

## Calendar of Events

### Annual Multicultural Family Reunion

Wednesday, September 21, 2011 - 11:30 a.m.  
Multipurpose Studio  
618 S. Michigan Ave./4th floor

### Black Student Union Annual "Black Out Party"

Friday, September 23, 2011 - 10:00 p.m.  
Stage Two  
618 S. Michigan Ave. 2nd floor  
Suggested Donation/College ID required.

### Paint It Black Auditions

Monday, September 26 - Tuesday, September 27, 2011 - 6:00 p.m.  
Multipurpose Studio  
618 S. Michigan Ave./4th floor

### "The Wonder Year" Screening and Q/A with 9th Wonder

Friday, September 30, 2011 - 4:00 p.m.  
Stage Two  
618 S. Michigan Ave./2nd floor

### Black Student Union Meeting

Every Wednesday - 6:30 p.m.  
Multicultural Affairs Conference Room  
618 S. Michigan Ave./4th floor

### "The Barbershop" for MEN ONLY!

Monday, October 10, 2011 - 7:00 p.m.  
Multipurpose Studio  
618 S. Michigan Ave./4th floor

### Meet and Greet with Darrin Henson (Lem from Soul Food TV Show)

Monday, October 17, 2011 - 5:30 p.m.  
Multicultural Affairs Conference Room  
618 S. Michigan Ave./4th floor

### Afro Blue Café: Open Mic

Monday, October 17, 2011 - 7:00 p.m.  
Multipurpose Studio  
618 S. Michigan Ave./4th floor

### Faculty/Staff Meet & Greet

Wednesday, October 26, 2011 - 4:00 p.m.  
Multipurpose Studio  
618 S. Michigan Ave./4th floor

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# :::harambee:::

AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL AFFAIRS NEWSLETTER | 618 SOUTH MICHIGAN AVENUE/4TH FLOOR | 312.369.7569

Fall '11



Image: Marlon Griffith-Louis, LOUIS (from the Powder Box School Girl series), 2009

## multicultural affairs

### African - American Cultural Affairs

618 South Michigan Avenue/4th Floor  
p. 312.369.7569 • f. 312.369.8465  
[colum.edu/africanamericanculturalaffairs](http://colum.edu/africanamericanculturalaffairs)

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CHRIS'S CORNER | IT'S HARD | SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES | BLACK STUDENT UNION OFFICERS | MUSIC DROP | UNSPOKEN | GYPSY FASHION TAKES THE LEAD | AN URBAN PARADISE | OUR RESPONSIBILITY



Greetings!

## Director's Corner

IT'S A NEW YEAR! The beginning of the academic year is always exciting to me. High School graduates and transfers are joining the Columbia College Chicago family for the first time and returning students are continuing to perfect their craft. I know classes have begun when I see several new students on the sidewalk of Michigan Avenue and Wabash with cameras simulating a live newscast. The elevators are packed, posters are up everywhere about events and the Harrison stop is abuzz with students climbing the stairs. Classes at Columbia are back in session.

What will the new year bring? BSU meetings, Afro Blue, Village Lunches, One Tribe events and the 5th anniversary of the infamous Paint it Black are just a few of the events scheduled for this year. Getting involved is key to your success. Students who network develop contacts that turn into life long friendships, references, internships and jobs. College is only what you make it therefore you are the author of your 4 years here at Columbia. Learn from your past mistakes but don't become hostage to them. Make a vow to do it bigger and better this year and most of all LIVE WHAT YOU LOVE.

**Kimberly L. Weatherly**  
Director  
African-American Cultural Affairs  
618 South Michigan Avenue/4th floor  
312.369.7569  
aaca@colum.edu

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MEET & GREET  
**DARRIN HENSON**

MONDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2011  
5:30 P.M.  
MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS CONFERENCE ROOM  
618 S. MICHIGAN AVE./4TH FL.

Join us for a special meet and greet with actor/choreographer Darrin Henson, Lem from TV's *Soul Food*.

Stay afterwards for the open mic at Afro Blue Performance Cafe.  
7:00 p.m. - Multipurpose Studio  
618 S. Michigan Ave./4th Floor

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MONDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2011  
7:00 P.M.  
MULTIPURPOSE STUDIO  
618 S. MICHIGAN AVE./4TH FL.

