, she incorporated so much of her own Kenyan culture in her lessons, and opened my eyes to so much I hadn't known before. Aside from being an amazing educator, she is a genuine person who cares about her students and is helpful in any way possible. She was always open to learning about my Latin culture, as well as other cultures of her students. She embraced the individuality each student held and made my learning experience something I will never forget.

**Jamie Myers**—Avanti Mukherjee, my professor for ECO 301, made a huge impact on my experience as a SUNY Cortland student because the class was a very difficult one and she made sure to go over everything thoroughly. On top of that, she made sure to be inclusive with everyone in the class, which, as a non-traditional student, made me feel closer to my other classmates and less like an outsider.

**Lisa Nembhard**—A person that has made a positive impact in my experience as a SUNY Cortland student is Sam Reali. She is a mixed media artist and is in the BFA program. Sam always greeted me with positive energy from the moment I met her. Whenever I told her my dreams and aspirations, she would always tell me to go for them. Her optimistic attitude always made me want to be around her. She was a person that I didn't speak to every day, but when we crossed paths we would converse for days. Being that she was in the BFA program, she always created artwork out of the ordinary. Her projects were something that would push me and inspire me to become a better artist. I remember one day I told her that I wanted to incorporate fashion into my assignment for our Drawing III class. She ended up taking my notebook and writing down a list of ways on how I can accomplish my goal. It was so inspiring because even though she could've been working on her project, she took the time out of her day to help me with mine. It means a lot to me, because being that she was in the BFA program, she had numerous amounts of work to accomplish, but instead she would help me figure out the answers to my questions. Aside from art we also had a heart-to-heart conversation, and she mentioned some personal things that I would never imagine she was going through. I found it hard to believe at the time because she always approached me with such positive energy. It came to a point where I was in disbelief that she told me the things she was going through. I respected her not only as an artist but as a human being. She was a person that I do not regret meeting for sure.

**Ashley Nicolas**—Dr. Kelechi Ibe-Lamberts has made a positive impact on my college experience by letting me take charge of my academic career. As my advisor, he let me look through my courses and helped to adjust my schedules. He also saw opportunities for me. He would provide me with any incoming internships and research opportunities to build my resume, explore the field, and make connections. He is open-minded, transparent, honest, and a genuine being. I am so glad to have met him, and I hope to continue to work with him throughout my academic career and beyond.

**Savannah Pearson**—Unknowingly, Mario Hernandez's composition class landed me in my current major. Previously struggling with my dropped major in psychology, I had spent hours reading and studying to keep up with my assignments and grades. I was failing two courses and slowly releasing my interest in the rest. It was within an office hour meeting that Professor Hernandez sat down with me where I fully decided to switch my major. He spoke about what an English major can lead to as a career and what some of the courses consisted of within our college. The course he led was beyond fulfilling. Within the next semester, my grades, my mental health, and my excitement for each day of class drastically improved. Had it not been for that composition course, I most likely would have failed out of college because I hated the path I was on.

**Melissa Peralta**—One person that had a huge impact on my educational career is Professor John Sosa. I have attended almost all of his classes. He has opened up my eyes and introduced me to new ideas that I have never been introduced to. He has taught me to think outside of the box, and to imagine how the educational system could be if students were taught material that came from a different perspective, which would be from the originated citizens of each country, instead of the colonists. I was able to break the bubble that I have lived in my whole life and think of the ways, we as future educators can teach future students the logical way and facts about our society from back then till now.

**Daniela Pinto**—A faculty member that I will always admire and thank is Dr. John Sosa. He is a wonderful man with a wonderful heart. I was lucky to be able to take two classes with him that consisted of U.S society and ethics and prejudice and discriminations, where many hardships in today's society were questioned and challenged. Before taking both these courses, I hadn't taken such an impactful or intimate class as the ones Dr. Sosa has taught. It has truly shown me the underlying misfortunes and inequities in American society as well as many others. I believe Dr. Sosa has helped to shape a better me and has enlightened me along with many other students.

