

Department of African & Black Diaspora Studies



We Are Here

Spring 2018 Student Newsletter



Interested in Majoring or Minorng in ABD?

Majoring = 13 courses

Minorng = 6 courses

Courses can count for
both Major/Minor courses
and Liberal Arts Learning
Domains

Double majoring is an
option. Contact the
Department of ABD Studies
for more information at
ABD@depaul.edu

Table of Contents

Message from the Chair - Dr. Amor Kohli	1
Senior Reflection by Kamelotte Gregory	2
Senior Reflection by Mariana Quinn	3
Alumni Profile - Rahwa Sebhat '15	4-5
“Monumental Work: How the Legacy of Ida B. Wells Continues” by Nyah Hoskins	6
“Christina Sharpe: The Wake, the Weather, and the Importance of Care” by Angela Hamilton	7
“Women of Color Solidarity Conference Reflection” by Kayla Johnson	8
Artist Highlight - Scimone Williams	9-10
Summer Reading List	11
CBD & ABD Spring Open House	12

A Message from the Chair: Dr. Amor Kohli



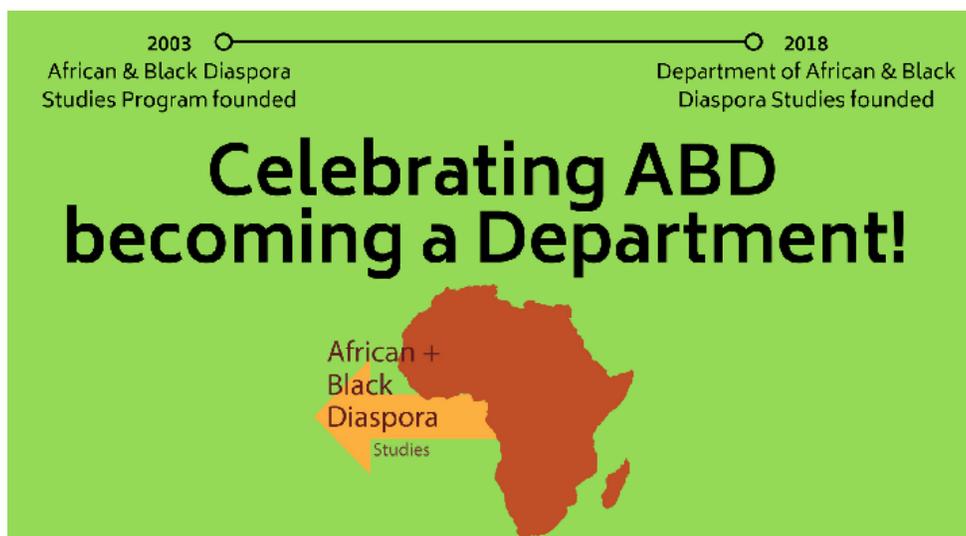
Welcome to the Spring 2018 issue of We Are Here, the African and Black Diaspora Studies newsletter.

You may have already heard, but we have some pieces of big news to announce. First is that the African and Black Diaspora Studies Program is now the Department of African and Black Diaspora Studies! It took a lot of work over our first fifteen years of existence, but we can celebrate what is an historic moment for ABD and for DePaul. We appreciate the support of our Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, Dr. Guillermo Vásquez de Velasco and the University Provost, Dr. Marten denBoer for their support. It couldn't have happened without the work of our students, alumni and faculty over the years to get us to this point. We thank all of you as well.

The other news is that Dr. Jalylah Burrell, who held the position of the Ida B. Wells-Barnett Postdoctoral Fellow in ABD will be leaving DePaul to pursue other opportunities. We'll be on the search for our next Wells-Barnett Fellow soon, but we have benefitted greatly from Dr. Burrell's presence here over the last year. We wish her the best and look forward to when we can invite her back here to share her work with us in the future.

