

*The Department of African and
Black Diaspora Studies*

WE ARE HERE

*Fall 2018 Student
Newsletter*



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR:

W elcome to the Fall 2018 issue of *We Are Here*, the African and Black Diaspora Studies student newsletter. Once again, we have collected in this issue the wisdom, talents, and energy of our students.

ABD is joined this fall by Dr. Poe (Evan) Johnson as this year's Ida B. Wells-Barnett Postdoctoral Fellow. Professor Johnson comes to us after spending a year at Rutgers University's Center for Historical Analysis. He received his PhD from the University of Texas at Dallas in Aesthetic Studies. In October, he presented his work to the DePaul community. The lecture, "The Mediated Lynching of the Black Athlete: Fan Violence in Sports Spectatorship" was attended by over 100 people. (If you missed it, you can find the video on our ABD department home page at abd.depaul.edu.) Professor Johnson will be teaching three classes for ABD over the next two quarters. In Winter term, he will teach a course called "Black Aesthetic Thought" and in the Spring he will teach "What Is Black Cinema" and "Racial Violence in American Culture".

Thank you so much to our newsletter contributors. Big thanks also to Evan Lowry and Jenna Washington for their work on editing and art direction for this newsletter. If you are interested in writing for our next newsletter, please email us at abd@depaul.edu.

We at ABD count on our students to help us get the word out about ABD and what it has to offer. We're always looking for committed, enthusiastic students who see the universal value in studying the Black Diaspora and its peoples, histories, cultures, and ideas. If you've taken an ABD class that you've enjoyed, spread the word. Look out for our upcoming events and classes. Have a good end to this Fall term and have a restful break.





DIASPORA

DI-AS-PO-RA / n. a dispersion of a people, language, or culture that was formerly concentrated in one place, to scatter, to displace, to live in separated communities.

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Cover Photo taken by Jonathan Burns (see page 15)

Newsletter Art Direction and Editing by Evan Lowry and Jenna Washington

MAJOR

FOUR CORE CLASSES :

ABD 100: Intro to ABD
ABD 200: Africa
ABD 206: Afro-Caribbean &
Latin America
ABD 208: African America

+ Four 300 level coursed
+ Four Electives (200 level & above)
+ Senior Capstone

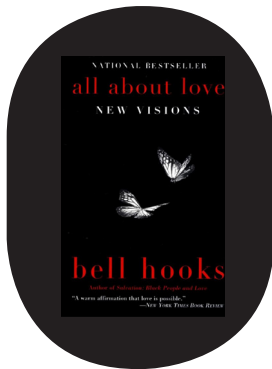
MINOR

ONE CORE CLASS :

ABD 100: Intro to ABD

+ ABD 200: Africa
Or ABD 206: Afro-Caribbean & Latin America
Or ABD 208: African America
+ 4 courses (in consultation with ABD advisor)

WINTER QUARTER CLASSES :



ABD 220: BLACKS & LOVE:

Blacks and Love examines the interconnection between love, race, power, and justice. This course focuses on the importance of love in Black philosophy, literature, music, politics, and popular culture. It employs literary and cultural criticism, critical race studies, and feminist theory to examine a range of genres in search of progressive, transformative loving images of blacks.

Counts as Social, Cultural, &
Behavioral Inquiry Learning
Domain



ABD 206: AFRO-CARRIBEAN & AFRO-LATIN AMERICA

This course examines historical and cultural constructions of blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean. This class will explore the way racial projects intersect with gender, sexuality, and class issues. Students will learn how racial identities are constructed and interpreted in the Americas and the ways these identities have shaped Latin American and Caribbean cultures, politics, and societies. This course will explore these identities through an analysis of various topics such as colonization, slavery, independence struggles, neo-colonialism, revolution, social movements and others.

Counts as Social, Cultural, &
Behavioral Inquiry



ABD 234: BLACK AESTHETIC THOUGHT

This course examines the historical and interdisciplinary idea of the black aesthetic by investigating some of the various political, philosophical, and ideological debates surrounding the roles of art in black life and blackness in artistic production. This course will focus on the development of and disagreements within sources of prominent black artistic and intellectual production such as: The Harlem Renaissance, The Black Arts Movement, The British Black Arts Movement, Blaxploitation, Hip Hop, and Black Digital Culture.

Counts as Philosophical Inquiry
Learning Domain

SENIOR REFLECTION

by Nyah Hoskins



This might be the hardest thing I've written in my DePaul career. Trying to explain the impact the Department of African and Black Diaspora Studies has had on me deserves a Ted Talk or another grand speech of some sort. DePaul was, and honestly still is, completely out of my comfort zone. I came to DePaul as a 17 year-old from Jersey City, New Jersey, and was caught completely off guard. I came from a city and school environment where I was constantly surrounded by mentors and people of color who were invested with their students. DePaul was not that.