**Jackeline Ponce-Mejia**—One person that has made a positive impact in my experience as a SUNY Cortland student was Professor Elizabeth Bittel. When I first took her course, I was not as encouraged as I should have been. Speaking to her after class during office hours, helped me communicate with her more. She helped me focus on the areas I needed help with. By doing this she provided not only comfort but guidance as well. She has helped me not only in her course but also in applying to other programs on campus such as NUFP. She supported me and allowed me to open up to her and find comfort in college.

**Tatiana Reyes**—One person that has made an impact on my college experience is Dr. John Sosa. The first time I met Dr. Sosa was in my U.S ethnic identity and conflict class in fall 2018. I was amazed to see someone so passionate about their job and I then told myself I wanted to be that happy with my future career. I took another class with him the following semester and then I changed for him to be my advisor. He has always reminded me that it is okay to fail because I can always pick myself up. I have never given up on myself after what I have been through my freshman year of college. He pushed and motivated me to keep going and take 18 credits because my goal was to graduate on time. He had faith in me and knew I was capable of it all. Here I am to show that I will be graduating in May 2021 and I can say I am very happy with my major.

**Lauren Ricks**—Jordan Bonaparte is a fellow student that has made a positive impact on my experience at SUNY Cortland. Since I met Jordan my freshman year, he has been a supportive force in everything that I have done. Not only has he been there when I was accomplishing things that I worked hard for, but he was also supportive when I didn't get the positions that I wanted and often encouraged me to continue until I did. Jordan has encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone which is one of the reasons I hold many of the positions I do today. I am thankful for the role he played during my years at SUNY Cortland.

**Shania Robinson**—Lima Stafford has been my life savior for coping with the transition of leaving home and becoming an independent student on campus. I was hesitant from the beginning of going away to college but when I met her at the Open House, she was so informative and gave such comforting advice that I decided to accept the offer to come to Cortland. She has made a huge impact on my campus experience. I've always been shy and I was making myself miserable feeling homesick but she motivated me to come out of my comfort zone, join clubs, and become part of the campus community. She helped me to mature, gain self-confidence, and take advantage of the opportunities Cortland had to offer. She was my biggest support system, and she helped me get through the years.

**Claritza Rodriguez**—My four special housemates (who are also my dear friends) have made my time at SUNY Cortland the most amazing and have impacted me the most. I say this because, without them, I would not be where I am today. It's easy for one to get caught up in college life and all the great things that occur here. But what people don't tell you is that you go through a lot of rough things too (things like mental health, depression, homesickness, anxiety, etc.). Like various other college students, this happened to me. There were so many times where I couldn't even bring myself to get out of bed and start my day because of all the things going on with me. I wanted to give up on so many occasions, but my four housemates never let me. They cared for me in a way I never thought I'd find away from home. They are what made Cortland my home away from home and for that, I am forever grateful. People say you meet your lifetime friends in college and I can thankfully say that I am a part of those people.

**Madison Sesselman**—Dr. Vierre Placide is amazing. I've taken three courses by her and each one is packed with information with activities and discussions. She is very understanding and is always there to help.

**Brittany Sharps**—I have multiple people that have made an impact on my SUNY Cortland experience. My DRAMA dance team and Pyro Dynasty step team have made a big positive impact on my experience. Freshman year I had joined Cortland Dance Company because I didn't know any better, and didn't know which dance teams were the ones I wanted. I thought DRAMA, in the beginning was an acting group until I saw how they performed freshman year; the rest was history. Being on the DRAMA dance team and the Pyro Dynasty step team, I had made so many new sisters in my life that I couldn't thank enough. Being together every day and participating in every event that happened on campus was one of the best things that happened at SUNY Cortland for me. Freshman year I went home every weekend just because I felt homesick and didn't want to be at school until I transferred out then when I transferred back, I never even thought about going home ever just because every weekend I was with my sisters. If we weren't at practice, we were eating together, and if we weren't eating together, we were doing some type of activity. If not all of us were together, one or two of us were together and that made my college experience memorable.