This issue is full of great work by our ABD students: poetry, visual art, reportage, reflections. We have reflections by graduating seniors and an alumni profile of one of our recent graduates. Thanks to our newsletter editor, Mariana Quinn, for all her efforts. Our majors and minors are doing excellent work. If you'd like to join their ranks, please email ABD@DePaul.edu for more information.

Finally, a big congratulations to all our graduating majors and minors! We look forward to hearing about the contributions you will no doubt make to the world outside of DePaul!



Senior Reflection

Kamelotte Gregory

When asked to reflect on my years as an African and Black Diaspora Studies major, I was instantly overwhelmed about how to begin to explain what it means to me and how it truly molded me for the better. When I think of myself on my first day at DePaul versus my last day, I can say wholeheartedly that the main changes I have seen in myself are the direct outcome of my professors, peers, and ABD courses I have taken over the years. Before enrolling in my first ABD class, I don't think I even realized how necessary it would be to my growth. I didn't realize how much I deeply craved representation until I walked into a class where the majority of the students looked like me, and the text we examined were about people who happened to look like me as well.

When I think of ABD, various memories flood my head all at once. Sometimes I think about sitting in a big discussion circle and finding myself agreeing with a stranger from across the room. Other times, I think about the intimate class settings, where I'm sitting next to a couple peers who feel comfortable enough to speak their truths, no matter how personal. I think of times where I analyzed and criticized an author that I was in love with the week before and being challenged to look at a writing from a different perspective. Some of the best classes I took were the ones where the professor's profound connection with us resonated with me more than any reading. The mini life lessons about oppression and being comfortable with taking up space in the world was just as powerful as any historic speech. There were other classes where I became so enthralled in the books that I gathered my own lessons even if they differed from the class. These classes aided me in thinking critically, listening carefully, and discussing openly. Each class was different, but the underlying tone of all of them, to me, was togetherness and using your voice. These classes taught me to find strength through struggle, turn pain into purpose, and commit to the change I want to see. I deeply admire the curriculum put forth by

this department because it did such a great job of shaping my values and freeing my mindset.

Majoring in African and Black Diaspora Studies is the best choice I made during my undergraduate years. When I was applying to graduate school for Higher Education, the question constantly asked was what does 'ABD' have to do with this program and/or how has it prepared you for your Master's degree? My answer has always been the same. This department has given me an affirmation of my worth and a confirmation of all the work that still needs to be done. The disparities that still exist drive me towards wanting to create a better curriculum for students of color. A curriculum that, thanks to this department, I received. This department prepared me to accept ideas that are not always on the forefront, to be confident in my passion, and to be unwavering through adversity. It taught me to believe in myself and know that fighting for a purpose is what my people have always done and will continue to do. As I leave DePaul, and go on to get my Master's this Fall, I know to keep the lessons I learned and the strength I acquired with me. And because of this department, I will be all the better prepared for it.



Senior Reflection

Mariana Quinn

As my time as an undergraduate comes to a close, I am looking toward the future, but also reflecting on the past. I would like to start by giving thanks to all the people that supported me through this journey. Without the support of friends, family, faculty, and staff, none of this would have been possible. Throughout these four years, I have experienced absolutely heartbreaking and painful situations, but there have been a lot more that were filled with happiness and joy.

I started off my undergraduate career really quiet and shy. I was hoping that getting good grades would be enough to successfully get me through college. However, I quickly realized that I was wrong and needed to make the most out of my time here. I took my first ABD course the Spring of my freshman year and declared my minor the subsequent quarter. I have used ABD to supplement my Psychology major and ultimately the intersection between the two has informed by career goals and aspirations.

As soon as I entered college, my family members started to inquire about what I was planning to do with my Psychology degree. Up until my junior year, I knew that I did not want to get a PhD, at least not right away, but boy was I wrong. I knew nothing about research and I did not want to spend another 5-6 years in school. With the help of loving (and convincing, might I add) staff members of TRiO Student Support Services (SSS), the McNair Scholars Program, my sister, and ABD and Psychology faculty members, here I am about to enter a PhD program this Fall. I needed the extra push to believe in myself and get the necessary training for a doctorate.

