

## Berea College Opening Convocation for 2021-2022

### My Berea Story

By Andrew Baskin

Good afternoon! I especially want to greet the class of 2022. You were the last students to have their first college classes of GSTR 110 and GSTR 210 at 8 a.m. with Mr. Baskin. Do you remember, “Whom Should We Serve?” Congratulations!

My Berea Story began in 1968 after I read a Berea College catalog in the guidance counselor’s office at Alcoa High School in Alcoa, Tennessee. At that time, I never imagined that over fifty years later, in 2019, I would retire from Berea College. So, we know the beginning and the ending of my Berea Story, allow me to focus upon what happened in between these events.

My Berea Story includes:

1. Linda Kash Sabino and Teresa Kash Davis, two Bereans from Menifee County, KY. One enrolled in my classes as a high school student and first-year student at Berea. The older sister (Teresa) was the driving force to endow the Andrew and Symerdar Baskin Student Research Fund. As a result, as Dr. Chad Berry stated, for perpetuity, there will be money available for students conducting research in African and African American Studies.
2. The student who reacted to failing the GSTR 210 research paper by writing, “I hope you enjoyed the satisfaction of failing a literate white individual, and would love a statistic on your history of grading based on level of intellectual writing and race.” She was reminding me that no matter how many awards or banners I have in front of the

- Alumni Building, some white folks still cannot bring themselves to accept instruction and assessment from me as a Black person.
3. My former faculty colleagues who worked with me on different committees and faculty meetings. Even though some of you believe that I am too chauvinistic, I am not and was not interested in winning any popularity contests. Hopefully, you respect me for my focus upon how to best achieve the foundational Great Commitments of Berea College: Interracial education, Appalachia, Coeducation, and Christianity.
  4. Monica, Alicestyne, Keith, and Dr. Val with whom I shared office space for seven years in the Dr. Carter G. Woodson Complex. We created an environment that was sometimes messy where Black students did not have to code switch. They were scholars who could be unapologetically Black.
  5. Every student who graduated with a major or minor in AFR. This includes Lyric, Melissa and Erica. Their contemporaries questioned what they could do with a degree in AFR. However, to paraphrase the words of Ilyah Hocker, they allowed me to show tough love and to push them to go above and beyond. I was tough on them, but they knew that I cared and wanted them to be successful. What can you do with a degree in AFR? All are gainfully employed or enrolled graduate schools at WKU, UK, UC, UL, Tulane, Howard and OSU. Also, thank you to Dr. Jose Bey for being African and African American Studies's, most knowledgeable scholar and integral member of the team..

Before being asked to participate in this convocation, a Brenda Guy, a Berea College graduate asked me: what is my legacy at Berea College. Allow me to use the answer provided by Renessa

Whyte, a 2016 double major in COM and AFR who received a MBA from UL: “I guess I’d say your legacy would be in every student who is a better defender of their argument for having gone back and forth with you so much. It’s in every student who has learned to hold themselves to a higher standard both academically and generally. For having received a letter grade or so knocked off because of the alignment of their paper, having been kicked out of class for not doing the reading, not being allowed to enter the class once it had started. Your legacy is in the students who pushed through and finished what they started or added a major or minor because they knew they had your support, encouragement, and/or tough love. It’s me, I am your legacy.”