

WHOS WHO: UZOMA ORCHINGWA '14

Junior films documentary on the Hill



NAME/THE COLBY ECHO

Uzoma Orchingwa decided to become more involved on campus after responding to a controversial Digest post.

Orchingwa noted that students of color often have conversations about race and inequality behind closed doors. In his film, he wanted to capture their strong opinions about their role, or lack thereof, on the Hill.

Orchingwa hopes to bring to light the general experience of black students on campus and appeal to the administration to take a more active role in addressing biases and issues of discrimination. Through a series of interviews and with the help of fellow students, Orchingwa captured the stories and experiences of many of his peers.

The College has been moving in the right direction, according to Orchingwa, who cited the Multicultural Affairs Committee and the facilitation of multi-faith and race conversations as positive developments. He also believes that being a student at the College has been an immense privilege. "Where else can an American student can sit across a lunch table and converse with an Afghan or Israeli student? Imagine what the impact that a change in the way we perceive each other could do?"

But there is still work to be done, he said. Orchingwa sees the Civil Digest as a means to actively engage with and challenge the College's policies on addressing campus-wide issues like the role of the Student Government Association (SGA) on campus. He also reiterated the importance of student activism. "Imagine if the President were to make an official statement acknowledging and pledging to address issues of race, Bowdoin would take the cue, so would Bates, then New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC), an entire domino effect."

As part of the Black History Month events, *Black on the Hill* will be screened as part of the "Ebony Threads in the Colby Tapestry: The State of Black Colby 2013 Discussion on the Hill" on the Feb. 25 at 4 p.m. in the Pugh Center.

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NEWS STAFF

Uzoma Orchingwa '14's film *Black on the Hill* was born out of the desire to attain a better understanding of the College and carve out a niche within its increasingly diverse ecosystem.

Orchingwa, a philosophy and sociology double major, wanted to fully comprehend the journey of black students at the College and capture a story that often remains misunderstood or unacknowledged. Inspired by his own internal conflict of whether to define himself or be defined as African or African-American, Orchingwa decided to explore the experiences of other black students on the Hill, using the history of student activism as a reference.

The College has a long history of students advocating for equality and fairness. Milestone events include the occupation of the Chapel in 1970 by a group of African-American students demanding that imbalances between black and white students be addressed, and Jacqueline Nunez '61's campaign against discrimination in fraternities and sororities.

Learning about the College's past and present culture of student activism, Orchingwa found that he was able to better understand the racial dynamics on the Hill and seek out ways to have a positive impact on campus.

Orchingwa was born in Chicago to Nigerian parents. When he was six months old, he moved back to Nigeria and later returned to West Hartford, Conn. at age ten. In his first year on campus, Orchingwa realized that his experiences were not meeting his expectations. He had envisioned the College as a close-knit hub of intellectual conversations on issues of social and global relevance; a platform where he could engage with colleagues and professors and navigate the world in a more informed way. "It appeared as though intellectual discussions seemed to end when the class ended, so naturally I fell

into the 'mainstream' college route," he said.

Fortunately, he said, his apathy did not last for long. In his sophomore year he responded to a Civil Digest post that criticized affirmative

action. Orchingwa defended his belief that affirmative action was a necessary attempt to address issues of privilege and inequality. His response was controversial and generated a heated debate. Orchingwa realized that there were people on campus who, like him, were searching for stimulating conversations.

Black on the Hill stemmed from the Civil Digest debate. "I'm concerned about the next black student who is going to have my experience—that white student who will not engage," he said.

Orchingwa noted that students of color often have conversations about race and inequality behind closed doors.