

John Boccacino:

Hello and welcome back to the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast. I'm John Boccacino, senior internal communications specialist at Syracuse University.

Dylan France:

Existing beyond the Lines has to do with being more than just this general box of what Blackness is. It's so much more like we're all people in our own unique ways. If you look across campus, that there's so many students from so many different backgrounds doing all these amazing things and to highlight that, highlight the creativity, highlight the different leadership and everything else on campus. That's the goal of this year's theme and to showcase all of these different avenues and how we're existing beyond the lines of what traditionally Blackness has looked as.

John Boccacino:

On the Syracuse University campus we have a proud and storied tradition of honoring Black History Month through the work of our engaging and active student leaders here on campus. And I could not be happier to bring on our guest today here on the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast. She is Dylan France. She's a senior in the Whitman School of Management, studying both finance and real estate. She'll be graduating coming up this year. She's also a talented student leader. She serves as the controller for the Student Association. She's an undergraduate representative for the SU Board of Trustees, a Renée Crown Honors scholar, and a member of the Black History Month Committee. Dylan, you're quite involved. I appreciate you making the time, given how hectic your schedule must be.

Dylan France:

Yes, I'm glad to be here.

John Boccacino:

For our audience who may not know, give us a little bit about yourself and how you wound up at Syracuse.

Dylan France:

As the gracious introduction, to introduce myself, my name is Dylan France, senior finance and real estate major. In terms of ending up at Syracuse, honestly, I am a big sports fan, so that was part of the draw from the get go. From New Jersey originally, North Jersey and Carmelo has, I grew up on Carmelo being a Knick, and so part of the appeal was just I love sports. I knew that I wanted to be a finance major going into school, and I realized that Syracuse University has so much to offer and then, of course, coming in as the graduating high school class of 2020, it was going into COVID. So, it was definitely a unique experience, but now within my last year, I've learned so much, grew so much since the start of the pandemic.

John Boccacino:

What was it exactly about Whitman that really called out to you and made you want to come study here?

Dylan France:

Yeah, so I think part of the appeal has to be, and shout out to the program, the Orange Value Fund. And so, going in, I knew that I had a weird interest in investment banking because usually high schoolers aren't like, "Yeah, I want to be an investment banker." And I knew exactly what I wanted to be and that hasn't changed because of graduating, I will be working in investment banking. But the Orange Value

Fund prepared me a lot in terms of a lot of the fundamentals I needed to know going into my job. It definitely gave me a competitive advantage relative to some of my peers, and I think that's a unique Syracuse experience that even some of the top schools in the country doesn't provide. And so, yeah, I'm just grateful for that.

John Boccacino:

You mentioned earlier, and I don't think we'll ever, hopefully we never have a class that has to go through what you did, coming to school, starting your journey in the middle of the worst health pandemic in more than a century. But reflecting back on it, how did that experience help you going through adversity, learn more about yourself and fuel your development as a student leader?

Dylan France:

I think going through the pandemic as coming in 2020, it was difficult because it completely changed the way that students interact on campus, the way we meet each other. Just like going to any social situation, there was already guidelines in terms of six feet apart and you can't do a lot of the things you would traditionally do as a freshman in college. And for myself, it involved adapting to change and really going through being resilient during these troubling times. And as a student leader, a lot of my development came in seeing the opportunities and trying my best to get as involved as possible.

I know starting at school, one of the first things I was involved in was the Wells Links program, as well as the Finance Board on Student Association. And those two opportunities connected me to so many people that I'm still close to to this day, a lot of mentors, a lot of people that helped me to get a sense of Syracuse, even though it doesn't look like Syracuse as normal, it's definitely really different with the pandemic, but they helped inspire me. They're still people that inspire me to be better on campus, be a better leader, and not to be afraid or shy away from some of the things on campus that may be troublesome and help those that are now younger than me to help solve these problems and give them the same courage that the people before me gave me.

