

TEDx Bergen Community College

MARCH 8, 2016 9-4 CICCONE THEATER AT BERGEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

8:30 to 9:30 Registration and Welcome

Chris Anderson TED Talk playing in theater

SESSION 1: THE STORY OF I

9:30 to 9:45

Title: How Africa Changed My Life

I visited The Gambia, West Africa, for the first time in my mid-twenties while in college. I had only been on a plane once and had never traveled outside of the US. A self-proclaimed Pan Africanist, I couldn't wait to go back to "The Motherland" and reclaim my ancestral heritage while working with youth and schools throughout the country. The six-week trip was deeply transformative. I was able to witness the majestic beauty along with the painful inequity of that country. I still speak of the experience as if it were yesterday. I began to learn how to really listen, still myself, and embrace the living all around me. I've been back to The Gambia several times since that initial visit and in other ways, have deepened my connection to the Motherland. At 30 years old, I was initiated into a West African priesthood whose teachings are a major part of my life. In this presentation, I will share insights from my "African journeys" and how they have liberated my being and brought me home.

BIO:

Michelle Coghill Chatman, PhD (Iyalorisa Omo Olufina) is a cultural anthropologist who teaches undergraduate courses on African spirituality, Culture and Social Justice, and Urban Ethnography, at the University of the District of Columbia, in Washington, DC. As a contemplative educator, Michelle weaves mindfulness meditation, song, and reflective practices into her teaching to help facilitate students' deeper connection to course content, each other, and the broader world. She is an active member of the Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education and served as a faculty member in their 11th Annual Summer Session on Contemplative Pedagogy at Smith College. Michelle is enthusiastic about spreading

contemplative practices among her campus community and has shared her “Coltrane Meditation” in faculty development sessions and in her classes. She is particularly interested in exploring contemplative traditions within the African Diaspora and translating them into viable resources for HBCUs and public universities with diverse student populations. In addition to her teaching and community involvement, her life is fulfilled by her husband and their seven-year-old daughter. Also a vocalist, she performs at cultural events in the DC area. A practitioner of the Yoruba belief system for 17 years, the teachings of this ancient tradition, along with her Christian upbringing, serves as the basis of her personal, contemplative practices.

9:50 to 10:05

Title: The Fight for Transgender Rights in the Public School

When I came out as transgender, my school denied me my legally protected right to use the facilities in accordance with my gender identity. I refused to take that injustice laying down, and in time the administration agreed to follow the law. Despite this, I am a very lucky Trans kid. Throughout my battle with the school board, I had the support of my parents, my extended family, my friends, even the majority of students and teachers at my school. And of course, the law was on my side. Most Trans kids aren't so lucky. Over half of the transgender student in the United States report having been denied access to restrooms in accordance with their identity, and only 17 states in the country have laws that protect people from discrimination on the basis of gender identity or expression. This is not ok. I, who had to fight for rights I'm legally entitled to, should not be considered lucky. It's time for a change.

Bio:

Rubin Smyers is a 17-year-old transgender male from Ocean County, New Jersey. He came out to his parents in February of 2014, and to the rest of the world in June of that same year. He considers being transgender an important aspect of his identity, and he has a passion for the movement towards equality. Rubin is a senior at the Ocean County Vocational Technical Schools Performing Arts Academy, where he studies voice and actively participates in the school's theatrical productions. He hopes to go to college, earn a degree in musical theatre, perform on Broadway, and use his relative notability as a Broadway actor to promote important social causes such as transgender equality to his fans.

10:10 to 10:25 BREAK

10:30 to 10:45

Title: It's in Your Hands: The Power of Body Language

Studies show that over 90% of human face-to-face interactions are accounted for by nonverbal communication, which humans are innately wired to decipher and understand. However, in spite of verbal communication playing only a marginal role, most of us focus on words and are uninformed about body language and the vital role it plays in our lives.

This TEDx will open with a brief introduction to the science of body language. The audience will be introduced to some hands-on tools for detecting and decoding several key signals of the hands and face, as well as to strategies for enhancing their projected first impression, thereby rekindling their inborn capacity for reading body language.

Bio:

Dr. Tal Millet, PhD., LL.M. mentors companies to help them obtain measurable and sustainable organizational goals by enhancing their nonverbal business communication skills. An attorney holding a PhD in Industrial-Organizational Psychology and a Master of Laws, Dr. Millet formerly served as Deputy National Public Defender of the State of Israel. Apart from teaching college level classes, Dr. Millet's track record also includes serving as Corporate Counsel for private companies, litigating and appearing as trial counsel for the District Attorney's Office, and serving as a legal advisor on large-scale international governmental agreements.

