

**Million Ways**

**Undergraduate**

**Fellowship**

SPRING  
NEWSLETTER  
2009

# From the

# Editor

For this year's MMUF Newsletter, I asked the fellows to write about something that they enjoyed, something that wouldn't feel like work. The Newsletter is an opportunity for fellows to take the voice we've developed in the MMUF and present topics and issues that are important to us, regardless of their relevance to our actual research foci. In this 2009 installment, a senior recalls the past as another looks to the future, and a junior recites poetry as another looks at the meaning of scholarship. This Newsletter is not written like a scholarly journal; it is more a personal journal of scholars.

*Luis-Michael Zayas*

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### Kimberly Daily

Houston, Tex.  
Sophomore,

At WashU, I lead a Bible study for freshman women, sing in Visions Gospel Choir, serve as President for the Club Basketball team, mentor high school juniors and seniors in the college application process, and starting this fall, serve as a Writing Residential Peer Mentor. My research interests include rethinking perceptions of black authenticity, including investigating the role of the public education system in fostering different ideas about race and identifying the narrative forces that influence our collective recollection of our race-conscious past.

### Thomas Hernandez

San Antonio, Tex.  
Sophomore, International Studies and PNP

I am a third generation Mexican-American majoring in International Studies and PNP. I am involved in Sigma Iota Rho (the International Studies Honorary), Wash U Model United Nations, the Annika Rodriguez Scholars Program, and Beta Theta Pi. Last year, I helped create a student group called Controversy n? Coffee, which brings together professors and students to discuss pertinent and controversial issues. I am interested in studying the cultural impact of multinational community investment programs in developing countries undergoing rapid democratic change. To do this, I will be looking at Georgian communities and the impact of the BTC oil pipeline and related investment projects in terms of political empowerment and cultural perceptions of individual agency.

### Maria Santos

Queens, NY  
Sophomore, Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies

I am a member of the Committee Organized for Rape Education and Safe Zones: both groups work towards education and awareness on campus as a form of reducing intolerance and violence against certain groups. My research will focus on Peruvian women in the Shining Path, a communist guerrilla group in Peru. These women were fierce and brutal combatants as well as leaders; they were Peruvians whose culture shaped their mentality; and they were revolutionaries that spearheaded an arguably successful plot to lead one of the most influential Communist organizations in the world. Using archival research and interviews, I want to examine the violence by these women as an extreme rejection of gender roles and how they have affected Peruvian society's views on women.

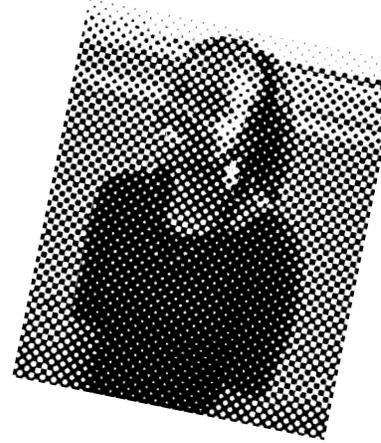
### Monica Smith

Dallas, Tex.  
Sophomore

I hail from the great state of Texas where I have lived in Dallas for my entire life. At Washington University, I am actively involved in Saint Louis Family Court Mentoring, an organization that supports the intellectual and personal growth of area youth. I work as an Environmental Records Analyst at Professional Environmental Engineers. I am interested in pursuing research that explores the current economic disparity between whites and non-whites as it relates to New Deal legislation, specifically the GI Bill of 1944.

# The Continual Curiosity of a Fellow

"I REALIZE THAT CURIOSITY,  
PASSION AND THE ABILITY  
TO QUESTION ARE WHAT  
DRAW US ALL TOGETHER"



## Kimberly Short

Baltimore, MD  
Senior, English Literature

Throughout my research I explore the representations of African American females on television and how other African American females perceive them. My research pays specific attention to the early 1990s sitcom *Living Single*, which depicts four black up and coming twenty-something women. Through an understanding of this television show, I am working to understand how the relationships and bonds between African American females are portrayed on sitcoms. By using primary resources, including interviews, letters to editors of the show and online message boards, I hope to discover how African American female viewers relate and respond to these representations. I am also working on understanding how African American female friendships are represented on television in comparison to other 1990s sitcoms whose plots center on female friendships and bonds.

