

Literary giants take part in Thornton Wilder Society Event

The campus community welcomed the Thornton Wilder Society to its new home at TCNJ with a panel discussion featuring some literary heavy-hitters. Best-selling novelist Joyce Carol Oates, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Edward Albee, and Emily Mann, artistic director of the McCarter Theater in Princeton, shared thoughts and stories about Wilder and his work.

Lincoln Konkle, associate professor of English and a charter member of the society, was asked if he'd be interested in succeeding the founding executive director of the society and relocating it to TCNJ. Konkle, who has written a book on Wilder due for publication, jumped at the opportunity. "I said I was, and the rest is history."

Thornton Wilder is an integral part of American literary and theatrical history. He had a special connection to the state of New Jersey, where many of his works are set. Wilder taught at the Lawrenceville School from 1921 to 1928, while he earned a master's in French at Princeton University and began his writing career.

Oates recalled reading one of Wilder's most enduring works as a high school student. "I think that most of us, of



© Ralph Morse / Time Life Pictures / Getty Images

Playwright Thornton Wilder (center) and other cast members in performance of his play *Our Town*. circa 1938.

course, think of him as *Our Town*," she said. "I was really sort of bowled over by his versatility."

There wasn't a seat available within the Music Building Concert Hall as celebrated actress of stage and film Marian Seldes opened the program with an emotional reading from several of Wilder's most famous works, including *The Matchmaker*, which was eventually adapted to the popular musical *Hello, Dolly!* The audience was also treated to some of Wilder's more personal writings in the form of letters to friends and family.

The discussion, moderated by writer J.D. McClatchy, allowed panelists to share their personal thoughts on Wilder. Mann's first Wilder experience occurred

in 1976 at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, a year after the writer's death. On a fellowship with the theater and the University of Minnesota, Mann directed *The Matchmaker*. "Thornton Wilder gave me a launch as an apprentice in my profession," said the OBIE award-winning stage director.

An actress who has performed in numerous Wilder plays, Seldes explained that "it's all there on the page...It seems to play itself."

One of the event's highlights was Albee's description of his personal relationship with the late Wilder. By age 25, Albee explained, he had developed a habit of "thrusting" his poetry at more experienced writers for



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their critiques and opinions. He eventually "thrust" his poems at Wilder.

Sitting on a dock at sunset, overlooking a pond, the two shared a bottle of bourbon as they discussed Albee's writings.

Albee said, "I remember the entire surface of the pond was covered in my work" as Wilder placed his poems on the water.

He recalled Wilder saying, "I read all these poems, Albee. Have you ever thought of writing plays?"

Albee joked that he does not believe Wilder saw his potential as a playwright; rather, "he was probably trying to save poetry from me."

The community should expect to feel the Thornton Wilder Society's presence on campus. "It was decided to shoot for fall 2008 (assuming administrative approval) to hold an international Wilder conference here," said Konkle. Two to four Wilder "FYIs" will be published a year, as well as an annual newsletter. "We will also continue to maintain and build the Web site, which is now on the College's server, as a source of information about Wilder, his works, and upcoming events for the general public—around the world."

One may find the society's Web site at www.tcnj.edu/~wilder/index.html.

Nicole Levins '07



TCNJ's ranking looks even better

Another national college ranking service has added to TCNJ's luster among American colleges, this time with emphasis on its financial value.

In January, *Kiplinger's Personal Finance* released its ranking of the nation's top 100 values in public higher education, and the College took the No. 19 spot out of more than 500 eligible colleges and universities.

TCNJ tops the list of public institutions in New Jersey and joins institutions like the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of California at Berkeley, The College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, VA, and the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in the top 20.

The Kiplinger ranking was based on academic quality, cost, and financial aid offerings.

TCNJ Clinic is boosting its speech, hearing, and counseling services

TCNJ's counseling clinic has been part of the College campus for many years. Dating back to the 1950s, youngsters suffering from speech difficulties could obtain help from faculty professionals, and students at the College could learn how to cope with these issues in the classrooms.

But until last year, the clinic never had a director; its facilities were less than ideal; and the future was an uncertainty.

Times have changed, and with the leadership of William Behre, the new dean of the School of Education; Charlene Alderfer, associate professor of counselor education; and Jackie Vyas, the new clinic director and an adjunct professor, a plan is in place and being executed.

