

TALENTED



TENTH



My Village at Vanderbilt

By: Janelle Stokes
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The old African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child," could not be more true in my life. After being accepted to Vanderbilt, I did not know that a transient part of my village would be there to guide me and provide a sense of home in my new environment.

Walter R. Murray began his journey at Vanderbilt as one of a few Black students in 1966. Despite the lack of racial diversity present, Murray became the Vice President of the Student Association and the founder of the Vanderbilt Association of Black Alumni.

Even though I did not get a chance to meet him, his presence was apart of my life before I even stepped foot on campus. Walter R. Murray was the late pastor of my home church, Zion Baptist where his memory and legacy served as a constant reminder to what was expected of me and other youth.

It was through his annual scholarship at my church that a challenge to strive for excellence and to really impact my community was given to me.



Shawn Murray, the eldest son of Walter R. Murray Jr., stands in front of Murray House at last year's dedication ceremony
Photo courtesy of Rosevelt L. Noble

He left his mark on Van-

derbilt and the Murray House on the Commons has been erected in his name posthumously to show his continued impact. Recently, the Walter R. Murray Lecture series invited Board of Trust member Sherryll D. Cashin to speak about her work and experiences. Murray's wife, a close friend of my family, Donna Murray was in attendance.

"Coming back this time is very special," said Donna Murray of her early November return to campus. "(Walter) loved all people and wanted to bring people together of diverse backgrounds.... this is what's continuing to happen at the Murray House (and the Commons)."

The constant verbal and institutional reassurance of his values were a part of my experience at Zion Baptist Church and are now apart of my education at Vanderbilt.

WHERE FORM MEETS EXPRESSION

The Influence of Hip-Hop Dance on the Vanderbilt Dance Program

By: Shana Berkeley
STAFF WRITER

Hip-hop dance, rooted in African styles, has been an influential art form in the African American community for decades. However, in the year 2008, it has officially transcended genre by intertwining with more conservative dance styles.

Dance shows such as "So You Think You Can Dance" and "America's Best Dance Crew" have given national attention to a neighborhood phenomenon. In such arenas, classic moves such as break dancing and ticking are mixed

with current popular dances such as the heel toe and the poole palace to create an authentic experience. Now, these experiences are being added into traditional dances such as ballet and jazz under the umbrella of fusion.

Fusion has really taken flight when it comes to Vanderbilt Dance Program. Many of the dance classes utilize the conservative techniques to teach this beat-conscious dance style. They also offer-

classes that are hip hop based and incorporate hip-hop styles.

Groups such as Momentum and Rhythm and Roots have embraced hip-hop dance and has included it, in some form or fashion, in their show.



Photo courtesy of Rosevelt L. Noble

VIBE, Vanderbilt's premier hip-hop dance team takes this burgeoning appreciation for hip-hop culture and fusion as a compliment. "VIBE has really worked hard to keep hip-hop in the hearts and minds of Vanderbilt students. VIBE also began to

incorporate fusion into the routines showing that the dancers' range of skill is not contained by a genre title," says Ashley Cockrell, a two-year member of VIBE dance team.

The Vanderbilt Dance Program slogan "Where form meets expression" is manifested in the inclusion of Hip-hop classes. And like the dance creators, hip-hop dance has evolved into a multi-faceted learning experience.

Illustrating a "Trivial Pursuit:" Spirituality and the Community

By: Eric Brown
STAFF WRITER



Samuel Dunson

At a TAG Art Gallery, Dave Perkins Director of the Art Gallery at the Divinity School asked Samuel

Dunson, a student at the school, if he would create art that portrayed spirituality, life, death, and innocence.

Dunson accepted the proposition and titled the art, "Trivial Pursuit."

"In our lives we pursue to be on a higher plane, whether it is through spirituality, finding ourselves, or helping our community," said Dunson. "But in this pursuit of questioning and evaluating, our pursuit can become trivial."

Proclaiming himself as a Cornel West mixed with Bill Cosby, his pictures embody the soul of Black culture and spirituality. Dunson says while painting his art, the meaning of the symbolism of the art, might not come until the last stroke has been made. Even through

this, he wants the viewer to critique his art's meaning and find his or her own interpretations for place in life.