**Azaley Silva**—I would say one person who has made a positive impact as a SUNY Cortland student is my mother. She has helped me in my process of transferring to Cortland. She was there for me through my struggles and accomplishments

**Shaneya Simmeljaer**—Dr. Elizabeth Bittel, who is a relatively new professor for the Sociology/Anthropology department, impacted my college career in a significant way. She serves as my Criminology advisor, but she is also a great mentor to me because she has helped me through a lot of my tough personal experiences as well as my academic experiences. She has also helped me profoundly think about what I want for my future self in terms of seeking another degree, a career, and individual growth. Dr. Bittel is a fantastic educator and person overall!

**Jania Sims**—My friends, Savannah Pearson and Samantha Castro, had a positive impact on my experience as a SUNY Cortland student. In my freshman year, I felt lonely and wanted to leave because I did not make friends. Meeting them made my four years the best.

**Maxwell Smith**— One person who has completely shaped my time here at SUNY Cortland is Lima Stafford. To mention Lima as someone who shaped you I feel is almost a cliché because who has she not impacted? That just speaks volumes to her magnifying character, extraordinary kindness, and legendary leadership skills. When Lima walks into the room, all eyes are on her. She is the star of SUNY Cortland, especially the Voice Office. I can't even name how many organizations she has her hands in on campus. It's almost as if there are 50 of her, but every time you speak to her you feel like you're her best friend and only care in the world. She's inspired me to take on leadership roles on campus, and gave me the confidence boost to understand what it takes to be a role model and a leader to my peers and those outside of the campus. I will never forget being a freshman and seeing Lima DJ one of the CSA Corey parties and thinking, "Is that a teacher? She's lit!!" Lima has walked me through many events during my time as an e-board member on MOVE, constantly helping me put in last-minute purchase requests or meeting with me in her office to discuss the next steps for the club. She does a million things at once and somehow always finds the time. She is so brilliant, reliable, and dependable. She is the quintessential leader that ALL of us should aspire to be. She gave me the confidence to understand not only being a leader in the campus community but the importance of being a leader of color and advocating for diversity. She is the backbone of SUNY Cortland, and anyone who knows her can attest to her greatness, but Lima truly has allowed me to become a better person each and every day.

**Merin Smith**—I feel that my Residence Hall Director, Cyrenius Nelson, has created such an impact on my whole life that I aspire to become like him. Cyrenius has helped me throughout the majority of my time being an RA but specifically, he has helped me through Fall 2020. Emotionally and school load, this semester has been very stressful and Cyrenius has been there to work through everything with me. He has been such a great resource to see how I can make this semester still fun and safe which took most of the stress and pressure off.

**Aitza Soto**—Through one of my most challenging semesters, I had a professor named Kelechi Ibe- Lamberts who created an impact upon me I would've never thought of upon meeting him. To begin, he understood and saw the potential in me that many other professors might have been blinded to. It all started with the basics of how he ran his class; conversation-based while always being informational and pulling everyone in to want to participate. When I started facing bumps in the road, he not only noticed but understood and helped me. Whether it was my family problems, personal, organizations I was in, or academic, he was there to listen. He is a professor who cares about his students academics but also about their lives. After a semester of being in his class and working together through programs and communication, we spoke about mentoring. I am grateful to be able to have a mentor who looks out for me. Talking about research, internships, and life has been the greatest support to me during college. Being a Latinx woman at a predominantly white institution, it is nice to have someone there for you who can relate. My Cortland experience would not have been the same if I had not met him.

**Alexandra Steinberg**—Dr. Gail Buckenmeyer has had a tremendous impact on my experience at SUNY Cortland. She pushed me to be the greatest student I didn't realize I could be. Through perseverance, long nights of studying, and a little extra help from Dr. Buckemeyer, I received an "A" in the class that I previously took and had gotten a "C-" in. Fast forward a year, I was having difficulties writing a simple summary of an article for another class. I stopped by her office and she told me that I have to take it one step at a time. She explained to me that I cannot give up and that once I get myself rolling, there's no turning back. She related my struggle to something personal to her and it made me not doubt myself, and realize that I could accomplish anything I set my mind to.

