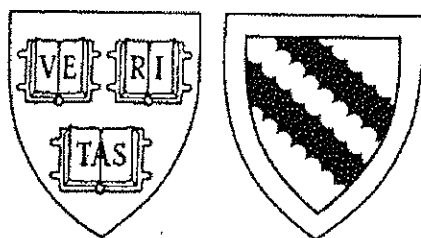


Harvard and Radcliffe
Class of 1982
Twenty-fifth Anniversary Report



CAMBRIDGE

Printed for the Class

2007

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SECONDARY SCHOOL: The Maret School, Washington, DC.

YEARS AT COLLEGE: 1978-1982.

HOUSE/DORM AFFILIATION: Leverett.

DEGREES: A.B., magna cum laude, '82; Ph.D., Univ. of Chicago '91.

SPOUSE/PARTNER: Olubunmi Fatoye-Matory, Sept. 27, 1990 (Univ. of Ife, Nigeria '81; M.Ed., Univ. of Ibadan '83; Ed.M., Harvard '98).

SPOUSE/PARTNER OCCUPATION: Administrator.

CHILDREN: Ayo Alexandra, 1991; Adu Laitan, 1995.

SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES WHILE AT HARVARD/RADCLIFFE: Kuumba Singers; *Harvard Crimson*.

Twenty-five years later, I am now smack-dab in middle age, with the graduated bifocals to prove it. Yet I resist the evidence that I am now closer to the age of the parents who cheered my Harvard graduation than to my cap-and-gowned twenty-something self. Yet I feel lucky. I have walked far on an open road—a road opened by Civil Rights warriors and smoothed by their sacrifices. Nonetheless, at forty-four, I worry—in the moments when I have time for reflection—about how many untrodden miles, and how little time, remain.

In the Class of '82, most of us have now lived half a lifespan, but, if you're like me, you wish we had three-quarters more.

Of course, I don't know if all of you have had those thoughts. Maybe it's the same intimations of mortality—the arthritic hip, the backache, the receding hairline or encroaching forest of grey, the attrition of elders—that caused our fathers to divorce or buy sports cars at forty. My thoughts were occasioned by the passing last year of my forty-eight-year-old sister, who succumbed to melanoma, and my fifty-three-year-old brother, who suffered from diabetes. Fortunately, they have crossed over into the memories of the thousands of patients they healed, of the kin they loved, and of the children they bore and inspired. For better or worse, they will live longer in our hearts than they did in their own bodies. The memory of their long strides and stratospheric flight remain proof that no path is closed to me.

In the year of that extravagant loss, there were moments of joy. I published two books—the second edition of *Sex and the Empire That Is No More* (Berghahn), about religion, gender and politics among the Nigerian Yoruba people, and *Black Atlantic Religion* (Princeton), about the spirit possession religions that bind Latin America to Africa. *Black Atlantic Religion* won the Herskovits Award from the African Studies Association, for the best book of the year. Also in 2005, owing partly to my insistence on a faculty vote, the University put an end to four years of bullying, censorship of dissent, and transparently self-serving but globally influential dismissals of other people's suffering. Yet the struggle for justice is seldom without pain or turmoil.

Life's needlework sometimes reads with excruciating symmetry. Every life ends in a death, and every sorrow ends in relief. Sometimes consolation comes fast enough to lighten even the last handful of dirt. In 1995, I had lost my beautiful mother and, in the same year, gained a beautiful son. The universe lets us turn loss into gain, and, like lessons well-learned and memories well-nourished, our suffering sometimes turns into the spectral blessings of the next generation. What moment in life could be more exemplary than childbirth? An instant pregnancy and painless delivery would hardly make us love a child more.

Twenty-five years after most of us last met, I am a tenured professor of anthropology and of African and African American studies at our alma mater. More importantly, I am the husband, forever, of Bunmi Fatoye-Matory and the father of Ayo and Adu. There might not be enough time to love them as much as they deserve, to teach Ayo and Adu all that I've figured out, to live enough life and read enough words to kiss the last of my ignorance goodbye, to write all the books that are percolating in my head, to clock as many sunrises with Gifford, George, John, Chuck, Harry, and Bob as I wish we could, to swim and gym my washboard abs into visibility. I might not get to splash as many dance club mirrors, question as many takens-for-granted, level as many injustices, cry over as many movies, worship as many gods, travel as many lands, learn as many languages, live with as much African art, or inspire as many students as I long

to. On the other hand, my late start and steady strides at the violin are convincing me that however well I come to play is good enough. If I lived as long as I want, too many other people probably would too, and there would be no more open roads or open fields for our children to walk. We would cramp them into an overpopulated forest of skyscrapers, and little sunlight to see a new day. Every generation would know more pain and less justice than we did.

So as we commence hopefully on the second quarter of life, I pray for more asymmetry, less tit-for-tat, less American political pendulum. I hope the Class of '82 will leave the world permanently more fair for everyone than when we entered it, progressively smarter, inexorably more loving. Here's to the hope that our children will have more paths to happiness than we enjoyed and that—wherever in the world they go—they will open more paths for their own and for other people's children.

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HOUSE/DORM AFFILIATION: Quincy.

DEGREES: A.B. '82; M.D., Univ. of South Dakota '87.

SPOUSE/PARTNER: Gilda Lorensen, 1993 (Stanford Univ.; M.D., Duke Univ.).

SPOUSE/PARTNER OCCUPATION: Ob/Gyn.

CHILDREN: Rosa, 1997.