The artwork itself can cause an observer to question their self, community, and values as seen in the painting "In Jesus Piece we Trust."



"In Jesus Piece We Trust"

and fortune. Within that same glimpse, Dunson shows how God is still a God of a sinner who acknowledges how much he needs God.

In the painting "God in a box" out pops a God who is only for our satisfaction and immediate need. This God cannot be anything, but what we make that God to be. This

This picture captures notions of how black males thank God for the violence, misogyny, and profanity that allow them to gain awards

"Jack in the Box God" is limited to only our own selfishness and bias to make that God work in our life.



"God in a Box"

This Dayton native thanks his parents for starting his passion for art. Dunson notes that his Southern parents, who worked full-time jobs, always found time to make sure he and his sister explored their imaginations at museums, plays, and film festivals.

Dunson finds spirituality through his art, he always makes sure to be a family man first. This must be so because his work is only a reflection of his love for the community.

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Another Note on Racism

From the Desk of the Editor-in-Chief

It was situational irony. After Talented Tenth printed Danielle Gantt's "Racist Confrontations in Africa," many people expressed their relief that these racial experiences did not occur in present-day United States. One person admitted to me, "Well, at least it didn't happen here [in the United States]. At least it didn't happen at Vandy."

After Barack Obama won the presidency, many want to say that we are a colorblind nation. Many want to believe that we have finally become that melting pot of culture—the epitome of positive race relations. Nevertheless, almost a month after Talented Tenth printed Gantt's story of her being called a nigger, I received a similar experience here in the States.

Friday night, October 14th, two of my close friends and I conversed and laughed in the rain sheltered by our gigantic black and gold Vanderbilt umbrellas. Cars sped down West End as we left TGI Friday's and headed back to campus when a White male rolled down his passenger window to yell "NIGGERS!" As the car whizzed by, we looked back to see the brown two door that the derogatory word came from. Their faint laughter and *that* word echoed inside my ears seeping down to my heart replacing a joyful night with discontent.

I turned around to find one of my friends laughing at this point. She laughed because of their ignorance, she said. We were headed back towards an institution that provides us upward mobility and that enhances our intellect, whereas they sped away from the same establishment.

Were they drunk? Do they go to Vanderbilt? Were they educated? Those questions filled my consciousness; however, those questions will never be answered. What can be answered is that one day I may be their boss. Those ignorant people may have to look to me for a promotion—if not me, maybe some other Black woman or man.

Times have changed but the remnants of racism are omnipresent. Those few are still clinging to the hope of White supremacy. However, that hope is finally diminishing piece by piece. United States is evolving into a place of equal opportunity. Barack Obama is evidence that the United States is indeed moving from judging on the basis of skin color and moving towards selecting those most apt.

Nevertheless, Obama is not the savior who will make United States a colorblind nation. He is only one battle won, and what I experienced very well may be the after effects of this win. Our win. The nation's win. This is the very reason why the concept of the Talented Tenth remains pertinent. Obama cannot stand alone. He cannot do it by himself. He needs individuals who will stand against intolerance, who will not give up just because no person of color has done it before.

Be bold Vanderbilt students. Be wise. Let your power exude positively throughout the nation as we gather to enlighten the ignorant and provide hope to the hopeless. Let's change this country one presidency at a time. Let's change this country little by little.

Thoughts on Election Night

As we await Barack Obama's inauguration, many students still feel the excitement of Election Night. Below are the reactions and photographs of a few students showing the activities they partook in and their responses to learning that the 44th president of United States of America will be Barack Obama-- a man with a Kenyan father, a White mother from Kansas, and a Black wife:



"I was engaging in fun activities with my friends at the Commons and at the BCC. I ate food with other Obama supporters, took pictures with

my friends in the photo booth, and watched the results come in on the big screen.... I watched the last results come in that let America know that yes indeed we have seen a change....

