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Inside:

Global Outreach

Students' Engagement Feeds Thousands

Vol. 28 | No. 3 | Spring/Summer 2012



A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Students Study Law
through the Lenses of Film
and Pages of Literature by Brandi Palmer



Every Tuesday and Thursday morning, students in Professor Robert Batey's spring seminar class at Stetson University College of Law in Gulfport, Fla., crack open their books to discuss the latest assigned readings. It is a typical law school seminar, except instead of poring over case law, Professor Batey's students are reading Kafka and watching Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*.

"The course draws people who are natural readers, and hungry to read something more than cases and textbooks," Batey said. Professor Batey explained that through the lenses of film and pages of classic fiction and philosophy, students get another perspective on crime and the social response to crime. "Literature and film create a textured setting for dealing with ethics and jurisprudence," Professor Batey explained. "The focus in a standard course is on teaching doctrine. This kind of course is more about thinking what criminal law is intended for and how different actors in legal systems play their roles."

Professor Batey's course in Law, Literature & Film began in 1992 as part of a winter term cross-disciplinary program on the Stetson University campus in DeLand. He initially co-taught the course with the late Professor Michael Raymond for undergraduates.

In 1993, the first course in law and literature on Stetson Law's Gulfport campus was offered as a two-hour seminar. Interest in the intersection of law and literature had expanded in the 1980s into course offerings across the country, Professor Batey explained. Scholars like Richard Weisberg, author of *The Failure of the Word: The Protagonist as Lawyer in Modern Fiction*, and James Boyd White, who wrote *The Legal Imagination*, had helped incubate an interest. The course at Stetson Law later developed into a popular three-hour course with the addition of film, to complement the reading assignments.

Professor Ann Piccard, an English Literature major in college who studied international human rights at the University of London, also teaches the course at Stetson. "The Law, Literature & Film seminar allows students to focus on a theme that might be fiction but that has very real applications and implications

in the law. There are endless possibilities, and students are not limited in choosing their topics," Professor Piccard said. "Writing a seminar paper for this class might be a completely different experience from writing for a more traditional seminar, because literature and film know no limits."

Second year law student Jared Williams said that he is focused on criminal law and trial work and took the course in part because he would rather write a paper on a good novel than on an obscure section of the law.

Part-time third year law student Jennifer J. Conway is focused on bankruptcy, property law and mortgage law. "I enrolled in the Law, Literature & Film seminar because it combines three of my favorite subjects," Conway said. "Having studied television and film production, screenwriting and literature in both my undergraduate courses and following academic endeavors, there was no way that I could pass up an opportunity to explore how these concepts interact with law." Conway, who first worked in the legal field as a paralegal in a small bankruptcy firm in Dallas, Texas, is focused on becoming a consumer-protection advocate.

"Attorneys, especially those involved in litigation, must create a narrative that connects with the judge and jury, persuading them to reach a desired conclusion. Literature and film are stunningly similar," Conway said. "Neither have the goal to win over a judge or a jury, nor to seek or prevent a punishment; but both literature and film seek to create a story that wins over the audience and influences the way they think and perceive. When studying how literature and film portray the law, there is a sense of experiencing a story being created within another story."

"We start the course with William Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and focus on the law's ability to deter crime," Professor Batey said. In *Billy Budd*, the class explores the role of judging. In reading *Crime and Punishment*, students discuss why people confess to crimes. Titles like *Native Son*, *Menace II Society* and *Malcolm X* help students focus on contemporary issues like race in American society. Professor Batey explains how the social and behavioral sciences intersect with criminal law, and how law intersects with history and philosophy.

Professor Batey opens the discussion in the Law, Literature & Film seminar with a question about the assigned readings. In class, Professor Batey complements literary readings with films that explore similar concepts. "We read *The Scarlet Letter* and watch *Dead Man Walking*, or read Kafka and watch a documentary about the legal struggles of the film director Roman Polanski," Professor Batey said.