**Gaelle St. Hilaire** -If there's one staff member that has made an impact on my experience at Cortland, it would be Dr. Ibe-Lamberts. He has shown me what it means for a professor to care about your future. Dr. Kelechi has allowed me to grow academically as a student. Through every hurdle, he was by my side and push me to keep going. He brought out potential in me that I did not know I had in myself. He's hands down one of the best academic scholars I've come across in my college and I will always thank him for his efforts.

**Aleksandr Strekalov**—Eric Edlund, helped me to learn about US culture and shared a lot of things about education in the US.

**Katherine Tenempaguay**—Professor Samantha Applin is someone I respect at a high degree. She was my first professor and I remember the first day I sat in her class. I felt like I made it in life because college was always just a dream until it was real. She continued to be one of my professors for every class after, and she's someone I've always looked up to. She's very kind-hearted but in a way that is still highly respected. She is also one of those professors that always made the class understandable.

**Safiya Tónico**—One faculty that has made a positive impact on my experience as a student is Dr. Raymond Collings. As a student of Dr. Collings, he always understood that along with his class, I had other obligations as well and would work with me to find times to meet with me when I was unable to go to his office hours, so that we can go over the material and understand it instead of just memorizing it. Being Dr. Collings's research assistant, he helped me prepare for what is next after I graduate. We have developed my writing into a more mature form and are currently working on writing a research paper to publish. He has been a guide when it comes to me looking into graduate programs and internships as well.

**Veronica Ulerio**—Sharon Steadman- Professor Steadman has pushed me to reach my fullest academic potential since I was a freshman. She has guided me since I started here and if it weren't for her encouragement and advice I probably wouldn't have strived for the many opportunities that I have had during my time here.

**Norcaris Ulloa**—A person who has made a positive impact in my college experience is a fellow student named Nicole Garcia. She inspires me each day to work harder for what I want to accomplish. She grew up in the Dominican Republic and despite her English proficiency, she tries her best in everything she does. She introduced me to so many people and helped me with my networking skills. She pushes me to get outside of my comfort zone and be a better version of myself. She informed me of a lot of campus resources like the Learning Center for tutoring, interlibrary loans, and night owl. She is an RA and I admire how helpful, and kind she is to her residents. I am grateful for meeting her. She definitely helped me a lot in my years at SUNY Cortland.

**Jasmiri Valerio**—Dr. Seth N. Asumah has made a positive impact on my experience as a SUNY Cortland student. When I arrived at Cortland my freshman year, it was a difficult transition because I came from a diverse city to a small town where I stood out because of my skin color. Dr. Asumah helped guide me in the right direction, encouraged me to get involved on campus, and helped me find things I was passionate about like advocating for social justice. He also supported me through my journey in the Africana Studies department and even pushed me to go study abroad in Ghana.

**Jaleesa Ventura**—One person/professor who has had a positive impact on my experience as a SUNY Cortland student is Professor John Sosa. Being able to have the opportunity to take some of his courses such as prejudice and discrimination and ethnic identity has given me a different outlook on racial discrimination on and off campus. John Sosa is very involved and active on campus, always participating as a guest speaker and with the Voice Office clubs. He creates an environment in his classroom that is considered to be a judge-free zone, and puts one's differences aside to bring awareness to these topics.

**Austin Voorhees**—There are several individuals in the History Department, such as Dr. Laura Gathagan and Dr. Gigi Peterson, that have had positive impacts on my experience as a SUNY Cortland student. In recent times, my boss, RHD Frank Parsons, has had a significant impact on my experience as a SUNY Cortland student. He has made me feel welcome as part of the Alger Staff, and he is extremely supportive of me.

**Jaya West**—I would have to say Claire Barrett is one of the best counselors and helped me out a lot. She stays in touch with a lot of her students.

