

INSIGHTS



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DRAMA SOCIETY SHINES

Fall Theater Production Includes Scholarly Discussion

More than two dozen English majors assisted in the successful presentation of playwright [August Wilson's *Fences*](#), the fall theater production of the UMES Drama Society. The play was staged in the Ella Fitzgerald Performing Arts Center October 29 through 31.



Actors (L to R) Dominique Fuller, Cordario Worrell, Gregory White, and Sam Taybron

One of the highlights of this year's production occurred following the opening night performance. The audience was invited to join the cast and crew—and a panel of experts—in a discussion of the complex issues explored in the play. The ten panelists included UMES President Thelma Thompson; English Department Chair Betty Taylor-Thompson; Drama

Society Advisor Della Dameron-Johnson; faculty members Kathryn Barrett-Gaines, Dean Coolege, and David Johnson; English alumni Ashley Collier and Lorenzo Hughes; and two current students, Keith Savage and William Wallace.

Dr. Taylor-

Thompson discussed the symbolism of the play's title. "The fence is symbolic as well as literal," she said. "There are psychological fences, barriers that people put up."

The play, set in the 1950s,

explores the obstacles that confront the characters including racism, infidelity, gender discrimination, and generational miscommunication. English faculty member David Johnson, who grew up in the era depicted in the play, admitted that he had experienced some of the same frustrations as the African-American male protagonist. "I have learned that people will treat you in the manner that you allow them to treat you," he said.



Panelists (L to R) Dr. Dameron-Johnson, Dr. Taylor-Thompson, President Thompson, Mr. Savage, and Dr. Johnson

The lengthy and animated discussion was drawn to a close by President Thompson. "You have to know the past, but you can't be bound by it," she said. "Be strengthened by it."

IN THE PRESIDENTIAL SPOTLIGHT

UMES English Grad is in the Right Place at the Right Time

If you thought you spotted a familiar face in news coverage of President Barack Obama's recent trip to the [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#) to announce \$5 billion in medical research grants—you were right!

Woleola "Wally" Akinso ('04 Grad) is a member of the NIH communications staff, and he was among the hundreds of employees who gathered to listen to the President's remarks. As the speech ended

and the President exited, Mr. Akinso made his move; his outstretched hand grasped Mr. Obama's.

"It was one of the best moments of my life," he said. "I, Woleola Akinso, son of two great Nigerian parents, shook the hand of the President of the United States. It was such a great moment."

Mr. Akinso became interested in employment at NIH after a representative

visited one of his UMES English classes.

Mr. Akinso (R) reaches across his colleagues to shake the hand of President Obama.

N.I.H. Photo by Bill Branson



GET WELL WISHES

Former Department Chair Recuperates

A former member of the UMES Department of English and Modern Languages faculty is recuperating from a grave illness.

James Polk, an assistant professor who served as chair of the department from 1974 to 1983, is 94 years old.

English alumni remember him fondly. "The Polk family's legacy goes beyond the UMES community



Mr. Polk

Yearbook photo provided by Frederick Douglass Library staff

to the entire Eastern Shore," said Horatio "Bill" Jones ('78 Grad). "None of us with whom he shared time and knowledge could adequately thank him for his selfless deeds."

You can speed his recovery with get well wishes; cards or letters are welcomed. They may be sent to Mr. Polk at 1016 South Delano Avenue, Salisbury, Maryland 21801.

DON'T FORGET!
Pre-registration for Spring 2010 classes begins on Monday, November 9.

PRODUCTION CONTINUES

Faculty member Will Rose says his documentary about his niece, [Quincy Lucas](#), and her fight against domestic violence is on track for completion next spring. He and his co-producer,



Mr. Rose and co-producer Louise Fleming

Photo by Sandra Ebosele

Louise Fleming, shot footage recently at a 5K fundraising walk in Delaware organized by Ms. Lucas.

Mr. Rose hopes to enter the production as a documentary "short" in numerous film festivals. He is also optimistic that the film will be used by the U.S. Justice Department in an educational campaign to combat domestic violence.

MARKING MILESTONES

Department Chair Betty Taylor-Thompson and junior English major Cherish McMillan traveled to Baltimore recently to participate in the celebration of the 75th anniversary of [Morgan State University's Department of English and Language Arts](#).



Dr. Taylor-Thompson and Ms. McMillan attended the anniversary luncheon where the featured speaker was Terry Edmonds. Mr. Edmonds is a Morgan State alumnus and a former speech writer for President Bill Clinton. He serves now as Associate Vice-President and Editorial Director at Columbia University.

Dr. Taylor-Thompson said a highlight of the conference was a presentation by M.K. Asante, Jr., an assistant professor of English, who is a young author and a film maker. His topic was "A Gateway to Opportunity: Using the Verbal and The Visual to Reshape the Academy."

Simeon Shoge's public speaking class got some advice from the leader of the local chapter of [Toastmasters International](#) recently. Regina Bright-Edwards encouraged his students to hone the skills they are learning in class because she believes great communicators make great leaders.



Ms. Bright-Edwards addresses Mr. Shoge's class.

Toastmasters is an organization with over 8,000 clubs worldwide; members practice public speaking in a friendly, supportive environment. It markets its "learn-by-doing" program as a way to become a more confident speaker and a more effective listener.

Ms. Bright-Edwards introduced the

students to "Table Topics," an exercise often utilized at Toastmaster meetings. "You get to practice impromptu speaking," she said.

At Ms. Bright-Edwards direction, students gave speeches on topics suggested by their classmates. They were held to strict time limits; their presentations were judged in fifteen different categories including vocal variety, body language, relevance, grammar, and appearance.

Mr. Shoge is a member of the local chapter of Toastmasters International. He hopes Ms. Bright-Edwards appearance will motivate students to start a UMES chapter.



Solita Lam tries her hand at "Table Topics."

ADVICE ON ADVISING

The English department prepared for the upcoming pre-registration process by sharing information on best practices in academic advising.

Faculty member Bonni Miller conducted a “refresher” course for her colleagues and distributed an advising handbook she created to assist them.

Each fulltime English faculty member is an academic advisor to a designated group of English majors from their arrival on campus until their graduation.



Ms. Miller (R) leads advising discussion.

VOCAL RHYTHMS

Poetry, Percussion, and Public Speaking

The sound of a conga drum echoed in Wilson Hall recently. It wasn't a presentation by music majors; it was a public speaking class exploring the rhythms of their voices.

Faculty member Will Rose's class was presenting poetry accompanied by a conga drum and other percussion instruments. It's a teaching method he's been using since the late '90s. It drew some odd reactions back then including “Oh my God, Mr. Rose is crazy,” he remembered recently. “It was different.”



Mr. Rose demonstrates the technique while Vanessa Henry provides the rhythm.

Mr. Rose says he has found that drums can stimulate the sound of the voice. “Rhythm will stimulate the voice to shade different words,” he said.

This year, student reaction was strictly positive. “I liked it because it made you feel like you were in a café,” said Arabia Morgan, a sophomore English major in Mr. Rose's class. “It made you feel like it was a performance. You really listened to the words.”

Mr. Rose was equally pleased. “We were feeding off each other. It was beautiful,” he said.



Mr. Rose accompanies Krystal Watson.

SPREADING A MESSAGE

English Major Joins New Campus Organization

An English major, junior Cherish McMillan, is a charter member of a new campus organization designed to share a positive message to and about young people.



The group is called X2rep!. It was founded in the D.C. area by a UMES graduate, Anthony Murrill, who says it is “time to represent” positive role models for troubled youth. Mr. Murrill was a sociology major at UMES in the 1980s.

Ms. McMillan and her X2rep! colleagues

recently attended a multi-cultural community fair in nearby Salisbury, Maryland.

“The UMES chapter attended this event to show its support of all different cultures,” Ms. McMillan said.



(L to R) X2rep! members Paul Jerry, Denis Gonzales, and Cherish McMillan attend multicultural fair.

Photo provided by Paul Jerry

ENGLISH CLUBS AT CORONATION '09



Amber Green & Ryan Woodson
Miss & Mr. Satellite

Atiya Powell & Byron Smith
Miss & Mr. HawkRadio



Morgan Leak & Raymond Marshall
Miss & Mr. Drama Society

Photos by Alverne Chesterfield

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