

THE INTERCOLLEGIATE DEPARTMENT OF

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EDWIDGE DANTICAT GIVES 2009-10 SOJOURNER TRUTH LECTURE

BY BRITTANY TROTTER, '10, POMONA COLLEGE

Haitian-American author Edwidge Danticat spoke on Thursday, February 18th to a capacity crowd at Pomona College's Rose Hills Theatre. Ms. Danticat, a MacArthur Fellow, spoke in the aftermath of the devastating January 12th earthquake that shattered her native country. She offered personal reflections that can serve as "lessons" for people around the world. In her talk, Danticat celebrated the memory of her cousin Maxo, who, during the earthquake, died in his home alongside his children. Local community members rushed to unearth his body with their bare hands, and Danticat focused on this demonstration of empathy and solidarity as an example of Haitian culture. She recited a popular Haitian saying: "Misery, I am not afraid of you; I am a human being."

While providing an inspirational and nuanced reading of Haiti's current circumstances, Danticat rejected U.S. perspectives like those of Pat Roberts, the ultra-conservative televangelist who called the Haitian people "cursed." Moreover, she expressed fears that outside corporations and nations will attempt to restructure the financial and sociopolitical landscape of the country, which could, in turn, affect the nation's aesthetics, culture, and values. At the end of her talk, Danticat left the audience with the following solemn words once savored by her cousin Maxo: "Your song was very beautiful and your sadness does me honor. I'm going to start life in a new world. If I ever return, I'll tell you what it's like there. Great Black country, I bid you farewell."



Did You Know?

CURRENTLY, 19.4% OF AFRICAN AMERICANS OVER AGE 25 HAVE EARNED A BACHELOR'S DEGREE.

*"MAKE A DIFFERENCE
ABOUT SOMETHING
OTHER THAN
YOURSELVES."*

-TONI MORRISON

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FEATURED FACULTY: DR. ERIC HURLEY

BY: ALLANA ZUCKERMAN, '10, POMONA COLLEGE

Dr. Eric Hurley is an Associate Professor, recently tenured, with a joint appointment in Africana Studies and Psychology at Pomona College. He received his Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from Howard University, in 2000. When asked why he chose Howard to pursue his Ph.D. he said, "I wanted to be immersed in a community of Black scholars." Dr. Hurley's current research interests include cultural continuity (the continuity of cultural themes that can be distinguished in different diasporas) and the relationship between neurophysiology and culture. His research interests reflect the joint appointment he holds at the Claremont Colleges.

In addition to his research, Dr. Hurley's courses also integrate Psychology and Africana Studies. One of his favorite courses to teach, "Psychology of the Black Experience," falls within this framework by providing "a critical review of historical and traditional approaches to the psychological study of Black people and an examination of the contributions of the first three generations of Black psychologists who set the foundations for the current generation." Dr. Hurley described this course as "providing the greatest opportunity for a transformative experience" for himself and his students.

His dedication to teaching was a main factor in his desire to obtain a faculty position at the Claremont Colleges. Dr. Hurley commented that teaching at a school with a heavy focus on research does not allow for spending time with students outside of class. He used his prior teaching experience as an Assistant Professor at the University of Massachusetts as an example of this. "While UMass was a great school," Dr. Hurley says, "it didn't offer the kind of opportunity to get to know one's students that the Claremont Colleges do." The fact that we held this interview on the porch of his house is a testament to this statement! When asked for another reason why he wanted to work at the Claremont Colleges, he said, "And, of course, the weather."

His students (many of whom refer to him simply as "Hurley") can tell you that Dr. Hurley is a professor who always has his door open. Mindful of the limited number of Black faculty on campus, he makes himself available to students of color at the Claremont Colleges, no matter their major. In fact, his students were so dedicated to ensuring his tenure, that one of his previous advisees created a Facebook group titled "Tenure Professor Eric Hurley!" The page was a hub of excitement when he finally received the good news that he had, in fact, received tenure.

Dr. Hurley is going on a sabbatical in the spring of next year, though due to his impending fatherhood, he will actually be off both fall and spring. In the fall, he will be taking "family leave." Dr. Hurley will utilize his "family leave" by giving his wife, Shelva, an opportunity to work on her doctoral dissertation. In the spring of next year, he will be working on research concerning cultural continuity and education. Until then, he and his wife are anxiously awaiting the arrival of their first child.



FEATURED STUDENT: ELIZABETH WILLIAMS

BY: MICHAEL BRIGHT, '10, POMONA COLLEGE

Bright: Thank you, Miss Williams, for this interview. It's a wonderful privilege. First, where are you from?