I entered DePaul as a Journalism major, and my primary goal was to do long-form storytelling on subjects whose stories are often ignored. For my Explore Chicago class, I took Chicago's Black Cultural Renaissance, which was taught by Dr. Kohli. Over the course of ten

weeks, I was immersed in the literary, musical, and historical impact of Black people in Chicago.

After spending a whole quarter learning about the impact of Black people, I was compelled to add a minor in African and Black Diaspora Studies. Throughout my freshman year, I took my first Journalism class and felt like it was lacking. I learned how to write and report, but there was very little emphasis on diversity in the field. A minor in ABD was my starting point. I knew I wanted to learn more and fill in certain gaps within my education in the Journalism

department. As a double major in Journalism and African and Black Diaspora Studies, I was able to contextualize the issues that are occur to Black folks on the daily. The knowledge I gained through my double major made me a better writer, and overall, a well-rounded individual. My education in ABD enhanced my storytelling abilities by giving me the cultural context necessary for reporting on marginalized communities, especially intersectional Black communities.

My growth at DePaul has been exponential. It has exceeded and completely shifted my own perception of self. My junior year, I realized I was not fully engaged with Journalism. I lost my love for the field, but my love for ABD grew stronger. I was able to take ABD classes that would help me navigate the fields of study I wanted to explore. By the end of my junior year, I took Black Sexual Politics and Race, Media, and Representation. These two classes were transformative in terms of evaluating my post-grad-

uate goals. In Black Sexual Politics, we analyzed what factors throughout history shaped the sexual politics around Black women. Starting from slavery and ending in the era of the Internet, the course gave a comprehensive explanation to the struggles of Black womanhood in regards to sexuality. The required reading for the class was transformative in every aspect. One of the primary texts, Algorithms of Oppression, opened my eyes to the problematics of search engines and the Internet. Race, Media, and Representation analyzed the role the media plays in enforcing systems of oppression. Analyzing the impact, importance and flaws of Black film and television flipped a switch in my brain. This course solidified my interest in Media Studies, which is my intended field of study for graduate school.

I often tell my peers that majoring in ABD was necessary for me. At DePaul, it was so hard for me to find genuine support within the Journalism program. The Department of African and Black Diaspora Studies is full of faculty that genuinely cares about my success at DePaul and beyond. I am so thankful for them, as well as the Center for Black Diaspora, for their endless support and guidance. As I enter my last year in undergrad, I would tell anyone who is contemplating on adding a major in ABD TO DO IT!! The knowledge you gain will help you in any field, affirm you in your identity, and allow you to see things in a critical framework.

Above: Photo of Nyah Hoskins taken by Jonathan Burns

REFLECTIONS ON PRESERVING BLACK CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

by Michaela Clarke



The South Side of Chicago is, without a doubt, a hub for Black cultural institutions. The neighborhoods hold stories filled with resilience, beauty, and history. The University of Chicago recently hosted a symposium showcasing the role of cultural institutions on the South Side. The purpose was to draw attention to and document the significance of fighting for spaces that actively challenge dominant narratives of white supremacy and cultural segregation in Chicago.

The event began with a panel discussion from four members of different organizations in the community, about emergence of activism work and cultural institutions on the South Side: Natalie Moore - WBEZ, Masequa Myers - Director of South Side Community Arts Center, Faheem Majeed - artist, educator, and curator of Floating Museum, and Bob Black - retired photojournalist with Chicago Defender and the Chicago Sun Times. Although these four people are in very different fields of work, their

vision is for building and passing on a legacy of cultural wealth that already exists on the South Side.

Common titles the speakers gave themselves were, “cultural guardian”, and “cultural keeper”. The declaration of these titles for themselves spoke to the larger theme and importance of cultural preservation. Cultural institutions such as, The South Side Community Arts Center, Osun Gallery (no longer in physical existence), and the DuSable Museum, were created in the context of institutionalized segregation in Chicago. However, they are working to preserve the histories and stories of Black people and art on the South Side that have been diminished from mainstream conversations around Chicago history. Another important aspect of cultural preservation is intergenerational conversations. Each of the speakers were invested in learning from youth of Chicago, while also passing along the knowledge and legacies they have inherited over the years. Building

strong institutions has to happen within the context of strong communities, and that has to include the honoring of youth voices.

“THE HOPE IS TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES AND HONOR STORIES THAT HAVE BEEN ERASED”

The symposium continued with a panel discussion from youth activists about the intersections of art and activism on the South Side. Their work in pushing for spaces for creativity, and reimagining community, takes the importance of cultural institutions a step further. Artists and youth activists have continued to build upon the legacy left by cultural institutions on the South Side. By continuing the legacy of community organizing, they are shifting the narrative of how the history of the South Side of Chicago is told. The preservation of these historic, artistic, cultural institutions is uncovering and advancing stories that have always been essential to the history of Chicago. With more exposure comes the threat of potential exploitation or tokenization by outsiders. But, by acknowledging the role of institutionalized segregation in the emergence of culturally rich institutions, the hope is to strengthen communities and honor stories that have been erased from dominating conversations about Chicago’s history.