After two years of research under the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship, it is easy to feel that the work of a Mellon Fellow is never done. But for the senior fellows whose time ticks closer and closer to the commencement date of May 15, it calls to question whether the work of a Mellon is actually ending. The goal of the Mellon Mays program is to recruit more students of the world of academia, to equip them with research skills, educate them about graduate study and allow them to explore a topic in a way never done before. For many of us, graduate school proves a promising option. But for others or us, academia is not the right career field for us.

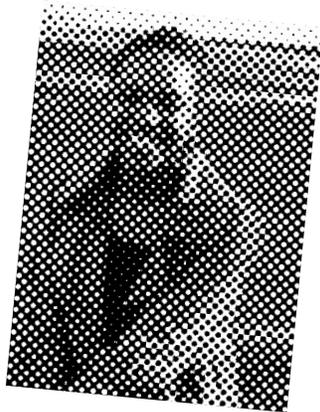
As I embark upon new endeavors next year away from the world of academia, this very issue comes to mind. How will I continue to learn more about the topic that I have studied for so long? Will I have time to pursue my questions in the same way that I have an opportunity to now? Will no one else engage in topics of interest with one another like what

has become so common in our seminar? Asking myself these questions, I grew scared of their answers. Perhaps the completion of my Mellon article is the closing the chapter of a book where I have the opportunity to pursue my interests amongst a supportive network of scholars. However, when I think a little bit more deeply about what the Mellon program is really all about, I realize this answer to be anything but false.

Mellon isn't just about the work that I put in writing for publishing, nor the presentations that I develop, nor the comments that I write for the other fellows. It's about the work that is done behind that: the sheer essence of asking questions and feeding the curiosities of our minds. When I think back to the application process of the Mellon program and our interactions as fellows in seminar

together, I realize that curiosity, passion and the ability to question are what draw us all together. We pursue different interests, work with different mentors, and approach our projects differently. But what allows us to work effectively is each of our desires to learn and seek the answers to our questions. This realization assured me that Mellon does not end at graduation, but will start anew. I will embark upon new curiosities, develop more interests, and ask plenty more questions. The work that we complete as Mellon fellows is within our minds not solely what is placed on paper. As Mellon fellows, I'm sure we will never tire of seeking the answers to our never-ending questions.

# Autobiography



"I REALIZE THAT CURIOSITY,  
PASSION AND THE ABILITY  
TO QUESTION ARE WHAT  
DRAW US ALL TOGETHER"

## Latasha Kinnard

Chicago, Ill.  
Junior, Psychology, Education

I was born and raised in Chicago. I am the oldest of three siblings. I am currently majoring in Psychology and Education, even though I have no ambitions to be a psychologist or a teacher. Even before I was old enough to know that psychology was a field, I was a psychologist. I love asking people how things make them feel, and I enjoy learning about how people think, so I thought it was only fitting that I majored in psychology. And even though I do not plan on being a teacher, I am deeply passionate about affecting change in the education system, so studying educational problems and policy will hopefully give me some foundation to do that. I believe that your thoughts are directly related to the reality that you create for yourself, so I try to always be positive, and I surround myself with people who inspire my spirit. Lastly, I am very involved with community service on campus, in the community, and even on a national level. I think that helping others makes my life much more meaningful.

I am involved in so many activities, but the one I am most proud is the one I started myself. I recently created a personal development and college mentoring program for students in St. Louis public high schools and when I am not in class or doing Mellon work, this is what I focus a lot of my energy on. Being a Mellon has been a challenging adventure for me, even though this is only second semester. As a Mellon fellow, mediocrity and complacency is not an option. I am being challenged to improve even in academic areas that I had thought I excelled in. I think that Mellon work is going to be a reflection of my growth over the years.

The story goes like this. When I was eleven years old, I taught my five year-old sister how to read. It was an agonizing experience for her, but I found pleasure in being the one to introduce her to the world of words. Every day we would work on learning three letters, going through all of the steps until she had learned how to put letters together to make words. I can't explain my desire to teach my sister how to read, but I do know that I felt like without the ability to read, she was missing something that connected her to the rest of the world.

After teaching my sister how to read, it was as if a door had opened. And ever since then, I internalized the idea that literacy gave you access to something more than just words on a page, prompting the focus of my Mellon Project. Generally, my Mellon project looks at literacy and access to power. Who is given access to literacy? Who has been denied (formally or informally)? How does this inform our notion of the current power structure and hegemony of the dominant society? Even typing this, my fingers are excited as they run across the key board, thinking of ways that I can argue my point, distracting me from the work of writing this article. While I have always wanted to focus on education and literacy, it has not always been so clear to me how I wanted to address it.

