

MUSEUM

SANKOFA illuminates centuries of African American heritage

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"I was disappointed because he was a straight 'A' student, which meant it wasn't being taught," said Jennings. "And so it was either me or the teacher."

"It's an amazing exhibit," said Dana Professor of English Carolyn Beard Whitlow. "I don't think anyone could attend and not learn something."

Indeed, there was plenty for those who wished to learn. While common figures in African American history, such as Fredrick Douglass, Harriet Tubman and Martin Luther King, were represented, there were also pieces providing knowledge about lesser-known figures, such as Richard Allen, Ida B. Wells, and Cathay Williams.

A large section devoted to inventions created by Africans and African Americans also gave visitors something new to learn. Items one might not have expected to see, from the hairbrush to the helicopter and many more, sat on that table.

"I thought I knew a lot, but you can never know enough," said Afanda. "I've gone through Guilford for four years, but none of this was taught to me. We talk about the Wright brothers, but not the gentleman who gave us the helicopter."

Afanda was not alone in admiring the inventions section. "So often American culture doesn't think of African Americans contributing other than in music, song, dance, and comedy," said Whitlow. "But there are so many conveniences and medical necessities that are available today, and we never think they were invented by African Americans."

Since the exhibit started, Jennings' nephew has learned more, too.

"He challenges me now," remarked Jennings. "And if he's reading, he's reading about the culture."

But the exhibit provoked more than just intellectual stimulation.

Visitors saw barbaric scenes from the slave trade through paintings, complimented by authentic shackles and a whip. The tour moved through the Civil War era, presenting the most profound and moving writings of abolitionists.

Visitors were also confronted with lynching photography in a section so disturbing yet provoking that it was impos-

sible not to pause and ponder. The exhibit continued to chronicle the brave achievements of countless activists.

The tour ended with a table in the center of the room devoted entirely to President Obama and his family, representing both progress and the issues we still face as a society.

"There should be a more holistic view of American history, including African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and everyone," said Africana Community Coordinator Jada Drew.

Although the museum raised many issues, the overall feeling at SANKOFA was one of inclusion and celebration.

"One of our values at Guilford is community, and this is really building community," Drew said. According to Drew, people came in from Guilford's campus and Greensboro and were made part of that community.

Drew said that they would invite the museum back next year. But Afanda didn't think that people should wait that long.

"People should not think, 'When is this coming again?'" Afanda said. "Instead, they should take that curiosity and learn on their own."

Jennings certainly encourages people to pursue learning.

"Students need to know about our struggle, our pride, and our success, that we, as African Americans have made."



(Top) Sophomore **Jeffery Jarvis** studies the photograph of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the SANKOFA exhibit. The African American Museum on Wheels came to Guilford Sept. 1 and 2. (Below) A museum patron peruses the section of the exhibit on the history and horrors of slavery in America.



Connor captivates with reading from new short story collection

By **Nick Bunitsky**
STAFF WRITER

On Sept. 2, a large audience waited in the Carnegie Room with palpable excitement for a reading sure to enliven the creative mind. As Assistant Professor of English and Director of Writing Cynthia Nearman took the podium to introduce the star of the evening, it became certain that no one would leave unfulfilled.

"See how lucky we are to have with us this Queen of Mutants, who will tolerate no followers, and whom we recognize as royalty only because this is the case," said Nearman. "Please join me in welcoming Traci O. Connor."

The crowd began to clap with anticipation as Assistant Professor of English Traci Connor walked behind the podium. Smiling and looking across the room, she began her introduction.

"Guilford College is a really special place," said Connor. "So thank you for not only being here, but for being a part of my writing. The story I'm going to read tonight is called 'The Flying Codona.'"

"The Flying Codona" is the first story from Connor's new book, "Recipes for Endangered Species."

"Traci's own reading was really an aerial experience. It somersaulted, swayed and sliced through the air as the audience sat in anticipation of the next jump."

Diya Abdo, assistant professor of English

Connor then prefaced the reading with a brief, though informative, explanation of the title. Alfredo Codona was a circus aerialist (or trapeze artist) born in 1893. His first wife, Lillian Litzel (another famous trapeze artist), died during a performance. Alfredo would later take his own life as well as his second wife's, leaving a tragic story interwoven with a rich history of performances in his wake.

Though the story is not about Alfredo, Connor's introduction set the tone for the catastrophic lives of the story's characters, full of recognizable yet adventurous experiences.

As Connor said previously, "Every story in my collection is pretty much about this:



Traci Connor, assistant professor of English, presents from her recently published collection of short fiction during her reading in the Carnegie Room on Sept. 2.

As human beings we often fail to see other human beings as human beings."

"Tuesdays, Zha Zha's tits are made of cantaloupe and she eats them with a spoon," began Connor. "'Mother's milk, mother's milk,' she chants, juice and pulp

spilling from her lips."

Connor read as the audience listened closely, every ear tuned for just these words, this moment.

"Everyone was so entranced by her voice and by the characters that it seemed as if the whole audience was holding its collective breath, waiting for the other shoe to drop," said junior Meredith Brown.

"I loved the way Traci prefaced her reading with the story of Alfredo Codona, the trapeze artist," said Assistant Professor of English Diya Abdo. "Traci's own reading was really an aerial experience. It somersaulted, swayed and sliced through the air as the audience sat in anticipation of the next jump."

Throughout the story, the audience was visibly pulled into the reading. And as the story came to a close, one could tell that it would be difficult for anyone to walk away unmoved.

"It's Saturday, and Zha Zha is pulling the lily apart," read Connor, winding the story down. "'Love me, love me, love me,' she drones. Petals fall in pieces to the stage."

This would not be the end for audience members and readers though. The inspiring "Recipes for Endangered Species" is only endangered by high sales numbers and a devoted readership.