

OUR VOICE

IMAGINE, INTEGRATE, EDUCATE

"Not understanding is the beginning of learning, confession if a reflection of growth" - Robin Sharma

FEATURED STUDENT: CIARA MALDONADO

Ciara Maldonado is one of our newer students at College Initiative (CI). She graduated from Bronx Community College and is currently pursuing her Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice at John Jay. She first learned of CI when she was exiting incarceration and has been with CI since Fall 2017. Ciara is a full-time mother, wife, and student. She makes every effort to balance her time between family and academics, understanding that all of it will pay off in the end and set a positive example for her children. She was involved in social justice work as a parent advocate for Friends of the Island Academy at the Manhattan family court. Her passion comes from her own experiences and the support of her family. When she accomplishes her goals, Ciara hopes to return to advocacy work with juveniles in the criminal justice system and get involved in re-entry work to help individuals who have been through similar experiences. She has this advice to share with us, "If you really want to go to college, you can definitely do it despite any obstacles. There are many resources such as CI that can help with your success and the people you meet along the way, most are willing to help see you succeed in completing your education."

WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW? #CLOSERIKERS

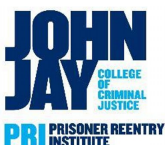
In 2016, #CLOSErikers launched its first march led by individuals who were detained and imprisoned at Rikers, their family members, and friends who have loved ones detained at Rikers. The #CLOSErikers campaign highlights the stories that have emerged from documented abuse and brutality in prisons like Rikers Island. In 2015, some 77,000 individuals cycled through the Rikers Island jail, which cost taxpayers \$247,000 per year for each person detained. About 89 per cent of the detainees are Black and Latino and 79 per cent of the individuals at Rikers are still awaiting fair trial. As a solution, the #CLOSErikers campaign believes in expanding existing alternative-to-incarceration programs, making the bail system fairer and more equitable, and focusing on referring people with mental health or addiction issues to proper treatment instead of incarcerating them.



EVENT HIGHLIGHT: WE THE PEOPLE

On December 7, 2017, the OCFS Brookwood Secure Center facility hosted "We the People Congressional Hearings," an event for youth at Brookwood and students from John Jay College. We the People is a debate held annually at the facility to promote civic competence by engaging participants in debate questions about the U.S. Constitution. The participants presented their arguments about the concept of a democracy, the amendments in the U.S. constitution, and debated a variety of topics, including the safety, protection, and liberty of citizens under the Constitution. There were four judges present to evaluate the debates. Judges took turns challenging participants' arguments. Issues of racism, the balance of power, injustice, and accountability arose as participants explored questions of American liberty and free speech. Participants debated their opinions about the Constitution and examined the several setbacks it poses for individuals of color. Some participants offered suggestions for the Constitution in order to make it a document that suffices for all. The John Jay College team won the debate by two points. Awesome job to both teams for their hard work and dedication!

STAY CONNECTED!



@JohnJayPRI



@PrisonerReentryInstitute



@PrisonerReentryJJ

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FEATURED STUDENT: DEREK JOHNSON

Derek Johnson has been a College Initiative (CI) student for over a year. He first learned about CI through the college courses he took while incarcerated. A few days after he was released during the summer of 2016, he registered to become a CI member. CI had a positive impact on his academic career by continuously supporting him and making it easier for him to readjust back into society. He is currently working towards his bachelors' degree with a major in writing at Hunter College, where he is also a part of the CUNY Baccalaureate program. CUNY Baccalaureate is a unique degree program that offers students the freedom and opportunity to design and personalize their education with guidance and mentorship from a faculty/staff member. With support from CI and the CUNY Baccalaureate, Derek passionately pursues literature, maximizing his potential and refining his skills as a scholar and a writer. He enjoys working on his novels, through which he hopes to share his personal experiences and insight into the issues that affected him, so that others with similar experiences can find inspiration and hope to move forward like he does. Derek enjoys being immersed in the judgment-free environment that he's felt ever since he first visited CI. At CI, he always feels welcomed and valued, and the CI team always meets his needs as a student. In addition to the support that he receives from his advisors at Hunter and from CUNY Baccalaureate, Derek also has the dedicated support from one of CI's academic counselors, Ebony Maher. Derek plans to take on a more active role in CI's peer mentor program through which he is planning to become a mentor later in his college career.

CI provided support beyond Derek's academic career, a testament to how we are dedicated to our students' holistic well-being outside of school. When Derek first arrived, he was referred by CI to the NY State of Health, which helped him access health insurance. Derek registered for the Urban Health Plan, where he receives the health care that keeps him in the top physical and mental condition necessary for him to continue to advance his career.

