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All Time

News

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Poll

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Scholar wins grant to fund civil rights book and exhibition

By [Natalie Ingleby](#)
Staff Writer

A scholar for UMBC's Center for Art, Design and Visual Culture has been awarded a grant worth \$400,000 to fund a website, book, and exhibition which examines the history of the fight for civil rights across America.

Dr. Maurice Berger, the project manager, curator, and author of *For All the World to See*, received the America's Historical and Cultural Organizations: Implementation Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, which has also deemed the project a "We the People" work. These projects are deemed gestures which are encouraging and strengthen the teaching, study and understanding of American history and culture. Berger is currently the adjunct curator of UMBC's Fine Arts gallery.

The project has been organized in partnership with the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C. and is due to be unveiled on May 12, 2010 at the International Center of Photography in New York. The project features an exhibition, website, and a book written by Dr. Berger, *For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, published by Yale University Press. The exhibition will be featured in a festival and public program at the New York Public Library later in 2010, and will then tour museums nationwide, culminating at a display at the UMBC Center for Visual Arts in fall 2012.

Dr. Berger's work comes at a time when race relations are still prominent in today's society. Writer Thulani Davis, who gives the foreword for *For All the World to See*, writes in her introduction that "we may all need this book as a guide to the present day representations of our larger-than-life president." She adds that "Berger's text and a superb collection of images spanning the second half of the 20th century gives us a guide to visual literacy in African American representation."

The work of Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, W.E.B. Du Bois, Roland Barthes and the art historian Rosalind Krauss, Berger's mentor throughout his undergraduate and graduate studies, has been the main influence on his creativity. The inspiration for this work, however, lies a lot closer to home. "My father was a civil rights supporter before most whites even acknowledged the movement, so my initial inspiration comes from the dialogue that I had with my father in the 1960s as a young child," he says. Dr Berger has been writing on and curating the topic of American race relations for the past 25 years.

Berger says he has had a continuous attraction to political art and has long been interested in the connection between visual culture and the society at large. *For All The World To See* explores an even more compelling issue for me: how visual images, from photographs and magazines to television and film, can alter prevailing attitudes and thinking about politics, culture, and broader social issues," he says.

Berger has been published in a number of other areas, writing about the U.S. Supreme Court for the *Village Voice* in the 1990s, and discussing race relations in the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times*. Perhaps most significantly, his memoir about life in a predominantly black and Hispanic housing project in New York, *White Lies*, is assigned as a text in sociology, political science, literary studies and African-American studies. "I've always been a big supporter of interdisciplinary studies, so I guess I practice what I preach," Berger adds.



Abnet Shiferaw - TRW

Dr. Maurice Berger's project examining the history of civil rights will go on display May 12, 2010. 10

[Enlarge Photo](#)

Although primarily viewed as a "science school," do you think the University should increase its spending in the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences?

- Yes!
- Yes, but let's wait until our budget situation is looking brighter.
- No, we should devote our funds to further build upon UMBC's strong reputation in the sciences.
- No, we shouldn't spend any additional money on either.

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Last Week's Poll

Do you feel as if UMBC is doing enough to make itself more environmentally friendly?

- Yes (61)
- No (66)
- I don't know (34)

Latest Issue

Despite being awarded the grant, Berger feels that UMBC favors the science-related fields over the humanities. "Given the relative success of some of the humanities programs at UMBC—here at CADVC, for example, we have a national, indeed, international following. We're keeping up with the sciences in terms of grants, we are continually the subject of national press. It's my hope that the humanities will finally get the attention we deserve at UMBC. Yes, our science and math programs are superlative; but so are our humanities departments and centers."

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