

January 2013

THE VISION



We'd like to welcome you all back to another edition of *The Vision*. We are happy to say that our debut publication was a success amongst the rustles and bustles of last semester's Finals week preparation. We've gotten a lot of positive feedback and we are excited to continue to work *The Vision* into the intellectual fabric of the University. Keep in mind that a part of The Vision's mission is to facilitate the exchange of ideas and creations between the African American Cultural Center and the campus population. We'd like all of our current readers to continue to share the publication with our fellow students as you soak in every issue. We are eager to receive feedback from readers; as well as entries of your own work, or ideas, for publishing. With that being said, this edition features our first group of guest contributors. So, while you read, please take the time to thoroughly digest the artisanal entrée. Set to debut on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s day of observance, this edition comes complete with essays, short stories, illustrations and a wealth of poetic expression. Appropriately, let us first take the time to reminisce on the man that has touched all of our lives in so many different ways with our first entry.

Division of Student Affairs

H. Fred Simons African American Cultural Center

Director: Dr. Willena Kimpson Price

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Ode to the King

Much has changed since the seasons of two score and ten years ago
Climates sweeping the nation
From Georgia through Alabama to Texas
We can now only imagine the sweltering pain of summer's condition
And the heat...

Uncle Tom would Fall to his knees with ease by the coming of the Autumn breeze
Then even the staunch leaves, severed by time who they would never leave the tree
Enraged; fire against fire, by winter's time bound to freeze
The pains of the journey through '63

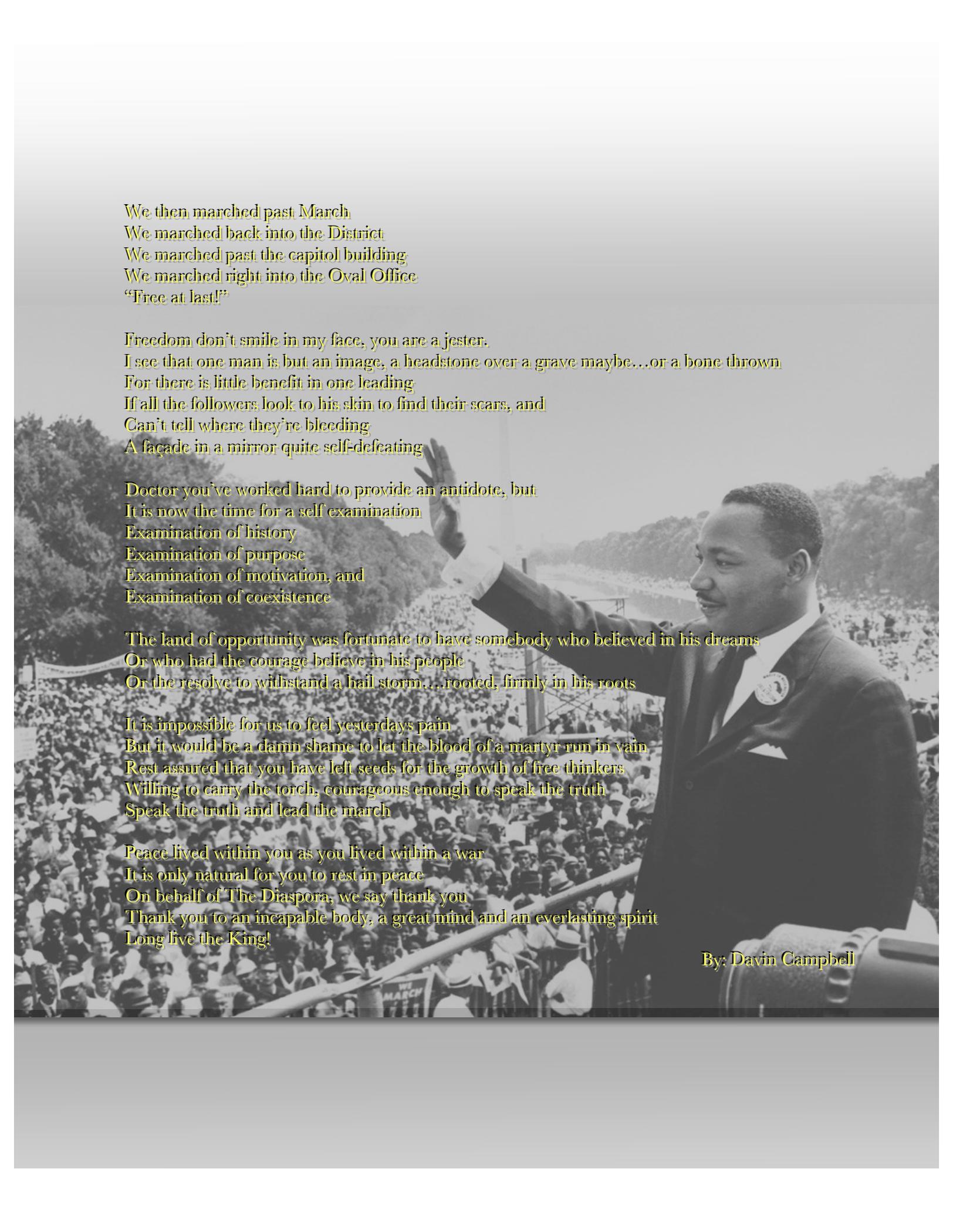
But you always said love and patience was the key
For nature is inevitable,
The moon is bound to retreat, and
Before you fell
The equinox brought brighter days and the energy for life
That was '64

