

# The Albion Pleiad

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## Highlighting Albion's Black Student Leaders

Jocelyn Kincaid-Beal  
Features/Opinions Editor

Whether you're interested in a cappella, AC Drip or Alpha Kappa Alpha, there's a student-led organization for you at Albion College.

Albion advertises "100+ ways to get involved" on campus, with 11 categories that its clubs and organizations fall into, such as Greek Life, diversity awareness and student government.

No matter the category, all of Albion's organizations are led by students who have stepped up to be role models, decision makers and innovators on campus.

### Joy Babatunde: AC Drip President

Chicago senior Joy Babatunde is the president of Albion College (AC) Drip, the treasurer of Black Student Alliance (BSA) and the outreach chair of Students for Reproductive Justice (SRJ).

She's also been a community living assistant, a tour guide and a student senator. Babatunde calls these roles "little side missions" that she finds herself in.

To Babatunde, being a student leader means having a say in what happens on campus.

**'Having Black students be able to come up to uphold these positions, it's what's keeping them standing'**

"It's one thing to complain about what's not there," Babatunde said. "It's another thing when I have the opportunity to be in such roles and make such an impact."

Babatunde said it's "so important" for Black students to have leadership roles at Albion.

"Having Black students be able to come up to uphold these positions, it's what's keeping them standing," Babatunde said. "Having more students take up these roles once we leave and graduate is what we're really looking for."

### Miles Newman: UB President

Union Board (UB) President and Roseville, North Carolina, senior Miles Newman said he has enjoyed meeting and interacting with people from a young age.

Naturally, when he came to Albion, he got involved on campus.

"After a certain level of involvement, you can't stop," Newman said. "I fell in the rabbit hole."

To Newman, being a student leader means being "an active presence on campus."

"I always enjoy people being like, 'I keep seeing you everywhere,' or, 'Every time I go somewhere you're always out helping out,'" Newman said.



A photo collage of four Black student leaders on campus. From left to right: Detroit junior Bria Jackson, Chicago senior Joy Babatunde, Chicago sophomore Tatiyana Oliver and Roseville, N.C., senior Miles Newman (Photo illustration by Bella Bakeman).

Newman said he wants Union Board to be a collaboration between people of different backgrounds, working together to plan something that everyone at Albion can enjoy.

"I hope that students can look back and enjoy memories at events," Newman said. "Just knowing that you had an impact in some way, shape or form – that's pretty cool."

### Bria Jackson: Cheer Co-Captain

Detroit junior Bria Jackson is the president of the Sigma Zeta chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) Sorority and was captain of the cheer team for the fall 2024 season.

Jackson joined cheer her first year at Albion, but the coach quit after that first season.

Her sophomore year, 2023-2024, there was no official cheer program – but Jackson was rallying.

"A lot of the work that I put in to get the team back was a lot of asking people if they were interested, attempts to go to games and just show that we're there, that we're committed to being a team again," Jackson said.

Over the summer, a new cheer coach was hired: Mercedes Pace, alumna '20. Once hired, Pace reached out to Jackson, and they started

### Tatiyana Oliver: BSA President

Chicago sophomore Tatiyana Oliver is the president of BSA and vice president of the Student Senate. For her, leadership is all about collaboration.

"I don't want people to look up to me, I want people to see me eye to eye," Oliver said.

As BSA president, Oliver makes sure everything runs smoothly, makes sure everyone does their job and advocates for Albion students of color. However, she said she doesn't see herself as the "face" or "overseer" of the organization.

"I always tell my (executive board), 'I'm not over you, we work together,'" Oliver said.

Oliver said one of her favorite things about her leadership roles is getting to meet students and ask, "How do you feel about this? What do you think we should change?"

**'I don't want people to look up to me, I want people to see me eye to eye'**

"To be a student leader it means to humble yourself, to understand that at one point in time, before you were a student leader in a sense, you were a student who just wanted change," Oliver said.

