Faculty Reflections of Trayvon Martin: One Year Later

Before I came to Boston College, I worked for [New York Rudy] Giuliani’s administration on civil rights cases filed against the New York City Police Department. In this capacity, I specialized in the kind of police interactions that make front page headlines—just like the tragedy of Trayvon Martin, which happened a year ago. One of the things I realized on this job was institutional change doesn't just happen overnight. It happens because some relentless voice demands it. Now that I have been on the campus of Boston College for 3 years, I’ve not heard many demands from anybody for anything.

Since I have been [a part of AADS faculty], I have designed several courses that reveal the role of protest music in American history. Last year just before Trayvon's murder, several students [in my classes] explained how BC students, in general, are not the type to protest anything that doesn't impact them personally. Soon after the murder, I discovered that some students participated in a demonstration to protest the state's failure to arrest and prosecute George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin.

Our outrage at this senseless tragedy is part and parcel of the story of the African American experience in the United States, which-thanks to the curriculum of AADS-is available for study at our illustrious institution. But all too often we have little time for our black peoples’ stories and all the time for the trinkets of success and arrival that should make this study seem obsolete.

One of the main reasons programs like AADS exist on this campus is to inform students of the diverse history of this country and continued on page 2

AADS introduces Voices of Imani Gospel Choir’s New Assistant Music Director, David Altenor

David Altenor is a multi-award winning artist, producer and songwriter. He has been involved in music ministry since the age of 14 when he began playing the piano for church and choirs. In 2010, was called to become an artist, bringing a new sound to the world that carries the message of God, love and inspiration through various genres of music. In 2012, he launched a music production company called KingdomSound Productions, LLC.

The organization creates positive music that strives to effect change. This company aims to spread global social change and improve communities around the world. Altenor is from Everett, MA and earned a degree in Theology from Boston College in 2009.

What do you want the Boston College community to know about you? Music and helping others are the things that I’m most passionate about. My BC experience has helped me to discover and foster that passion for global change. The school has an amazing spirit that has inspired me, and I’ve been on fire ever since that I encourage you to embrace as well.

continued on page 2
Many were amazed to see how after all of these years, there is enough interest in the story of American protests that this amazing monument was erected as a witness. And as excited as I am sure Dr. King would be to see this memorial, I’m certain that he would rather that it was not necessary. I’m sure he would rather see the monument of protest be new generations of young people who aren’t afraid to protest when the need arises.

But instead, we have to travel back to a time when we weren’t so eager to be mainstreamed. And just like the dinosaur casts we visited in the Smithsonian, maybe one day a whole wing of that museum will be devoted to activist students like those in generations past who once turned the world upside down, insisting that their voices be heard, about the American withdraw from an unjust war and that justice flow like a mighty stream.

Instead of identifying as protesters, we are content to be Facebookers, forgetting that when muscles that were designed for resistance lie dormant, atrophy sets in. It appears that a year after the Martin murder, we are no closer to seeing a generation of activist students than we were before it happened.

If Gil Scott-Heron were here to witness the state of our student activism, he might say: “this revolution will not be televised or tweeted. It will not go with UGG boots, and it will not go viral.” For all of our sakes, let’s hope we don’t miss it.

Read the unedited edition at bc.edu/aads/AADS_Newsletter.html

2012-2013 “Works in Progress” Lecture Series

Wednesday, April 10th
“Lapsed Africans: Unhappy Hybrids and Discontent Cosmopolitan in Zimbabwe’s Diaspora”
Siphiwe Gloria Ndlovu, AADS Dissertation Fellow
This presentation explores issues of identity and belonging in the Zimbabwean diaspora. Ndlovu discusses Brian Chikwaba's novel Harare North, which defines "Lapsed Africans" as individuals in the African Diaspora that have forgotten how to be African. This presentation will challenge, strengthen and unravel the ties that bind Africa to her Diaspora.

Wednesday, April 17th
“Acting Your Color: The Power and Paradox of Acting for Black Americans”
Professor Monica White Ndounou, Tufts University
How does the complex history of Black representation in theatre and film influence audience reception and performance?

Wednesday, April 24th
Lori Harrison-Kahan
Harrison-Kahan discusses Zora Neale Hurston’s essay “The ‘Pet Negro’ System,” a scathing critique of cross-racial relations tainted by white paternalism.

continued from page 1
VOI new Assistant Music Director, David Altenor

Aside from doing that, I love spending time with family, traveling and working out.

What advice would you give to students at BC?
As a BC alumnus, my advice to students would be to pray and pursue the visions and dreams that God has given you. Your gifts can impact the world, but the only way to get there is to step out on faith and move toward those dreams and visions that are on your heart.

