

# Griot

September/ October 2016  
Editor: Yasmine Amon  
Designer: Tina Nguyen



**BEAUTY IS  
MORE THAN  
EXTERNAL**

- Ratu appearing under this month's student spotlight
- Who doesn't love free food and football?
- Emotional rollercoaster trip in Estes Park
- It's not always about winning
- Students voice their opinions on heavy topics



**Who's taking the spotlight for this month?**



**Creating life long memories**



**Crowning the new faces**



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:

## RATU MARUTLE

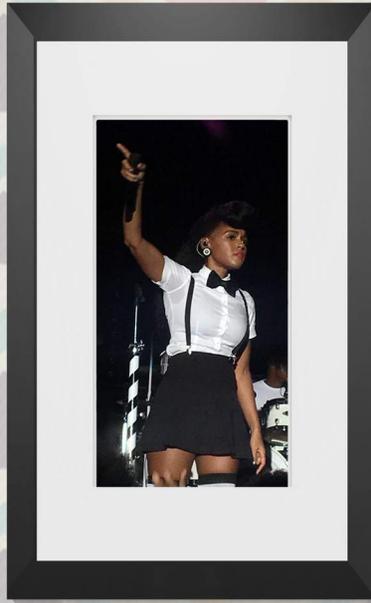
WRITTEN BY: YASMINE AMON AND PICTURES TAKEN BY: RATU MARUTLE

The Afropunk Fest is a music festival that takes place in Brooklyn, New York over the summer. While the focus is on music, the festival also showcases, integrates and expresses black and African American culture through a variety of mediums. Music is performed by locals as well as some big names in music such as Janelle Monet and Ice Cube. Street art and professional art work is shown through the Art and Times event and political and social issues are highlighted on Activism Row. Black owned or black inspired businesses sold their goods and promoted their brands at the Spin Thrift Market and food was enjoyed at Bites and Beats. The best part about going to festivals like this is seeing people of color express themselves without holding back which must have been so inspiring! Going to a festival or any event that is

centered around our culture is not something that we get to do often, especially living in Colorado and so Ratu shared what it was like to be there.

**What was it like planning the trip, finding a place to stay (in one of the most expensive cities in the world!) and flying out to New York?**

“I heard about the Afropunk Fest last year when it happened in Atlanta” she explained. “The artists that would be performing were posted online and originally I wanted to see Janelle Monet” who is one of Ratu’s favorite singers “but I knew a lot of the artists on the line up. The performers had a lot of Alternative R&B sounds and the New Wave that incorporates a lot of sounds and genres. I’ve actually been to New York before” she ad-



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:

## RATU MARUTIE

genres. I've actually been to New York before" she admitted "I visited my family over the summer. I went with my friend, so it was just the two of us and we got a place on AirBnB. Where we stayed was a little sketchy and the people looked intimidating" she cringed thinking about it. "My phone died when we got off the plane which was scary!" she laughed now, looking back. I asked Ratu if she would ever want to live in New York and she said "no, I like Colorado. I like my space. Also a lot of people that do live there said they don't really like it."

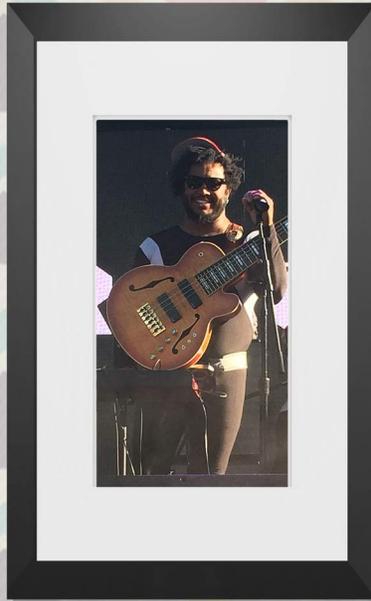
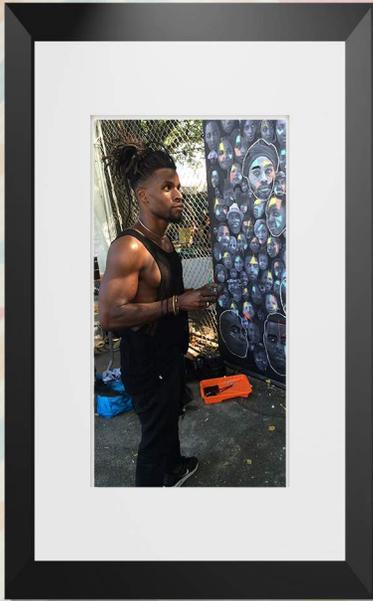
### **What was it like when you arrived at the festival?**

"I had never been to a festival before so I didn't know what to wear. Next time I want to dress cool, but I did have people ask to take pictures with me because of my

purple braids! It hurt standing up for so long but I tried to stay in the moment." Nowadays when people go to events they post every second of it on Snapchat, Instagram, or go live on Facebook but Ratu "avoided posting on Snapchat and taking too many pictures because this moment wouldn't happen again."