Everyone should have the opportunity to be a leader, Oliver said, adding that it's a way to show who you are outside of the classroom.

"It's important for Black students to be in leadership because we've achieved so much and we've went through so much," Oliver said. "It shows significance."

### Black Student-Led Events

On Feb. 22, in the science complex, BSA is hosting the first annual James A. Welton Legacy Gala, in honor of the first Black student to attend Albion.

"We decided that since he has caused so much history for Black students here on campus that he deserves to be honored," Oliver said.

Another event this month was AC Drip's fashion show, held on Saturday. One of the themes of the event was "cultural/nationality," which Babatunde said lets her showcase her Nigerian wear.

"It gives me an opportunity to show myself, with the events we have," Babatunde said. "My biggest impact on this campus is letting my culture be known."

## Opinion: Black Characters Deserve Accuracy



The author, Dearborn first-year Kyla Lawrence, sits in a chair watching "The Princess and the Frog." The movie was one of the earliest and only examples of a lead Black woman in Lawrence's childhood (Photo illustration by Lizzy Kelley).

Kyla Lawrence  
Staff Writer

Growing up as a Black girl in the suburbs, I always struggled to identify elements of myself in modern-day media. Whether it be books, movies or TV shows that I liked, I still remember the searching I would do in an attempt to find a character that looked like me.

By Merriam-Webster's definition, representation is "the action of presenting or describing a person or a thing, especially in a particular way."

However, I firmly believe there is more to representation than its dictionary definition. There is a right and wrong way to go about it, and unfortunately, much of the current Black representation in media is not only wrong, but deeply upsetting.

### Common, Disappointing, Terrible Portrayals

If I were lucky enough to even find a good depiction of myself on television, it

would typically be in the form of a "boxy" side character with a one-dimensional personality.

The Mammy, The Jezebel, The Token Friend and The Sapphire are four common archetypes used to form the personality/character of Black women in media. Their characters can be easily broken down into: submissive, sexual, blank-slate and sassy.

Growing up, a lot of the media I consumed was targeted toward children and prepubescent teenagers. Therefore, I saw a lot more of The Sapphire, as well as The Token Friend. These two tropes are often intertwined in some way.

The Token Friend, better known as The Token Black Friend, typically has no real characteristics outside of being the main character's sidekick or offering some sassy quip when a situation calls for it. We audience members never really get to know much about the character's background and have a hard time defining their genuine purpose.

Continued on back.



# Editorial: The Pleiad is Committed to Inclusive Storytelling, DEI



## Editorial Board

The Pleiad believes in diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). We will continue to strive to provide equitable opportunities to applicants and sources through a lens of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.

We will continue to practice AP Style's inclusive storytelling, which "seeks to truly represent all people around the globe." We will give voice and visibility to "those who have been missing or misrepresented in traditional narratives of both history and daily journalism."

According to The Pleiad's handbook, our mission is "accuracy, truth, integrity and representing the diverse perspectives of Albion College students."

Albion College is a diverse community, and that community deserves to be equitably reflected in its on-campus news publication. Through inclusive storytelling we want our readers and viewers to "recognize themselves in our stories, and to better understand people who differ from them."

President Donald Trump's executive order titled "Ending Radical And Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing" refers to DEI as "illegal" and "immoral discrimination."

DEI is not immoral, nor does it encourage discrimination. It seeks to prevent discrimination. It is the dismantling of these programs that allows and invites discrimination.

These DEI programs seek to fill in the gaps that centuries of oppression have created. Nothing can be truly equal if equitable opportunities are not provided.

The Pleiad is and will stay committed to the mission of creating content in which everyone is represented.



## THE ALBION COLLEGE PLEIAD

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**Staff Writers:** Finn Brady, Kyla Lawrence, Seiji McSwain, Sophia Valchine

**Photographers:** Noah Guevara, Lizzy Kelley, Gabriela Popa

**Volunteer Staff Writers:** Shay Athayde, Nick Briscoe, Bella Fabrizio, Solongo Tamir

**Volunteer Photographer:** Oghenefejiro Nakireru

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# Comic: Black Inventors of Modern Technology

**Marie Van Brittan Brown**  
(1922-1999)

Van Brittan Brown invented the first home security system, patented in 1966.

