



**H. FRED SIMONS**  
**AFRICAN AMERICAN**  
**CULTURAL CENTER**

*The Division of Student Affairs*  
**H. Fred Simons' African American Cultural Center**  
**Director Dr. Willena Kimpson Price**



The African American Cultural Center would like to proudly announce the production of our newsletter: *The Vision*. *The Vision* has, in the past, been a staple of the AACC's expression and communication to the University. It has since had a temporary lapse in publication and the Cultural Center has subsequently missed the enlightenment *The Vision* has brought to the University. We are here today to bring to you its resurrection. With the will, passion and dedication of our student writers and the support of the Director of the African American Cultural Center—the honorable Dr. Willena Kimpson Price—we will ensure that *The Vision* regains its utility in the dynamics of the University of Connecticut. Accordingly we feel that it is appropriate to formally introduce ourselves and re-introduce the Newsletter as this is, in a sense, a debut to the University. On the next page of this edition we have a short bio of each staff member, we compliment that with this group photo, to familiarize you all with us. After you've been acquainted take the pleasure of witnessing the written manifestation of our vision.

*Your Editor-in-Chief*

# Meet The Staff

## Staff Writer/Advice Columnist Shantel Honeyghan

I was born on April 7th, in Saint Elizabeth, Jamaica. I am currently a sophomore, and I am majoring in Education with a concentration in English. I hope to eventually get accepted into the NEAG School of Education, to pursue a career as a Secondary Education English teacher. I am also an RA, Workshop Leader for Poetic Release, Spoken Word Poet, Praise Dancer and soon to be Advice Columnist for the AACC Newsletter here on campus. Questions can be emailed to me at [Shantel.honeyghan@uconn.edu](mailto:Shantel.honeyghan@uconn.edu). Please feel free to email me at anytime.

You can always request to remain anonymous for the newsletter, if you do not feel comfortable revealing your identity. So if you need any advice or have a question, don't be shy, Just Ask Honey!!

## Sports Columnist Lafayette James Jr.

Hey I am Lafayette James Jr., a sophomore Communications major. I am also involved with UCTV and the WHUS radio station. I am interested in sports broadcasting and journalism. My goal is to someday work at ESPN.

## Staff Writer/ Graphic Designer Steve Cartagena

Hey, I'm Steve Cartagena and I hope to be one of the world's most influential people some day. But in the mean time, I am a sophomore currently pursuing a degree in Computer Science at the University of Connecticut. Proudly mixed in race and culture, I am a Dominican/ Colombian American born in The City and raised in Bridgeport, CT. I look forward to writing for The Vision and contributing my heart and soul.

## Editor-in-Chief Davin Campbell

The idea of this new era for The Vision has simply been the product of my REM cycle and sleepless nights. Some time ago I got this crazy notion to assemble some of the best writers I knew and become a persistent pest in Dr. Price's office until this dream came to fruition. Now that we're here, hey I'm Davin. I was born in St. Thomas, Jamaica, moved to the United States at the age of six and was raised in Bridgeport, CT.

I am now a sophomore here at the University studying Political Science and a range disciplines within the humanities. Upon graduation, I plan on enrolling into Law School with the hopes of eventually becoming a prosecutor. Hey they told me that I could be anything I wanted when I was younger. I guess I had the nerve to listen to them.

## Staff Writer Martina Powell

Martina is a third semester sophomore studying Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Creative Writing. She is a staff member at the Rainbow Center, facilitator of Transparency, and one coordinator of the Speakers Bureau.

Her favorite authors include JD Salinger, James Baldwin, Oscar Wilde, and Truman Capote. When writing, she (mercilessly) listens to Bob Marley & the Wailers' Legend album on repeat. She likes good novels, good poetry, and good company in no particular order.

## Staff Writer Aden Aden

Hello my name is Aden Aden (yes my last name is my first name). I am of African descent, Somali, Mogadishu to be exact. I am from Bridgeport, Connecticut living in a household of 10 including my seven brothers/sisters and parents. Graduating out of Central High School I now attend the University of Connecticut majoring in Economics/Finance with plans to attend Law School after I graduate.



