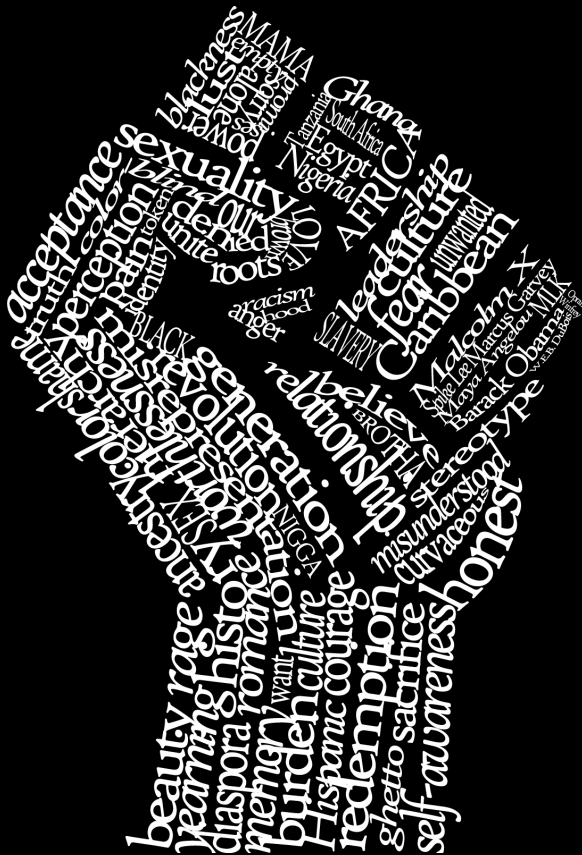


BLACK PRAXIS

Fall 2011 Issue



BLACK EXPRESSIONS

Fall 2011 Staff

Editor-In-Chief

Deidra Willis '13

Managing Director

Rashelle James '14

Content Editor

Lauryn Overton '13

Assistant Content Editors

Alicia Rodriguez '14

Jasmine Kumalab '12

Layout Editors

Shermaine Waugh '13

Bennie Niles IV '15

Racquel Bernard '13

Blog Web Master

Jasmine Kumalab '12

Cover Art by Deidra Willis

Table of Contents

Letter from the Editor	1
State of the AAM	2
<hr/>	
Our Community Beyond Our Bubble	
Why Am I Still Troy Davis?	4
<i>Michelle Domingue</i>	
Ignorance	6
<i>DaVeon Smith</i>	
Craig Watkins: Revolutionizing the Justice System through DNA Exoneration	7-8
<i>Jordan Terry</i>	
<hr/>	
Your Representations, Our Revolt	
Beauty	10-11
<i>Joan Leslie</i>	
Sexualized But Not Sexy	12-14
<i>Hannah Giorgis</i>	
Are You Like Me	15-17
<i>Robert Esnard</i>	
<hr/>	
Artist Spotlight	18-19
<i>Morgynn Wiley</i>	
<hr/>	
Family Matters	
I'm Sorry the Clock Won	22
<i>Angilique Coleman</i>	
Hail Mary	24-25
<i>Shayla Mars</i>	
<hr/>	
Heart Strings are Hard Things	
The Love Commentary	28
<i>Samantha Azinge</i>	
Pierce	30-31
<i>Shermaine Waugh</i>	
Now My Heart Is Closed to Others	33
<i>Janna Fennell</i>	
Meltdown	34-35
<i>Nikkita McPherson</i>	

Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

This issue of Black Praxis is truly a medley of everything within the Black community. Fall 2011 was not only a triumphant time for Black Praxis, being the second consecutive term in print after a two-year hiatus, but also a trying one. With the bar set higher than before we present to you "Black Expressions", a look into the hearts and minds of Dartmouth's Undergraduate Black community. "Black Expressions" provides a full range of artistic and literary work that deals with everything from relationships, both familial and romantic, to identity to what's happening now.

For you, Black Praxis should not only serve as a display of the best of what can be expressed in words and pictures, but a window into the issues that Black Dartmouth students are facing now. Topics such as the recent Troy Davis execution, discussed in "Why Am I Still Troy Davis?", led to a well attended heated African-American Society General Body meeting and "I Am Troy Davis" posters around campus. As stated before, the works included are a testament to the creativity and talent within our community. Jordan Terry's Craig Watkins essay was a finalist in the John F. Kennedy Profiles in Courage Essay Scholarship Contest. "Beauty" was the winner of the Soul Scribes Poetry Slam earning its poet Joan Leslie a chance to compete at the 2012 College Unions Poetry Slam Invitational in California. These are just a few examples of the what Black Dartmouth students are accomplishing.

That being said, readers of the present and future, sit back and enjoy. Get wrapped up in the stories and artwork in the following pages. For older editions and the chance to post comments check out the Black Praxis blog at <http://blackpraxis.wordpress.com/>. I know you won't help but feel moved and inspired as I was when I read these submissions. I hope you then feel encouraged to share your thoughts and experiences in the issues to come.

Until next term,

Deidra Willis

Black Praxis Editor-In-Chief



STATE OF THE AAM

16 November 2011

Dear Community,

I have not been this proud of the AAm since my freshman year. Initially, I was drawn to this organization because it reminded me of what my education had meant to be up until that point in my academic career: black intellectuals growing in all senses of the word. This fall, we engaged in thought-provoking discussions about issues stretching from “Occupy Wall Street” to the way we view ourselves as people of color at this Ivy League institution. We have drawn the attention of our peers from various backgrounds in a more positive light than I have witnessed before this year. As president of the Afro-American Society, I look at my community and I am filled with genuine pride in who we are and what we have come to represent on this campus. There have been stigmas associated with the black community that we have had to face in the past. However this term, a writer of this same publication made it his business to reach out to community members to discover what Cutter-Shabazz and the Afro-American Society means to its membership. The fact that people outside of the black community at Dartmouth are now starting to ask the right questions, which reveal the reason why this community is so important to many students of color, shows me that both the Afro-American Society and the Dartmouth community at large are making progress in the way we view and represent the AAm on campus.

I believe the executive board for the AAm came in thinking that this year would be one to remember, and I am truly convinced that the freshman class received the memo. The Class of 2015 brought the type of energy to the community that I had not witnessed since my freshman year. They seem to understand the importance of the AAm, and they encourage their peers to join the community in our social gatherings and moments of fellowship and intellectual discourse. My goal for the remainder of the year is to hold on to this energy and ensure that this is actually the year that we change the image of the AAm as a more active and inclusive group. Our peers who do not identify as black should feel as welcomed in our space as we do. We have started to expose Dartmouth to who we are and why we find community amongst other students of color, and I am looking forward to sharing that message and those sentiments with the larger Dartmouth community throughout the year. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Joan Leslie '12

President of the Afro-American Society (2011-2012)



Black Praxis



**"Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave
I rise
I rise
I rise."**

Maya Angelou "Still I Rise"

Why Am I Still Troy Davis?

MICHELLE DOMINQUE '12

On September 21, 2011 at 11:08 p.m., Troy Davis' veins pleaded guilty to a crime suffocated by reasonable doubt. As I stared blankly at the television in Morehouse College's student center with tears welling in my eyes and fire consuming my once content spirit, I thought to myself, "They won again." "They" refers to the blur of faces responsible for upholding a decision about a case fueled solely by witness testimonies. "They" also refers to the pillars of racism, White supremacy, and hegemony that continue to erect the house of biased social and political governance of this country. Troy Davis fell victim to an inherently flawed system, skewed to condemn the marginalized, the minority, and misguided at all costs.

Before delving into the events surrounding the mysterious fate of Troy Davis, some background information is in order. Davis was convicted with the 1989 murder of Savannah police officer, Mark MacPhail in 1991 and sentenced to death by lethal injection. Seven witnesses claimed they saw Davis shoot MacPhail and two alleged that Davis personally confessed his crime. As years passed, seven of nine witnesses recanted all or part of their statements. State and federal courts repeatedly denied Davis' requests for a re-trial, allowing all testimonial evidence to be "frozen," or unable to be altered, at the time of the first trial in 1991. Before the 2011 execution date, Davis was granted stay of execution on three separate occasions (June 2007, July 2008, and October 2008), all surrounding doubts of Davis' guilt.

I can still picture that "fateful" day. Budding activists from the Atlanta University Center filled crowded buses the afternoon of Davis' fourth execution date destined for the Georgia Diagnostic and Corrections Prison in Jackson, Ga., where Troy Davis was scheduled to be executed at 7 p.m. NAACP Chairwoman Roslyn Brock directed us to Towaliga County Line Baptist Church for a brief meeting before the demonstration. After nearly an hour of singing, praying, and devouring inspirational words, protesters flooded the area surrounding the prison.

S.W.A.T. team members lined the entrance to the maximum security prison. Protesters stood clanging pots and makeshift drums in order to convey to those influential officials to grant Davis clemency, or at the very least, another stay of execution. 6:59 p.m. stared us each in the eyes for what seemed like an eternity. We fell to our knees with clasped hands praying and hoping for a miracle. And, we received it. Davis' execution was delayed by a review by the Supreme Court of the United States, yet no official stay had been granted. We shouted at the prospects of actually saving this man from corrupt jurisprudence. 10 o'clock had come, and all assembled were sure that Davis was safe. However, a later upholding of Davis' guilt led to his death roughly an hour later.

I am Troy Davis. My father is Troy Davis. Anyone suffering at the hands of the hegemonic forces of America's institutions is Troy Davis. The only thing separating any of us from Davis is time and a trial. No one is immune to the fallibility of human memory or the abuse of an official's authority. The practice of capital punishment requires cessation immediately. As Voltaire profoundly stated, "It is better to risk saving a guilty man than to condemn an innocent one." The uncertainty of Davis' involvement, due to lack of substantial evidence, incited nauseous feelings in the stomachs of those who tuned into newscasts covering the compensatory murder for a slain officer. How can a country that shouts "God bless America!" rationalize justifying murder supported by fickle, oft-ill-interpreted law? Now that Davis is gone, what now? Americans often treat serious ethical issues like fads. We ride the swelling tide, in hopes of stealing a few minutes on camera, and the moment media coverage fades, so does our fervor for justice. Diligence is essential to the eradication of such practices that perpetuate incivility. Remaining complicit in one's oppression only allows for further exploitation to the point of physical and spiritual decimation. Don't let Davis' death be the end of a fight against a system whose best interests are maintaining the status quo and not progressing to an ideal of harmony, equality, and justice. I am still enraged; I am still fighting; I am still Troy Davis.



Collage by Deidra Willis '13

Killing An Innocent Man IS SHEER: BARBARISM!!!

KILLING AN INNOCENT MAN IS STRAIGHT CRUEL

I AM TROY DAVIS!

NOT ENOUGH EVIDENCE

THIS IS TROY DAVIS

TROY DAVIS IS MY NAME

NAACP SAYS NOT IN MY NAME 9.21.11

Fall 2011

save Troy Davis matters!

Innocence matters Save Troy Davis

STATE OF GEORGIA vs. TROY A. DAVIS, Defendant

5

I AM TROY DAVIS



IGNORANCE

DAVEON SMITH '15

Ignorance, Ignorance, Ignorance
Life is a blur
Just trying to find your way
Throughout this blindness
Layered with gray
Helpful Hindrance, Lies as low
Trying to fulfill my dreams
In my hand is the future, I'm told
If life is what you make it
I'll make it in my mold

Remember all my mistakes,
There are no regrets, I hold
Living in the past, does not make life last
But make it go faster,
Rushing towards an eternal doom
Going quickly into their tomb, Some people don't realize
The error of their way,

Ignorance, Ignorance,
If ignorance is bliss
Than what a blissful world we live in.



Photography by Rianna Starheim '14

Black Praxis

Craig Watkins:

Revolutionizing the Justice System Through DNA Exoneration

JORDAN TERRY '15

John F. Kennedy asserted in Profiles in Courage: "A man does what he must - in spite of personal consequences, in spite of obstacles and dangers and pressures - and that is the basis of all morality" (Kennedy, 1956, p.266). In a legal system viewed by society as unjust and corrupt, Dallas County Texas District Attorney Craig Watkins is restoring a sense of hope and credibility to the legal system. While most district attorneys make names for themselves by winning convictions, Craig Watkins has achieved that distinction by reversing wrongful convictions. With sheer determination and DNA testing, Dallas County's District Attorney Office has overturned the convictions of more than ten prisoners after serving a total of 185 years imprisoned (Blumenthal, 2007). District Attorney Watkins' work is the epitome of a non-conformist and his commitment to justice is courageous. As such, he embodies John F. Kennedy's words "Conformity is the jailer of freedom and the enemy of growth".

In November 2006, Craig Watkins became the first African-American district attorney in Texas history (Moreno, 2006). He was young, smart, and fresh to the political scene, and proudly exclaimed that his inexperience was an advantage. The odds were stacked against Watkins when he decided to run for office. His two previous applications to work as an assistant district attorney in Dallas County were rejected, in fact, by an office in which a prosecutor once produced a manual on how to exclude minorities from Texas juries (Moreno, 2007). Courageously Watkins decided to run for

office again, but the campaign was difficult; he didn't have the support of the white establishment, he wasn't endorsed by the local newspaper, and he was running against Toby Shook, the incumbent district attorney for over twenty years (Forsyth and Eaton, 2008). Craig Watkins' main goal after being elected was to not merely be tough on crime, the status quo, but seek justice by being smart on crime (Watkins 2007).

The newly elected prosecutor faced immense obstacles. He was taking over an office long associated with the "win at any cost" prosecutor Henry Wade, whose approach had been called "archaic, racist, elitist and arrogant" (Graczyk, 2008). Watkins was new to the office, and many who had supported his predecessor and were not overly excited upon his arrival. When elected, he faced an office where seven assistant district attorneys immediately resigned, and some still had portraits of Henry Wade in their office (Crain, 2009). However District Attorney Watkins persevered, he declared that he had a mission to seek justice and didn't want to engage in partisan politics and said, "You have to look at it from the standpoint of: I can go in there and try to make these people like me, but is that a good use of my time?" (Watkins 2009).

The state in which Watkins chose to serve has long been scrutinized for its extreme "tough on crime" approach. Texas has added over 100,000 prisoners this decade, 89,400 of whom are imprisoned in for non-violent crimes, and the incarceration rate for blacks is 63% higher than the



national average, (Ziedenberg and Schiraldi, 2003). Despite such numbers, Texas' crime rate has declined more slowly than state in the country (Ziedenberg and Schiraldi, 2003). Watkins saw that the Texas justice system with its "get a conviction at all costs" approach "utterly failed us" (Watkins, 2008, Washington Post). Since taking office in 2006, Craig Watkins has vowed to "not only be concerned with putting people in prison, [but] concerned with people being safe" (Watkins, 2007).

Perhaps the most heroic work of Craig Watkins is his determination to end unjust and wrongful convictions in his county and beyond. His office has partnered with the "Innocence Project of Texas", an association that examines the claims of wrongful convictions. His office has agreed to review whether DNA tests should be used in any of the cases of 354 people convicted of rapes, murders and other felonies as far back as 1970 (McGonigle, 2007). Since taking office, Watkins work has freed many of the wrongly convicted. One of those men, James Woodward is the longest serving inmate in history to be exonerated by DNA evidence (Pelley, 60 Minutes). Woodward was sent to prison in 1981, after being convicted of the murder of his girlfriend who had been raped and strangled. For nearly 30 years, he never gave up writing letters and filing motions, but no one would answer his requests— until Craig Watkins. After DNA evidence was examined, it was clear that Woodward had served over 27 years in prison for a murder he did not commit.

The district attorney's office's unprecedented relationship with the "Innocence Project" is not the only groundbreaking change to Dallas County's judicial system that Watkins initiated. He also tightened procedures in the eyewitness identification of criminal suspects and

instituted a double-blind system requiring that lineups or photo displays be administered by prosecutors with no knowledge of the case so that they could not influence the outcome (Blumenthal, 2007). His quest for justice is being criticized by many, they would prefer that he focus on convictions rather than focus on overturning conviction rates: "Pardons and parole boards should be concerned with getting people out of prison... it's the wrong orientation for the DA (McAdams, 2008). Watkins however has remained steadfast in his mission for social justice in the penal system, and his conviction rate of more than 98 percent is higher than the figures of his tough-on-crime predecessors (Hastings, 2009). District Attorney Watkins journey for justice cannot be stopped, and he believes that he has "the constitutional obligation to seek justice." (Watkins, 2008, WSJ).

Craig Watkins is rebalancing the scales of justice one overturned conviction at a time. He is using his position as district attorney not to gain political stature but to effect real change where it is needed most.

The job of the district attorney is to seek justice, and when justice is being denied, he has made it his job to correct it. Watkins had the political courage to run for office and implement several innovative measures because he has a vision for his county, state and nation; he wanted to and is giving a voice to the voiceless, and to seek justice no matter the cost. Watkins was able to form alliances, engage in community outreach, free the wrongly imprisoned, and just as importantly, incarcerate those who are guilty of breaking the law. District Attorney Craig Watkins has revolutionized the criminal justice system by restoring respect, integrity and honesty in the laws of the land. For this, Craig Watkins is truly an inspiration to all.

citations on page 37



Your Representations: Our Revolt

"I am **America**.

I am the part you won't recognize.

But get used to me.

Black, confident, cocky, my name, not yours;
my religion, not yours; my goals, my own;
get used to me."

- Muhammad Ali





JOAN

You get more than what you bargain for in NYC subways
I wait for the 3 train
Headed to Harlem every Saturday Night
Two guys enter
One train car, One destination, One loud ass conversation
If she got natural hair, She gotta be real cute
Like Aaliyah face, Nicki's body, Deelishis Ass
Wishing I could stop them dead in their tracks
I just listen to two motor mouths headed in the wrong direction
Somewhere between reminding the girl with natural hair
That her beauty, If it exists is the exception to the rule
And telling the dark skinned diva
That shes our reminder of origination
She resembles the civilization
And the first woman in this world to be deemed beautiful
Now it's a little hard to see history through her eyes
When the beauty we stream in is all Americanized
Who's gonna be the one to tell her?

Now compared to the other ingredients in the melting pot
You no longer stand out as much as you used to
Your features no longer combine to equal beauty
Because selected from a sea of breathless words is beauty in the flesh
How many of her great grandmothers were victims of miscegenation
Generation down
And her melonin decreases a few shades
Next victims
Her hair spirals out of control
Curls rapped around insecurities
She's not black enough
Because being black is something we want to avoid at all costs
Like how we go about describing her to others as a raceless being
Because we're all color blind
And No one can really tell right
It's like imitation of life where we see her how she wants to be seen
Full cycle of her wanting to be seen as beautiful
Defined by no one she even knows
But shell still endorse the concept



Black Praxis



LESLIE '12

Next victim: Light skinned, Curly hair
We trace her nose back to Nigeria
Those lips to sierra leone
The curvature of her body outlined by bones trailing
throughout the Atlantic Ocean
And she's gorgeous
Her smile, no matter how fractured by societal expectations, is beautiful
Her image outcasts shadows of her sisters at the other end of the spectrum
Their curls so tight they form collages in the shape of emptiness
Comparing themselves to historical tragedies that we silently applaud
By making Dorothy Dandridge, Nia long, and Lisa Raye our standards of black
beauty
And as wonderful as they are,
Why are there exceptions to the rule
Like how Gabriel union is pretty for a dark skinned girl
And michelle obama is a diva by association
Where the line between the two blurs our imaginations to the point of believing
this to be
the
standard
Compliments of the former
As the latter holds on to her roots
Self-declared aesthetically pleasing features
Rippled hair thick enough to capture the words of
history teachers of her past
Reminding her that the coexistence of this America
And this beauty is a figment of her imagination
And if she only gets compliments because Indian
Remy weave is sewn into the final traces of herblackness
She can cut it all off and remind you that shes still the same person without it
More kinky less impressionable
And if she stares 2 guys dead in the face on the 3
train headed back to Harlem on a Saturday night
She can tell them the truth
That her beauty is on its way back from home
And maybe one day
they'll be fortunate enough to see it too



Sexualized, But Not Sexy: (Nappy) Roots of Western Conceptions of the Black Female Body

HANNAH GIORGIS '13

The tendency to view that which is different with unfiltered disdain rather than healthy curiosity is one deeply rooted in the human psyche and evident throughout history; every war ever fought originated in a disagreement fostered by differences in culture, opinion, outlook or lifestyle. The harmful effects of the innate human proclivity to judge rather than to seek understanding have not restricted themselves to the sphere of warfare or similarly tangible, easily measured fields. This damaging worldview has also made its way into private homes, often warping family dynamics and skewing the self-esteem of young children. Perhaps the most crippling deterrent to positive interpersonal—and more specifically, interracial or international—relations, ethnocentrism has manifested itself for ages in the immensely distorted and unflattering depictions of African and African American women propagated by the Western world. Arguably among the most clearly visible manifestations of the Western world's harsh judgment, the tremendous scrutiny placed on Black women's physical and mental attributes beginning with pre-slavery exploration of "the Dark Continent" even spills over into modern day conceptions of Black women and, consequently, race and gender relations. Many enduring negative views of Black women—negative because they contrast so strongly with European ideals of beauty—trace their roots to Western conceptions of difference: large, sagging, unclothed breasts and ample hips emphasized supposed hypersexuality, sturdy frames and the ability to toil for hours in fields spoke to the brutelike nature of the strong Black female, while dark skin was simply unattractive and therefore more animalistic than human ("human," of course, meaning European)(Guy-

Sheftall).

The characterization of Black women as innately, overtly sexual beings hardly began with blaxploitation. Steeped in explorers' observations of (and extrapolations upon) the distinctly un-European peoples on the African continent, views of the African female as a hypersexual being find their basis in what explorers determined phenotypic markers of overt sexuality. Among such "obvious" indicators were sagging breasts (included in medieval imagery of female devils "as part of the iconography of danger and monstrosity") (Morgan 170). Because these African women, with their breasts that could be "flung over their shoulders" or drag on the floor, so greatly resembled the sexually insatiable medieval devils, the explorers' only logical assumption was that these similarly shaped women were also devilish or hypersexual. However, their drastically different breasts alone were enough to make white men view these women in an overtly sexual light; this was hardly the only contributing physical factor. Perhaps the strongest evidence of African women's sexual proclivities came in the form of the very body part by which even modern men are still captivated: the steatopygia, or fatty enlargement of the buttocks (Guy Sheftall). Granted, it had yet to acquire as many names as it has today, but it (and the ample hips that came along) perplexed the men. This emphasis on the women's nether regions so intrigued those who encountered them that South African woman Saartje Baartman, who was exhibited by an animal trainer for European audiences to mock, heckle and dehumanize freely, was dissected after her death by comparative anatomist George Leopold Cuvier, who then presented her

excised genitalia to the Academie Royale de Medecine and later to the Musee de l'Homme for the general public (Guy-Sheftall). Moreover, "writers commonly looked to sociosexual deviance to indicate savagery in Africa. . . and to mark difference from Europe." (Morgan 170) That the African peoples did not partake in the custom of marriage presented further evidence of this abhorrent sexual freedom. Though many Western men were unfaithful to their wives, most maintained a façade of righteousness and monogamy; to see a society that completely eschewed this concept of closed, sanctified marital unions was alarming. Even worse, the sharing of women represented another lapse in cultural norms; for Western men to engage in sexual relations with more than one woman was hardly unheard of or even frowned upon, but women were routinely excommunicated from society for similar transgressions. Appallingly, it was thoroughly acceptable for White men to turn to their hypersexual Black slaves for the sexual release they were denied by their chaste, virginal white wives (Guy-Sheftall) Therefore, these women—whose bodies alone suggested such vulgar sexuality to the White men—came to be abused as sexual playthings through no misdeed of their own.

Among the strongest of opinions regarding the machinelike quality of Black women's bodies came from Englishman Richard Ligon, who first saw a black woman when he stopped in the Cape Verde Islands during a 1647 voyage (Morgan 167). Ligon asserted that "their monstrous bodies symbolized their sole utility—their ability to reproduce both crops and other laborers." (Morgan 168) The practicality of manipulating Black women's easily exploitable bodies (indeed, bodies it seemed were clearly intended to be exploited) became invaluable to slave owners, whose actions (or lack thereof) were justified by Ligon's writings, which affirmed that "the discovery of African women's monstrosity helped to assure the [negative symbolic work assigned to African women]'s

success." (Morgan 169) These were clearly not the fragile, demure European women to whom Ligon and other European men were accustomed; these hard-working women toiled over fields, their backs bent over and their breasts nearly touching the land over which they labored. In fact, it was this hunched position which first caused Ligon to remark that the women resembled six-legged beasts (their breasts, ever important as they were, constituted the final two appendages) (Morgan 170). The women's ability to do the difficult work of weeding for days on end—to live this difficult lifestyle—spoke to their strength in that it directly contrasted with the standard European gender roles. Therefore, it made sense for Europeans to enslave these African women and force them into slavery if they were already doing difficult, traditionally male-dominated jobs. Because these women did manual labor Europeans reserved for men of low socioeconomic status, the archaic and yet somehow also modern cliché of the strong, masculine Black woman emerged. Here was a figure, both exuding and devoid of desirability and femininity despite her decidedly large breasts and hips, who could not only be exploited for her reproductive ability to give rise to men who could labor endlessly but also for her productive ability because she could work right alongside these men.

Directly linked to the idea of the Black female as a sexually insatiable being or an efficient laborer (and for this reason, an ideal slave) is the belief that these women were more animalistic than human, an idea perpetuated by various "expert" writings emphasizing Black women's many animalistic qualities. Among such works was William Dean Howells's *Imperative Duty* (1892), "a novella about a white girl who learns that she has Negro ancestry. . . and ends up at a Black church so she can 'surround herself with the Blackness from which she sprung.'" (Guy-Sheftall) The descriptions of the Black women in church—a place that should presumably be filled with the

utmost of civility, decorum and holiness—abound with animal overtones; the women, called “creatures” by the girl whose ancestry is entwined with theirs, have mouths “like catfish.” (Guy-Sheftall) This, however, is hardly comparable to the blatant comparisons often made between Black women and monkeys; “authorities” such as Ligon cited the shapes of their heads as prime evidence, while anatomist Cuvier cited Saartje Bartman’s hair and body shape as reasons she was clearly more animal than human, even naming her a “Hottentot” rather than referring to her as an actual human being whose blood ran the same red as his. But perhaps the greatest travesty in the treatment of Black women as animals is that the women did not have a hand in the factors that supposedly “made” them animals. Because the White man saw fit to exploit the Black woman’s body, raping her at his discretion, using her body to breed more slaves like animals, forcing her to toil in fields and develop muscles that often overshadowed his own, he deemed it inhuman. The circular logic of the argument is blatant, allowing anyone who really investigated the matter to see that these women were indeed human despite claims otherwise.

That Black women’s bodies are viewed with such a different gaze than White women’s—even today—is hardly surprising when one takes into account centuries of Western emphasis on the differences between the two, or more accurately, Black women’s shortcomings and inability to fit into the European model of beauty. That sagging breasts and large hips automatically meant African women were hypersexual beings was an assumption that in and of itself drastically altered and irrevocably affected the Black female psyche. Moreover, the notion that Black women were masculine simply because they did labor traditionally reserved for men within European societies showed a tremendous dearth of understanding on the part of the Europeans; that African societies may not have the exact same gender roles as those of the Western world did not present a strong enough argument. Rather, they focused on these women’s “brute strength” to justify

their beliefs that the women could easily be used for breeding and other difficult labor at no cost to either party because she clearly felt no pain. This, however, was not the most logically problematic conclusion the Europeans jumped to. The idea that Black women were not really women at all, but rather animals—and should be treated as such—is one that has resonated throughout history despite its basis in evidence that is not even circumstantial at best. Given the ignorant, ethnocentric manner with which Europeans approached all their interactions with these unfamiliar—and later, entirely too familiar—women, it is not surprising that such negative imagery of Black women pervades society to this day.

Works Cited

Guy-Sheftall, Beverly, “The Body Politic: Black Female Sexuality and the Nineteenth-Century Euro-American Imagination.”

Morgan, Jennifer L., “Some Could Suckle Over Their Shoulder’: Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1770,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 54, No. 1 (Jan. 1997). pp. 167-192.

Are You Like Me?

ROBERT ESNARD '14

*Are you like me?
Do you like the fall?
I love the word fall
Because where I grew up fall fell from the heavens
In colors on the trees that were cemented in a row
To line the sidewalk as I would go
On my walk home from school.
Kicking cans on city streets
Still sounds like music to me
With the bass as my foot steps
And the stereo sounds as crunchy leaves and
Crackling glass over the concrete where most other kids would find grass.
If you are like me then surely you see the beauty
In the big kids on the play ground who bum cigarettes
Off of high high schoolers
Because buying Newports imparts the value of a dollar faster
Than most kids can holler at a real dealer.
Thereby ensuring that no pipsqueaks got played by druggies - like pips on dominos.
And no matter how cold one got no one would want to say no to a
Frio frio en parcha o coco.
If you have the beat of the street bumping like Biggie in your headphones
Bringing heat to and from heart,
Then you might be like me.*

*Are you like me?
Are you white? Because I'm not.
And I will not be defined by ugly words like race,
Which generalize and marginalize my heritage.
Mine is not simply a white face.
Because when winter brought out the Salvation Army Santas
Ringing silver bells for copper coins
My grandma began cooking Christmas dinner,
And in my family we eat pernil.
With tostones
And as always, arroz.
But the middle school kids didn't understand because
My white skin was bland to them.
So clearly I could not be party to the majority party of minorities*

*Because no one knows cubanos with hands as pale as these.
To everyone, I was white.
Snow white.
But, in the city Snow
Was only white when she laid out in a line,
And was taken in not on tongues in the open mouths of children looking up
But snorted by streetwalkers and hood rats who had had enough
Of trying to catch happiness.
Snow was only white
When she fell directly from the sky,
I only knew snow as slush:
Brown, and beaten into liquid state by public busses and gypsy cabs.
That's the only kind of snow I ever felt like.
If you have culture and no race,
Then you might be like me.*

*Are you like me?
Does spring bring back
Memories of moving
From apartment to apartment
Always having a place to live,
But never having a home?
For me spring was always moving time
As if spring-cleaning meant
Sweeping up our life
Under an area rug
Rolling it up and relocating it to a new floor
On another floor.
In the city, the same spring birds sing different songs to each other
Because Mother Nature knew
Too well that the people on my block spoke
In too many tongues for language to be universal.
Some birds don't even have a song,
Their voices were taken away by their parents because they weren't singing in tune.
My parents never heard their parents speak Spanish
Until I started learning in school
And wanted to practice
Because their parents didn't think American children should speak
The language of the island long left behind.
I never really got to start over the way I wanted.
I was left to grow like a dandelion
Similar enough to look like I belonged in the grass
But, ultimately just a weed.*

*Colorful enough to stand out like the flowers
But, ultimately just a weed.
Always wary of my blue eyes
Especially at the time of the Ides
When I would freckle
I had no safe space on this cultural divide.
If you are not sure who you are like,
Then you might be like me.*

*Are you like me?
Probably,
In the sense that “summer”
Sounds like “school’s out,”
To virtually everyone.
Unlike most of the kids on my block,
But most like most of the kids here,
I went to summer camp.
And my parents never let me
Worry that we probably couldn’t afford it.
Because I worked hard in school
And they wanted to teach me that working
More meant earning more
Even, before, I was old enough to get a job.
And summer always seemed better
Than ever
Because my skin would tan
And people might start to believe me
When I told them that every Tuesday
I went to Abuela’s house, off of Gun Hill Road.
I love summer because
Piragua de fresa reminds me that
You might be like me.
Because even though you
Eat strawberry shaved ice
We both know the flavor we savor
With different words, that I love,
And the color that runs in both of our veins.
In the summer
We’re all just sweaty, sticky fingered children.
In the summer I like me,
Because I am like you,
And we are the same.*



Artist Morgyn

Morgynn Wiley

Phone: 773.818.1189

Email: Morgynn.W.Wiley.13@Dartmouth.edu



mwdesignstudio.com



Black Praxis

Spotlight gynn Wile

Hometown: Chicago, IL

College: Dartmouth College

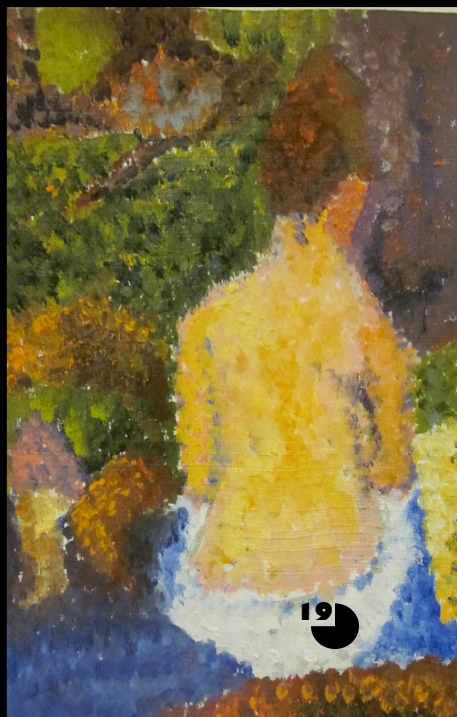
Year: '13 [Current Junior]

Major: Studio Art and Art History with a
concentration in Architecture

Post-Grad Plans: Dual Degree in Masters of
Architecture and Masters of
Business Administration



Fall 2011



Black Praxis asked seniors & freshmen...

"What do you think of the Dartmouth community as a family?"

"I don't consider Dartmouth to be my family. I have never felt completely comfortable here. I consider myself to be a part of smaller families. I'm a part of the FYSEP family and the African-American community, both of which have provided strong support to me in different ways. I've found some of my best friends here, and in that sense we've created somewhat of our own family. I've learned to appreciate the strong bonds and connections that I have with people in these families, because sometimes it's those people that are the only thing that get you through the inevitable tough times here."

- Jessica Drazenovich '12

"There is no solidarity amongst the entire black community at Dartmouth. However, none of us can survive Dartmouth alone, it'll take a solid community to get us through."

- Kevin Gillespie '15

"There is a small active group that I consider the black community. Sadly, we do not get enough support from the College to do everything we wish, but we are a tight-knit group that supports each other. If it were not for these relationships, many of us would not choose to remain at Dartmouth."

- Aaron Limonthas '12

"The culture at Dartmouth, I believe, is incomparable to any other college because the school feels like a family. The sense of family is established the minute you arrive through events such as the DOC first year trips, orientation week, and matriculation. Dartmouth invests a lot of time and energy into creating a warm and friendly atmosphere for all of its students."

- Crandalyn Jackson '15

"Uhh, Dartmouth is not a family. That is a lie we tell ourselves freshman year and we are young enough to believe it but then it breaks down."

- Darrius Pelissier '11

"As of now, I think the Dartmouth community is pretty strong. Most of the people I've come across are willing to help you and truly care about your success. Not only my peers, but professors and faculty as well...there are still moments, however, when I feel like the Dartmouth community as a whole lacks 'together-ness'."

- Nia Foney '15

"I believe I have found a family here at Dartmouth in the African American Community. Being secluded, you often feel forced to interact with other people and I initially felt this way. But going through Dartmouth alone was a challenge and I just couldn't succeed in this feat, especially after my first winter term. I have wonderful memories with many different people and I'm happy with the Dartmouth family I have created."

- Reba Gillis '12 "I feel a family-oriented environment, and the presence of the community has made my Dartmouth experience very comfortable."

- Jordan Are '15



FAMILY MATTERS

"IN EVERY
CONCEIVABLE
MANNER, THE
FAMILY IS THE LINK
TO OUR PAST,
BRIDGE TO OUR
FUTURE."

- ALEX HALEY

I'm Sorry The Clock Won

ANGILIQUE COLEMAN '13

The seconds are racing, the minutes are chasing behind, and the hours are eternities. The clock is my father's enemy and my annoyance because every movement of her hands means my father losing seconds, minutes, and hours with me that he can never regain...But my hopes are still higher than God because fathers have to come and rescue their children from their skepticism right? Tick; He has to be close by... right around the corner. Tock. He has to be coming. The next car has to be him...Tick...or maybe the next one...Tock...but the next car is definitely my dad coming to put my doubts to rest, telling me that the clock is wrong because we have all the time in the world. Tick.

So I continue to look up the street from my window, anticipating his arrival. Tock. I wait with my sister, who only goads my hopefulness. Tick. My mother keeps telling me that I should change my clothes, watch some TV, play a game even, but I don't hear her...I do not want to hear her. Tock. There is no point because the next car looks just like his! ...Tick...I think it's slowing down!...Oh...in front of another house... Tock. Guess that's not him. Tick. It's fine...next one. He'll be in the next car, waltz right into my life and quiet my uncertainty. Tock.

He never came. Tick. He never called. Tock. He never said sorry. Tick. And he lives five minutes away. Tock. He never told me why he never came. Tick.

And I cried.

I cried because I had to grow up. I cried because I didn't understand...Tick. I cried because the clock was right. He would never be on time and he could never reclaim the time it took to crush his little girl's dreams. Tock. I wish the clock would just stop rubbing it in... You win...

Goodnight daddy.





Hail Mary

SHAYLA MARS '11
BLACK PRACTICE SPRING 2008

When Mommy felt the coarse rusty backhand strike her coco cheek,
She quickly believed that it was love
That forced daddy to treat her like tissue paper.

Mommy falls like dandelion seeds in summer beneath Daddy's black leather feet.
Looking up, he seems Idol-like with big broad shoulders and a dim-effervescent glow.
Or maybe that was the lights flickering again
Mommy had forgotten that the crumpled paper next to her read Oct 11

But Daddy must love Mommy
Love her enough to discipline her when she forgets.
Which is often

Mommy loves Daddy enough to paint the carpet a deep shade of red
That when dried looks like brown tears stains.
She thinks this is mercy.
No words pass through Mommy's fattened lips.

Looking up
Her brown eyes now tar, try to console me.
With bruised lips she forms false hope
A smile I've seen too often

I stare as Daddy starts to fold her like woolen covers
Like mine her breathing is faint.
Mommy is a scared little lamb.
Daddy is her shepherd.

Daddy lays down his burden by their naked bed.
Like the bill she forgot the laundry.
I notice the crimson of the off-white mattress matching the carpet.
Daddy shuts the door.

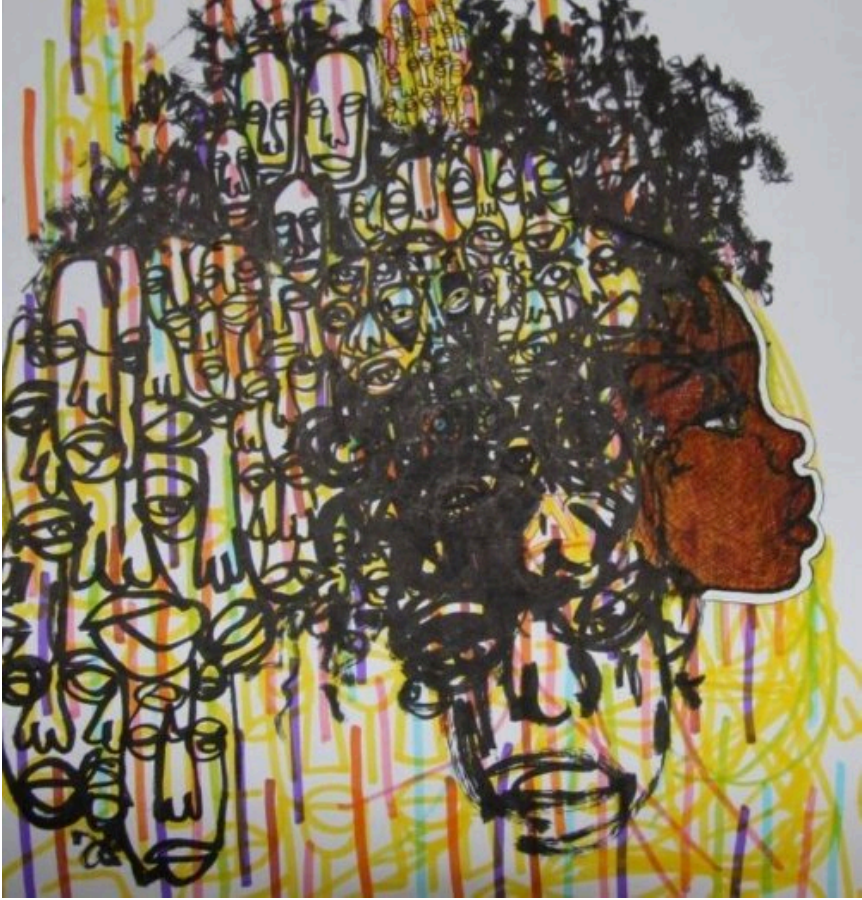
I stand alone in my angel pajamas
Holding my rosary close to my heart
Thumbing the black beads.

Silence engulfs our dim-lit repression box.
Shh! Is that God speaking?
No, Daddy is asleep.
The lights flicker then die.

I wade in the red sea carpet
My eyes bob in shallow pools.
Through blurred vision
I see gray seeping through their door like dreams

Instinctively I walk through the golden arch that is our doorway.
Outside I stand alone in my angel pajamas
Holding my rosary close to my heart
Thumbing the black beads.

Mommy always told me Idols are for sacrifice.
Her words cling to my soul like tears to cheeks.
Our dim-lit repression box is now a luminous inferno
That no amount of earthly water can extinguish.



"**Love**, I find, is like singing. Everybody can do enough to **satisfy** themselves, though it may not impress the neighbors as being very much."

- Zora Neale Hurston

Heart Strings are
Hard Things

The Love Commentary

SAMANTHA AZINGE '12

*It so happens that I think of you.
My mind gets lost thinking of you.
We almost met but you...
Introduce yourself to everyone but me
My friends, family, coworkers, classmates
All have seen you.
All have believed in you.
All have tried you.
But you have immunity to me like a common
cold.
I see you all around me and feel you
Especially in everyday conversations and
late night phone calls.
You are always the topic and always
the hero or the heartbreaker
It's a part of me that is glad I
did not meet you yet.
If I did, I would have
nothing to think about.
So I th*ink* (of)
you!!!!*



PIERCE

SHERMAINE WAUGH '13

A
boy
named
Andy pierced
me first.
15 and hands shaking,
pale cheeks flushed with
color – he looked to me for
reassurance before ever touching
skin.
Fingertips kissed my tummy – roamed over
deep, feminine curves neither one of us were
used to.

I remember his whimpers... like a newborn, loud and
piercing, but so full of life that I smiled through the pain of
clumsy little pricks – shallow at first but then deeper –
hesitant until finding the right spot.
I stared in wonder at the blood on his needle.

Damien was the second.
He saw my back like a dusky canvas, a rich expanse of something
new to conquer.
He did me on my stomach – my cheek pressed against the
pillow, body so close I could smell the heat of his
skin.
“Easy,” he liked to tell me as his long, dark
fingers probed my spine, finding the soft
junctions to tease...
...to stick.
With him I squirmed --
writhed
under the
touch of an
artistry
that



left
my skin
sheened
with sweat and
a row of sparkling
studs in its wake.

Then, Mark.
He worked serving kimchi at a
family restaurant that kind of looked at
you funny if you *weren't from the neighborhood*.

He had a smile like diamonds and on our first date,
studded my ears with a pair from Tiffany's.
Boring. I remember thinking they were so boring. I already
had six on my right ear and three on my left.
But he knew.
The shining little diamonds did nothing, so he did everything.
Eager where others had hesitated, powerful when most men were soft.
I bled onto his fingertips and let him conquer my hips with pressure
and steel.

On my stomach, on my back, staring down at him without
shame – we worked everywhere and any way we could.
I would always leave his room with new holes and
the scent of raw spice burned into my skin.
We were strange, but we worked.
Stewed ox tail at my place and bulgogi
at his.

A steady needle always
piercing -my body
open
and
willing.

Painting by Bukola Badipe-Hart '15



Now My Heart Is
Closed
To Others

JANNA FENNELL '11

Here I stand
Aching to be chosen over countless others—
Cramped between the likes of Hawthorne and Melville
At last I sense your slender fingers
Press lightly on my spine
Pleased to breath in the cool air
As you crease back my aged and slender sides
My black and white features are tainted
Tainted with patches of yellow like marigold
Making me vulnerable to your scrutiny
I dread you will dismiss my thoughts
Cast me to the side so I may be trampled on
Or hidden (in) silent (darkness) underneath the shelves.

For now you give weight to my words—
My world—
Trust me to guide you deeper out of reality
That when the bond is broken I can feel our pain
As you savor the last sentence
You finish me battered and bruised
Only from excessive love
I am forced to leave your caring cradle
Back into my empty space ready to meet another.

*Tightly
molded for the
liking of them.*

MELTDOWN

NIKKITA MCPHERSON '13

*Melting against brick
walls*

*Carved cement, yearning
for imprints of roots
evergreen.*

*Trucks enter into canals of
darkness,*

*Massaging vessels of graciousness
Being engulfed by patient,
overwhelming, welcomed power.*

*Your smell and your taste will not be new to me
It is the respect that you have for who I am
The love you have for who I am not
That will make the thrusts melt into my pores and
produce gentle breaths of waterproof barriers when
you open me up even more to envelope your skin.*

*Evenings bring further yearning of the river of life to boil
underneath the softened barrier.*

*Fetishes unresolved, unrelieved.
Scornfully avoiding that lustful fluid,
Ungodly. Unworthy.*

Bodies Fixated, Eyes unfocused.

Placed one beside another

Against the will of many

For the wanting of 2 of 3 of...

Time and time again.

For the acknowledgement of many.

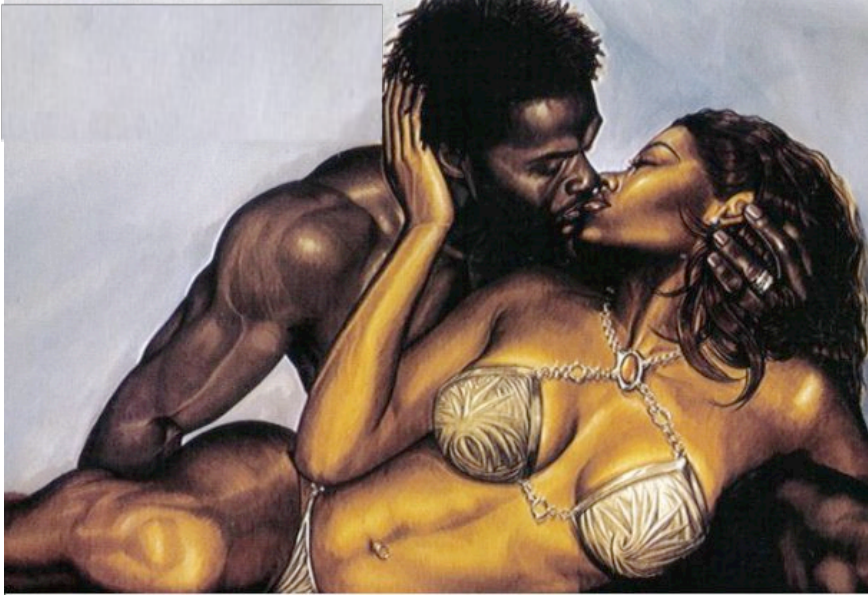
Deathly curves that cause the meltdown of knees

Crashing into tile, into dirt, into wood.

The break down vibrates slowly, lowering under cervices

Tasteful. Fulfilling.

*Gently running down chests, running down full,
edible lips.*



*Distastefully delicious against the holy
matrimonial meaningless exchange of
vocal cords*

*Only needed in this world to vibrate
against nerves*

*Numbering millions making joints bend and
blood run red*

*Clawing from the excitement underneath hip
bones.*

*Breasts cupped by human ridges
Constantly gripped between white bridges.
Shock waves elevating muscle pressure into wrists.
Pressure through the stomach reverberating into the
intestines*

*At rates unacknowledged, but recommended only
through gold, platinum and silver held together by the
rehearsal of "love."*

*Chest cavities rising
Falling into impact zones
Shaking relentlessly against calcium enriched structures
Digging deeply into unprotected zones.
For the specimen cut out
To enter into dams.
For the desires of all.*

from pg. 7

Craig Watkins:
**Revolutionizing the Justice System
Through DNA Exoneration**

Works Cited

Kennedy, John F. (1956). Profiles in courage.
New York: Harper and Row.

Blumenthal, Ralph. (2007). For Dallas, new
prosecutor means an end to the old ways.
The New York Times, Retrieved from [http://
www.nytimes.com/2007/06/03/us/03dallas.ht
ml?_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/03/us/03dallas.html?_r=2)

Moreno, Sylvia. (2007). New prosecutor
revisits justice in dallas. The Washington Post,
Retrieved from [http://www.washingtonpost.co
m/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/04/
AR2007030401566.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/04/AR2007030401566.html)

Forsyth and Eaton, Initials. (2008). The
Exonerator. The Wall Street Journal, A1.

Watkins, Craig . (2007, January). Dallas
district attorneys office website. Retrieved
from <http://www.dallasda.com/>

Graczyk, Michael. (2008). After Dallas DA's
death, 19 convictions are undone. USA Today,
Retrieved from [http://www.usatoday.com/
news/nation/2008-07-29-2653195694_
x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-07-29-2653195694_x.htm)

Photo Credits

pgs. 10-11
Photo by James Maher
[http://www.jamesmaherphotography.com/?
page=48](http://www.jamesmaherphotography.com/?page=48)

pg. 23
[http://www.blackartdepot.com/gallery/
fatherlyloveart/crops/blackfathers12.jpg](http://www.blackartdepot.com/gallery/fatherlyloveart/crops/blackfathers12.jpg)

pg. 26
[http://theearthstle.blogspot.com/2010/04/
jerika-interviews-artist-friends_15.html](http://theearthstle.blogspot.com/2010/04/jerika-interviews-artist-friends_15.html)

pg. 29
[http://quirkyblackgirls.blogspot.com/2010/1
0/so-treuonceuponapoet4evalocsmamasgot
mox.html](http://quirkyblackgirls.blogspot.com/2010/10/so-treuonceuponapoet4evalocsmamasgotmox.html)

pg. 35
[http://magazine.freeblackdates.com/assets/
content//sexyblackcouple.jpg](http://magazine.freeblackdates.com/assets/content//sexyblackcouple.jpg)

Want to Get Involved?

Thoughts? Comments?

Want to Learn More?

Submit to Black Praxis!



**Contact the Black Praxis at
Black.Praxis@Dartmouth.edu**

**Visit us at
<http://blackpraxis.wordpress.com/>**

