

## **Bitter Roots Sweet Fruit Progress Report - Esme Allen-Creighton**

For the original composition, the following advances have been made:

The oral history sound bites have been selected from UD's collection. The black Delawareans speaking about the struggle for education are:

Pauline Dyson: A one room School-house teacher speaks about how she challenged and protected her students.

Alethia Young: A lifelong Wilmington resident who raised her children during the depression and speaks about how they found strength and joy, how they made ends meet and her pride in her children who all went onto some form of college and ended up as teachers, UN workers.

Ed Fields: 96 year old man born in 1876 who began life as a domestic helper and ended up being very involved in the community he lived in in southern DE. As a school board trustee, he talks a lot about how they had to raise their own funding for black schools in the context of the injustice of the educational tax system of the time.

Pauline Young: Author of "The Negro in Delaware: Past and Present", historian, community leader, librarian, community leader among other prolific roles speaks about her own childhood in Wilmington, her thoughts about the future of segregation, busing, her Aunt Alice Dunbar-Nelson and the effects of segregation on a sense of identity.

To contextualize these voices, the timeline will focus on:

Firstly, a reminder of the racist social media comments which broke out here on campus last fall, and information about the racial divisions historically and currently between the University of Delaware and Delaware State College.

The state of one-room school-house teachers and their students as examples of the challenges in elementary and middle school education. This will also reference the prejudicial tax systems which further disadvantaged black institutions.

Howard High school: the one black High school in Wilmington which had to serve children from towns all over the state which though underfunded, produced incredibly successful graduates, greatly influenced by the inspirational efforts of leaders like Alice-Dunbar Nelson.

The two main anti-segregation court cases fought by Louis Redding: Brown vs Board of Ed and the case assembled against the University of Delaware leading to chancellor Seitz's acceptance of a black student at UD.

Our feature concert has been confirmed for Nov. 12th at 8 pm in Gore Recital Hall. This will be a social justice event as well as premiere of the Bitter Roots Commission.

Developments include collaboration with the UD Dance minor faculty, the addition of

projected historical photography and decisions about how to memorialize the recent victims of racial violence in the form of police shootings of unarmed black citizens. The concert's dramatic arch introduces issues of racial identity, then memorializes victims of this division, then highlights the specific story of Trayvon Martin, then pivots towards understanding how these issues manifest in Delaware, with a recognition of the incredible achievements of Delaware's equality champions and their hopes for the future.

The order is as follows:

1. Free improvisation, Mazz Swift and Esme Allen-Creighton
2. A true Stranger, original composition by Mazz Swift with Esme Allen-Creighton and UD dancers
3. Reading of the names of unarmed African Americans killed by police  
(Will be asking a UD NAACP member to read)
4. Bach Chaconne in Memoriam with projected photos of victims on screen behind Esme Allen-Creighton, performing
5. Invisible: Original composition by Mazz Swift dedicated to the family of Trayvon Martin: Mazz Swift, Esme Allen-Creighton and Lawrence Stomberg (UD cello professor) perform with UD dancers
6. The Marsh: solo performance selection by Mazz Swift
7. Bitter Roots Sweet Fruit: This piece will open with the timeline of historical events in advance of the music. Next, Esme and Mazz will perform with tape and projected historical photography.

Our rehearsal and composition progress continues to develop.



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