*Congratulations to Davin Campbell, Editor in Chief of the University of Connecticut's H. Fred Simons African American Cultural Center's premier edition of THE VISION, a student publication. Davin, Steve, Shantel, Lafayette, Aden and Martina have produced a wonderful newsletter that captures a great sense of the contemporary issues and musings of University of Connecticut students. We encourage you to read this edition and encourage others to contribute to the richness of future publications that will be produced by this magnificent staff of distinguished contributors.*

*Best Regards,  
Dr. H. Glen L. P.*

# *The Inspiration*



Besides the fact that the newsletter was not currently being published there was special inspiration that sparked the resurrection of the Vision and this inspiration has shaped what it will become. Writing has always been a passion of mine but I have recently developed a keen interest in using literature to enrich the black community. So I have teamed up with Dr. Price and did some recruitment of fellow students to try to achieve this goal. I intend to follow in the footsteps of legendary black leaders who have taken it upon themselves to provide a voice for their communities. Leaders such as Haile Selassie I the Ethiopian Emperor who brought independence to his nation and created the printing company/newsletter the “Berhanena Selam”, which in Amharic means “light” and “peace”, that provided a means to which works of Ethiopian Scholars and Scholars of other nations could be facilitated throughout his nation—a printing enterprise which still stands as one of the largest printing enterprises in Africa today. Or Malcolm X who in 1960 founded the publication “Mohammed Speaks” for the Nation of Islam to convey their beliefs and forward their mission of the recruitment and enlightenment of African Americans all across the nation—a publication which became one of the most widely read newspapers in America. In a time where we feel there is a similar need for an informative and substantive publication for our own community, we will, as our forefathers did, rise to the occasion and provide a newsletter which will, not only helps to enlighten the black community, but enlighten others on the light within the black community. The Vision is by no means exclusive to the black community. It is intended to convey the perceptions, ideas and desires of our writers who represent the black community but it is a vision we want all to see. We shall be the voices of the people but we beckon all to see the vision as you read our words. *The Vision* will feature coverage of news and events across the *entire* Uconn community, critical discourse on contemporary social issues, a sports column, poetry, an advice column, an interactive Q&A column for the readers and the writers, and interviews of Uconn students and faculty on relevant issues and beautiful photography by our colleague Jared Miller. Excited? Well with no further ado we bring to you your first issue. Enjoy...

First Edition

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## *“Not Black Enough”*

We’ve all heard the adage “history repeats itself”, but who knew it would be this severe. Mental enslavement is something that crosses my mind from time to time. I’m not referring to bondage or a type of indentured servitude that is a part of American history, but I’m speaking of the imprisonment of the mind in a figurative sense. Mental confinement is analogous with slavery because just like slaves who weren’t free some of our minds aren’t as well. There are some of *our people* out there right now who haven’t emancipated themselves mentally—to the point where they can think for themselves and not perform actions based on societal norms. We only know what we are taught. Television, music, the progression of the internet and other outlets has caused to think about ourselves or a group of people in a particular way. We then attribute characteristics and personality traits towards these groups of people. It’s an unconscious effect that almost seems natural. As a result stereotypes emerge which then lead to class and division. Norms and stereotypes have been held to the highest regard that people are now associating with a certain group or class of people. But in this case I would like to keep it singular and discuss a certain class of people. These aren’t just any people. These are people I actually care about and would love to see do extraordinary things. I’m talking about African-Americans. Now the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 may have already occurred, but how many African Americans are really emancipated? Mental illness is a serious issue and I feel as if some Black people are embracing it instead of searching for the cure. There are Black people that see problems they face as something that existed before them and something that they have no control over... like their skin color. Some of them see these issues as something that is within their culture. I really think they believe that is how the world is; a never ending maze with no exit. In their eyes their worth was predetermined. They’ve heard too much of the same story for them to easily brush it off and deem it as a fable. The story in this case is the vicious cycle of conditioning that they are exposed to through their household and television. This is exactly why the individuals who are driven and free thinkers are alienated while these puppets who are collectively strung together mingle. They feel comfortable being around those who think like them even if their thought bubbles resemble a cloud full of rain.

