Greetings, everyone! The academic year of 2006-2007 was indeed eventful. While most of the news is positive and well worth celebrating, the year was shadowed by the death of Professor Frank M. Snowden, Jr. on February 18, at the age of 95. For no less than 50 years, Professor Snowden was a mainstay at Howard University. From 1940 to 1990 he served in various capacities, including Chair of the Department of Classics (1942-1978) and Dean of the College of Liberal Arts (1956-1968). In recognition of his outstanding cultural and educational contributions during his tenure as cultural attaché of the American Embassy in Rome (1954-1956), Professor Snowden received Italy’s Medaglio D’Oro in 1958. At a grand ceremony at the White House on November 21, 2003, he received a National Humanities Medal citing him for “a life of eminent scholarship, inspirational teaching, public service, and personal courage on behalf of civilization’s noble ideals.” For a detailed survey of Professor Snowden’s work go to: http://www.howard.edu/library/Special/Excellence@Howard/Snowden/Blacks.htm.

In 2003, the Department of Classics inaugurated the Snowden lecture series in tribute to Professor Snowden’s illustrious career. This year in a touching coincidence, our scheduled lecturer was Frank M. Snowden, III, a professor of modern Italian history at Yale University. His lecture entitled “Growing Up with Zeus: Memories of Childhood, ‘Black Athena’, and Frank M. Snowden, Jr.” presented a poignant, often humorous and always insightful account of life with his Olympian father. The lecture is available for viewing via video-stream at the HU website: http://www.howard.edu/library/stream/lecture_series/snowden/1.htm.

Six graduates majored in Classical Civilization: Willette Elder, Janielle Hyde, Barbara Johnson, Stephen Nichols, Angelica Rainey, Fawn Robinson; one in Latin: Ebony Dorsey. Along with Jessamyn Perkins (‘09) and Janielle Hyde, Willette Elder interned at the Center for Hellenic Studies. Angelica Rainey was a part-time intern teaching Latin at Ashlawn Elementary in the District. Ebony Dorsey has been hired as a full-time intern in Latin at the newly established Washington Latin School, a charter school in the heart of Washington, D.C.
school with which we collaborate. In fact, Maria Kane ('03) recently spoke to students of Washington Latin on “An Unlikely Friendship: How a 21st Century Texan Found Herself in the Ancient World.”

More to celebrate! Majors Kristen Bushnell ('09) and Christian Murphy ('08), mentored by Drs. Levine and Hock, respectively, won second and third prizes in Humanities at this year’s Undergraduate Research Symposium. Majors Tyra Moorehead ('08) and Kimberly Martin ('08), spent the spring term abroad, Tyra in Italy and Kimberly in China. This spring, five Eta Sigma Phi members, Chris Agard, Jemiah Barrow, Kiersten Cooley, Jessamyn Perkins, and Angelica Rainey, attended the annual convention at Temple University where they met fellow members and participated in various activities. (See Jessye’s firsthand account of the experience in The Hilltop, May 16, 2007).

This year, for the first time, the Department is offering a study abroad summer course for credit in Greece. Our own Dr. Norman Sandridge will be Odysseus leading his nine charges across the wine-dark sea. Finally, we want to warmly welcome our new departmental secretary, successor of the wonderful Deidra Goodwin, the equally wonderful Ms. April Jenkins who joined us in March. I can’t resist informing those of you who believe that I am a relic of the past that this year I actually got BOTH a cell phone AND an iPod!!! *Mirabile dictu*

*Editor’s Note: Stay tuned for even further *mirabilia* about Dr. Hock

Maia Scribit

Salvetel! As many of you noted, Hermes ’06 never happened. My excuse is the lounge remodel. This project took all of Spring ’06 and stretched well into the summer. The results, I think you will agree, were well worth the price. The lounge in Locke 254 has been painted a soothing shade of blue with spicy red trim and furnished with comfy brown suede couches, warm lamps, a cool new rug, and curtains that make the sunlight dapple. The project never could have been accomplished without the efforts of the ‘primary’ work crew: Drs. Hock and Sandridge, alumni Seth Blackburn (’02) and Keith Harris (’02), and my sister Rachel Myerowitz. With nary a complaint, these folks hauled heaps of old paper, broken furniture, and random ‘stuff’ (a sandwich from 2001!?); they then cleaned and painted for many long sweaty days. Seth, drawing on his experience in the building trade, boxed in the window’s rotting frame. My sister Rachel supervised the application of the finishing touches: two fine Corinthian columns now flank the couch. Throughout the whole process, Deidra’s usual serenity was pressed to the limit as she labored to push our purchase orders through a labyrinth of offices; daily phone calls were the rule from March through July. Dr. Susan Joseph contributed the handsome TV and VCR/DVD player and Dr. Caroline Dexter produced a one of a kind “Howard Classics” throw pillow. I was the overall site forewoman. Hence no Hermes last Spring but in exchange a lounge to be proud of—cleaner, prettier, yet as relaxing as ever!

Look at the Lounge!
Graduation ’06 was celebrated by a graduation party at my home (aka the Minoan palace) honoring our top Classics graduates: Mike Simzak and Jerry Brooks. This year’s party honored ’07 graduates Chris Agard, Ebony Dorsey, Janielle Hyde, Angelica Rainey, and Willette Elder. It is a sign of the Classics Department’s success that since my living room can no longer accommodate all of our graduates and their families, I have had to limit the honors to the very top of the annual line.

On a personal note, my summer ’06 was highlighted by a great seminar on “the master-disciple relationship” at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (for my new “Christians and Jews” course) and the birth of a new granddaughter (#3!) Sivan Alexandra. I was so elated by the performance of my three great students-Graham Barry, Kimberly Martin, and Jemiah Barrow, joined this year by Ebony Dorsey and Tyra Morehead—in my new Intensive Latin course (all of Wheelock in one semester!) that I published an article on the group in this Fall’s Classical World (“Oracles of a Quadragenarian Latin Teacher,” CW 100.1 [2006] 49-53).

Special thanks go to Dr. Caroline Dexter and alumna Maria Kane for help in copyediting and photo-editing. This issue would never have been light without Alicia Bell’s (’02) expertise in page-making AND generosity of spirit. (We miss you Marisol.) Last but not least, I send thanks to those of you who took the time to send in pictures and updates in response to my series of increasingly nagging emails. Quite a few of you visit, but especially those of you whom I see less often, please do keep us up to date on your current emails, phone numbers, and addresses. In other words (nagging mother again): WRITE HOME! Scribite et Valete! (myerowitz@gmail.com)

Rumor [De Alumnis] Volat

Ebony Dorsey ’07 (Latin)
Magistra futura, Washington Latin School, MISSEJD@aol.com

Her water broke at 6 o’clock that morning, so naturally, she went to the hospital. She was in labor all day. It was warm in there. I didn’t want to come out. Around 8 o’clock, I finally made my appearance—7 pounds, 14 ounces—and boy was I angry. They had coaxed me out of my peaceful domain into this cold, cold world. Almost 22 years later, I am still in this cold, cold world, but I have probably made more out of it than most people. Finally a graduating senior, I have moved into the penultimate phase of my education. I double majored in Latin and English and next year I look forward to teaching Latin to students of the new Washington Latin Charter School. Although I am not 100% certain of my long-range plans, because of the Classics Department I do know that learning is a continuous process and there is no limit to how far I can push my brain. I have been equipped with knowledge, power, and wisdom—something no man or woman can ever take away.

Willette Elder ’07
George Washington U. Law School
greengrape2@aol.com

My study of high school Latin in my hometown of New Haven, CT fostered my earliest interest in ancient culture. Upon coming to Howard, my interest in literature and the evolution of stories led me to...
double major in English and Classics. The connection between the two has driven my entire college career. Through the study of classical literature, I have come to the conclusion that the stories we have gotten from Homer, Euripides, and Virgil, for example, are still reoccurring in literature today. My focus throughout the past four years has been to analyze story structure and thematic patterns over thousands of years of oral tradition and written text. My analytical thinking and ability to unify various disciplines has led me to pursue a career in law. I will be attending the George Washington Law School this fall. Although I am very interested in intellectual property law, I am looking forward to exploring my options in the field. Classics have prepared me to conquer the world ahead with lifelong skills in thinking and writing, and I thank you all!

Toni O’Reggio, ’06
Howard U. Med. School
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From taking the Hippocratic oath at my White Coat Ceremony in August, to Anatomy in the spring, I am constantly reminded of the significant contributions of the ancient world to modern medicine. I’m sure my fellow classics/medical school colleagues recognize that many, if not, all of the anatomical terms are in Latin, such as fasciculus gracilis, splenius capitis, infundibulum, vertebra prominens, and nucleus solitarius among many others (all of which now make me wish I had taken at least one Latin language course in college). In my first week of classes we discussed Galen and Imhotep among others, which made me realize even more the special role a physician has in society.

My post-classics life has been filled with nothing but studying and trying to fit in my weekly dose of HBO’s “Rome” whenever I can. It’s like a fun test to see how much I remember and to recognize when anything has been falsified for entertainment value, which has, of course, happened a lot in “Rome.” I also occasionally look at my hieroglyph text by Allen in the hope that I’ll never completely forget. Come on, I can’t let that skill go. How many people can say they read Middle Egyptian in college? (smile) Every day is a new challenge in medical school. I remember being told as an undergrad that you can do anything with a Classics degree. So I can’t help but be grateful that I was able to study the Classics and recognize that even as a physician-in-training the Classics will continue to have purpose in my life.

Stanley Blackwell ’06
Career Counselor
slblackwell@hotmail.com

All is well with me. After graduation from HU, I began working at St. Vincent's Center (Catholic Charities) as a Child Life Counselor. I still occasionally work there on-call. Currently, I am full time at Job Corps as a Career Counselor and I like the job and counseling as a whole. I am also taking classes at my church to become a Biblical Counselor. My study of Latin and Greek continues to be of great help.

Solace Duncan ’05
M.A. in Public Administration, Howard ’07
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My big news of 2007 is that I’m still at Howard. I will finish a Masters in Public Administration this May. We all know that the real trick is to be at Howard without being at Howard. By this I mean, of course, that the trick is to be actively in pursuit of your place as a leader in America and the global community. And thereby hangs a tale.

I only recently learned of Art Buchwald. He was a humorist, born into a Polish-Hungarian family. He writes in his last book “Too Soon to Say Goodbye,” that after spending six months in a hospice where he had expected to die within weeks, “The big news of 2006 is that I’m still alive.” He has become a good friend. Last Fall, I found myself in Hungary. Through a graduate school exchange, I studied at Central European University. Budapest was an intense city while I was there. During the first month there were protests outside of Parliament, often violent, most hours day or night. Also, this October 23, 2006, was the fiftieth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution, an uprising against Soviet occupation.
In terms of using public art to establish legitimacy, Augustus has nothing on the Soviet regimes.

One of the most interesting parts of my time in Europe was actually in Romania. I had conversations about Octavian and Petronius’ “Satyricon” with two of my Romanian classmates, named Octavian and Petronia. It was amazing to hear their affinity to ancient Rome. My point is that Classics is always with everyone -- forging links from Locke 254 to Budapest. And I’m so glad for that. Oh! Now I know how I can connect Art Buchwald. I was departing Howard in a hurry after graduation in 2005, but two years and many nations later I, too, realize that it is too soon to say goodbye. Did that one work a little better?

Varun Boodram ‘05
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Ahh, Tokyo. It is exactly as I thought it would be: women in kimonos gab on their mobile phones as they shoot through the belly of the city on clacking trains; schoolgirls in short skirts lean heavily on the handles of their bamboo swords in the shade of futuristic buildings; enormous fire-breathing monsters occasionally saunter through, knocking over buildings, eating unwary passers-by, and generally making a nuisance of themselves.

Well, okay, I lied about the bamboo swords.

I’ve been living on the outskirts of this city for the last two years, in Saitama Prefecture, a patchwork of towns and rice fields, and teaching English as a second language at Kawagoe Girl’s High School. It has been an awesome experience so far. Teaching has been both challenging and very rewarding, and Japan is itself a remarkable place. Everywhere I turn, there are little treasures to be discovered, like shrines cloistered in the alleyways between high-rises, or ancient castles lying cheek by jowl with baseball fields, or the crazy twenty-something crowd that dress up like their favorite comic book characters to hang out on the street corners.

I feel very lucky to have been placed at this school. Many of the teachers are quite young, and quite a number of these are very friendly. However, almost all of the time that I spend here is with my kids. If I’m not teaching or planning lessons, I spend my time among the many clubs that they’ve divided themselves into. I always allege that I’m just making myself available for them to practice their English (which is quite good), but in truth, I just want to try some of the cool things that I see them doing, like archery and kendo.

I’ve had only one persistent difficulty here, which is, of course, the language. Japanese is utterly unlike anything that I’ve ever encountered before. Even after two years, I remain more or less illiterate (but in my defense, the written language uses three different scripts simultaneously, and one of these is made up of over two thousand characters) and unable to express myself in anything but the most primitive way. This has lead to numerous silly situations, like finding myself at a family planning clinic when I thought that I’d asked directions to the post office, or asking for a map at the convenience store, and being handed a block of cheese.

All in all, these have been a good two years, and I’m hoping that this next one, the last of my contract, will be so too. People have already begun peppering me with questions about life after Japan, but I’m determined to ignore that problem for as long as I can and continue to drink in every drop of enjoyment that I can extract from this experience.

Marisol Gouveia ’05, Copy Editor
Indianapolis Star marisolgouveia@gmail.com

Greetings from Indianapolis, land of the Super Bowl champions, John Mellencamp, and a state fair where they’ll batter and deep-fry anything.

I’m into my second year as a copy editor on the Features desk of the Indianapolis Star. I’m lucky to work with a fantastic bunch of Hoosiers on my desk who are always willing to help
me in and out of the office. They're all a lot older than me for the most part, so there's no post-shift heavy drinking and bar hopping. But then again, I was never one for wild nights and such, so no loss there.

It's just the job I wanted when I graduated, believe it or not. I got a rare chance to apply my classical knowledge a few weeks ago. I was reading a proof of a Home & Garden page (of all things) and saw that they referred to Janus as a god of "Greek myth." I triumphantly whipped out my red pen and scrawled in the margins "Roman!" It was a thrilling moment.

But over all the newspaper industry is a scary one to be in right now. Readership is declining, most of all among those of my generation and younger. Companies are struggling to find ways to stay competitive, keep old readers, and woo new ones. That process is one of perpetual and desperate attempts to be relevant and innovative. Frightening terms like "adjacencies" and "platform-agnostic" confuse journalists who thought they worked at a newspaper. Maybe pursuing classics would have been more practical in the long run! Who knew?

Being spoiled by D.C.'s advanced public transportation system, it was quite the shock to be subjected to what passes for mass transit here. I'm slowly and grudgingly coming to the conclusion that, if I'm to have any degree of independence, I need to buy a car. I'm not looking forward to that. At all.

I miss Howard, D.C., the undergrad experience and, most of all, my professors and classmates from Classics. A lot has changed since I graduated, too. No Deidra??? Madness! How are the walls of the department staying upright? New lounge?? Madness! I regret I'm not there to personally test the siesta index of the new furniture. I'm sure others are conducting their own experiments as I write.

Much love to my entire Classics family, in D.C. and around the world. Until we meet again.

Editor's Note: Congratulations to Marisol on the recent purchase of her first house! Welcome to the world of mortgage holders (and classicists should have no problem deciphering the etymology of ‘mortgage.’)

Maria Kane, ’03
M.Div., Duke ’06, Ph.D. Candidate, William & Mary
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Greetings from Williamsburg, Virginia's colonial capital! As cliché as it sounds I have fallen in love with this quaint city on the James River. I've even fallen in love with the doctoral program in history that I started last fall...Well, on most days I love it. And depending on the day of the week most of my research interests are concentrated on religion and immigration around the Progressive Era. I'm still putting that MDiv degree to use--preaching at my local church and making pastoral visits when I am able. It's a good place to be. As my former ethics professor at Duke, Stanley Hauerwas, used to say about PhD students and professors: "Why are you complaining? You get paid to read books all day." Indeed, despite its stresses, the experience of school has been a gift to me academically and personally. Of course, I am waiting for the day when I won't be on the graduate student budget. Alas! I press on.

Love to the Classics Department,
Maria

Britt Johnson ’02
J.D., ’07, University of Arkansas, School of Law
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It has been far too long. How are you all? Me? Well in just a few weeks I'll be done with this thing called law school. It's been a long and winding road, or shall I say roller coaster, because law school has truly had its ups and downs (way down). Other than that, not a whole lot is going on. I'm not a hundred percent sure where I'm sitting for the BAR. I've been interviewing with the DA's office in Queens, NY. So I'll keep you posted on that. I have missed you all so much and often long for the Classics. I still hold the Department dear to my heart. Speaking of which, I was in the District during home-
coming weekend. I forget that the school all but shuts down during that week. I stopped by the Department, however, and met a few new faces. I've forgotten their names unfortunately. I've also failed to make my annual endowment to the Department. I know, shame on me but I've been so busy, and I'm sure the department is going under due to the absence of my twenty bucks. lol!! Anyway I will try to get better at staying in touch. Meanwhile, hello to everyone. Hope all is well. Pax Vobiscum.

Editor’s Note: Britt’s annual contribution has kept us afloat for years. We are going under without it!

Keith Harris ‘02
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Salvete Alumni,
Where does one begin? The last time the Hermes letter went out, I was in grad school, churning the hours away studying Greek and Latin. Well, a lot has changed for me since that time, but then again, a lot hasn’t. I’m still studying assiduously, but now instead of brooding over Greek particles and Latin participles, I’m racking my brain figuring out bond yields and option contracts. Call me a glutton for punishment! I’ve traded in the classics for the securities business. I am now working at Morgan Stanley, training to be a financial advisor and studying for my licensing exams. How did that transition occur, you might ask? Well, I’m still figuring that one out... Suffice it to say that I eventually hit a brick wall in pursuit of my Ph.D. at Penn, and had to bow out with a Master's degree. I almost went back, encouraged by our ennobling faculty at Howard, who even got me a gig teaching Greek and Latin at Howard in the spring of ’06 to give me an opportunity to study for my Ph.D. qualifying exams. In the end, however, it became apparent that I no longer had the passion and intellectual endurance for the study of classical philology and it was time for a change. After withdrawing from the program, I worked as a leasing consultant for an apartment community until the end of ’06, before finally landing this gig with Morgan Stanley in January. I’m excited about this new venture--I’m learning a great deal, not just about financial markets, but about human nature, and ultimately about myself. It’s going to be a long, difficult journey ahead--the apprenticeship program that I’m in has a 60% attrition rate! But I am looking forward to the challenge. So wish me luck.

[Editor's note: Keith passed!!]

Coming Home to Ghana

Marianna Ofosu ‘04, M. Phil in Intentional Development, Oxford University, American Rhodes Scholar, Managing Director of GWI Ventures Ghana, marianna.ofosu@gmail.com

When I went “home” to Ghana for the first time as a graduate student at Oxford University, I felt a mixed sense of ownership and alienation. Although my father is Ghanaian, I was raised in Poland by my Polish mother and then educated in high school and college on the East Coast of the United States. At Oxford, I was reading Development Studies, a multidisciplinary subject focused on exploring the challenges of developing countries from multiple academic angles. As part of my fieldwork research on the impacts of ethnicity on the democratic process I went to Ghana to observe the run-up to the 2004 elections in a small rural district. Despite a score of multicultural experiences—teenage years on America’s east coast, undergraduate studies at Howard University, ‘a black school’ in the United States, graduate work in the bubble of Oxford University in the United Kingdom, studies and work in places as diverse as Santorini, San Juan, and Geneva—I knew that my research trip to Ghana would be more challenging than all of the others. This would be my first trip to sub-Saharan Africa, a part of the world with which I strongly identified both politically and intellectually,
which I engaged regularly in my thinking and championed in the US and Europe, but which I was still struggling to understand in ‘real’ terms.

In fact, before that first trip to Ghana, what I knew of Africa, I had learned academically through the prism of pan-Africanism and within the discipline of international development. Within that landscape, Nkrumah appeared to be a leader tragically ahead of his time on both the counts of African unity and economic development. Nkrumah had translated his passion for freedom and justice and his love for his ancestral land into action and from the distance of the schoolroom, his life loomed large and iconic.

For those of us abroad, the way that Nkrumah had led Ghana to independence through mass mobilization represented courage and commitment and made us proud to be African. Nkrumah’s Ghana, the first black African colony to become a nation, provided practical reinforcement for the spiritual strivings of Africans in the diaspora: an ancestral homeland no longer blighted by the embarrassing realities of colonization and an ally in the struggle for racial equality.

The Ghana that I held in my imagination while living in the diaspora was Nkrumah’s Ghana, but the country I encountered in 2004 was being transformed by John Agyekum Kufour whose election had ushered in a new era of democracy in Africa. The victory of Kufuor and his New Patriotic Party (NPP) in the 2000 general elections ended a twenty year period of first, military and then, elected rule by JJ Rawlings and the National Democratic Congress (NDC).

On this first visit, my homecoming was not unlike that of Ekow Eshun, the writer and art critic who documented his odyssey from the UK to his ancestral home in Ghana in “Black Gold of the Sun.” We both expected Ghana, Africa, to bring some closure to the nagging questions of multicultural, multinational, multilingual and—in my case—multiracial identity that defined our young lives in the “west.” And for both of us, Ghana responded in mixed and unexpected ways.

In my case, the welcoming generosity and openness of Ghanaians, the tempo of daily life, the verve of its academics, made for an amazing learning experience. But, school children from the rural areas where I did my research chased me yelling “obruni” or “foreigner” or “white woman.” I was called white not only by children but also by educated adults. I was disappointed, maybe even hurt, because Ghana, which produced Kwame Nkrumah and which buried WEB Dubois, the famed African American sociologist, was reputed to be a pan-African hub. Perhaps this is a misleading shortcoming of Nkrumah’s legacy—his rhetoric of pan-Africanism did not seep deeply into the soil of Ghana or the remainder of Africa. Since Nkrumah’s overthrow no administration has been as active as he had been in leading the cause of pan-African cooperation across the continent and in the diaspora.

Many of us who come back to Ghana have to settle into the practical realities of everyday life in a developing country. It is impossible to ignore the power outages, the length of time it takes to get anything done, the unpaved roads, and wide-stretching communal rubbish dumps. In his book, Eshun tries to reason through his own reaction to some of these difficulties: “Europe looked down on Africa. Maybe I’m doing the same thing?...Does living in a white country make you, in some way, white?”
I left Ghana after my research was completed with no immediate plan to return. Perhaps I was afraid to commit to a life as different and, therefore, as challenging as Ghana offered. Perhaps if I were older and less idealistic, I would have focused my expectations less on the Ghana that Nkrumah represented and more on the country that Kufour was building. So I wrote my dissertation, finished my studies at Oxford, and returned to the United States, to a comfortable life and to familiar pan-African rhetoric.

Now three years later, by chance or fate, I am back in Ghana, a much different Ghana than I remember or perhaps a Ghana I am viewing with different eyes. After graduate school and a year-long stint at a non-profit organization, working between Washington, DC and Nigeria, I have returned to Ghana to set up the local arm of a global advisory firm. Since a significant part of our mandate is to serve as a credible broker between American firms and African and Caribbean markets, the position seemed like the perfect job for someone like me, a person so “in between.” Ghana’s stability and economic prospects convinced my firm’s partners that the country would be a sound addition to their African portfolio. Having completed the World Bank’s highly indebted poor countries program, which helped to offset a significant portion of its debt, having qualified for a United States Millennium Challenge Account offered to top performers on economic reform and governance issues, having weaned itself from the International Monetary Fund’s lending, Ghana is becoming as economically attractive as it is politically stable. For me, the job offered an opportunity to work in Ghana and to give our relationship another shot.

I could not have come at a more interesting time. Ghana seems to be on the verge of being a grand country again. Maybe it’s all of the corporate buildings springing up around the airport, in an area now fashionably known as Airport City. Maybe it’s the influx of Nigerian banks heralding a new era in financial services or the relocation of companies such as Nestle from a deteriorating Ivory Coast. Maybe it’s the 6.5 % annual growth of the Ghanaian economy, a number the country has not seen in a long time. Perhaps it’s the growing middle class: more and more Ghanaians can afford to patronize places that were previously the reserve of foreigners and ex-patriots living in Accra. President Kufour has just been unanimously elected to the leadership of the African Union. In many ways, as Kufuor declared in his state of the nation speech this year, “Ghana, the Black Star of Africa, is on the rise again.”

As Ghana continues to rise, the country will attract more and more of its young people who would otherwise work and live in the diaspora. But, as I know well from my own experience, coming home to Ghana is not without its obstacles. These obstacles are mostly socio-cultural and they confront me every day as a young person trying to make my own academic and professional experience felt in Ghana and abroad. By far, the most daunting challenge is the paternalism with which young people are treated. To young people coming from academic and professional institutions in the United States and Europe in which the intelligence of youth is a prized commodity, where young people are sought after to bring not only fast minds and technical skills, but also new ways of looking for solutions, the paternalistic reality in Ghana comes as a culture shock. A bright peer of mine who was educated at Oxford and who worked for Lehman Brothers in London, but who has since returned to Ghana to start a financial engineering firm, once put it quite cogently: “In a country where the youth leader of the ruling party is in his 40s, what leadership roles can there be for us while we’re in our twenties?” I often feel that I am struggling against reverse ageism in Ghana, as if I am trapped by the circumscribed expectation of “elders,” who believe that intellectual or technical superiority is inherent in their advanced age.

The other socio-cultural challenge that Ghana presents to young people returning home from the diaspora has to do with its “patrimonial system.” One of the first books that I read about Ghanaian politics was Paul Nugent’s “Big Men, Small Boys and Politics in Ghana.” The book’s arguments about the social structure of patrimonial networks and the social conformity and stunted progress that this structure promotes, have been reinforced every time I come to Ghana. Together with ageism, patrimonialism stifles the potential that Ghana has to do away with inefficiencies in its socio-economic and political systems.

All of this raises two questions about the future of Ghana and Africa more broadly: Are Africa’s leaders and people ready for an influx of new citizens reared in western democracies who may demand speedier economic and political reforms than are on offer? Are diaspora Africans ready to engage a demystified Africa, a
real Africa, which is as challenging as it is full of opportunity, and in which they may sometimes be treated as outsiders? Are we, the bright young things, privileged with elite education in the United States and Europe, where youth and intelligence are often associated, able to integrate into countries which we love, but in which we may be under-appreciated because our youth is seen as a handicap?

Whatever the answers may be, we must try to come back to our countries, despite the sense of alienation and occasional disappointment that we may feel. Our challenge is to bend and be bent by our ancestral homes, in order to understand and improve them, from both the inside and outside. What we as young people have in our hands is a tremendous legacy. That legacy applies to us all, whether we live inside or outside of the country. And we should nurture the legacy so that our successors can congratulate us on our own accomplishments, but also can feel free and empowered to criticize our strategies and to stand at the decision-making table, offering their own plans for the future. That will be a true measure of progress.

De Professoribus

Alex Tulin: My article on Book I of Plato's Republic appeared last summer ("On the Refutation of Polemarchos: Analysis and Dialectic in Republic I," Elenchos 26, 2005, 277-316). This article comes directly from material that was covered in detail in two earlier courses which I offered on Plato's Republic -- as some may recall. Now I sit by the mailbox each day waiting (in vain) for the royalty checks to come in. I'm teaching Ideas and Ancient Law & Politics each term -- both of which have come together nicely -- and have excellent groups this semester -- the best in a while. Hope you're all doing well and doing what you want to do.

Caroline Dexter: The point of studying Classics is to be prepared to shape the future, not to get lost in the past. By studying the interactions of the complex institutions of the ancient Classical world, we can get a better understanding of the even more complex world in which we find ourselves. Students will inevitably shape the future either by default or by design, and by studying a field that gives you strong intellectual skills, I believe, better prepares you to determine the character of the nation and the world you will ultimately inherit.

As for me and my family: I continue to be grateful to my students at Howard, and especially to our dedicated Classics majors, who daily inspire and energize me. My husband is hard at work on his fifth book; he writes mostly about recent and current American foreign policy. Talk about a generation gap - we have a millennium and a half gap! And then both our children have ended up working in the world of finance – go figure…

Norman Sandridge: Greetings to all alums of Howard’s Classics program! This year, when I have not been teaching Greek, I have been hanging out with students at our Wednesday teas, watching movies, and learning the guitar. I have also been working on a article currently under review on pity in three plays of Sophocles and a longer study on Jason’s leadership in the Argonautica of Apollonius of Rhodes in light of the works of Homer and Isocrates. This latter project will be the basis for a WAC course on “Leadership in Antiquity” next fall. Finally, I am most excited that my wife, Kimberly, and I will be taking nine Howard students on a two-week trip to Greece this summer. I plan to make future trips available to Howard alums, so contact me if you’re interested to go in 2009!
Vale Deidra... Salve April

As you all know our beloved Deidra Goodwin left her job with our department last summer (see below). Junior Jemiah Barrow stepped up to the plate during FA06 as we searched for a new permanent secretary. The good news is that she has arrived in the person of Ms. April Jenkins. April Jenkins has been employed at Howard University since 1999. She has worked in the Student Financial Services Department as a receptionist, loan specialist, and an account analyst. She is married to Louis Jenkins and they have three sons - Louis, Frederick and Brandon. Frederick and Brandon currently attend Howard University.

April Jenkins

A Letter From Deidra

Hello everyone!

It’s a pleasure to be touching bases with you all. I pray that everyone and their families are doing well as the academic year comes to a close once again. It’s hard to believe that I have been away for almost a year now. I miss the Classics Department and Howard tremendously and think of you all almost every day.

I am currently working as a Senior Administrative Assistant for Sodexho’s Health Care Services Division. Sodexho is one of the leading food service and facilities management companies in the United States and around the world. Howard’s Hospital is one of our Health Care accounts and our Campus Services Division provides food service for the University as well. So now you can think of me when you are taking part in one of those lovely chicken wing, meatball, fruit, and cheese platters that we all came to love and appreciate (wink wink) while attending special functions on campus. I support the Food and Nutrition, Brand Management and Product Development team.

The corporate world is big on these long titles but what we do is not as complicated as the name is long. My team consists of mostly registered dieticians and executive chefs that develop the recipes and menus that you would be served as a patient in one of our hospitals or as a visitor in the hospital’s cafeteria. We produce all the promotional material, such as daily special posters, recipe cards, and nutritional guideline sheets that you might see as well. Lastly we are responsible for making sure that the standards of the Sodexho brands, i.e. the Ski Ranch Grill and Pandini’s in the Punch Out, are strictly adhered to on a daily basis. It’s very interesting and intriguing work and I would have never imagined how much goes into serving patient meals or running a hospital cafeteria.

Being a food aficionado for most of my life, I find it extremely fulfilling to be working in the food service industry. Some of my favorite pastimes as a child were watching cooking shows on television and creating dishes from my mother’s recipe books after school. I still get a little misty thinking about the day my mother put a whole watermelon on top of a lemon meringue pie that I made because she didn’t know it was in the fridge. When asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, my answer would always include the phrase, “something that is helping someone in some way.” Providing administrative support here at Sodexho is the best of both worlds for me. I’m doing the work that I love in a field that I have a genuine passion for and view it all as a remarkable blessing.

I’m also getting to put to use all those skills I acquired in Pharmacy and Business School at Howard.
Some of my duties include statistical research, project management, payroll processing, database implementation and administration, expense reporting, and inventory management. Being the one that ties it all together for a group of individuals with different functions and personalities requires a lot in the way of organization and interpersonal communication. These are just some of the skills that I definitely honed in the Classics Department. Needless to say, I’m a very busy lady at work and enjoy every minute of it.

Things are just as busy on the home front as well. One of my hardest tasks is balancing my home and professional life, but my future husband, his children, and Lawrence make it all worth while. (Thank you Dr. Hock for always being understanding in this area; and thank you Dr. Levine for all the enlightening books on womanhood.) Yes, I will be getting married this summer and, drum roll please; we will be welcoming the newest member of our family in September. (Thank you Dr. Joseph for the Irish wedding bracelet; I have someone to help me put it on now and thank you Dr. Cowherd for all the African-American children’s books that we love to read on the weekends when my house is full of children. I’m sure the new baby will love them as well.) A teenager and a toddler at the same time...this is going to be interesting. (Thank you Dr. Tulin for all the exciting stories in this area; and thank you Dr. Bochi for all our afternoon chats on child rearing.)

I’ve also taken up cake decorating and have sold several cakes to date. Decorating cakes is like meditation for me and keeps the creative juices flowing. (Thank you Dr. Dexter for coming to see me the last time I was in the office and bringing me more cake pans to use; and thank you Dr. Sandridge for the recommendation on Giant brand cookies. They are some of the best cookies around and I use them to hold the children at bay when they want to lick all the cake batter from my bowls.) Lawrence is doing very well in school and was chosen as student of the quarter earlier this year for reading. He sends his hellos as well.

Students, I urge you all to take a long hard look at yourselves, paying close attention to the talents and personality traits that you were given at birth. Accept them, appreciate them, and apply them to your everyday life the way YOU see fit, not the way society, your peers, or even your parents see it. Not everyone was put on earth to be a doctor or a lawyer, and it is very important that you find a place or career in this world that fits your personality and is enjoyable, not just profitable. We were all made differently so that we can learn from and teach one another. And as long as you are living your life in a positive manner you will be successful. Do not follow where the path may lead. Go where there is no path and leave a trail. Best wishes to you all and please keep in touch. Deidra, gdeidra@hotmail.com

Sermo: Can These Bones Live?   Ezekiel 37:1-14   Maria Kane

Maria Kane ’03 earned an M.Div. from Duke University ’06 and is currently working on her Ph.D. in History at William and Mary. She wrote the following sermon inspired by her experiences tending the floppy flowers in MML’s garden!

I have decided that no matter how old I’ll get, I’ll always cherish my childhood visits to my grandmothers’ homes. Because as most grandparents and grandchildren know, grandparents know how to heal the deepest hurts. It’s something only they can do. When I was with my grandmothers I also could get them to do just about anything that I wanted them to do. I even got them to go on multiple trips to Chuck E Cheese, the zoo, the swimming pool, and McDonald’s in just a matter of days. But there is also something else that sticks out in my mind when I think about these special visits: whether I was in Nashville or San Antonio, I always got a lesson or two on the aches and pains that come with living a full life.
See, usually each morning my grandmothers would make eggs, grits, toast, salmon cakes, and bacon for breakfast. But then every once in a while there would only be some cereal and milk on the table. And on these mornings I would stand in the kitchen and cry, “What’s going on?” And no matter which grandmother I was visiting the answer was always the same. “I’m sorry baby, but I just couldn’t make you breakfast this morning. I needed to rest. It’s raining out there and you know what that does to my arthritis. Baby, that’s what happens when you get my age. You’ll understand it one day, but you’ve got some growing to do child. Things just don’t work like they used to. I’m sorry honey, but we’re going to have to find something to do inside. My bones just can’t take it.” Know what I’m talking about?

Dry, cracked, achy bones. Bones that even BenGay, Vioxx, and Celebrex can’t heal. Bones that seem to have no life and no will to live anymore. Bones that have seen better days in the past. Bones that have been worn down by life. But you know, it’s not just bones and folks with arthritis who have always have it rough. Admit it. We’ve all had that dry, cracked, worthless feeling—and not just in our bones—but in our soul. And it doesn’t always take much either to get us to that point. Sometimes the mounting debt, the expectations of those we love most, the fear of our failure, and the anxiety of health ailments that doctors can’t seem to find a name for makes us feel as if our soul is lost. And sometimes...sometimes it’s the loss of our faith, our sense that God might have forgotten us in our too young or too old age that leaves us achy, dry, and lifeless. And when we’re here nothing seems to heal the hurt. When we’re here, we’re in a valley of misery. And when we’re here, it seems that we are in a pit of dry, useless, arthritic bones. Makes you wonder, doesn’t it: Can these bones live?

I know that some might say, “Welcome to life, welcome to the real world.”

But, my friends, it’s here in this place of despair that we are given the chance to become something new. It’s when we have nothing left to give that God is able to take our lives and bring healing when our own efforts could not. It’s when we stop trying to do it on our own, it’s when we give up, that God says, “hold on; let me show how my glory reigns today—in this world and your life.”

If we look to our Scripture lesson we can catch a glimpse of how our friends in the nation of Israel struggled and found healing in their own dark night. Now, Israel was God’s chosen people, God’s elect. They had been assured life in the promised land. The fertile, familiar land that they called home has been taken away from them and now they are wandering as exiles in Babylonia. And now they are wondering if God has forgotten them. And because of it they have also lost their identity and their purpose. Now, they wonder who they are and what in the world they are supposed to do with their lives! They are the people of Israel, and they aren’t even there!

I believe that we have all been in that place where the things that were familiar to us suddenly became unfamiliar, even repulsive. It’s like being in the place where it seems that no matter how hard you try, that struggle that you’re fighting for so long seems to get the best of you. The questions can be overwhelming. It makes you feel rusty and achy. It makes you question your purpose. And it makes you wonder: Can these bones live?
We are usually quick to say no, they can’t. But can’t we dare to believe as God calls us to believe—not as the culture, media, and our fears tell us we should believe—that life is not all for nothing? For despite all of their failings and shortcomings God heard the cries of Israel and saw the great danger they were in. And when all seemed lost, our Creator-God sent a young ordinary man named Ezekiel to be his prophet to these wayward and hurting children. As our Scripture says, God grabs Ezekiel by the hand and takes him to a valley where he shows him these decrepit bones we’ve been talking about. They are lying about in a deep pit. Just imagine the dirt and the smell and the aridness of that valley. It’s simply heartbreaking. God then tells Ezekiel that these bones represent the people of Israel.

But my friends, listen to this. Just as God shows Ezekiel this, God also tells him speak life to these bones. It seems crazy. It must be crazy. But maybe God is a little crazy, for as Ezekiel repeats the words of God to these signs of a life once lived, they slowly rejoin and piece-by-piece they are covered in the tissue and ligaments that will give them their purpose. And they live. Yes, these bones live.

I must tell you though, it was not an instantaneous action that occurred with the wave of a magic wand or a New York Times best-selling how-to book on improving your life and fortune in just 5 days! No, in God’s mysterious timing and in God’s patient breath of life that loves and sustains us through our questions and hurts, life was restored into bones that had been discarded by everyone else as good for nothing. My friends, what in your life needs restoration? Where must you step back and seek God for guidance?

I must confess though that if you’re anything like me, you like things to happen fast. But I’ve come to learn that the change and restoration we yearn for is a process. It does not always happen as we understand it should be. We are never complete—even though at 16 we think we have it figured out, only to realize at 22 that we need our parents help, only to realize at 40 that we wish we were 8 again, only to reach our golden years and realize that we have been strengthened and purified into the finest gold of a life well lived.

And when conventional wisdom of the world would say start over someplace new, someplace better, God believes we can live at all stages of our life no matter what we go through. God believes in you and me, for what kind of God would forsake the very beings God created? The question for us is this: do we live we as we claim to believe? With the rising of the sun, we must ask this question each day. For each day is one more chance to experience the grace of living a full life.

This summer I had the most wonderful opportunity of house-sitting for one of my Howard professors while she was in Israel for the summer. One of the duties included caring for Molly’s amazing garden. It had nearly every flower you could imagine, including some amazing roses, hibiscus, and others I’ll never be able to name. She also had this one particular plant that I named the “floppy flower”—although it comes from the nicotine family. In the beginning I couldn’t stand it. It just got on my nerves. For one thing, when I gardened in the morning I would always find it limping over and looking dead. On top of that it required me to trim its stems and pick off the dead blooms so that new ones could grow nearly every day. By about the 4th or 5th week in Bethesda I was up to here with these darn flowers! Nothing I was doing seemed to keep them from flopping over. I put stakes in the ground. I tried trimming them back, but these flaccid flowers just took up space. Then one evening I decided to do something different. Instead of my usual evening reading in the living room, I went outside on the back porch and decided to read on the deck for a change of scenery. As I walked down the stairs to check on the garden I started to smell a most strong and sweet scent. I tried to figure out where it was coming from I suddenly realized that it was coming from those darn floppy flowers—the ones I was ready to pluck from the ground days ago. Not only were they giving off the most precious scent, they were no longer flopping over, and their blooms were radiating a sea of purple, white, and pink all over. It was the most breathtaking experience. I wanted to shout to the neighbors about my new discovery.
See, what I didn’t know was that these flowers were unique. They bloom only in the evening, and when they do they fulfill their unique purpose of adding light and sweetness to the otherwise dark night. I had to do some things differently, and as I did my eyes were opened to something precious I had been missing. I had nearly given up on them when they finally revealed their precious life to me.

My friends, how often have you and I given up on our ourselves because we seem not to bloom at what we think is the right time? Many times people don’t always know how to care for us or understand our deepest hurts, and we feel like we are in a valley of dry bones. But my friends, like the valley of dry bones, like those droopy flowers I had given up on because they seemed to not fit my plans of being useful, we are unique and given purpose even when all seems lost.

As my grandmothers used to always say, you’ve gotta live life to know what it’s all about. You can’t run away and hide when it gets tough. They would remind me that sometimes you have to take a break and know your human limitations and that’s okay. Taking a break doesn’t mean bowing out of the game. Its simply pausing to take a break and find new ways of seeing old things. For this dark night shall soon pass. One of my favorite poets, Rainer Maria Rilke, describes this best in a love poem to God:

She who reconciles the ill-matched threads
Of her life, and weaves them gratefully
Into a single cloth--
It’s she who drives the loudmouths from the hall
And clears it for a different celebration
Where the one guest is You
In the softness of evening
It’s You she receives
You are the partner of her loneliness
The unspeaking center of her monologues
With each disclosure you encompass more
And she stretches beyond what limits her
To hold You.

My friends, come join the celebration dance. Dare to believe that God wants to breathe new life into the fringes of the soul. And no matter where you go, God will be there to hold you and lead you on...because, yes, THESE BONES—YOUR BONES—CAN LIVE.

Amen.
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Faces of the Howard University Classics Department