Being a TRiO SSS participant and a McNair Scholar has truly changed my life for the better. Through these programs, I was able to travel to Argentina for my first experience abroad, be a research assistant at the University of California, Irvine, apply to numerous graduate schools and fly across the country for numerous interviews, and get my research paper published in our Ronald E. McNair Scholars Journal. In the moment, everything seemed impossible. Balancing a full course load, work, lab hours, and graduate application prep was difficult, but I managed to get through it. For anyone who is in the same or similar situations: I believe in you, you can do it and things will work out.

I am embarking on a new path at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana in the Fall as a School Psychology PhD student. I will be uprooting my life and starting over in a city that is new and different. Right now, it feels overwhelming, but I am excited about what is to come. As I am excited to leave DePaul to start anew, I am just as excited to come back to share knowledge and information with the students, faculty, and staff of my soon-to-be alma mater.

As I say farewell to my DePaul community, I want to say what a pleasure it has been to be the Student Office Assistant for the Department of African and Black Diaspora Studies. Whomever is my successor, you are truly blessed to work with a team of such caring and compassionate individuals. To all the ABD majors and minors, present and future, I urge you to utilize the quality education and experiences you are gaining from ABD courses. Not only have our professors taught me about theoretical analyses and critical thinking, but also about life in general. I am honored to have studied African and Black Diaspora Studies at DePaul and I am more than proud to carry on this legacy as an emerging Black scholar.



Alumni Profile

Rahwa Sebhat
Northeastern University, School of Law
DePaul University, Class of 2015

Q: What have you been up to since graduation?

A: I am currently at Northeastern University School of Law in Boston. Just having finished my first year of classes, I will be heading to my summer co-op shortly (co-op is our school's name for an internship). This summer, I will be working at the Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS) in their Family Defense Practice (BFDP). This specific unit of BDS offers legal representation to clients who cannot afford attorneys, but are involved in the child welfare system. Taken from their website, their work is described as follows: "The focus of BFDP's work is to assert the due process rights of parents in Family Court, including their constitutional right to family integrity, while providing access to the benefits and services families need to stay together. Our highest priority is to get and keep children out of foster care safely."

I am beyond ecstatic to be working there this summer, as they have a holistic approach to their legal representation, by providing other services – such as social work – to their clients. Being that a large part of the clients they represent face oppression in some or a multitude of ways, I feel very ready to use whatever knowledge I have gained in service of those trying to retain their fundamental rights.

Q: What are your future goals/plans?

A: At this point, I have two main interests within the law that I would like to pursue: civil rights and criminal defense. I also have a growing interest in privacy law with respect to the privacy that citizens are owed in relation to the government and corporations.

At this point, I am planning on doing co-ops in the fields that I am interested in, to see if my interest grows as I do the work. But, I know two things: the first is that whatever work I do upon graduation will be in the public interest with a social justice lens. And second, I plan on returning to and (a long way into the future) dying in Chicago – it's my favorite place.

Q: What drew you to ABD in the first place?

A: I was drawn to ABD due to a recognition in my gap of knowledge, history and understanding of Black intellectuality, religion, music, social movements, poetry, political theory – and power, generally. In



attempting to mend this gap in my knowledge, I first became an ABD minor; and when I knew I would be able to graduate on time while still completing requirements, I changed to double-major in ABD.

Q: What did you gain from your ABD course of study?

A: The greatest thing I learned from studying the wide variety of courses in ABD is the ability to think critically. Being a double major in political science, I was able to see the gaps of information in my political science courses – gaps that were inexcusable. To illustrate my point, there was a moment in a political science class, where I could see portions of Angela Davis' *Women, Race, and Class* that we read in my ABD course with Dr. Kohli fit right in with the course topic – however, it was absent in the other class, and there was no discernable reason for its absence or the absence of other prolific Black thinkers. Observing those gaps in information, thinking about why those gaps exist, and filling them in ourselves is crucial to critical thinking, in my opinion. ABD helped me to read between the lines and observe the details, while maintaining a watchful eye at the larger systems at work.

