

IN THIS ISSUE

2: From the Director

3: Reimagining Bronzeville

The CC Certificate: A Conversation with Two Alums

Dana Schultz and Rachel Spaulding are Cultures and Communities certificate alumni whose work today reflects the focus on community engagement at the heart of the C&C program.

Since graduating, both have earned master's degrees: Dana in political science at UWM and Rachel in education at the University of Las Vegas. Today Dana is Communications and Outreach Director at Wisconsin Voices, and the former state director of 9 to 5 National Association for Working Women. Rachel is the Director of Community Based Learning at UWM's Center for Community-Based Learning, Leadership and Research and a former AmeriCorps*VISTA in UWM's Center for Volunteerism and Student Leadership.

Here they talk about earning UWM's Cultures and Communities Certificate and how it figured in their development as professionals.



Dana Schultz

Why did you choose the Cultures and Communities Certificate?

Dana: I choose the CC certificate because it looked like a great opportunity to maximize my credits, add value to my resume and learn about people and Milwaukee in a way my major wouldn't and couldn't.

Rachel: There were lots of reasons why completing the certificate made sense to me. Taking courses in the Natural Sciences, Arts, History, Humanities, etc. encouraged me to explore fields and topics I had never had before and made me realize that right out of high school, I didn't know all the career options out there. I understand that sometimes students are frustrated with having to take GER (General Education Requirements) courses not directly linked to their major, but it helped me really discover what I wanted to do, and the Cultures and Communities Certificate allows you to earn a certificate on top of it. It's really a win-win.

What are some of the advantages or benefits of the Certificate?

Dana: The advantage of the CC Certificate is that it takes you outside the UWM bubble a bit, physically and intellectually. It's a combination of courses that fit together nicely for a well-rounded cultural experience.

Rachel: Aside from having a marketable certificate upon completion, I learned more about Milwaukee and the community I was living in.



Rachel Spaulding, right with colleague and Cultures and Communities alum Nicky Glaser



FROM THE DIRECTOR:
Robert Smith

The “Arts” Will Lead Us

It was about 7am on a Monday in September 1996. It was as beautiful a late summer morning as one could imagine in southeast Michigan, Deetroit to be exact. I drove north on I-75 in my '92 Civic. I remember the moment vividly. As John Coltrane's classic album "A Love Supreme" caressed the car's interior it began to happen. It hit me in a gradual rush of uncontrollable expression I'll never forget. I can normally handle such incidents, but this one was careening out of control. I looked on both sides and in my rearview to check for onlookers. I looked at my CD player and it read "Track 4." Then I knew. But I refused to accept the awesome beauty of the moment. As tears streamed down my face, for no apparent reason as far as I could tell, I continued to check to make sure no one saw. The minor traffic congestion began to disperse allowing me to hide my embarrassment by driving like a Michigander. But the fourth movement of Coltrane's offering refused to relent. It melodically trudged on far longer than the supposed 7 minutes and :05 seconds. "A Love Supreme," indeed! I'll return to this later...

A few years passed, and with that Coltrane moment etched into my mind and consciousness, I had the awesome opportunity to see the revered Alvin Ailey Dance Troupe at the historic Detroit Opera House. The moment was electric. The crowd of children to seniors brimmed over with anticipation. I was on a date, and while I was glad to be able to brag about seeing "The Alvin Ailey Dancers," dance doesn't interest me much. But that night, the Ailey Dancers were doing their collective thing in tribute to the soulful masters Donny Hathaway and Roberta Flack. And while I know many have their favorite soul artists, there is none more soulful than Donny Hathaway. That night, the Alvin Ailey Dancers performed to the great love ballads from Hathaway and Flack. Phenomenal show! At some point during the performance I looked over and noticed my significant other crying. Like any good, supportive mate I turned and inquired, quite inquisitively, "Are you crying?" With no shame and in full stream, she answered affirmatively and fired back her own question, with some indignation, "Are you watching this?" Fair question. I wasn't paying attention.

I grew up with an artist. So I am a self-proclaimed, non-artistic...art snob! I grew up with a man who used the entire world as a canvass. Blank walls became African Elephants thundering into our living room. Bedrooms would mysteriously have beautifully drawn horizons appear one day as colorful rails, to then turn into an entire mural weeks later. Trash, yes, garbage – cardboard, yard clippings and soda cans – with just the right touch of spray paint became, "Art." African warriors emerged from chalk and canvass. Moonlit harbors made of oils and varying interpretations of "Black Jesus" became moneymakers for the household during the 80s. I vowed to never buy another's "Art" when so much of my young life was filled with memories of watching the creation of homemade portraits of family members. While a college student I was lucky enough to own a home-drawn interpretation of El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz that my college friends lobbied for. But one day, just a few years ago, I saw a piece I had to have. I can't explain it. I broke my own code. The Haitian artist Fungcap merged three of my favorites into one piece, with earth tones even. My own brain was captured on canvass it seemed.

Almost a decade after the Coltrane incident I still couldn't put into words what happened to me during the fourth movement on I-75N. I even became a little nervous about listening to the album in a group. Who knew when such an outburst would revisit? As a gift one day my Ailey-date-turned-spouse handed me – I can't make this up, even for the CC Newsletter – a book titled, A Love Supreme: The Story of John Coltrane's Signature Album. From that book I learned what I had known all along, or at least what I was reminded of that morning in my '92 Civic, "'Music shouldn't be easy to understand' claimed Coltrane in 1963." I learned that A Love Supreme – the four part jazz suite – was recorded in one night. I learned that this classic album was more than a great jazz CD – how insulting I had been. I learned that in the liner notes of the album was a poem addressed to God. According to the book's author, Ashley Kahn, "Coltrane created A Love Supreme as a gift to the Divine...Coltrane unabashedly dedicated the recording, in his own words, as 'a humble offering to Him.'" Or as Elvin Jones, the quartet's drummer recalled, "He was baring his soul on...A Love Supreme." That morning on I-75N, when Coltrane joined me in my '92 Civic, makes more sense to me now.

My point is elusive I'm sure so let me explain. The "Arts" have the capacity to tap into feelings we don't always know we have, or have a hard time locating within. The "Arts" have the capacity to give voice to feelings or meanings to thoughts we often have difficulty bringing to the fore. The "Arts" can capture a moment, and for as long as that rendition thrives, we can always turn to it for the recounting.

If it's revisiting the past, the Arts can take us back there.

If it's maximizing the moment, the Arts can bolster us here.

So, it seems safe to assert, that if we want to Re-Imagine America through our efforts at engagement, the Arts must lead us in that journey.

Robert Smith
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The future of Bronzeville: Artist Mutope Johnson helps shape the debate

If you journey through artist and scholar Mutope Johnson's recent work, you'll find yourself in the heart of Milwaukee's Bronzeville, and likely thinking about the rise, fall and hopeful future of this once vibrant African American community. Bronzeville finds its voice not only in Johnson's dramatic images, but also in the words of the poets he has woven through them.

Johnson's art exemplifies the kind of engaged scholarship that is a cornerstone of the Cultures and Communities program. An award-winning Milwaukee artist who has exhibited widely, and now a UWM master's degree candidate in art and design, Johnson sees his Bronzeville series—which was recently shown on campus—contributing to the public dialogue about the neighborhood's legacy and its revival.

In his artist statement on the series, Johnson says:

"My current body of work has developed as a result of the growing discourse regarding Milwaukee's Bronzeville neighborhood. During the first half of the 20th Century, Bronzeville grew to become the business, economic, and cultural center to most of Milwaukee's African-American residents. Re-imagining this neighborhood through a series of paintings serves as a basis for visually articulating the adverse effects of eminent domain policies

that destroyed this neighborhood during the early to late 1960's, the result of a political apparatus that allowed the I-43/I-94 freeway to plow through the heart of the neighborhood and wipe out the richest source of black cultural identity Milwaukee has ever known. [Bronzeville, is bounded by Brown Street on the north, Juneau Avenue on the south, Third Street on the east and 12th Street on the west.]

"The principle aim of using Milwaukee's Bronzeville as a cultural case study is to introduce a set of visual images that promote a discourse about cultural awareness. This becomes my own personal way of establishing a working method that uses the power of the arts to help influence public opinion. As artists we can open up new avenues of art practice and critical thinking that serve as cultural conservation strategies that are responsive to the needs of neighborhoods like Bronzeville."



Mutope Johnson



Bonneville Poet Series, Tiffany Miller, Oil on Canvas

More from the Bronzeville Poet Series, page 4

The CC Certificate: A Conversation with Two Alums Continued...

Did the certificate give you classroom or real-world experiences that you would not have had otherwise?

Dana: The certificate took me to a free meal service church where there were meals served every day. That experience put a face to service. It also made me begin to think about why there are hungry people and what can we do as a society to change those circumstances.

Rachel: My first service learning class, History 150, was a great motivator to learn how to navigate the city bus and leave the East Side. I made connections with folks off campus that advanced my career options years later.

Some students tell us their classroom and/or service learning experiences have been transformative. What do you think?

Dana: The Multicultural America Anthropology class was transformative for me. It was one of the only courses I took at UWM that even scratched the surface of racial dynamics in America.

How did the certificate complement your area of study?

Dana: The certificate put my area of study (political science) into context. The Certificate went beyond statistics and into religion, race, culture, and art. Every job will ask you when you

interview, how you work with a diverse group of people. In our new economy, understanding your privilege and oppression in context to work and life is essential.

Does the certificate give you an edge in the work world?

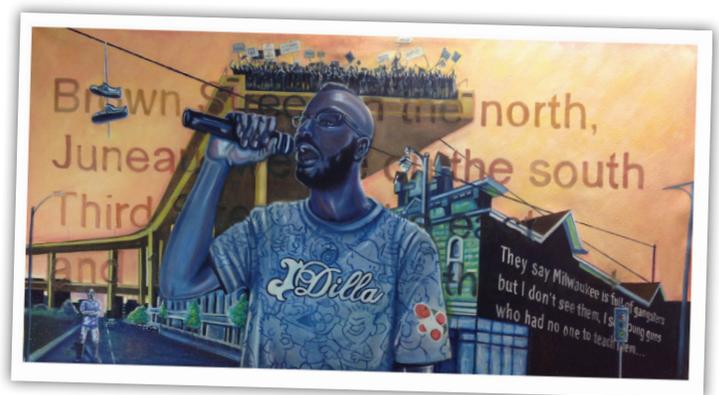
Rachel: I don't think you can really expect to succeed in a community until you've attempted to learn about that community and its people. The CC certificate gave me an edge and complemented my area of study by giving it a focus. I can't think of a major the CC certificate wouldn't complement, because you'd be hard pressed to find an employer out there that doesn't value an employee's ability to work with diverse populations, function as a team, and understand the value and issues that affect a community!

I graduated with a degree in Communication, which is really as broad and general as it gets. Through the exploration of social justice and community issues provided to me by my CC courses, I was able to narrow down what I wanted to do and served with AmeriCorps after graduation. My AmeriCorps opportunity led me to what I do now, which is coordinate Community-Based Learning programs in the Center for Community-Based Learning, Leadership, and Research.

More from Mutope Johnson's Bronzeville Poet Series



Bronzeville Poet Series, Jeff Winke, Oil on Canvas



Bronzeville Poet Series, Mikal Pruitt, Oil on Canvas

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