Above: Howard Simmons, left, with fellow photographers Bob Black, John White, and Ovie Carter, photographed by Howard Simmons outside the South Side Community Art Center in 1973.

LAQUAN MCDONALD MURDER, JASON VAN DYKE TRIAL TIMELINE

by Evan Lowry



Above: Images taken from Google

OCT. 20, 2014

17 year old Laquan McDonald is shot 16 times by Officer Jason Van Dyke and is later pronounced dead at Mount Sinai Hospital in Chicago, IL.

MARCH 23, 2017

Van Dyke awaits trial and is formally charged with six counts of first-degree murder, one count of misconduct and 16 counts of aggravated battery.

JUNE 27, 2017

Chicago police officers(current and former), David March, Joseph Walsh and Thomas Gaffney, are charged with official misconduct, obstruction of justice, and conspiracy in the covering up of LaQuan McDonald's shooting.

SEPT. 13, 2018

The court selects 12 jurors to sit for the case. The jury consists of seven white jurors, three Hispanics, one Asian-American and one Black juror

SEPT. 17, 2018

The Van Dyke trial begins. The prosecutors drop four counts of murder. The opening day sees opening statements from both sides as well as two officers who were at the scene of the shooting

SEPT. 20, 2018

After presenting 24 witnesses the prosecution rests its case.

SEPT. 24, 2018

The defense begins presenting their case under the pretense that Van Dyke justifiably shot McDonald out of fear for his life.

OCT. 3, 2018

The defense rests its case.

OCT. 4, 2018

After hearing closing arguments, the jury begins deliberation.

OCT. 5, 2018

Van Dyke is found guilty of second-degree murder and 16 counts of aggravated battery. He is exonerated of official misconduct.

How much time will he serve?

It remains unclear how much time Van Dyke will actually serve. Second-degree murder doesn't guarantee prison time meaning he could end up serving probation or potentially up to 20 years depending on his final sentencing. However, each aggravated battery conviction carries a sentence of 6 to 30 years in prison and with 16 convictions Van Dyke is guaranteed to spend time behind bars. It is still unclear whether or not these counts will be served consecutively or simultaneously.

#MORETHANRAPE

by Zipporah Kaffey



On September 7, 2013, hope infused the hearts of many as More Than Me Academy (MTM) opened its doors in West Point, Monrovia, Liberia. The academy sought to empower young girls through education in order to save them from sexual exploitation, a prevalent issue in Liberia. However, since the very beginning of More Than Me, these young girls were forced to endure rape and sexual harassment from one of the organization's first staff members.

More Than Me initially emerged in 2008 as a charity founded by a white New Jersey resident, Katie Meyler, after her visit to Monrovia in 2006. According to Time magazine, the foundation raised more than \$8 million for 19 schools, educating 4,000 students. To put this into perspective, in Liberia the literacy rate of youth ages 15-24 is 63.5% for boys and 37.2% for girls, while the primary school participation is 42.3% for boys and 39.9% for girls according to UNICEF. This would come at the cost of them being taken advantage of sexually by co-founder Macintosh Johnson. Meyler appointed Johnson as the point of contact for MTM in Liberia after she met him in 2010, since he was born and raised in West Point; he recruited



girls for the scholarships. Community members and individuals involved with this organization trusted and respected this former child soldier as we operated a “neighborhood watch” type of program. Meyler even referred to him as the “Jesus of West Point.” Johnson abused his power and took advantage of these vulnerable girls by threatening to take away their scholarships if they did not comply or if they told anyone. On top of this, his short-lived intimate relationship with Katie Meyler further protected and permitted the perpetuation of his actions; even when Meyler and other board members had reasonable suspicions of Johnson, they still kept him in the position of power to continue assaulting these girls, until they attained “sufficient evidence.” Survivors initially confessed their rape to the MTM nurse. When she reported these findings to the MTM board—comprised of all Americans—they refused to report it to authorities until they received “adequate, physical evidence.”

