Baratunde Thurston presents “Birth Certificates, Fact Checkers and the Art of Negrospotting: A Look at Race, Comedy, and Politics in the 2012 Election”

2012-2013 “New Directions in African Diaspora Studies” Lecture Series

Baratunde Thurston is a technology-loving comedian from the future who cares enough about the world to engage with it politically. Yes, he votes. Regularly. With an ancestry that includes a great-grandfather who taught himself to read, a grandmother who was the first black employee at the U.S. Supreme Court building and a mother who took over radio stations in the name of the black liberation struggle, Baratunde has long been taught to question authority. It helps that he was raised in Washington, D.C. under Mayor Marion Barry.

His creative and inquisitive mind is forged by his mother’s lessons and polished by a philosophy degree from Harvard.

Baratunde is also helping to re-define the media’s future. In 2006 he co-founded Jack & Jill Politics, a black political blog whose coverage of the 2008 Democratic National Convention has been archived by the Library Of Congress. Then-candidate Barack Obama called him “someone I need to know.”

The standup comic lives on Twitter and travels speaking and advising on our digital future and storytelling.

Thurston’s first book, How To Be Black, is a New York Times best-seller. Baratunde Thurston will speak at Boston College on Thursday, October 25th @ 7pm in Fulton Hall. For any questions about the appearance, you may contact (617) 552-3238 or aads@bc.edu

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

David Altenor is a multi-award winning artist, producer and songwriter who has been involved in music ministry since the age of 14, when he began playing the piano for church and choirs. In 2010, he heard a call from God 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 KingdomSound Productions, LLC.

The organization creates positive music that strives to affect change. This company aims to spread global social change and improve communities around the world. David is from Everett, MA and has 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.

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The inaugural talk for the 2012-2013 “Works in Progress” Lecture series presented by BC Professor of English, Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, was standing room only.

Kowaleski-Wallace agreed that there is something accurate about the way race is portrayed in *Mad Men*, she argued that the show’s accuracy lies not in the way it realistically reflects a willful ignorance, but in the way characters are unable to escape the racial maelstrom that whirls around them. In her essay, she describes that from the very first episode, the characters, the actors, and the script of *Mad Men* are haunted by race which was the title of her talk “How *Mad Men* is Haunted by Race.”

First, the characters’ identities are called into being by the black figures who inhabit the edges of their consciousness. Second, the performances of the actors are haunted by a history of racialized representation. Third, the script of *Mad Men* is haunted by political events that manifest as psychic disturbance. This last form of haunting mirrors the audience’s own experiences with a history of race in America, and, in the end, it evokes a painful knowledge of a history of racial violence.

Later in her talk, the English professor goes on to explore some of the ways in which *Mad Men* evokes the ghostly presence of race and how it both engages and doesn’t engage with that powerful presence. She looked at places where characters appear to be haunted by breakdown of a black and white binary, but also where the script itself seems to be haunted by what it denies or refuses to say. She accomplished this task by looking at key scenes involving two central characters, Don (Jon Hamm) and Betty (January Jones).

Read the rest of Professor Kowaleski-Wallace’s essay at bc.edu/aads

Next in the “Progress” series is a talk by Northeastern University’s Hanna Musiol entitled “The Language of the Page: Race, Pleasure, and Femininity in Early Twentieth-Century Periodicals” on Wednesday, October 24, 2012 at 12pm (noon lecture).

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Wednesday, October 3rd @ 5:30pm

*Wild Women Don’t Have the Blues* shows how the blues were born out of the economic and social transformation of African-American life. The film recaptures the lives and times of Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith and other legendary women who made the blues a vital part of American culture.

Tuesday, October 9th @ 5:30pm

*Looking for Langston* combines authentic archival of Harlem in the 1920’s with scripted scenes to produce a non-linear impressionistic storyline that celebrates black gay identity and desire during the Harlem Renaissance.

Wednesday, October 17th @ 5:00pm

The horror film, *Ganja & Hess*, follows the exploits of archaeologist Dr. Hess Green who becomes a vampire after being stabbed by his intelligent, but unstable, assistant with an ancient cursed dagger.

Monday, October 29th @ 5:30pm

*The Murder of Emmett Till* chronicles the story of Till, a 14-year black male, who was brutally murdered for allegedly whistling at a white woman, unaware that he had broken an un-written law of the Jim Crow South.

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VOI’s 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.
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 sense of belonging, which leads to 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 precolonial, 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, Siphiwe Ndlovu is a doctoral candidate in the interdisciplinary Modern Thought and Literature program at Stanford University. Her dissertation is titled “I live by a stranger of another nation: Land, travel, and belonging in a southern African country.”

Word Around the Community

Each month, “Voices” will include articles pertinent to the African and African Diaspora. Feel free to submit any articles that pique your interest to aads@bc.edu

Teachers’ Strike Ends
Reported by Lordrick Mayabi’s allAfrica.com

Teachers have been directed to resume work on Tuesday after the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) officially called off a three-week strike.

The directive by KNUT Secretary General David Okuta followed a unanimous resolution of the union’s National Executive Committee to end the industrial action.

Teachers signed a deal with government on Sunday which will see their salaries harmonised with other civil servants at a cost of Sh13.5 billion.

Okuta who has been hospitalized

since the strike began on September 3 made the announcement at the KNUT headquarters. Read the rest of this article at allAfrica.com

Jesse Jackson frees 2 from prison
Two Gambian-Americans serving long prison sentences are now in the United States after the Rev. Jesse Jackson made a personal plea to Gambia’s erratic president, Yahya Jammeh, to release them this week.

Mr. Jackson traveled to the tiny West African country, considered one of the most repressive on the continent, after an international outcry over Mr. Jammeh’s announced plans to conduct a mass execution of dozens of prisoners on his country’s death row.

Nine prisoners have already been killed. However, several days before Mr. Jackson arrived Sunday, Mr. Jammeh announced a moratorium on the executions, after expressions of disapproval from the European Union, the United Nations and other international groups.

The two men Mr. Jackson helped release, Amadou Scattred Janneh and Tamsir Jasseh, had been high-ranking officials in Mr. Jammeh’s government who were convicted on the routine charge of treason leveled against those who fall out of favor with it.

Read the rest of this article at nytimes.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.

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

Brown missteps in the way he questions Warren on heritage

By C. Shawn McGuffey

As a black man who is also of Cherokee descent, I know that Native Americans come in many different complexions. Like many people of color, a history of colonization, rape, and interracial unions has resulted in Native Americans ranging in hue, from as dark as I am to as light as Elizabeth Warren. Therefore, in last Thursday’s debate I found Senator Brown’s assertion that Warren “clearly is not” an American Indian to be both ridiculous and offensive.

Just exactly how does one how does one identify an American Indian?

Second, Brown’s insinuation that being a person of color is an “advantage” flies in the face of social-science data. Native Americans are particularly disadvantaged in the United States.

Warren’s experience is similar to that of many Americans. Their familial accounts of history—in this case, that Warren is of Cherokee descent—not only become internal narrative, they become identity.

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