Q: Is there anything you would like prospective ABD minors/majors to know about your experience in African and Black Diaspora Studies?

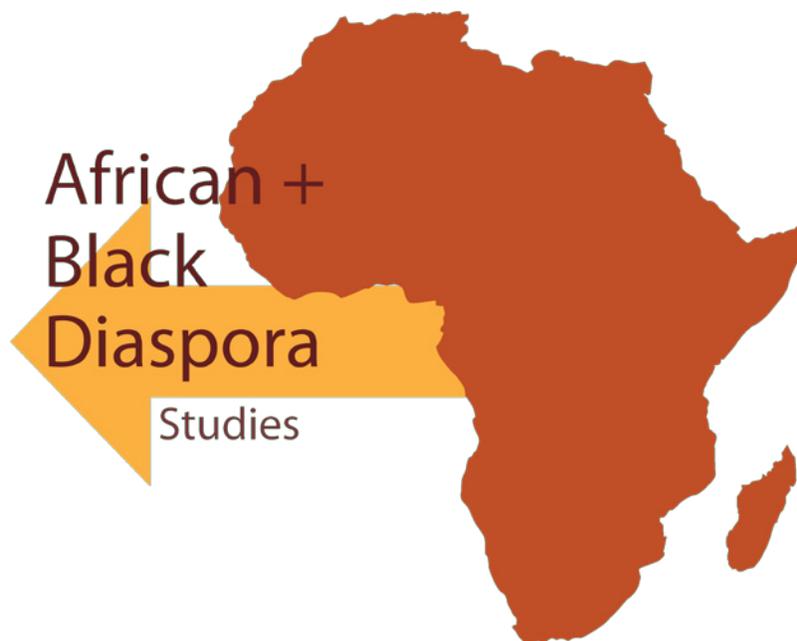
A: I think that anyone who takes any course from those which ABD offers should lean in and take every moment to learn. Upon graduating college, you truly begin to realize that access to a lot of this knowledge is not readily accessible; or one might find it hard to know where exactly they should start on gathering or

learning information. Also, one of my favorite parts about being an ABD major was studying something I had limited understanding in, while there was a profound amount of knowledge to be had – it was very fulfilling. For example, my knowledge of the Black Power Movement of the 60s-70s, and the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense was extremely limited (and I still have much to learn). However, I was able to write my senior thesis on a topic that concerned the Panthers, and was able to develop a knowledge on something I was given very little or misguided information about pre-college.

Q: Any other nuggets of wisdom for our current students about undergraduate or postgraduate life?

A: Be sure about what next steps you want to take in life, make a plan, and then stick to it. Do not let anyone's "no's" stop your "yes."

Also, currently being in a classroom of almost sixty people with only four Black students in it really makes you appreciate the diversity of the classroom environment that ABD provides – don't take that for granted!



Monumental Work: How the Legacy of Ida B. Wells Continues

by Nyah Hoskins

Black women have always been important in the fight for liberation and freedom. One of the foundational women, Ida B. Wells, was an active civil rights leader all over the United States. Wells was a journalist who focused on the lynchings of African-Americans and women's suffrage. Her legacy and work is often overlooked when the discussion of civil rights leaders is presented. As a way to solidify her spot in history, the Ida B. Wells Commemorative Art Committee is fundraising for a monument of Wells on the Southside of Chicago.

Michele Duster is an award-winning author, speaker, and educator whose work and involvement is focused on preserving the history of Black women. Duster is the great-granddaughter of Ida B. Wells, and a member of the Ida B. Wells Commemorative Art Committee. The work of Wells is still a part of the blueprint of Black women's organizing. As Duster says, "Black women were always at the forefront of political change even though they weren't the priority, they forced themselves in." Duster recalls a memory about her great-grandmother and possibly a preliminary form of the Women's March that we know today. During a 1913 march with the Illinois delegation, members of Women's Suffrage movements were allowed to march with the delegation. "What actually happened was that Black women were told to march behind the White women and delegation, since the White women did not want to march with the Black women." In a situation where people are denied space—they have to make it. "Even though she was not allowed to march in the front, she forced her way to the front of the march to let everyone know Black women are always present."