“IN LIBERIA THE LITERACY RATE OF YOUTH AGES 15-24 IS 63.5% FOR BOYS AND 37.2% FOR GIRLS”

In June of 2014, Macintosh Johnson was arrested for rape. Only 10 girls agreed to testify against him in the case of the *Liberia v. Johnson*, as others were sued to withdraw their testimonies. According to the ProPublica and Time magazine documentary “Unprotected,” about a quarter of the girls at MTM were identified as survivors of Johnson's assault. While Johnson was in prison awaiting trial, it was revealed that he had HIV/AIDS. This news devastated the girls because they reported that when Johnson raped them, he never used condoms. Because of this, they tested only the survivors that came forward,



and one of them tested positive for HIV/AIDS. During the trial, all of the American MTM staff and board members left for America, leaving the girls to testify for themselves. Eventually the case led to a mistrial, and Johnson died from AIDS after two years in prison. The Liberian government opened an ongoing investigation on MTM after the testimony of the young girls.

“IT IS IRONIC THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL MISSION OF THIS ORGANIZATION WAS TO PROVIDE AN EDUCATION FOR THESE GIRLS IN ORDER TO SAVE THEM FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION”

The aftermath of this tragedy left many girls hopeless and in a worse state than before MTM arrived in Liberia. More Than Me Academy no longer exists but the board funds the education of girls that have still decided to continue their education elsewhere. No one on the board has faced any type of consequence; Katie Mey-

ler temporarily stepped down and the board chairman also resigned only after Time magazine released an article and documentary revealing this scandal. This incident may have been specific to the West Point community in Liberia, but it is emblematic of a large scale and systemic “white savior complex” that can be observed throughout history and modernity. Throughout interviews, many white Americans on the MTM staff and board have insinuated that because their program was well intentioned and may have had some positive outcomes, those effects overshadow the long-term trauma endured by the More Than Me girls. It is ironic too that the fundamental mission of this organization was to provide an education for these girls in order to save them from sexual exploitation, when the foundation was only able to provide them an education at the cost of sexual assault and harassment.

Opposite Page: Children walk through Duala Market in Monrovia, Liberia. Kathleen Flynn, special to ProPublica

Above: More Than Me Academy in Monrovia. Kathleen Flynn, special to ProPublica

“WADE IN THE WATER”

Are the struggles of my people not good enough for you?
Or the way they picked cotton not intriguing enough? Or the way they
endured lashes of fire on their backs in order to see their families at night
Tell me, is my history boring?
or is my black offensive?
Those 28 days in February is all some of us got.
My ancestors have bled on your America's flag long after slavery,
Suffocating, beneath, red waters,
We're wading, on hands and feet
Writing our history on waves,
Carrying lineages on backs,
You see bullets bounce between ocean currents,
Like middle passages,
Like black boys floating in pools of blood.
I am the blood and sweat of my ancestors seeped into this soil,
that's produced the strangest of fruit.
I am sandcastles built on concrete because the concrete jungles can't stand
sand anymore,
Like America can't seem to stand black boys anymore.
Like guns in the hands of black boys like black girls be black boys they see
no difference, they see black they see color, they see no difference.
Carter G. Woodson, created Black History week as a means to give credit
to the diligence within the bones of my people.
A confirmation that invention and innovation isn't just a "white thing" and
that my melanin was good for something more than collard greens and
fried chicken
I am the fight in Martin's voice, The rage in Malcolm's power, militant like
Fred Hampton, Cunning like Harriet, Brave like Rosa
Fed the fuck up like you, like me, of this country and its injustice.
My people are strong and I'm still trying to connect dots of blood and
bone,
wondering what my true history even is and if being black is even real?
What is black? What is real?
I am african
The Nile river pumps through my veins
I am Ghanian
I am Sudanese
I am Kenyan
Egyptian
Moroccan
Somalian
I am the scriptures lost at sea
I am wading amongst all these waters
Wondering...if God is going to trouble them?