So the biggest obstacle for inner-city African Americans right now is themselves. It’s so sad because I believe we have ability and power to do whatever we can, but yet choose to do the alternative. When I think of African Americans I think of Tommie Smith and John Carlos clenching their fists in the 1968 Olympic Games. I think of the March on Washington led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. I think of Freedom Riders, Underground Railroads, and a letter from a Birmingham jail. I think of Malcolm X and a man born in Hawaii. Notice how I didn’t mention any basketball players or entertainers. I want to denounce this myth that Blacks are subjugated into only these professions and no other route is available for them. Contrary to what the television may portray we are more than ostentatious rappers who emphasize vanity over knowledge. What captivates me the most in these notable moments in Black History is the support they received from one another and ability to overcome struggle. I want to put a strong emphasis on support as it is something some Black people nowadays rarely share with each other. With black on black crime at an all time high it is safe to say that African Americans are a threat to their own progress. It’s very ironic that there was a point in history that the white man used to be the one impeding the progress of African Americans. It is now vice versa, and the tables have taken a turn for the worse.

Hatred between African Americans is literally like a Cain and Abel story in a biblical sense. Cain murdered his own brother Abel out of anger and envy. This is synonymous to what most African Americans are doing to each other today. Sometimes we forget how large we are in numbers as a race and the coalition of advancement we could create collectively. Misery truly loves company and although this doesn't apply to all African Americans the circumstances may suggest otherwise. The obstacles we place upon one another are not just physical. If a particular African American has a strong inclination to better their self academically he/she is looked down upon. When so many African Americans aren't even educated about the college application process it poses a problem. It's so easy to stay ignorant. Some African Americans don't think college is for them and usually pull out the race card. This goes back to mental enslavement and insecurity. Because they feel like they can't excel in a collegiate environment due to the society they are conditioned in they look to point fingers and blame their position. I can recount a particular time when an African American friend of mine exclaimed, "Whenever I am typing an essay I try to sound as white as he possibly can." This statement can be perceived in many ways. One possible interpretation that is obvious is the lack of faith in one's ability. The fact that he is trying to sound like another group of people implies that he is of lesser quality and on the short end of the stick. More importantly, and this is something that I find the most troubling; he associated the ability to write well exclusively with a group of people he does not belong to. He implied that white people were the only ones who could produce eloquent words or substantive essays. In the eyes of these mentally enslaved African Americans, if another black person is speaking articulately he is "trying to sound white". What does that even mean? The fact that some of their own people spend hours reading and acquiring knowledge is an absurd idea. They don't associate academic knowledge with African Americans. They have seen too many music videos of ignorant behavior and nothing that contained any intrinsic worth...such as knowledge. So your character is questioned whenever you go against the grain. You are deemed *not black enough* for wanting to break the cycle and avoid unproductive stagnant behavior that produces nothing.

We have to question our value system and what is really important to us. Above all the thirst for knowledge should be at the top of the totem pole. African Americans that go off to college shouldn't be classified as "trying to be white" as I have heard this many times back home. Although colleges are predominately white nationwide, the fact that African Americans also attend shouldn't be an irregular thing in their minds.

We are only limited by our imagination. Whatever constraints we force upon ourselves dictates what we will yield. The issues that plague us will soon dissipate through the collective pursuit of knowledge. We must start by freeing our minds and expelling stereotypes that are blinding us. Some of us need to take accountability even if it is hard to do so. Our success isn't determined by things that happened in the past. If you have pulled the race card in the past to make a point now is the time to stop that. We wouldn't want the efforts of our beloved martyrs to be in vain. The boycotts, lynchings, literacy tests, and riots detail our history as well as American history. People have died for a greater cause. I don't have a particular vendetta towards African Americans by bringing forth these controversial issues. My only agenda is to wake up the masses whose minds are enslaved.

*Aden Aden*

# ***5 Ways a University Student Can Change the World***

## **I. Open Your Eyes**

and look beyond your front doors. Acknowledge your very own privileges. Take your privilege and turn it into productivity. Use it to your advantage for positive actions. Research. Learn that while there is not an active draft in America at this point that all Israeli youth must serve in the military for three years. Learn that in Uganda there's a "Kill the Gays" bill, authorized and active. Realize it is your constitutional right to protest and that, in other countries, people are shamelessly slaughtered for speaking.

