

# THE TATLER

*Bringing you new developments within the English Department*

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## **CLAFS Lecture Series: Includes International Perspectives**

During the 2020-2021 academic year the Annual CLAFS Lecture series became both virtual and international. While the sharing of pizza and fellowship was missed, the virtual gatherings under pandemic safety precautions opened up avenues for hosting speakers from universities abroad. There were five lectures altogether. On September 22, 2020, Dr. Andreas Herzog presented a stimulating talk on "A Century of German Film." The second CLAFS speaker on October 27, 2020, was Dr. Douglas Root who talked about his new book published in July 2020. His topic was "Research Drafting, the Process of Publishing (and the Puritans)." For the Spring semester of 2021, there were three CLAFS lectures. On February 11, 2021, Dr. Douglas Thomas of the State University of New York at Brockport spoke on "From Queen Mother to Church Mother: Transformations in Gendered Authority in the African-American Church Tradition." On February 25, 2021, Tiana Wilder spoke on "Black Coding in Animation." Tiana Wilder is a graduating senior English major from Blythewood, South Carolina. She is part of the Alice Carson Tisdale Honors College and a member of the Mellon Mays Fellowship. When she is not doing research, she is catching up on her favorite shows. The final speaker of the 2020-2021 series was Dr. Juliana Daniels from the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. Her lecture on "Counter-Hegemonic Feminism and the Image of African Women in Literature" was presented on March 23, 2021.



## **Claflin University 19<sup>th</sup> Conference Goes Virtual**

On October 28-29, 2020, Claflin University's Nineteenth Conference on English and Language Arts Pedagogy was entirely virtual. The sessions were in the form of Zoom webinars that were attended by faculty and students from Claflin University. Presenters came from thirteen institutions including Claflin University. The presentations were from seven states in the USA and three countries overseas. 151 attendees represented this year's conference. The keynote speaker was Dr. Eric J. Paulson, Associate Dean of The Graduate College and College of Education, Texas State University, who spoke on the topic of "College Reading...and What it Means." For the plenary session on the second day, this conference hosted Robbie Melton, Associate Vice President, Tennessee State University, who spoke on "Digital Literacy and Computational Thinking: Everyone Can Code and Create."



This year's virtual format was chosen due to travel restrictions and social distancing requirements under the pandemic conditions caused by Covid-19. Future plans include another year of virtual sessions.

## A New Face at Claflin University

In August of 2020, Claflin University introduced Mr. Dakota Carlson as its newest staff member of the English Department and as the new Interim Coordinator of the Writing Center.



Mr. Carlson is from Mt. Sterling, Illinois. He received his bachelor's and master's degree in English at Western Illinois University. He was also a Teacher's Support Assistant, Graduate Coordinator, and active undergraduate and graduate tutor for the Writing Center at Western Illinois. Prior to his employment at Claflin University, he was an adjunct professor at Quincy University in Illinois and Carl Sandburg College. Mr. Carlson decided he wanted to teach English and Film on the post-secondary level during his senior year of college.

Mr. Carlson also offered important strategies for future professors to adopt. Mr. Carlson believes a professor must always be prepared to be patient with students and nurture longitudinal growth. He believes students determine their mindset, drive, and work ethic from their professor. The professor should be engaged with their students and should have faith in their academic abilities. The most important asset that a professor can give each student is a retainable understanding of academic writing. Writing is a tool used in most departments and students need to have a firm grasp of the concept and practice. Even with the challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic, Mr. Carlson plans for a successful academic year and desires to bring more opportunities to all Claflin students.

## Dr. Robinson wins several awards in 2020-2021

**Nick R. Robinson, Ph.D.**, grew up in Junior Village, a Washington DC-based, government-run orphanage that was the oldest and largest institution of its kind in America. A ninth-grade dropout, Dr. Robinson earned a general equivalency diploma and graduated from the University of the District of Columbia. A graduate of the creative writing programs at Florida Atlantic University (2009, MFA) and the University of Missouri (2016, PhD), Dr. Robinson is currently an Assistant Professor of English at Claflin University.

Regarding Dr. Robinson's illustrious literary career, here are nine of his many achievements and awards presented to him in between 2020 and 2021:

1. 06/21: Keynote Speaker, 14th Annual Greater New Orleans Adult Education Graduation
2. 05/21: Tennessee Williams Scholar in nonfiction, 2021 Sewanee Writers' Conference
3. 01/21: Finalist, "Our Dad," 50<sup>th</sup> *New Millennium Writing Awards*, nonfiction category
4. 12/20: Honorable Mention, *Our Family Walks*, *Memoir Magazine*, 2020 *The Memoir Prize for Books*
5. 10/20: First Place Winner, "Our Family Walks," 2020 *Arch Street Press First Chapter Competition*. *Submission withdrawn at pre-announcement: it was a fiction competition.*
6. 10/20: Honorable Mention, "Junior Village," 2021 *San Miguel Writing Conference Creative Nonfiction Competition*
7. 09/20: Finalist, "The Sweet Spot," *The Fiddlehead*, 2020 *Creative Nonfiction Contest*
8. 07/20: First Place Winner, "Junior Village," *Southeast Review* 2020 *Ned Stuckey-French Nonfiction Contest*. *Selected by 2013 Pulitzer Prize Winner in General Nonfiction, Gilbert King*
9. 07/20: Honorable Mention, "Our Family Walks," 2020 *Lightning Key Review Wilt Prize in Creative Nonfiction*



# Reflections in Prose and Poetry

## Beginning College During A Pandemic

By: Jerrell Alston

When I first selected this prestigious institution in Claflin University, I believed my greatest hopes and endeavors would become a tangible object with each day that I spent on this campus. However, I realized much more after my first-year experience; that my endeavors and aspirations were only a steppingstone to a larger and more impactful goal ahead. My time at Claflin has taught me how college is a complex map to navigate, but with the support of friends and family, anything can be done. During my first year, many of us experienced the tragedies resulting from the Covid-19 Pandemic. This year was supposed to be a chance to experience the terrifying, yet cultivating challenges of adulthood, but we never truly got the opportunity that we had been looking forward to for years. Even through the many adversities, I still managed to obtain 3.8 GPA, while meeting new people and enjoying the moments that were still granted. Overall, I am grateful for this year. It set the tone for the rest of my academic career. I learned that even when everything around you seems dark, you can still become your own light.

## The Joy of Whistling

By: Jerrell Alston

As quaint as it may seem, it's quite powerful.  
A soft, majestic tone that awakens prehistoric beasts.  
A quite song created by the wind's lovely orchestra.  
A normal day's passion filled with the love of one's spirit.

Imagine if whistling was a sin.  
The birds wouldn't be able to wake up and enjoy life's vocals.  
The trees wouldn't be able to see their fellow brethren soar while hitting high notes,  
And we as humans would die without the oxygen of a gentle melody.

Chiming through the soundless storm raised a heavy hand upon society.  
The blessings choreographed with the reminding ashes rang new bells.  
As the world collides between our skull, the words flatline into a calming song.  
One that takes away all the pain that you once knew too well.

Whistling is just another necessity the world needs.

## Communications

By: Josten D. Bryant

It is a vehicle for feelings  
The building block of bonds  
And the method by which we drive ourselves insane  
A word with multiple meanings  
The correction of our wrongs  
And the method by which we drive ourselves insane  
I despise the lies  
That I've told myself  
My communication skills  
Are lacking  
So I offer my help  
And at the cost of my health  
These words just float in my head  
Until the day I write them  
Or I force them to be said  
But even "open" conversation  
Comes with negatives  
Out of fear  
We lay our thoughts to rest  
With the weakest  
Of sedatives  
Because as soon as we disperse  
And we've silenced ourselves  
We become well versed  
And the deeper we delve  
Into our mind with regret  
Of what we should've said  
Or how we should've left  
Those final talking points  
Of that tough conversation  
Maybe we could all use some practice  
Ineffective communication

## A few English Majors present at a national/international conference

Three Senior English Majors and one English Major who graduated in May 2020 presented papers at the 30<sup>th</sup> British Commonwealth and Postcolonial studies Conference on February 19, 2021. This conference was held virtually. The mentor for these papers was Dr. Mitali Wong, Chair and Professor of English. The panel was titled “Perspectives on Edwidge Danticat’s novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory*; an undergraduate panel.”

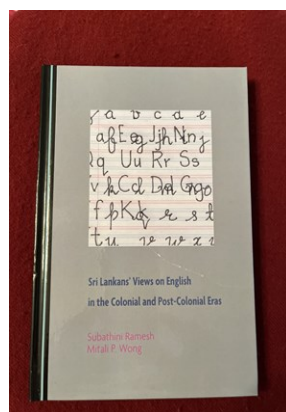
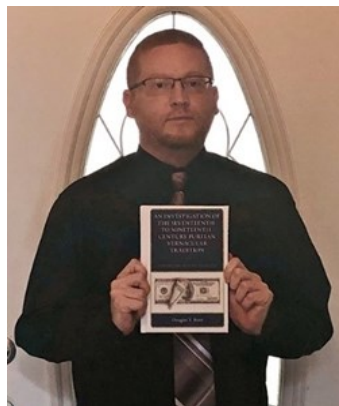
The presenters were Tanika Carolina, Janya Williams, Jala Roberts, and Tiana Wilder.

## English Department Classes Offered in three Modalities

As the pandemic continues, Claflin University students returned to classes for the 2020-2021 academic year in three modalities. Those who lived on campus attended face-to-face classes wearing masks. Seating was socially distanced. Sanitizing chairs, desks, and hands while entering and exiting classes was in place. Some professors taught remotely based on medical advice. Many students stayed home and attended classes either virtually and synchronously or were completely asynchronous. Cameras and recording equipment were installed in campus classrooms during the late summer of 2020.

## Two English Professors Publish Books

In the summer of 2020, Dr. Douglas Root’s new hardcover book titled, “An Investigation of the Seventeenth-to-Nineteenth Century Puritan Vernacular Tradition. To Please God or to not please God” was published by Lexington Books, a subsidiary of Rowman and Littlefield.



In the summer of 2020, Cambridge Scholars Publishing published a hardcover edition of “Sri Lankans’ Views on English in the Colonial and Post-Colonial Eras” by Dr. Subathini Ramesh and Dr. Mitali Wong. Dr. Ramesh was a postdoctoral researcher and part-time English professor at Claflin University from 2011 through 2013. At the time, she was on sabbatical leave from the University of Jaffna, in Sri Lanka. She developed her work project under the supervision of Dr. Mitali Wong who also contributed to this book. Dr. Ramesh is the Head of the Department of Linguistics and English at the University of Jaffna.

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