Ida B. Wells' legacy in Chicago was seen in the public housing that was named after her. During the Great Migration, Black Americans needed affordable housing. These homes sustained Black life on the Southside of Chicago. Over time, gang related issues, poor upkeep by the Chicago Housing Authority, and drug distribution led to the deterioration of the Ida B. Wells Homes. From 2000 to 2011, the Ida B. Wells Homes were condemned, evacuated, and destroyed.

The neglect that was inflicted on the Ida B. Wells Homes is only one part of the physical legacy that was left by Ida B. Wells. The Ida B. Wells

Commemorative Art Committee has been trying to fundraise for a monument of Wells in Bronzeville—the same neighborhood in which the Ida B. Wells Homes once stood. "Whenever I mention that we [Ida B. Wells Commemorative Art Committee] are working towards a monument for Ida, everyone tells me how much they love her, then the actual action to help does not follow through."

Duster has been on the Committee for over 10 years as a member of the family. The Committee was created as a reaction to the destruction of the Ida B. Wells Homes. Organized by former residents, they felt the need for another way to commemorate Wells' legacy in Chicago. "I'm not going to lie, I am baffled at how hard this has been." Duster described the process for the monument to be created. "The Committee was created first as a preliminary form of organizing, then I was brought on to assist with the next steps." Finding a location for the monument and an artist to create the monument were the next steps, then the hardest step has been going on for years: fundraising. The financial aspect of the monument has been the most difficult.

Like the politically active Black woman today, Wells is held in high regards for her contributions, but there is a disconnect with regard to continual support. Bringing the work of Black women into discussions on civil rights and activism can help with the inclusion of their stories. The monument is still in the works by the Ida B. Wells Commemorative Arts Committee. Donations and support are always accepted to help the production of this necessary monument.



(from left to right) Khari Matthew Humphries, Community Life Senior Manager of The Community Builders, Inc.; Daniel Duster, great-grandson of Ida B. Wells; Shirley Newsome, committee member; Michelle Duster, great-granddaughter of Ida B. Wells; Anthony Rogers, committee co-chair

Christina Sharpe: The Wake, the Weather, and the Importance of Care

by Angela Hamilton

On April 19th, DePaul had the pleasure of having Dr. Christina Sharpe talk about her book. Sharpe is a Professor at Tufts University and her latest book, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, explores how Blackness lives in “the wake” and the afterlife of slavery. Dr. Sharpe opens her talk stating some ideas that will thread the talk: care, imagination, weather, and persistence. These ideas are discussed in *In the Wake* and is at the forefront of my mind when thinking about her work. After reading Sharpe’s book and engaging in this talk, I am particularly thinking about the weather and care and how the two intertwine in the wake.

The weather is the murder, the anti-blackness, and the colonialism that is all-too familiar and often government sanctioned, such as the murders of Stephon Clark and Marielle Franco. This is encountered every day on social media, especially with auto-play videos and the constant consumption of violence against Black people. The weather is in the macroaggressions encountered at work and school, and the normalcy of anti-blackness in everyday life. Sharpe is focusing on remedying the weather through care. Care is the antidote of violence, and as Black people, it is important to find our own practices of care. Care is countering the “care” given by institutions like prison and mental facilities. Sharpe states community as a practice of care, and how ordinary acts of care are. The example that beautifully puts this into perspective is the character Hi Man in Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved*. Hi Man is practicing care by knowing when life is almost too much and signaling when to stop before it gets to that point. This care that is demonstrated in community does not translate into larger institutions. Sharpe discusses how institutions do not use their powers and privileges to access care, allowing misuses of care such as medical experiments, stop and frisk, and the Flint water crisis to infiltrate and violate Black communities. Care for blackness has been and continues to be used for inflicting hate and violence, but there are ways to practice care that can heal and honor those who weren’t afforded the care that they deserved.