## **II. Create Art**

and indulge in it. Produce documentaries. Write novels. Make music and movies. Paint pictures. Write research papers. There is art in everything—even in speaking. Speak, and speak loudly. Tell people about the injustices in ways they can understand. Show them what they should be thankful for. Show them with film, poetry, prose, photography, portraits, paintings. Catch someone's eye, peek someone's interest, spark someone's activism.

## **III. Be Honest**

and use your honesty to foster change. Be honest with yourself, your loved ones, and your acquaintances. Being honest allows you to change negatives and reinforce positives. Being honest allows you to live a productive life. Tell your secrets. Display your hidden talents. Don't over exaggerate; don't underappreciate. "Speak your mind." Don't be blind to minorities: acknowledge race, acknowledge gender, acknowledge class, acknowledge sexuality—embrace it.

## **IV. Get Active**

and stay active. Going to a single protest is wonderful, but going to more is better. You may not even need to physically "go to" a protest—protest from your computer screen, your cell phone, the front desk of your office, your living room, your best friend's basement. Make signs. Make big signs. Make noise. Make loud noise. Tattoo yourself. Write to your government officials. Write to your celebrities. Donate money. Donate time. Donate consciousness. Get over your apathy and get active.

## **V. Fall in Love**

and mean it. Fall in love with humanity. Recognize its potential. Sleep next to it—kiss it goodnight and tell it good morning. Realize we are all of the same blood, of the same race, and that cannibalism (literally or metaphorically) is abominable in the eyes of many nations. Save your fellow human beings when you can. Fall in love with nature once more. Love the sunrise for its beauty, the moonshine for its light. Love literature, for in its very body there is a sweetness our tongues will never taste. Use technology lovingly and sparingly. Hold hands at street junctions. Communicate non-violently. Breathe in. Breathe out. Let go. And get going.

*Martina Powell*

# JUBILEE NIGHT



On September 28<sup>th</sup> the West Indian Students Organization (WISO) held the Jubilee cultural celebration event in the Student Union theatre. The celebration was focused on performances of artistic expression inherent to the various ethnic groups present in the University's Student body, but also included pertinent information about the origins of the cultural traditions to compliment the entertainment with an element of education. The event was hosted by the President of the West Indian Student's Organization, Desiree Wimberly, who provided a jovial atmosphere to the theatre while the audience awaited the ensuing performers. The first performance of the night was a rhythmic West Indian Island dance by the Uconn "Alima" dance team. Their performance was then followed by two...*interesting* dance performances by the Uconn Irish dance team. The first was the 'soft-shoed' - a style where performers use thinner, lighter shoes to enable a more agile performance – dance to a traditional Gaelic song...but the audience was in for a surprise. They broke out into the next performance of a 'hard-shoed' step performance to "swing it away" a single by the Jamaican reggae artist 'Beenie Man'! Despite the unconventional arrangement I'm sure everyone in attendance would agree that it was a pleasant surprise and a nice 'shout-out' to their host, WISO.

It also captured the spirit of the event in fusing the culturally distinct forms of artistic expression into one powerful performance.

The remainder of the performances included an array of cultures and art forms: a sign language interpretation of Bob Marley's "redemption song", a poem by Alyssa Hughes, a few reggae performances by two separate artists Michael "Deputy" Clark and Michael Young, and a dance performance of the Brazilian martial art 'Capoeira' - which was explained to have derived from clever Brazilian slaves who actually designed the martial art to resemble dancing to discreetly practice martial arts amongst slave masters. Capoeira is a martial style still commonly used as both, and luckily for us it was used for purely dancing purposes at this event.

One of the most notable performances of the night however belonged to an improv' band composed of Brandon Lopez, Richard Miller, Shaelle Etienne, and our very own Steve Cartagena who performed "Can't take my eyes off of you" by the legendary Lauryn Hill.



Cartagena served as the bongo drummer, while Miller and Lopez played the guitar and Etienne provided the tantalizing vocals; the ingredients of which made for a very natural and soulful performance.

