THE FACULTY SPEAKS

Headliners

Dr. Byron Price is TSU's Ambassador to the University of Liberia

Byron Price, PhD

While at Rutgers, I was able to take advantage of Rutgers's interest in developing international programs that facilitated the globalization of our students' educational experience. I first became interested in working in Africa after attending a conference in Durban, South Africa, in 2002. Most of the emphasis was on Europe and Asia at Rutgers, but as the Associate Director of the National Center for Public Performance at Rutgers, I was able to champion interest in Africa. I began to develop the African connection through a contact I made at the Durban Conference.

I create opportunities in Africa by staying informed about the issues plaguing the continent. I created the current opportunity to work in Liberia by submitting an unsolicited proposal to the President of the Republic of Liberia; she—or her people—obviously liked the proposal. I was contacted by the president of the University of Liberia and have been working with Liberia for the past year.

My goal is to create more cross-cultural opportunities for African American students and scholars in Africa. Africa is the last frontier in respect to development. The African American community is missing out on an opportunity to make a difference in Africa, which ultimately will improve life here in America for African Americans.

As an aside, the first president of TSU was an ambassador to Liberia. I would like to see the TSU community get involved in rebuilding Liberia's educational system; more importantly, creating opportunities for students and scholars to serve will, I believe, help us develop better students and scholars.

On The Table/ TSU History

ON A QUESTION OF LEARNING

BY SAM ANDREWS

(ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN AT THE CORE NEWSLETTER FOR THE CENTER FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES, TSU, JANUARY 9, 1995)

Texas Southern University requires each undergraduate student to complete with a non-failing grade some 48 credit-hours of academic foundations courses. Such information may be found in any edition of the university catalogue. What one fails to find are the academic reasons for this particular collection of academic experiences. What skills, may we find, are to be developed during this academic rite of passage? What information should be firmly ingrained in the conscious academic pursuits of students who complete the rite? How

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Town and Gown

“LAST WEEK THERE WAS AN INCIDENT”

Emailed letter from an African American female TSU student to the area management of a chain store, September 23, 2009:

“Last week there was an incident that happened at the ______ location that has not set well with me. Two female European American customers were harassing an African American female (a good friend of my family) because of her racial ethnicity. I feel that if your employees really care about all of their customers, no matter what their race may be, they should have handled the situation better than they did. It seems to me that you allow racial remarks and racial activity in your store, so my conclusion is that I will no longer shop at any of your locations as a result of the harmful things that were said to my friend.”

Supporting email from an African American male TSU student, September 23, 2009: “I am very disappointed with the way a situation was handled involving one of your loyal customers and two other customers at your ______ location. This fellow college student was followed and harassed, with derogatory language used against her. Eventually this young lady had to leave your store without looking at any merchandise, to be able to shop in peace.

Why did your employees not stop this incident?

Why were these two people not asked to leave the store?

Is this the way your employees handle a situation with one of your customers being harassed? Well, if it is, I don’t think I want to be a customer at your store anymore... Thank you....”

Supporting email from a Nigerian male TSU student, September 24, 2009: “I was saddened to hear what one of my fellow classmates encountered at one of your stores at ______. I find it very offensive that no one took the necessary actions when she was verbally assaulted by a fellow customer. It’s not okay for a customer to be attacked another with racial slurs. I hope you take my thoughts seriously and seek ways to prevent this incident from taking place again. Thank you.”

Supporting email from a Tanzanian female TSU student, September 24, 2009: “I want to report an incident that happened to one of my classmates. She was harassed by other customers inside your ______ store, and none of your employees took any action. This was between an African American girl and other European American girls who were following her around calling her the N word. If this is how customers get treated in your store, I am not looking forward to shopping in your store anymore....”

Supporting email from an African American female TSU student, September 26, 2009: “I am very bitter and very disappointed that the employees just let this incident occur. There was a European American following an African American around repeatedly calling the African American, I quote, a “nigger”. This was an action of harassment and racism. The em...

(Book Review, Continued from page 1)

well is the academic foundations sector of the curriculum doing its job, assuming we have a clear understanding of what that job entails?

The undergraduate curriculum can be divided rather easily between lower division classes (academic foundations plus additional 100 and 200 level introductory courses in specific subject matters) and upper division (advanced course work in major or minor disciplines). But how are these two divisions related?

If lower division course work is intended as a method of stimulating logic and structural processes organizational instincts, and aesthetic appreciation and understanding, then by what measure or set of measures may we infer such intentions have been and continue to be met?

Let us examine lower division course work in that light. The lower division becomes a laboratory designed to prepare students to grasp levels of learning (knowledge, understanding, and utilization), processes of learning (induction, deduction, analysis, synthesis, and intuitive cognition), and structures of learning (language). The lower division then must be understood as a two-level undertaking, with language, mathematics, science, and the arts as foundational experiences, with the remaining course work as applications of those basic skills.

Course work at the lower-division level stresses a curricular design which emphasizes course matter as an extension of skills enhancement. As an example, many universities require foreign language course work as part of their foundational studies. Why? Cannot one learn to speak a language in a far better setting, say a Berlitz course, or a series of audio cassettes or tapes for home and automobile?

(Book Review, Continued from page 2)

Slavery by another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II

By Douglas A. Blackmon

New York: Anchor Books, 2009. $18.95

Following the 1874 collapse of Reconstruction, the United States fell into a period that Douglas A. Blackmon, Atlanta Bureau Chief of the Wall Street Journal, argues has not yet ended: the arresting of African American men and boys for nebulous charges, uniquely racially applied, for the purpose of selling their labor to big business. Beginning in the late 1800s, the invented handy charge that fueled what Blackmon calls America’s “Age of Neoslavery” was “vagrancy.” Perhaps readers are familiar with Tezake’s terror of venturing out after the hurricane in Zora Neale Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God, his being forced onto a chain gang and made to dig ditches for corpses while his rabies gains irreversible ground in his system. Or perhaps readers recall Paul D’s unspeakable treatment on a chain gang in Beloved as he makes his way from the plantation where he was enslaved to the small town of freedpersons where he will encounter Silla and the most emotionally profound experiences of his life. “Oh,” the reader thinks as Blackmon explains this aspect of America’s hidden history, “so that’s what was going on.”

(Book Review, Continued from page 3)
Updates from the Senate

PHASED RETIREMENT? WHAT’S “PHASED RETIREMENT”? 

The adoption of a phased retirement policy at our university would allow faculty members a choice in their manner of retirement. Faculty could choose to retire in the traditional manner, which is at once, or they could decide to retire in a more gradual manner, bit by bit, over a period of time, with their course load and salary reduced proportionally. For example, if a faculty member decided to phase his or her retirement over a two-year period, that person would teach a half load at half pay for two years. The same formula of proportional reduction could extend up to five years.

Providing university educators a choice in their manner of retirement is a new idea but not brand new innovation. If one Googles the phrase “Phased Retirement,” one will discover fifteen pages of entries. Many of these entries refer to institutions of higher education across the nation that already have added phased retirement as an option to traditional, sudden retirement. For example, the entire State University System of North Carolina offers a gradual retirement choice to its faculty employees. Locally, the University of Houston is among those that also provide this choice to its faculty. Universities have offered an option for voluntary phased retirement to faculty personnel since at least the 1980s.

Phased retirement has become an accepted, standard retirement option for educators because it seems to work for faculty and their institutions, alike. For institutions, phased retirement offers attractive benefits. It allows them to retain talented, veteran faculty at a fraction of their full-time salary. Additionally, phased retirement provides plenty of lead time for administrators to plan their future budget needs and to anticipate their staffing requirements. For faculty, a gradual retirement offers a major life transition from full time work and career to the very different life that follows. Social scientists have identified this passage as one of great psychological, social, and economic importance. For many, of course, retirement is one of the eureka! moments of a lifetime: they’ve reached the Promised Land and embrace it with enthusiasm. But for others, sudden retirement is more problematic. Psychologically, the self-esteem and identity of many workers are linked to the job they have and to the work they do; uncoupled from career, some workers flounder and experience difficulty. Socially, retirement almost always results in separation from the work “family,” to increased isolation, and sometimes to depression. And financially, not only do workers usually experience a drastically reduced income.

(Continued on page 4)

...use, them in the structure of a university course? Language facility is not the raison d’être of this course work. The university foreign language curriculum for nonmajors should be designed to facilitate an understanding of people through a study of their language. The course work should seek to examine why people of a given nation operate in a particular fashion. Utilization is the goal in this context.

Perhaps the present context of specific credit-hour course work is not the best method of imparting skills information. Perhaps freshman and sophomore colloquia, absent individual and specific course designations, would better serve our student population. In this operation, emphasis would be placed on acquisition and utilization of structural and procedural skills through use of the subject matter. Teams of teachers would be devised to instruct students in basic learning skills in the freshman colloquium. The emphasis here is not on information apprehension, but on learning as an end unto itself. The sophomore colloquium would concentrate on skills utilization through subject matter mastery. The subject matter, however, would have to be tied into continuing reinforcement of skills training.

Such an undertaking would require a significant break with traditional methods, naturally. But ask five [sic] questions of the new structure. Would its use provide students with better skills? Can it be tested with appropriate measures? Is it a better process for our students to undertake? Does our faculty have the right stuff to get the job done?

(Reviewed, Continued from page 2)

Raised in the Mississippi Delta, Blackmen shares with the reader his perception that “those bulging slave centers became a primary weapon of suppression of black aspirations.” the book is the result of the weight of personal responsibility that came with his realization that “these were not unavailing events, driven by invisible forces of tradition and history” (7). Blackman’s unflinching research excavates the grim realities beyond these literary glimpses.

The book opens with a photo of African American men and boys in ironed at their mining camp bunk beds; the insert portrays prisoners at hard labor; in various torturous forms of punishment, and transported in wired wagons to read gangs, lumber camps, rock quarries, and plantations, from the 1880s through the 1940s.

Men and boys died in this brutal system at epidemic rates, denied education, their day in court, or recourse to appeal. “The system arrived at a cynical optimum of economic harmony, knitting together the interests of capitalists, white farmers, local sheriffs and judges, and advocates of the most cruel white supremacy—all joined and served by an unrelenting pyramid of intimidation” (231). Blackman’s expose of what he calls American “human labor trafficking” restores a crucial historical/political element to academic understanding of the intertwined nature of capitalism, law, and big business in the United States.

Dr. Alexis Brooks de Vita
EDITOR'S CHOICE

Dr. Obidike Kamaau, TSU's Director of Libraries and Museums, and Sister Akua Fayette present "Self-Determination" on KPFT

Every Sunday night from 9:00—11:00 pm on KPFT, 90.1 FM, TSU's own Dr. Obidike Kamaau and his co-host, poet and community activist Sister Akua Fayette, bring academia to the airwaves in Self-Determination, an informative marathon. Dr. Kamaau and Sister Akua regularly host the community-savvy, the politically-aware, and academics who present issues and engage caller discussion on matters of international, national, and local interest. Self-Determination brings spirit and power to the listening people.

(Town & Gown, Continued from page 2)

employees at this store did nothing about it. Is this how your employees are trained? I am a regular customer, and I at least shop there once a week, but if nothing is done about this, I will no longer shop there. It makes a lot of sense to me, and I will make sure that neither my family nor friends shop there either. I just don't want this to happen to another African American, and I don't want other customers to think it is okay because nothing was done about it. Thanks for your time..."

Emailed response from Store Operation, September 28, 2009:

"Hello All, I want you to know I received all of your emails about what you witnessed at our store location, and I am truly sorry about this. Please rest assured— it will be addressed. I will bring this matter to the attention of the store's District Manager and Regional Managers, as well as the Director of Stores. I am grateful for the time you all took to inform me of what occurred. We take your feedback very seriously, as it gives us the opportunity to address issues we would otherwise not know about, and to retain our employees. Again, I am very sorry for your and your friend's experience. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further concerns. Regards..."