All three share a new vision for the clinic. With remodeled and newly equipped space in Forcina Hall, the clinic is now open Monday through Thursday, seeing patients of all ages for hearing and speech problems, as well as counseling services ranging from personal addictions to family and group therapy sessions.

For Behre, the fundamental role of the clinic is to allow TCNJ undergraduate and graduate students to observe and learn from qualified faculty professionals who



are providing clinical service to patients.

Vyas is devoting much of her energy this year to promoting use of the clinic by the local community and encouraging residents to take advantage of the nominal fees. Sessions with a speech pathologist are only \$20, compared to \$75-\$100 for a private practitioner, she noted. Counseling sessions range from \$5 to \$30 and are based on a sliding scale of ability to pay.

Financing for the center will be a challenge, Behre admits. Presently costs are low, and are being met from the dean's discretionary budget. He's looking into creative ways to take advantage of the modern offices and hopes to find a skilled clinician who might combine a private practice and teaching role from offices in the newly renovated clinic.

Faculty evaluation system undergoes major change

For the first time in 10 years, the "feedback" system by which TCNJ students are asked to evaluate their professors has undergone a major change.

Beginning with the spring semester just past, students are being asked to evaluate both their professors and the academic course they completed.

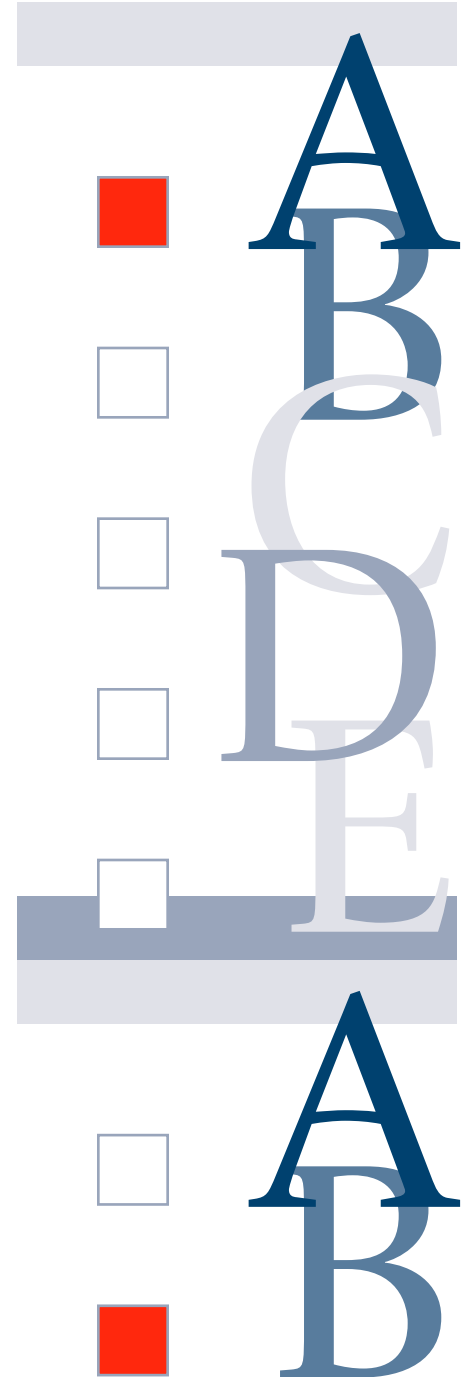
While such a procedure might be expected to generate strong feelings, both faculty and administration share the view that the new "evaluation instrument" seems sure to be a great improvement.

Amanda Norvell, associate professor of biology and chair of the Committee on Academic Programs (CAP), helped shepherd the new system through the final stages of approval and the first stages of implementation. She and Michael Robertson, professor of English and president of the Faculty Senate, agreed the new system is more likely both to improve teaching and the students' engagement with the course material.

The reasons for this are two: First, the evaluation form in use from 1996 until last fall dealt only with the individual faculty member and his or her instructional approach. The new form poses 16 questions related to the instructor, and nine related to the course being taught.

In addition, the previous evaluation form became the property of the teacher, while the new one will be available to administrators, who are most interested in knowing whether or not students are fully engaged by the classroom experience and whether the transformed curriculum is actually working. With the

College having gone through a two-year period of redesigning courses to make them more challenging and rewarding, leaders in the revision of the evaluation system agreed the course being taught deserved equal scrutiny by students.