I started with NAEP. The National Assessment of Educational Progress is a test that is given to a sample of students across the nation, to see how students are performing. It is often called "The nation's report card." I quickly found that NAEP was not getting to the bottom of what I was trying

to say, and I really didn't even fully know what that was at the time. I would go through the multiple iterations of topics that I have struggled with before finding the thing that put fire in my belly, but it would be hard for me to recall (although I could retrieve it from my backfiles of Mellon assignments), because what I am doing right now feels like what I have been studying my whole life, even though I did not know it explicitly.

While I am glad that I feel I have more of a handle on my project now, I know that none of my current work would be possible without the time, effort, exploration, and discussion that I had to put in since day one of deciding to apply for the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program. It is this growing process that the Mellon program really facilitates, and although I knew I would be trying to become an expert in my field, mastering the information that is central to my topic, I never knew that it would feel this good.

# In The Heights

## A Broadway Musical

### As Cultural Discourse

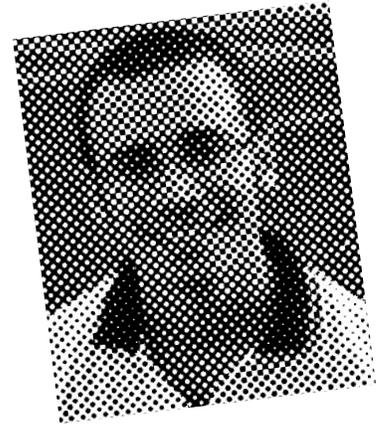
“...I don't know what else I got; I'm off the dome; I know I wrote a little show about home...”

When Lin-Manuel Miranda won the 2008 Tony Award for Best Original Score, audiences were visibly enthused, and the rhythmic, rapped acceptance speech that followed proved exciting and profound. Miranda's Broadway musical *In The Heights* follows in the footsteps of the great composers and their musicals, and with the tried and true tropes of the Broadway musical, has developed a work that is significant as a cultural object as well as a musical storytelling of a culture. As Miranda reminds us in his Tony acceptance speech, *In The Heights* is “a little show about home,” what I consider to be a fine example of the milieu of so many Americans in the communities like Washington Heights that are all around the country.

#### Luis-Michael Zayas

Irvington, NY  
Senior, Music

I was born in the suburbs of NYC, a diverse backdrop where his passion for the performing arts and ethnic cultures was cultivated. With a major in Music and a minor in Latin American Studies, Luis-Michael's MMUF project on a Chilean folkloric song style is the culmination of years of academic study, and embodies his deep interest in Latin American folkloric musics. After graduation, I plan to pursue a career in the performing arts before beginning a Masters degree in Ethnomusicology. The MMUF has been an invaluable asset in Luis-Michael's intellectual and scholarly capital and the research and analytical skills afforded to him by his experience in fellowship will certainly remain beneficial far beyond the realm of academic interests.



“AND WHILE SPEAKING SPANISH HELPS FORM THIS COMMUNITY, IT IS ONLY ONE ATTRIBUTE, AND FLUENCY IS NOT A PREREQUISITE”

Since its conception at the beginning of the 20th century, the Broadway musical has been a place to showcase quotidian culture in a spectacular manner. Indeed, the narratives of many musicals are romanticized versions of the lives they seek to emulate, but as a popular form, the musical must be hopeful and joyous; it fills the seats this way. *In The Heights* falls prey to this Broadway trope, but it is the story told by the musical and linguistic elements that holds the key to its significance in the Broadway repertoire.

At the first flick of the conductor's baton, signaling the beginning of the musical, a 3-2 clave, an idiomatic Latin rhythm, sets the mood and pace. After two clave cycles, Usnavi, the lead, begins to rap his story, how he got here, where he's going, what he feels, and after a bit more rapping, the rhythm section enters, with the title

chord progression and a hip-hop break beat. Usnavi gives directions to Washington Heights, quoting Ellington's “Take the A-Train”, and when ensemble characters enter the stage, they are accompanied by music that helps us understand who they are. When the *50-something* couple Camila and Kevin enter, the orchestra switches to a bolero style. The DJ, Benny, is framed with a hard-hitting reggaeton beat, and the young college student Nina is presented to the audience with a poppy, club groove. But, as the clave hinted at the beginning, these character introductions are separated by a sturdy salsa tumbao and piano montuno, with the complete ensemble singing the title line, “In The Heights.”