African-American Cultural Affairs presents student performances of music, poetry, theater and comedy, in an intimate café setting. Performances will be followed by an open mic.

Come a little early to meet Darrin Henson, Lem from television's Soul Food.  
5:30 p.m. - Conference Room  
618 S. Michigan Ave./4th Floor

AFRO  
BLADE  
CAFE

Performance Cafe

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## Chris's Corner

I'm about to start my last year at Columbia College, and I've been buggin' about what to do after graduation. Since coming to Columbia, I've done a lot of terrific Student Affairs work here at Multicultural Affairs, and had some amazing opportunities to teach through the Fiction Writing department. One of my happiest days in recent memory (aside from the day back in December when "My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy" leaked to the internet) was when I updated my resume and realized that I would probably not have to go back to proofreading once I got done with school.

I worked as a proofreader for four years before coming to Columbia for a master's degree in Fiction Writing. Aside from wanting to do more creative writing, I came to grad school for career options. Proofreading is a dead end, and I

was glad to quit when I did.

A proofreader is the person who reads over a magazine or catalog to make sure that there aren't any mistakes. To be sure that no one accidentally wrote "Nude York City" or priced a \$500 lawnmower at \$5. It beats digging ditches, but it's boring, it involves a lot of squinting, and if there's anything wrong with the final product, it's all your fault.

Since Columbia can't handle the heat, I'm off from Multicultural Affairs for the whole summer. The teaching job that I had lined up lost funding, and suddenly it was May and I didn't have anything to do until August. I was tempted to see how long I could sit on the couch in my boxers, but I needed money to buy more Cosby sweaters off of eBay, so I had to take on some freelance work in my old field: proofreading. This time, it was for an architecture magazine. "It won't be too bad," I told myself. "It's only for a couple months."

Fast-forward three weeks to the first big deadline. It was after 5 p.m. on a Friday, the magazine was going to print on Monday, and I still had to look over captions for photographs of super fancy condos that I could never dream of living in (Lord, let me prove to you that having a crib with a skin sauna will not change me!). Meanwhile, my girlfriend was texting me from a cookout across town: "Picked up some whiskey!" "Ooh, they just put burgers on the grill!"

The sun was going down and I wanted out of that office so bad. I wish I could tell you a heroic story about me throwing a water cooler through the window and escaping into the sunset, but I just buckled down and worked until 8:45pm, just shy of a twelve-hour shift. I biked over to the cookout and lay in the grass with a cold burger and some grown-folks beverages, resolving to teach and get involved in Multicultural Affairs as much as possible this upcoming year. That way, I could fatten my resume and avoid doing any more proofreading. Sometimes you've got to know what you DON'T want to do in order to figure out what you DO want to do.

What don't you want to do? What are you trying to move beyond? What motivates you to be great at Columbia College?

by Chris Terry

Photo by Melanie MacBride



**It's Hard**  
by YaQuavia Gooden

Pregnant. That was the word the showed up on the home pregnancy test that I took in my dorm room bathroom. How did this happen?

Well, we all know how it happened, but I thought I was being careful. I was almost done with school, just a few more semesters left, and I find out I'm pregnant. Believe it or not, I was scared. My options were clear: finish school and have my child. I haven't had a normal day since I found out I was pregnant. I have always been the type to have a lot on my plate, and now a whole baby is going to be added to it...oh wow!

3:30am: Quanell wakes for something to drink.

6:30am: Quanell is up and ready to play.

7:00am: Make breakfast and start playtime.

8:00am: run around the house and play with Quanell.

12:00pm: Quanell eats lunch.

1:00pm: Quanell takes a nap and I try to get some homework done (this turns into my naptime).

3:30pm: Quanell is up and I need to figure out what we are eating for dinner.

6:30pm: Dinner is ready.

8:00pm: Quanell's bath time.

9:00pm: Quanell's bedtime. Now, time for mommy time

12:00am: Mommy's bedtime.

The cycle starts all over again.

This is what my day consists of, give or take a couple hours or some different activities. I am one of the very fortunate young black women who has an actual support system. My child's father is actually in his son's life without a fight. I thank God for him. Even though we are not together, we make it work for our son because he is the priority, not us, nor how we feel about each other.

Being a single parent is not easy. I have an internship, one full-time job and one part-time job, I am a full time student, and an all the time mommy. Balancing all of these things is hard, and I have to make sure that my son always comes first no matter what. I try to make sure not to spread myself thin, but I am also trying to set up my son's future. I don't want him to want for anything. I want him to work hard for everything, but I also want to be able to reward him for his hard work. I love my son so much and I never thought that being only 22 years old with an 18-month-old son would be something that I would never change. But nonetheless, it's still HARD!

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# Life Skills Workshops Tips on Tuesdays

**Tuesdays, 12:00 p.m.**  
**Multipurpose Studio**  
**618 South Michigan Avenue/4th Floor**

**SEPTEMBER 13, 2011**  
**COLUMBIA'S BEST KEPT SECRETS**  
Learn about Columbia's resources, labs, OASIS, buildings, and organizations.  
Featuring Bob Blinn from College Advising office.

**SEPTEMBER 27, 2011**  
**THE 'BUSINESS' PART ONE**  
Learn how to connect your academic plan with your career aspirations. Featuring industry professionals Daryl Satcher, actor & public speaker Yolanda Joe, TV journalist and author Chandra Dennis, and book publisher Cheryl Katherine.

**OCTOBER 11, 2011**  
**MARKET YOURSELF**  
Learn about first impressions, networking, and social media.  
Featuring Jessie Craney, Columbia College Chicago Employment Services Coordinator.

**OCTOBER 25, 2011**  
**DO I NEED TO CHOOSE/CHANGE MY MAJOR BEFORE REGISTRATION WEEK?**  
It is not the end of the world if you don't know what you want to major in or after taking classes want to do something different. Let's figure it out.

**NOVEMBER 8, 2011**  
**THE 'BUSINESS' PART TWO**  
Learn how to connect your academic plan with your career aspirations.  
Featuring industry professionals from Fashion, Graphic Design, Radio/TV and Theater.

**NOVEMBER 22, 2011**  
**HOW TO FIND INTERNSHIP FOR SUMMER 2012**  
Don't miss out on internship possibilities. Deadlines are closer than you think!  
Internship employer panel.

**DECEMBER 6, 2011**  
**END OF THE SEMESTER PARTY**  
Holiday break party. Food and refreshments will be provided.

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multi**pass**

inspirational thoughts

## Our Responsibility

It isn't our responsibility to assure we're accepted by others. Our responsibility and duty is to ourselves. To love and cherish ourselves enough to do what is best for us. When we choose not to take time to evaluate ourselves and capture the true sense of which we are; we lose who we are. We begin to fall pray to what others and the world expects of us. Self evaluation and Self love assures our valued place in this world. We must commit to the duty that it is our responsibility to do what is best for us, not someone else. There is something called the "universal flow", once we operate in this flow, self-love, universal love, things fall into place; not only within ourselves but the people we surround ourselves with. Once we value who we are and what we want, we begin to love and give unconditionally to ourselves and others. Give what you have to receive all that you need.

- Gemini Wadley  
Assistant Director of Diversity Recruitment



Image: Marlon Griffith-Louis, LOUIS (from the Powder Box School Girl series), 2009

## DEPARTMENT OF EXHIBITION AND PERFORMANCE SPACES (DEPS)

DEPS is the student-centered galleries, performance spaces and student art store of Columbia College. An extension of the classroom, DEPS fosters vibrant environments in which students can view and showcase bodies of work within the larger urban community. The DEPS calendar includes annual exhibitions of featured Columbia students as well as new work by internationally renowned artists. Contact Camille Morgan, cmorgan@colum.edu, for more info on how to get involved!

[www.colum.edu/deps](http://www.colum.edu/deps)

Glass Curtain Gallery, C33 Gallery, The Arcade, and ShopColumbia

## Black Gossamer November 17 – February 11

Black Gossamer will feature contemporary black artists who use fashion, textiles and dress to articulate their ideas on the revolution of black identity over the last decade. Curated by Camille Morgan.

Reception with curator and artists: November 17 at 5 p.m.

Glass Curtain Gallery  
1104 S Wabash Avenue, 1st floor  
Chicago, IL 60605

Gallery Hours: Mon-Wed, Fri, 9-5pm, Thurs 9-7pm, Sat Noon-5pm

## Services for Students with Disabilities

The Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office provides services and accommodations for students that have a documented disability. The SSD office coordinates support services for all students who self-identify and provide verification of their disability while they attend Columbia College Chicago. Students with a disability must register with the SSD office in order to receive accommodations based upon their disability. The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities has adaptive equipment and software in a dedicated computer lab. The staff also works with faculty to provide in-class or other campus accommodations.

312.369.8296  
623 S. Wabash Ave. – Suite 304  
[colum.edu/ssd](http://colum.edu/ssd)





# What is One Tribe?

By Brandon Taylor-Sides

One Tribe is an organization built from the Office of Multicultural Affairs at Columbia College Chicago. Each of the students come from different cultural backgrounds with important experiences to share. Even though we are different, there is much we have in common. Most importantly, we've come to find that all people experience some form of oppression. May it be class, age, religion, race, ethnicity, gender... the list goes on. One Tribe has come together speak out and break oppression.

This upcoming semester, we have twelve One Tribe scholars who have each made a commitment to be part of change, starting with the campus of Columbia College. We each will be bridging gaps with different organizations and training students to become aware of the words they say. We will also be working with faculty. As teachers it's important for them to be aware of how they approach students. Developing in a safe space makes life much easier. It's our goal and duty to build people up and show them how important they are.

Columbia College has become very well known for its acceptance and respect of the LGBTQIA community. Don't believe me? Last year Columbia College Chicago had their first male Homecoming queen. On top of this, not only do we accept support from those who identify as heterosexual or other, the LGBTQIA organizations support them in return. We take pride in our allies that come to events and even those who sign pledges to respect different sexual and affectionate preferences. We have students that practice many faiths and prove that different beliefs can work and grow together. Of course, we can

never forget about our International Student Organization, Black Student Union, Asian Student Organization or Latino Alliance. It's our belief that if you mess with one person, you're messing with a whole union of people.

One Tribe came about due to the Multicultural Affairs staff. Former Asian-American Cultural Affairs coordinator Laila Alchaar expressed the importance of unity among all of the different backgrounds on campus. Each student organization has a faculty advisor, and these advisors selected students who they sensed understood the importance of diversity. The first project was called Speak Out Reach Out and allowed students to come to a safe space to express fears, concerns and past experiences that affect them. The Project was a huge hit and a week later, the same students were asked if they would commit to making more projects like this happen. This was the birth of Tunnel of Oppression. Tunnel was a very emotional project which gave students the chance to experience and understand some of the things others go through on a daily basis on the street, in school and online. Each person that came left a different person. Since these experiences, more students have become interested in making Columbia a safe space.

You don't have to fill out forms or paperwork to become a One Tribe member. Simply show up. Come as you are and become part of the One Tribe family! We have meetings every other Wednesday at 12:30 in the Office of Multicultural Affairs on the 4th floor of 618 S. Michigan Ave. It's an amazing feeling to come to a safe space and be your unconditional self, teaching and learning from other open-minded people. If you want to experience that greatness, come check us out.



# An Urban Paradise

By Tyler McDermott

Caption: Tyler rapper Big Sean

This summer, I had the immense opportunity to intern with Vibe magazine. Upon applying for the internship, I had no idea what to expect. Armed with my computer and ice water, I entered a world which I never want to leave.

Each day was a learning experience for me. I did everything from writing articles for the website, to interviews with some of music's most prestigious and rising stars, to attending industry events. I learned the art of forming witty yet informative pieces, giving your writing a voice, and the work behind creating and manufacturing a major publication.

The best part was when the senior editors gave the other interns and I our midterm assignment, where we had to create a new version of Vibe. The excitement was unbearable, and with the backing of our senior editor mentors, the other interns and I worked hard crafting Vibe: The

New Edition, dedicated to new generation of artists, musicians, writers, businesspeople, etc. We each used our special talents and fused them into one unit to create an amazing project. as well as what was known as the V Intern Takeover.

These people who were originally just my fellow interns and staff mentors became my family. I resented leaving Vibe on my last day, but the bittersweet end didn't feel so much like a goodbye, because I know we'll all flock back to Vibe someday for part two of the V Intern Takeover. But, in the meantime I am so thankful for this opportunity in this urban paradise and am excited to return to Columbia this semester to practice the skills I learned.



Gypsies, who prefer to be known as Roma, inhabit Italian city's streets unaware of being a part of a major movement in fashion. During migration, they took on native styles, shaping the look for today's Gypsy styles. The modern day Roma woman often wears long, floral-printed dresses and skirts paired with an oversized blouse for the winter, and t-shirts during the summer.

Fashion's relentless fascination with the Gypsy style of dress remains prevalent across the globe, particularly in Florence, Italy. Contemporary fashion designers are borrowing elements from Gypsy styles to create innovative bohemian looks. Certain aspects of the bohemian style, such as a mixture of very poor and very rich fabrics, unfinished edges on a garment, and use of lace are being translated into new creations.

"I don't know that I am apart of a trend, it has never phased me," said Lumoni Monage, a Romani who resides in Italy.

In the 14th and 15th centuries, a Gypsy woman's ensemble was typically a simple dress draped around the body, often times accessorized with a turban. Navigating into the Renaissance era, Gypsy fashion consisted of laced vests, breeches, flounced skirts and billowing blouses.

Everyday women can pay a premium for the Gypsy look at several boutiques in Italy. Skirts can be priced as low as 10 euro and up to 80 euro each. Bohemian lace skirts and embroidered scarves are being worn over floral ankle-skimming skirts. Not only are Italian women following this trend, tourists have also been seen wearing lengthy peasant skirts and even going to the extremes of duplicating the traditional Gypsy hairstyle—two braided ponytails.

The Romani are an ethnic group who live within the borders of Romania,

while Gypsies don't have a definite place to live. Today, Gypsies predominantly reside in encampments near the outskirts of Florence.

Their lives are consumed with moving from one place to the next, finding resources to put together a look—any look. Fashion is not as essential to the Gypsy as it is to most people; what is functional works for them.

"Gypsies don't think about what is in fashion or not; their unclean hair and grungy style is very appealing, and there is a very strange beauty about that. Just being simply dressed can be sexy and very enigmatic," says Guido Riccitelli, dean of the fashion design department, Lorenzo de' Medici.

The Gypsy trend is intriguing because of their nomadic heritage. In past collections, designers implemented natural colors of countryside scenery, sustaining an echo of Gypsy stereotypes in the 1900s that were common in the Romantic Movement.

Designers such as Anna Sui, Roberto Cavalli, and John Galliano often use the Roma style for their high-voltage designs.

Boutique Nadine, an Italian retailer, sells unique accessories and clothing that are reminiscent of the contemporary Gypsy fashion. Sales representative Giada Fernando says, "A lot of the merchandise is very 'boho-chic.' The Gypsy skirts, peasant skirts and dresses are free flowing; women enjoy being free. Especially, in Italy where it is very warm out in the spring and summer."

As fashion designers continue to be inspired by the Gypsy motif, retailers will prosper and shoppers will gallivant to the nearest shopping outlet.

## Black Student Union Officers

Kendall Williamson - President

Kendall Williamson is a Junior at Columbia College Chicago. He is an Audio Arts & Acoustics major and a Public Relations minor. Born and raised in Joliet, IL, Kendall is a lover of God, music, family, and life. He has been playing piano for about 5 years. Before attending Columbia, he played at his home church, Triumph Community Church in Bolingbrook, IL. He is currently serving as the President of Black Student Union. While at Columbia, he has also used his musical talents at different events here at school, spanning from Big Mouth and I Love The '90s Music Show to Afro Blue Cafe: Open Mic Night. He loves listening to music including Hip-Hop, R&B, Gospel, Soul, and Jazz.



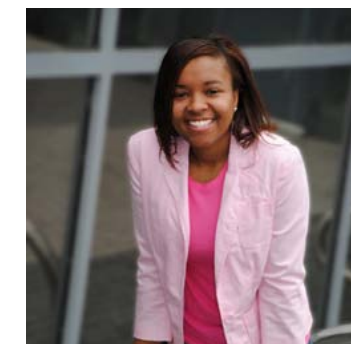
Shunda Watts - Vice President

Shunda is a senior Arts, Entertainment, and Media Management major from Joliet, IL. Her focus is in Advanced Management. Shunda's long-term goal is to start/create youth arts therapy and development programs here in the Chicago area. Currently, she is partnering with other creative and entrepreneurial minds to create small businesses. On campus, Shunda has been in student org leadership for three years as Black Student Union's treasurer and president, treasurer for the Entrepreneurship Club, and a vision team leader for Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. This year, she is very excited to be directing Paint it Black, the 5th anniversary tribute to African Americans in the arts. In her free time, Shunda likes to write poetry, go out to eat with friends, play board games very competitively, and watch Glee.



Mequilla Powell - Treasurer

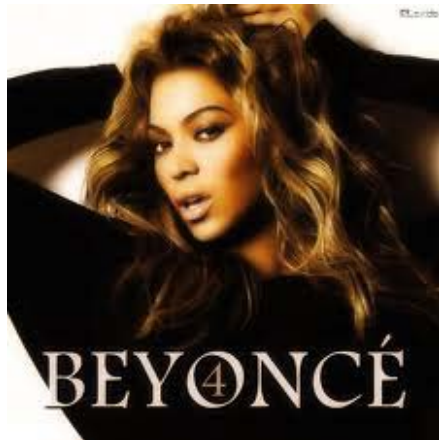
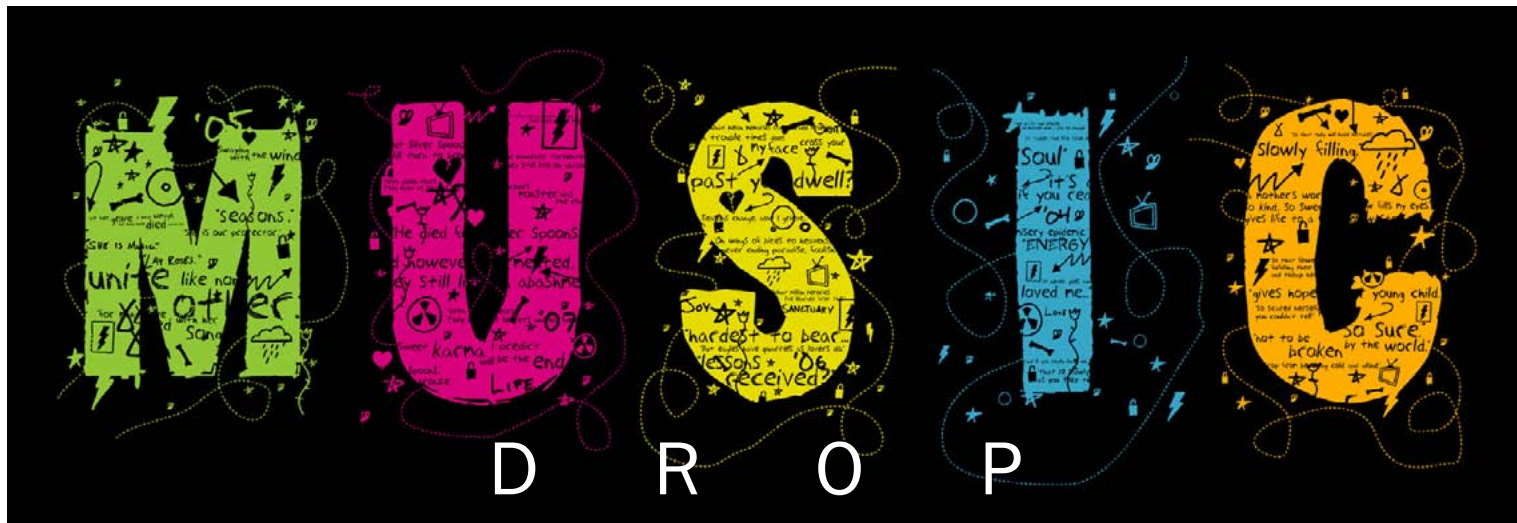
Mequilla Powell is a sophomore majoring in Broadcast Journalism with hopes of becoming a Broadcast Anchor and or Investigative Reporter. She is from Madison, Mississippi. She is a member of the Executive Board for Black Student Union where she serves as Treasurer.



T.C. Liggins - Chair

Tillman-Curtis a.k.a. T.C. is a Sophomore Marketing Communications major with a concentration in Public Relations. He is also pursuing a double minor in Music Business Management and Cultural Studies. T.C. currently holds positions as the Special Events and External Relations Chair in Black Student Union (BSU). When he is not involved with BSU, T.C. is a Student Coordinator and Scholar in the newly founded group One Tribe; a collaborative social justice group and scholarship program within Columbia's Office of Multicultural Affairs. T.C. is a Mentor in the Peer Support Program and a Student Worker in the Office of Student Engagement.





**Beyoncé  
4**

by TC Liggins

When asked the question, “Who runs the world?” Beyoncé comes to most minds. For the past ten years, Beyoncé has been one of the top female artists in the Estrogen Era of Pop. Beyoncé is a weirdo, but not as weird as her biggest competition, Lady Gaga. Wearing meat dresses to an awards show or portraying male characters like Joe Calderon is not something Beyoncé would do. Beyoncé’s weirdness is in her music. She can syncopate her voice, arrange odd melodies over intense beats, and make mixing rap bravados with gospel sanctimony and old-fashioned razzle-dazzle look good. 4 is Beyoncé’s fourth and latest album. It was set to be released June 28, 2011, but was leaked weeks earlier, which did nothing but hurt the artist’s album sales. It was also knocked out of the top spot by her former group mate Kelly Rowland’s latest album, Here I Am. Although 4 flopped, it is still an album not to be messed with. Bey brought in a team of highly recognized producers and writers, yes I said writers, to help put together this album. Her A-list of writers and producers includes: The-Dream, Tricky Stewart, Babyface, Frank Ocean, Diane Warren and Shea Taylor. The track list includes “1+1,” that shows off Beyoncé’s powerful vocals and “Run the World (Girls),” the post-feminist track that is a sample of Major Lazer’s “Pon de Floor.” All in all, Bey’s album may have been bumped out of its number one spot, but it will surely sneak its way up there somehow.



**Jay-Z and Kanye West  
Watch the Throne**

By Brandon Yarbrough

Watch the Throne, an epic album with mixed reviews, was released on August 8, 2011. Jay-Z and Kanye always lightly mentioned doing an album together. What started as “Man, it would be crazy if we did an album together” has now been deemed by most to be a legendary classic by the rap and hip-hop game’s juggernauts. These two heavyweight rappers go back and forth on all of the tracks. One noticeable track, “Otis,” has a sample of Otis Redding, the legendary soul singer from the ‘60s. The sample plays nonstop throughout the entire song, which, did I mention, has no hook. The rappers give each other assists on the song; picking up where the other leaves off. The album has some great producers who all hold their own on each track. Kanye, of course, produced most of the work, but other contributions came from 88 Keys, The Neptunes, Q-Tip and Swizz Beats, just to name a few. The album features themes of opulence, fame, materialism, power and the burdens of success. Jay-Z and West’s lyrics include boasts of obscene wealth, grandiosity and social commentary. The album is a flexing of the musical domination muscles that each rap icon possesses. Say what you want about this album, but realness in anything is a trait that is always feared and respected, and this is exactly what they brought to the table in their own way. All in all, I think this turned out to be a pretty good album. Personally I like it, and feel that it lived up to the hype. Now, everybody is entitled to their own opinion, but I believe most people would feel the same. You decide...



**Shabazz Palaces  
Black Up**

by Chris Terry

This past spring, I noticed that I was throwing on Shabazz Palaces’ “Of Light” EP whenever I wanted to hear some music. It made me think, Dang, is this my favorite band? See, I’m old: I was born when Carter was president (Jimmy, not Shawn or Wayne), and in my mid-twenties, I stopped getting all worked up over music. I still love music, but now it’s a rare occasion for me to get super geeked. But Shabazz Palaces was doing it. Speaking of being older than dirt, Shabazz Palaces is Ishmael Butler’s new project. Old heads will remember Butler as Butterfly from early ‘90s jazz-rap outfit Dignable Planets, whose album “Blowout Comb” is still on the iPod of anyone with the sense that god gave geese. Dignable Planets are a decent jumping-off point for describing Shabazz Palaces. Butler, who now goes by Palaceer Lazaro (why not, right?), still has the same breezy flow and Afrocentric lyrical content as he did back when, but his rhyme schemes have got denser, his lyrics more poetic. He’s graduated from 1994’s “I’m slicker this year, Myrtle Ave., A train, got the pick in my hair,” to “I fill my smiles up with the tears that I forgot, and haunt myself beside these pretty ghosts that float my heart. You know I’m free,” on “Free Press and Curl” off of Shabazz Palace’s 2011 LP “Black Up.” The ten-song album “Black Up” is Shabazz’s first full-length, following two well-received EPs. It’s basically Butler’s solo project, with the aforementioned rhymes echoing over futuristic boom-bap beats. The music is intense and creepy, with the atmosphere of a near future where everything has gone wrong. Synth drums boom, swells of bass obscure everything else, haunting “Oohs” sweep across the songs, and live African percussion adds texture. It sounds like the night after the machines took over. Afrofuturism is an art movement that looks to a futuristic aesthetic as a way of gaining perspective on the problems of current black life. Sun Ra, P-Funk and even “ATLiens”-era Outkast are all examples of Afrofuturistic music, and I would nestle Shabazz Palaces in there with them, as another progressive, conscious, and above all, freaky artist who should appeal to anyone with an open mind.



**Unspoken**

As the sun beats down on my face  
I take my pail and shovel  
Rigorously digging and filling  
Sand packed tightly, I tip the pail over  
And stack, stack, stack  
Stack, and stack, and stack, again & again  
Building my castles in the sand.  
Then a man came along & made me an offer.  
He said my castles were the most beautiful he’d ever seen.  
So I sold them away... Away they went,  
Never seeing them or the high bidder ever again.  
I begin to build more.  
More & more I build these castles in the sand.  
A girl came along & wanted to help.  
She said she had a trunk of wondrous treasure to dress our castles with.  
Soon to find out, this fool’s gold tarnishes again & again.  
We had to keep dressing the castles to make them seem beautiful.  
At the height of our castles’ beauty,  
A man came along and wanted to play around the castles.  
She was gone. I was lonely, so I let him stay.  
Rolling around & around in the sand,  
With no regard, he didn’t even realize his force when he took my arm and twisted it back.  
With fear he stood up speechless & ran, ran away  
Right through the tarnished castles  
Now lying with a dislocated shoulder,  
Legs too weak for me to stand, I cry out for help.  
I’m lying on my back, I cannot raise my head to see if anyone’s around...  
I try to lie still... to try to hear a sound.  
The only thing I can hear is the Water...  
I become thirsty.  
I have to find the strength to make it to the shore.  
Dragging myself across the sand, barely holding on,  
I cannot even keep my eyes open.  
I just listen to the Water to find its direction...  
At the edge of my defeat, I stretch out my hand for one last reach.  
And then... My hand is grabbed.  
This is a familiar hand, but I didn’t know it fully.  
I expected it to lift me up with ease, but no.  
There was still one matter at hand—my shoulder.  
He took my arm and aligned me back to my proper state.  
This unexpected healing made me cry out with a voice I had never used.  
But through the pain, I knew it had to be done.  
This Hand... I know it better now.  
A Healing Hand that had the compassion and concern to save me.  
And with His hands I was carried to the shore & thrown into the Water...  
This Water was a Love that refreshed my mind, heart, strength and spirit.  
It took me deep & far away from the surface of the sand.  
It allowed me to flow with freedom.  
It kept me calm & cool when the heat was too hot.  
As I swim deeper & deeper into the Water,  
I realize... I’m not alone here.  
There were others swimming with me...  
Others who had been thrown into the Water like me;  
Broken & in need of healing...  
I call them my brothers & sisters....

**Shunda A. Watts**