"STILL CRAWLING" BY CARL BERNARD

POUR KNEES, get no sleep

It's been through the milestone of life from A to Y and still it never get the Z's

Slick with metaphor but I must be Raw

From a can of Worms to the closet with my old fossils

Rich with Simile, SO sweet but I must not be Silly No really, You need the real me, so follow me, if I am still worth to lead

I am the protagonist for Effort, digging in sand for Water in dry land

But their eyes lie, they see a man hydrated with an abundance of Life I reach, for those stars in those galaxies

But knees, poor knees, gets scarred In decades to far for momma to tend for

Why your book isn't published

Why your grades haven't flourish

Shit I don't know, they think my songs fast but my song drags

They think it's on purpose, and it's a new style

But I am really losing purpose and the song is Wild

I came from a dismantling stoop and

Jumping through circus hoops of disenfranchisement

Then there came, an untied lace In my way, bruising my knees

Trapping me In a pigeon coop Conceived By 13 and her amendments With Supremacy greed

STUDENT CONTRIBUTIONS



Illustration by Eric Bright

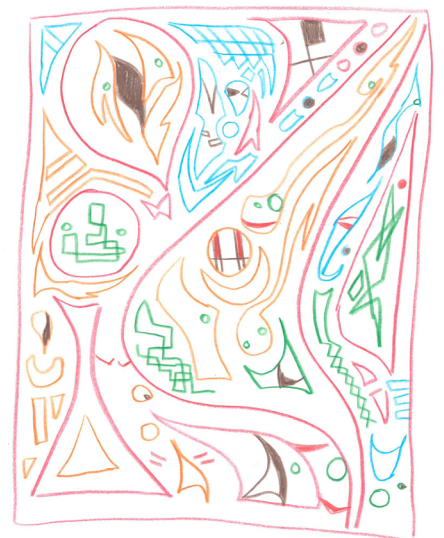


Illustration by Eric Bright

MEET OUR NEWEST COUNSELORS: AKIA WILLIAMS

This fall, College Initiative (CI) had the pleasure of welcoming Akia Williams as one of our newest academic counselors. After graduating from City College with a Bachelor's in Psychology, Akia continues to pursue her education at the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy, where she will earn her Masters' in Disability Services and Higher Education. Before joining the CI community, Akia was a college advisor at Harlem Children's Zone and a case manager at CASES. Akia's experience working at different agencies helped build on her passion for supporting students with seen and unseen disabilities by giving them the opportunities and accommodations they need in order to succeed academically. Her interest in academic accessibility has guided her to work with justice-involved youth, where she familiarized herself with the obstacles these individuals face and learned how to effectively problem solve.

At CI, Akia helps students with appeals and counsels them on their journey through college. In addition to the academic support Akia offers students, she also supports them in finding and utilizing the various resources outside of the CI community. "Trust the process and be patient because everyone's journey does not look the same and that is okay," Akia says.



MEET OUR NEWEST COUNSELORS: DESIREE GOMEZ

Meet one of our newest academic counselors, Desiree Gomez. She graduated from Hostos Community College in 2010 with an Associate's degree in Liberal Arts and from Lehman College in 2016 with a Bachelor's in Psychology. Before joining CI, Desiree worked in various health care companies as a customer service representative. She also works as an assistant for her psychology professor, Eileen Treacy, with whom she developed a close mentor-mentee relationship; they still keep in touch, and Desiree understands that whenever she needs something, she can turn to her mentor for support.

At CI, Desiree counsels our students, works with students coming out of Rikers, determines the resources and services they need, and helps prep them for the transition into college. Her passion comes from understanding that the criminal justice system is inherently set up against people of color. She also understands that there are never enough resources available to students, so she hopes to work on a more macro/holistic scale in the future. For now, Desiree is trying to learn and help as many individuals as possible as a counselor. She wants to help people continue forward with their goals. "Everything is possible if you set your mind to it," says Desiree.

