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EDUCATION PROFILE

Black History Makers Made Their Mark At Kingsborough For Decades

BY DR. CLAUDIA V. SCHRADER

In 1926, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) held the first Negro History Week. The second week in February was selected because it coincided with the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. The initial Negro History weeks were marked with local celebrations across the country. During the 1960s, at the crest of the Civil Rights Movement, there was a growing call to recognize the contributions of Blacks in American history. What started as a week informally evolved into a month of such recognition. In 1970, students, faculty, and administrators at Kent State University designated February as Black History Month. Six years later, President Ford would formally do so.

As KCC celebrates Black History Month with programs and activities, I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the role that KCC had in preparing a number of future African American history makers and welcoming famous African American history makers who have graced our shores and stages with their

presence.

At the start of World War II, long before the idea for Brooklyn's first community college was born, our campus was the site of the largest U.S. Maritime Service Training Station in the country. More than 400,000 merchant mariners were trained, including renowned African American authors Alex Haley and Ralph Ellison.

In 1971, the same year of what would be known as the Fight of the Century, Boxing Heavy Weight Champ Muhammad Ali made his way to Kingsborough to speak with students outside our T-6 building. At the time of his visit, Ali had been stripped of his title as World Heavyweight Champion for being a "conscientious objector" to the Vietnam War. He was doing a paid tour of college campuses around the country to pay his legal fees. In June of 1971, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Ali's conviction by a unanimous 8-0 decision.

An African American history maker who went from Kingsborough to the ring is sports icon Riddick Bowe. The Brooklyn resident from East New York first



The sculpture *Passages*, 1986, by world renowned African American artist Melvin Edwards can be found outside the Marine Academic Center on the campus of Kingsborough Community College.

attended KCC to study drama in hopes of pursuing an acting career after boxing. He also studied business administration. Bowe won the silver medal in the super heavyweight division at the 1988 Summer Olympics. He competed as a pro boxer between 1989 to 2008 and reigned as the undisputed world heavyweight champion in 1992.

KCC has also helped to produce many champions for the people. Among them is the Honorable Jaime R. Williams, the first Black female alum to become a member of the New York

State Assembly, who graced our campus as a student in the 1990s.

While they are not alumni, our shores have been graced most recently by contemporary history makers like Letitia James, the city's first African American NYC Public Advocate and now the first woman to ever hold state-wide office as NYS Attorney General; and Eric Adams, Brooklyn first African American Brooklyn Borough President and now the second Black NYC Mayor since 1849.

At age 34, KCC Alumna Tashni-Ann Dubroy became

the second youngest president of Shaw University and, as you know, in 2018 when I was appointed as KCC's 7th president, I humbly secured my part in KCC and Black History as the first African American in the College's history to hold this office. I proudly walk in the footsteps of Thelma Malle, the first Black dean of Kingsborough.

Throughout Black History Month and beyond, we celebrate and remember African Americans who have helped shape and unite our communities and recommit ourselves to helping to prepare the next generation of history makers. Black history is more than just about securing a place in history, but how you make a place for others to shine.

Dr. Claudia V. Schrader is president of Kingsborough Community College (KCC), a 72-acre academic oasis in beautiful Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn that offers students over 50 academic programs, 100 percent online degrees and affordable two-year degrees for their future. For more information about Kingsborough, visit the website at www.Kingsborough.edu.

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