Election Night 2008 is one that I shall never forget. God did not forget about us. Indeed Vandy, we have seen "A Great Change, Oh What A Wonderful Change Has Come Over America!" said Christina Walton, A&S junior.

"... The most important message we received was from Obama, when he stated that the real work begins now. We can't stop with the vote, but now we must turn our passion to serve our country and WORK toward a better tomorrow," said Trenika Moore, Engineering senior.

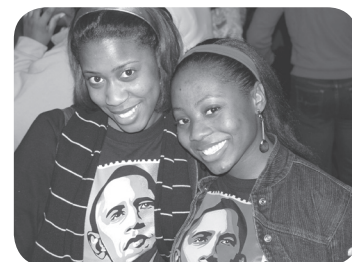


"I am still studying abroad in South Africa.... There is an 8-hour difference, so the polls on the east coast didn't close

until about 3 or 4 in the morning here. We slept a bit and woke up at 4:30 in the morning and went into the

dorm's TV room to watch CNN. There weren't that many people there, but we were too hype to notice.... I was the only person to see it happen, to see Obama be declared the winner. It happened so quickly, but it was so fulfilling. We ran around. We jumped. We danced. And, apparently we screamed and woke up half the dorm. Who cares? They should have been awake. THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES IS A BLACK MAN FROM HAWAII!!!! It was the best birthday present ever. For my birthday party that night, we all wore Red, White, and Blue!" Danielle Gantt, A&S senior.

"Every dorm I passed I heard people screaming and running out the buildings. The BCC was packed! It was full of proud black students and even a grad student's family cheering and crying. One boy yelled, "Ask me who MY president is!!" A four-year-old girl said, "That's the president cuz we voted!" It was full of spirit, an overwhelming sense of love and the realization that WE ARE THE FUTURE," said Shana Berkeley, A&S sophomore.



that worked so hard, and subsequently lost their lives, to allow this to come to fruition," said Kadoria Ivory, Peabody senior.

"I was vigilantly watching the news to see what the electoral standings were, but also, I cried for all of those

All photos courtesy of Rosevelt L. Noble (Complete Capture) except second from top: courtesy of Christina Walton.

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OPINION POLICY

We at Talented Tenth appreciate the thought provoking comments and opinions that you feel would be beneficial to our readers. All letters sent need to be well written, cohesive, and contain logical arguments to any claims made. Submissions that do not meet these requirements and are nameless will not be considered. Once submitted, all articles become property of the Talented Tenth and are subject to editing as the editor-in-chief deems necessary. Please submit to vandytalentedtenth@gmail.com

Words of Inspiration: New Day, A New Beginning

By: Lee Perkins
STAFF WRITER

The message of change has certainly been in the atmosphere considering the historical presidential election. This change is not only for America as a nation or the African American race, but for anyone who has hope in something greater than themselves.

Challenges of life may afford despair and discontentment, but when things seem to be over, and there is no hope for a better tomorrow, know that it is the end — the end of one chapter of life, and the beginning of a new one.

This new phase of life will bear the same challenges and struggles of the past, but rest assured that God is with you

even in your struggles. The apostle Paul said, "When I am weak, then am I strong" (II Corinthians 12:10 NKJV). In other words, in the lowest points of strength and greatest vulnerability, Christ shows himself strong; when you are at your weakest point, Christ does his best work through you, for He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Ephesians 3:20 NKJV).

So change in life does not come from some new-found inner strength to conquer the problems of life, but it comes from having hope in Christ and who He is in your life. Despite

the rhetoric of change in the election season, President-Elect Barack Obama is not our source of hope (although he is, I believe, a part of the plan that God has). Our hope must be built upon the solid foundation of Christ because in the midst of changing circumstances, good or bad, Christ is yet in control.

I leave with you the words of Paul again, "...forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14, NKJV).

BLACK FACULTY SPOTLIGHT:

Ifeoma Nwankwo, Ph.D.



Photo courtesy of Lucius Outlaw

"Ifeoma Nwankwo, PhD, expresses her passion for teaching: "Students are profoundly important to me... more than they know."