Desiree's Reading Recommendations:

- *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho
- *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez
- *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez
- *Letter To My Daughter* by Maya Angelou



ANNOUNCEMENTS

SCHOLARSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Chancellor's Global Scholarship for Study Abroad
(For more info, please visit: <http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/studyabroad/financial-matters/national-and-local-scholarships/chancellors-global-scholarship-cgs-for-study-abroad/>)
Application Deadline: March, 2018

Colin Powell Fellowship (Undergraduate)
The City College of New York
(For more info, please visit: <https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/colinpowerschool/powerschoolscholarships>)
Application Deadline: March 2, 2018

Colin Powell Fellowship (Graduate)
The City College of New York
(For more info please visit: <https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/colinpowerschool/powerschoolscholarships>)
Application Deadline: April 6, 2018

CUNY Becas Scholarship Program
(For more info please visit: <http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/cuny-mexican-studies-institute/scholarships.php>)
Application Deadline: March 1, 2018

SUDOKU

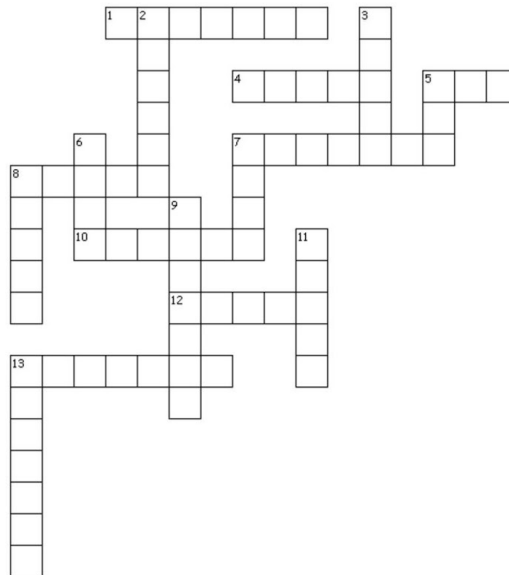
		6	7		1			
		4					2	7
		1		2	9			3
9	6	3			5			
		8				3		
			3			6	7	9
6			5	4		9		
3	4					7		
			9		6	8		

WORD SEARCH

W I D E R E C E I V E R E T U R N
Q U A R T E R B A C K F I E L D E
P T I G H T E N D G U A R D S P S
A R R E K C A B E N I L D F Z Z P
N F I E L D G O A L T A C K L E E
S O F F E N S I V E L I N E H X C
F A I R C A T C H S I W Z L A T I
N O I T E L P M O C N I C H N R A
K C A S P D L U A J R L O I D A L
E Y Y R H E Z R N U E G R C O P T
V N C T U A C O Z T T F N K F O E
I F D A E S L R N J N F E H F I A
R U O Z D F H F E E E O R U L N M
D M Z T O O A I B T C K B D R T S
X B F L S N W S N A N C A D E F E
R L D A K Q E N R G C I C L E X K
E E F U L L B A C K G K K E Y U O

Center, Guard, Huddle, Interception, Kickoff, Linebacker, Quarterback, Return, End Zone, Fumble, Sack, Wide Receiver, Tackle, Field Goal, Snap, Red Zone, Rushing, Safety, Punt

WORD PUZZLE



Across: Family, Father, Aunt, Brother, Cousin (f), Grandfather, Mother, Niece

Down: Grandmother, Granddaughter, Uncle, Daughter, Son, Cousin (m), Sister, Grandson, Nephew

CALENDAR

Events listed are open to all CUNY students unless noted

2/26 New York Metro Professional Career Fair. Get Hired!
1535 Broadway New York, NY
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

2/28 Graduate Programs at the Marx School of Public and International Affairs.
Baruch College
6:00 - 7:30 PM

3/1 - 3/4 Beyond The Bars: Closing Jails and Prisons
Columbia University

3/2 East Harlem Community Walking Trail Showcase
Harlem Health Action Center
158 East 115th Street
New York, NY 10029
11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

3/12 I'm not racist . . . Am I?
University Settlement
184 Eldridge Street 2nd Floor-
Speyer Hall New York, NY 10002
6:00 - 9:00 PM

3/22 - 3/25 Volunteer Sign-Up - 2018 National Black Writers Conference
Medgar Evers College

3/23 Spring Dance-A-Thon
J. Hood Wright Recreation Center
351 Fort Washington Avenue New York, NY 10033
4:00 PM - 8:00 PM

4/19 Manhattan 2018 Career Fair
1535 Broadway New York, NY
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

4/28 African American Book Expo-New York Edition.
New York City Hall
12:00 - 5:00 PM

STUDENT SUBMISSIONS

If you are interested in being interviewed or having your work featured in the newsletter, contact us at rnguyen@jjay.cuny.edu or mail your submissions to:

John Jay College - PRI
ATTN: EI Student Newsletter
524 W. 59th Street 609B BMW
New York, NY 10019