

LAFAYETTE

Winter 2008

the MCDONOUGH report



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



THIS SECOND ISSUE OF *The McDonogh Report* reaffirms what I have known since I arrived at Lafayette: our African American students, alumni, faculty, and staff continue to distinguish themselves as members of the College family and within their own communities. The following pages profile individuals who are excelling in fields as diverse as scientific research, consulting, law, medicine, education, and the environment.

In reflecting upon these stories, I was struck by the common theme of helping others and giving back to one's community. Perhaps no one exemplified those ideals better than Gerald Gill '70, who is remembered on p. 7. The subject of a feature article in this publication last winter, Prof. Gill had an extraordinary impact on everyone who knew him, including his many Lafayette friends, and we were deeply saddened by his death.

In that article, Gerry spoke of his growing pride in Lafayette. We have indeed worked hard to create a more open and welcoming campus, and I am pleased to report that this past fall *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* ranked Lafayette fifth among the nation's 50 leading liberal-arts colleges and universities in the percentage of full-time African American faculty members. Among the top 30 liberal-arts colleges, we ranked 12th in the percentage of enrolled black first-year students. While

these rankings are encouraging, we realize that much work still remains to be done.

Readers of this report will share our excitement about the sculpture that renowned artist Melvin Edwards is creating to commemorate the granting of a degree to David McDonogh in 1844. This sculpture, which will be unveiled on campus next fall, will honor the accomplishments of all of our African American alumni, as well. During the coming year we also look forward to developing a special network to connect Lafayette's African American alumni with one other and to provide mentors for our African American students. We will look to this group for guidance as we continue our efforts to enhance diversity on campus.

In closing, I would like to encourage you to visit the website devoted to the contributions of Lafayette's African American students and alumni: www.lafayette.edu/mcdonoghreport. As always, the College and I welcome your input and support.

Daniel H. Weiss

“Our African American students, alumni, faculty, and staff continue to distinguish themselves as members of the College family and within their own communities.”

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the MCDONOGH report

Celebrating the contributions of African Americans to the Lafayette community

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For much more on the contributions of African Americans to the Lafayette community, including alumni, students and faculty, history, and campus news, visit

www.lafayette.edu/mcdonoghreport

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Editor: Roger Clow

Designer: Dale Mack

A portrait of Cornell Wright '74, a middle-aged Black man with a grey beard and mustache, wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt, and a colorful patterned tie. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a calm expression. The background is a light, textured surface.

Plan Well and Execute

Cornell Wright '74 helps businesses realize their goals

WHEN CORNELL WRIGHT '74

speaks with clients and colleagues, he closes with a simple statement: “Plan well and execute.” He followed that mantra during nearly 20 years with IBM Corp. and is still guided by it today as principal of the Parker Wright Group, the management-consulting firm he founded 13 years ago in Stratford, Conn.

Another, more personal, mantra might be “Pray fervently.” That is what he and his wife, Joanne, did in 1994, when he was considering leaving IBM to go into business for himself.

“We did a lot of work in the yard, and we actually prayed on it,” he says. “Then I went to a church revival-week service. The minister who was preaching that evening said, ‘It doesn’t matter whether you work for Xerox or IBM, you’ve got to build your life on the rock.’”

He took those words to heart and took the plunge, but not without some trepidation, because “IBM had been my business foundation and development,” he says. He had held several positions with IBM, including systems engineer, marketing representative, marketing manager, and manager of consultants in the insurance industry, and he’d worked in Bethlehem, Pa.; West Orange and Princeton, N.J.; and Hamden and Milford, Conn.

But, being true to his business mantra, Wright had planned well for his move, studying for an MBA at the University of Bridgeport. He completed the degree in 1994 as he began his new career as a consultant. His current work focuses mainly on customer service for clients in financial services, telecommunications, marketing, manufacturing, and the public sector. “Customer service is kind of like the glue that holds the whole thing together. It’s the best way to compete in the marketplace,” he says.

Wright also writes a biweekly column for the *New Haven Register* and has taught six different business courses, including marketing, customer service, and management, as an adjunct faculty member at Housatonic Community College.

While he has experienced a few sleepless nights since going out on his own (“worrying about the business and



The minister who
was preaching said,
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the management and the growth and development”), he has no regrets.

“I’ve never looked back on that as not being a right decision. I absorbed it all, I did it all, I made it happen,” Wright says. Now, “I’m like a black belt in planning. I’m capable of customizing research techniques. I sit down with the clients, talk to them, and listen to them. I’ve seen a lot of different things over time. I’m pretty good at helping people realize what their issues are and helping them resolve their situations.”

In addition to maintaining his base of paid clients, which include nonprofit organizations, Wright is a leading volunteer in his community. He is president of the boards of the Community Economic Development Forum and Greater New Haven Business and Professional Association and a member of the boards of the United Way of Greater New Haven and Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce. He also is a member and past lieutenant governor of the local chapter of Kiwanis International.

His Lafayette experience helped shape his sense of responsibility to give back to his community, Wright says. As a member of the Association of Black Collegians, he helped produce the College’s first black arts festival and helped implement the Black Children Can program,

bringing children from Easton on campus, helping them with their homework, and teaching them about both black history and college life.

Wright says his liberal arts education – he majored in American studies – has served him well over the years, despite the warnings he heard that he’d have trouble finding a job. His answer, both then and now, has remained simple: “My degree will not help me get a job; it will help me keep whatever job I get.”

In fact, his educational background and business experience give him a unique view of the problems his clients face, he says (and credits Lafayette with helping shape his “soft skills,” including how to handle business-related social events, as well).

