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## Hakim Mohandas Amani Williams, Assistant Professor of Africana Studies

### **Abstract**

*In this new Next Page column, Hakim Mohandas Amani Williams, Assistant Professor of Africana Studies, shares with us highlights from a recent trip to Trinidad he took with students, where he gets his daily dose of news, and which book "gives him fire" after each reading.*

### **Keywords**

Musselman Library, Gettysburg College, reading, books, interview

### **Disciplines**

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# Next Page

## Hakim Mohandas Amani Williams, Assistant Professor of Africana Studies

November 4, 2014

*In this new Next Page column, Hakim Mohandas Amani Williams, Assistant Professor of Africana Studies, shares with us highlights from a recent trip to Trinidad he took with students, where he gets his daily dose of news, and which book "gives him fire" after each reading.*

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*Hakim Mohandas Amani Williams,  
Assistant Professor of Africana Studies,  
tells us which book "gives him fire" after each reading.*

### **What are you reading now (or have read recently) that you would recommend to a friend or colleague on campus and why?**

I hardly do leisure reading; it is mostly linked to class or some conference, or paper etc. Now I am turning a keynote speech I gave at a Music education conference into an article for review. So I am reading lots of critical music education materials.

### **What is the topic of the paper you wrote for the Music Education keynote address? Do you have musical training?**

I use to sing in choirs and I love to sing but I would not say have I musical training. The conference was the [MayDay Group](#) which is a group of Critical Music Educators. Music education is not my forte but I took up the challenge of becoming fairly familiar with the field so that I would be able to offer something substantive. My keynote address (and subsequent article derived from it) is entitled "Fighting a Resurgent Hyper-Positivism in Education is Music to My Ears." In the speech (and article), I argue that critical music education plays and can continue to play an important role in helping to disrupt what I perceive to be a positivist hijacking of ways of being/seeing in the field of education; a hijacking that is ruinous to human flourishing.

### **What book/article/blog have you recently recommended to a student to read? Why?**

I recently recommended readings on human rights education to a first-year student I took with me on the human rights trip to Trinidad. He has felt inspired by the Trinidad trip to create and lead a GRAB trip to the South centered on human rights.

### **Tell us more about the Trinidad trip. What were some of the highlights of the trip? How did you prepare students for their experiences there?**

I had been planning for this trip for two years and then this year it came off without a hitch. We met with

human rights advocates and organizations in Trinidad as well as toured many cultural sites all over the island. We looked at issues pertaining to refugees, asylum seekers, educational inequities, domestic violence, anti-LGBT laws, to name a few.

I think the highlight was when I visited a poor community and gave my story and journey from poor kid to college professor to the parents and community members present. There was an emotional energy in that space. When I was done, they asked me to return to do a workshop with parents on how to mobilize. My students were so touched by my story. There was something that I cannot fully articulate that lingered with us after that meeting. It got us fired up and we left transformed.

**How do you keep track of what you have already read, are reading currently, or want to read in the future?**

I use [Zotero](#) to store stuff I have read or more so, want to read, lol.

**What is on your list of titles you would like to read? Anything that would surprise us?**

Nope, no surprises. I love fiction but just don't have the time for it. All I read is really academic material. One good day, I shall return to fiction (and hopefully in a hammock somewhere near a beach).

**What book or article has inspired you to take action (i.e., books/articles that might have inspired change in career path, travel to a new place, activism, etc.)?**

My number one book is Paulo Freire's [Pedagogy of the Oppressed](#). It changed my life and gives me fire every time I read excerpts or discuss it.

**When did you first read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*? In undergraduate or graduate school? How has your reaction to the book changed over time? Why?**

I read this book in graduate school. Each time I read it, I become ever more emboldened toward radical change in education. Time is of the essence and this book gives me fire; it doesn't permit me to rest. It speaks of radical notions of education, of breaking down hierarchies that hinder transformational pedagogy.

**What do you read for fun?**

I devour news. I check for news updates several times a day.

**How do you get your news? What are your go-to news sources?**

I use [Zite](#); a news aggregator. Also, friends post on Facebook and Twitter so I read via those means as well. I regularly check [BBC](#), [Trinidad Express](#), [Electronic Intifadah](#), [Salon](#), [HuffPost](#), [New York Times](#) (every so often), etc.

**If you could meet any writer, dead or alive, who would it be? What would you want to know?**

Definitely Paulo Freire! I'd like to ask him how to make his intensely dense book more intellectually accessible.

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