John Boccacino:

On top of what happened with the global pandemic, we had the social justice movement, we had the George Floyd murder, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor. Unfortunately there were so many instances, but it did shine a light on the atrocities that were taking place and our campus was motivated to take action too. How did that impact and influence your development too, knowing that if the world is going to change for the better, you guys are going to play a large role in accomplishing that change you want to see?

Dylan France:

I completely agree with everything you said, that it did involve, especially going into the Black Lives Matter movement and everything, that was in my senior year of high school where I'm just coming into adulthood. And so, for a lot of students within the class of 2020, it was really kind of growing into that and learning that no matter what age we're at, we can still make a difference. And so, I think that a lot of it had to do in terms of going through adversity and learning to be an advocate for ourselves, it had to do with the circumstances that a lot of people of color on campus had to rise to the occasion and stand for what we believe in, even though it's through COVID and everything.

John Boccacino:

And I feel like one of the best things to come out of the tragedies involving what's happened with the Black Lives Matter movement has been this development of 119 Euclid, which is now going to be the Barner-McDuffie House in honor of the generosity of trustee Sharon Barner, who gave more than a

million dollars recently to both ensure the future of 119, but also to strengthen scholarships for Black, for first generation and for underrepresented students. You've got a personal connection with 119 Euclid. Can you describe a little bit the key role that that house has played through the programming and through the comradery you've developed?

Dylan France:

119 played such a large role within my development here at Syracuse, coming into the school, especially in COVID, I didn't get to meet that many people because, of course, now there's not that many social experiences and things through the pandemic, but especially students that looked like myself and had the same complexion. 119 really meant so much to me during this time because I was able to see people like me going through the same struggles. And that's honestly where I met the founding members of the Black Student Union where we realized, "Hey, there's not really an organization that represents the entire diaspora on campus. Let's try to make that."

And going from there, all that was centered around 119. It was more than a meeting place. If you were going through a hard time or you just wanted to, after class, just talk or hang out or anything like that, 119 is such a welcoming place and it's where I met some of my closest friends. And yeah, it just means so much to me, especially looking back at the development of the Black Student Union, how far we've come because of having a space like that.

John Boccacino:

People think of it as, okay, there's a building and great things happen in there, but everyone I've talked to with the title 119 stresses the feeling of home, the feeling of comfort and a safe space and things that can't be put into words, just how safe and comfortable the students feel to be themselves, to celebrate themselves, to celebrate Black accomplishments and the Black student experience on campus. And you've really taken that mission upon yourself of engaging with student leaders to make sure that they can become the future leaders on campus. What has that process been like of trying to pay it forward and make sure that when you graduate the young students are just as focused as you were on making change?

Dylan France:

A lot of it honestly is intrinsic, where students who are below us see things that have happened to us or that happens on campus and, props to all the freshmen, sophomores and juniors on campus, kind of picking up like, "Hey, we need to organize, we need to work to do better in this space." And they do. And there's so many new organizations that are coming back on campus. There's so many different initiatives and different organizations that are coming back and representing who they are and standing for what they believe in and doing these amazing initiatives to help foster community on and off campus in philanthropic ways around the Syracuse community and beyond.

And so for, this is a long-winded answer, but going back to how to inspire younger leaders, I think they're already inspiring themselves. I'm not sure if it's looking at us as upperclassmen or whether they themselves are like, "We need to do something." I think it's a combination of both, where we're really seeing the change already by some of the underclassmen on campus. And I believe that beyond my graduation, they'll do more amazing things to help foster community on campus.

John Boccacino:

And again, it's really, it's inspiring to hear the chain both getting passed forward, but also the generation doesn't need it. They've seen, they've witnessed as leaders, you guys will lead with your actions and not just with your words. When you take stock of it, what are some of the most proud accomplishments you can come up with from your time as a student leader here at Syracuse?

Dylan France:

I would say that some things that I'm proud of would definitely be, first, I always talk about it, but where the Black student union is right now, they've done amazing things, and this is all due to the founding members building it up to be an amazing force on campus and doing all of these amazing things. The community service director, Caden, recently held a coat drive to help collect coats on campus, led by the Black Student Union. That was an amazing initiative there.