“I have a business-process perspective, an information-systems perspective, a customer-service perspective, and an American-civilization background. As I work with clients to understand their internal culture, I’m well-prepared.” ■

360 Degrees of Gratitude

Simmone Chaddan '04

“A LOT OF YOUNG ALUMNI are nostalgic about college, but reality hits when you have to look into your future,” says **Simmone Chaddan '04**.

Chaddan understands recent Lafayette graduates' reality and strives to ensure that the College helps meet their needs. As chair of the Alumni Association's Young Alumni Committee, her focus includes prepping new and soon-to-be grads with useful life skills. She has championed the Orientation to Life program, whose debut edition gave young alums and current students an opportunity to learn about investment issues directly from financial experts.

Chaddan calls herself blessed by relationships forged at Lafayette. She keeps in touch with professors, classmates, and other alumni.

“My Lafayette network is incredibly strong,” she says, adding that “more times than I can count,” alumni have taken the time to help the government & law and English grad on her career path.

That path took her into luxury goods and branding. She quickly worked her way through floor-sales positions at several high-end retailers to emerge as a merchandise analyst at Saks Fifth Avenue, New York City, where for two-and-a-half years she called upon strengths in discerning present needs and making projections for the future.

Chaddan saw greater opportunity when an alum told her about SpaFinder, a company that pairs spa facilities with clients concerned with personal wellness. As a business-to-business specialist, she promotes SpaFinder's brand to companies, linking 4,000 spa partners with customers secured through incentive programs and promotions offered by her clients. She's often on the road, building relationships one face-to-face meeting at a time.

“The industry is exploding,” she says. “I wanted to be where I saw growth potential not only in the company, but for myself.”

Indeed for Chaddan, life is as active now as it was at Lafayette. She was student representative on the Trustees' Committee on Development and Alumni Affairs, president of the multicultural women's support group NIA, member of Association of Black Collegians, executive board member of Lafayette Activities Forum, and resident of the volunteer floor in Keefe Hall, where she promoted the Relay for Life fundraiser for cancer research. Not to mention that she directed a play on the main stage of the Williams Center for the Arts.

“I'm passionate about what I do,” she says. “I chose Lafayette because I wanted to attend a college where I could

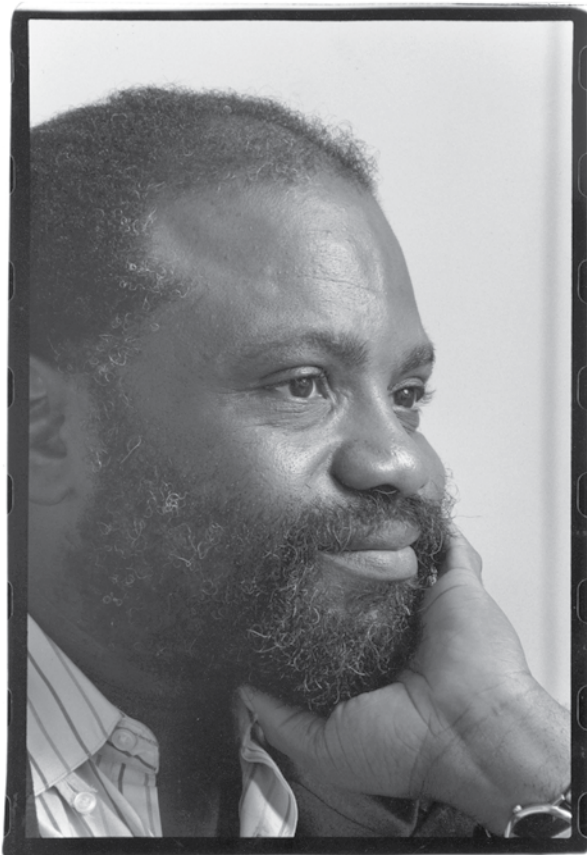


be seen and heard, not be faceless or just another number in a classroom. It was important to my academic and social balance to be involved.”

Chaddan credits her success to a positive, assertive personality and to her father, who “pushed me to get an excellent education. There's something about a father's spirit and a little girl that creates an unparalleled bond,” she says. After suffering a cerebral hemorrhage during her first year at Lafayette, her father emerged from a coma and spoke only her name, an act Chaddan believes gave her the will to persevere.

Chaddan supports Dress for Success, an organization that provides disadvantaged women with professional attire, and organizes an annual Lafayette alumni Christmas mixer to support the Marine Corps' Toys for Tots campaign.

Her word of wisdom is to stay connected: a golden thread links people and opportunities. “It's all one big circle—360 degrees of gratitude.” ■



Fund Honors Gerald Gill '70

**It will support campus programs
related to diversity**

AN ENDOWED FUND HONORING the late Gerald Gill '70 will support campus speakers and other programs addressing issues related to diversity. It is being established by College trustee **Joseph Cox '68** in memory of his former Lafayette roommate.

Gill's impact was profound in 27 years on the history faculty at Tufts University, which was shaken by his sudden death of arterial sclerosis in July. Tufts president Lawrence Bacow said, "Thoughtful, soft-spoken, and incredibly generous with his time . . . he always pushed Tufts to be a better place, a more inclusive place, one that is welcoming to all."

The *Boston Globe* said, "His classes filled to capacity, and yet he memorized the name of each student. . . . He took pains to bridge the gaps between various ethnic communities on campus." Gill's faculty colleague Jeanne Marie Penvenne told the *Globe*, "He touched everyone. I can think of a score of young black men for whom he was a role model, a mentor; he never let them down. And I can say the same for many young white men and young Asian-American men."

Gill was the inaugural recipient of the university's Arts and Science Multicultural Service Award. The Pan-African Alliance named him an honorary graduate, and the Africana Center renamed its annual award in his honor. Gill did groundbreaking research on the history of African Americans at Tufts and of race relations and black protest activities in Boston. Twice named Massachusetts Professor of the Year, he was co-editor of *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader*.