Sharpe shifts her talk to discuss recent projects that are practicing care for Black people. Sharpe’s deep interest in soil’s tie to Blackness lead to her explanation of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI)’s

recent project that centers soil. EJI’s Community Remembrance Project is to honor the Black men and women who were lynched in Alabama. Empty jars are filled with the soil of lynching sites in Alabama, and the jars are labeled with the victim’s name, date of death, and place of death. The identical jars are lined up next to each other, the unknown with the known setting an image of how blackness is inescapable and whiteness causes so much violence in the United States. When I think of nature in the South, I think of the beautiful oak trees; now, I think of how those trees were used as tools for violence of Black people, and how those murdered men and women’s blood, bodies, and tears help nourish those trees. The United States was built off the blood of Black people, but Sharpe took a deeper perspective by providing the idea that Black bodies have fed this country and are often hidden under the shadow of the afterlife of slavery.

A phrase that has stayed with me from the talk is “Black.Still.Life.” What is Black life in the wake of slavery? Black life is traded for the democratic success of the United States, and Black bodies are inextricably linked to the country. It is difficult to escape the wake and the afterlife of slavery. Blackness can’t be still in the ever-moving tides of violence, so the only place where Blackness can lie is in death. To remedy the constant weather, there must be acts of care to lighten the load before it becomes too much. It is up to us to enact our own acts and processes of care to create community and healing.



Women of Color Solidarity Conference Reflection

by Kayla Johnson

Conferences are an amazing opportunity to socialize with likeminded people and soak in rich information that comes from all experiences in the world. We see plenty of flyers for conferences that seem boring, too long, and exclusive. But it is also important to act upon our understanding that we have the power to change anything when we either speak up or show up. So, I got past my assumptions of what a conference is like, I shot my shot and applied to present a workshop at the Women of Color Solidarity Conference in New York. I am writing this, because I got accepted and I am eager to share my own experience.

The process of creating a curriculum for a workshop was initially nerve-wracking, because I was pressured with my own ideas of what a teacher is. My Venus in Capricorn was stirring out of control, because I genuinely wanted to present my best self. But moving beyond perfect and best, I remembered a Black woman telling me that a teacher holds space for others to teach themselves. I instantly realized what I had to do and that was hold a space for women to discover themselves. My workshop would be a combination of writing and sharing our truths on our physical and spiritual journeys. Still nervous and making assumptions about the absolute worst happening, my workshop in NYC surprised me in the most comforting way possible.

The Women of Color Solidarity Conference is for women of color only, and they did not do the best job of being inclusive, but they are a grass roots organization founded by two young women native to New York. This conference was different. It was youthful and full of spirits eager to exercise love and care to everyone in the room. There was a lot of Drake and Cardi B playing so you can imagine how this environment challenges the ideas around traditional conferences. The format of the conference was traditional in the sense where there were plenty of workshops and panels for people to break out to. But the content of these workshops explored so many nontraditional topics and realms of decolonization, ancestors, magic, and sexuality. Participating in workshops, I made new friends, heard new truths, and contributed to a global sense of community and sisterhood.

My workshop in short was divine. Fourteen beautiful reflections of me participated in the

workshop. I started off with ice breakers, jokes, and astrology to warm everyone up, but with only an hour to spare us, we soon dived straight into our writing. I played Alice Coltrane in the background as the women picked from different prompts I crafted and wrote away. I asked questions like, "What does love smell like?" "Create a scene of freedom." "What is your gift and how do you share it with the world?" In our sharing we realized that our traumas and need for support intersected in all of our stories. It was not a workshop to come up with solutions, but to see your value in the value of your sister. It was a workshop to alleviate some of the anxiety and loneliness we confront daily. It was a workshop that offered simple tools in our moments of distant travel. To hear these women and be in their presence was the most rewarding and motivating moment throughout my entire conference experience.

Now, I am ready to take my self-discovery workshop to the next platform and city, because it was truly magic.