### **What was it like to be surrounded by artistic and free spirited people?**

"I saw Janelle Monet which was pretty cool!" she said, lighting up at the memories. "I love what she does. My favorite songs from her is Electro-lady and Say You'll Go. I liked her interludes at the show because it tied into the stories she told and the theme of her concert. She was wheeled out in a chair



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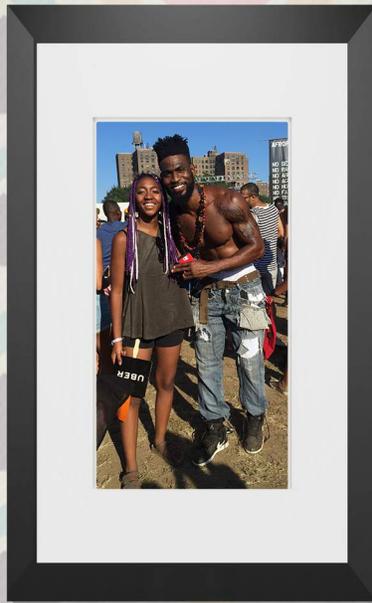
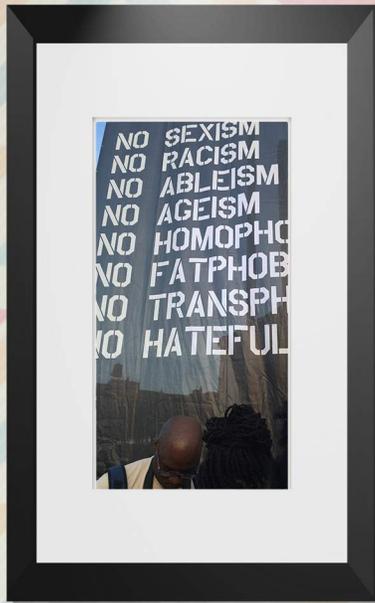
## RATU MARUTIE

She was wheeled out in a chair with a strait jacket on then she broke out and sang her songs. There were two songs she sang that most people didn't know unless you were a true fan, like me!" she laughs. The best way to experience new things is to go out of your comfort zone and Ratu did just that. "I tried to see artist I didn't know about or hadn't seen before. It got pretty frustrating because really tall people would stand in the front when there were shorter people in the back!" she said as she expressed her annoyance. "I got to see Ice Cube, but only for a little while. A rock band called Bad Brains went an hour over schedule and cut into Ice Cube's performance! A South African singer from the U.K., Laura, sang R&B songs. I liked her because she had a really good voice and stayed true to herself. It showed she

really wanted to be there. She played a guitar-keyboard instrument while she sang and her brother is in the group too. Some people were really into the concert, jamming and vibing out, and other people were just standing there. I was wondering, why are you taking up space?! For people like me coming out of state, I wanted to take it all in."

**You have a very unique style when it comes to your clothes, hair and accessories. Did you purchase anything that will add to your wardrobe?**

"At one booth I bought three stickers of little black girls who were all different in their own way. One girl was light skinned with blonde hair, it's like she represented Albinism. Everything was custom made and



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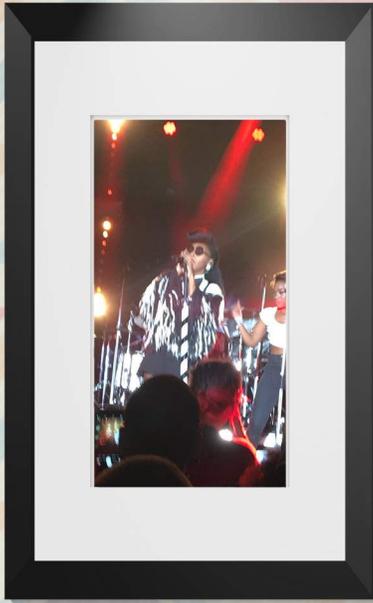
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the lady at the booth also sold jewelry, pins and other things. A booth that caught my eye was for beaded jewelry which reminded me of African jewelry, and to me beads are important because I'm from South Africa and so I bought a red and orange beaded bracelet."