10:50 to 11:05

Title: How to Become a Millionaire in 3 Years

When most people say they want to be a millionaire, they're really saying that they want to spend one million dollars. Besides winning the lotto or inheriting money, you'll learn three key elements used by the most successful people who have ever lived. You'll not only be able to learn how to become a millionaire, but you'll learn the real reason of why it helps our society to

alleviate poverty. This valuable session offers the solutions that you'll need to be successful for the rest of your life, whether you want to be a millionaire or not.

Bio:

Despite growing up in poverty, Daniel Ally became a millionaire by age 24. He is the personal development expert and author of three books, which can be found in 40 different countries. He runs multiple businesses as he speaks to corporations all over the world. Daniel currently resides in Virginia.

11:10 to 11:25

Title: Drawing a Line from your Life to your Art

Learn how to "make it" as an artist by searching within, not from without through drawing a line from your life to your art that is straight and clear. Each of us has a story to tell, and it's important to understand not just what you do, but why you do what you do as means to sparking creativity behind your own life's narrative. Go behind the scenes into Bell's process of painting, catch a glimpse of his innovative 31 Nights Project and how he became Mob Artist to America's most infamous.

Bio:

Michael Bell is a renowned American portrait artist, most famous for his larger-than-life sized narrative series paintings and for his infamous portrait clientele, which includes the late John Gotti, Dominic Capone III (Al Capone's great nephew) and numerous actors from "the Sopranos", "Goodfellas", "A Bronx Tale" and more. Bell's works are often the mirror to a tragic world, but they deepen our humanity through psychology, ghostly brushwork and personal color palette that draws on memories and silent echoes from the artist's own dark, turbulent past.

11:25 to 11:40

Title: If There's a Wheel, There's a Way

Using stories and song, I will take you on my journey to becoming the first actor in a wheelchair to be on Broadway. In the pursuit of this dream, I was unexpectedly introduced to my most powerful self. The realization that my limitations were actually my opportunities changed the

entire game.

Bio:

Ali Stroker is a groundbreaking performer with an inspiring story. In 2009, Ali became the first actress in a wheelchair to earn a degree from the NYU Tisch Drama Department. This year, the GLEE and GLEE PROJECT star made history as the first actress in a wheelchair to appear on a Broadway stage, where she is currently originating the role of Anna in Deaf West's 2015 revival of *Spring Awakening*. Her performance in the role of Olive in *The Twenty-Fifth Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* earned Ali a Barrymore Award nomination, and exceptional acclaim when reprised at the Papermill Playhouse, thirty minutes from her hometown of Ridgewood, New Jersey. In addition to her work on and off-Broadway, Ali has enjoyed solo performances at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., and New York's Town Hall, as well as concert appearances at Lincoln Center. An ardent humanitarian and advocate, Stroker is a co-chair of WOMEN WHO CARE, which supports United Cerebral Palsy of NYC. BE MORE HEROIC, an anti-bullying campaign which tours the country connecting with thousands of students each year counts Ali as a founding member. Her devotion to educating and inspiring others has taken Ali to South Africa with ARTS InsideOut, where she holds theater workshops and classes for women and children affected by HIV and AIDS. Ali's remarkable ability to improve the lives of other people through the arts, whether they be disabled or not, is captured in her principle of "Making Your Limitations Your Opportunities".

11:45 to 12:45 Lunch Break

SESSION 2: Narrative Matters

1:00 to 1:15

Title: Breathe the Air of Freedom

Rosa Martinez will be enacting her grandmother's story. She came here after the Cuban revolution. Once a member of Fidel Castro's inner circle, Rosa's grandmother fled Cuba after the revolution in fear of her life. Now that Cuba is building a diplomatic bridge with the US, Rosa wants to go and visit family she has never met but her grandmother has forbidden her to go. Through story-telling and music Rosa transports us to her grandmother's Havana and her harrowing escape to "breathe the air of freedom".

Bio:

Rosa Martinez is a singer song-writer who has been performing and writing since the age of 11. She is currently studying theater at BCC and has been cast in a few BCC musicals such as "Three Penny Opera" and "Company." She is also signed as a songwriter to Alex Morelli Music in West NYC and is involved in many other projects. She feels that without the love and support of her family, her accomplishments would not be possible. One of her family members that has really supported and inspired her to pursue a career in the entertainment industry, has been her Grandmother, Ruth. The woman she could proudly call her "Abuela" has a story about her life, when she fled from Cuba to escape one of the deadliest dictatorships, so that her family could have a chance to breathe the fresh air of liberty.

1:20 to 1:35**Title: Genocide and International Responsibility**

Serian, an expert on the Armenian Genocide, reviews what is widely considered the first genocide, that of Armenians during 1915. Using this historical event as a template, the talk will outline the challenges faced today when fighting against these atrocities.

Bio:

Greg Serian is a 2nd generation descendant whose grandparents survived the Armenian Genocide. He is the founder of the Armenian Genocide Society, armeniangenocidesociety.com, where he works with educational staff to share the survival story of his grandmother Anna Manoogian with NJ high school students. Her own words have been directly recorded and documented.

Greg is an active member of the NJ Armenian National Committee of America and has also served as a consultant for the NJ Commission of Holocaust and Genocide Education. The Commission distributes Serian's presentation as part of their Armenian genocide and culture curriculum.

Serian has a Masters Degree in Computer Engineering and currently lives and works in Central New Jersey as an Information Technology Business Executive. He is a Musician, Recording Engineer and Producer with his own digital recording studio. He leads, manages and plays live

with his classic rock band, Liquid Garden, throughout the NJ area.

1:40 to 1:55

Title: Paradoxical Ebullience

Narrative Matters is intended to be a call to action that realigns Blacks' socioeconomic consciousness with their socioeconomic reality. *Paradoxical Ebullience* is a contradiction in the purported ebullient view that Blacks hold regarding their economic position relative to the reality of their economic progress. Driven by post-racial neoliberal narratives that allege socioeconomic outcomes and life chances are no longer tied to race, America's ascendant narrative tells Blacks to abandon collective action in favor of individualism to improve their economic position. Alternatively, Critical Race Theory's tenant of counter-storytelling says that narratives from the perspective of marginalized groups matter and that subalterns need to tell their own story to counteract the false narratives for why they experience economic stagnation. Just as the causal story of *Brown v. Board of Education* reinforced a sociopolitical movement that in turn aided the civil rights act and politics more broadly, causal stories and a movement to counteract today's neoliberal narratives and structure of Black economic stagnation need to be put forth to help Blacks better advocate for policies to address their economic stagnation.

Bio:

Lessie Branch is a Senior Research Fellow at the DuBois Bunche Center for Public Policy at Medgar Evers College. She is also on faculty at Monroe College. Dr. Branch has a Ph.D. and an M. Phil from Milano School of International Affairs, Management, and Urban Policy as well as an MA in Political Science from the New School of Social Research. She completed her BA in Political Science at Fordham University. Her research examines the gulf between African American optimism about group progress and the actual data on continuing disparities and potentially speaks to wider questions of social knowledge, social beliefs and relative group position; even to questions of "consciousness" and ontology. Dr. Branch's most recent project, *Paradoxical Ebullience: Discordance Between Changing Black Racial Attitudes and Stagnation of Black Economic Progress* is being considered for the Cambridge University Press series on Stratification Economics.

2:00 to 2:15

Title: Narrative Matters: Recognizing Narratives About the Futures - and How to Break Free!

One of the hottest topics right now is "what will the future be like?" That's why it's more important than ever to take a step back and think about what we're being told about "the future." It's important to remember: No one can predict the future! The future is plural - futures - because it has infinite possibilities. But even so, we are constantly being told what the future "will be," and these stories are so persuasive that we begin to feel that we do already know what will happen. When we think a certain future is inevitable, we feel there is no reason to try to work towards a different one. This is often true in society ("Candidate A is going to win the election, so why even vote?") and in our personal lives ("Everyone thinks I'm [fill in the blank], so I guess I am.") If we're not careful, our thoughts about the future can be taken over - even colonized by - these powerful narratives. But we can change this! Instead of passively listening to and obeying these narratives, we can critique them. By retaking control over our thoughts about the futures, we can begin to make a big difference - in society and in our own lives.

Bio:

Adriane M. Raff Corwin is a political analyst and trained futurist who teaches Political Science courses at Bergen Community College. She obtained her MA in Political Science at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, where she focused on Futures Studies and foresight thinking in politics and society, and her BA in Human Rights at Bard College. As an independent researcher and analyst, she assesses how important drivers of change and current trends could affect the well-being and futures of societies and cultures, government entities, businesses, non-profits, and individuals.

Break: 2:20 to 2:35

SESSION 3: The Collective Narrative

Title: How Engineers Will Save the World and How you can help them

Climate change. Lack of clean water. Failing infrastructure. These are just a few of the biggest challenges our world faces today. Unfortunately, these are challenges that if not solved, could end civilization, as we know it. But that's not going happen. Why? Because engineers are going to save the world; but not without YOUR help. Less and less children in the United States are

going to school for engineering. Why? They don't think it is an exciting career. They often choose finance over engineering because the stereotype is that engineers are nerds with pocket protectors. Not true.

In this inspirational talk, civil engineer and author, Anthony Fasano, will dispel all myths about engineering being a nerdy or boring profession. He will challenge the audience to start to spread the idea that engineers will save the world and inspire them to excite more of our youth about this innovative profession that may just save our planet....

"There's nothing I believe in more strongly than getting young people interested in science and engineering, for a better tomorrow, for all humankind." - Bill Nye the Science Guy

Bio:

Anthony Fasano, PE, is a licensed engineer, published author, and STEM advocate. He has authored a bestselling Wiley published book titled *Engineer Your Own Success*, started two top rated iTunes podcasts for engineers, and serves as the Executive Director of the non-profit organization, The New York State Society of Professional Engineers. He has spoken for thousands of engineers and engineering students, inspiring them to be the best they can be.

2:40 to 2:55

Title: Please Pick Project: Creating an Edible Town In New York.

Please Pick Project is a small example of how we can revolutionize our relationship with food and address many of the health and hunger problems that plague communities around the country and around the world. The initial purpose of this project was to create an edible town in Nyack, NY, thus connecting people to real food grown in real soil in the urban and suburban landscape, and to eliminate the many obstacles that we all face to accessing the healthy, organic food that we all need regularly. When good food is woven into the streetscapes of our urban and suburban communities and made available for picking, it adds healthy eating and an acknowledgment of the earth to a fast-paced culture that frequently veers away from nature for the sake of convenience. In an edible town, convenient snacks don't have to come from vending machines or food processing plants. They can hang from baskets in front of merchants' shops, grow in the backyard of the town's civic center, dangle over the fence within reach of the sidewalk, and plump out in raised beds in town square. There is nothing simpler than uniting everyone in a community by sharing soil, sharing a bounty and sharing a healthier future.

Something primal in all of us cherishes our natural food sources, and when we work together to create more and more natural food sources to share in every community, our differences fall away and leave us all with the same hunger for good food at our cores. Now is a crucial time for people all over the country to recognize just how important it is to know our food and our soil, and to localize our food production as much as is possible. Moreover, now is the right time to come together in communities around the country and create edible towns for ourselves, for our kids and for our neighbors. Because, we are all hungry for good food, and we all deserve access to it.

Bio:

Suzanne is the Director of Communications for Rockland Farm Alliance, a non-profit dedicated to preserving suburban farmland. She has a Master's Degree in English Literature, and she worked as an English professor and writer for a decade until writing ultimately opened up the portal to a career in farming and agriculture. Suzanne has always stayed close enough to the natural world to keep a few layers of soil under her fingernails, but high school science classes thwarted her ambitions to seriously pursue agriculture or animal science as a living. Despite her preference for poetry anthologies over biology textbooks, she found herself moving cyclically right back toward the earth as she moved into her thirties. She created Please Pick Project in 2014 after walking past a peach tree with heavy fruit languishing, unpicked, within reach of hundreds of people who walk past on the sidewalk. With the help of some agricultural experts and a generous group of neighbors, Please Pick Project established an edible town, filling empty strips of front yards along the sidewalks with vegetable gardens, berry bushes and fruit trees, and marking them with signs asking passersby to please pick the bounty for free. Now, over 3,000 pounds of free, organic food is grown in front yards and on the properties of civic centers in Nyack, and it is harvested by anyone in the community who finds themselves hungry and interested in connecting right to the source of real food.

3:00 to 3:15

Title: Why I became a Change Agent

My passion for creating positive change for people and the planet happened after a long time battling insecurities and self doubt. My presentation will be about how my life changed when I found what I am passionate about and why looking to the future and the potential that young

people have to change the world inspires me. This inspiration is with me everyday in my work as the Environmental Director for the Town of Secaucus and as a UN Representative for the Foundation for Post Conflict Development.

Bio:

Amanda Neshiewat currently works as the Environmental Director for the Town of Secaucus, NJ. She is a Commissioner for the town as well as chairwoman of their Environmental Committee. She is an organizer and environmental activist and is passionate about sustainable development and combatting climate change. She was a youth delegate in conferences such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Doha, Qatar where she was the State Department Liaison for the delegation. Amanda has been trained by Climate Reality Corps to effectively present information about climate change as a climate reality leader since 2013. Amanda has a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Studies with a concentration in Environmental Science. Amanda is a recipient of the 2014 United Nations ATOP International Day of Peace Award alongside Dr. Patch Adams for her work in Environmental Sustainability and was listed as one of the top 50 Most Influential People of Hudson County, NJ. She was Sustainable Jersey's Sustainability Hero of the Month in November 2014 and received the North Jersey Young Environmental Innovator Award for 2015.