Like the overture of a classic musical, the self-titled opening number of *In The Heights* presents little tastes of the musical

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# Peru:

# The Magical

# Mystery Tour

I can't even count the number of times I've been told "You'll love Peru, it's so different from America...it's magical." What does it mean for a country to be "magical?" In the case of Peru, it means that the tourism industry has permeated almost every facet of indigenous life, from cheap mass produced textiles to man-made islands where foreigners can "go native." Peru and the people living within its borders are exporting a self-perpetuated exoticism that is rapidly gaining a broad international audience. Peru is beautiful and full of culture and history. But at the same time, the reality of Peru that I have encountered is very different from the reality that is experienced by most tourists. This poem is a reflection of that reality and my own conflicting emotions on what it means to be an abroad student in Peru.

"A 5 YEAR OLD ASKS YOU TO BUY THEM MCDONALDS, ALWAYS HOLDING YOUR PASSPORT CLOSE AND YOUR RETURN TICKET CLOSER."



## Marley Williams

Tucson, Az.

Junior, Latin American Studies, Spanish

Being a Mellon Fellow has taught me what it means to be a scholar and the importance of contributing academic knowledge to your community. Through the Mellon Fellowship, I have had the opportunity to work with professors and peers who are passionate and dedicated to their work and who have in turn inspired me to be equally passionate and engaged with my own research. I have realized that scholarship is not just what you read in books, but something that can play an active role in changing people's lives.

I am a tourist,  
I am a student,  
I am Peruvian.

What does it mean to be a tourist?  
Breathtaking rivers and indescribable ruins,  
A 5 year old asks you to buy them McDonalds,  
Always holding your passport close and your return ticket closer.

What does it mean to be a student?  
Stepping through the sewage and trash that nobody will ever clean,  
Knowing that poverty can have more than one definition,  
Wishing you could learn your way into someone else's family.

What does it mean to be Peruvian?  
Man made islands where foreigners can go native,  
Cheap mass produced textiles that sustain a community,  
The reality that your city is only affordable for those who can leave.

I am a tourist,  
I am a student,  
I am on a magical mystery tour.

# My Native Voice



"THE LIFE OF A LANGUAGE ENDURES NOT WHEN WRITTEN DOWN IN A SCHOLARLY BOOK OR RECORDED ON AN ANTHROPOLOGIST'S CASSETTE TAPE, BUT WHEN USED BETWEEN PEOPLE."

## Bobby Bigby

Tulsa, Okla.  
Senior, Anthropology and Chinese Literature

My research, advised by mentor Geoff Childs (Ph.D., Anthropology) investigates the intersection of indigenous religious rituals and tourism in the ethnic Naxi community of Southwestern China. Throughout my undergraduate career, my research interests have focused on indigenous agency through language and culture revival, as well as ethnic-state relationships in China, India, and the United States. I ultimately plan to pursue a career in Anthropology that places me both in the classroom and working on behalf of indigenous communities abroad.

It was only proper that this gathering began on America's Veteran's Day. After all, several of the Natives seated throughout the conference room had fought on behalf of the United States military. Native men and women employed not only the metal weapons provided to them to fight a so-called enemy, but also gave their own languages. We were reminded that before the legacy of the Navajo Code Talkers during World War II, Lakota speakers were also approached to put their language to a similar use. Yet the usual unspoken irony did not go unnoticed today. The fact that we Natives continuously yield our lives, our service, and our languages to a country that has attempted to obliterate Native peoples, identities and voices for such a long time was not a topic brushed aside. We thus gathered to honor the Native warriors who have courageously defended our people throughout time from the death and despair that other American veterans brought to our communities. This day was not simply about remembrance, however. It was instead centered on healing through the reclamation of language, memories, songs, and tears.

For three days during November 2008, I attended the first annual Lakota Dakota Nakota Language Revival Summit in Rapid City, South Dakota. This conference was

organized by Tusweca Tiospaye, a non-profit Lakota organization dedicated to promotion and teaching of Lakota language, in an effort to discuss ways of revitalizing Native language use among communities throughout the Great Sioux Nation. As an undergraduate student of Native, Chinese, and White heritages, I immediately took interest in this gathering not only for its relevance to my own research on culture and language preservation in indigenous communities, but because Native language reclamation has always played an important role in shaping my own multi-ethnic identities. Growing up in Oklahoma, I was exposed to many different Native tribes and their customs during summer powwows and stomp dances. It was not until high school, however, that I attempted to reconnect with my eclectic heritages through language study. As an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation through my father's family, I felt that memorizing the letters of Sequoyah's syllabary and vocabulary lists would somehow put me closer to the Cherokee heritage that my grandfather had largely denied in the face of racism. Yet missing in those long lists of vocabulary words was the most crucial ingredient I have found for ensuring a language's survival: a community.

