Civil Rights in the Age of Obama: Symposium

On January 20, 2009, two McNair Scholars, Gordon Abner and Kayla Mire, participated in a lecture panel hosted by Dr. Michael Soto, McNair Scholars Program Director. Also included in this panel were two of San Antonio’s highly acclaimed civil rights specialists, Luis Figueroa of MALDEF, and Dr. Gregg L. Michel, history professor at UTSA. Students, faculty and staff had an opportunity to ask the panel of speakers questions regarding Obama’s rise to power as president in such a financially strenuous time. Contemporary civil rights issues were the crux of the discussions that occurred and each panelist was able to share her or his expertise in respective fields.

The symposium took place on Inauguration Day in hopes of attracting many questions surrounding the event. Gordon and Kayla did a fantastic job of interpreting the historic event based on their research activities the prior summer in the McNair Scholars Program, and will continue to utilize the skills they have gained with the McNair summer research program in their future academic careers.

Panel of Presenters: Left to Right; Luis Figeroa, MALDEF; Gordon Abner, McNair Scholar; Kayla Mire, McNair Scholar; Dr. Gregg L. Michel, UTSA; and Dr. Michael Soto, McNair Program Director

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<th>Spring at a Glance</th>
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<td>Civil Rights in the Age of Obama</td>
<td>Scholars, faculty and staff came together in a symposium type environment to discuss contemporary issues surrounding President Obama’s election.</td>
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<td>Black History Month Kick-Off</td>
<td>A special screening of The Express, with special guest, Dr. Carey Latimore, Trinity history professor, also attended to share input on African Americans in film.</td>
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<td>Communicating Research Interests Reception</td>
<td>McNair Scholars mingled with Trinity faculty to discuss possible topics of interest for summer research.</td>
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<td>UTSA Lone Star Graduate Diversity Colloquium</td>
<td>McNair Sophomores and Seniors spoke with UTSA graduate students presenting their research, and also spoke with representatives from Texas Graduate Schools.</td>
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<td>Research Banquet</td>
<td>Summer Research Scholars presented their summer research topics and graduating Seniors were honored.</td>
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<td>Rice University Visit</td>
<td>McNair Juniors took a special tour, met with the Dean of Graduate Studies, graduate students and faculty.</td>
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McNair Spring Graduates
Danny Large and Gordon Abner

McNair Seniors, Gordon Abner and Danny Large, graduated with the class of 2009. Gordon Abner graduated with a degree in International Studies and Spanish. His plans include an internship with the Greenlining Institute at the University of California, Berkeley, over the summer, and he has been awarded a full scholarship to attend the University of Indiana’s School of Public Affairs. When asked if he could leave with a piece of advice for Scholars, he said, “Never be afraid of putting yourself out there or of failing. When you don’t try you never realize how much support and potential you possess.”

Danny Large graduated with a degree in Psychology and a minor in Spanish. Danny will be working with Dr. Chris Nice, of Texas State University, doing field work at the Freeman Ranch and at the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge in Marble Falls. He leaves the program with some quick advice for current and future Scholars:

“We, as members of disadvantaged ethnic and socioeconomic groups, oftentimes have a unique and valuable perspective to offer to the mainstream. Ultimately, I think that if we locate and appreciate this unique voice, we also take hold of one of our most powerful assets.”

Scholar Spotlight:
Stephanie Croatt

McNair Sophomore, Stephanie Croatt, has proven to be an enthusiastic student and Scholar. Stephanie is an anthropology major with a concentration in archeology at Trinity University. She recently participated in a 150 hour internship at UTSA’s Center for Archeological Research. Her summer research plans include exploring a historic sugar plantation in the Yucatan to document and “recon” for a dig in the future. She is excited to be given the opportunity to continue exploring her passion for anthropology through a great program like McNair. Her summer research experience will help her in conducting ethnographic interviews, conducting archival research and preliminary archeological work on historical sites. Her research mentor is none other than former Tutorial Faculty member, Dr. Jennifer Mathews.

When asked what Stephanie would like to gain from being in McNair, she responded, “The McNair program will definitely help me with preparing for applying to graduate school, taking the GRE, and learning the ins and outs of conducting scholarly research.” Since research is new to Stephanie, she looks forward to diving into the process this summer.
**UTSA Graduate Diversity Colloquium**

More than 200 undergraduate students attended the fourth annual Lone Star Graduate Diversity Colloquium, March 27-28, 2009. McNair Scholars from Trinity University found it useful mingling with other undergraduate students planning to attend graduate school, as well as having an opportunity to view poster presentations in various fields of study. The colloquium was designed to encourage students from underrepresented populations to consider attending schools in Texas.

Some of the workshops included discussions about graduate school funding, developing competitive applications for entry into graduate school, dealing with debt and various other useful topics for students to pull from.

Students in attendance also appreciated the guest speaker during the luncheon on the 27th, Dr. Darlene Grant, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Grant encouraged all students to take courage in their future and to do something noble for humanity. She is the kind of woman who makes you hope for a better future, and Scholars appreciated that.

All-in-all, students found the content useful and will utilize their newly made contacts to practice their goal of obtaining entrance into a graduate school program.

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**McNair Juniors Visit Rice University**

McNair Juniors ventured off into Rice Owl territory with McNair faculty members, Dr. Soto and Dr. Urquijo-Ruiz. The visit was spawned by Dr. Soto’s wish to expose rising seniors to yet another prestigious campus in the south, Rice University. Scholars in attendance met with professors in various fields with the Dean of Graduate Admissions and graduate students.

McNair Junior, Miguel Guerra, said he appreciated a different perspective on being a professor at such a prestigious university, and looks forward to maintaining contact with faculty from the campus.

Students also had a chance to view the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater production on their last evening in Houston. Scholars enjoyed viewing the energetic dances from African American cultures. Patrice Durden, rising Senior, appreciated attending because “the focus on family, relationships and gospel was a true depiction of the African community.”
Dr. Leifer, Tutorial Faculty member since McNair’s inception at Trinity University, has played an important role in the success of the program. Having started as a mentor for the first cohort of scholars in the Fall of 2007, Dr. Leifer brings his knowledge and expertise in the field of Mechanical Engineering.

He commonly teaches Mechanics and Engineering design courses at Trinity, and will act as a Research Mentor to one of McNair’s newest scholars, Chad Oian.

We would like to congratulate Dr. Leifer for obtaining tenure at Trinity University this school year, and to thank him for his service to the Program. He will be leaving the program as Tutorial Faculty, but will continue to assist in any way he can for future Scholars who are interested in doing research in Engineering. Thank you, Dr. Leifer!
Welcome to McNair New Scholars!

Mellissa Delcont, Sophomore
Bi (Peggy) Guo, Sophomore
Wendy Hernandez, Sophomore
Phoung Khuu, Junior
Chad Oian, Junior

UPCOMING MCNAIR RESEARCH CONFERENCES

2009 University of Buffalo McNair Research Conference
The Conference Center Niagara Falls
July 16-19, 2009
Niagara Falls, NY

Penn State McNair Research Conference
The Penn Stater Conference Center
July 17-19, 2009
State College, Pennsylvania

17th Annual McNair Scholars Symposium
The University of California-Berkeley
August 6-9, 2009
Berkeley, California

Kudos to McNair Scholars

Gordon Abner received a full scholarship to attend the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University. He was also accepted into UC-Berkley’s Greenlining Institute summer internship program.

Jacqueline Arevalo submitted a photo that was selected for publication in the Trinity Review.

Jonelle Bailey, McNair Alumna, received a Master of Arts in Teaching from Trinity University, with the Class of 2009.

Patrice Durden presented her research at the University of North Texas McNair Conference in February.

Celeste Garcia will attend the Alaskan Leadership Seminar this summer, and has also been elected President of Latino Exchange on campus.

Miguel Guerra prepared a proposal, “From My Street to Main Street,” for the Harvard Education Review.

Peggy (Bi) Guo received the University Scholar award, and was accepted into Alpha Epsilon Delta, the premed honor society.

Amanda Martinez presented at the Showcase for Student Talent and presented research on Haven for Hope: A Future for San Antonio’s Homeless.

Roxana Rojas’s research proposal was accepted by MALCS (Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social) and she will be presenting her research in Las Cruces, NM in July.

Jonathan Trejo was accepted into the Joint Admission Medical Program and will be at Texas Tech for the program this summer. He has also been accepted into Alpha Epsilon Delta, the premed honor society.

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