Poem by Darius Parker
Critical Ethnic Studies
Class of 2020

BLACK SPIRITUALITY: ASIANIC JEWISH FAITH

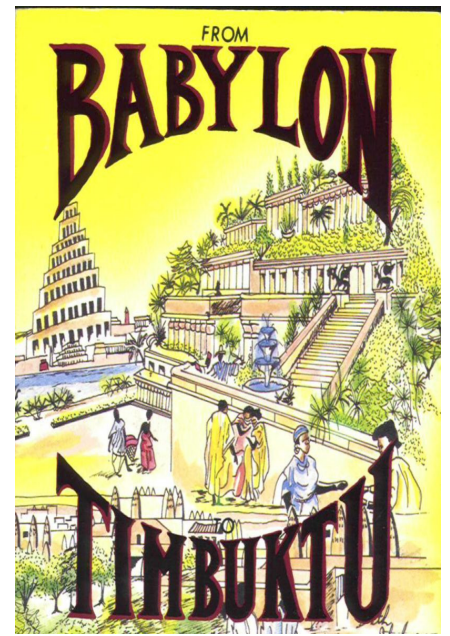
by Kaitlen Crawford

From conversations with my peers, the oppression inflicted on us by individuals and institutions has left us with more than a sense of victimization, but curiosity. The study of the black diaspora has been just as much about identity as history. When we seek this knowledge we are essentially asking these questions: Why is this happening to me? Where do I belong? What is my purpose? There are countless works attempting to answer these complex questions, and explain the roots of the black struggle. I applaud those who work under the very sound logic of “you must know where you come from to know where you are going,” and where we are today. However, I find that in black diaspora studies, we often times focus on the most recent past of the second, man-made diaspora, The Atlantic Slave Trade. Constraining our studies of the migration of black people from Africa to the Americas is just as limiting as American public schools teaching black history as beginning with slavery and adding a dash of ceremonial masks and percussion. I believe that a true knowledge of our past requires an understanding of the first diaspora of Afro-Asiatic peoples, inspired by trade, religion, and politics. Studying both the ancient and modern diasporas will result in having a more complete diasporic perspective and benefit us in finding out who we are as descendants of these black movements. As a child of teachers and

professors of our study, I know fully well that this task is easier said than done. That is why I also encourage my peers and anyone interested in the world’s largest diasporas to begin and continue to seek knowledge beyond the requirements of our syllabi.

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In my own efforts to expand my knowledge about the ancient black diaspora, I found myself running into familiar histories. The first civilization in Babylon and the decline of the Egyptian empire were all histories I had learned in my Southern Baptist bible studies. Although I no longer identify myself as a Christian, but as a Messianic Jew, this realization led me down a rabbit hole of comparing Abrahamic texts to historical works. Recently, one of my mentors recommended a book that had done most of the work that I was interested in. Rudolph Windsor’s “From Babylon to Timbuktu” gave me a compre-



hensive timeline of events that took place from the beginning of the human race through the end of the first diaspora. What struck me the most was that his research was not just based on the typical sources of archaeology and academic reports, but also the Bible. In today’s world of increasing secularism some might disregard this religious text as a credible reference, but I encourage you to do the opposite. Windsor’s use of the Bible is subjective at times, but his objective work with the sacred text is used because it is one of the earliest evidences of black contribution to ancient civilization. The direct citation of the Bible turns this short read into a deep analysis. That is why I support using the Abrahamic texts, as well as peer-reviewed articles that use these texts as references, to build a better understanding of the ancient diaspora. Windsor’s book is the beginning of my journey into combining my religious views with my academic interests, and I hope that it will continue to lead me and my peers to answering the complex questions of Afro-identity.



ALUMNI PROFILE

Gabrielle Howard CLASS OF 2017

What have you been up to since graduation?

I am currently still attending DePaul University as a “Double Demon.” I am heading into the final two quarters of my masters program where I am getting my Master’s in Public Policy. I am also a graduate assistant coach for the DePaul University Track and Field team. In addition to my studies and my assistantship I am interning for the Kennedy Forum, an organization named after President Kennedy and created to educate about and assist with mental health in marginalized communities.

The Kennedy Forum is an organization dedicated to changing the system surrounding mental health by fighting stigma and discrimination while promoting policies that focus on person-centered care practices.

This past summer I interned for the 46th ward Alderman James Cappleman and was able to gain a better understanding of local political office. Both of these experiences have helped me in understanding what I want to do after my June graduation. I applied for the position with the Kennedy Forum because they primarily work with the Black community, and that is the community that I most want to help bring positive change to in my career. I

live in the 46th ward and wanted to play a part in helping leave a positive impact on my community instead of being a passive constituent.

What are your immediate and future goals post graduation?

My immediate goal at the moment would be to secure a job (not only so I have something to tell my mom when she asks me) so that I can feel more secure about graduating. I think my intern experiences have helped me know that if I were to work more in politics it would be at the state or federal level. One of the positions I am seriously considering is being a legislative aid for a Congressperson or working for a public policy think tank.

My ultimate goal is to be an active leader in the development of public policy to improve conditions in marginalized communities (specifically Black communities) and correct social injustices and inequality in this country and abroad. It is my strong belief that we are all interconnected and no matter what our background or culture, our lives all intersect in some way.

What drew you to pursue an ABD major while in undergrad?

When I began my undergraduate studies, my goal was to become a psychologist. My empathetic nature

and desire to help others coupled with my ability to understand and see things from other people’s perspectives led me to believe that psychology was the right career path for me. I entered my undergraduate studies as a sophomore because of the dual credit hours I received during high school so I was able to begin my core psychology classes right away. While I excelled in all of my classes and found the material intriguing, I began questioning the research and study findings that I was learning about. As an African American woman, I quickly grew tired of the many statistics and research results that placed African Americans in a negative light. In order to better understand history from an African American perspective, and also to understand the circumstances and reasoning behind the many negative statistics that labeled African Americans as poor, economically disadvantaged, and with a focus on criminal elements, I decided to take the class “Introduction to African and Black Diaspora Studies.” That class opened my eyes to the achievements and multidimensional aspects of my culture that I had never been exposed to before. I gained a basic and much needed lesson on the perspective behind the statistics I read about in my psychology classes and how policies and systems of power led to them. I could have graduated in

three years if I had only majored in psychology, but I developed a strong desire to learn more and to gain an even better understanding of the history and interdisciplinary perspective that I was afforded. After taking that introductory class, I decided to major in African and Black Diaspora (ABD) Studies in addition to Psychology.