But continuing down that path, there's different organizations on campus, the National Black Accountants, the National Black Journalists on campus, all these different coalitions that are doing amazing things in their own spaces and as comptroller to help give out money to help with these organizations get off their feet. For me, some things that I've worked on is to help supplement some of the money that we have within our budget and within rollover to help these organizations get off the ground and have some starting money to get these initiatives going. That's something that was important to me when getting into this role. And then, also to advocate to make sure that they're able to continue to work with the different units across Syracuse University and beyond to make this process as seamless as possible so they can make their initiatives come true, is some of my proudest accomplishments.

John Boccacino:

When did you realize that you wanted to become a leader, somebody who could rally the troops and could engage with your campus community? What was that moment like?

Dylan France:

I don't know if there was really an aha-moment where it's like I knew that I had to step up. I think part of it came with the circumstances. Like with Black Student Union specifically, that was, I know we were having our second meeting where we were trying to get the idea of a Black Student Union out there, not even any actual organization made or anything like that. And we were all about to leave the room, go off in our own spaces and things like that. And I was like, "Wait, before we go, I need to get everyone's contacts, everyone's this and that." And we organized and created, right before the deadline, and I remember it was within a week or two we met on a Friday and Saturday back to back to get our constitution and everything going, but that's when I first started my work as secretary, and it was one of those moments where I just jumped into the position.

There wasn't really like, "Oh, I want to be secretary." That didn't come until after I sent those initial emails and everything. But just that jumping in, that changed my trajectory for the next year and a half, two years, so immensely. And then right after that, actually, a few months after that was when I applied and became the undergraduate representative to the Board of Trustees, which is another position in which I didn't see David Bruin, who was the representative at the time and I was like, "Oh, I want to be juts like him."

It was more so, it was the opportunity opened and rather than contemplating like, "Oh, am I qualified? Am I this?" I'm like, "I know what I want to do. I want to help represent students on campus through this report and let the board of trustees know what's going on to the best of my ability. And so that was kind of, again, a moment where just jumping in and I wasn't really, again, like, "Aha, I know I'm going to be this leader and I'm stepping up." But I kind of became it through having the position as well as advocating and creating these town halls and all these other things to help students on campus.

John Boccacino:

You're still involved in another landmark celebration taking place on campus, and that's our Black History Month Celebrations. And the theme for this year is Existing Outside the Lines: The Colors of Resistance. Can you tell our audience a little bit about the theme and where that came from and what we can expect from the celebrations?

Dylan France:

Part of it has to do with the national theme that's also along the lines of being creative and outside of the box. But really I think, personally, there's a lot of stereotypes and what Blackness looks like to on a generalized level and existing beyond the lines has to do with being more than just this general box of what Blackness is. It's so much more like we're all people in our own unique ways. If you look across campus, there's so many students from so many different backgrounds doing all these amazing things. And to highlight that, highlight the creativity, highlight the different leadership and everything else on campus, that's the goal of this year's theme and to showcase all of these different avenues and how we're existing beyond the lines of what traditionally Blackness is looked as is kind of the goal of this Black History month. So, yeah.

John Boccacino:

And just to get a little personal with the question, if you don't mind me asking it, how would you summarize what your Black culture, what your Black heritage means to you?

Dylan France:

My ancestors came through the transatlantic slave trade. We've been here for hundreds of years, and so I've kind of existed. My parents are both Howard alumni. I am highly integrated in different national organizations that celebrate Blackness. So, being outside of the lines, for me, I grew up having a very high perception of what Black excellence is, and it means a lot to exist beyond the lines because I knew it to be one thing and I'm existing in a completely different way than I ever expected to be. I had so many different role models and examples of Black excellence in my life and looking back from when I was little and looking up to those role models, to where I am now and how I developed into the person I am today, I think existing beyond the lines of what came before me and taking a step beyond where they were to where I am now, I think that's what it means to me.