The Earth came full circle that year
And everybody thought it was a revolution
The March on Washington marched with the seasons to Spring the nation forward

Promises of the Constitution could no longer be broken by laws
"Free at last!"

....We'd like to believe
But we know better
The decades past your passing reminded us that the law is but a promise in itself
Promises meant to be broken
Broken by the innocent and the guilty
Ignorance and poverty remains the vessel for the filthy
To carry away, and to be carried away, with the vestiges of freedom and liberty
Laws are not reality
Reality is a nightmare for the restless young nigga chasing the American Dream
Laws do not create, impede or cease culture
For now, "the free" mirror the demographic of the imprisoned population

The world turns and the march continues



We then marched past March
We marched back into the District
We marched past the capitol building
We marched right into the Oval Office
“Free at last!”

Freedom don't smile in my face, you are a jester.
I see that one man is but an image, a headstone over a grave maybe...or a bone thrown
For there is little benefit in one leading
If all the followers look to his skin to find their scars, and
Can't tell where they're bleeding
A facade in a mirror quite self-defeating

Doctor you've worked hard to provide an antidote, but
It is now the time for a self examination
Examination of history
Examination of purpose
Examination of motivation, and
Examination of coexistence

The land of opportunity was fortunate to have somebody who believed in his dreams
Or who had the courage believe in his people
Or the resolve to withstand a hail storm...rooted, firmly in his roots

It is impossible for us to feel yesterdays pain
But it would be a damn shame to let the blood of a martyr run in vain
Rest assured that you have left seeds for the growth of free thinkers
Willing to carry the torch, courageous enough to speak the truth
Speak the truth and lead the march

Peace lived within you as you lived within a war
It is only natural for you to rest in peace
On behalf of The Diaspora, we say thank you
Thank you to an incapable body, a great mind and an everlasting spirit
Long live the King!

By: Davin Campbell

UNTIE THE KNOTS

I am destined to untie the knots.
The knots that keep me a hostage in my own body,
A prisoner in my own mind.

The knots are so tight that they have made me stop chasing my dreams and now my dreams are chasing me.

Oh really? Now isn't that sad.

You see, everyone is so caught up in making their own fantasies a reality, that they wouldn't even notice if I was tied up with insecurity and the knots of failure were suffocating me,

So hard in fact that blood rushes to my head, my legs and arms go numb, two minutes from dead, because there is a blockage in my head from the suffocation of the words that were left unsaid.

Unsaid? Yes

those are the words the hurt the hardest,
cut the deepest,
bleed the reddest
and scars the longest.

So I declare today, that I will get rid of the knots.

The have not's, will not's, and may not's that I've heard all my life .

Not because I am incapable or incompetent,
but because I am a woman.

An African American woman in a country where I have to fight twice as hard to untie the knots that other people have tied

because of fear of their inabilities, indecencies, inaccuracies, insensibilities and knots that we have yet to untie.

The truth of the matter is,

we are no more incapable of anything than anyone.

We all bleed the same, seed the same, feed the same, breathe the same, feel the same, go insane.

We are all humans,

is what I'm saying.

My race is not black or white,

its human.

Human being, human nature.

