

Wandeka Gayle

(Graduate student, English Literature)

Where are you from and what brought you to Andrews?

I am from St. Catherine, Jamaica. I was working as a writing instructor at the university in Mandeville, Manchester before coming to Andrews. I have two degrees in the humanities—BA in mass communication and BA in English. I worked as a staff reporter at a national newspaper before teaching part-time, but wanted to become a full-fledged professor of English so came to Andrews for a master's in English. I arrived in January 2010 with \$160 in my pocket. It is amazing how I was able to pay for my first semester. My parents petitioned the Inter-American Division for assistance to pay a portion of my tuition so I could be financially cleared. Thanks to grants from the Department of English, Office of the Graduate Dean, and assistance from family members, I am currently able to meet my tuition expenses.

As a graduate student in English, how does creativity between the two disciplines of art and language work?

Being able to see things in an artistic way helps me with specificity in writing but I am careful not to create purple prose. Not everything from visual art translates into written work. I have been told that my writing tends to be very visual and I think that comes from being observant of everything around me. My journalism training gives me balance and discipline in writing. I did not start painting professionally until 2005 as a form of therapy after a traumatic experience. In Jamaica I participated in group exhibitions, and I had my debut solo exhibition at Andrews last October, with another one scheduled for April.

What inspires you to write and paint?

I write and paint things that remind me of home, most importantly things that give me that warm nostalgic feeling or say something distinctive about my culture. Having been a reporter for a few years, I had the opportunity to see a lot of places in Jamaica and meet people from all walks of life. So, I write about a lot of social issues.

How would you like your future to unfold?

Completion of my graduate studies at Andrews this summer. I would love to get an MFA in painting, but it would be practical to go for a doctorate in creative writing. Publish my manuscripts, author and illustrate several children's books, have an annual art exhibition and own an art studio in New York. Travel throughout Europe and Africa, documenting my journey and painting scenery and people. Get to Grade 8 music level and publish my piano compositions and ballads. Get married and have two children. Those are my plans, anyway.



Photo by Darren Heslop in Wandeka's Beechwood Apartment "art studio."