John Boccacino:

Well, I appreciate you sharing that anecdote and also giving our audience a little background too. And because a theme is just a theme, but hearing it vocalized and verbalized like you did really helps to paint the picture of what we can expect here on campus. And as one of the committee members who has been involved in orchestrating and planning the celebrations, what are some of the events you're most looking forward to this month?

Dylan France:

The Black Beauty Expo, where there'll be different, both on campus and off campus, beauty experts, whether it be for hair or nails or other spaces, they'll be coming in to do different demonstrations of their work. And then I think there's also different things like the basketball classic, I think there's going to be a kickboxing instructor, a career mixer, and of course the gallery. I'm very excited for that, to see the different pieces that are going to be showcased there. And then of course, at the end, a little bit beyond the month, but on March 3rd is going to be the closing ceremony, and I'm really excited for that.

John Boccacino:

Yeah, the Daring to Dream Gala concludes the month-plus long of festivities. Of course, I know you'll agree with this too, Dylan, but this is something that we really need to remind our audience. We don't just want to celebrate Black culture and Black history just during February. This is a 24/7, 365 movement, and you have definitely done your part to be an outstanding advocate and student leader here at Syracuse. Hopefully, you're able to enjoy a little bit of the fun coming up this month, and I know you'll do great work with both your academics and as a student leader. I want to thank our guest, Dylan France, for

coming on and shining a light on Black History Month here on Syracuse. Dylan, thank you so much and best of luck.

Dylan France:

Yes, thank you.

Andi-Rose Oates:

Summer of 2020, that's when I became really passionate about my advocacy work, whether it was talking about all of these issues that are affecting the Black population within not only America, but the world in general, but really focusing on that and definitely getting more involved with not only my advocacy, but also my direct action to helping these issues. So, I just love to make a difference really in any way that I can, but more specifically through my advocacy is how I see that I make a difference.

John Boccacino:

Well, we are continuing with our Black History Month podcast celebrations here on the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast. I am really excited for our next student leader to welcome onto the podcast. She's Andrea-Rose Oates. She's a dual major studying public relations and policy studies in both the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications and the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. She's a passionate, energetic student leader who is also involved in a fantastic peer-to-peer mentoring program called Dimensions. We're going to talk about Dimensions, but first, I want to welcome Andi onto our podcast here. Thanks for making the time to join us.

Andi-Rose Oates:

Yes, thank you so much for having me.

John Boccacino:

I love having our students on the podcast. You guys, you all are the reason we're doing this podcast, you all are the reason we're employed here at Syracuse University. What was it about the 'Cuse? Why did you choose to come and be that dual major studying here at Syracuse?

Andi-Rose Oates:

Well, I was going through the process of looking for a college that I wanted to spend my next four years at. Syracuse really stood out to me the most, mainly because of the welcoming atmosphere. The times that I was able to come and physically visit the campus, or even when I did a virtual information session, I always felt this warm spirit that was welcoming me to come to study and to learn and grow and just find more opportunities that would help me with not only my major, but also my professional life as well. And I will say, as soon as I stepped onto the campus for my first official tour after I was an admitted student, I kind of knew right then and there that this would be the place for me. And ever since my freshman year, I will say, that I've grown so much, I've learned so much about myself, and it's all thanks to Syracuse University.

John Boccacino:

How would you summarize the ways that you've developed and grown holistically through your time on campus?

Andi-Rose Oates:

I will say that it was definitely a huge maturing stage for me. I would say over the past year and a half, I've definitely learned a lot about myself, in the sense how I interact with people, how I learn, and also just learning what I want to do in the future. Through Syracuse, whether it was my major classes or whether it was just different activities and organizations that I'm involved with on campus, I've learned a lot about what I want to do in the future. And I will say that Syracuse has definitely helped me a lot in that area, whether it's giving me real world opportunities and experiences or even just allowing me to try something new. I think that's the beauty not only of Syracuse University, but college in general, that it gives you this space to meet all different types of people and throw yourself into experiences that you would've never thought you would've done in your hometown. So, I will say that I'm very grateful for that as well.

John Boccacino:

How did you decide the course of studies that you took, of having a dual major with both public relations and policy studies? And second part of that question, what do you want to do with those degrees once you graduate?