This month, Talented Tenth spotlights Dr. Ifeoma Nwankwo, English Department professor. From Kingston, Jamaica, Nwankwo was born in 1972, an era in which reggae, a musical and cultural phenomenon, surfaced. This is also within ten years of a critical period in colonial history as Caribbean countries' search for national identities separate from Britain began to result in their formally gaining independence.

Nwankwo grew up not knowing her Nigerian father. "There may be students who can identify with this..." says Nwankwo. However, this did not deter Nwankwo from success.

Nwankwo received her bachelor's degree in Spanish and English from Rutgers University in 1994. She attended Duke for her doctorate, specializing in African American, Caribbean, and Latin

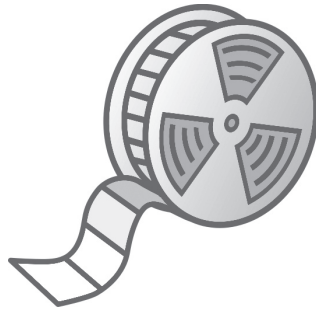
American Literatures. Having a great cohort of fellow graduate students, including several Black women, and fantastic mentors played a pivotal role in her completing her program.

Nwankwo has a passion for teaching. "Students are profoundly important to me... more than they know," Nwankwo says. She dedicates herself to enriching the minds of students, seeking to inspire them to think critically as well as outside the box. This passion gives her English classes a special flair.

Currently, Nwankwo heads a project called "Voices from Our America," which combines research and community engagement. This project focuses on gathering Black communities' perspectives on intercultural relations. The Nashville portion of this project, centering first on African American women, kicks off next semester.

STUDENTS PURSUE CAREER IN FILM

By: Ashley Chrisman
STAFF WRITER



Most Vandy students want to be doctors, lawyers, or teachers, right? Wrong!

Jeannette Francis, a junior from Chattanooga, and Casey Colver, a senior from Nashville, are students in

Vanderbilt's film department.

Colver and Francis are currently working on a project for their Advanced Filmmaking class, entitled "Student Film." The story is based on a group of students trying to make a film and the problems they encounter.

Colver wrote the screenplay and says that

originally he created a script with a complex plot, but due to time restraints and lack of resources, he had to make drastic adjustments.

"I had written a script that was dark, and realized that it was unrealistic, we needed money and time," Colver admits.

The production group began to make fun of the situation that they found themselves in due to the difficulty in making a film. Colver went back to the drawing board, and "Student Film" was the final product.

Francis and Colver plan to enter the film in the Vanderbilt Film Festival next semester. They also plan to take their film beyond Vandy and enter it into the Nashville Film Festival.

"I'm expecting this to be the best thing that I have ever worked on so far," said Francis.

Francis plans to focus her film career towards editing and producing commercials.

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Journey to...

Healthiness

By: Cardella Leak
STAFF WRITER

As African American students on a predominantly Caucasian campus, we tend to not recognize the health issues of our race. I decided to explore these issues and concerns by surveying Black students.

Before the surveying process, I predicted that people would have difficulty thinking of an answer to the question, "What is the biggest health issue for Black students on campus?" When asked, people hesitated to answer, but everyone who was surveyed suggested issues of food and weight, with the only three answers being weight control, lack of exercise, and unhealthy food choices.

These responses are not new to our community. Everyday we are reminded that our race is leading the pack with the highest incidence of diabetes and the highest percentage of obesity. With these constant reminders, one would believe that students at such a prestigious university, as Vanderbilt,

would take heed and address such issues. But no! We fall into the stereotypes and the statistics.



Photo Courtesy of Rhyann Robinson (Complete Capture)

We continue to eat the greasy and fattening foods. We choose to eat the barbecue sauce-drenched pork ribs, fried chicken, greasy hamburgers and rich pies instead of taking advantage of the organic, vegetarian, and all-around healthy foods that are provided in such places as Nectar and Grins.

Changing your diet is a good start but exercise must be implemented to help change this problem and perspective

on our campus. I understand that we all have busy schedules, but we should try to make it to the gym a few times a week.