At Lafayette, Gill was among the students who formed the Association of Black Collegians in 1968. As a senior, he was on Student Council and president of ABC, which issued a manifesto demanding more black students and faculty, a black studies curriculum, and a black social center. In March 1970, about 25 black students met with several trustees, and the following month the board approved the establishment of a Black Cultural Center.

"I do appreciate the education I got from Lafayette, and I'm proud of it," Gill said last year.

Cox was a "conservative from an ROTC background" and Gill "a young, black liberal," but they formed a close friendship that was influenced by the turbulent times. "I learned a lot about the world being Gerry's roommate. Being able to see things through his eyes helped shape my view of the world," says Cox, who rose to the rank of colonel and taught English at West Point during a 20-year army career and is now headmaster of The Haverford School.

The fund will support activities focusing on "multiculturalism and the richness that is inherent in a diverse education," Cox says. For information on contributing, contact Gary Carney, director of development, (610) 330-5573 or carneyg@lafayette.edu. ■

"Gerry had a great deal of integrity. He said what he thought and he did the right thing. He was an excellent teacher and an excellent person."



Overcoming Infertility

**Winston Thompson '86 heads
Cooperative Reproductive Science Research Center**

YOUNG WOMEN WHO SURVIVE CANCER with the help of chemotherapy or radiation often experience a bittersweet victory. Many are left infertile by the lifesaving treatment—unable to bring new life into the world.

Winston E. Thompson '86 is working to provide more options to these women, including collecting and storing follicles that contain eggs before the eggs are fully developed—and before aggressive cancer treatment begins.

Thompson heads the Cooperative Reproductive Science Research Center at the Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta. He conducts and oversees research aimed at understanding the anti-proliferative and tumor-suppressive properties of the gene prohibitin.

“The ovary is a very dynamic organ, and there’s a lot to learn about it,” he says. “It’s amazing to explore the intricacy of how this process works – how cells work together to ensure a fertilizable egg.”

Thompson participates in Northwestern University’s Oncofertility Consortium, which brings together professionals in reproductive medicine, oncology, reproductive health research, biomechanics, materials science, mathematics, social science bioethics, religion, policy research, and educational sciences to explore the reproductive future of patients facing fertility-threatening cancer treatments. In addition to Northwestern, the consortium’s primary centers include the University of California, San Diego; University of Pennsylvania; Oregon Health & Science University, and University of Missouri.

“We have to deal with a number of questions, including what role health-care practitioners and religious groups will have,” Thompson says.

His own work focuses on finding the best ways to store and preserve premature egg follicles and how to grow them in vitro.

Already, he says, “we have demonstrated that we can have live births of mice and some primates after egg follicles have been preserved and thawed.” His prohibitin research also could lead to new strategies for diagnosing or offering prognoses for ovarian cancer and other problems, helping in the “design of a more rational basis for drug development,” he adds.

His collaborators also include researchers at the Mayo Clinic, Columbia University, University of Pittsburgh, University of Missouri, and Ottawa University.

“The challenging part is sustaining funding for my laboratory,” says Thompson, who also teaches cellular, molecular, and reproductive biology and embryology as an assistant professor in Morehouse’s Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Thompson, a former Alumni Admissions Representative for Lafayette, enjoys spending time with his family, including two sons and a daughter, and volunteering at his church as a head basketball coach for 11- and 12-year-old boys.

After majoring in biology at Lafayette, Thompson, a native of Jamaica, earned a master’s degree in endocrinology from Rutgers University in 1988 and a Ph.D. in cell and developmental biology from Rutgers in 1993. He completed three years of postdoctoral training in the Department of Cell Biology at Harvard Medical School and earned a certificate in embryology from the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Mass.

At Lafayette, Thompson, who’d been planning on a career as a physician, conducted independent research on fiddler crabs with **Charles Holliday**, professor of biology, and grew to love research.

“The excitement of discovering new things really piqued my interest,” he says. “I found I had more of an interest in science and discovery rather than just treating an illness.” ■



Executive Strategist

Kenneth Rich '67 is an award-winning corporate recruiter

THE ROUTE TO THE TOP echelon of his profession has taken **Kenneth Rich '67** from science to business, from Athens to Dubai.

Now managing director in the financial services practice of the executive search firm Edward W. Kelley & Partners, Rich graduated from Lafayette as a chemistry major. But his future direction was established when he received a fellowship to study business administration at the University of Chicago.

Some four decades later he has worked in, or recruited for, virtually all segments of the financial services industry including capital markets, corporate finance, public finance, mergers and acquisitions, alternative investments, investment management, wealth management, hedge funds, and private equity. He serves mainly financial services clients but also has executed board searches for a variety of industries and engagements for nonprofits.

Prior to entering the executive search profession, in 1983, he served in investment banking positions at General Electric Credit Corporation; Peat, Marwick, Mitchell; the International Group of Citibank, N.A. (where he worked in Athens and Dubai), and Kuhn, Loeb & Co.

His career also includes a four-year stint at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

"I've done a little of everything, so, while some people have a very specific area of expertise, I'm a real generalist. I've seen just about everything," Rich says. "Basically I enjoy helping clients develop their strategy—not just their recruiting strategy, but their business-development strategy. I want to position their firm uniquely, and they look at me as a confidant, not only a consultant."

