

9-28-2021

Symbols of Solidarity

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eCommons Citation

Spina, Eric F., "Symbols of Solidarity" (2021). *President's Blog: From the Heart*. 281.
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Symbols of Solidarity

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Tuesday September 28, 2021

By Eric F. Spina

Destiny Watson '20 shared a photo on Instagram after Saturday's joyful, tearful dedication of the NPHC Legacy Terrace that features nine granite pillars symbolizing the contributions of Black fraternities and sororities on our campus.

This project came to life because Destiny and three other students — Tre Lamarr, Kenosha Robinson-Washington, and Jordyn Mitchell — dreamed it, advocated for it, and then worked to help make it happen.

"This still seems surreal. UD will forever be in my heart," Destiny wrote on Instagram after the ceremony. "From presenting the pitch in 2018 to the fruition of the NPHC (National Pan-Hellenic Council) Monuments in 2021, we have truly made history. To have led this charge as the original four, we turned our dreams and vision into a reality. The NPHC Legacy Terrace is a milestone that will last forever. My heart is overjoyed and full."

My heart filled with joy, too, when I looked out over the crowd of hundreds of alumni who attended the celebration in Kennedy Union Plaza as part of Black Alumni Weekend. These historical markers hold such deep meaning. Because of the historically modest population of Black students on campus, the Black Greek letter organizations have lacked visibility despite their importance to these students. Therefore, to our Black students and alumni, the monuments say “you are part of the tapestry of our community. You and your voices matter.”

That message came across loud and clear at the dedication, which featured representation from all of our historically Black Greek letter organizations, whose members formed in clusters in the plaza, set apart by their colorful jackets with crests. A few whoops and cheers punctuated the cool autumn air.

“These monuments here today serve as a reminder and a place of education for those who may not know that Black students are here. That they are thriving and they are making an impact,” said Alexandra Smith ‘14, assistant director of fraternity and sorority life at UD.

In her blessing, the Rev. Renita Green, associate director of religious diversity and ecumenical ministry called the monuments “symbols of solidarity.” Later, the Rev. Dustin Pickett, director of multi-ethnic education and development, led the audience in a “libation dedication,” an ancient African ritual involving pouring water into a vessel and offering short prayers that recognize God’s presence and the interconnectedness of life.

Literally tens of thousands of people each academic year pass through the Kennedy Union Plaza, the most highly traveled pathway through campus. With the NPHC Legacy Terrace, we are making a statement about the kind of university we are striving to be. True to the Marianist charism and the work of the Marianists over many generations, we want diversity, equity, and inclusion to be at the heart of our mission as we work to give a sense of belonging to all members of our campus community.

No one says that better than Destiny: “It shows that we belong, we’re seen, and heard.”