Andi-Rose Oates:

Yes, that's a great question actually. I always knew that I wanted to do some type of communications major and at Newhouse all their majors are seen as communications majors, but you specifically have to focus on a specific area of communications, which I thought was just so special and unique to the Syracuse campus. So, I chose public relations because I know that I've always loved to work with people, but also that I have a passion for writing as well. So I feel like it combines both of those passions into one major. And I didn't know too much about it going in, but I will say that I've learned so much about it now and it's really something that I am considering for the future.

And then my other major, policy studies, because I couldn't just have one major, that came from the fact that I love or I've always had a passion for law. And in the future, right after Syracuse actually, I do want to attend law school, so that's where that second major came in. But honestly, at first I was a little nervous and I didn't know how the two were going to connect, but honestly, I feel like both my public relations major and my policy studies major have been able to intertwine so much. And I've also been very grateful to meet other people who were in the same boat as me, whether they're majoring in both Newhouse and Maxwell or specifically public relations and policy studies.

So honestly, I couldn't see myself without the other program here at Syracuse. And like I mentioned, after, I do want to attend law school and hopefully become a lead defense attorney someday. That's always been the goal of mine ever since I was a little girl. But honestly, I'll see where the wind takes me quite honestly, because I feel like I've just learned so much about the two majors. So, I could go into either one of those fields professionally, but we'll just have to wait and see.

John Boccacino:

I don't know too many children, to use the phrase lightly, who say they want to become a lead defense attorney when they grow up, especially at such a young age. Where did that desire come from?

Andi-Rose Oates:

I knew that I wanted to be a lawyer, more specifically attorney, as soon as I watched the movie Legally Blonde. I knew that I wanted to have the exact same lifestyle as El Woods because I love the color Pink, and I saw how she was able to go to law school and just absolutely kill it. So I was like, "Well, I could do the same thing too." But obviously as I grew up and got older, I realized that I had a real passion for different issues that are affecting the human population, so more so human rights, but also that I really realized I had a passion for the law and I have a few family members who were lawyers themselves. So, I

was able to talk to them and understand why they chose that profession specifically. And ever since then, I kind of always knew that I wanted to be a lawyer in fighting for justice for people who deserve it the most.

John Boccacino:

There are so many human rights, civil rights issues that are taking place not only across our country, but across the world that really beg our attention. Has that inspired you at all, seeing the strife that your fellow person is going through, to want to do good through your career choice?

Andi-Rose Oates:

That was definitely a motivating force. I will say, around the summer of 2020, that's when I became really passionate about my advocacy work, whether it was talking about all of these issues that are affecting the Black population within not only America, but the world in general. But really focusing on that and definitely getting more involved with not only my advocacy, but also my direct action to helping these issues.

But honestly, I would say that my work started a lot before then as well. I actually started my very own nonprofit organization in the eighth grade called Girls Rise, and that is my very own 501(c)(3) nonprofit that speaks to girls' educational awareness. So whether it's in my hometown community of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where I am speaking to girls about their self-confidence and about why their education matters, or even if it's me doing work actually in a completely other continent, I actually host a book drive every single year where I donate all of the proceeds to girls in South Africa, both who are being educated and not being educated. So I will say that I've always pretty much been a strong advocate, especially about issues I believe in, but I've really been able to do that direct action work, which has obviously made me change my entire perspective on the issue as well.

John Boccacino:

And how did you come about, these are phenomenal efforts by the way, working with Girls Rise, working with the book drive for the girls in South Africa, who gets the credit for influencing and instilling this spirit of doing good, helping people out? Who do we give credit to for that?

Andi-Rose Oates:

I would actually say a few people. My personal role model, who I was able to watch their work and I was like, "Okay, well if she can do it, I can do it too," is actually Malala Yousafzai. And with the work that she did, especially at her young age, within her own country, and her being a young girl at the time, risking her life to have educational rights, which is something that we see so basic, especially here within America, but other people are not fortunate enough to have the same opportunities. But she really, truly propelled and inspired me to start my work with girls' education.