The Association of Executive Search Consultants honored Rich with its Eleanor H. Raynolds Award, which recognizes excellence in executive search and a strong commitment to volunteerism. A former member of the College's Board of Trustees and Lafayette Leadership Council, he received the Clifton P. Mayfield '09 Outstanding Young Alumni Award in recognition of outstanding service to the College or Alumni Association. ■



Working in the Vineyard

Seattle attorney Lem Howell '58 champions the injured and poor

AS HE LISTENED TO Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speak at the March on Washington in August 1963, **Lem Howell '58** wondered if the civil-rights movement had passed him by.

"As a naval officer, I couldn't participate," he explains, recalling his days as the first black officer on the troopship *USS General George M. Randall*. Yet only a few years later, his efforts would create opportunity for African Americans.

Howell had moved with his family to Harlem in 1946 from his native Jamaica. At Lafayette, he flourished as a history major, led the debate team, and was nominated for the Pepper Prize. "Lafayette was good to me. The individual attention I got was great for my progress." He was one of only 19 black students, he says, but never felt out of place.

But when he graduated from New York University School of Law in 1964, "Doors were closed because of racism. I could never dream of going to work for a large firm." He worked for Washington Governor Albert Rosellini, passed the bar in the Evergreen State, and, in 1968, established a private practice.

In 1969, he argued in federal court on behalf of workers barred from labor unions, winning a case that would alter the lives of many African Americans. The government brought suit against the same unions two years later, which opened construction unions to African Americans in Washington state.

Howell has been named Trial Lawyer of the Year by the Washington State Trial Lawyers Association, listed in *The Best Lawyers in America* multiple times, and featured on the cover of *Seattle* magazine. He continues to advocate for people fighting large companies' legal teams.

"I see too much corporate greed, and, sadly, lawyers are leading that charge," he says. "There's still a lot of work to do in the vineyard. The type of law I do makes a difference for the injured and poor. I'm their champion." ■

More Than Just a Job

**Renee Becton Strickland '82,
former Air Force officer,
launches a consulting firm**



In addition to devoting time to her family and the consulting firm she founded, Renee Strickland teaches a Sunday school class for three-year-olds.

FIVE YEARS AGO, Renee Becton

Strickland '82 retired from the U.S. Air Force as a colonel following a 20-year military career that included serving as deputy program manager of a cutting-edge technical intelligence program.

Those years were fun but incredibly fast-paced and demanding, she says, and she was ready to relax a bit and spend more time with her twin daughters. But now, Strickland is often busier than ever, thanks to a combination of family commitments, volunteer work, and what she terms a "part-time job" as founder and chairman of the board of Edge Consulting, Inc., in Centreville, Va.

Strickland, whose activities include being a member of the Lafayette Leadership Council, happily blames her husband, Frank, a former U.S. Marine Corps and CIA intelligence officer, for the change in her professional plans. It was Frank and a colleague who wanted to begin an intelligence consulting business—and wanted her on board.

"We talked about doing it for a while when I was still on active duty, and they convinced me," she says, explaining that she signed on with the understanding that "this cannot be a full-time job for me." At first she handled all financial aspects of the firm. Now, with a staff of about 40 working on projects related to defense and intelligence, she says, "The bigger we've gotten, the more I've backed off from day-to-day activities."

But Strickland still participates in long-term decision-making and planning and plays a key role in maintaining the culture of the company, whose literature says, "Our executives model life as more than work and money – esteeming others; genuine behavior; physical, mental, and spiritual health are important to a full life."

"We're trying to make sure that the culture of the small, family-oriented group we started does not change too much," she says. "We created and want to sustain an environment where everybody functions as a family. We want people to be part of a larger thing that's more than just a job. We want to make sure every person feels like he or she is part of something that's pretty special."



"We want to make sure every person feels like he or she is part of something that's pretty special."

Strickland, who was an A.B. engineering major and participated in ROTC at Lafayette, began her Air Force career classified as an engineer, managing parts of a space-related ground system in Colorado Springs.

"I stayed in the space community and became more and more involved in intelligence aspects," she says, explaining that, at the time, the programs she managed were considered covert. "It was not at all what I had expected as a 22-year-old coming into the Air Force," she says.

Her military career included experience in budget development and justification, systems acquisition and operations, and security policy and personnel security. In addition, she served as the first public affairs officer for the defense department's National Reconnaissance Office, which designs, builds, and operates the nation's reconnaissance satellites.

Strickland earned an MBA degree from Northrop University and an M.S. in strategic studies from the Air War College. She was honored with the Defense Superior Service Medal, awarded by the secretary of defense, and the Medal of Distinguished Service from the NRO.

These days, she says, she spends a large part of her time ferrying her teenage daughters to classes and activities, volunteering at their school, and helping them through the joys and perils of learning to drive and starting to date. "We have, over the past four years, spent an incredible amount of time together in the car," she says with a laugh. She also teaches a Sunday-school class for preschoolers.

She assisted her father, former Federal Emergency Management Agency director Julius W. Becton Jr., with his book, *Becton: Autobiography of a Soldier and Public Servant*, set for publication by U.S. Naval Institute Press in February.

"I've been his closet editor," she says, noting that her father served 40 years in the U.S. Army, retiring as a lieutenant general. After his stint with FEMA during the Reagan administration, he served as president of Prairie View A&M University for five years.

"It's a little bit of everything," Strickland says of her life. "I'm happy with that. I love telling people that I'm retired, but I find I'm actually busier than when I was working full-time." ■

In the Forefront

Now in its 11th year, the Experimental Printmaking Institute, under the direction of Curlee Raven Holton, professor and head of art, continues to work with world-renowned artists and maintain its stature in the forefront of African American art and culture nationally and internationally.



MARTHA JACKSON-JARVIS WAS THIS YEAR'S

Temple Artist-in-Residence at EPI. Her sculptures have been exhibited in solo and group shows in galleries and museums throughout the United States and abroad, and she is the recipient of a Creative Capital Grant, Virginia Groot Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, Penny McCall Foundation Grant, and Lila Wallace Arts International Travel Grant, among other awards.

