



## **RESEARCH EDGE**

### **CREATING THE TINGUM COLLECTIVE CHAPBOOK: *SEAGRAPES IN THE TIME OF MOONS***

Tiffany Austin

English Studies  
University of The Bahamas, Nassau, The Bahamas  
Email: [tiffany.austin@ub.edu.bs](mailto:tiffany.austin@ub.edu.bs)

*Working Paper Series*

**No. 11, April 2018**

The Office of Graduate Studies & Research of the University of The Bahamas publishes RESEARCH EDGE Working Paper Series electronically.

© Copyright is held by the author or authors of each Working Paper.

RESEARCH EDGE Working Paper Series cannot be republished, reprinted or reproduced in any format without the permission of the paper's author or authors.

**Note:** The views expressed in each paper are those of the author or authors of the paper. They do not represent the views of the Office of Graduate Studies & Research and University of The Bahamas.

Compiled and edited by:  
Dr. Vikneswaran Nair  
Dr. Earla Carey-Baines  
Virginia Ballance

**Office of Graduate Studies & Research**  
University of The Bahamas  
University Drive  
P.O. Box N-4912, Nassau, The Bahamas

Tel: (242) 397-2601/2602  
E-mail: [grants@ub.edu.bs](mailto:grants@ub.edu.bs)

# CREATING THE TINGUM COLLECTIVE CHAPBOOK: *SEAGRAPES IN THE TIME OF MOONS*

Tiffany Austin

English Studies  
University of The Bahamas, Nassau, The Bahamas

Email: [tiffany.austin@ub.edu.bs](mailto:tiffany.austin@ub.edu.bs)

## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Students are often encouraged by viewing their own work in collaboration with others, from its inception, throughout the process, then as a completed project. The instructor surmises, then perceives the students surmising that they are on a scholarly journey and an aspiring part of that journey becomes, not its outcome necessarily, but its relationship to our continuous budding knowledge. This is even more so when students are given a chance to express themselves creatively. Tingum Collective is a group of University of The Bahamas (UB) students dedicated to writing, workshopping and performing their poetry on-campus and in the local community of Nassau. It names a revolving creative space that officially started on the Oakes Field Campus during fall 2016, although students and faculty in English Studies had previously participated in various creative writing groups. Since its duration, many students have met to write creatively, presented at rallies, performed at on-campus conferences (including the Critical Caribbean Symposium and An Evening with Bahamian Writers) and at the university's yearly literary festival. Students also participated in writing events off-campus, including community poetry reading nights at the art gallery space Hillside House in Nassau, Bahamas.

Author Noah Eli Gordon (2007) informs us:

From the 16th to the 19th century, chapbooks flourished as a locus of popular culture, religion, folklore, myth, history, poetry, and story; for many, they were the sole link connecting them to the events of the day, and, implicitly, to a sense of personal identity.

Creating and publishing a full poetry collection require more time and resources than this project could allow. However, a chapbook as Gordon again relates, with "its momentary focusing and sculpting of the reader's attention, is the perfect vehicle for poetry" (Gordon, 2007).<sup>1</sup> The poetry chapbook also became the "perfect vehicle" for revealing UB students' literary talents as well as attracting an audience for its production through the university and local community.

The collective recently created and published a poetry chapbook titled *SeaGrapes in the Time of Moons: A Tingum Collective Collection*. The chapbook is a shortened (approximately 30 pages) poetry collection that features nine poets (and their original poetry) from the collective and the Introduction to Creative Writing course. These writers include Kaj Archer, Pavel Eric Bailey, Suhayla Hepburn, Tisunne Major, Breyant T. Marshall, Wynona

---

<sup>1</sup> Noah Eli Gordon covers the origins of the chapbook, a term arguably taken from the chapmen who hawked the tangible products of folk traditions, from the broadsheet and broadside to ballad and modern versions.

Nicolls, Shernee Symonette, Ide Thompson, and Jarrod Williams.<sup>2</sup> With Bahamian cadence and foci, the title *SeaGrapes in the Time of Moons* riffs off of Langston Hughes' poem phrase ("a dream deferred"), Lorraine Hansberry's play title (*A Raisin in the Sun*), Nina Simone's musical tribute ("To Be Young, Gifted and Black"), Gabriel Garcia Márquez's syntax, and Kamau Brathwaite's style, introducing and offering the burgeoning genius of these young writers. The themes of the poems range from personal narratives of grief, new views of past poems written by poets like Derek Walcott and Warsan Shire (for example, one poem is inspired by Shire's chapbook collection *Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth*, 2011), to poems that speak of gender, ethnicity, sexuality and the place of The Bahamas. At the forefront exists a concatenation about personal and Bahamian identity and politics. With this collection, the goal is to showcase the students' poetic voices—diverse and courageous and inspiring.