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Guest lecturers address national and global issues

As part of Community Learning Day, **Marjane Satrapi**, internationally renowned author of *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*, addressed the campus on October 12, 2005, about her controversial book, in which she uses the story of her childhood to tell a larger tale about her native country of Iran.

Byron Motley addressed the campus about a subject he describes as “very near and dear to my heart”—the Negro Baseball League. Motley’s father, the only living Negro League umpire, played for the Kansas City Monarchs.

Charging journalists with inaccurate portrayal of the Middle East, Satrapi explained, “The media has dehumanized us completely.” She added that the inaccurate portrayal works both ways and said, “I grew up with the notion that everything bad in the world came from the United States.”

Donna Brazile, the first African American to lead a major presidential campaign, addressed the campus on

reporting on the continent’s AIDS epidemic, which he compared to the “black plague.” On United Nations World AIDS Day, he shared his Peabody Award-winning story, “Death by Denial,” with a sizeable audience in the new library auditorium. According to Gelber’s reporting, though rates of HIV infection are decreasing throughout the rest of the world, nearly 1,600 people are infected each day in South Africa

more than 300, including alumni.

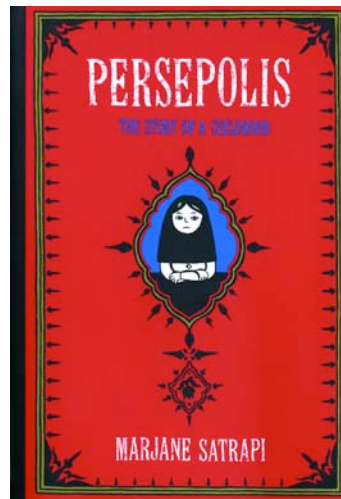
Byron Motley, a distinguished Los Angeles performer and director, addressed the campus February 13 about a subject he describes as “very near and dear to my heart”—the Negro Baseball League. Motley’s father, the only living Negro League umpire, played for the Kansas City Monarchs. Motley is producing and directing a two-hour documentary that is due for completion

Manji explained her concerns with modern Islamic practice.

“Human rights violations happen under the banner of every religion, even secular religions. Literalism is mainstream worldwide,” said Manji. However, she believes there are distinct differences between literalisms in other religions and those in modern Islam. She said modern Islam asserts a “supremacy complex” that

audience questions about movies, comics, friends, and growing up in the great Garden State.

On April 12, prominent political icon **Patrick Buchanan** addressed the campus, speaking on the war in Iraq, the flaws of the Bush administration, immigration, foreign policy, and free trade. Buchanan, senior adviser for Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, communications director for



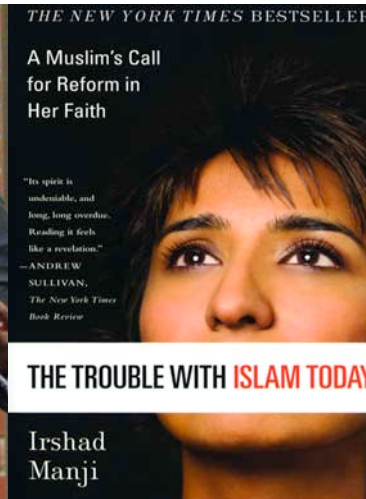
Marjane Satrapi’s book



Donna Brazile



Kwame Jackson



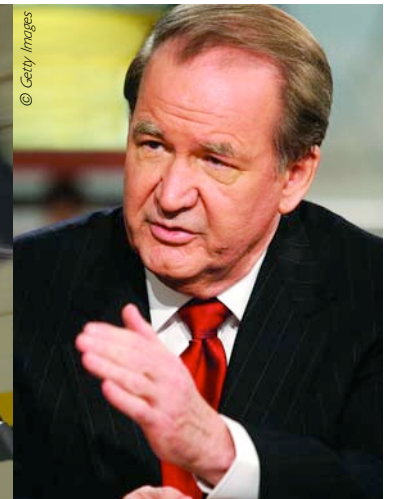
Irshad Manji’s book



Yanar Mohammed



Kevin Smith



Patrick Buchanan

November 2, 2005, as part of the Multicultural Lecture Series. In her lecture, titled “Race and Poverty, the Lessons of Katrina and Rita,” the New Orleans native spoke of what she felt was a poor response from the government to aid hurricane victims.