Students choose books, often with film components, for seminar research papers. Recent seminar research projects have included *The House of Sand and Fog*, *Lolita*, *Watchmen*, *Heart of Darkness*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Fahrenheit 451*. "The value of a seminar class like this is giving students new perspectives. If you learn to step back and think about something, later in life and in practice, when lawyers find themselves struggling, they

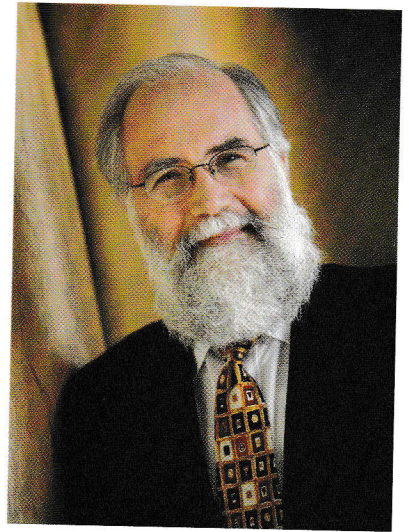
may be able to better perceive how the system is failing and what to do,” said Professor Batey, who has taught the course at Stetson for almost two decades. “By continually exposing people to ethical questions, I think they learn to think ethically.”

2008 Law alumna Afia Donkor grew up in Ghana, Africa, and still remembers the Law, Literature & Film class she took with Professor Batey more than four years later. “The tragic saga of Billy Budd, Sailor; The odd tale of Bartleby the Scrivener who preferred ‘not to’; journal entries with comments inserted by an interested and engaging professor... Truly, Law, Literature & Film was one of my favorite classes in law school,” said Donkor.

“As law students and lawyers, we tend to get bogged down in complex, critical and intricate details,” Donkor continued. “This seminar encouraged students to step back and consider the bigger picture. What lawyers are trying to do is to make sense, and use, of the legal construct put in place to bring order to society. But what do we as a society think order should look like? Should it be rigid? Flexible? What considerations should shape and influence it? The stories and films we read and considered gave us a unique glimpse into the operation of law in everyday life, and opened our eyes to the role we, as lawyers, will have to play in building a legal system we can live with and be proud of.”

“Ultimately, however, the success of the seminar lay in the skill of Professor Batey. He often challenged me to think through problems, view issues from another angle, and extract valuable lessons from the materials we worked with. As an aspiring lawyer, he also gave me much needed encouragement, and I’ll never forget the day he told me he thought I’d make a good lawyer someday.” Donkor, who returned home to Ghana for a visit this past December for the first time in 13 years, still travels and has an avid interest in photography. She recently returned from the Dominican Republic where she was attending a conference on religious liberty. Donkor currently works as a lawyer in the area of wills and estates with a sole practitioner in Ontario, Canada.

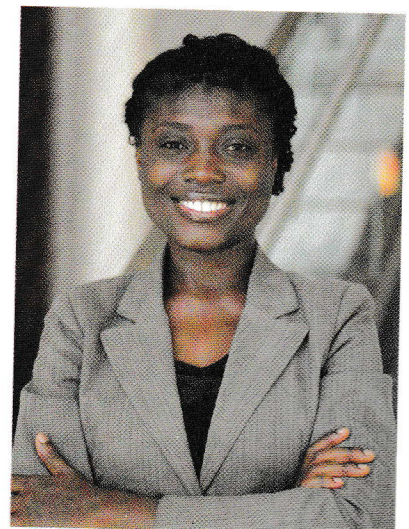
“My path to a legal career seems at times to be less of a steady walk and more of a tripping and stumbling over my two left feet. But on those days when I find this journey particularly difficult, the lessons of that class and the encouragement Professor Batey offered help me to find meaning in my work and plug on yet another day, hoping to one day become the type of lawyer he envisioned I would be,” Donkor said. ♦