How does your majoring in ABD define your critical lens in relation to the world around you?

The ABD major opened my eyes to many of the circumstances locally, nationally, and globally that affect not only the African American community, but all parts of the African and Black Diaspora. The knowledge gained through my ABD degree has led to my pursuit of a Master's in Public Policy. Reading and learning about the negative implications that policy decisions have had and continue to have on Black people in the United States and across the world instilled a desire in me to make a change. ABD gave me the background to help in some way with the implementation of beneficial policies and a desire to better understand how I can contribute to positive social change locally and internationally. ABD has made me painfully aware of the interconnections that race has on virtually everything else. I can no longer think about a topic without trying to understand how race comes into effect. For example, last quarter I took a class called "Poverty, Inequality, and Public Policy." The teacher continually tried to separate the issues of mobility, insecurity, and poverty from race when I felt like you could not talk about them without including race.

Currently the systems that the United States of America operate on are not geared to enabling the success of all people, and I believe that this degree will enable me to

see those gears shift. So many aspects of today's society bear witness to the lack of accountability, justice, professionalism, transparency, and sensitivity to all people and communities, and that is what ABD helped me to realize is what I am passionate about changing and enforcing in my future career.

What are three things you would tell any prospective ABD minors/majors to better prepare them for life after declaring?

Three things I would tell any prospective ABD minors/majors to better prepare them for life after declaring would be: 1. Prepare to be pushed, do not take an ABD class unless you are ready to think critically and be able to expand your frame of thinking. I was a student-athlete and I remember an advisor telling me that ABD classes were challenging as if to deter me from taking them, but she only made me want to take them more. 2. It is one of the best decisions you can make with your time at DePaul. All of my ABD teachers were phenomenal and each class is filled with so much interesting and insightful information. Be sure to consume as much knowledge as you can. 3. Be prepared to be frustrated with society after taking these classes. Frustrated because you are just learning who and how you are, frustrated because of some of the history, and frustrated when you gain a better understanding of why American society is at the place it presently is.

Are there any tidbits of advice you'd like to give for current students about undergraduate or postgraduate life?

I definitely encourage you to explore any topic you are interested in now. I often find myself wishing I had taken a class in a certain subject and being frustrated that I

don't have that opportunity anymore. Those four years of undergrad go by like the blink of an eye and this vast array of knowledge won't be as easily accessible. Really take a moment to think about what you could potentially see yourself doing post graduation. Once you have done that take a class geared toward it, talk to someone currently in that position, and maybe intern somewhere similar.

I would also say to network with people. If someone is doing something you are interested in ask them to go out for coffee and learn more about their career path and how they got to where they are.

Lastly I would say to utilize internships so that you have that professional experience for when you graduate.

SERVING WHILE BLACK: LEARNING THE POLITICS OF BLACKNESS, SUGAR CANE, AND NUESTROS PEQUEÑOS HERMANOS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

By Evan Lowry



This past summer, I was given the opportunity to accompany DePaul Athletics on the Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (NPH) service immersion trip to the Casa Santa Ana home in the Dominican Republic. NPH is an international organization that creates living compounds for vulnerable children in Latin American countries. NPH homes provide children with a familial environment that works to offer formal education, vocational mentoring, and healthcare facilities for children from underprivileged areas. For me, living in a Dominican home was an invaluable and humbling experience that invoked intense feelings of diasporic nurturing and global responsibility. Not only were we immersed in Dominican culture by living in the home, we were granted the opportunity to meet with advocate

groups for Haitian migrant rights, learned about the history of race relations on the island of Hispaniola, and even met with sugar cane farmers to discuss their working conditions and protest options.

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In the beginning of our trip, our group met with nuns from ASCALA (Asociación Scalabriniana Al Servicio De La Movilidad Humana) who revealed the realities

of Haitian immigration and the active denaturalization of Dominicans of Haitian descent being implemented by the Dominican government. The nuns shared that legislation passed in 2013 by the Dominican Constitutional Court has worked to strip the citizenship of all Dominicans born under undocumented parents, leaving hundreds of thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent as societal ghosts. This disproportionately affects Haitian migrants who have lived on the right side of the island for multiple generations without naturalizing. Children of undocumented Haitian parents are denied naturalization and are disqualified from public schooling, obtaining identification, voting in political elections, and migrating from the country. This specifically has limited communities of sugarcane workers (called Batays) ability to pursue upward economic mobility, access to healthcare,

and political enfranchisement. NPH DR works with these communities and organizations like ASCALA to effectively navigate the ethnically biased naturalization process while also providing children who are most affected by this with opportunity, stability, and the resources necessary to secure their own identification papers.