The copies of the chapbook have been disseminated at the Blue Flamingo Literary Festival<sup>3</sup> where some of the students recited poems from the collection before internationally known poets. Copies also will be distributed to the university's Writing Center, English Studies, Hillside House Art Gallery, local main library, and sold as part of fundraising efforts for the monthly community poetry readings organized by Tingum Collective. Each student/poet will/have also received two copies. The inspiration for the chapbook, process of creation and publication, as well as the responses to its publication by students, faculty, community members and other writers will be discussed during the forum.

In conceiving and crafting this chapbook, we sought and seek to impact UB students by highlighting their poetic abilities. The poets included in the chapbook can now proclaim, "I have published work within a material book". Moreover, emerging poets in the UB student community can aspire to have their work published as well. We also desire recognition about the literary and creative excellence of UB students. The publication of the chapbook allows UB to record students' creative work. Part of the center of academic life must be the oral/literary arts for, as Gwendolyn Brooks reported, "Poetry is life distilled." This endeavour raises UB's reputation as a university full of creative artists and an institution ready to embark on creating a Creative Writing minor within English Studies. Also, the national culture is enriched by the new voices proffered by the student creative writers. The publication of their work raises awareness of and continues the Bahamian literary tradition.

**Keywords:** *Poetry, publishing, creative-writing, culture, chapbook*

---

<sup>2</sup> Two UB students have won awards based on their poetry writing. Student Eric Pavel Bailey recently won second prize for the U.S. Embassy Nassau sponsored 2018 Martin Luther King, Jr. Poetry Contest. Student Kaj Archer won second prize in the 2018 University of The Bahamas Student Government Association and English Studies-sponsored Poetry Competition. Both students are members of the Tingum Collective and are former students of the Introduction to Creative Writing course.

<sup>3</sup> University of The Bahamas and English Studies sponsored a book fair and literary festival, March 31-April 1, 2017 in Nassau, Bahamas. Along with opening and closing ceremonies, the festival encompassed a full schedule of events, including readings, panels, writing workshops and reading activities geared towards the youth. Moreover, the festival featured Bahamian writers selling and signing their books throughout the two days. The next literary festival was renamed the Blue Flamingo Literary Festival, included more international writers, and took place in Nassau, Bahamas, March 23-27, 2018.

## **Acknowledgements**

Dr. Tiffany Austin would like to thank University of The Bahamas, specifically the Research Grants Committee, for funding this project. She would also like to thank all of the creative writing students, back cover design artist Breyant T. Marshall and Media Enterprises for their diligent work on the chapbook.

## **References**

Gordon, N. E. (2007). *Considering chapbooks: A brief history of the little book*. Balmain, Australia: Australian Literary Management. Retrieved from <http://jacketmagazine.com/34/gordon-chapbooks.shtml>

Shire, W. (2011). *Teaching my mother how to give birth*. London, Eng.: flipped eye publishing.

## CORRESPONDING RESEARCHER BRIEF BIODATA



**Tiffany Austin**

Assistant Professor

English Studies

University of The Bahamas, Nassau, The Bahamas

Email: [tiffany.austin@ub.edu.bs](mailto:tiffany.austin@ub.edu.bs)

Dr. Tiffany Austin currently teaches rhetorical and creative writing at University of The Bahamas. Her research interests include African Diaspora Studies, including African, African-American, Caribbean, and Afro-Latin American literature. She holds a BA from Spelman College, JD from Northeastern University School of Law, MFA from Chicago State University, and PhD in English from Saint Louis University (where she studied musical connections between the works of Gayl Jones and Afro-Ecuadorian writer Luz Argentina Chiriboga). She has received fellowship or residency grants from Virginia Center for the Arts and Mississippi Arts Commission and has attended Callaloo and Kimbilio Writing Retreats and many conferences. The subjects of upcoming paper presentations include blues elegy, the literary representations of “black girl magic,” and alt-cadence related to Bahamian writers. Austin maintains a concern for social justice, examining at conferences the body politics of post-incarceration, the protest of non-mobile corporeality, and being invited as a guest lecturer on “Poetry and Social Justice” at Ball State University. She has published poetry and/or critical essays in *African American Review*, *Callaloo*, *CLA Journal*, *Moko*, *Obsidian*, *pluck!*, *Sonia Sanchez’s Poetic Spirit through Haiku*, *Valley Voices*, and *Sycorax’s Daughters*, a speculative literature anthology. Her photo essay “A South in Sound” was also published in *TriQuarterly* and an interview with Nicaraguan reggae artist Philip Montalbán in *Auburn Avenue*. Most recently, one of her short monologues was included in the *50in50: What Place Do We have In This Movement* performance at the Billie Holiday Theatre in Brooklyn, New York, and her short play *Common Law Wife* performed by dancer Jasmine Powell at the Hayti Heritage Center in Durham, North Carolina.