



UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME

ARTS & LETTERS



2021

SENIOR THESIS PROJECTS

Study everything. Do anything.SM

**Rae'Vonne Barnes**

- Majors: Africana Studies and Psychology
- Advisors: Maria McKenna and David Lapsley

Rap Gets a Bad Rap: The Effects of Rap on Mental Health Stigma

My research project seeks to understand rap as a form of music therapy. It includes a questionnaire and a qualitative interview to determine the amount of mental health stigma at the University of Notre Dame and whether gangsta rap and confessional rap can decrease that mental health stigma and increase the likelihood of students seeking professional mental health help.

Although there is a plethora of research claiming rap has negative effects on listeners, I believe that rap is capable of having positive effects. I thought of using rap as a positive force once I realized there has recently been an increase in the number of rap artists who talk about mental health in their songs. I realized that these artists have the capability to spread awareness about mental health and mental health treatment to listeners.

**Tonaysia Price**

- Majors: Africana Studies and Sociology
- Minor: Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- Advisor: Mark Sanders

Initiative on Race and Resilience

My yearlong senior capstone allowed for what Paolo Freire coined “praxis,” putting theory to practice. Over the course of the year, I assisted Mark Sanders, director of the Initiative on Race and Resilience, with research, benchmarking, and outreach projects related to the University’s newest efforts on race, racial identity, and resilience.

This project was an ideal way to round out my studies in Africana studies. It provided me with experiences that honed my professional writing, communication, and project-management skills.

**Malik Tropez**

- Major: Africana Studies
- Minor: Collaborative Innovation
- Advisor: Maria McKenna

Design for Good: Sharing the Readiness Center with the World

My project is a collaboration with the Readiness Center in Benton Harbor, Michigan, an early childhood and family programming center serving historically under-resourced families. Working to combine my expertise in Africana studies and collaborative design, I assisted the Readiness Center with new and expanded graphic art, including logos and communication designs.

I was excited to combine my major and minor to produce something of value to the world. When we think about being a “force for good” as Notre Dame students, this is exactly what it means — being able to understand and represent nonprofit organizations in meaningful and culturally sustaining ways.

**Tia Wilson**

- Majors: Africana Studies and Management Consulting
- AnBryce Scholar
- Advisor: Maria McKenna

Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship: Empowering Students from Diverse Backgrounds

This project is a collaboration with the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship in St. Louis, Missouri. Through the collaboration, I was able to apply my understanding of the experiences of African American youth and how they relate to entrepreneurial activities and outlets for youth. Through student coaching, research, social media management, and grant writing, I used the skills and knowledge I gained in Africana studies to support the nonprofit's mission and constituent groups.

As a business and Africana major, I was interested in working at the intersection of business, community outreach, and Africana studies. The community I served was a group of high-achieving, low-income, majority African American high school students who were interested in entrepreneurship and the business world. This allowed me to give back to the community that raised me, while also cultivating a business acumen in students who have a similar background.