Should not, could not, would not, still not, cannot, is not, might not, has not, have not, had not, are not

in my vocabulary anymore,

those knots I have untied,

so I will stand tall and not fall

because failure as an option?

I believe not.

By: Shantel Honeyghan

Disassembled

I took apart each drum, bolt by bolt. As the tension holding each head disappeared, the instruments turned into wooden cylinders and spare parts. I stacked every metal rim and plastic head together and began to fill the extra large Home Depot storage box. Soon, everything would be packed tightly between crumples of newspaper and sealed with clear tape, ready to be put away. Asking myself whether or not I would drum again seemed sacrilegious.

“I practically think in rhythm,” I watched her giggle as she probably pictured musical notes flying around my head. I laughed, “Seriously! I make music in my head all the time. It’s part of my internal language.”

She assured me responding, “I’ll assume you aren’t crazy and just a little heart-broken at the fact that you had to put your drum set away.”

It wasn’t going anywhere; I mean there it was back home, in the attic, protected, gathering dust, experiencing extreme fluctuations in temperature due to the lack of proper ventilation...

“I don’t think I’ve spent as much time on anything else in the last five years of my life,” I smiled to hide the seriousness of my statement. “It’s been my baby for so long!”

Wide-eyed and half-mockingly she replied, “Aw, look at you being sentimental about inanimate objects. I understand though.”

Did she? Comparably perhaps, she’d been dancing for years. With college I’m sure her hopes to audition for Alvin Ailey would be packed up in a box as well.

“I just want to be able to come back to everything and not feel like a stranger.”

“You worry too much,” and though that’s true most of the time in this case I didn’t feel like I was overacting at all.

“It’ll be okay. Music won’t just stop being a part of your life because you can’t drum every day.”

I looked up to catch her eye contact and we exchanged smiles.

“Yeah, no you’re right.”

I grabbed her hands and let my poor circulation mix in with her warmth until we reached equilibrium. I’d come to miss her encouragement much more.

By: Steve Cartagena

Black Bones

I discovered I was black when I was nine years
old in the shattered glass of a dusty mirror.

I wondered—and I

I contemplated—and I came to understand

That maybe this disposition of skin against my bones was just

A sin made with mistake, a sin made of flake-

y misdeeds and whispered secrets my family never spoke,

never dared to let go, never dared to put down in our history

books and flimsy family trees made with white braches—

lies and secrets beneath that shattered glass and I wondered—

I contemplated—

if I could I trace my faint skin lines back to

Mother Africa's rigid shorelines; maybe

I was from an island where the women sat

in incongruent circles singing

batuque

saying, *me sta canta repete repete repete*

until their lungs gave way to

love.

I cut myself on that shattered mirror and

against the brown bled red blood from my mother

and hers and hers and hers.

I discovered I was black when I was thirteen years

old and Nathaniel Zimmerman told me I was a nigger as he

pressed his German penis against my back—and his penis was

a thousand years of assimilation and discrimination

and forced penetration of my people and I

wondered, I contemplated

if countries mirror the souls of their people or if people

are the backbones of their countries, I

wondered and I

contemplated while Nathaniel Zimmerman was pressing

pressing

pressing

his German penis against my back and telling me I was a nigger,

that brown skin is probable cause for slavery and forced

penetration, nations of

white nails biting into my thick hair, I

cry for Mother Africa because continents

are backbones of countries, Mother Africa

and *batuque* music and shattered mirrors and brown skin

and red blood, and discovery.

I discovered I was black when I was sixteen years old and I was told that I “act white”—like we were never emancipated, like fuck Abraham Lincoln, fuck that he died over emancipation and proclamations and declarations that all men are created equal that both a cracker and a nigger are five-fifths of a person, and that both a cracker and nigger have rights to read, let me tell you that Mother Africa don't cry for nobody and no thing, and if we want to talk about a nation of rugged individualists, let's look to our neighborhoods where for me to be black, I've gotta act— and I wondered and I contemplated why reading poetry is a white thing, contemplated why if my sentences are formed correctly I'm heinous and niggas that are famous are just sell-outs, never-made-it-outs, just selling their souls to some Illuminati and their bodies are just wasted caricatures of what white people are.

I discovered I was black when I was nineteen years old and my Italian girlfriend's grandmother prohibited her to have black girlfriends and I wondered and I contemplated how race is still the face, still the pace that keeps the hate moving, I wondered why it didn't stop with Nathaniel Zimmerman or the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, why we, as a nation, still can't see that the color of my skin has nothing to do with the color of my blood, how fast my heart beats when she kisses my cheek, or how I look at the same sunrise, let me tell you that Mother Africa don't cry for nobody and no thing, and if we want to talk about a nation of rugged individualists, please, let's look to the ones who can't breathe without having their skin color questioned, always need to learn a lesson from Nathaniel Zimmerman, who don't know they're five-fifths of a person until someone tells them so, how about no, how about we stop crying for Mother Africa and be our own backbone, how about we stop placing traits and states for whites only, read poetry, how about we stop bleeding in the name of Mother Africa, my mother, and hers and hers and hers.

By: Martina Powell

BLACK LIKE BROWN

I am black like chocolate
Chocolate like raw cocoa before sugar
Sweet like devils food...
with salt.
I am black like
And you was like-
And I was like-
Then we was like-
Get your hands out of my pocket!
I am black like street with no lights
I am black like city with no power
Black like city with power
Black like city with no power
I am black like moonlight shadows
Black like leather jacket you think is behind you
Black like magic
like basketball
Black like taboo
like AIDS
like voodoo
like Africa
Black like curses
like we need special aid
Section 8
Black like curse rituals
Gang Signs
Black like 8 ball
like bubbled in ballot
like black vote
like can't vote
Felony
I am black like attending a funeral
Black like grim reaper
like 9 millimeter pistol
like an usher
Black like Usher
Scream
I am black like first person to die in American
horror films
Black like first to die in the American
Revolutionary War
Not black like "The British are coming!
The British are coming!"
Black like "5-0, run!"
I am black like garden dirt
Fertilizing the harvest for a dark skinned birth
Breaking the stereotypical
Since I typically listen to stereos, typical

Tip this shade of black lightly
because I am brown
like back of the class
like the cl in class doesn't exist when I say I like
your class
Brown like I still parks my class in the back of the
bus by choice
I am brown like "teach you how to dougie"
Brown like not your teacher
Like teacher says principals office
Why?
For being...
black like never getting an A on your project
like never getting your A out the projects
Like you always want to be wit ya boys
and not be brown like WEB Dubois
like you built every last one of the Egyptian
pyramids
and even though you were a slave you made this
entire American nation with your bare hands...
period.
I am brown like "you know, I thought slavery was
wrong too?"
Brown like lock your car doors
Brown like "can I touch your hair?"
like vicro
like Crows
like Jim Crow laws
like Jim
The runaway slave of Huckleberry Finn
Brown like always being first pick in gym
Because I was black
I mean brown
like Ken doll on clearance
Not like "You so black"
More like "You're so beautiful"
I am brown like panther
Black
Brown like do the right thing
Brown like doo doo
Brown like do nothing
Browns likes "Is knows hows to dos everything"
Domestic
My face is brown
Not black like faces
Not like rapper
I am brown like chocolate.
Bite me.

By: Sabir Askari Abdussabur

The Conversation After College

He asked me, *“What do you want to do after college?”*

I think, reflect, and besides debt, acquire some knowledge
But at times I feel that my brain only retains 10 percent
For something that’s a right, shouldn't it cost more than no cent? It makes no sense?

I respond, *“Become an educator”*

Not going to the NBA and falling back on a fader
But he thinks education is a fall back profession
I can tell by the look on his facial expression
I use an opportunity, to teach a lesson

I ask, *“What do you want to do after college?”*

He goes straight to the money and skips the knowledge
I see a byproduct of a materialistic world
An eye, which is caught by some pretty twirls

He looks in my eye, and says,
“You’re a cool guy, people that are educators I respect...”

I think to myself, *“We deal with the issues that the world neglects!”*

Tryna speak life while the pupil text
Thinking ahead of myself of what to say next
But the pupils seems to drift astray, when I can’t focus on what to say
It seems that both of our eyes are just wandering away

I remind myself, *“Our brains are just malleable clay”*

So I mold his mind, as he molds mine
I know his life isn't my business, and I should mind...

But I think back to what my mama said, *“kill em with kind”*
We were born with two ears and one mouth
So that we may listen twice as much as we speak
So I sit and listen...

And that is where the story would have been told,
But in a world full of pebbles be bold.

By: Justis Lopez

Passionless Patronage

Passionless patronage is the call of twenty-first century liberal arts universities.

We're told in high school (in those haunting, daunting months of applying-to-college) that our superiors are seeking passionate students whose drive for excellence is unparalleled, whose worldliness is beyond ordinary measures, whose dedication to learning is insatiable, unquenchable. We must be refined and cultured, knowledge-soaking sponges, whose ultimate goal is not to graduate with a degree (and, fingers-crossed, a job) but to have, in some mystical way, become even more cultured, more worldly, than we appeared on our Common Apps.

That is why we have General Education requirements.

I'm not going to bash Gen Eds, not at all. I think they're great—everyone should step out of their comfort zones. Everyone should be exposed to something that was secret, archaic, or unknown to them prior to attending college. It's a beautiful thing—learning—it truly is.

What I am going to bash is the way students are fixed to function; the way that “learning” becomes mindless “doing”—habitual and humdrum—and how the act of true, active learning disappeared from this generation.

If it were up to many students, Gen Eds would be erased from our curriculum, leaving us only to focus on our majors and minors, taking classes that “pertain to our future.” But because this is not the case, and Gen Eds are graduation requirements (after all, isn't that the main goal?), we painfully load our enrollment shopping carts with classes we wouldn't have chosen otherwise. We complain about the cost of the books, the time of the course, the professor, the pretentious smart-ass, know-it-all kids who are actually taking the class for their major, always participating, always doing the extra credit, always on first-name basis with the professor. Despite this, we do not drop the course because it's a requirement. Therefore, the work we do is a requirement—there is no room for pleasure, no room for interest—“just get a B+ and I'll be set.” And on those glorious last days of the semester, we wipe our brows in relief and erase all that information we retained for our final.

This is detachment. This is apathy. This is passionless.

Ask a graduating English major if he can recite the Pythagorean Theorem or if she can define osmosis. Ask a Chemistry major if she knows who wrote *Heart of Darkness* or if he remembers what year Andrew Jackson was president. They learned it all in those Gen Eds a few years ago, but they can't remember, they didn't retain it—they were taught, they didn't learn.

But if these students can excel in their desired field, all is well because the transcript will read “worldliness” and “diversified” when it may not necessarily be the case. It's all false advertisement, that universities are these breeding grounds for well-rounded individuals. The definition is narrow and the expectations are unattainable. We're suffocating and suffering beneath this mountain of “liberal arts education”, while it isn't really “education” at all—it's just a bunch of random students taking random classes to fulfill random requirements.

If you asked me for a solution, I wouldn't know what to say. There was a time, I believe, where the privilege to education was valued highly thus creating students who were more interested in what they “had” to learn—education wasn't forced, but was a fortunate freedom.

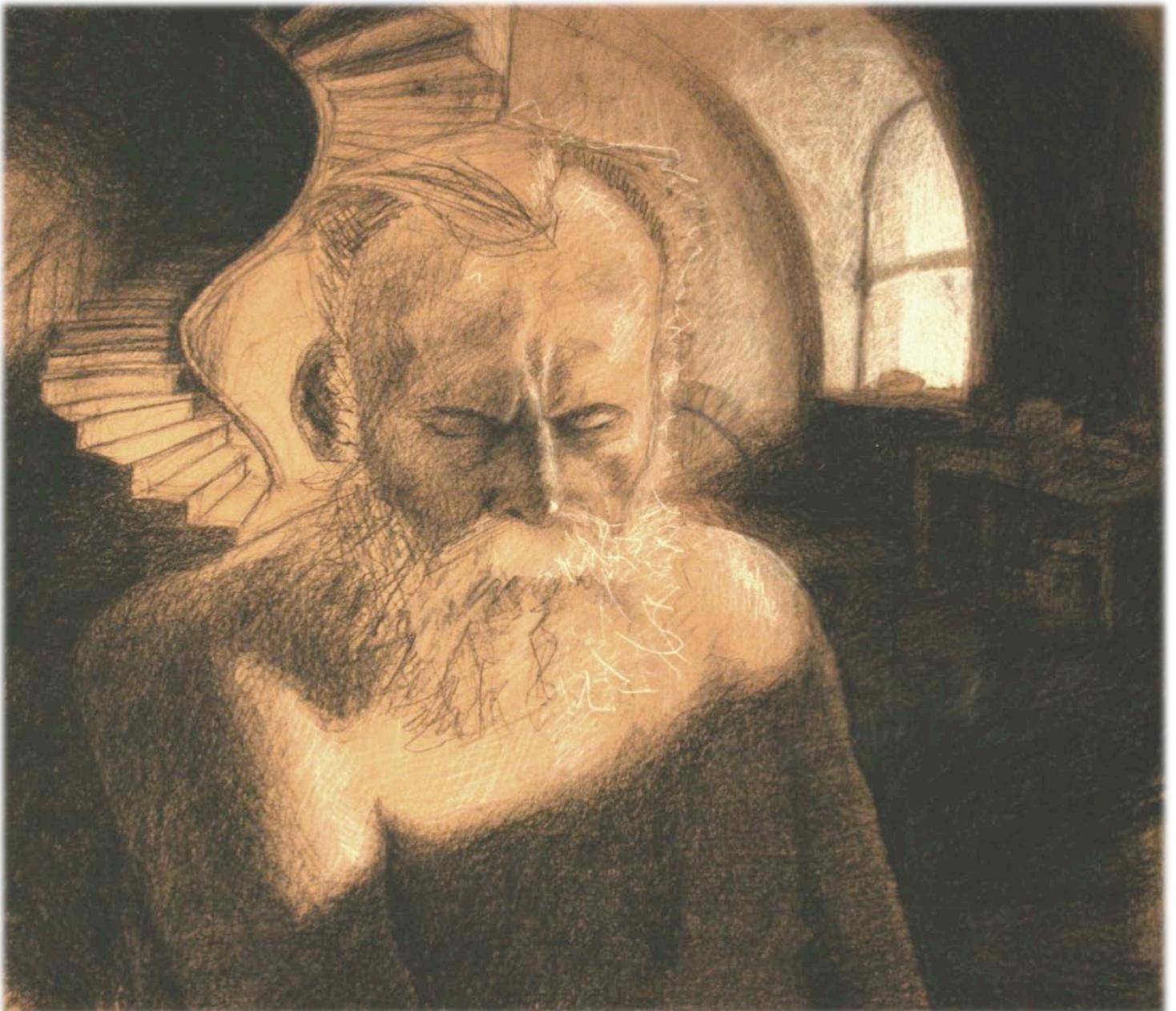


I believe it still is to an extent, but we've become so accustomed to the typical timeline—from high school to college to graduate programs to careers to families to retirement—that students can't really value something they take for granted. So they become apathetic, sulk in their own laziness and fortunate circumstances, get their Bs, and move on with their lives. It's all too casual, too predictable, too underappreciated.

Education and, moreover, the opportunity to learn, are gifts often overlooked. But, I get it—there isn't enough passion in a single person to put everywhere and you're not going to identify and absorb everything you're taught. I get it. But there is a deliberate apathy that is present in our education system—do what you can when you have to and get by.

That, my friends, is passionless.

By: Martina Powell



'Philosopher in Meditation' by David Pereira

Featured Contributors



Sabir Askari Abdussabur

Born and raised in New Haven Connecticut, he is currently a Freshman here at the University pursuing a degree in English and a Minor in Psychology with the hopes of becoming an inner-city High School English teacher. He says that his ultimate goal is to establish equality between generations, as well as closing generation gaps. Fun fact: He has been dressing in formal attire on a daily basis October of 2011. Essentially, he's always ready for business.



Justis Lopez

This is a man that needs no introduction. But for the purpose of this newsletter, we'd like to welcome Justis Lopez. Justis is a Junior in the Neag School of Education Majoring in Secondary Education and History. He has already taken up many positions of leadership on campus en route to positioning himself as a great leader for future generations as a High School teacher. He has recently taken up the art of poetic expression but revels at the opportunity to inspire the world to attain wisdom, knowledge and understanding.



David Pereira

David Pereira is a Sophomore Communications Design and Illustration Major in the school of Fine Arts, and a very active member of the Humanities Learning Community. The image that is featured after the article by Martina Powell, "Passionless Patronage", is actually a portrait that he drew for his class as an assignment. He modified his previous drawing using inspiration from a famous masterpiece. If any of you Art Historians haven't guessed, he used "Philosopher in Meditation" by Rembrandt. Regardless of the original piece, the re-creation is a magnificent piece of art and remarkable display of dexterous skill.

Lafayette James

Sports Columnist

'Tis the Season for Football



As the National Football League draws nearer to the climax of the 2012-2013 season, I want to take a moment to shine light on the athletes who risk their lives for themselves and the sports fanatics craving for the week to reach Sunday. As athletes get bigger and faster each year it only makes sense that there will be greater collisions, leaving some players hurt—not temporarily but for life. As reported in the New York Times by Columnist Kevin Cook, the National Football League's retired players are three-to-four times more likely to die from diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Lou Gehrig's. Such pain and suffering has caused some players to take their own lives. This was the case for the recent 12-time Pro-bowler Junior Seau, who passed away last year.

What is mind-blowing is the role the disease Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy, or better known as CTE, plays in this issue. CTE is a disease that eats away at the brain as the years pass and it is contracted from constant head trauma; but as we all know, football is a sport where head collisions cannot be avoided...at all. Another unfortunate detail in this crisis is that it is difficult to diagnose CTE until the person has passed away and the brain has been examined. Some CTE symptoms include memory loss, aggression, confusion and depression; all of which can appear within a few months, or even decades, after developing the disease. It is now suspected that Junior Seau may have taken his own life so that his brain could be examined with the hopes of opening the eyes of the many players who are prone to acquiring CTE. Some other notable football players that have been declared to have this disease are Mike Webster (died at 50), Terry Long (died at 45), Andre Waters (died at 36), Tom McHale (died at 45) and as mentioned before Junior Seau (died at 43). As you can see the age of death is very young, which is why initiatives to prevent this disease should take shape as soon as possible.

Due to these recent studies of how the constant head trauma is detrimental to the health of active players, the NFL has been compelled to protect these players with better officiating of the game and heftier fines to those who disobey. Ed Reed, a future Hall-of-Fame safety, is a well-known repeat offender on illegal hits on 'defenseless receivers' and he has already been fined 50,000 dollars this past season alone. The plan is that the fines and suspensions that have been put in place should lessen the amount of times players are suffering head injuries and concussions.

On the field, referees have really cracked down on players and have thrown flags at anything that even looks close to helmet-to-helmet contact on defenseless quarterbacks or receivers. Progression is moving surely but slowly because the players are not easily capable of snapping out of their old ways. These players have been taught to dismantle anything that is on the field that comes in between their chances of winning and the sudden change in rules may be a lot to ask for so quickly. With all these rules and regulations in place for defenders to obey, it is changing the game of football. The players cannot completely play off of instinct anymore but now have to think before they react to a defender with a ball in their hand. This new implication can now allow that receiver to come down with the ball in a clutch game which handicaps all defenders. The speed of the game has, and may continue to, slow down in order to secure the safety of players; with the hopes that players will no longer have to worry about what life after football will be like health-wise.

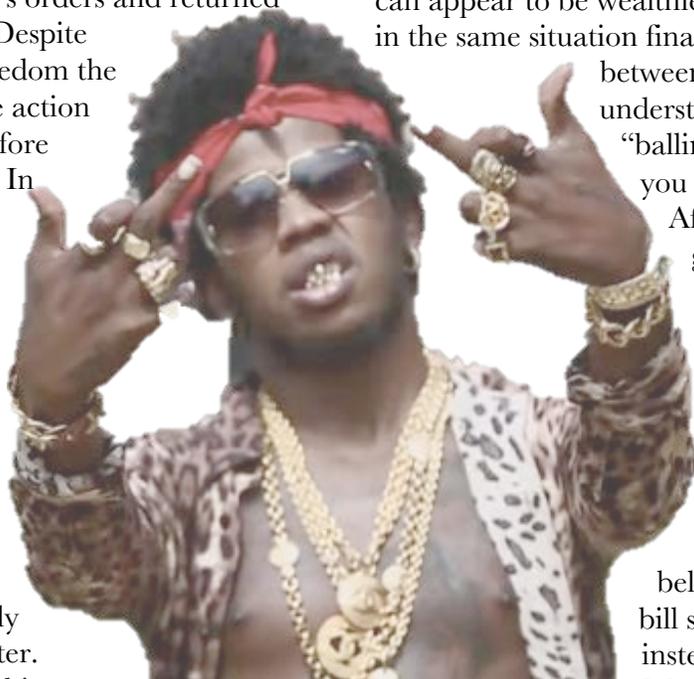
So does this mean dull football? Not at all, in fact the game can still be played fast and instinctually. What needs to be done is that the players continue to practice the fundamentals that they were taught when they began playing the game such as tackling with your helmet on the ball, wrapping and running through the ball carrier. As opposed to those lunging hockey-check-type hits that often lead to illegal helmet to helmet contact. In fact, the game would probably be more interesting seen the way it should be played - with harder thumps and more complete tackles. It is also important to consider the up and coming football players that look up to these NFL stars. Everyone knows how contagious it is to taunt after a big touchdown - Randy Moss and Terrell Owens being some of the bigger names – influencing the ego of younger players. It may seem like all fun and games but those same dirty hits are aimed towards the heads of showboating receivers that younger generations are bound to emulate. For the sake of the tradition of football and safety for all ages, player behavior and the way football is played should definitely be altered so that families will not have to suffer from the result of traumatic brain injury. The price of life should be cherished more than the urge to make money or acquire fame. In conclusion “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter” – Martin Luther King. So be heard and make a difference.

**“OUR LIVES
BEGIN TO END
THE DAY WE
BECOME
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MARTIN
LUTHER KING**

40 Acres and a Mule and Jewels

The Post Civil War era freed African American slaves expected the federal government to give them a certain amount of land as compensation for all the work they had done during slavery. This proposal was devised so that freed slaves could foster and move up economically after they gained their freedom. Union General William T. Sherman issued orders to reserve land (40 acres per family) for black settlement. This idea was extremely radical at the time hence the term 'Radical Reconstruction' and wasn't admired by the cotton-dominated South. After President Lincoln was assassinated, President Johnson who assumed presidency revoked Sherman's orders and returned land to its previous owners. Despite giving African-Americans freedom the federal government took little action to help freed slaves and therefore Reconstruction was a failure. In fact freed slaves were forced to work as laborers and sign yearly labor contracts. Former Confederate states passed stringent laws dubbed "black codes" which restricted the activity of freed slaves so that they were available as laborers under a sharecropping system. Because of this failure African-Americans would only see real progress 100 years later.

Why am I discussing this historical fact you may ask? Where am I heading with this? All of these questions will soon be answered. There is a recurring theme in the culture of Hip-Hop today: rappers in the music industry show-off or glorify vanity in, what appears to be, a sort of a crude compensation of the days when black slaves couldn't do the same. This is especially heinous because these highly televised rappers greatly influence the public's perception of African Americans—not to mention they are idolized by the youth. So we dress lavishly, adorned with the finest jewelry and clothing because we feel as if we weren't able to do so earlier in our lives because of previous socio-economic status. This overly ostentatious behavior manifests into a persona that reflects the 'mentality of a freed slave', excessively craving for lavishness.



Some African-Americans strongly idolize those who live the lifestyle of the rich and famous. Who wouldn't want to display their "wealth" and materials on live television? Anyone with cash is highly regarded and respected even if they attain their money illegally. But, do these African-Americans even know what real wealth is? I don't think some African-Americans can differentiate between being rich and being wealthy. Some African-Americans misconstrue having money with looking like you have money. Thus, some of us compete with people in the same socio-economic status as us, so it is essentially a competition on who can appear to be wealthier while both individuals are in the same situation financially. There is a fine line

between the two that we must understand and discern because "ballin" will lead to "fallin" before you even realize it. A lot of

African-Americans in poverty grow up looking up to drug dealers who they see with money. They fail to see that the money they have is temporary and isn't something to aspire for.

The glorification of wealth glamorized by our favorite rappers makes some of us believe that chasing the dollar bill should be the main priority instead of chasing passions.

We are all self-conscious even if we don't want to admit. But there has to come a time and place where we ask ourselves, "Do we want to try be remembered for material things that people won't remember us by?" Let's face it these material things only matter to us. No matter how full your closet is your soul will always be empty because the only thing that resonates with people even after you die is the knowledge you leave. I highly doubt the slaves that were chained together would want to come back and see excessive chains on the necks of bright young African-Americans with potential. Overcompensation is an issue that needs to be dealt with. Although it gives us pleasure in the short-run it only hurts us in the end.

By: Aden Aden



Lafayette James Jr., Shantel Honeyghan, Martina Powell, Davin Campbell, Steve Cartagena, Aden Aden



Sports Columnist, Writer, Writer, Editor-in-Chief, Graphic Designer/Writer, Writer

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Questions? Comments? E-mail the Editor at davin.campbell@uconn.edu

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