Within the span of the three days at the conference, I saw that spaces were actively being forged in which Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota languages could grow and survive. But more than just creating a safe space for Native languages, this conference was unique in its ability to bring together Native elders, leaders, scholars, students, and lay people alike, thus forging a true community. The varied audience attending the conference pointed back to the meeting's original objective: allowing Natives, rather than outsiders, to proudly reclaim their languages. The life of a language endures not when written down in a scholarly book or recorded on an anthropologist's cassette tape, but when used between people. This conference was made meaningful for those attending because it involved the community. Unlike other conferences I had previously taken part in, this summit interwove lectures, forums, and discussion panels with prayers, songs, language games, and the stories of elders. All along, an academic atmosphere was not compromised, but restructured to complement the community building necessary for language growth. This gathering proved to me that academic agendas do not have to conflict with Native beliefs and ways; they instead can be harnessed to present Native goals to a wider, non-Native base. Moreover, I was proud to be

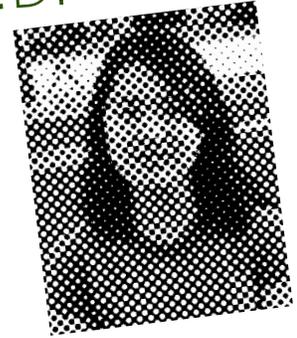
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**Just say no...**

**or say yes?**

**Or...ugh!**

"ARGUABLY, GRADUATE SCHOOL GIVES STUDENTS INTELLECTUAL LICENSE TO EXPLORE DIFFERENT INTERESTS, BUT AFTERWARDS, THERE IS ALSO THE ISSUE OF DECIDING WHAT TO DO WITH THE BRAND NEW PH.D."



### Mimi Li

Chengdu, China. St. Louis, Mo.  
Senior, French, Economics

I discovered Alice Walker and *The Color Purple* as an eighth grader at Wydown Middle School, and have been learning to look at the world with an academic feminist's eye ever since. In my free time, I can be found seeking out unnecessarily esoteric things to read, think, and talk about. After graduation, I plan to work for a few years before finding my way to a graduate school.

"Graduate School in the Humanities: Just Don't Go," advised Thomas Benton in the January 30 issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. I am not surprised to see the title of the column. Benton has something of a reputation for his fiery indictments of the humanities branches of academia, expressed over the years in a series of columns he wrote for the *Chronicle*. Although most of the *Chronicle's* intended audience is already more or less ensconced in academia, his columns flagellating the institution of graduate studies in the humanities enjoy a second life on the multitude of blogs written by and for former, current, and future academics. Citing an ever-tightening academic job market in the humanities, Benton, a tenured professor of English, labels the academic institutions unethical for perpetuating a cycle of high unemployment and sub-par working conditions for graduates. The author seems to consider his views so radical that he uses Thomas H. Benton as a penname instead of his real name, possibly to avoid harassment from those who disagree strongly with him.

The theme of academic life as harsh mistress is common in blogs geared toward the academic set. A Google search for "life in academia" yields many

blog entries attesting to aggressive colonization of one's personal life by one's academic life, whether one is in the field of literature or immunology. The main contributors to the blog Bitch Ph.D., founded by Washington University alum Tedra Osell, also like to harp on the inadequacies of academia in addressing the needs of its faculty, especially adjunct and non-tenured faculty. Posts labeled with the tag "academia" tend to generate upwards of 50 well-worded comments from the blog's readers, many of whom are also humanities Ph.D.s without tenure track academic positions.

Thomas Benton and some of the more fiery blog entries on "Bitch Ph.D." represent an extreme in the spectrum of opinions surrounding the decision to undertake graduate studies. While the *sturm und drang* of the Bitch Ph.D.-Benton tend to focus, perhaps overly so, on the potential negative consequences of not starting a job search early or not having a backup plan to life in academia, it is true that the opportunity cost of graduate education is high. The stereotypical view of a Ph.D. program involves six years of concentrated study and research in one's chosen field, but in reality, doctoral programs can take anywhere from five years to...theoretically forever.