*Davin Campbell*

## *Sports Insight: The Replacements*

The referee lockout in the National Football League took over the sports news during the weeks of the ordeal. Time has since passed but I want to throw my own two cents into the conversation about the issue. NFL teams and fans became frustrated with the inexperienced replacement refs; referees that came from D2, D3, Junior Colleges and High Schools. This was naturally a problem because the nature and rules of the NFL differ from these other leagues big time. For instance, the NFL allows more contact; and is a faster and, arguably, a more physical game with some of the best athletes in the country. Another very significant difference in rules is that in college and high school a player only needs one foot to be inbounds in order for it to be ruled a catch; while in the NFL you need both feet. The NFL asked a lot of the refs for them to have to get accustomed to the NFL's spotlight when they did not even have the proper experience. It seemed as if, most of them came into the games as if they were still officiating at their old jobs; but in a game where every inch counts there is no room for mistakes. People were constantly complaining about them making unnecessary calls but the amount of penalties called was less than the average from the previous year, going into week 3. I am not saying that these ref's were not bad but not as bad as the media, fans and players made them out to be.

Are these ref's really causing people games? Take for instance the New England Patriots and Arizona Cardinals game that took place week 2 of the NFL regular season: the Cards defeated the Pats 20-18 with a last minute questionable field goal which was reviewed by the replacement refs. But the refs should not have been blamed here; it should have been the Patriots! Each year the patriots come into the season with Super Bowl expectations and, in my opinion, for the game to have been so close nearing the end with the Cards is nothing but embarrassment to the Patriots' organization. The same goes for the Green Bay Packers' 12-14 loss to the Seattle Seahawks in

week 3 due to a Hail Mary last second touchdown pass; which everyone suggested was an interception instead of a completed catch. In all reality the Packers—who just won the super bowl two years ago and have been so explosive over the past couple of seasons—should have blown out the Seahawks who I do not see as a legitimate playoff caliber team. I am blaming these teams not the Refs.

So why the bad rep? To answer that question let's ask another: when do refs ever get a good reputation? NEVER! Any sport ever played or watched the first thing we get mad at for petty mistakes are the ref's. Not even the team whose fault it really is. So the replacement ref's came into the league with their hands full. There will be multiple missed calls every year no matter whether it's the old refs or the replacements. But because they are inexperienced their decisions have been ten-times magnified. Fans use Refs as an excuse because fans are 'diehard' and they need something to blame for their favorite team's loss. They are just using the refs as an excuse. Analysts love to magnify everything. That is their job. So when the referees are stuck in these critical football situations and are coming up on the short end of the stick for their decisions the analysts took the opportunity to exploit it. It just gives them something to talk about.

Another thing that should be taken in to consideration is how hard it is to be a ref in the national football league. The real refs were taken for granted while we had them and then football players and fans couldn't wait for their return to the gridiron.

The unappreciative culture is something that we are all a part of. We don't miss something until it is gone. Having replacement refs was an executive decision the NFL made and they will not budge for anyone that is in disagreement with such decision making. The important thing is the game will go on!

*Lafayette James Jr.*

Ask Honey

*Advice Column of Shantel Honeyghian*

Dear Honey,

I am very involved on campus. Other than being a student, I am a Mentor for Student Support Services, Coordinator of Pipeline Connect (which connects Hartford Students to Uconn Mentors), a member on the Voices of Freedom Gospel Choir, and a dancer for the Encore Dance team. I often find myself being overwhelmed by trying to balance everything. So how can I balance school work, extracurricular activities and my social life on campus, without missing out on anything?

Sincerely Yours, Nordia Meggie

Dear Nordia,

I am glad to hear that you are being so involved here on campus. It is one of the best ways to make sure you get the most out of your college experience. My advice to you would be to make sure you have a clear sense of priority. You might find that separating each aspect of your life into its own category might be useful as well. Although you seem to make time for your academic, extracurricular and social life, you seem to have compiled everything into just one aspect. Keeping a schedule of when you do things and a handy planner on you daily will help keep you organized and give you a better sense of how much time and dedication is needed for each thing. You said it perfectly in your question; the most important thing to do is to find that healthy balance between your school work and everything else that is going on in your life. While, at all times making sure to take care of yourself in the midst of everything so that you do not get burnt out. Thanks for writing me, hope I was able to help. If you have any more questions, just 'Ask honey'!

Kind Regards, Honey

Dear Honey,

I am a senior, but I have yet to really experience the college life because I am a very shy and reserved person. I want to go out and meet new people, but I am often intimidated by this large campus and how much there is to do. My Major is very difficult and demanding so I have spent most of my time studying, which I use as a crutch to not go out and explore all Uconn has to offer. This is my last year, I need to get out of this phase, so my question is; how can I go about being more of a people person and enjoying my last year?

