

Diversity Spotlight: Rose Brewer delivers more than a timeline

It's beneficial for everyone in society to learn about black history, not just those of African descent. It's important for people to realize the centrality of African-American history and how it shaped and defined American history.

- Rose Brewer, Minnesota Daily, February 2009

"Expect to be wowed." That's Ramsey County Diversity Specialist Jonna Shelomith prediction for the Feb. 27 Black History Month event presentation by University of Minnesota professor Rose Brewer, "B. K. Bruce to Barack Obama and Back Again...Black History Makers in American Politics."

"Dr. Brewer makes history come alive. This is not going to be how you remember high school history class," said Shelomith.

"I appreciate the title, 'B. K. Bruce to Barack Obama,'" said Brewer, looking forward to providing the noon-hour educational experience. "It can be filled-in from Reconstruction to the current moment," she said. Although Brewer will have only a short timeframe for such a long timeline, the scope provides an opportunity to share what she describes as "a lot of history that remains untaught."

But don't come to her lecture expecting to hear a series of names and dates. You won't find a straight-line story of achievement either. Instead, Brewer promises a multi-layer, compelling story that incorporates the historical context. Get ready to hear the backstory of what were the country's needs, desires, and political pressures at that time in history. "Things are not as they appear on the surface," she said.

Also enthusiastically recommending this event, Ramsey County Diversity Specialist Marisol Chiclana-Ayala added, "I remember when I was taking a class from her that Dr. Brewer was so knowledgeable, so smart, so intelligent, and at the same time, every day we were in class, she was so willing to share her wisdom with each one of us students."

This year the University's African and African-American Studies Department is celebrating its 40th anniversary, tracing its roots back to the Morrill Hall takeover in 1969. Recently Brewer facilitated a related youth conference, "Standing on the Shoulder's of Giants," which included an intergenerational conversation on political activism. In coverage of that event, she wrote, "Political generations are not just about age, but about coming to political age at a particular political moment."

Whether Brewer will bring political generations into her talk on African-American politicians will be left for the audience to discover on Feb. 27.

Brewer, a faculty member in the African and African-American Studies Department, is a self-described scholar-activist. Well known for her commitment to issues of social transformation, she is the co-author of "The Color of Wealth" and writes extensively on black families, black women, class and gender, race, and political change. She has been quoted as saying that she has always been drawn to "people who refuse to accept the status quo."

Facts and Stats:

- Rose Brewer presents "B. K. Bruce to Barack Obama and Back Again...Black History Makers in American Politics"
Musical entertainment by Gary Hines featuring Doris Hines
Friday, Feb. 27, noon to 1 p.m., Court House basement, Room 42
Bring your own lunch.

This is the final Black History Month event presented during February for Ramsey County and City of Saint Paul employees. Members of the planning committee were Shirley Pierce, Jonna Shelomith, Marisol Chiclana-Ayala, and Kathy Henderson from Ramsey County Human Resources, and Kelly Barto, Angela Burkhalter, Paul Gertsen, Abdinasir Museid, Angela Nalezny, Matt Reinartz, Cory Rucker, Anne Weber, and Beth Yue representing the City of Saint Paul.

- The New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture offers the online exhibit "African-Americans and American Politics: A multimedia survey of African-Americans' quest for freedom, justice, and equality over more than 200 years." Find it at [nypl \[dot\] org/research/sc/sc.html](http://nypl.org/research/sc/sc.html).
- "King in Minnesota: The Lost 1959 Broadcast" features L. Howard Bennett, Minnesota's first African-American judge, interviewing Martin Luther King Jr. You can view a clip from the original KTCA production on the "Almanac" Feb. 20 show archive available on the Twin Cities Public Television website or watch the entire program on TPT 2.2 digital (Comcast channel 243 in St. Paul) at 10 p.m. on Feb. 25 and at 4 a.m. on Feb. 26.
- Minnesota's historic African-American politicians – along with fur trader George Bonga, first black woman lawyer Lena Smith, and other notable people and state events – are included in the documentary "North Star: Minnesota's Black Pioneers." The 2004 production will be rebroadcast on TPT 2.2 at 8 p.m. on Feb. 25 and at 2 a.m. on Feb. 26. TPT also offers an interactive website for this documentary with highlights, a timeline, lesson guides, and discussion guides.

*- Diversity Spotlight is compiled by Kathy Henderson, Programs Assistant
Diversity and Organizational Unit, Ramsey County Human Resources Department*