Artist Highlight

Biography:

“Aaliyah” Scimone C. Williams is a storyteller and Chicago native. Miss Aaliyah Scimone was born and raised in the South Shore community, located on the eastside of Chicago. At the age of six, she began writing to cope with emotional trauma and sexual abuse. She would write fictional stories based on others, and her own, realities. This, is where she found her love for music.

Prior to joining the DePaul community to study Community Psychology, Scimone attended primary school in various well-known neighborhoods around Chicago, including Bronzeville, where her passion for art and psychology began to flourish.

I Am Woman by Aaliyah Scimone



The painting, *I Am Woman*, was originally a self-identity piece – however, it can be interpreted as a women’s empowerment piece – inspired by a scripture that reminds me, every day, of God’s face: “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:” (Revelation 12:1, KJV)

The Message by Aaliyah Scimone

Inspired by Bible scripture, Revelation 12:1 (KJV)

Millennials.
A long fight ahead of us
Ahead of us, is such a fight
In the name of Justice
Before the Eye.

We hear with our ears.
We see with our eyes.
We speak volumes
From between our lips.
And bleed from our pens.
If you are black,
God forbid,
Odds are:
The blood you bleed
Will be from within.
All,
Now, floating along the river;
The knowledge we carried
From childhood to adulthood
Our innocence streaked like wood
Black veils of ignorance
Meant to hide us from
The Eye of Truth,
Now, vaguely fade away.

And I say,
In the words of
King Nat Turner,
“Brethren,
I pray you sing a new song.”

Millennials.
We have a long fight ahead of us
Ahead of us, is such a fight
To defeat injustice
Before the Eye.

I wrote the poem, *The Message*, to tell a story and forewarn Millennials of what is to come. Furthermore, I wrote this piece to inspire Millennials to fight against injustice to make a, legendary, difference. The message is to look within and be better than your yesterday's self; speak your truth, and die for what you believe in. We are stronger united than we are divided.

Summer Reading List

We have compiled a list of suggested summer reads from some of your favorite DePaul professors!

Dr. Shiera Malik

- *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* by Vijay Prashad
- *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South* by Vijay Prashad
- *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* by Keeanga Yamahtta-Taylor
- *Migritude* by Shailja Patel

Dr. Amor Kohli

- *Uncut Funk: A Contemplative Dialogue* by Stuart Hall and bell hooks
- *Map to the Door of No Return: Notes on Belonging* by Dionne Brand
- *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* by Robin D.G. Kelley

Dr. Lisa Calvente

- *Assata: An Autobiography* by Assata Shakur
- *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon
- *The Street: A Novel* by Ann Petry

Dr. Lori Pierce

- *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* by Matthew Desmond
- *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* by Ibram Kendi

Dr. Julie Moody-Freeman

- *Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo"* by Zora Neale Hurston
- *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs
- *Our Nig: or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* by Harriet E. Wilson

Dr. Christina Rivers

- *Spatializing Blackness: Architectures of Confinement and Black Masculinity in Chicago* by Rashad Shabazz
- *Linden Hills* by Gloria Naylor
- *Exile, According to Julia* by Gisele Pineau

Dr. Tera Agyepong

- *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi
- *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander

Dr. Jalylah Burrell

- *Algorithms of Oppression* by Safiya Umoja Noble
- *Bound in Wedlock: Slave and Free Black Marriage in the Nineteenth Century* by Tera W. Hunter

Dr. Chernoh Sesay, Jr.

- *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* by Rebecca Shumway
- *Betty Shabazz, Surviving Malcolm X: A Journey of Strength from Wife to Widow to Heroine* by Russel Rickford

Spring CBD & ABD Open House

On May 9th, the Center for Black Diaspora and the Department of African & Black Diaspora Studies had their joint Spring Open House. Here are some photos of the joyous occasion.



**Contact the Department of African & Black Diaspora
Studies at abd@depaul.edu**

Follow us on Twitter at [@ABDdepaul](https://twitter.com/ABDdepaul)