

Room and dining changes effect students
Page 2



VPAS hosts red flag campaign with K9 Jules
Page 5



Women's soccer beat Post University
Page 6

SOUTHERN NEWS

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Reflecting on Ricci v. DeStefano event

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

The historic affirmative action case Ricci v. DeStefano, which involved the promotion tests and practices of the New Haven Fire Department, on April 22, 2009.

Firefighters filed a lawsuit against Mayor DeStefano and the City of New Haven, claiming that race was an undue influence in the hiring process. In a 5–4 decision split on June 29, 2009, the Supreme Court ruled in Ricci's favor. According to the majority, the city had violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by eliminating exams.

Despite thecase being over a decade old, it still holds significance in today's world. For this reason, a reflection on the case was held in Engleman Hall. Staff, students and community members were able to attend Reflecting on Ricci v. DeStefano: Affirmative Action and its Status Today from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

The discussion provided deeper insight into the case's implications as well as the legal and political climate surrounding affirmative action today.

Jonathan Wharton, associate professor of political science and urban affairs, moderated a discussion between Frank Ricci and former mayor John DeStefano Jr. to launch the forum.



PHOTO | WADE BARILLARO

Guest speakers Carol Platt Liebau, Tolulope Odunsi-Nelson and Julian Madison.

"The fact is, at the end of this case, when Victor Bolden, the Honorable Judge, came in, they came to the table with good faith on how we can resolve this issue, and how can we have a conversation and move this forward," Ricci said.

Following the debrief, a panel featuring local legal and academic experts, led by Theresa Merchant–Shapiro, a professor in the political science department, discussed affirmative action.

Judge Victor A. Bolden of the United States District Court (District Judge of Connecticut), Professor Tolulope Odunsi–Nelson of Western New England University, Carol Platt Liebau of the Yankee Institute, and Julian Madison of the university were among the featured panelists.

Discrimination cases similar to the landmark case also have an impact in the workplace. Odunsi–Nelson said that in today's workplace setting, discrimination on the basis of race is harder to identify due to its high awareness of it being illegal.

"While society has transformed in its view of race, those who want to purposefully treat people disparately have also evolved and know how to do it in a way that perhaps can't be identified and can't be litigated in terms of the evidence itself," Odunsi–Nelson said.

With the possibility of there being a presence of intentional discrimination in the workplace and a lack of evidence, many workers remain silent about their injustices.

"There are potential workplace culture shifts where there's a chilling effect on the workplace," Odunsi–Nelson said. "They see their colleagues pursue claims and lose, and it can cause people to not come forward."

Along with unsuccessful cases, Odunsi–Nelson said colleagues have also been able to work in industries or fields that they were a part of due to a public lawsuit that they pursued.

While this factor can dim the light on discrimination in the workplace, Carol Platt Liebau said it is important to recognize the stipulations and efforts enforced to fight these grievances.

"It does show that America as a society has really taken it onboard to try and address these things. We would not have the enormous legal and regulatory framework that exists if we were not trying to express a commitment to not engage in invidious discrimination," Platt Liebau said.

Platt Liebau said that after Ricci's case, all parties involved, regardless of their different opinions, all had to return to their job, work together and go into burning buildings alongside one another.

"I sometimes wish we as Americans kept that in mind as well. That we are, in a sense, all part of the same country, and that as we discuss these matters when it's finished, we are all going to be responsible for confronting a lot of important issues together," Platt Liebau said.

Student Government Association 2024 election

By Solé Scott
Editor in Chief

Now is students' chance to run for a position with the Student Government Association, SGA, and make a difference on campus.

SGA is running an election campaign for representatives at large and class government.

The election form is open and will close Friday Oct. 4 at 12 p.m. After submitting students have until Oct.18 to campaign.

SGA held an interest meeting on Thursday, Sept. 19 in the Adanti Student Center in Room 305 from 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Psychology major Riyanna Singelton, a senior, is the new president after former SGA President Trevor Boczer graduated in the spring of 2024.

"So as president, I'm pretty much the figurehead for SGA," Singelton said.

Singelton has been in SGA for the last two years and knows the ins and outs of the club.

"I am a non–voting member, and I kind of just facilitate and run the body meetings, go to the board meetings and talk to administrators and faculty alongside my executive board," Singelton said.

There are 11 positions open for the election which Singelton is hoping all gets filled so SGA can have a full club.

Nursing major Hailey DeNucci, a sophomore, is the current secretary and has been with SGA since the fall of 2023.

"It's a way to kind of communicate all together and focus," DeNucci said.

Public health major Chekenah Jeudi, a junior, was one of the students that stopped by the interest meeting.

"I attended the meeting. I don't know much about SGA, so I wanted to get more information because Riyanna came to the event with Sigma Gamma Rho and BSU," Jeudi said.

In order to run for an open position, students need to fill out a packet through OwlConnect under SGA.

Students interested need to understand the time commitment. Each body member is expected to complete two hours of office hours a week in Adanti Student Center room 218.

"The election works with the election packets going up on OwlConnect. From then, you have about a week and a half to submit your application," Singelton said.

Students can run for representative at large and a class government position.

"The difference between class government and rep at large is rep at large deals with student government and student government is a non–programming body," Singelton said.

Representative at large students hold their positions for two years.

"We advocate on behalf of the students, whereas class council is a programming body and throws events for that class," Singelton said.

There are a few rules to campaign. Students are not allowed to hang up posters on other organizations' boards or where there is not a board for posters and ads.

"If you are thinking about it and you're unsure, try it," Singelton said. "We need your voices, and there is no one student that is perfect for student government. We want all students."

Associate Director Daphne Alston is one of the advisors for SGA.

She gave insight on some of the work the organizations does behind the scenes.

"SGA, multiple times over the course of the years has engaged in conversation about what the shuttle bus services look like for commuter students," Alston said.

SGA collaborates with different organizations every year and plan events.

"That's why we get these representatives from all these different populations, so they can put that on our radar and show us what else we could be doing," Singelton said.

SGA's body meetings are every Monday at 1 p.m. in Adanti Student Center room 217.

If any student has any questions or corncerns they are encouraged to stop by.



PHOTO | RIYANNA SINGELTON

The new Student Government Association E-Board for the fall of 2024.



PHOTO | SOLÉ SCOTT

Psychology major Riyanna Singelton, senior, is the new president of SGA.

Nursing major Hailey DeNucci, sophomore is the secretary for SGA.