**Being an African American women and the struggles our community has faced, what was this experience like for you on a deeper level? How did it feel to have your people and culture celebrated?**

"I had to take a step back because you don't get to do this in Colorado. For me it was more about the festival than the city. The murals and street art were really cool. On one mural they posted faces on a blank wall with pictures of people associated with the festival; I'm not

sure if they were famous but it seemed exclusive. Black women were very visible at the festival. I noticed white people wearing braids and dreads which I think is cultural appropriation. You can enjoy the show but don't try to take the lifestyle because taking a person's culture is not okay especially when it doesn't seem acceptable on the people who created it. I use to have locs but I didn't feel like it was widely accepted, and yet when people of other races wear it, it's seen as okay."



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:

## RATU MARUTIE

**Do you have any tips for going to events similar to this one?**

- Always be prepared for anything!
- Always have cash on you (because you might have to pay for a \$3 bottle of water)
  - Wear comfy shoes
- Always have someone with you. Inside the festival there wasn't any discrimination, but outside the festival people aren't always as welcoming. I got cat called a couple times, people would stare or make me feel uncomfortable.
  - Stay hydrated
  - Be in the moment!

# SDPS TAILGATE



VS.



The SDPS Tailgate was a great experience as it brought together different communities and identities that represent CSU. The food was amazing as well as the opportunity to meet and talk with other students. Everyone seemed to have a great time and many inclusive games were played. The best part of the event was actually going to the game and watching our football team beat the UNC Bears with a score of 41-27. Overall, we had a tremendous time and I'm looking forward to the next game!

Written by Ohonsi Ohimai and Pictures taken by: Tina Nguyen

# rites of passage retreat

Written by: Yasmine Amon and Pictures taken by: Staff members

I remember my first retreat as a freshman; excited to start college but not yet ready to step out of my comfort zone. You may hear the term “brave space” and “safe space” within the office and you might even hear it in a class or two. What I learned that year is that you may not always feel safe when you’re being brave but that is exactly what it means to step out into unknown territory. Being a staff member this time around, made the experience different in a way that fulfilled me without it being about me. I saw vulnerability, learned about new experiences, breathed in the fresh mountain air and woke up just as the sun was hitting the peak of the mountain tops. Laughter echoed, tears fell, powerful words were spoken and kind words were given as bonds formed and friendships grew among students and staff.



# FRIDAY

When the students and staff members arrived at Estes Park on Friday, you could feel the excitement. Students rushed to find their rooms and meet their roommates for the weekend and the anticipation grew as questions were asked about what we would be doing and what new experiences would be discovered. We started the retreat off the best way; with food! The tacos made by the B.E.S.T Staff were delicious and definitely beat anything the dorms could offer. While most people may think of the B/AACC Office staff as students who only work together, we like to think of ourselves as family and that is exactly how we introduced ourselves! You know the catchy tune “It’s the B/AACC Office Family, who we introducing??” if you’ve been on the retreat in previous years or with a different spin at your own family reunion. After the introductions Mrs. Bridgette Johnson formally introduced herself (after she had popped, locked and dropped it!) and also introduced our Assistant Director Duan Ruff and our Retention Specialist Ivan Hubbard. All other staff members were introduced as well from the Lead Peer Coordinators and mentors to the I.C.As, the graphic designer, and myself, the editor.

We played an ice breaker lead by Adrian Jones and Jhasmyne Cooper-Moore which became very competitive and even had the B.E.S.T Staff form a team to compete against the first year students. (Of course the B.E.S.T staff won!) After the fun we broke off into identity groups to have in depth discussions about what it means to you to be a part of that group or what you would like to learn about a certain group. The options were African American, African and Biracial which were split by gender of male and female. There was also a QPOC group which stands for queer person of color. I chose to go into the African identity group and it was great to hear the stories of other students. A few had moved from countries such as Ghana, Nigeria and Rwanda while others were born and raised in the U.S but had a strong tie to their home country. I was pleased to see that some students, who had no idea where their roots connected to within Africa, were curious to learn. We came back together into a large group and shared what we had learned from our small groups.

Just when some students thought we were going back to fun games, Mrs. B introduced an emotional activity called “Never want to Hear.” I believe one of the most powerful things is being in a room full of people who are willing to be vulnerable with each other. It takes a lot of strength and courage to share parts of yourself that even you are afraid of or uncomfortable with. Voices were heard, some loud and commanding, others soft and gentle as a feather. Tears rolled down faces while others held back the urge to cry but regardless of how students and staff reacted to the situation, there was someone to hold them. Hug them. Give them a smile or a kind word. It took me a while to learn that tears are not a sign of weakness but proof that you are going through something and yet you’re still pressing on. So if you are reading this, I encourage you to be vulnerable at least once today. Be honest about how you really feel when someone asks how you are.

You might be pleasantly surprised at the outcome.



# SATURDAY/SUNDAY

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Duan lead a hike bright and early in the morning and I didn't go because sleep is my best friend but I wish I had because I heard the atmosphere was so calming and the mountain view was breathtaking. There was also full internet connection on the top of the hill they climbed! (If you've ever been to the mountains you know the struggle is real with that connection!)

After breakfast and some time to mingle, the first year students were broken up into groups to create a skit based on situations college students could encounter during their first year. This was a great bonding exercise and it allowed everyone involved to bring out their creative side. As one of the judges, I enjoyed all the performances but the winning title went to Ally Johnson's team also known as Team Average!

Jumping back into more pressing topics about racial tension our community faces today and Blacks in the history was started off by the captivating poems of Sametra Woods, Jordan Logan and Arisson Stanfield. First year students once again split into groups for a mini history lesson. The Transatlantic Slave Trade, American Slavery (Pre and Post 1865) and Modern Day systematic oppression were the main topics. We shared what we learned in a big group before splitting off into our afternoon activities such as Horseback Riding, Outdoor Adventures, Crafts and Archery. If you've ever been in the office, you've probably noticed the group picture of the retreat from every year dating back to 1988. This year it was our turn and despite the chill and windiness we still managed to take great group pictures! Right after pictures was the Challenge Course lead by Jordan Logan and Ahonsi Ohimai which was a success with the first year students who learned how to work as a team. Later that night we had dinner prepared by our grilling staff member Duan, followed by a talent show and s'mores over an open fire. The talent show was great fun and showcased many talents such as dance, singing, spoken word, stepping and comedy. (If you have time on your hands you should ask Olivia to tell you a story). If you were energetic enough to stay up, then you probably participated in a game of hide and seek or Spoons but if you're anything like me you probably went straight to sleep!

Students rose bright and early on Sunday morning, and we ended the long weekend with a reflection and a continuing tradition called Penny for Your Thoughts.

Thank you to all the students, staff and faculty members who made this retreat possible.



# BEAUTY *in* COLOR

The Homecoming Pageant was a great night that showcased the talents of brilliant black/ African American students. Daveion Oliver was crowned Homecoming King and Alexis Jo'Von Gwin was crowned Homecoming Queen! The crowd, as well as the judges were mesmerized by Alexis who skillfully played the flute, while Daveion hyped the crowd up with his original gospel rap. Tobe and Simbi Umwali both won Ram's Choice and Lamine Kane won Congeniality. A big well done to all the contestants who participated!



**SAMETRA WOODS AND MOHAMMED YORK  
(2015 HOMECOMING WINNERS)**



**THE CONTESTANTS FINISHED DANCING AND NOW THEY'RE INTRODUCING THEMSELVES**



**SIMBI UWALI**



**ALEXIS JO'VON GWIN**



**DAVEION OLIVER**

The pageant was hosted by the 2015 Mr. and Ms. CSU winners, Mohammed York and Sametra Woods. They both introduced our judges; Jolly Green-Palmer, Octavious Jones, Marina Martin, Xavier Hadley, Tamara Wesley and Dr. Albert Dimper Jr. The beautiful Aliyah Briggs opened the show by singing the Black National Anthem with her captivating voice. The contestants performed an opening dance to the song 'All we Got' and 'Drown' by Chance the Rapper, which was choreographed by Mohammed York. While we waited for contestants to change out of their coordinated dance gear into beach wear, Mohammed sang an impromptu version of My Girl by The Temptations and the crowd joined in. As contestants strutted their best beachwear, Mohammed read their favorite or most inspiring quotes. We saw a variety of outfits, from colorful max dresses, an African printed swimsuit, patterned swim trunks and even a missing shoe!

WRITTEN BY: YASMINE AMON  
PICTURES TAKEN BY: TINA NGUYEN

# REALITY *in* COLOR



The director of B/MACC Mrs. Bridgette Johnson, who looked very elegant in her black maxi dress, facilitated the interview portion of the pageant. The questions focused on current oppression that black people face in America. A few questions asked were “what is post traumatic slavery? What is cultural appropriation to you and how do you think it affects society? How does media’s representation of the black man affect how we see them and what challenges do you believe black women face today?” Students answered thoughtfully and used examples of personal experiences that the audience could relate to.