Senate (Continued from page 3)

when they retire, but age brings with it increased medical and other costs. Phased retirement would not obviate these and other common problems associated with the transition from working to no longer working, but by gradually shifting from one to the other, it would give faculty employees more time to anticipate the shocks of an important life change.

A preliminary examination of phased retirement policies currently in place at other universities reveals that they address certain core issues but in a variety of ways. For example, most such policies limit the phased retirement option to tenured faculty only, and sometimes only to tenured faculty with a specified number of years in service. Most contain a "no back-out" clause stipulating that once a faculty person has chosen the phased retirement option, he or she cannot subsequently decide to "back out" of it and return to full-time employment. Likewise, virtually all phased retirement policies specify a length of time for phasing, but it varies from two to five years. Furthermore, most but not all such policies explain that faculty during phased retirement are treated identically with other faculty when it comes to office and parking accommodations, committee assignments, performance evaluations, insurance coverage, and the like. These and other issues related to phased retirement have been negotiated successfully at other universities, and they can be negotiated at ours as well. In fact, a little known section of the

TSU Faculty Manual (Section 3.3/B/d) already contains a provision for proportionally reducing the teaching load and salary of some senior faculty members, and this section could provide a starting point for an expanded phased retirement policy at our university.

A Faculty Senate committee is currently gathering data about phased retirement policies at other universities. After studying them, the committee hopes to fashion a proposal this academic year for adoption at TSU. If you would like to serve on this university-level committee, or would like to make suggestions to it, please contact the committee chair, Dr. Thorpe Butler, at But ler_AT@TSU.edu or at 713-313-7663.

Dr. Howard Booth
Secretary, Faculty Assembly/Senate

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Holiday Faculty Colloquium

Benjamin Britten’s “A Ceremony of Carols”

The Words and the Music

On a ship from the United States to England in 1942, Benjamin Britten wrote a celebration of innocence in the midst of violence, using medieval and Tudor poems as lyrics.

You are invited to hear "A Ceremony of Carols" and join a discussion of music and words led by Dr. Jason Oby, Department of Music, and Dr. Rita Saylors, Department of English.

Date and Time: Wednesday, December 2, 2009, 12 noon
Place: Room 111, MLK Building

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TSU FACULTY SENATE NEWSLETTER
The President
September 1, 2006

Dr. John M. Rudley
President
Texas Southern University
3100 Cleburne
Houston, Texas 77004

Dear President Rudley:

The University of Liberia would like to inaugurate a faculty exchange program between our two universities by inviting Dr. Byron E. Price, Interim Director of the Barbara Jordan Institute of the Barbara Jordan – Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs, to serve as a Visiting International Fellow and Special Assistant to the President for External Collaborations during the spring 2010 semester. The goal of the program is to help develop the international capacity and cooperation of both of our faculties to facilitate our respective universities achieve their core mission.

I would like for our two institutions to engage in the following areas of cooperation:

- Visits and exchange of members of the faculty and undergraduate and graduate students for the purpose of study, teaching and discussion as well as for cross-cultural experience
- Collaborative research activities, including partnering in research projects and publications
-.Form group and individual grants jointly
- Development of an Honors College and program at the University of Liberia
- Establishment of a research center dedicated to the analysis of specific public sector management issues such as ethics, administrative reforms, the use of technology and public finance

The collaboration between our two institutions has the potential to bridge the north-south divide and bring the two worlds of America and Africa higher education much closer than before. Dr. Price has worked in West Africa since 2004 and has an understanding of the problems and solutions required to help implement mutually beneficial programs. His proposal to me in March on how to organize HBCUs into a consortium to help the University underscores his understanding of the Herculean tasks required to help Africa and its partners address the myriad of inherent issues, especially in the area of higher education.

Liberia has many challenges and Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has eloquently articulated the partnership we need and, amazingly so, many have responded to her overtures. I hope you and Texas Southern University will also respond to our need for partnerships.

I eagerly await your response and look forward to a long and prosperous relationship between our universities.

Best regards,

Emmett A. Deniau, President
University of Liberia