And then when it came to just advocacy work in general, I would say my parents have really inspired me. They're both very strong figures within our Philadelphia community, and they've done a lot of work with issues that they are very passionate about, whether it's direct advocacy work or direct action or them just being able to help in any way they possibly can. They've always taught me to give back to communities who have given so much to you. So, I just love to make a difference really in any way that I can, but more specifically through my advocacy is how I see that I make a difference.

John Boccacino:

You had the pleasure of coming from Philadelphia, which is one of the really more racial melting pot cities in our country, there's a ton of diversity, and then you come to Syracuse. How did you go about that process of finding community and connecting with your cultural roots here on campus?

Andi-Rose Oates:

It was definitely challenging at times and kind of looking around and not always necessarily seeing immediately people who look like you. So, when I came to Syracuse, I was prepared for that, but at the same time I wasn't. It definitely, like I said, taught me a lot about myself. I will say that even though I always thought that I'd experienced diversity in the past and why not? Because, I will say, my parents always did a really good job of putting my brother and I into those spaces where we did see people who look like us. When I did come to Syracuse University, it was my first time really interacting with so many people from different backgrounds. I really think that's the beauty and the true essence of college, is the fact that you can meet so many people who you would've never been able to cross paths with in any other situation.

So when I came, I definitely made it an effort of mine to get involved with different clubs and organizations that would not only speak to my passions and interests, but more so speak to my ethnic side as well, which is why I was so passionate about getting involved with Dimensions' mentoring Group. Being around so many, not only amazing young women, but more young women of color and being able to not only start out as a mentee and now being a mentor through that group. It's been such a blessing to me and honestly, one of my true favorite experiences of Syracuse.

And even outside of that, I'm also currently the secretary of the Black Student Union, and that is something I've enjoyed a lot, just being not only a member of, but being a part of the executive board, being able to reach out specifically to Black students here on this campus who are a little unsure about how to navigate it necessarily. But we are providing these opportunities and these experiences for Black students to come together to just socialize with one another, but also do meaningful work, whether it's community service or any passionate areas that we believe through advocacy as well. So I would say, those groups definitely helped me really find my place here on this campus and get involved with different communities of people who look like me.

John Boccacino:

What level of support and comfort did you get from being a part of Dimensions and how do you think the biggest impact Dimensions has on our women of color here on campus?

Andi-Rose Oates:

Well, I would personally say that I found out about Dimensions kind of as soon as I came to this campus. I remember when during Move In Week and I was a freshman, my parents and I just walking around, getting a feel for the campus and whatnot, and we visited the office on Multicultural Affairs just to see what it was all about. And the girls of Dimensions, they were so welcoming. As soon as they saw me, not, they saw me for more than just a Black girl who was attending Syracuse, but more so someone who really just wanted to find a community, someone who wanted to be involved because I love to be involved really in anything or any way that I possibly can, especially here on this campus.

So, they saw me for more than that, and when they reached out to me and they were encouraging me to apply and whatnot, I was a little nervous at first, but I will say, it was definitely one of the best decisions that I ever made because I have met so many girls who I don't believe I would be able to have met in the regular situation, me being a freshman. But now they've become my big sisters. I have some little sisters through the program as well, and I think it is definitely one of the best things about Syracuse, especially as a woman of color. Me being able to be with these girls, to be mentored by these girls and now to mentor other girls. It's really such a surreal experience. And I honestly don't think I would get the same type of community feel anywhere else.

But I also love the fact that with different groups as well, like the Men of Color Initiative, how it's also happening for young men of color as well, and they get to have that same experience so it's not just

limited to one gender. I think that's really special, and I think it's the true essence of what a community feels like.

John Boccacino:

I do want to make a transition, building off of the cultural aspect you mentioned for women of color finding peer mentoring advice with Dimensions. We are celebrating Black History Month here at Syracuse University, and I was hoping you could shed a little bit of light for us and our audience. What exactly, how would you describe the impact and the influence that your Black heritage and your Black culture has on your life?