Sincerely Yours, Anonymous

Dear Anonymous,

You have taken the first step to bettering your situation by acknowledging that you are using your academic life as a shelter for not being more involved. I think the first thing you should do is to consider joining clubs that are related to your major. Since your studies take up a lot of your time, this might be a great way for you to meet people who have the same major as you, and see what things they are involved in, which may also be of interest to you. Yes, I must agree on a campus this large it is easy to feel overwhelmed, but start getting involved and you will see just how small it becomes when you can start associating yourself with different groups, as opposed to Uconn as a whole. Also, I hope you went to the involvement fair because that is a great way to know what is offered here at Uconn as far as clubs and organizations are concerned. If not, then you can always ask around, speak with your RA, or just go online and see what others are doing. As a senior you want to make sure after you graduate and reflect on your four years here, that you will feel a sense of accomplishment both from what you did in and outside of the classroom. Good Luck! I know you will be just fine. If ever you need any more advice, just 'Ask Honey'.

Kind Regards, Honey

## *Calm Storm*

*By: Shantel Honeyghan*

Sometimes God calms the storm,  
But sometimes God lets the storm rage,  
So that he can calm the child,  
So I was calmed by the storm.

The gusting winds knock sense back into me  
The high pressures gave me the desire to serve God in  
ways that I had never  
Thought of,  
Now I have God in everything  
I think, say and do, trinity  
So I stand firm on my beliefs and I remain abstinent  
That means I have never had sex and will never have sex  
before marriage  
So what happens when the most amazing guy comes into  
my life and says  
Baby I love you, just let me hit once

Imma hit you once if you don't stop peer pressuring me to  
give up my purity  
No I will not just let you come into my life and snatch  
away my virginity,  
And since I'm not into playing games I will never just slide  
you my V card

I know it's hard,  
but patience is a virtue,  
and they say,  
good things come to those who wait,  
so I hope you are patiently waiting for me, just as I am  
patiently waiting for you,  
or that you have learned to carry the weight,  
or carry or wait  
because if not, then you are not my king,  
and since I am a queen,  
you will never get the keys to enter my kingdom

My body is a temple,  
not to be tampered with or tempered on,  
or to catch tempers with,  
but to hold in sweet embrace with amazing grace,  
so I will know that there is no replace..ment  
of me

Because I am who and what he has always wanted,  
America's most wanted, Jamaica's most wanted,  
Japan's most wanted, Germany's most wanted  
yet on his most wanted list I will always be the  
number one chick,

So I will not search for him,  
but in my daily pursuits,  
I will keep my eyes open,  
Hoping  
that one day we will meet face to face,  
and I will just somehow know,  
that this was meant to be,

Birds and bees and sweet melodies,  
as we glance up at the stars,  
to count the light years that we are away from each  
other

Just to realize that you were always by my side,  
and my pain and my tears I've never had to hide,  
and in you I can always confide,  
so now I know that who God bless  
no man can curse  
and what he pushes forward no one reca reca  
reverse  
and since I'm not playing,  
there's no need to re, there's no need to re, there's  
no need to rehearse,  
for better or worse

So let's pretend that there are Pall bearers,  
flower girls,  
groomsmen and bridesmaids,  
and if you're the groom  
then I swear I'll be your bride,  
so if you ask me will I love you forever,  
I will answer with 3 words and six letters,  
YES I DO.

## *The Pot and the Kettle*

After a year of my journey through college it has come to my attention that I am surrounded by, in some respects, the same kinds of people that I was back in my hometown of Bridgeport, CT. The other day I was having lunch with a friend of mine who happens to be in a fraternity and I inquired upon how things were going with his fraternity since I haven't heard him mention it in a while. He assured me that things were fine; and I foolishly responded, "oh I thought you weren't with them anymore". This was followed by a brief pause at the table. Then he gave me the most austere expression and retorted, "no, that's for life bro". Now, that is certainly not the first time I've witnessed such an expression of commitment to a fraternity or sorority on campus. Neither is it the first time I've heard such an adamant expression of commitment to an organization from my peers at all. I've also encountered the same attitude in the streets of Bridgeport, CT...by gang members.