**Garrett Morgan**  
(1877-1963)

Morgan invented the first three position travel signal device, patented in 1923.

**Fredrick McKinley Jones**  
(1893-1961)

Jones created the first portable air-cooling for trucks, used to transport perishable food, and later, medicine and blood.

**Alexander Miles**  
(1838-1918)

Miles created the first automatic elevator door, and we still see his design in modern day elevators.

Noah Guevara  
Photographer

*Underrepresented and underappreciated Black historical figures who heavily influenced modern inventions that we see and use everyday. This comic uses information from [biography.com/black-history-month](http://biography.com/black-history-month) and [blackpast.org](http://blackpast.org) (Illustrations by Noah Guevara).*

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# Opinion: Black Characters

*Continued from front.*

Truthfully speaking, a lot of times they're just there to fill in an unspoken quota for diversity.

Characters I was exposed to with these tropes were Chastity from "10 Things I Hate About You" and Ivy from the Disney show "Good Luck Charlie." These were characters that I enjoyed seeing onscreen a lot, but as I grew up, I began to realize how poorly thought out and portrayed they were.

And every Black girl watching is expected to identify with them? Hard pass.

## But Wait! We Can Fix it! (Poorly)

As conversations around representation evolve, Hollywood has attempted to backpedal and fix it. However, there is a very clear right and wrong way to do so.

The right way: Make new stories involving Black female leads who don't always have to come from a life of hardship and struggle structured around their race. Seriously. Finding a soft-hearted African American female lead is like looking for a needle in a haystack. And I don't mean Zendaya or Amandla Sternberg.

The wrong way: Remake something that has already been done successfully with a white female lead, with a Black female lead.

That hardly ever goes well.

**'What I don't want is for these mainstream studios to take a story that was made with a specific character in mind, change her skin tone and brand it as something new.'**

Case in point: the 2023 remake of Disney's "The Little Mermaid."

Growing up, Ariel was my favorite Disney princess. I loved the story, I loved Prince Eric and I loved the fact that she was a literal mermaid. She was all-in-all everything I wanted to be and more. And to me, the only reason I couldn't get that life was because mermaids weren't real. Not because Ariel was white and I am not.

When the announcement came out that they were remaking this story with Halle Bailey as the lead, I was less than thrilled.

This story had already been done and made its mark on pop culture everywhere. Not only was remaking it a poor decision, but to try to change the story in such a strong way? It just feels so overwhelmingly cheap.

The remake resulted in so much backlash and racist controversy that the story no longer felt like it was about a mermaid anymore, it felt more like a battle between Bailey's supporters and haters. To me, this defeated the whole purpose of her casting.

When I'm asking for representation of myself in media, I want to watch a movie where the main character looks like me, talks like me, acts a little like me and is genuinely thoughtful and fleshed out. I want her to have her own story that is individual to her.

What I don't want is for these mainstream studios to take a story that was made with a specific character in mind, change her skin tone and brand it as something new. It's not new, and it's not all that impressive either. I, as a viewer, am not wowed in the slightest.

## Why is Good Representation Such a Big Deal Anyway?

Everyone deserves to know that they're not the only person who looks, speaks, acts or walks the way they do, or whatever it is that distinguishes them from others. Good representation allows for individuals like myself to see a reflection of who they are that isn't just in the mirror, or in the family that they grew up with.

Being able to identify and align with someone projected on screen, hundreds of miles away, can make all the difference in whether a young Black girl straightens her hair to look like someone else, or wears it naturally.

Representation doesn't just apply to Black people either. It goes for everyone who lives their life in the minority, no matter how big or small their community is. And the sooner we as human beings begin to truly understand and accept that, the sooner we can begin to include all kinds of people, onscreen and off.