Professor Robert Batey



Professor Ann Piccard



2008 Law alumna Afia Donkor

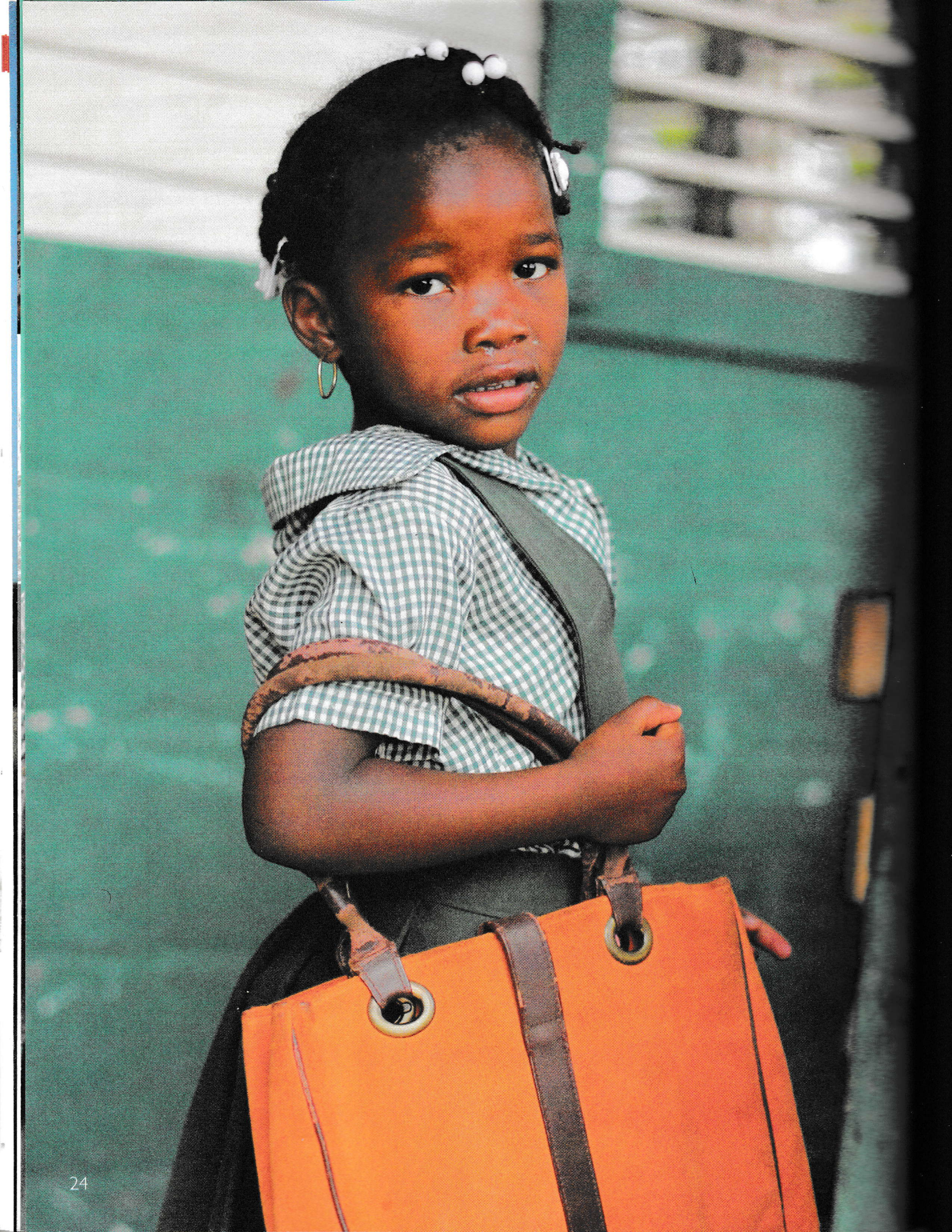


Stetson Law Alumni & Professors

Making a **Difference** in the Caribbean







For most people, the Caribbean is a tropical paradise, a getaway destination where reef fish dart among sunken pirate gold in a boundless turquoise sea. For the people who live and work for equality and human rights in the Caribbean, a different picture emerges, one focused on the struggle for social justice.

Hundreds of years of colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade have left an indelible mark on the story of the Caribbean. Unemployment is rampant. Natural catastrophes like hurricanes have regularly struck the fragile islands. Hundreds of thousands of people died in Haiti in a devastating earthquake in 2010 and many of the survivors remain displaced and homeless, still living in makeshift shelters two years later.

