

Jackie Robinson....."NEED I SAY MOORE!"

Written by Darren D. Moore, Ph.D., LMFT
Wednesday, 20 March 2013 15:51



On Friday morning Mar. 1, I woke up excited for my annual trip to New York City.

For the past eight years I have gone to New York to attend the annual Mentoring and Leadership Conference (formerly the Networking Weekend) sponsored by the Jackie Robinson Foundation. The Jackie Robinson Foundation provides undergraduate scholarships to students of color and students who have an interest in working to promote diversity and multiculturalism in the world. Each year some 200 plus students gather in Manhattan to connect with other students, attend workshops regarding career planning and professional development, engage in community service activities and receive mentorship, among many other fascinating things.

I was the recipient of the scholarship award during my undergraduate experience. In addition, I was able to obtain the Extra-innings fellowship, which is a graduate scholarship program that is offered by the organization to a select few of their most notable undergraduate scholars. For the past two years since working on my dissertation and graduating with my doctorate last May, I have been asked to present a workshop to freshmen students in New York regarding stress and substance abuse. In this workshop we discuss issues that are pertinent to minority students, often discussing the balance between home, family life and the demands of being a college student; and a college student of color at that. Some of the students come from marginalized backgrounds and have had to deal with significant barriers to obtaining a college education. Some are first generation college students. Some have faced significant financial barriers. Some are the product of single parent households or have had to face adversity in some profound way.

At the same time, these students are "the cream of the crop." They tend to graduate at the top of their high school classes, maintain next to perfect grade point averages, and attend top tier and prestigious colleges or universities. In Minnesota, some of the Jackie Robinson Scholars have graduated from the University of Minnesota, Carleton College and Macalester College.

Jackie Robinson....."NEED I SAY MOORE!"

Written by Darren D. Moore, Ph.D., LMFT
Wednesday, 20 March 2013 15:51

Nationally, scholars have graduated from Ivy League institutions including the big three – Harvard, Yale and Princeton – in addition to Dartmouth, Cornell, Brown, University of Pennsylvania, Columbia; not to mention other equally prestigious institutions including Morehouse College, Spelman College, Hampton University, and Tuskegee University. Need I say Moore?

As an assistant professor and licensed marriage and family therapist, I, alongside clinical psychologist, Michael Selders, of the Dallas V.A. Hospital, and noted mental health advocate and publicist Terrie Williams of the Stay Strong Foundation, teach students how to cope with and manage stress.

Students may be dealing with how to navigate the college experience, how to recognize the warning signs of depression and how to access resources on their respective campuses. All college students may face problems related to negotiating parent, student relationships, transitioning to college and becoming more independent. However, in addition to discussing universal concerns, I also make sure to address some issues specifically regarding students of color, such as race relations on campus, diversity and inclusions issues, discrimination and advice on how to address these issues. It is widely known that students of color may face additional burdens and in some cases, barriers when attending a predominately white institution. In addition, some students may feel extra stress related to having to be the one in their family to "make it." Students of color may have additional family obligations that other students may not have, which can negatively impact a student's ability to function on campus.

During the workshop, we also discuss addictions in the context of some of the negative ways that college students cope with stress and depression. We discuss, alcoholism and college student drinking, sexual promiscuity, marijuana and other drug use, overeating, among many others. I also make sure to talk about the importance of eating healthy, maintaining a balanced diet, getting enough sleep, and not being afraid to ask for help from peers, teachers, mentors, church, family, and licensed professionals. As a matter of transparency, I am always candid with any audience and have no problem with telling students about stress and how I have struggled with food consumption. Students tend to think that if you are successful (however you define success) you have never had to suffer or deal with some of the harsh realities that plague our youth today. Make no mistakes about it, I have had to deal with bruises, scratches, scrapes, burns, disappointment, set-backs, failures, etc. Every year I make sure to quickly remind students that I was in their very shoes a few years ago. Being a former Jackie Robinson Scholar and having gone through the ranks from undergraduate student, to graduate student, to the Ph.D., and now coming back as conference faculty gives me a unique perspective that some of the other presenters may not have. I am able to say, I know what it is like to be the only one of color at a big university. I can relate to the students in such a way, that they then realize that they can overcome any and all adversity that may come their way.

During the weekend students had the opportunity to see a sneak peak of the movie, "42" that comes out later this year. While I cannot discuss the movie in detail, it depicts the hardship that Jackie Robinson faced during his life. Like Robinson, we all will face adversity in some way, shape, or form, but also like Robinson, we all have the ability within ourselves to overcome that same adversity. Like Jackie Robinson and his beloved wife Rachel Robinson, I hope to use my

Jackie Robinson....."NEED I SAY MOORE!"

Written by Darren D. Moore, Ph.D., LMFT
Wednesday, 20 March 2013 15:51

experiences in addition to my skills and expertise to help others in some profound way. Attending the 2013 Mentoring and Leadership Conference sponsored by the Jackie Robinson Foundation was a blast, and a wonderful way to start out March. In my last commentary, I said that "I am hip-pop." This week, I am going to say, "I am Jackie Robinson" Need I say Moore?

Well that's all for now, hope to talk to you soon, but until then, stick around, there's Moore to come.

Darren D. Moore, Ph.D., LMFT, is a licensed marriage and family therapist and an assistant professor in marriage and family therapy at a University in Georgia. He works with individuals, couples, and families regarding mental health and relationship concerns. His research, teaching and clinical interests include general mental health, obesity, weight loss, eating disorders and addictions, within couple and family relationships, with an emphasis in working with men, African-American families, and marginalized populations. Moore is a north Minneapolis native and obtained his bachelor's degree in African American Studies from the University of Minnesota, his master's degree in marriage and family therapy from Valdosta State University, and his Ph.D. in marriage and family therapy from Virginia Tech. Dr. Darren D Moore can be reached by email at ddmoore@vt.edu or (612) 296-3758.