Jackson-Jarvis is interested in the compelling possibilities of public art in the new millennium that reflect the diversity and wealth of cultural influences in contemporary life. At EPI she gave a public talk; met with students, faculty, and members of the community; and developed a print that will be produced as a limited fine-art edition. Her residency was sponsored by the David L. Sr. and Helen J. Temple Visiting Lecture Series Fund, which supports the work of artists, curators, and art historians.

EPI PRODUCED EIGHT original serigraph prints by Faith Ringgold for a special edition of Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Letter from Birmingham City Jail* that is being published by The Limited Editions Club. EPI produced an edition of 600 of each print to be hand-bound in books and portfolios. Each print is hand-pulled and contains an average of 13 colors per print.

The public viewed the prints for the first time at a reception honoring Ringgold, a longtime collaborator of Holton and EPI, at the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Ringgold's art has been exhibited in major museums around the world and is in the permanent collections of the Guggenheim Museum, Metropolitan



“A future of even greater achievement for Curlee Holton is certain.”

—Faith Ringgold

Museum of Art, National Museum of American Art, Museum of Modern Art, and Boston Museum of Fine Art, among others. She has written and illustrated 14 children’s books. The first, *Tar Beach*, won more than 30 awards. Her 1995 book of memoirs, *We Flew Over the Bridge*, was re-released in 2005.

Holton is the author of *Faith Ringgold: A View from the Studio*, which was published in conjunction with Ringgold’s 2005 exhibition at the Allentown Art Museum. Lafayette awarded Ringgold an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree in May. Her citation reads, “The verb that anchors the title of your memoirs—we flew over the bridge—conveys the soaring magic of your imagination. You yourself are an exuberant and intrepid traveler among constellations. And through your art, you have transported each of us to places that enlarge our own capacity to understand—and to dream.”

THE PORTLAND (MAINE) MUSEUM of Art and Mount Holyoke Museum recently added prints produced at EPI. The Portland Museum acquired “Yoruba Couple” by David C. Driskell. EPI has been working with Driskell, one of the world’s leading authorities on African American art and recipient of the National Humanities Medal, for years.

The Mount Holyoke Museum established the Tague Collection of African American Fine Art Prints, named for long-time EPI supporter **Janet Tague P’00**. The collection

includes 17 works by Holton, Emma Amos, Benny Andrews, Elizabeth Catlett, Melvin Edwards, Sam Gilliam, Faith Ringgold, and William T. Williams. Additional works will be added on an ongoing basis.

WORKS CREATED AT EPI have also been placed in other important collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University Art Gallery, Allentown Art Museum, New Jersey State Museum, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and High Museum, Atlanta.

Works produced at EPI were on view this fall at The Ink Shop Printmaking Center and Olive Branch Press, Ithaca, N.Y. The exhibit featured art by Holton, Benny Andrews, Richard Anuskewicz, Berrisford Boothe, Barbara Bullock, Roy Crosse, Elizabeth Catlett, Gregory Coates, Wayne Crothers, John Dowell, David C. Driskell, Allan Edmunds, Melvin Edwards, Wanda Ewing, Sam Gilliam, Grace Hartigan, Robin Holder, Paul Keene, Bodo Korsig, Lynn Linnemeier, Al Loving, Quentin Mosely, John Philips, Faith Ringgold, Ian Short & Robin Beckman, Kay Walkingstick, and William T. Williams. ■

Tellin’ it Like it Is

Curlee Raven Holton mounted a major solo exhibit of prints and drawings at SoHo Creative NY this fall.

“It is not at all unusual to hear that Curlee Holton is abroad, collaborating with printmakers, making art or traveling with a new show of his own work or artists from EPI. He creates exhibitions like he creates art, with a compelling force and directness,” writes Faith Ringgold in the exhibition catalogue, *Tellin’ it Like it Is*.

“I am proud of him. A future of even greater achievement for Curlee Holton is certain. *African American and White Artists Construct the American Artistic Canon*, one of Holton’s latest research projects, is just another example of Holton’s contribution as scholar and teacher,” Ringgold writes. “African American artists have had a long, hard struggle to uncover their history and achieve inclusion in the canon. Now to identify and credit their innovation is a brand new trail. Holton is on it. We will all benefit from this exploration.”



Photo by Hub Willson

Career Path Leads Home

Natasha Strother '96 is
executive vice president
of her family's business



AS A TEENAGER, Natasha Strother '96 helped in the family business by setting up cheese trays and working the coatroom. Now she oversees the strategic planning, business operations, and finances of Strother Enterprises, Philadelphia, as its executive vice president.

The food-service management firm, founded in 1987, provides concessions at Lincoln Financial Field for the Philadelphia Eagles and serves many other clients.

It's not what she envisioned as an undergraduate, says Strother, a chemical engineering graduate who remains engaged with the College as a member of the Lafayette Leadership Council. "My parents instilled education as the key to success and opportunity and encouraged me to reach for the stars. I wanted a school that had a great academic reputation and excellent engineering."

Chemical engineering wasn't easy. "I remember struggling. Professors [James] Schaffer, [Andrew] Craft, and [Elizabeth] McMahon were genuinely interested in my success. They stuck by me and wanted to see me graduate," she says.

Strother did more than just get by. As an EXCEL Scholar she did research in fuel-cell technology and co-authored a paper for a scholarly journal. But upon graduation, she says, "I thought I wanted to be a lawyer."