Or until a Ph.D. program removes a candidate. One of the main drawbacks to pursuing a doctorate in any field is the fact that assuming someone entered a doctoral program in his/her early 20s, the majority of his/her "youth" would be spent as a Ph.D. student. The rewards of such a life include connection to an intellectual community, engagement with an area of intense interest, and the buzz of achievement.

Among the supporters of pursuing graduate study is, unsurprisingly, Dean Mary Laurita, who holds a Ph.D. in Russian Literature from Columbia University. She cites the intellectual confidence one gains from having pursued a concentrated course of study. Other benefits a doctoral training confers include an increased ease and facility with language. As Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellows can attest, the examination of terms and language almost never ceases once one delves into a research question. "You won't be intimidated by other people's rhetoric," confirms Dean Laurita, a satisfied smile on her face. It's true. Take apart a "rhetoric bully's" language, and his/her case falls apart.

Among the recent Mellon alumni considering graduate school is Amir

*continued on page 9*

# Trying to Make a Difference

"WHAT DRIVES RESEARCH IS DIFFERENT FOR EVERYONE, SHE SAID. WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS TO FIND THAT REASON FOR YOURSELF."



## Tim Shaw

Schaumburg,, Ill.  
Junior, Political Science, Spanish

As a Mellon, I have been given the resources and time to study something that I care about, and at the same time learn about the passions of my other fellows. It has been a great learning experience, not just about these subjects, but about myself, and I am sure I will continue to learn and grow more in my last year as a fellow.

Ever since I joined the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship, there has been no lack of lively, stimulating conversation. The topics are often about our personal projects: What is the definition of literacy? What does "authenticity" really mean? Sometimes, the conversations between fellows and the topics became more personal. Are you applying to graduate school? Where at? And the question that has been bouncing in my head since before I even applied to the program. Will this research make a difference? This was an important question for me as I was applying to this fellowship.

My current project is about poverty in the Appalachian Mountains, and I had just come out of a summer of what can only be described as "hands on" work, repairing houses in eastern Kentucky. I had met the people who I had served and seen the finished product of the work done with my hands. Being a Mellon Fellow would let me try my hand at doing work with research. I did not know if I wanted that chance. The same program I had worked with before was available for the following summer, and I could not participate in both. If I became a Mellon Fellow, I would learn about the topic of poverty, and in the end publish a paper about my findings. But would the paper

be read? Would it make a difference? Was it worth sacrificing the hands-on work I would have done in the mountains instead? I was not sure about the answer to these questions, but I decided to take the chance.

One of my first events as a Mellon Fellow would take on that exact question directly, even before my research even started. All of us were invited to a "World Café" type discussion. For simplicity's sake, I will describe it as an open forum discussion on a topic, though the process is much more detailed. The topic of the day was "what it means to be a scholar." The discussion included graduate students, professors, and at least one dean, all of us discussing in one form or another topic of scholarship. I found that I was not alone. Not only was I pondering the question of my usefulness as a fellow, but graduate students were asking those same questions of themselves. Several responses to those questions have stuck in my mind. One of them was that there is uselessness everywhere. Why should it be particularly problematic in scholarship?

This was certainly true, once I reflected. The summer previous, there were times that I thought that the work I was doing was more of a band-aid fix than a real solution to the problem. In some ways, I

questioned the usefulness of that work in the same way that I questioned the usefulness of the research I would do. This line of thought comforted me a little about my decision, but it was not particularly cheerful. Then one of my current fellows, who I did not know at the time, offered up a thought that stuck with me. What drives research is different for everyone, she said. What is important is to find that reason for yourself.

I believe she was right. I knew what was driving me to do this research, and for me it should be enough to know that I am doing my best to make a difference in the area that I am passionate about. The jury is still out on whether or not my work in these two years will make a difference. What is important is that I make that work the best it can be, and learn from the other driven people around me to be satisfied with my contributions through this work.

### *Natives from page 6*

a part of a conference guided by Native ways and visions. I also became inspired to bring this sense of a tightly knit language community back to my own people in Oklahoma.

Although the sense of belonging I felt among the conference's community was inspiring, it was the words of one Lakota leader that reaffirmed my Native identity and reminded me of my professional and personal commitments to preserving my own and other indigenous languages. Ron His Horse Is Thunder, Tribal Chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, spoke about the peculiar nature of Native identity today. He claimed that Native Americans are the only people in the world that still use a card to prove their status as Native tribal members. On these cards are stamped a fraction, the quantity of Native blood that runs through our bodies. My own card has always served as a source of shame for me, as well as for some of my other Native friends back home. Half, One-fourth, one-sixteenth, one-thirty-second, three-sixty-fourths, and the numbers go on. These fractions have done little to inform me of my heritage, other than to impress into my head the idea that I am not whole. I am forever incapable of being a true Native. I am simply not enough.