In perhaps the most humbling and emotionally potent moment for me, we also met with actual sugarcane workers and discussed their labor conditions. The realities of modern day sugarcane harvesters varies little from the realities of their enslaved ancestors. Conditions are humid, infested with insects and snakes, and labor intensive. Workers wield machetes from day break to sun down and are paid \$3 per ton of sugarcane produced. To put this perspective, our group visited a local mercado to buy groceries for a meal and spent about \$5 on two papayas, 5 oranges, and 2 small mangoes. It was heart wrenching to witness entire communities being exploited to mass produce something our communities take for granted.

The bright spot of my trip was without a doubt the relationships we cultivated with the children of the home. We played soccer, attended Catholic mass, exchanged stories about our lives back home, and even led a couple dance parties with our hermanos pequeños. For the athletes of color the experience demonstrated just how tethered we all are to the African diaspora no matter where we meet fellow members. We were able to share this and many other perspectives with the rest of our group everyday upon reflection. In these daily group debriefs we discussed how we've encountered institutionalized racism and colorism back home and compared those encounters to those that the nuns and children described as happening frequently here in the Dominican Republic. Despite being from a privileged circumstance our blackness served as both a unifier and a empathizer with our Dominican peers.

My trip to the NPH Casa Santa Ana home in the Dominican Republic re-



vealed to me both a need to service others and to cultivate international connections with the African diaspora as a means to broaden and enhance my knowledge of Black identity. Since returning I have begun working with NPH Chicago and hope to make another trip in the near future!

Opposite & Above: Pictures a courtesy of Evan Lowry

THE BLACK ARTIST NETWORK



The goal of the Black Artist's Network (BAN) is to provide a social sphere for Black visual artists to share artwork, exchange ideas, collaborate, build networks/make connections, and be in community with one another. Student's artwork doesn't have to be grounded in afrocentric ideals for them to become a member, nor do they need to be in a creative major program at DePaul. BAN aims

to attract students from all schools at DePaul because we feel the collective will benefit the entire DePaul community through various kinds of activities and programming that could be partnered with other on campus groups.

The collective strives to create a space in which people across the African and Black diaspora are specifically targeted and encouraged to reflect on their unique culture and aesthetic. We value the

ideas that artists of color have to share with the world around them, and wish to provide a platform for them to explore their creativity to the fullest.

Keep an eye out for winter quarter meetings! We'd love to have you join the collective!

✉ ban.dpu@gmail.com

📷 [@depaul_ban](https://www.instagram.com/depaul_ban)

NEW FACULTY MEMBER

DR. EVAN POE JOHNSON



Where do you come from?

Well, I received my PhD in Aesthetic Studies from the University of Texas at Dallas. My most recent position before arriving at DePaul was Rutgers University where I was a postdoc in the Center for Historical Analysis.

What types of things do you research and teach about?

I teach and research on how visual representations of race and gender in popular culture intersect with participatory fan cultures.

Why did you choose this profession?

When I was doing my undergraduate degree and graduate degrees, I didn't have any black professors. Or, to be more accurate, I had one black professor, who was an adjunct. As such, I felt really isolated and alone. I want to be able to help make space for black students and other students of color who are interested in academic life.

Can you tell us about some of the classes you are teaching while you are here?

In the Winter Quarter, I will be teaching *Black Aesthetic Thought*. That course ex-