She worked on tobacco litigation as a paralegal with the law firm Dechert LLP. But memories of earlier days with her

father and his twin brother at the family firm's board meetings kept entering her thoughts, so she began taking classes at Temple University's Fox School of Business. She completed her MBA in finance in 2001, and, armed with new skills and renewed vigor, said to her family, "I've got this business background now, and the company has a great foundation—why don't you let me come in and add some fresh ideas?"

Now, after seven years with Strother Enterprises, she credits her success, and the company's excellence, to integrity, respect for employees, and vision. But nothing satisfies her more than helping her community.

"I've been able to empower people economically," she says. "Some who started off as dishwashers or stewards are now catering supervisors and assistant general managers of facilities. That pride of work trickles down into people's families, then into the community."

Strother is a member of the advisory board of Presbyterian Children's Village Services, which aids troubled children and their families. As an undergraduate, she was a member of the Association of Black Collegians and served on the All-College Committee on the Conditions for Women, Minority, and International Students.

"Lafayette is the doorway to limitless opportunities," she says, adding that her experience taught her "to embrace all challenges with confidence." ■



Dedicated Dentist

Alfonzo B. Owens III '75 cares for the less privileged

AT DAWN MOST DAYS, Alfonzo B. Owens III '75 commutes from Mt. Vernon, N.Y., to the Brooklyn clinic he helped found. At the Cumberland Diagnostic and Treatment Center, part of New York City's public hospital system, he delivers high-quality care to the less-privileged.

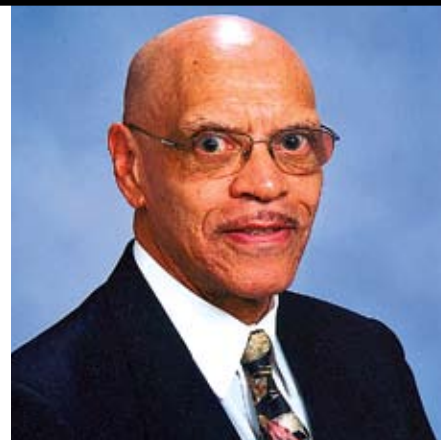
His patients, mostly Caribbean, Hispanic, and Eastern European immigrants, hope for a better future. Owens has nurtured their hope for more than 27 years, and they know he will "treat each person as I would like to be treated. I look at each person as an individual and as a child of God," he says.

His father's commitment to dentistry—54 years in private practice until his death in 2004—spurred Owens to follow his lead. A sprinter in high school—and distant relative of Olympian Jesse Owens—Owens sought out Lafayette for both academics and athletics. "I didn't want a program that put sports first and academics second."

"Lafayette helped me to look at things from a scientific point of view," says the biology graduate, and "allowed me to build my confidence and be more comfortable when interacting with people in different settings." He met his wife of 26 years, **Kim Wilson Owens '77**, at the College.

He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine in 1979 and joined his father's practice after a one-year residency at the Philadelphia VA Medical Center. The two went on to collaborate for 24 years, but the younger Owens' focus on others' needs led him to complete a master's in public health at New York Medical College in 1989 and found the Cumberland Center.

Owens chairs the board of trustees at First United Methodist Church in Mt. Vernon. "Lafayette has been a major factor for my success. Each year, I could feel that I was growing and maturing as a person." Now, he says, he tries hard to help the youth at his church grow into the people God desires them to be. ■



Thousands of Lives Touched

Paul Eugene Thurston '60 inspired generations of students

FOR PAUL EUGENE THURSTON '60, a career filled with purpose and accomplishment as a chemistry professor at Texas Southern University grew from one of the oldest of sayings: *Take it or leave it*.

As a teenager who had already committed to another college, Thurston got a call from the National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students. Lafayette would offer him a scholarship, loan, and on-campus job. Plus, NSSFNS would add a grant. Would he accept?

"Can I think about it?" he asked. "We need to know now," he was told. "Yes," he said.

Thurston had been told as a youngster that he had a gift "to see chemistry" and never doubted that would be his field. "My expectation was to work for a company like DuPont," he says. But at Lafayette another desire awakened in him. His first-year English instructor impressed him with his concern. Chemistry faculty, particularly **William F. Hart**, showed that good professors reach out to students as individuals. A call to teach grew more powerful than the lure of business.

He earned a Ph.D. at Cornell then honored an ROTC commitment at the Army's Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Ala. Texas Southern hired him in 1966. He retired in 2000 after 34 years of devoted service.

"I've been given gifts by God that I use to help people when I can," he says. He's an active community volunteer, tutors students at TSU, and remains intensely engaged in learning.

"As an African American, teaching at a historically black university was icing on the cake. Although I'm sure I could have made a lot more money working for some big chemical company, I doubt I would have gotten the same satisfaction from the work as I get from being a professor. Seeing students grow and then come back later to thank me" is a great joy, he says, adding, "My experience at Lafayette influenced my attitude about what a college professor can and ought to be." ■

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

College Honors Gomes, Ringgold

Lafayette honored The Rev. **Peter J. Gomes** and **Faith Ringgold** at the 172nd Commencement in May. Gomes, the Plummer Professor of Christian Morals and Pusey Minister of the Memorial Church at Harvard University, delivered the Baccalaureate sermon and received an honorary Doctor of Divinity. Ringgold, the acclaimed artist and author and long-time collaborator of **Curlee Raven Holton** and Lafayette's Experimental Printmaking Institute, was awarded an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts (see page 12).

An American Baptist minister, Gomes was named Clergy of the Year in 1998 by *Religion in American Life*. He is the author of *The New York Times* best-sellers *The Good Book: Reading the Bible With Mind and Heart* and *Sermons: Biblical Wisdom*



The Rev. Peter J. Gomes gave the Baccalaureate sermon and was awarded an honorary degree at the 2007 Commencement.

for *Daily Living* among other books, articles, and collections of sermons. He has received honorary degrees from more than 30 colleges and uni-

versities and is an Honorary Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge University, where the Gomes Lectureship is established in his name.