**Demani Williams**—One faculty member would be Jeremy Jiménez. I had Professor J for just a quarter, and the class was only one semester but it was very impactful. First, he was my first professor of color that I had at SUNY Cortland and in college. In addition to that, the topic of the class was something I am truly passionate about, anti-racism. I have never been so excited to join a Webex call until I had this class. Although we met once a week, the discussions that we had resonated with me. The discussions we had did not just stay in the class. I also took what I learned and spoke to friends and family about it. I recommended the required books for the class to everyone that I knew. This all derived from Professor J's personality and how he presented the coursework. It made a positive impact on my experience as a SUNY Cortland student.

**Ashlee Yearwood**—Professor John Sosa is a man who has not only inspired me to think outside of the box but also showed me that the life I live in isn't as scary as I thought. In Fall 2020, I took his US Ethnic Identity and Conflict, and that was the best decision I have ever made. Professor Sosa taught my class about the many injustices not only African Americans faced, but many other cultural groups. He flawlessly showed me that I wasn't alone in the fight for justice and that my ancestors and many others like them have weathered many storms that came their way. I was given the ability to have faith in a future that isn't so black and white, rather understanding of the negative effect a repeating past would have on people of color, my people. I now have hope that if I can get one person of a differing opinion than mine, see the flaws in their ways, that I have made one step towards a better America. With Professor Sosa's help, I can walk outside of my house every day and see people who can change, instead of fearing those who may never want to listen.

**Natalie Yoder**—My previous RHD, Andrew Doane, has made a huge impact in my time here at SUNY Cortland. Coming into my sophomore year I was in a dark place and wasn't enjoying my time at SUNY Cortland anymore. I still had not found my place or group at Cortland and was thinking about transferring home, when a friend of mine got me to go on the Cortland Leadership Retreat. It was there where I had met Andrew Doane and got to talk to him about my experience traveling, moving around through high school and mentioned that I was thinking about applying to be an RA because I could connect with the incoming freshman about being thrown into a new place without knowing a soul. Little did I know that he was an RHD looking to hire for the upcoming spring. In Spring of 2018, I had been hired to be a part of the Bishop staff under Andrew Doane. During my time working with Andrew, I had developed my leadership skills significantly and learned to be more confident in myself. I am a crafty person and took great pride in my bulletin boards and Andrew Doane noticed my passion and pushed me creatively with many projects. He was the light in a dark moment of my life and seemed to appreciate and have faith in me when I didn't. Because of Andrew Doane, I don't think that I would be where I am today at SUNY Cortland and in Res Life without him. He challenged my mindset of how I saw myself and my accomplishments, teaching me to appreciate the things I have achieved, strive for the "impossible" and never doubt myself.



# **Black National Anthem: Lift Every Voice and Sing**

Written by James Weldon Johnson

Lyrics:

Lift every voice and sing,  
'Til earth and heaven ring,  
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;  
Let our rejoicing rise  
High as the listening skies,  
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.  
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,  
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;  
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,  
Let us march on 'til victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,  
Bitter the chastening rod,  
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;  
Yet with a steady beat,  
Have not our weary feet  
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?  
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered,  
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,  
Out from the gloomy past,  
'Til now we stand at last  
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,  
God of our silent tears,  
Thou who has brought us thus far on the way;  
Thou who has by Thy might  
Led us into the light,  
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.  
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,  
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;  
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,  
May we forever stand,  
True to our God,  
True to our native land.

## **About James Weldon Johnson**

James Weldon Johnson (June 17, 1871 – June 26, 1938) was an American author, educator, lawyer, diplomat, songwriter, and civil rights activist. Johnson is widely celebrated for his leadership of the NAACP, where he began working in 1917. In 1920 he was the first African American to be chosen as executive secretary of the organization, effectively the operating officer. He served in that position from 1920 to 1930. In 1934 he became the first African-American professor to be hired at New York University. Later in life he served as a professor of creative literature and writing at Fisk University, a historically black university.

## A Special Thank You to:

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  - To the Kente Blaze - Noland Jack-Scotland
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- Your assistance and hard work not only helped make tonight possible but for all future Kente celebrations at SUNY Cortland.