Now, I understand most people with cringe at me having the *audacity* to compare these two groups. However, it has come to my attention that the circumstances that surround the decision making prior to, and during, affiliation with their respective organizations renders the members of these organizations strikingly similar.

Well, let's start from the beginning. How is it exactly that young people even become members of these organizations? It is ironic that the social circumstances that entice a young person in a poverty-stricken, and or, violence ridden inner city ghetto are, in principle, very similar to those recognized by a young person in a socially atomized University: both individuals feel as if their singularity isn't enough. Both individuals develop the understanding that being a part of a community which provides protection and assistance in achieving their goals places them in a much better position. But here is where the traditional and rudimentary lines are drawn. The protection sought after by an inner city kid is obviously different from that sought after by a college student. The children in the gangster environment seek protection against violence, they seek protection against destitution and they eventually realize that they are much better equipped to survive and prosper if they are a part of the gang community. That is because a street gang is a meticulous and cooperative force that functions to bring survival, wealth and prosperity to each one of its members . This is a much better position than having to look from the outside in, or being forced to compete against them. Why, on the part of the youth, it is a matter of prudence. You also have to take into consideration that, for some of these kids, the gangs are the primary influential community. They are incessant throughout their schools and neighborhoods. Family? Assuming that their family members are not members of a gang—which provides another incentive to join—often time that contradicting family unit does not have the time or strength to gravitate these youths away from their daily surroundings. For the most part, if they don't condone the behavior, they pale in comparison to the influence of the gang communities.

For the newly integrated college students that choose to join a fraternity or sorority there is the same need for security, but it is a social insecurity, which can be remedied by a close-knit organization. The student may not feel as if they are able to connect with a large enough network of friends; or they may not share enough interests, skills or personality traits with those in the campus community to be able to naturally build a host of great relationships. Especially in a larger University, a student can easily feel like an insignificant number amongst a large community of individuals who have no concern for them. In a University where the campus is dominated by Greek life, being the social minority is a terrifying prospect. So to avoid this ostracism they join one of these organizations that guarantee a social life, a sense of inclusion and belonging that helps to avoid the emotional crisis. That is survival.

Hold your horses. I am also *not* suggesting that the social force is the only force that motivates a college student to join a fraternity but it is the primary factor in the community vs. individual crisis and that is the same crisis that is present in the gang ridden community.

There are a host of similarities between these organizations I can discuss to further my comparison such as: the traditional colors, the idea of “sisterhood and brotherhood”, the relentless pride and the status obtained by the individuals in the communities; but to wrap this up, I will focus on what we typically understand to be the major differences between these organizations. The glaring surface-level difference between a college fraternity and a street gang is simply their actions. Gangs are prone to committing violent acts, facilitate the distribution of narcotics and vandalizing their neighborhoods while fraternities, conversely, tend to promote congenial relations and perform community service. However, the fraternity student has been conditioned to believe that the right thing for them to do is earn high academic marks, support their fellow members and be of service to the campus and external communities. The people who matter most to them in their lives encourage this behavior and thus they are understood to be virtuous actions. On the other hand, being loyal to a fellow gang member—which can itself entail opposing a rival force—and selling drugs to provide for themselves and fellow gang members are perceived as virtues to the gang member. It is not a question of morality. They have *also* been conditioned by those who matter the most to them to believe that it is the right thing for them to do. The actions performed by each organization’s members is thought to be an accomplishment within the community of the organization. In principle there is no difference. The real difference between the actions of the members these organizations is their setting.

These groups have been starkly differentiated mostly because of superficial analysis. In actuality the members of these organizations have similar characters and succumb to the same influences. I think if they switched places they would both make the same decision that the other has; which, sadly, would determine the drastically different ways they are treated and perceived. If either of these two were to condemn the other for partaking in the activities that they each do for the sake of their respective organizations, that would just be the pot calling the kettle black.

*Davin Campbell*







**H. FRED SIMONS**  
**AFRICAN AMERICAN**  
**CULTURAL CENTER**

*Lafayette James Jr., Shantel Honeyghan, Martina Powell, Davin Campbell, Steve Cartagena, Aden Aden*



**Last Words...**

*The Vision* seeks to be highly interactive with the University community!

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