As part of the College’s recognition of AIDS Awareness Week, the Department of Communications Studies sponsored a talk on December 1, 2005, by **David Gelber**, executive producer for the Ed Bradley Unit, which produces news segments for CBS’s *60 Minutes*.

Several years ago, Gelber and his team spent five months in Africa,

alone. One in five South African adults will die of AIDS, and one in three pregnant women will pass the disease on to their children.

On February 1, **Kwame Jackson**, runner-up on the first season of Donald Trump’s hit show, *The Apprentice*, spoke at the College as a contestant from the show and as a self-proclaimed “serial entrepreneur” who is interested in spreading his ideas on how to cultivate personal excellence. Jackson’s lecture, “Lessons from the Boardroom,” was sponsored by the College’s chapter of the National Association of Black Accountants and drew an audience of

by the end of 2006. The film, narrated by Lavar Burton, tells stories of the Negro League through interviews, pictures, and other media. It includes commentary from famous former and current black baseball players and dignitaries such as former President Bill Clinton and former Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Irshad Manji, best-selling author and award-winning TV personality, addressed the campus community on March 1 as part of the Multicultural Lecture Series. In her lecture, which corresponded with her book, *The Trouble with Islam Today: A Muslim’s Call for Reform in Her Faith*,

“disproportionately empowers radicals.”

Yanar Mohammed, president of the Organization of Women’s Freedom in Iraq, addressed the campus April 1 on the subject of women in Iraq. Mohammed’s organization seeks to raise the status of women in Iraq while aiding those who have escaped honor killings, the practice of killing a woman who has dishonored her family.

Kevin Smith, the renowned and notorious director of *Clerks*, *Chasing Amy*, and *Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back*, spoke to the campus community on March 23. For more than three hours, the New Jersey native entertained

President Ronald Reagan, a host of CNN’s *Crossfire*, and a former presidential nominee, warned the community: “It is your country that I think is in trouble.”

“Bush’s presidency is in critical condition,” said Buchanan, reflecting on his belief that the administration has strayed far from a truly conservative agenda. A vehement opponent of the war in Iraq, Buchanan said it is not a conservative war and that the troops need to be brought home.

Kidsbridge Museum and TCNJ to teach values

Quiet and a little shy, the fifth-grade students from Trenton Community Charter School file into what was once the media room in TCNJ's School of Education. Meghan Braun, a junior, greets them with an enthusiastic "Hi, how are you?" When the reply is a muted "hi," she energetically calls out, "Let's try that again! Hi! How are you?" This time, the response is a bit louder. Braun then explains to the students the purpose of their visit: They will participate in the Kidsbridge Children's Museum, currently located on campus at TCNJ.

The Kidsbridge Children's Museum features the exhibit *Face to Face: Dealing with Prejudice and Discrimination*, originally developed by the Chicago Children's Museum in 1995. In recent years, it has been touring various cities and now is being purchased by Kidsbridge, a nonprofit organization in Trenton. In January, TCNJ and Kidsbridge began a year-long partnership that each hopes will make a difference in the lives of area children by offering this unique mini-museum, focused upon teaching diversity and character education.

Kidsbridge believes the museum and its location on TCNJ's campus will serve to inspire the children who visit. As its literature explains, "Children cannot aspire to something they have never seen. By broadening their vision in the invigorating environment of a college community, we fully anticipate that the children will raise their own expectations..."

Since it was established in 1988, Kidsbridge has devoted itself to numerous community outreach

programs promoting character education, diversity appreciation, and life skills. The mini-museum, however, is a program Kidsbridge has worked long and hard to put into place. With TCNJ's partnership, the goal finally has been reached.

The exhibit consists of 10 workstations. Each offers children the chance to deal



with a real-life situation. At one, they watch a video called "School Bus Showdown," in which students watch a child getting on a school bus and being ridiculed. In the video, children on the bus explain how they felt and what they were thinking during the incident. At another stop (they spend about 12 minutes at each station), they play a "See and Say" game designed to dispel the use of negative stereotypes. At a craft station, children create stories and drawings about their own experiences with discrimination. In yet another empowering activity, a child writes an especially hurtful name on a piece of paper; then places it in a paper shredder and sees it destroyed.

In a separate area, a bulletin board features clippings of newspaper articles and photographs, cut-outs of children,

and reproductions of actual signs—all of which relate to real instances of discrimination throughout history. Here, TCNJ students studying to be teachers explain the articles and photographs and ask questions designed to help the children better understand and relate to the events.