His Horse Is Thunder chose his words carefully, systematically tearing apart the links between Native identity and fractions or physical traits such as black hair and dark skin. He shared with us his own belief in a premonition that his grandfather had spoken about years before: a day will come when a Native person's identity will be contingent upon language ability and not an arbitrary fraction found on a card. Language, he claimed, can serve as an equalizer for people of mixed heritages as well as for Natives who have previously been stripped of their heritages. Since Natives' histories and understandings of the world are embodied in their language, speakers are the ones empowered to carry on the legacy of their tribal beliefs and ways. From that day forward, my convictions toward the power of language to unlock the past and assure a steady future grew stronger. For the first time, I glimpsed the possibility of claiming a legitimate, respected Native voice. A voice indivisible by blood or fractions.

### *Yes, No, Ugh! from page 7*

François, who graduated in 2008. Having spent the past year working as a teaching fellow at a private high school in Boston, Amir is itching to get back into the academic fold. "If you get out of school and really wish you could be back just... reading about things, then you know grad school is for you." said Amir. Amir's longing for academic stimulus after graduation points to another built-in advantage of graduate school: The fact that a ready outlet for intellectual urges is built in. Although Amir thoroughly enjoys his work as a teaching fellow, he lacks the time and energy to seek out reading material that feeds his continuing interest in the intersection of education, psychology, and diversity. Amir's post-graduation work experience will be a great benefit to him, as he will have been able to mull over his interests during his time off from school and will enter graduate school entirely certain of his reasons for returning to school, an advantage that is not necessarily afforded the student who transitions directly from an undergraduate curriculum to a graduate program.

Someone who has no doubts about when, where, and why she wants to pursue graduate education is Sarah Frazier. A senior majoring in biochemistry, Sarah first fell in love with biomedical research as a teenager who excelled in math and science and sought refuge from life's everyday stresses in the lab. After taking an anthropology course on women's health around the world, Sarah developed a consuming curiosity about preeclampsia, a little-understood condition characterized by hypertension in pregnant women and is linked to the expectant mother's body's rejection of the fetus. Asked about the paucity of research into the condition, Sarah's passion for the subject and exasperation at the medical establishment immediately surfaced.

"I was spurred to action by my anger that the molecular mechanisms of preeclampsia were unknown and under-researched because no one thinks that women's health is of any interest outside of the public health realm," Sarah complained, one hand slapping at the air. "Just because it's a women's health issue doesn't mean it isn't scientifically interesting in its own right! Reproductive health deserves medical and scientific attention. It's not just a social issue. I've learned a lot more about the science and politics of reproductive biology research and

my motivations have changed a bit, but I'm still fascinated by the unknowns, the questions that even the world-renowned experts are forced to answer with 'So... um...yeah...we don't know why that is.'" Perhaps Sarah will be the one to make inroads into the condition, which shows that even with our myriad medical breakthroughs, pregnancy and childbirth remain two of the most hazardous events women can expect to undergo during their reproductive years. When asked about the role of graduate school she envisioned in her life, Sarah replied dryly, "I'm not particularly interested in being someone's lab monkey for 4-5 years, but it's a necessary stepping stone to getting my own lab, having intellectual freedom, etc." She shrugged, seemingly mentally resigning herself to hours hunched over cell cultures and operating behind fume hoods.

That an academic can gain intellectual freedom from winning his/her independence within the context of academic research is important. Arguably, graduate school gives students intellectual license to explore different interests, but afterwards, there is also the issue of deciding what to do with the brand new Ph.D. While doctorates in math and the hard sciences, as well as certain social sciences, can be applied to industry and academe, Ph.D.s in the humanities generally receive narrower training geared toward the professorship and academia. As with all things, a plan B is advisable for anyone considering pursuing graduate studies, especially in light of a tightening academic job market. It is important to be flexible and prepared for challenges, especially in the face of articles penned by the likes of Thomas H. Benton. It is important to remember that no matter what, a Ph.D. can be a powerful signaling device to prospective employers, both academic and non-academic, that a candidate has the discipline and ability to complete a course of graduate study. That signal, combined with intellectual flexibility found less often in candidates lacking advanced graduate training, should instill a healthy dose of self-confidence in any prospective Ph.D. or soon-to-be Ph.D.

In the Heights from page 4

material in the show, introduces ensemble members, and sets the narrative foundation. The opening number responds to the audience's question, 'What have I gotten myself into?' However, *In The Heights* goes beyond just establishing the musical material in this overture. It also introduces aspects of the Heights milieu that deal with the Latino heritage. There are references to traditional dishes and even a reference to Chita Rivera, a Puerto Rican actress who played Anita in the Broadway premiere of *West Side Story*. The character of the piragüero, a traditional Puerto Rican street merchant who sells flavored shaved ice, embodies the desire of the community to retain their traditions, even when tough competition is present, like the looming threat of Mr. Softee.

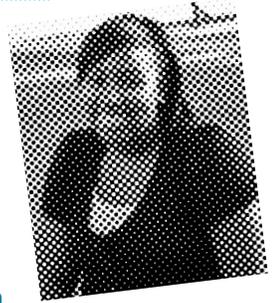
The bilingual component of *In The Heights* is probably the most noticeable element that links the musical to the Latino population. Simple Spanish greetings and salutations the characters offer each, like 'Como estas?,' convey a sense of community, if only one formed around the Spanish language. And while speaking Spanish helps form this community, it is only one attribute, and fluency is not a prerequisite; many 1st and 2nd generation Latinos are not fluent, and only know short phrases or colloquialisms. In fact, the opening song of the second act is subtitled 'The Spanish Lesson,' and it is a moment where a non-Latino tries to learn Spanish. And for the audience, again, fluency is by no means obligatory because all these Spanish flairs can be understood by their context, and sometimes the English translation is repeated immediately after.

In combining all of these features, I believe that the true essence of *In The Heights* can be seen and heard in the chorus of the title piece sung by the 'community,' and in

the use of the piano montuno of this section. Like I mentioned earlier, each character, representing the many constituent nationalities and traditions that form that the Heights community, is introduced with their own theme music, each differing in style. But, when the Heights community sings the title chorus together, it is salsa that unites them, a style born in New York City, created by the array of Caribbean immigrants that congregated in sectors similar to Washington Heights. Salsa bears many features of earlier traditional and national styles, but is a unique product of the NYC Latino milieu; it is musical acculturation. And when the piano montuno, associated with the title chorus, is 'sampled' into Usnavi's hip-hop groove, the two uniquely New York styles, salsa and hip-hop, converge. The individual histories of salsa and hip-hop are tales of peoples who take their cultural roots and incorporate the new, recognizing their differences from their Caribbean and African roots, but equally respecting these cultural roots.

All this said, *In The Heights* is based on the model set by greats like Gershwin, Sondheim and Bernstein, and is a successful modern interpretation of such a model. *In The Heights* follows in style of musicals like *The Fiddler On The Roof* and *West Side Story* by both pitting the new against the old and by focusing on a unique cultural milieu, but is something wholly new and refreshing, with its eclectic use of popular musical styles and relevant bilingualism. It is in this way that *In The Heights* can be used as a tool to understand the dynamics of the Broadway musical, and equally as a tool for understanding culture politics in sectors like Washington Heights, NYC, and how music is being used by the people in such places.

## Mellons not in this Issue



### Tiffany Johnson

Schaumburg,, Ill.  
Junior, Africana, Anthropology

I am the President of WashU's *Keep A Child Alive*, which raises awareness and funds for children and families affected by the AIDS pandemic. In this role, I along with an executive board have raised over \$2,000 for anti-retroviral treatments and comprehensive care for children in Africa and India. I am also Education Chair for the Association of Black Students. As Education Chair, I have revitalized a mentorship Program to help foster meaningful relationships between students and faculty members. In addition, I am a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Research Fellow and am conducting an in-depth analysis of women's role in the Black Power and Black Arts Movements.

## Crossword

### Ashley Williams

#### ACROSS

- 1 Benjamin E. Mays' Alma Mater, for short
- 7 Founder the Black Panther Party
- 8 A Southern Appalachian State
- 9 Men's Lifestyle magazine
- 11 Producer of Living Single
- 13 WashU Motto

#### DOWN

- 2 Capital of Eritrea
- 3 Name of WashU Mellon Journal
- 4 The technical capability to decode or reproduce written or printed signs, symbols, or letters combined into words
- 5 Animistic religion central to the Naxi people
- 6 An indigenous population in central and South-Eastern Chile
- 10 National dance of Chile
- 12 Co-founder of Washington University in St. Louis