"You are revered for the courage and forthrightness of your belief, the generosity and warmth with which you welcome those who are excluded from traditional faith communities, and the unwavering integrity with which you fulfill your special calling," reads Gomes' honorary degree citation. "Although you speak openly about your race, your political views, your vocational and personal interests, and your life as a gay man, you

refuse to let any of those things define you. 'The one thing' you wish to be known as, you have said, is 'a Christian.'"

CBS News Spotlights Posse Scholars

CBS Evening News featured Lafayette and the Posse Foundation, calling the College's Class of 2007 Posse Scholars "a wildly successful team" and citing Posse's record of "graduating minority students from top colleges at twice the national rate." The *Evening News* web site includes the story plus video interviews with President **Daniel Weiss** and Deborah Bial, Posse's founder and president.

Posse identifies, recruits, and trains student leaders from urban high schools to form multicultural teams ("posses") that enroll at top-tier colleges and universities. This year's freshman class at Lafayette is its sixth class with a posse from New York City and second with a posse from Washington, D.C. The College's successful affiliation with Posse also has been featured in the *New York Times* and *Chronicle of Philanthropy*.

Posse students "graduate at a rate higher than the rest of the school [and] not only succeed academically, they lead," Weiss says. "They get involved in programs on our campus to make the learning environment and the living environment richer and more exciting. It's not enough just to have students who can get good grades. What we want are students who can help make the learning environment rich and lively for all of us, and this they do." The College awarded Bial an honorary degree in 2006.



CBS Evening News featured the Posse Foundation and called Lafayette's 2007 Posse Scholars "a wildly successful team."

The 10 members of Lafayette's '07 posse included **Danielle Bero**, recipient of the Pepper Prize and Riley Temple '71 Creative and Artistic Citizenship Award; **Terese Brown**, recipient of the Jeffrey D. Robinson '80 Leadership Award and Aaron O. Hoff People's Choice Award; and **Maly Fung**, who received the David A. Portlock Award.



Faculty News

Rex Ahene, professor of economics and business, is in Uganda as senior technical adviser to that country's Private Sector Competitiveness Project and conducting research on African land policy and markets. He was the principal architect of new land policy, laws, and regulations in Tanzania and Malawi and influenced land reforms in South Africa and his native Ghana.

Sharon Jones, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering, was awarded the Engineering Education Excellence Award by the National Society of Professional Engineers. She also was appointed visiting scholar in the Science, Technology, and Environmental Policy program at Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School. Jones, **Christopher Ruebeck**, assistant professor of economics and business, and **Jeffrey Pfaffman**, assistant professor of computer science, were awarded a major National Science Foundation grant for research to improve environmental policy-making.

Chawne Kimber, associate professor of math, organized a course-development workshop on the mathematics of social justice at Middlebury College, building on a similar workshop at Lafayette. She is the recipient of the College's Thomas Roy and Lura Forrest Jones Faculty Lecture Award and Excellence in Diversity Education Award.



The Lafayette community celebrated African American tradition, legacy, and spirituality with poetry, dance, and song at Kwanzaa.

African American Experience

A research project by **Danielle Weaver '07** on the experiences of African American students at Lafayette in the late 1960s culminated in an exhibit at the David A. Portlock Black Cultural Center.

Weaver researched the black experience at Lafayette under the direction of **Diane Shaw**, special collections librarian and College archivist. Her exhibit included photographs from the archives plus the words of African American students excerpted from interviews published in a student-recruitment brochure from the early 1970s called, "Rapped in Black."

"As a student of color, I am interested in learning about my history. I started to pick up bits and pieces of the history of African Americans



at Lafayette through my meetings with different professors and administrators, as well as through my parents [**George '72 and Sylvia Daniels Weaver '75**]. I wanted to learn more and have a whole picture of what the African American experience has been like at Lafayette throughout Lafayette's history," Weaver says.

"Working with Diane Shaw was amazing. My research with her was an independent study, and the installation project came from working with **Mike Benitez**, director of Intercultural Development. An opportunity came up for an exhibit at the Portlock Center, and I jumped at the chance to share the information I had gathered in my research."

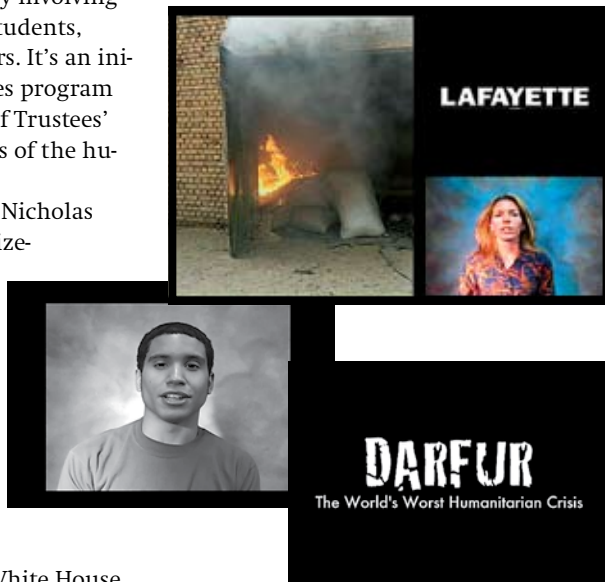
CAMPUSCONNECTIONS

Groundbreaking Video on Darfur

In a powerful video, “The World’s Worst Humanitarian Crisis,” the Lafayette community condemns the genocide in Darfur. Written by **Christopher Haight '09**, the production breaks new ground by involving more than 100 trustees, students, faculty, and administrators. It’s an initiative of the Policy Studies program to implement the Board of Trustees’ call to heighten awareness of the human-rights crisis.

Policy Studies brought Nicholas Kristof, whose Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* columns have advanced knowledge of Darfur, to campus for a public lecture and will hold a workshop for local educators on how to convey the tragic lessons of the crisis. Activism by students includes contacting the White House.

The Darfur video and other podcasts and slideshows are giving alumni new ways to connect with the life of the College. Experience them on the Lafayette web site (www.lafayette.edu).



Intercultural Horizons Debuts

A new campus magazine, *Intercultural Horizons*, debuted with an issue entitled “Globalizing the Racial Line” that included articles by students and staff.

“As a publication of voices speaking for change, it serves as a social support vehicle for groups to embrace diversity and aims to provide space to write about critical issues on campus, the local community, society at large, and the wider globe,” says **Michael Benitez Jr.**, director of the Office of Intercultural Development, which publishes *Intercultural Horizons*.

“The goal is to provide Lafayette and neighboring communities with different viewpoints on current issues underlying diversity and social justice, equitable community, and multiculturalism,” he says.

Pierre '06 Founds Networking Group

National Public Radio’s *News & Notes* program featured an interview with **Nkrumah Pierre '06**, who founded Young Entrepreneurs Entertainment, New York City, a networking organization that helps young professionals of color make connections.

A commercial real estate analyst with M&T Bank and former president of Brothers of Lafayette, Pierre started the organization as a student—more than 100 people attended his first networking get-together—and has continued organizing events.

News & Notes, which airs nationally, explores issues and people from an African American perspective. “I feel it’s very necessary for young African Americans, young professionals to have a mentor,” Pierre told the show’s host, Farai Chideya. “I have about three or four mentors that helped me. So I want to be able to lend a helping hand and be a mentor myself.”



This year’s Presidential Speaker on Diversity was Lani Guinier, author, law professor, and President Clinton’s nominee to be assistant attorney general for civil rights.

Working for Environmental Justice

Britney McCoy '05

THE CHILDHOOD CURIOSITY OF Britney McCoy

'05 flabbergasted her elders. Since that time her intellectual curiosity has taken her places she never thought possible.

"Even though I expected great things in life, it's hard to believe I'd be here now," says McCoy, who is pursuing a doctorate in engineering and public policy at Carnegie Mellon University. "A lot of the people I grew up with in Washington, D.C., aren't here any more. So it's still a little surreal, and sometimes I find myself asking if it's real or not."

McCoy's academic and social pursuits are indeed real. They are attracting recognition and affecting change.

Her research on emissions from U.S. petroleum refineries and how those emissions affect the health of residents in surrounding communities earned her a Teresa Heinz Environmental Scholarship award and an invitation to speak at a major 2007 seminar on environmental justice at Carnegie Mellon's Steinbrenner Institute for Environmental Education and Research.

McCoy's exploration of environmental justice issues began at Lafayette. A double major in engineering studies (formerly called A.B. engineering) and government & law, she wrote an honors thesis under the direction of **Sharon Jones**, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering, on the social-justice issues surrounding a water-contamination episode in Washington, D.C.

McCoy is drawn to issues with a personal connection. "For instance, with my air-quality work, six years ago my mother was diagnosed with asthma, five years ago my brother was diagnosed, and two years ago I was," she says. "It's very rare that adults are diagnosed with asthma, but it's happening more and more. It's thought that respiratory-related issues and illnesses are highly linked to the quality of the air, so I wanted to look at emissions and really examine how they're reported."

Along with using her intellect to solve social problems, she's driven to help her community on a more personal level. As a member of Carnegie Mellon's Black Graduate Student Organization she has been a role model for area youths through partnerships with Pittsburgh's public schools.

"Even though these students are surrounded by several universities, most of them have never been to campus before," McCoy says. "We really want them to see students of color who are in college and have decided to extend their careers into graduate school—and to show them about the pos-



sibilities. There is a whole world of careers that is not taught in school, and if all you see of minority heroes are basketball players and entertainers, that's all you'll aspire to be."

As president of the Association of Black Collegians at Lafayette she got the leaders of ABC, Nia (the multicultural women's support group), and the Brothers of Lafayette to communicate and work together to make the campus more inclusive. Her efforts were recognized with the Jeffrey Robinson '80 Award for Leadership.

"I didn't realize I had the potential to be a leader until I arrived at Lafayette," McCoy says. "People like **Dean Hutchinson** [Fluney Hutchinson, associate professor of economics and business and former dean of studies] encouraged me to get out there, get involved, and take responsibility in the Lafayette community. You just become driven to improve. That's the whole point of community: you work together to improve it."

"For me, everything is about giving back—I believe all people need is a spark to get to where their true potential is." ■

“LEGACY”

CELEBRATES MCDONOGH

Available in a limited edition of 100 signed prints, “Legacy,” by **Curlee Raven Holton**, celebrates and supports the creation of a campus sculpture honoring **David Kearney McDonogh**, the College’s first African American graduate and perhaps the first person with legal status as a slave ever to receive a college degree. Sculptor Melvin Edwards has been engaged to create a sculpture commemorating Lafayette’s granting of a degree to McDonogh in 1844.

The print “speaks to the importance of the relationship of Lafayette’s African American alumni to the College and to larger issues of educational opportunities locally and nationally,” Holton says. The signed print will be shipped with a letter of provenance. The image size is 18 by 24 inches, the paper size 22 by 30 inches. The purchase price is \$1,000. For information, contact EPI, (610) 330-5592 or holtonc@lafayette.edu.

LAFAYETTE