The mini-museum is designed so students move from one activity to the next, but when Braun calls out for everyone to rotate, the pace is slow as the children and the college students helping at the workstations finish their exchanges. The children are clearly engaged.

This spring, children primarily from the Trenton area have been visiting the museum, but Lynne Azarchi, director of Kidsbridge, says the organization will be reaching out to other areas as well, providing children of all backgrounds a chance to interact with one another, with college students, and with the exhibit. The museum and, indeed, the collaboration, are "cutting edge." Azarchi said this exhibit is "really an unprecedented relationship between an emerging museum and a college. I was unable to find another example. This

"We fully anticipate that the children will raise their own expectations."

can actually serve as a model for others...and hopefully can be repeated on other campuses. TCNJ's community service is really so laudable and the College should be very proud."

If it works out as hoped, the museum will benefit both the children who visit and TCNJ's community. For the students and faculty, there is valuable observation of interactive learning in an environment quite different from the traditional classroom setting, as well as a unique interaction with the elementary school students.

Debra Frank, assistant professor of elementary and early childhood education and director of the Institute for Education Design and Evaluation Assessment at TCNJ, said the partnership is a component of the Advanced Core Block of study in an education major's junior year. Part of the junior field experience has students creating their own curriculum modules and then acting as museum docents. In addition to those enrolled in the elementary and early childhood education major, students from the Department of Communication Studies are filming a documentary about the museum, and a fine arts major is creating a mural on the exhibit walls. Furthermore, psychology students are involved in conducting pre- and post-assessments to evaluate changes in learning attitudes and behavior.

Although the formal findings from the psychology students remain to be seen, Chuck Osborn and Shani Spady, two

fifth-grade teachers at the charter school, shared some of the immediate benefits to their classes. Spady said her children "are used to dealing with racial slurs and prejudice on the streets, so it's not a subject that they like to discuss...as they did more exhibits, they became more comfortable with the discussion."

Since visiting the museum, she continued, "They are learning to communicate more about their problems...and they stick up for one another if they see teasing. They have learned to use their words to talk positively to solve problems...to use their words more than their hands." She reported the children "absolutely loved it" and "wished they were there longer and that there were more exhibits."

The museum and its location also provide the students with an enlightening experience they might not otherwise have. Even though many of the children live within 10 minutes of the College, Osborn said most of them have "never set foot on campus...they've never seen it; it's so close, yet so far for them."

Spady added, the trip helps to "feed their aspirations."



The mini-museum and all its components are in continuous development. Azarchi says, "Every week, we are adding something new."

In the meantime, Frank says, "to see children here on campus is thrilling." She calls it "an opportunity for teachers in preparation to see what happens when they learn about teaching in a museum setting. It is a unique and interesting opportunity to learn how to make the most of those kinds of experiences."

Although the long-term goal is to find a permanent home for the museum, right now the exhibit is scheduled to be on campus until at least December 2006, and there is an option to retain it for another year. Azarchi states, "It is conceived as an experiment. If it proves beneficial to the



elementary school students and TCNJ undergraduates, the relationship may continue." In the meantime, Kidsbridge continues to seek funding to maintain the exhibit and expand its activities.

Melissa Santiago is a freelance writer who lives in West Amwell.

2006 Commencement

Consider the Class of 2006 a good luck charm. After a night of torrential downpours that threatened to cancel the traditional outdoor Commencement ceremony, the skies offered only sunshine on May 12, 2006, as more than 1,400 degree candidates took center stage in a packed Lions' Stadium. Assemblyman Bill Baroni, Assemblywoman Bonnie Watson Coleman, and U.S. Representative Chris Smith received honorary degrees for their commitments to education and civil rights in New Jersey and around the world.



All photos this spread © Jerry Millevi

Roscoe (at left) shows TCNJ spirit while the Class of 2006 banner (below) is presented during Commencement exercises.



Above, Students and family members capture a special moment prior to the Commencement ceremony. At left, President Gitenstein (wearing medalion and cap) is joined by the honorary degree recipients. Below, Megan Baglivio, president of the Class of 2006, shares memories and advice during her remarks.

President R. Barbara Gitenstein wished members of the Class of 2006 each "a life of promise and influence," and "the courage to base decisions on your convictions."



This group of proud TCNJ graduates seems poised and ready for the challenges that await.