Williams: Thank you, Mr. Bright. I am from south Los Angeles, California.

B: What college do you attend and what's your major?

W: I attend Pitzer and I am a Sociology and Africana Studies double major.

B: What attracted you to Pitzer, and Africana Studies and Sociology?

W: What attracted me to Pitzer was its commitment to social justice. I felt this was a place where I could be involved with community organizing, could be aware of and effectively address social issues I'm concerned with. I like studying people, their behavior, and problems in society, which is why I chose Sociology. In my Sociology classes, we talk about the problems of the world, like poverty and crime, but in my Africana Studies classes, I gain a more critical perspective on how these issues institutionalize in society for certain types of people. I chose Africana Studies because it's crucial for me to analyze and understand my own experiences and those of the people of African descent with whom I identify.

B: To expand, What are your post-graduate plans?

W: As of right now I'm waiting on notification about a Fulbright. Also, I was accepted to UCLA, SUNY Albany, the University of Michigan, and Washington University in St. Louis for Master's in Social Welfare. After college, I plan to go into the field of social work, more specifically, to be a policymaker who focuses on criminal justice issues like improving the effectiveness of re-entry programs for ex-offenders.

B: That's wonderful! You have had a lot of experience in your four years. Did you go abroad? I was hoping you could share where you went and what your experience was like.

W: I had always wondered what my life would have been like if I had attended a historically Black university as opposed to the Claremont Colleges. At Howard, I got a taste of it because I was surrounded by very driven and innovative students, as well as a rich legacy of Black achievements. I chose to study abroad in Botswana because I wanted to experience a true cultural immersion that did not involve a university experience. I felt that home stays would provide me with an insider's perspective of the culture. Being Black placed me as an "insider" because of my physical appearance, yet I was a complete "outsider" to the culture as an American. For the first time in my life, I was told that I was White! Furthermore, because I did not belong to any ethnic tribe that had its own unique language, I could not possibly be Black.

B: Such a rich experience... I have only one more question. Given that you were invited to this interview, are there any honors or awards that you have received?

W: Well, in my sophomore year, I received the Outstanding Commitment Award from OBSA, which was really humbling. The summer after, I was extremely honored to be selected as a Ronald E. McNair Scholar at CGU. I received a Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship that provided financial assistance for my study abroad.

B: Thank you, Miss, Williams, for this interview. It was a real pleasure. I am proud to say I know you.

W: Thank you, Mr. Bright.



Editor's Note: Two weeks after this interview, Williams was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to teach for one year in Malaysia. Congratulations, Elizabeth!

FACULTY NEWS

- Professor Rita Roberts (Africana Studies and History, Scripps): Professor Roberts's new book, *Evangelicalism and the Politics of Reform in Northern Black Thought, 1776-1863*, will be released this coming fall. This semester, she ends her three-year term as Chair of the Scripps College Department of History. During the summer, Professor Roberts will travel to several archives to collect material for a new project: African American letters in the Civil War era.

- Professor Sheila Walker (Psychology and Africana Studies, Scripps) was elected to a second three-year term as Department Chair of Africana Studies.

- Matthew Delmont (American Studies and Africana Studies, Scripps) was offered a contract by the University of California Press for his new book, *The Nicest Kid in Town: American Bandstand and School Segregation in Postwar Philadelphia*.

- Professor Abdourahman Waberi (Podlich Distinguished Professor, CMC): In July, in Barcelona, there will be a special conference, the "Colloque Waberi," devoted to Professor Waberi's work. Attendees will come from Africa, Europe, and the U.S.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 23: Dr. Alexa Canady, first African American neurosurgeon

NOVEMBER 3: Dr. Richmond Sarpong, biochemist, UC Berkeley

FEBRUARY 10: Sonia Sanchez, poet, playwright

FEBRUARY 24: Karen Hampton, textile artist

MARCH 24: Andrea Chung, artist, Fulbright Scholar

STUDENT NEWS

- Michael Bright (Africana Studies and Media Studies, Pomona) was admitted to the graduate program in Film and Television at UCLA.

- Savannah Ross, a sophomore at Pitzer College, was accepted to the study abroad program at the University of Adelaide, Australia, for the fall semester.

- Brittany Trotter (Africana Studies, Pomona) was admitted to the doctoral program in Africana Studies at NYU.

CONGRATULATIONS, GRADUATING SENIORS!!



MICHAEL BRIGHT, POMONA

AVERY KIRKLAND, POMONA

WYNTON MARSALIS, JR., PITZER

JALEESA PARKS, POMONA

BRITTANY TROTTER, POMONA

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