A variety of talents were presented such as dance, spoken word, singing and playing of instruments. Our Homecoming Queen, Alexis, played the flute which won points with the judges and the crowd. Her first song was about a young girl longing for the right man which was beautifully played. Listening to it was soothing and had the audience mesmerized. Her second song was one she had created called 'The Train Song' which surprised the audience by how quickly and effortlessly she played it and how much it sounded like a train! The Homecoming King, Daveion, performed an original gospel rap that had the crowd excited while also proclaiming his faith. It was upbeat, entertaining and even had audience members up and dancing. Three contestants danced for their talent, one was Tahani Mohamed who danced to an Egyptian song to acknowledge her country. Erica Bishop performed a cheer routine and Jaela Poythress danced to a mashup of three songs. All the ladies were energetic and fun to watch. Karrenasia Barely sang 'Black Bird' by Nina Simone and explained that she chose this song because it connected to her childhood. Powerful words were shared by Simbi Umwali in her spoken word, and Lamine Kane through his monologue. Simbi shared a poem she wrote titled 'Dear Black Child' and set the tone by asking the audience “have you ever hated your skin?” The crowd was silent during her poem, listening to every word and broke out into applause in the end. Lamine performed a monologue about a child that grew up without a father which was very moving and he ended it by telling the audience “Whoever you are missing in your life, remember that you have people that want you in their lives.”



# REALITY *in* COLOR

During intermission, while the judges calculated the contestant scores, Aliyah Briggs performed two original songs which were just as beautiful as the national anthem she sang at the beginning of the show. Sametra Woods did a spoken word which received a huge applause and Mohammed York performed a dance that was chilling but wonderful. Ms. Bridgette announced the Black/African American Cultural Center and El Centro's 10th anniversary that will be coming up in the following week before acknowledging our former Homecoming Kings and Queens from previous years. In the end Daveion Oliver and Alexis Jo'Von Gwin were crowned and were given flowers, a gift basket full of certificate from local businesses and a cash prize of \$200 each! They will both be in the Homecoming Parade as well as taking part in B/AACC events as the year continues. All the other contestants were given certificates that were presented by their escorts. Overall it was a great show! Congratulations to all the contestants and a big thanks to the D.E.S.T staff, especially to Ivan Hubbard, Dawnae Dent and Tina Nguyen who worked hard to make the show a success.

The formal walk allowed contestants to dress their best and to be escorted by a special someone whether they be a friend, a significant other, a sibling like Simbi, or a parent like Alexis. All the contestants looked stunning in their formal attire.



KARRENASIA BARELY

DAVEION OLIVER



ALEXIS JO'VON GWIN

TOBE



LAMINE KANE

ERICA BISHOP



DAVEION AND ALEXIS FOR MR. & MS. CSU 2016



AWARDED CONTESTANTS: SIMBI, DAVEION, ALEXIS, LAMINE, AND TOBE

# Real Talk: Aug.-Sept. 2016

Hosted by Ratu Marutle and Arisson Stanfield  
Every Tuesday 4pm-5pm

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Topic: The Black Experience at a P.W.I (Predominately White Institute)  
Date: Aug 30th, 2016

Q: “Do you think it is our job to educate people on our culture?”

A: “We have no obligation to teach others but if we want to progress, we have to be willing.”  
- Isaiah Martin

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Topic: Kaepernick vs. America  
Date: Sept 6th, 2016  
“No one has a right to ask a black person to stand up during the national anthem.”  
- Arisson Stanfield

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Topic: What's on your mind?  
Date: Sept 27th, 2016  
Q: “What do you think about the stigmatization of mental health in black communities?”  
A: “In the black community there is lot of ‘what happens in the house stays in the house’. Also what could be considered abuse is usually labeled as tradition.”  
- Amanda West

“

Topic: Abuses and Excuses  
Date: Sept 13th, 2016  
“Black women shy away from reporting abuse and rape because they don't want to perpetuate the stereotype and put another black man behind bars.”  
- Tricia Alexander

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Topic: G.O.A.T Hip Hop Legends  
Date: Sept 20th, 2016  
“Is the Greatest of All Time someone who has dabbled well in everything or excels in one area of expertise?”  
-Anonymous

# September / October

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			19 BSA STUDY NIGHT	20 R.O.P. OUTING	21	22 GPS
23	24	25	26 UMC WEEK 11/24 - 11/29		28	29
30 TASTE OF AFRICA	31	NOVI REAL TALK	2	3	4	5 BSA SKATE NIGHT
6 GPS GIVES BACK	7	8 REAL TALK	9 UWC WEEK 11/7 - 11/11	10	11	12 GPS UWC ALL WHITE PARTY
13 UWC CONCERT	14	15 REAL TALK	16	17	18	19



Colorado State University

BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER