

Pitt Library System Opens Archives of 4 African American Pittsburghers to Public

By Sharon S. Blake

A closer look into the lives of four prominent Black men from Western Pennsylvania who made important contributions to U.S. history is now possible as a result of new collections made available through Pitt's University Library System (ULS).

Pitt graduate students, under the supervision of Pitt archivist Wendy Pflug, have spent the past 12 months organizing and cataloging the personal papers of:

Frank Bolden (1914-2003), world-renowned war correspondent for *The Pittsburgh Courier* newspaper;

K. Leroy Irvis (1919-2006), legendary Pennsylvania legislative leader;

Percival L. Prattis (1895-1980), journalist with *The Pittsburgh Courier* and the first Black reporter to gain access to the U.S. House and Senate press galleries; and

Tim Stevens (1945-), past president of the Pittsburgh branch of the NAACP.

"This project represents a significant effort on the part of the ULS Archives Service Center to preserve, organize, and make available a key body of material for the further study of the contributions to American history made by these important men," said ULS director and Hillman University Librarian Rush Miller.

The four collections represent almost 200 linear feet of biographical information, correspondence, subject files, scrapbooks, images, newspaper clippings, and other materials. They are housed at Pitt's Archives Service Center, 7500 Thomas Blvd., Point Breeze. Researchers wanting to view a collection are asked to call ahead at 412-244-7091 so an archivist is available to assist.

The ULS has finding aids in place that offer detailed information about the contents of the collections. Information on the individuals and their collections follows.

Frank Bolden

The papers of this world-renowned journalist document his career as a feature writer for *The Pittsburgh Courier* and as one of the first World War II correspondents accredited by the U.S. Department of War. Because of racial segregation in the military, Bolden was only permitted to cover African American units. His articles, which described the bravery of soldiers in the 92nd Infantry Division in Italy, helped debunk the myth that Black soldiers could not handle the stress of combat. Bolden, who earned a bachelor's degree from Pitt in 1934, returned to *The Courier* in 1945 as a features writer after declining offers from *Life* magazine and *The New York Times*. He also covered the cultural and social life of the Hill District and was *The Courier's* city editor from 1956 to '60.

K. Leroy Irvis

One of Pennsylvania's most prominent politicians, Irvis represented Pittsburgh as a Democrat in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives from 1958 to 1988. Among Irvis' many achievements was his election as Speaker of the House in 1977, the first Black to hold that position in any state legislature in the United States since Reconstruction. Prior to his successful political career,

Irvis worked as a teacher, Pittsburgh steel worker, editor, civil rights worker, news commentator, law clerk, assistant district attorney, civilian attaché to the U.S. War Department, and author. He was a 1969 graduate of the Pitt School of Law. This collection contains a wide variety of materials, including the piece of legislation Irvis sponsored that made Pitt a state-related institution in 1966, as well as other legislative papers and photos, publications, correspondence, and campaign literature.

Percival L. Prattis

This collection contains documents relating to the life and career of Prattis, former executive editor of *The Pittsburgh Courier*. In that position, he highlighted the struggles of Blacks for fair employment opportunities, from teaching positions to sports. Prattis also had duties as a *Courier* reporter and was dispatched on international assignments to the Middle East, Far East, and post-World War II Europe. During World War II, he traveled extensively, covering the Black Armed Forces. In 1947 he was one of the first Black journalists unanimously granted membership in the U. S. Senate and House press galleries. Material in this collection dates from 1916 to 1980 and includes correspondence, financial reports of the *Courier*, drafts of articles and stories, scrapbooks, and photographs.

Tim Stevens

This collection documents the life and career of Stevens, who has remained a prominent figure in the Pittsburgh community for decades. Raised in the Hill District, Stevens earned a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's degree in urban and regional planning from Pitt. He has served as both executive director and president of the Pittsburgh branch of the NAACP. Stevens founded the Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP), an organization aimed at promoting Black involvement in local, state, and national elections. Stevens also is a well-known jazz performer and vocalist. He has released several albums, both solo and with his ensemble, the Tim Stevens Project, and has written a variety of songs, including one recorded by Nancy Wilson. This collection contains correspondence, meetings minutes, brochures, flyers, personal notes, news articles, memos, cassette tapes, VHS tapes, and photographs.

The ULS is the 23rd-largest academic library system within the United States. Under the administration of the Hillman University Librarian and ULS director, it includes 21 libraries and holds more than 6.2 million volumes and world-class specialized collections, among them the Archive of Scientific Philosophy and the Archives of Industrial Society, as well as major foreign-language materials from around the world totaling 1.4 million volumes. The ULS offers state-of-the-art facilities and services, with innovative digital library collections and capabilities.



From left, Chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg; Wen-Ta Chiu; his wife, Juan; and their son, Jason, in a photo taken during the 2009 Legacy Laureate dinner at Pitt.

Pitt Legacy Laureate Wen-Ta Chiu Is Named Taiwan's Health Minister

By Amanda Leff Ritchie

Taiwan's premier, Wu Den-yih, appointed Pitt alumnus Wen-Ta Chiu the new minister of Taiwan's Department of Health, effective Feb. 1, according to the *Taipei Times*. Chiu, a 2009 Pitt Legacy Laureate, was one of four new ministerial appointments to the premier's cabinet.

Chiu is a highly distinguished neurosurgeon, medical researcher, academic leader, and public health advocate. He served as the president of Taipei Medical University from 2008 to 2011, stepping down earlier this month after being named to the premier's cabinet. Chiu received his master's and doctoral degrees in public health from Pitt's Graduate School of Public Health (GSPH) in 1987 and 1989, respectively.

In 1999, Chiu was recognized by Pitt's GSPH as one of the 50 most influential faculty members or students in the school's history. The Chiu family represents three generations of GSPH graduates: Yung-Tsong Chiu, Wen-Ta's father, received his Master of Public Health degree from the school's Department of Health Policy and Management in 1954; and Wen-Ta's son, Jason, graduated from the school's epidemiology program in December 2010.

As president of Taipei Medical University, Chiu led the successful growth of a world-class medical university and hospital system, including doubling the size of the hospital system to 3,000 beds. During the same time, he also served as superintendent of Shuang Ho Hospital and as a professor in the Taipei Medical University's College of Medicine and College of Public Health

and Nutrition. In addition, he served as superintendent of Wan Fang Hospital, chief of neurosurgery, director of the Biomedical Informatics Center, and dean of the School of Public Health.

Widely regarded for his accomplishments as a head-injury researcher, Chiu developed the world's largest head-injury registry and promoted the adoption of helmet laws, which dramatically reduced the rate of motorcycle-related deaths in Taiwan.

Chiu has devoted himself to public service and public health practices in Taiwan as a primary investigator for the Center for Health Policy Research and Development of the National Health Research Institutes and as a consultant for the Department of Health. He has made significant leadership contributions in public health as president of the Asia-Pacific Academic Consortium for Public Health, the Academy for Multidisciplinary Neurotraumatology, and the Taiwan Neurotrauma Society; and as president of the Asia Oceania Neurotrauma Society.

Chiu's leadership in public health has garnered many awards, including a Contribution Award from the Asia-Pacific Academic Consortium for Public Health in 2007.

Chiu earned, in addition to his Pitt degrees, the Doctor of Medical Science degree in neuroscience from Nihon University School of Medicine, Tokyo, and the MD degree from Chung-Shan Medical College in Taiwan. He was a research fellow in neurosurgery at Stanford University.

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Briefly noted

Expert on Impostor Syndrome To Speak at Pitt on Feb. 28

The Swanson School of Engineering's Office of Diversity will present a talk by Valerie Young, an internationally known speaker and expert on the topic of "the impostor syndrome," from noon to 1:30 p.m. Feb. 28 in Room 102 Benedum Hall. Young's presentation is titled "How to Feel as Bright and Capable as Everyone Seems to Think You Are: What Every Woman and Man Needs to Know About Competence, the Impostor Syndrome, and the Art of Winging It."

The impostor syndrome exists when intelligent, competent people believe that they're fooling people—deep down they feel like impostors, fakes, and frauds and live in fear of being discovered.

Young has led workshops and given speeches for managers and professionals in diverse corporations, professional associations, and universities. Prior to beginning ImpostorSyndrome.com, she was the manager of strategic marketing for a Fortune 500 company and director of training for an international productivity-enhancement company. Her doctoral research at the University of Massachusetts Amherst focused on understanding and addressing internal barriers to women's academic and occupational success and satisfaction.

The talk is open to Pitt faculty, staff, and students. Box lunches will be available to those who preregister with Terri Kennelly-Cook at eodadmin@pitt.edu.



Valerie Young

Pitt Repertory Theatre Presents Churchill in Short(s)?

Pitt Repertory Theatre presents a compilation of three rarely performed one-act plays by Caryl Churchill in *Churchill in Short(s)?* Feb. 17-27, in Pitt's Henry Heymann Theatre, lower level of Stephen Foster Memorial, 4301 Forbes Ave., Oakland. Tuesday through Saturday performances are at 8 p.m.; Sunday matinees are at 2 p.m. Information on the plays follows.

- *The After-Dinner Joke*, originally produced for television, examines charity through the idealism of its main character, Selby, and the politics surrounding her charitable efforts.

- *This Is a Chair* is a series of vignettes dramatizing the challenges of everyday communication.

- *Lovesick*, originally a radio play, focuses on a therapist and his patients and their struggles to find love.

Tickets are \$25 general admission; \$20 for Pitt faculty, staff, and alumni; and \$12 for students. To order, call 412-624-PLAY (7529) or visit www.play.pitt.edu.

A talk-back with the actors will take place following the Feb. 20 performance.

Churchill in Short(s)? is directed by Tommy Costello, a fifth-year teaching fellow at Pitt pursuing a PhD in theater and performance studies.

Caryl Churchill is an English playwright known for her experiments with form and daring language. Her best-known work, *Cloud 9* (1979), is considered a landmark of feminist and postmodern literature.

—Sharon S. Blake

Isenberg Collaborates With NIH On Link Between Alzheimer's, Loss of Nitric Oxide in Brain

By Anita V. Srikameswaran

A researcher at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, in collaboration with scientists from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), has discovered that the deadly plaques of Alzheimer's disease interact with certain cellular proteins to inhibit normal signals that maintain blood flow to the brain. Their findings, which could lead to new approaches to treat the dementia, were recently published in *PLoS ONE*.

Levels of nitric oxide (NO)—a signaling molecule that helps regulate blood flow, immune and neurological processes—are known to be low in the brains of people who have Alzheimer's disease, but the reason for that hasn't been clear, said study coauthor Jeffrey S. Isenberg, a professor in the Division of Pulmonary, Allergy, and Critical Care Medicine, Pitt School of Medicine.

"Our research sheds light on how that loss of NO might happen and reveals biochemical pathways that drug discoverers might be able to exploit to find new medicines for Alzheimer's," he said. "There is evidence that suggests enhancing NO levels can protect neurons from degenerating and dying."

The researchers, led by first author Thomas Miller and senior author David D. Roberts, both of the Laboratory of Pathology in NIH's National Cancer Institute (NCI), found in mouse and human cell experiments that amyloid-beta, the main component of the plaques that accumulate on brain cells in Alzheimer's, binds to a cell surface receptor called CD36, which causes decreased activity of the enzyme-soluble guanylate cyclase to reduce NO signaling. But that inhibitory effect required the presence of and



interaction with CD47, another cell-surface protein, indicating that additional steps in the pathway remain to be identified.

"It's possible that an agent that could block either CD36 or CD47 could slow the progress of neuronal degeneration in Alzheimer's by protecting the production of NO in the brain," Isenberg said. "Importantly, we have already identified therapeutic agents that can interrupt the inhibitory signal induced by these interactions to maximize NO production, signaling, and sensitivity."

He and his colleagues currently are studying such blockers in a variety of disease models.

The research was funded by NCI and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

2011 K. Leroy Irvis Black History Month Celebration



America's Best Weekly: A Century of The Pittsburgh Courier

Pitt Chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg and Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs Robert Hill, in association with the Senator John Heinz History Center, held a private reception to help launch an exhibition at the center celebrating the nationwide impact of *The Pittsburgh Courier* throughout the past 100 years. The Feb. 10 program at the History Center was Pitt's 2011 K. Leroy Irvis Black History Month Program. The exhibition will be on view through Oct. 2.

1. Terri, Jared, and Kipauno Washington explore the exhibition. 2. From left, Robert Cindrich (LAW '68), History Center chair; Rod Doss, *New Pittsburgh Courier* publisher; Nordenberg. 3. Robert Hill takes a closer look at a 1910 issue of *The Pittsburgh Courier*.

4. Nancy Bolden, widow of the late *Courier* reporter and editor Frank Bolden (EDUC '34). 5. Pitt Board Chair Stephen Tritch (ENGR '71, KGSB '77) and his wife, Tami (A&S '81).



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BlackHistoryMonth

Here and There

Pitt Honors College Student Sesi Aliu Studies the Life He Lives



COURTESY OF SESI ALIU

Pitt senior Sesi Aliu (center) on a ferry in The Gambia crossing the nation's namesake river from the city of Barra to the capital of Banjul. Joining him were "hundreds of people, livestock, food, cars, and other goods."

By Morgan Kelly

Pitt senior Sesi Aliu brings the sprawling subject of Africana Studies into better focus. Abstractly, it's the study of disparate Black cultures worldwide loosely connected by resilient traditions and a shared sense of displacement and rediscovery.

Applied to Aliu, it's his life: born in Nigeria, moved to the United States at 8, and raised in a household equally influenced by his Yoruba extraction and Texas environs. Now 21 and an Africana Studies and French major in Pitt's Honors Col-

lege (with certificates in global and African studies), Aliu studies and explores his native West Africa as well as the places its émigrés have settled.

"My experience left me with a lot of questions about the world in general. I thought about the legacies of colonialism, the chemistry of international relations, and differences in development and opportunities. I wondered how these issues resulted in the experience I shared with Africans around the world."

—Sesi Aliu

"My story is one thread of the larger narrative of African communities everywhere," Aliu said.

His story began in his hometown of Lagos, a place he remembers just well enough to make him realize how much more about it he wants to learn. Flashes of his neighborhood, 1970s skyscrapers encircled by colonial architecture, and the incessant energy of Africa's second-largest city are all he has.

In 1997, Aliu's parents won a U.S.

State Department lottery to apply for a visa and moved him and his four siblings to Austin. Against the traditional narrative of the African Diaspora, they did not flee war nor was their move involuntary. But the indelible scars of Africa's misfortunes meant the education and comfort Aliu's parents wanted for their children were more likely to be had in the United States, he said.

"I don't think there's any doubt that it was for the best," Aliu said. "Education in Nigeria is hard to come by without the money, and, even then, the quality is questionable. Besides, there are a lot of educated Nigerians whose degrees can't get them a job. It's safe to say my family's life would be a lot tougher had we stayed."

His parents immersed the family into the local West African community—their closet friends were Nigerian, as is Aliu's best friend. As in the majority of immigrant communities, the culture permeating his family's home and its environs was all-encompassing. Aliu admits that his parents needed the cultural trappings of home a lot more. At 8 years old, his short life in Africa had not left him with a lot to miss. Instead, as Aliu got older, he started feeling he missed out.

"I felt there was a lot more I could know about my own culture," he said. "For instance, I never learned Yoruba. My parents speak it, but I never needed to. I live in the United States because it was better for my family to leave Nigeria."

"My experience left me with a lot of questions about the world in general," Aliu continued. "I thought about the legacies of colonialism, the chemistry of international relations, and differences in development and opportunities. I wondered how these issues resulted in the experience I shared with Africans around the world."

As a Pitt student, Aliu has focused on West Africa, particularly the French-speaking nations that comprise most of the region (Nigeria is an English-speaking exception). A 2010 inductee into the Phi Beta Kappa honor society, Aliu has distinguished himself academically: He received a Humanity

in Action summer fellowship in 2009, became a member of the Golden Key honor society in 2008, and was named a Helen S. Faison Scholar in 2007.

A 2010 inductee into the Phi Beta Kappa honor society, Aliu has distinguished himself academically: He received a Humanity in Action summer fellowship in 2009, became a member of the Golden Key honor society in 2008, and was named a Helen S. Faison Scholar in 2007.

In Spring 2010, he spent a semester in Senegal that illustrated the interplay of broad similarity and cultural specificity of Africana. Again, Aliu had memory flashes of Lagos: the colonial-era buildings, the streets filled with children, and the perseverance of an ancient culture. Just like home. Except that the predominant ethnicity is Wolof, and Islam is an entrenched feature of Senegalese life. And Senegal's capital and largest city Dakar is home to roughly one-fourth the population

of Lagos.

"I had this strong overall identification with Dakar at first, but as I lived there day to day I really noticed the differences," Aliu said. "Senegal was quite similar to Nigeria on its surface, but the underlying atmosphere was totally different."

(During a month in the summer of 2008 and another month in the summer of 2009, Aliu lived in Malawi as part of a student-led initiative to learn about

"As an African who left my home and was raised elsewhere, I think it's important to understand how the African experience of slavery, Diaspora, and imperialism connects and influences these similar yet distinct communities throughout the world," Aliu said. "What I've learned during my life and travels has taught me that."

—Sesi Aliu

and collaborate with community-based health and social service organizations in HIV-affected areas. He was too busy each time to take in much beyond the country's abundance of farms and rural villages, he said.)

The simultaneous feeling of kinship and contrasting cultural distinction he experienced in Senegal has encouraged Aliu to explore African culture outside of Africa. He has applied for a Fulbright Scholarship to study sub-Saharan African immigrants in France, hoping to examine the traits they share with Africans elsewhere and those developed

through their experience in France.

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Happenings



Churchill in Short(s)?, Henry Heymann Theatre, February 18-27

Pitt actors (from left) Theo Allyn, a teaching artist-in-residence; senior Fred Pelzner, and sophomore Amanda Leslie, rehearse a scene from *The After-Dinner Joke*.

Concerts

Mike Strasser, folk singer/songwriter, noon **Feb. 18**, Cup & Chaucer Café, ground floor, Hillman Library, Emerging Legend Series, Pitt Library System, Calliope: The Pittsburgh Folk Music Society, www.calliopehouse.org.

Manhattan Transfer, Grammy Award-winning vocal quartet, 7 and 9:30 p.m. **Feb. 18**, Manchester Craftsmen's Guild Hall, 1815 Metropolitan St., Manchester, MCG Jazz, 412-322-0800, www.mcgjazz.org.

Music on the Edge: Clarinetist Jean Kopperud and Percussionist Tom Kolor, 8 p.m. **Feb. 19**, Andy Warhol Museum, 117 Sandusky St., North Side, Pitt Department of Music, Andy Warhol Museum, 412-624-4125, www.music.pitt.edu.

Voices of Music: An Evening With Bach, program highlighting the genius of J.S. Bach's lyrical musical invention, including *Air on the G String*, 8 p.m. **Feb. 19**, Synod Hall, Fifth Avenue and North Craig Street, Oakland, Renaissance & Baroque, 412-361-2048, www.rbsp.org, PITT ARTS Cheap Seats, 412-624-4498, www.pittarts.pitt.edu.

Exhibitions

University Art Gallery, Mind Space, Maximalism in Contrast, presented by Pitt's Department of the History of Art and Architecture, **Feb. 15-Mar. 18**, Frick Fine Arts Building, 412-648-2400.

Hillman Library Latin American Lecture Room, 75th Anniversary of the University of Pittsburgh Press (UPP), selection of books representing the expanding range of UPP publications over the years, **through Feb. 18**, UPP and University Library System, 412-383-2493, mes5@pitt.edu.

Mattress Factory, Queloids: Race and Racism in Cuban Contemporary Art, **through Feb. 27**, 500 Sampsonia Way, North Side, Pitt's Center for Latin American Studies, 412-322-2231, www.mattress.org.

Heinz History Center, America's Best Weekly: A Century of The Pittsburgh Courier, **through Oct. 2**, 1212 Smallman St., Strip District, 412-454-6000, www.heinzhistorycenter.org.

Lectures/Seminars/Readings

"The Absolute Arithmetic Continuum and Its Peircean Counterpart," Philip Ehrlich, professor of philosophy, Ohio University, 12:05 p.m. **Feb. 15**, 817R Cathedral of Learning, Lunchtime Colloquium, Pitt Center for Philosophy of Science, 412-624-1052, pittentr@pitt.edu.

"Audible Traces: Documenting Indian Prisoners of War in World War I Europe," Neepa Majumdar, Pitt professor of English, noon

Feb. 17, 4130 Posvar Hall, Asia Over Lunch Series, Pitt Asian Studies Center, 412-648-7370, asia@pitt.edu.

"World History as Teaching Moments," Tom Anderson, Pitt World History Center postdoctoral fellow, noon **Feb. 17**, 3703 Posvar Hall, Pitt World History Center Brown Bag Lunch Series, www.worldhistory.pitt.edu.

Miscellaneous

Happy Together (Kar Wai Wong, 1997), free film screening, 7:45 p.m. **Feb. 16**, 2201 Posvar Hall, Contemporary Queer Cinemas Public Film Series Spring 2011, Pitt Women's Studies Program, 412-624-6485, www.wstudies.pitt.edu.

TIES Informational Luncheon for Researchers and Research Assistants, talk on Text Information Extraction System (TIES), Rebecca Crowley, director, Biomedical Informatics Graduate Training Program, Pitt School of Medicine, 11 a.m. **Feb. 23**, UPMC Cancer Pavilion, Suite 301, Conference Room 308, open to Pitt and UPMC faculty, staff, and students, Pitt Department of Biomedical Informatics, 412-623-4753.

Opera/Theater/Dance

Hair, New York Public Theater's new Tony-winning production, **Feb. 15-17**, Heinz Hall, 600 Penn Ave., Downtown, PNC Broadway Across America, www.pgharts.org, 412-456-6666, PITT ARTS Cheap Seats, 412-624-4498, www.pittarts.pitt.edu.



Hair, Heinz Hall, February 15-17

Juan and John, created and performed by Roger Guenveur Smith, **Feb. 18-19**, August Wilson Center, 980 Liberty Ave., Downtown, 412-456-6666, www.augustwilsoncenter.org, PITT ARTS Cheap Seats, 412-624-4498, www.pittarts.pitt.edu.

Churchill in Short(s)? Tommy Costello directing three lesser-known yet thoroughly contemporary one-act plays by Caryl Churchill, **Feb. 18-27**, Henry Heymann Theatre in the Stephen Foster Memorial, Pitt Repertory Theatre, Department of Theatre Arts, 412-624-6568, www.play.pitt.edu.

Camelot by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe, tale about the courage of King Arthur, the beauty of Guinevere, and the chivalry of Sir Lancelot, **through Feb. 20**, Pittsburgh Public Theater, 621 Penn Ave., Downtown, 412-316-1600, www.ppt.org.



Mike Strasser, Cup & Chaucer Cafe, February 18

PUBLICATION NOTICE The next edition of *Pitt Chronicle* will be published Feb. 21. Items for publication in the newspaper's *Happenings* calendar (this page) should be received at least two weeks prior to the event date. *Happenings* items should include the following information: title of the event, name and title of speaker(s), date, time, location, sponsor(s), and a phone number and Web site for additional information. Items may be e-mailed to chron@pitt.edu, faxed to 412-624-4895, or sent by campus mail to 422 Craig Hall. For more information, call 412-624-1033 or e-mail robinet@pitt.edu.