Through the law and humanitarian efforts, Stetson University College of Law alumni Peterson St. Philippe '09, Genevieve Whitaker '07, and professors Dorothea Beane and Darryl Wilson are creating opportunities for people to learn about the importance of human rights in the beautiful but troubled Caribbean. Alumna Afia Donkor '08, is helping to make a difference for Haitian children in the Dominican Republic. Both Whitaker and St. Philippe have a special connection to the islands, because they are also home.

"I do think that the Caribbean faces very unique historical challenges," said Whitaker, who was born and raised in St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

After graduating from Stetson, Whitaker returned to the Caribbean to advocate for juvenile justice and women's rights. Today, she serves on the board of the Women's Coalition of St. Croix, an organization formed to provide advocacy programs and services to end violence and oppression by promoting equality, and she is CEO of The Whitaker Consultant Group as well as the associate director of communications for AARP Virgin Islands.

"My passion and foundation for human rights were cemented during law school and my experience studying abroad," said Whitaker. "I found great mentors at Stetson, namely professors Dorothea Beane and Ellen Podgor and Dean Kristen Adams."

Whitaker co-founded the Virgin Islands Youth Advocacy Coalition, Inc., where she is helping to educate young people about the importance of civic engagement and to research the

oral and written history of social and political events in St. Croix. "Very few children in the Virgin Islands are exposed to civics," Whitaker explained.

"Growing up in Haiti was an experience like no other," said St. Philippe. "Haiti has been a country cursed by political unrest for the better part of two decades. I left Haiti when I was 12 years old and by then I had lived through two political coup d'états. I remember schools shutting down for days at a time because of violence that would go on in the city. I remember the country going through a severe embargo that nearly crippled the country by increasing the price of goods between 60-70 percent overnight."

St. Philippe worked with Gulf Coast Legal Services after graduating from Stetson Law before starting his own immigration law practice in Miami, Fla. At Gulf Coast Legal Services, St. Philippe's work focused on representing undocumented Haitian immigrants who had been victims of serious crimes, including domestic violence, human trafficking and immigration scams.

After the earthquake struck Haiti two years ago, killing more than 200,000 people and displacing thousands of others, St. Philippe concentrated his efforts on helping Haitian refugees to remain in the U.S. without fear of being deported.

"Although there have been some improvements, the conditions are still dire," St. Philippe said of a recent visit to Haiti. "The work I did at Gulf Coast was the most fulfilling work that I have ever done, and I can't think of any better way to use my Stetson education."

Afia Donkor, now a lawyer in Ontario, Canada, is helping with a school in the Dominican Republic for Haitian refugee children who have no access to education. The school, run and supported by the generous assistance of Paul Washington Jones, a member of her church, fulfills a need for learning that would otherwise go unmet.

"Because of the school, 80 school children have access to opportunities many of us take for granted. They are able to learn, to develop skills, and to understand how to implement their skills to build better futures for themselves and their communities," Donkor said. "That is priceless."



Haitian students in Dominican Republic

“It’s not just about money,” Law professor Dorothea Beane explained of social challenges in the Caribbean. “There are people who don’t have shelter, healthcare, education, roads or even water.”

“Who advocates for people?” Beane asked. “You have to understand how the law can be used to help people including underserved groups like women and children. You have to be clever, tenacious and creative.” Professor Beane has worked extensively in The Hague, Netherlands, on matters involving international criminal law and human rights.

Professor Beane served as a mentor to both St. Philippe and Whitaker while they were attending Stetson and said she is

proud when her students use their talents to help others. She co-directs Stetson’s Institute for Caribbean Law and Policy with professor Darryl Wilson. “Lawyers make history,” Beane said. “Very brave individuals can change the law.”

To learn more about studying abroad in the Caribbean or the Institute for Caribbean Law and Policy at Stetson, visit law.stetson.edu/studyabroad/cayman/ or law.stetson.edu/international/caribbean/home/.

For more information about the AARP Virgin Islands initiative, visit earnedasay.org. To learn more about Dominican school project, contact Afia Donkor at adonkor@msn.com. ♦



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– Professor Dorothea Beane

◀ School founder Paul Washington Jones with Afia Donkor