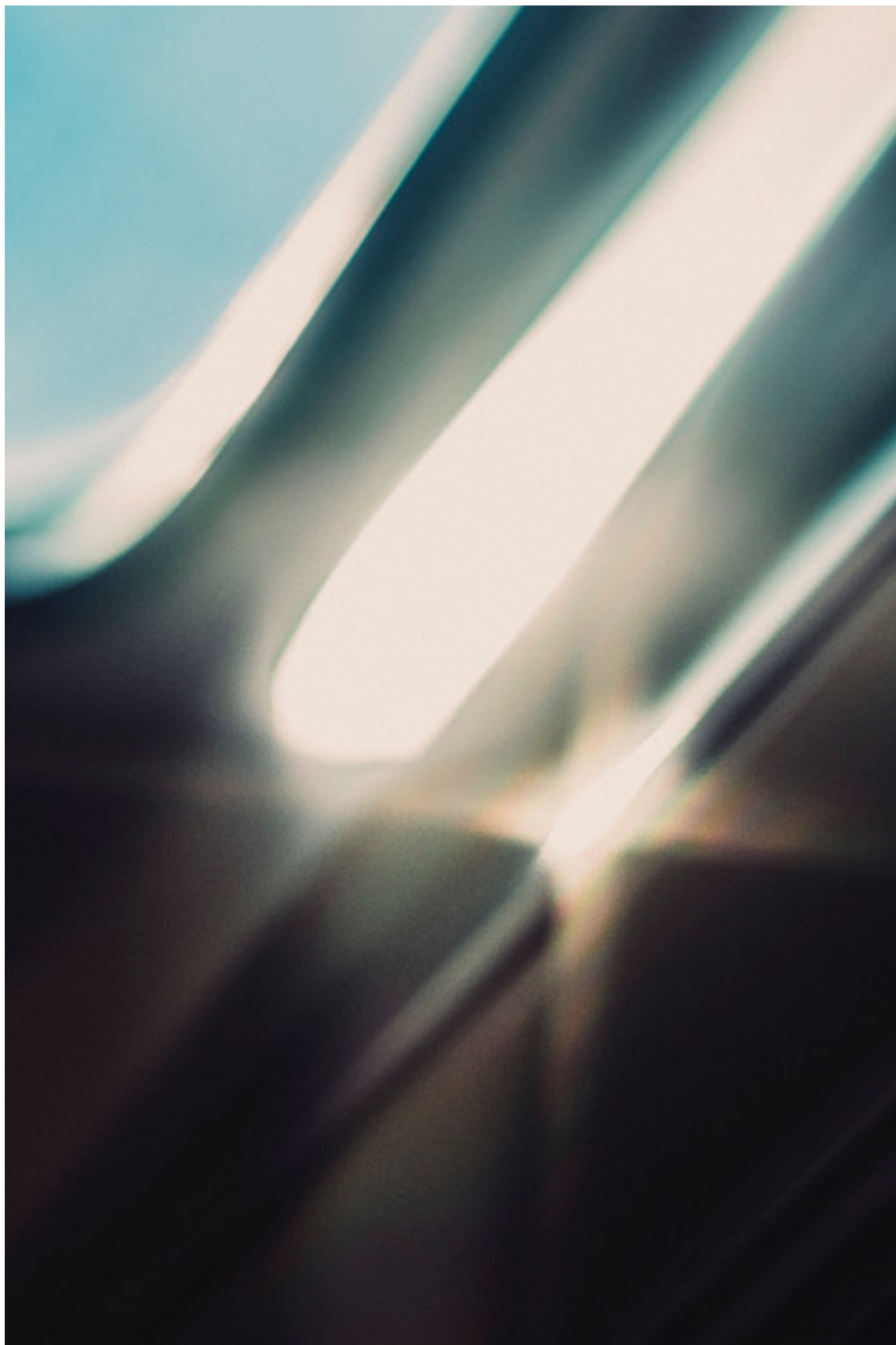
amines the history, politics, and debates surrounding black artistic and cultural production. During the Spring Quarter, I will be teaching one course called *What is Black Cinema?* and another called *Racial Violence and Resistance in Popular Culture*.

What should students know about you?

Despite the seriousness of some of the topics I teach about, or maybe because of their seriousness, I tend to run a pretty laid-back classroom.

What do you look forward to most during your time at DePaul?

The teaching, honestly. For one, I'm eager to get to know the students here, their interests, and what they respond to. I'm also excited to teach because the process and act of teaching is really how I start to clarify and hone my own thoughts on a subject. It's something of an awful cliché at this point, but I truly do learn a lot from my students.



PHOTOGRAPHER
JONATHAN BURNS



As an artist, my work often explores dichotomic relationships technically, and conceptually. My work, which is primarily comprised of digital images, tends to incorporate as many film-like qualities as possible. Incorporating grain, vignette, an even de-sharpening images have become a key aspect of my editing aesthetic. Conceptually, my work often surrounds juxtaposition regarding the photograph's subject, or regarding the content's innate meaning, such as focusing on the beauty of light glares bouncing off of Trump Tower

Growing up, I unconsciously exhibited signs of a skill photographers globally refer to as "the eye". My mother avidly assured me I had a gift to "see things at their most beautiful". However, it wasn't until after taking a photography class in high school that I actually began to develop and train my eye

with the basics of composition. While shooting on an iPhone 5, as I couldn't afford an actual camera, I discovered my late father's Pentax and Ricoh film cameras. This discovery not only reignited my passion but accelerated it; I began to use photography as a way of bonding with my father beyond the grave. It felt like I found something I loved to do, something I enjoyed doing, something that gave me meaning.

I believe my focus on dichotomies stems from my relationship with photography and my father. Somehow transcending life and death, previously unbeknownst to each other, father and son shared the same passion. Between these two sides, something ethereal, almost magical occurred. My work is the polymerization of two sides; my work is something beautiful, regardless of the image itself.



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