For more information to keep updated on David’s schedule and projects, please visit his website at www.davidisoffkey.com.
On the night of Feb. 26th, Zimmerman was reportedly patrolling the gated community Retreat at Twin Lakes in Sanford, Fla. As Trayvon was reportedly heading back from a nearby corner store to rejoin his younger brother to watch the 2012 NBA All-Star festivities, Zimmerman assumed the teen was up to no good. Following procedure, Zimmerman radioed in Martin’s activity.

Even though Zimmerman was ordered to wait on the arrival of authorities before intervening, Zimmerman did not heed the orders, leading to a confrontation that tragically led to the killing of Trayvon Martin.

Claiming the wiry Martin attacked him, Zimmerman said he fired his weapon.

Trayvon Martin’s Memory Lives On One Year After Tragic Shooting Death

The killing galvanized national protest, with many wondering how an unarmed boy casually walking home from a convenience store could lose his life in such a flash. As the case began to unfold amid media speculation, a family was left shattered and openly grieving.

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Voices of the Diaspora

Introducing AADS Dissertation Fellow, Siphiwe Ndlovu, In her own words

The beginning of the twenty-first century has seen more people leave Zimbabwe to go to live in other countries – sometimes simply crossing the border to South Africa and Botswana – but, now more frequently settling in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, China and Australia.

My research examines how the makeup of the Zimbabwean diaspora has been shaped by a history of migration and movement in Zimbabwe. With Zimbabwe’s population of 14 million, the estimated 3-4 million Zimbabweans living outside the country have become a topic of interest for a growing number of scholars.

I am interested in exploring a shared identity. In order to do so, I turn to the idea of travel. Central to my thesis is that Zimbabwe is a well-traveled space, and those who inhabit it are marked by travel in addition to being marked by race, ethnicity, nation, gender and class. In my dissertation, I will situate the growing Zimbabwean diaspora within the larger context of pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial mass movements, settlements, and displacements in the region.

I put the Zimbabwean diaspora in a historical context to show that the country has always been “unsettled” because of the series of migrations, settlements, displacements and resettlements that have taken place throughout its history, that is, the controversial “Stand Your Ground” law as a basis for his actions.

After Trayvon’s murder, Zimmerman was not charged; instead, he was released after a brief police investigation. Trayvon’s parents, flanked by family attorney Benjamin Crump, led a loud chorus of protestors and garnered support from various media personalities and much of the nation. Social media campaigns were erected, with many wearing hoodies in honor of the slain Martin.

Read the rest of this article at newsone.com
From the Director’s Desk ---

I earned my graduate degrees in English from the University of Pennsylvania (“Penn,” NOT* “Penn State”) before starting work in Boston College’s English Department in 1998. I was honored to accept a joint appointment with our African & African Diaspora Studies Program (AADS) in 2006, and I am still honored. Under the leadership of Prof. Cynthia Young, AADS has become one of this university’s most distinguished interdisciplinary programs; this is a distinction I hope to solidify and extend as AADS Director (2009 to the present).

In addition to teaching courses on Afro-Caribbean, African Diaspora, and pan-Caribbean literatures and cultures, my research interests include contemporary popular fiction (speculative, horror, detective, and mystery fictions), Post-colonial Studies, Cultural Studies, and narratives of migration. If you take a look at my research, you’ll see an interesting combination of personal, intellectual, and political interests.

The origins for my book, “Colón Man a Come”: Mythographies of Panamá Canal Migration, were very personal. My maternal and paternal grandparents were from the Caribbean (St. Lucia with a dash of Jamaica), but both of my parents were born and raised in Panamá. These histories drew me to the literatures of the English-speaking Caribbean, where I began to notice references to workers on the Panama Canal. That is where my research began…

Associate Professor Rhonda Frederick

Musing from the Diaspora

Each month, “Voices” will pick a topic of interest relevant to the Africans in the Diaspora and submitted by its readers. The goal of these editorials is to promote dialogue; after each editorial, readers are encouraged to submit written replies. Respondents may respectfully agree or disagree, but always remember that the

Doubting Thomas

By Cynthia Young

I guess you could say I’m a Doubting Thomas. Back in 2008, I was sure that Barack Obama would never be elected president of the United States. I even said so on a local tv show. This time around I was also certain President Obama would not be reelected. A stalling economic recovery, a stark increase in anti-black hatred (see, for example, an October 2012 Associated Press poll) and a multi-billion dollar fundraising machine, all seemed to presage the end of the Obama era. And then Mitt Romney had a run of self-inflicted wounds so unprecedented that it has commentators still shaking their heads.

In late July Romney began an international trip designed to showcase his statesman-like demeanor. Instead he insulted the London Olympic organizers, earning the public ire of London’s mayor and Britain’s Prime Minister, both Conservatives, by the way. Then he picked Congressman Paul Ryan whose proposed budget slashing Social Security and Medicare made him a

singularly unpopular Congressman in the most unpopular Congress in history.

Read the rest of this article at bc.edu/aads

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