

November 2015  
Build Community

# OVCS NEWS



## Upcoming Events

**Free Citizenship Workshop**  
Saturday December 5, 2015  
10:00am-12:00pm

Immigration Advocacy & Support  
Center (IASC)  
8 Washington St  
New London, CT.

For more information contact  
**Taryn Kitchen**  
tkitchen@conncoll.edu.

**Human Rights Day Issue Table**  
Cro Lobby  
Thursday December 10, 2015  
11:30am-1:00pm



## Writing and Healing Healing and Writing

Brian Damacio  
Class of 2016

As a low-income first generation student of color (FGSOC), I have had the immense privilege of interning with Higher Edge for this 2015-2016 academic year. Higher Edge is a nonprofit organization in New London CT that provides support and resources for low income and first generation students. Its mission is to help guide students, like myself, through the college enrollment process, increase retention rates, and increase graduation success.

One of the many rewarding parts of working at Higher Edge is fostering and developing relationships with the students. For the past two months I

have been reminded again and again in the way(s) in which low-income first generation students challenge and deconstruct negative stereotypes about community, home, family, and culture. In addition, through our dialogues, I see how students (re)define, (re)concile, and (re)new how they see themselves in their personal statements (hooks, 1989).



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### Bike ride around campus with KBA

Last week, during KBA, we had the opportunity to go on a bike ride with the kids from Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School. Bikes were brought over to Connecticut College and everyone, including the college mentors, were able to enjoy a beautiful tour led by Coach Wuyke. On both days, the tour consisted of highlighting some buildings on campus, such as residence halls, Shain library, Cro, Cummings, and the Lyman Allyn Art Museum. For each building that we visited, students had the time to ask specific questions about it or simply ask questions about campus life in general. It was great to see how enthusiastic the kids were about learning, but also about being able to ride bikes for the day, because it is something different from the physical activities they are required to do for gym class.

Even though the majority of the kids knew how to ride a bike, some felt more confident than others, which was completely fine. We had a couple of mentors guide those students and help them feel more comfortable being on a bike. Instead of joining the larger group on the campus tour, students had the opportunity to work with mentors on balancing themselves and doing other small activities in order to get them ready. Watching the kids learn how to ride a bike and know that they were feeling great about it, was definitely a rewarding experience.

- Mari Izoteco '17



### Writing and Healing (continued)

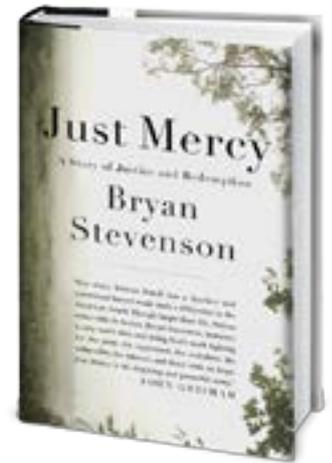
More often than not low-income first generation students, especially students of color, are reminded again and again that their lived experiences do not matter in the classroom whether it is through the content of their courses, the assignments they are given, and many other things. It is my role then as an intern at Higher Edge and future educator of color to disrupt that notion and empower students so they can honor and celebrate their families' stories and their hxs-hir-her-his stories.

to tease the details out. Through the teasing out of the details, students are healing. Healing, not physically, but spiritually and emotionally. This to me is the most important part of the college enrollment process. It is through story telling that students realize the power in their lived experiences, the beauty and complexity from/in their communities, the mastery of their multi-linguistic tongues, and so much more. I am forever grateful for this wonderful opportunity.

Students' narratives are often loaded with so much that we have to learn



Bryan Stevenson, author  
of *Just Mercy: A Story of  
Justice and Redemption*  
Photo by Nina Subin



## One Book, One Region Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson

Connecticut College has entered into a new partnership with One Book, One Region (OBOR) of eastern Connecticut and will join local communities in reading “Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption” by Bryan Stevenson.

As part of OBOR’s program, Stevenson will visit the College on April 4, 2016. OBOR’s concept is based on the idea of expanding a small book club to that of an entire community, around which programming is developed.

The goals of the initiative are to bring a community together to discuss ideas, broaden the appreciation of reading, and break down barriers among community members. Stevenson’s April visit will also launch President Bergeron’s new Distinguished Lecture Series.

The Center for the Comparative Study of Race & Ethnicity (CCSRE), the Holleran Center, OVCS and the Dean of the College will present a series of related programming throughout the Spring 2016 semester. SGA, SOAR and UMOJA will partner with this initiative as well.

The Dean of the College will also launch the first Winter Read program in as part of this collaboration.

Students, staff and faculty are invited to join the initiative, read the book over winter break, and attend the series of events. The Dean is also encouraging faculty to include the book in their syllabi for the spring semester. Bank Square Books, an independent bookstore is an ongoing partner with One Book, One Region and they will come to campus on the following dates and times and set up a table in the College Center to sell the book for the special price of \$10.

Those dates and times are:

**November 24 11:30 to 1:30 CRO,**

**December 2 11:00 to 1:30 CRO**

**December 9 4:30 to 7:30 Harris  
lobby**

In addition, the Dean of the College will have 100 copies of the book for students. Just Mercy and Bryan Stevenson are extraordinary. Attorney Stevenson founded the Equal Justice Initiative and has done ground breaking work around inequities in our criminal justice system, police and community relations and capital punishment.

The One Book, One Region

partnership initiative will provide a wide range of activities and events for our community to increase our knowledge about these pressing issues and encourage us to work together to advance reforms. We look forward to reading Just Mercy, dialoguing about the issues, and welcoming Bryan Stevenson to campus on April 4, 2016.

Find out more through the following links to online resources:

<http://www.eji.org/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2tOp7OxyQ8>



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**Make Change**