Andi-Rose Oates:

I would say it's definitely not something that can't be ignored. At a first glance, the first thing someone sees in me, they see I'm Black, and that's never been something that hasn't been a part of my life. Like I said, been Black my entire life. So, it's always something that was first glance. And I think that, at Syracuse, it's worked in my favor because I've had the opportunity to be a part of these really cool things such as Dimensions. It definitely has its ups and then its downs, but at the same time, I think navigating these predominantly White spaces as a Black person, it comes with a lot of pressures. But at the same time, I would say there's so many resources and just different mechanisms that I've learned not only at Syracuse, but in my life in general, that I kind of implement.

Also, the fact that Syracuse does a good job into welcoming these different organizations and student run clubs and things like that, that are definitely culture friendly. I would say that there's so many opportunities. Last night we had the Black History Month Kickoff, so seeing all of just the talent on stage from the different organizations and clubs and seeing how much people pour into this, their performances and the work that they've really put into it is just such a beautiful thing to see. And the fact that we have that right here on Syracuse's campus just really shows how proud people are to not only show off their heritage, but their culture as well, and share that gift for the Syracuse community. So, it's definitely something great to see.

John Boccacino:

The theme for the entire month-plus of celebrations is Existing Outside the Lines: The Colors of Resistance. And I love building on last year's theme, which last year's theme was Black Resistance: Building Bridges and Navigating Barriers. Well, now we're going through this part of using art through the intersectionality of the theme, the rich diversity within the Black community. How much does that theme appeal and resonate to you?

Andi-Rose Oates:

Honestly, I really just resonated with the theme so much. Attending last year's Black History Month Kickoff event. It was my first time experiencing that as a freshman and I just remember I didn't know what it was too much, but I just was so in awe of just how Syracuse is able to not only put on that celebration, but also how the students were able to contribute so much of that celebration, because mainly it is student run, student planned and whatnot. So, I just thought it was such a cool thing to see.

And now, coming back this year and seeing the same thing from last year, but 10 times more, was such an even cooler experience. So, now it is something that I look forward to every single year. And the events throughout the month of February as well, I think, are such a cool thing for students to really get involved in. And also a way to signify that Black History Month isn't just focused on the 1st of February, and it really should be celebrated throughout the whole month, but also throughout the whole year. But I really think that the events and the programming that Syracuse does put on every single year really make a true statement to that.

John Boccacino:

If it were up to you, what are some ways you think we could build on this momentum from Black History Month to carry it over throughout the rest of the year?

Andi-Rose Oates:

That is a great question. I honestly think that we need to continue this momentum by hosting more programming like this. I would say that 119 Euclid has done a lot with their efforts to really just be a safe space, especially for students of color here on Syracuse's campus, to allow them just to come in and use their facility, or they have amazing events that happen throughout the rest of the year as well. So I think people, it's really a community thing. So, I think that people need to also do their due diligence and making themselves more culturally aware, culturally friendly and allowing themselves to experience these events outside of just, like you said, the 28 or 29 days that are for Black History Month. But really, it's a thing that has to happen throughout the entire year.

John Boccacino:

It's really been a powerful conversation here. I want to thank our guest, Andi-Rose Oates. Andi, you are a role model for our students on this campus.

Andi-Rose Oates:

Thank you so much. And I hope that anyone hearing this is, whether you're a student, whether you're a parent, alum, whatnot, I really hope that this encourages people to not only get more involved, but also to put themselves out there more as well. I would say that if I didn't put myself out there a year ago, that I wouldn't be in this situation that I am now, and I wouldn't enjoy my overall college experience, Syracuse experience, as I had so far, if I wasn't allowing myself to be in these different spaces, different settings, and to try out these different experiences. So, definitely take advantage of all of it and I'm sure it will pay off.

John Boccacino:

Wise words. Andi, thank you for joining us again on the podcast and keep up the great work.

Andi-Rose Oates:

Thank you for having me.

John Boccacino:

Thanks for checking out the latest installment of the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast. My name is John Boccacino, signing off for the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast.