

dallas

a newsletter for alumni and friends of the college of liberal arts and sciences | SPRING 2008

UIC COLLEGE OF
LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES

Student Filmmaker's Documentary Uncovers Lives of Subway Performers

by Bruce Pecho



Pavan Bapu

It's a sight and sound familiar to anyone who rides the CTA—the many street musicians who fill the subway with their signature solos and serenades.

We've all passively listened, then passed them by. But Pavan Bapu, intrigued by the many talented performers he'd encountered, didn't just walk on by. He immersed himself in their world. Bapu, a senior majoring in English, parlayed his daily commute from Skokie to the UIC campus into an art-making project of his own.

The result? "Sound Underground," a 15-minute documentary Bapu made of the performers' music and personal stories. "Sound Underground," Bapu's debut project, was selected to premiere on WTTW-TV's "Image Union." Hundreds of films flood into the station, and rarely are student productions among the 40 or so chosen for broadcast each year. Bapu will enter "Sound Underground" in next year's Sundance Film Festival.

The film required three to four hours of shooting a day for three to four weeks during the summer at the Washington and Jackson stops of the CTA's Red and Blue lines. In all it took almost one year to complete. In fact, he spent a month before filming establishing a relationship of trust with the performers.

"I wasn't the first one to approach them, so at first they were put off by my approach due to past broken promises by other filmmakers," Bapu said. "From what I learned,

there was a lot more to them than meets the eye."

Like insights into the culture below street level including how donations function, the relationships between CTA officials and performers, and how performers share space.

"Prior to filming, I thought these performers were recluse people in their own worlds performing for money," Bapu said, until he learned money was not the objective of most of these performers. The musicians perform in the subway for a variety of reasons. "Those people down there, believe it or not, are people who have jobs and degrees—they do this just to release stress."

One woman was a backup singer to R&B artist R. Kelly. Others regularly perform at bars and nightclubs. These professionals find the subway to be a secondary rehearsal space.

"Their dreams, their passions are very inspirational; they're in it for the long haul," Bapu said. "They're determined to become successful. Many people don't pursue their passions. Their drive was uplifting for me."

Bapu, 22, has been interested in filmmaking since his days at Niles North High School, where he was the consummate techie and president of the AV club. He spent time after school making his own short films, documentaries, and music videos.

How does a student enrolled in film classes at UIC end up majoring in English? Bapu said, "as an English major, you deconstruct thoughts and reconstruct them into objec-

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MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Dear Friends of LAS,

As you can imagine, we have our fair share of meetings in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, gathering often to take stock of what our students and faculty need, and to work resourcefully in building the College's future. Every time I walk into one of these meetings, most everyone knows what I am about to say: "It's a great day in LAS!"

While it is probably true that I have become somewhat predictable to my colleagues and friends in the College, I think they know that I always repeat this phrase with the same commitment and freshness with which I approach my role as dean. Every week, we seem to have another accomplishment to celebrate. As you will read in the following pages, our faculty, students, and alumni have been doing some remarkable things:

- From an independent film project on Chicago's street musicians to founding a not-for-profit while also pursuing a modeling career, our undergraduates have discovered creative and important applications for what they are learning in their majors.
- From winning prizes for the humanitarian innovations of their research, to a share of this year's Nobel Peace Prize, LAS alumni bring to new audiences the training and creative thinking they honed at UIC.
- From research on neural sources of pain in naked mole rats, to the genetic switches that affect sexual orientation in mice, to isolating the moment of protein malformation in Alzheimer's, our faculty continue to make significant contributions in their fields.
- In turn, we've seen our faculty earn a myriad of accolades this past term, including a top 3 ranking for Germanic Studies, National Endowment for the Humanities grants for two of our faculty, and two National Science Foundation CAREER awards for two of the junior women faculty in Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science.

The College itself has broken new ground in many areas, and in so doing, has laid the foundations for what I hope will become traditions for LAS.



Photo by Jason Reblando

- On January 30, over 200 members of the UIC community gathered to celebrate the first LAS Distinguished Professor Award given by the College. The award's first recipient, Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, gave a lively and interdisciplinary lecture on "In Search of the Diaspora: A Personal and Intellectual Odyssey."
- To foster interdisciplinary scholarship, the College plans to commit \$100,000 per year for the next three years to support collaborative research, conferences, and classroom initiatives on interdisciplinary topics.

All this exciting news seems to indicate that brilliant futures lay ahead for LAS. But much work remains to be done. We still face extraordinary challenges. As our buildings age, and technology grows ever more sophisticated, we must all apply our greatest energies to making sure our laboratories and classrooms have the equipment that our faculty and students need to pursue their teaching and research. Nearly 615 deserving students submitted electronic applications for the 20 scholarships available from the Dean's Office this year. While we are pleased to see such a stellar applicant pool, we know, too, that we must turn away far more than we can celebrate. With more scholarships, more research and internship opportunities, more endowed professorships and chairs, we can create brilliant futures for the entire LAS community.

I hope you will join us in celebrating LAS's achievements, but also in taking up this important challenge. Come see all that is happening on campus, hire a UIC student, join the LAS Alumni Association, and make a gift that is meaningful to you.

Warmly,

Dwight A. McBride, PhD
Dean



Student News

by Bruce Pecho

YOUR VOTES HELPED MAKE HIM A SUPERMODEL ON BRAVO REALITY SERIES



Photos of Ronnie Kroell by Sarah Silver

One harsh winter's day, Ronnie Kroell, submerged in a huge tank of water, was enraptured by a six-foot boa constrictor. On another day, he was suspended from the rafters by wires forcing him to model a suit in mid-air. He even balanced a heavy headpiece while simultaneously walking a sheep down the catwalk.

Ronnie Kroell, a junior political science major, hit the catwalk as one of the eager contestants on Bravo's *Make Me a Supermodel*. And after competing against 13 other Supermodel-wannabes and 12 weeks of nail-biting elimination rounds, it all came down to Ronnie and one other.

"I felt that making it to the final four was a real accomplishment," Ronnie said. "During that last moment, so many emotions went through my mind. When I didn't win I was disappointed, but I was happy for Holly."

Kroell and the other contestants competed for the top prize of \$100,000 and a modeling contract with New York Model Management—a professional modeling agency committed to promoting top talent and exciting new faces. Week after week, the

wannabes performed in creative, unusual and sometimes downright outrageous challenges designed to test their professional modeling potential. Four times Ronnie faced the possibility of being voted off the show, but loyal viewers were hooked on his warmth and straightforwardness. Bravo even playfully presented him with "Bronnie" t-shirts inspired by his crush on fellow Supermodel contender (and straight) Ben.

His fondest memory? "When the panel apologized to me. At first they kept saying I was a wholesome, All-American kind of model who wouldn't be able to break into the high-fashion world of modeling. Finally, after I became more confident, it was nice to hear casting agent Jennifer Starr say 'I'm sorry, Ronnie, you really can do this' and that I had grown as a model."

Ronnie's transformation was due, in part, to two makeovers during the run of the show. As he sees it, a lot of how you feel inside comes from the outside and a lot of what you see on the outside generates the way you feel inside.

"It gives you that edge that boosts your

confidence and self esteem," he said. "Confidence is something I've always struggled with. There's a fine line between ego and confidence and I've never wanted to cross that line."

Kroell, who grew up in Andersonville and Morton Grove, worked for smaller modeling agencies in Chicago and happened to be scanning *craigslist.com* for any available jobs when he happened upon the *Supermodel* audition notice. He had two hours to get downtown to make the audition.

"I nearly fell off my seat when I got called back to New York as part of the final 40. I've been pursuing this for ten years and when it finally happens, you hardly believe it!"

Kroell became interested in modeling at the age of 15, inspired by a friend's mother who worked with Victor Skrebneski, the renowned photographer. Smitten, Ronnie would spend hours paging through books of his work on the fashion industry.

"It's probably one of the toughest industries out there. What I did on the show amounted to me playing in the NBA. When you want something so bad and it's finally given to

Continued on opposite page

18-YEAR-OLD BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES JUNIOR NAMED TO USA TODAY'S ALL-USA COLLEGE ACADEMIC TEAMS

Ying (Amy) Ye has had years of scientific research experience—and she's only 18. She was one of only 20 students named to USA Today's All-USA College Academic Third Team. She was recognized for her work studying the effect of abortion on breast cancer risk; now she's trying to find an effective method of early cancer detection.

Ye enrolled at UIC as a freshman at the age of 15 after skipping third and ninth grades, and excelling at the Illinois Math and Science Academy. "I've adjusted to living with people who are older," said Ye, who is pursuing minors in math and chemistry.

This year, Ye was one of three UIC students to win a Goldwater Scholarship, an annual award given to students in math, science or engineering by the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation.



you, it freaks you out. It's a little scary—I'm suddenly contemplating moving to New York." In fact, Ronnie and the other final four contestants all just signed contracts with New York Model Management.

The real beauty of a career in modeling is Ronnie's desire to use that fame in his passion for making a difference in his community. He established a not-for-profit organization called 4+1 Productions, with a mission of "bridging diversity through performance, art, literature, media and education in the Chicagoland community." 4+1 supports artists by providing them access to a growing multi-cultural network, hosting networking events, and serving as a vehicle through which they can share and celebrate their diversity with the community at large.

"It was wonderful to come home and find there was so much support for me. Now, thanks to the show, we can take our vision

to greater heights than we ever imagined. By sharing this vision and passion with others, we hope the community will embrace 4+1's mission. In doing so, we can do our part in reducing prejudice, hate crime, and discrimination."

Kroell realizes that to really make it as a supermodel requires tenacity and hard work. But he's dedicated to his two personal mantras in life: "Be the change that you wish to see in the world" and "People give up on their dreams, dreams don't give up on people." Using his passion, his modeling fame and fortune, and his political science education to influence policy, he will walk a new catwalk to really make a difference.

"I don't want 4+1 to be passing fancy. I want it to be a pillar of the community, to last long after I'm gone."

Learn more about Ronnie and 4+1 online at www.ronniek.com



Alumni News

By Virginia Tunnick



Hemant Mehta visits Old St. Pat's Church in the West Loop area of Chicago. (Photo by Suzanne Sataline)

Hemant Mehta appears on the Christian television talk show "Life Today." From left, hosts Betty and James Robison, Mehta and his soul's "buyer" Jim Henderson. (Photo by LIFE Outreach International)



YOUR BIDDING HELPED FRIENDLY ATHEIST SELL HIS SOUL ON EBAY

At 14, devastated by his family's move from Tennessee to a Chicago suburb, Hemant Mehta (LAS, 2004) became an atheist. "I couldn't believe God would be letting that happen...I discovered there really weren't any satisfactory answers—not from Jainism [the religious tradition in which he was raised], and not from any other religion either."

As a student at UIC, Mehta helped to found Students Without Religious Dogma (SWORD), now called Rationalists and Free Thinkers (RAFT). Since graduating, he has continued working with atheist groups. When his atheist friends describe their experiences in church, Mehta says, "they were almost always negative. I sometimes wondered if their stories were biased, so I wanted to check church out for myself."

Thinking it would be fun to have other people choose a church for him to attend, he decided to try to sell his soul (or at least church-going time)... on eBay. The listing read, in part, "While I don't believe in God, I firmly believe I would immediately change those views if presented with evidence to the contrary. And at 22, this is possibly the best chance anyone has of changing me. So, here's my proposal. Every time I come home, I pass this old Irish church. I promise to go into that church every day—for a certain number of days—for at least an hour each visit. For every \$10 you bid, I will go to the church for 1 day."

"I'm not sure of the total number of bidders, but I do know that Christians would bid for me to go to their church, then

atheists would bid for me not to go to church at all, and the two groups just kept outbidding each other!" The winning bid (\$504) came from Jim Henderson, a minister from Seattle, Washington, who encouraged Mehta to attend not just one, but a variety of churches.

The auction generated a flurry of media coverage that resulted in a book deal. *I Sold My Soul on eBay: Viewing Faith through an Atheist's Eyes* (WaterBrook Press) appeared in April 2007. Mehta says the response has been overwhelmingly positive. "Atheists have ... appreciated that I was able to write about atheism in a positive light . . . Christians have enjoyed the perspective on church they don't normally hear from their own people."

Mehta's own "beliefs were only confirmed through this journey. But I did see a lot of churches doing wonderful secular things for the community . . . If only more churches were willing to help people without being so focused on converting them all."

Currently, Mehta teaches high school math in Naperville, IL, chairs the Secular Student Alliance and blogs at www.friendlyatheist.com.



Top: Jean Bogner
Bottom: Carlos Simmerling

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNING ALUMNA HONORED FOR ENRICHING YOUR WORLD

What do Al Gore and LAS alumna Jean Bogner have in common? The Nobel Prize! Bogner is part of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the group that shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with Gore. The Nobel Committee cited "their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change."

Bogner was the coordinating lead author of the chapter on waste management for her working group's report, "Mitigation of Climate Change," which was part of the overall IPCC report, *Climate Change 2007*.

When news of the Nobel Prize came, Bogner was participating in an IPCC outreach meeting in Calcutta, India. "The press rushed in. We were interviewed, photographed, and had our pictures in the *Times of India* the next day. Quite exciting! It was a wonderful finale for the local organizers of the meeting."

Bogner is pleased that the prize "has raised the level of public interest in climate change science and mitigation issues... [and] given a 'local face' to these important issues."

President of Landfills +, INC. in Wheaton, IL, Bogner is an expert on landfill gas (LFG) recovery, utilization, and mitigation of emissions. With over 30 years of experience (including 20 years at Argonne National Laboratory), she has worked with U.S. Department of Energy and private sector programs on commercial, research, and policy aspects of landfilling and landfill gas recovery. She's also an Adjunct Associate Professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences at UIC.



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tive, cohesive writing. In filmmaking, you take loose ideas, theories, and concepts and you objectify them to specific shots,

lighting, edits. In both cases, you go through the process from objectivity to subjectivity."

He augmented his major by enrolling in film study classes at UIC and worked at WTTW Channel 11 as the chief production intern for "Foods of Chicago: A Delicious History." This experience is crucial as he looks to a career in television production.

In making the film, Bapu had to overcome many road blocks and bureaucratic hassles, and had to think way outside the box to meet his own \$100 budget. UIC English lecturer and internship coordinator Linda Landis Andrews helped arrange an independent study course to classify the project as a non-

CHEMIST'S GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH EARNS HUMANITARIAN AWARD

In recognition of his groundbreaking contribution to the understanding of the molecular basis of diseases such as HIV, Carlos Simmerling received the \$50,000 prize in the Humanitarian Impact Innovation category of the 2007 Itanium Solutions Alliance Innovation Contest. Simmerling and his team created a computer model of HIV protease that showed for the first time how a drug can enter and deactivate it. "This is a case of the timely convergence of technology [with research agendas] in math, computer science, physics, chemistry and biology," Simmerling says.

Simmerling credits UIC with providing the academic foundation for the work he does today. "I grew up on the south side of Chicago," he explains. "I went to UIC after being out of school for some time, so I was very motivated to work hard... I was a chemistry undergrad, and to be honest I didn't like lab work very much. I stuck with it. I started to learn about how computers were becoming useful for studying small molecules in great detail. Because I found this fascinating (and a potential way to study chemistry without being in the lab!), I decided to stay on as a PhD student. I learned about proteins and how very little was known about the way they behave at the atomic level." UIC faculty helped him to think about scientific problems in an interdisciplinary way by encouraging him to focus not just on traditional chemistry, but also on mathematics, computer science and physics. This interdisciplinarity, "the model of modern research," is, he suspects, what appealed to the judges.

In addition to his primary appointment in chemistry, he is the Director of Computational Biology for the Institute for Chemical Biology and Drug Discovery at SUNY Stony Brook.

profit and academic endeavor. Next, UIC backed Bapu with \$2 million in liability insurance required by the CTA. His friend's father, a CTA planning engineer, served as the required CTA location supervisor throughout filming. And the CTA agreed to waive the substantial filming fees to grant Bapu permission to complete his self-funded student project.

This collaboration of the filmmaker, the University and the CTA, and the performers themselves combined to create a unique portrait of underground Chicago music.

"I was very fortunate that all the pieces of the puzzle fit together; it was very euphoric," Bapu said. "I'm utterly thankful for everyone who helped out—my family, my partners, my professor."

You can watch "Sound Underground" online at www.bapu-films.com.

Above left: From "Sound Underground," Tampico serenades riders of the CTA Blue Line on the Washington stop platform where she plays violin, acoustic guitar and hand cymbals.

A Steady Pen & Roaming Heart: PAUL ZELEZA

By Stacia Campbell

Though his résumé is 41 pages long, listing the twenty books and countless articles he has published, the grants and awards he has earned, LAS Distinguished Professor Paul Tiyambe Zeleza has never learned to type. But looking at the trajectory of Zeleza's intellectual and personal life—one guided by independence, deep curiosity, and at least a pinch of rebellion—it is easy to see how he never found time for typing lessons. Like many of us, he studied hard to get good grades and go to college. **Few of us, however, have grown up in a country with only one university to attend. Even fewer of us have found ourselves published authors before graduation, or made political exiles for what we have written.** The story of how these efforts and experiences have combined to bring Zeleza to UIC is perhaps too epic for these pages. But the story speaks not only to Zeleza's zest for new ideas and ways of communicating them, but also to UIC's own vision for recruiting him to head the Department of African American Studies.



UIC UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO

While home on break from the University of Malawi in the early 1970s, Zeleza wrote his first short stories, the din of his hunting and pecking on the manual typewriter often testing his mother's patience. "Because I was always writing, my mama would say, 'can't you leave the house, and go play, or go do *something*?'” Before finding books—and the typewriter—Zeleza had spent much of his boyhood outdoors, growing flowers in his mother's garden, playing soccer and tennis instead of studying for class. He laughs with delight at this memory, and at the irony of his mother's exasperation—his writing getting him into various degrees of trouble early on, when Malawi's independence was as new as his own.

Malawi became independent in 1964, when Zeleza was only nine years old. That historical moment, “incredibly exciting” as Zeleza recalls, seemed to close the thousands of miles between Africa and the Americas. He admired the dazzling athletics of Pelé and Muhammad Ali, and watched with child's confusion as his parents mourned Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. These athletes and leaders had burned powerful images upon his consciousness, despite Zeleza never having seen footage of Pelé kicking a goal—or Dr. King orating at a podium. Kamuzu Banda had made television illegal in Malawi, banning its corruptions even in his earliest days as “president.” This ban, as Zeleza points out, not only failed to quell his or his friends' imaginations, but cultivated it, their mind's eye bringing vivacity to the newspaper stories that t.v. might otherwise have dampened.

When stellar marks on his 8th grade exams earned him a place at St. Patrick's secondary school, Zeleza joined a boarding system designed to educate Malawi's most promising students. It also moved him away from home at age 13. Under intense pressure, he and his friends “would sneak into the classrooms with our little lamps, because if you put on the light, the school master would know.” They would study “another two or three hours” past curfew. Though living apart from his family was difficult, Zeleza says that the experience helped him attain an early self possession: “When I talk to my old friends—many of us are scattered all over the place now—we attribute our ability to deal with different circumstances, different countries and cultures to our experience at boarding school.”

Zeleza and his classmates felt an urgent purpose beyond their individual achievements. Their teachers groomed them to realize, as Zeleza says, “the historic and humanistic dreams of African nationalism: decolonization, nation building, development, democratization, and regional integration,” a charge reserved for those chosen to become the country's intellectual elite. Enrolling in the University of Malawi in 1972, Zeleza majored in history and English, and quickly became active in the writing circles on campus.

By then, writing under Banda's regime had become more dangerous than watching television. The heady first days of constitutional democracy had succumbed to what would become nearly three decades of dictatorship. On Fridays, Banda's Special Board swept the campus of those lecturers and students deemed dangerous enough to earn a trip to “detention.” There, as Zeleza would later write in his novel *Smoldering Charcoal*, they would be held captive in total darkness or in crowded squalor, conditions designed to compromise their humanity. Zeleza had seen others hauled off to detention, returning weeks or months later, as he says quietly, “broken people.”

Instead of silencing them, Zeleza says that tyranny gave the country's young writers “a moral inspiration to write,” and made their “political antennae very sharp.” Not only does tyranny encourage an active imagination, he says, but also a deftness with language. Malawi's writers honed double meanings, allegories, and symbols to veil their criticisms of those keen to silence dissent.

By 1974 the stories that Zeleza had pecked out on the typewriter had caught the attention not only of a publisher, but of the Censorship Board as well. Zeleza was called into an “interview” with the board's chairman. “Do you want to be like Wole Soyinka?” the chairman asked Zeleza. Wole Soyinka, the Nigerian writer and Nobel Laureate, had from 1967 to 1969 spent 22 months in a Nigerian prison for his writings, and for covert attempts to broker a peace to avert a civil war.

The chairman handed Zeleza a pink sheet of paper. It listed six of the short stories set to appear in his first collection, *Night of Darkness and Other Stories*. The chairman tapped the paper with his thick index finger, “If any of these appear anywhere, you will go to detention.” Zeleza left the office shaken. At that moment, he says, “It dawned on me just how real this was.”

Zeleza has never forgotten the sting of that censorship, which even now informs his approach to scholarship. “Intellectuals, in my view, are hunters. They go over a large field, focus on the mark, and then they dig. I am more attracted to the hunting than the digging. Hunting gives the ability to roam, and to be in the position to make commentaries on other issues.” This intellectual roaming, he knew, could come with a professional price, especially in an era of academic specialization. “I said to myself, ‘It's just a job. It won't cost me my life,’” a sobering perspective from a man pressed to leave his country shortly after graduation.

Zeleza has since exercised this freedom to roam, both on the map and the page. After traveling to London and Canada for graduate school, he moved to Jamaica, Kenya, and the U.S. to teach. In an era when specialization often steers academic stature, he has chosen to write syntheses, imbuing the African economic and intellectual histories he has authored with a sense of humanity that he feels had been lost. He has started a blog—the Zeleza Post—as a forum for issues relevant to Africa and its diasporas. His latest project traces the global dispersal of African peoples, the formation of African diasporas in Asia, Europe and the Americas, and the connections forged between diasporas and Africa over time. Zeleza sees such interdisciplinary work as a beacon for novel ways of studying the world—not only for himself but for the Academy as a whole.

Since January 2007, UIC has also become a beacon for Zeleza. He had developed a fondness for Illinois during the eight years he spent at UIUC from 1995-2003. It was the first place he taught in the U.S., where he raised his daughter and fell in love with his wife Cassandra Veney, an assistant professor in Gender and Women's Studies. On weekend trips from Urbana, they had daydreamed about living in Chicago. While on his visit to UIC, Zeleza felt an “infectious collegiality” amongst the faculty he met, and that serving as their spokesperson would be “a privilege.”

His first day teaching confirmed his decision to come to UIC. After class, he was surrounded by a group of students—not to ask questions about the syllabus or the research paper, but just to talk with him. In their curiosity, their desire to learn, he saw reminders of himself as he had been at 18.

Above: Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, age 19, from the cover of his first collection, *Night of Darkness and Other Stories*



Special Times, Special Events

By Bruce Pecho

ATLAS 10

LAS UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, October 1, 2008

13TH ANNUAL LAS RECOGNITION DINNER

University of Illinois at Chicago

The UIC Forum

6 pm – 9 pm

Scholarship, donor and alumni awards dinner

For more information, please contact
the LAS Office of Advancement at (312) 413-1898



12th Annual LAS Recognition Dinner

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences honored scholarship recipients, alumni and donors at its annual LAS Recognition Dinner on November 8, 2007. Benefactor Ruth Davee was awarded the Sustainer Achievement Award, the college's highest honor, for her \$1 million contribution that established a scholarship fund for deserving students with the most financial need. The Davee Scholarship covers all tuition expenses after federal and state grants have been awarded. Ruth Davee was unable to attend the dinner due to illness, but several scholarship recipients accepted the award on her behalf. Pictured above, from left: Rebecca Penzick, Mohini Pathria, Katarzyna Olcon, Namrata Bhansali, and Adnan Cassim accept the award from Dean Dwight A. McBride.

A scholarship recipient and his donor were both honored this year at the LAS Recognition Dinner. Eugene Lieben-son, a senior majoring in anthropology, was this year's recipient of the Eugenia R. & Max M. Jacobson M.D. Memorial Scholarship. Here, at right, he celebrates with, from left, Marian Jacobson and Fruman Jacobson, the donor who established the scholarship. Jacobson, an LAS alumnus and member of the LAS Board of Visitors, was himself honored at the dinner with the University of Illinois Loyalty Award for his devotion, leadership, and loyalty in making the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences an exemplary place for students and alumni.



Twiley Barker Luncheon

Emeritus Professor of Political Science Twiley Barker Jr. returned to campus on October 30, 2007 for a luncheon and visit to the Department of Political Science. The renowned professor of civil liberties and constitutional law was one of the founding faculty members of the department. He retired from UIC in 1994. Pictured at the luncheon are: seated, Professor Emeritus Twiley Barker; standing from left: Professor and Head of the Political Science Department Dick Simpson; former U.S. Senator and UIC alumna Carol Moseley Braun, one of Barker's former students; Valerie Barker Waller, Barker's daughter; and Professor Barry Rundquist. *Photo by Stephanie Whitaker*



Inaugural LAS Distinguished Professor Event

On January 30, 2008, more than 200 members of the UIC community gathered to celebrate the first LAS Distinguished Professor Award given by the College. The award's 2008 recipient, Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, delivered a lively and riveting talk on "In Search of the Diaspora: A Personal and Intellectual Odyssey." Zeleza's work in diaspora studies is uniquely interdisciplinary—blending history, literature, and African and African American studies in ways that help craft a nuanced and encompassing portrait of his topics. The author of more than twenty books, including the award winning *A Modern Economic History of Africa*, Zeleza joined the LAS faculty as department head for African American Studies in January 2007. To read the paper Zeleza presented, visit <http://zeleza.com>. *Photo by Mary Hanlon*

LAS Town Hall Meetings

In October, 2007, Dean McBride sponsored two Town Hall Meetings, giving first-year students and their families the opportunity to meet him, various associate deans in the College and faculty members from across the disciplines. In his presentation, Dean McBride extolled the values of a liberal arts education and various faculty members suggested that students make an effort to get to know their professors. According to McBride, "the students and their parents asked extraordinary questions and their energy amazed me. It was a wonderful experience."



Dedication of Sandi Port Errant Language and Culture Learning Center (LCLC)

The Sandi Port Errant Language and Culture Learning Center was dedicated on September 19, 2007. The 17,000-square-foot facility is housed in Grant Hall which underwent a \$5.1 million renovation made possible in part by the late Sidney Port's \$2 million contribution. The center, named after Port's daughter, boasts classrooms with "smart technologies," a computer lab, a peer-led writing and tutoring center, and a language oasis featuring flat-panel televisions broadcasting news and cultural programming from around the world. The ribbon cutting ceremony included, from left: James Errant, husband of the late Sandi Port Errant; U of I President B. Joseph White; Carol Port and husband Ronald Port, son of the late Sidney Port; Roberta Washlow, Sidney Port's daughter, and husband Robert; Chancellor Sylvia Manning; Dean Dwight A. McBride; and Board of Trustees chair Lawrence Eppley. *Photo by Kathryn Marchetti*

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For further information about charitable gift annuities, please call or write Chuck Coughlin, Associate Dean for Advancement, at (312) 413-3469 or cec@uic.edu. Please also consult your financial advisors before you make a decision about charitable giving strategies.

LAS Alumni Association: Committed to Making Brilliant Futures

by KJ Hardy

The LAS Alumni Association is a dynamic and diverse group of alumni committed to extending the networking and social opportunities for LAS's alumni, faculty, and staff. At their meetings, these alumni share their very diverse experiences of UIC—of the upper walkways of Circle Campus, of a hockey team gone but not forgotten, of balancing school with working a job... These may be memories you too hold from your time at UIC. The LASAA takes pride in these memories and turns this pride into gifts of time, talent, and treasure. They invite you to join them in doing the same.



Two LASAA members, Gina Giglio and Nicholas Yassan, were nominated to be Torch Bearers for the "Lighting of the Flame," a tradition that begins every UIC men's basketball game. As a student, Gina Giglio served as the Student Alumni Association representative, and recently became an alumni member upon graduating from LAS. Nicholas Yassan is the current president of the LASAA. Pictured, from left: Dave Boyer, Gina Giglio, Nicholas Yassan, and LAS alums Andrew Yassan and Lindsay Zak.



In academic year 2007-08, the LASAA co-sponsored over a dozen events led by student groups and LAS academic departments, and hosted several wonderful events of its own. The LASAA Macy's Holiday Celebration is a time honored tradition extended every December to LAS alumni and friends. This year 65 people gathered to celebrate the season over a traditional Walnut Room lunch of chicken pot pie. Pictured, from left: Frances Wyncott, alumnae April Wyncott and Francine Uhlarik, Therese Uhlarik, and Amelia Wyncott.



The LASAA is particularly proud of the LASAA Merit Award Scholarships they gave to three very deserving LAS students at the LAS Recognition Dinner in November 2007. Priyanka Kalapurayil, a senior double-majoring in Neuroscience and Sociology; Angela Mascarenas, a third-year PhD candidate in Sociology; and Cynthia Najdowski, a third-year doctoral student in Psychology, were all honored for their academic achievement and exemplary service to the College. Pictured: LASAA Board member and Co-President of the Black Alumni Advisory Council Leodis Scott congratulates Cynthia Najdowski after she received her award plaque.

To learn more about getting involved as an alum or friend of LAS, e-mail LASAA@uic.edu

Voices of the College

Faculty Awards & News

By Stacia Campbell



LAURA DEMARCO

Two assistant professors in Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science—**ALINA COJOCARU AND LAURA DEMARCO**—have earned National Science Foundation CAREER awards this year. Cojocaru and DeMarco will each receive approximately \$500,000 over the next five years. While Cojocaru’s CAREER award will support her project on Analytic Problems in Arithmetic Geometry, DeMarco reports that she will utilize her award “to understand what is special about the algebraic systems” used to analyze chaotic dynamical models. Like other CAREER awards, “The project has a big educational component. It includes funding for graduate student workshops, an undergraduate summer project, the development of a new undergraduate course, research seminars and visiting professors.” *David Marker, MSCS department head, reports that the CAREER award recognizes “the ideal academic,” someone with an outstanding research record who is also dedicated to teaching.* In 2007, the NSF awarded only 16 CAREER awards for mathematics. As Marker notes, “Having one faculty member” earn one is “an achievement. Two is remarkable.”

The Department of **GERMANIC STUDIES** was recently ranked third in the country by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* for its scholarly production. Only Harvard and Georgetown earned higher marks. Astrida Tantillo, professor and head, points out that the ranking demonstrates that “one can come to a state university and receive instruction from one of the top-ranked faculties in the nation. While we stress research, it is not at the expense of either teaching or service. Our faculty members consistently receive high rankings on student evaluations, and we work very hard to mentor both graduate and undergraduate students. Given our relatively new PhD program, this ranking will help establish our reputation as one of the top graduate programs in Germanic studies in North America.”

In December 2007, *Forbes* magazine named sociology professor **WILLIAM BIELBY** a member of their “Scary Power” group of 25 “people business hates to see coming.” Over the last two decades Bieby has served as an expert witness in discrimination litigation, testifying in cases involving defendants like Wal-Mart, Home Depot and FedEx: “Most social scientists wonder whether their work will ever be taken seriously in the ‘real world,’ and this is especially true of organizational sociologists like me. So when I was first asked to serve—in a class action gender discrimination case against Lucky Stores in California—I was pleasantly surprised that some very good lawyers had stumbled across my work and found it relevant. In preparing for rigorous cross-examination, you quickly figure out how much of what



WILLIAM BIELBY

This ranking will help establish our reputation as one of the top graduate programs in Germanic studies in North America.



you know as a social scientist really is relevant to the issues being litigated. If you express opinions that can’t be supported by the social science upon which you rely, your credibility will be undermined. When these cases are resolved . . . *my own work and that of others in my field often provides the basis for changes in company personnel policies and practices that, in my opinion, are more effective, while at the same time enhance diversity and equal employment opportunity.*” As for being feared by big business, he finds himself “mainly bemused by it all.” Besides, he says, “it’s always fun to show my friends and relatives press coverage that suggests that the work I’ve been doing for years has some currency outside the ‘ivory tower.’”

In June, 2007, **STEPHEN GUGGENHEIM**, professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences, was elected a foreign member of the Italian National Academy of Sciences and Humanities. Established in 1603, the Accademia has a long history involving major figures in science, including Galileo, Darwin, and Einstein. Only 180 foreign scholars may be members at any one time; membership is for life. In November Guggenheim attended the induction, offering this travelogue from Rome: “It was standing room only in the meeting hall at the Palazzo Corsini as I arrived for my induction ceremony into the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei in Rome. *I was honored to be included as a foreign member in this prestigious society. The entire ceremony takes place in Italian (naturally), so it was nice to see some friends in the crowd.* Even though I could not understand what was going on in detail, when I heard my name called, I realized that this honor was indeed very special. The Accademia does not specify the basis for one’s election, but I have many years of work on developing ways to understand how atoms are affected in materials at various temperatures and pressures. Interestingly, I was one of the youngest members being inducted that day.”

The National Endowment for the Humanities has granted fellowships to two LAS professors this year. **STEPHEN ENGELMANN**, associate professor of political science, will use his award next year to complete his working manu-

script that explores the moral science underpinning Charles Darwin’s *The Descent of Man*, and the likeminded works that preceded and succeeded it. His “Biopolitics: Darwin, Moral Philosophy, and the Pursuit of Social Science,” will examine how scholars have over time searched for a biological basis for human cooperation, and as Engelmenn says, “*the surprising extent to which biology, as we know it, is a social and, ultimately, a political science.*”

RICHARD JOHN, professor of history, will spend his award year finishing “Network Nation: Inventing American Telecommunications” to deliver to Harvard University Press. John’s book looks at how civic ideals and government institutions affected the pursuits of Western Union and the Bell operating companies. That the general public should have access to the communication channels that these networks provided was, John argues, “by far the most expansive civic ideal to shape American telecommunications.” In his research he has uncovered surprising details about Chicago’s role in the history of the telephone: “*To an extent that is often forgotten, Chicago was the Silicon Valley of the second industrial revolution’s information age.*” (Adapted from a UIC News Bureau press release by Brian Flood, January 10, 2008)

Though they look like buck-toothed sausages from another planet, biological sciences professor **THOMAS PARK** says that naked mole rats “are the nicest, sweetest animals I’ve ever worked with.” They are also the only animal scientists now know of that show “completely no response to acid.” Park and his research team found that naked mole rats lack Substance P, the neurotransmitter that causes the feeling of burning pain in mammals. *Park suggests that this surprising anomaly could offer long term help for humans who suffer chronic pain: “We’re learning which nerve fibers are important for which kinds of pain, so we’ll be able to develop new strategies and targets.*” To test whether the lack of substance P in the mole rate is an anomaly at all, Park’s next project involves studying its distant relations—the Mexican free-tailed bat and the Alaskan marmot. (Adapted from January 30 reports by Charles Choi for LiveScience.com, and Dan Childs for ABC News Medical Unit. Photo by Kathryn Marchetti)



STEPHEN ENGELMANN



RICHARD JOHN



THOMAS PARK

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