Our fellow students find lack of exercise to be an issue in our culture, and this thought shouldn't be taken lightly. Instead of health professionals or trainers, our peers are saying that the Blacks on this campus have trouble living a healthy life as far as food is concerned. We should start making conscious decisions about our food choices.

It's alright to try some new things: vegetarian wraps, vegan cookies, or something as simple as grilled chicken instead of red meat.

If everyone takes small steps and makes small changes we can transform the thoughts of others concerning our health. People would no longer look at us as feeding into the stereotypes and statistics. They would see us as a united people taking the steps necessary to live a healthy and fulfilled life.

Black Student Alliance's Christmas Dinner Dec. 9th @ B66

Fashion for the Fearless: Arrive in style to your holiday soiree!

By: Courtney Towner
STAFF WRITER

Keeping your party looks hot when the weather gets cool can be tough, but any fashion guru can stay fresh with easy holiday party fashion tips:

Ladies: nothing says party like a little shimmer so make a statement by wearing something sparkly. Try a sequin top, dress, or skirt. Take this look to the next level by mixing contrasting patterns within the same color family.



Gentlemen: A well-fitted blazer will instantly transform any casual outfit to party appropriate. Mix a fitted graphic tee, dark denim

jeans, and a well-structured blazer to create a quick holiday look that still exudes refinement.

Ladies: Bring out your edgy alter ego in your outfit by toughening up a solid sweater dress by adding sassy fishnets and a wide belt.



Gentlemen: Don't hesitate to stand out from the crowd in a brocade printed blazer and similar colored bow tie. Complete the style with a great fedora and printed slacks. Take a hint from Andre 3000 to translate classic sophistication,

which is always party appropriate!

Follow these tips, and take the stress out of dressing for the holidays! Next time you get a holiday party invitation, think more about the people you will be with and less about what to wear.

--Happy Dressing and Happy Holidays--



Featured Poet

Countée Cullen

(1903-1946)

"For a Poet"

I have wrapped my dreams in a silken cloth,
And laid them away in a box of gold;
Where long will cling the lips of the moth,
I have wrapped my dreams in a silken cloth;
I hide no hate; I am not even wroth
Who found earth's breath so keen and cold;
I have wrapped my dreams in a silken cloth,
And laid them away in a box of gold.

"Ars Poetica"

By: Truth, Conscious's Sister

Words into lines,
Lines into stanzas.
Precise detail
like a surgeon's incision.

Poetry.

A new world defined in your angle.
Its direction of actors to a scene
slows time, rewinds,
Or fast forwards.

Poetry.

Outer body experiences
placed on a blank page
as Michelangelo would splash paint
into specific places for a specific purpose.

Poetry.

Your pen holds power—

Power like politics,
Power like a catalyst,
Power in creating

Poetry. ©

Poetry Corner



"A Poet Has a Duty to Words."

"Seen Through These Eyes"

By: Eric Brown
STAFF WRITER

I don't think anyone could survive looking
through these Eyes

I've seen Death through these Eyes
Not only on the outside, but on the inside too
I've seen my Fears kill my Heart and my Vessels
burst
I was a blood bath for real

I've seen Double Crossing through these Eyes
Not only on the outside, but on the inside too
I've seen my mind deceive my eyes
My mind made my eyes see something which
was not really there

I've seen Jealousy through these Eyes
Not on the outside, but on the inside too
I've seen my Feet mad at my Hands
Because my Hands can touch the Supple Silky
Skin
This is met with the warm presence of a Female
Temptress
One I could love With
My Feet only feel like someone is walking over
them

I've seen Rage through these Eyes
Not on the outside, but on the inside too
I've seen my Blood rush through my Veins
boiling
Hot like a "Lava Tsunami" in the Nile

I've seen Sadness through these Eyes
Not very well though because my Tears blur my
Vision ©

Support the Men of NPHC in December:

December 1st- December 5th
Alpha Phi Alpha: Founder's Week

December 1st-December 4th
Omega Psi Phi: Toy Drive

December 3rd- December 7th
Kappa Alpha Psi Mini Week