AADS Introduces New Program Specialist, Richard Paul
By Nathaniel Tolbert

If there is one constant in life, it is change. Every year brings about a new set of changes and this fall it sweeping winds brings a new face to the African and African Diaspora Studies Program. Gone is the wonderful Cat McAteer who provided the office with a warm and caring presence during her six-year tenure at the office, in her place is Richard Paul, the new Program Specialist. Mr. Paul brings the same warm and caring attitude that Ms. McAteer provided and couples it with an intense passion for black studies and an extensive knowledge of Boston College from every angle.

A double eagle, with a B.A. in Geoscience ('07) and a M.A. in Administration ('10), Mr. Paul knows his way around Boston College and boast an impressive list of accomplishments. Richard Paul has been a McNair Research Scholar, a Fullbright-Hayes recipient, a Resident Assistant for three years, a former president of Graduate AHANA, held a graduate position at the Learning to Learn office, served as both a tutor and full time staff member at the Learning Resources for Student Athletes program, and was both a member and moderator of the Dedicated Intellectuals of the People, a men’s group on campus. The list of Mr. Paul’s Boston College involvement can go on forever. Richard Paul's experiences at AADS have also come full circle. Richard began working for the program as a student worker during 2004-2005 academic year; he became a AADS minor in 2005 and returned to the program as a graduate assistant in 2009. Needless to say Richard Paul knows a little bit about Boston College and the importance of AADS as a presence on campus. Voices hopes that this interview allows readers to get to know the man we affectionately refer to as Mr. BC on a deeper level.

What are your goals for the program during your tenure as program specialist?

In light of recent staff changes in AADS, my first goal is to bring some stability to the program by my mere educational background, and familiarity and past employment with the African and African Diaspora Studies Program.

My second goal in to assist Dr. Rhonda Frederick in growing the minor. I hope to attract more active students in the BC community. If this means that I have to be outside [laughs] of the office showcasing the minor to students then yes, if it means that [AADS] must find clever ways to better advertise the minor and improve enrollment, yes.

How do you believe your experience at Boston College helps you in accomplishing your goals? You’re almost like Mr. BC of the program you’ve been in a lot of different programs you've been a recipient of awards you’ve been an RA, does that help you with this position?

I possess a very strong; work ethic. I take what I do seriously, I don't play, I get the job done. First and foremost, I have a vested interest in this program being a past AADS minor and then graduate assistant in the office during both my undergraduate and graduate career. Secondly, I have conducted several research projects on the African diaspora. The aforementioned has prepared me to become an asset to the AADS program. I need to reiterate that my position as Program Specialist is not
restricted to administrative duties. If I were only doing administrative duties then that means that there is no manager and everything falls on the shoulders of the director, so that takes away from him/her directing the program. My past employment and positions of leadership have given me the experience and skillset to accomplish my goals for AADS. For instance, my previous employment as an Academic Counselor in the Office of Learning Resources for Student-Athletes, not only did I advise students but I also performed liaison services between faculty, administrators, staff, coaches and student-athletes. During my tenure as President of Graduate AHANA, I created, planned and executed programs that fostered community and connected students with BC faculty, and staff. Those skills mentioned will enable me to assist Dr. Rhonda Frederick in growing the AADS minor into a major.

**Outside of your academic and scholastic experiences what strengths do you bring to the job personally? You already mentioned hard work.**

Besides hard work, I am Caribbean American. I was born in Trinidad to a working poor family. I am forever thankful to my mother and father who instilled in me from a kid that doing well academically was a means to upward socio-economic mobility. So personally I bring the drive for professional development and to succeed in whatever I do. Thus it is my immigrant experience I am bringing to AADS.

**So would you say you bring a relate-ability to a sector of students on this campus.**

In terms of relate-ability, I could easily identify with the Caribbean population at Boston College. Also, I am a first generation college student. I am in the first in my immediate family to go to college and also attain a Master’s degree. I do share the above experiences with many AHANA students at Boston College.

**What is the Boston College community’s weakest point and how do you think that AADS can help strengthen that area?**

Boston College is a great place to be. It offers an array of opportunities and for some reason people just fall in love with BC and find themselves here. I have a unique perspective of being an undergraduate, graduate student and now employee. I think that Boston College really needs to do a better job with diversity. I know its cliché that people say that, but it really needs to do a better job. You hear a lot about diversity regarding the undergraduate population, but what about diversity in terms of employees at Boston College? You do not hear about that of course. How many people in the past year...of the few black employees that are hired, how many have left in this past year for various reasons? How many people know that? And what is Boston College doing about that? Fostering diversity should be a Boston College Administration led initiative.

**The last question is what do you hope to learn during your tenure as Program Specialist?**

[Laughs] That’s a tough one, that’s a loaded question. From an organizational point of view, I think it would be good to learn more about where AADS fit in the university organizational structure and learn more about and connect with our allies who could support us in our endeavor to make this program greater than it is now. In other words, I am talking about learning more about BC politics. There is even politics involved in growing the AADS minor into a major. BC was one of the
first institutions in the United States of America to have a Black Studies Program. However, BC remained a program while other institutions like UPenn, Harvard, and BU have departments. What are the people in authority at BC doing about this? The BC administration needs to be committed to seeing AADS Program grow into a department. Providing AADS with the financial means to recruit more core faculty in addition to a concerted effort and openness to have AADS courses count towards the university core and not simply satisfy cultural diversity are just initially steps towards seeing this program grow.

On a personal level I am very much interested in African diaspora studies. I think it would be a great opportunity to meet scholars to enhance my education and knowledge base. I will definitely learn more about the African diaspora just by mere involvement with the Program.