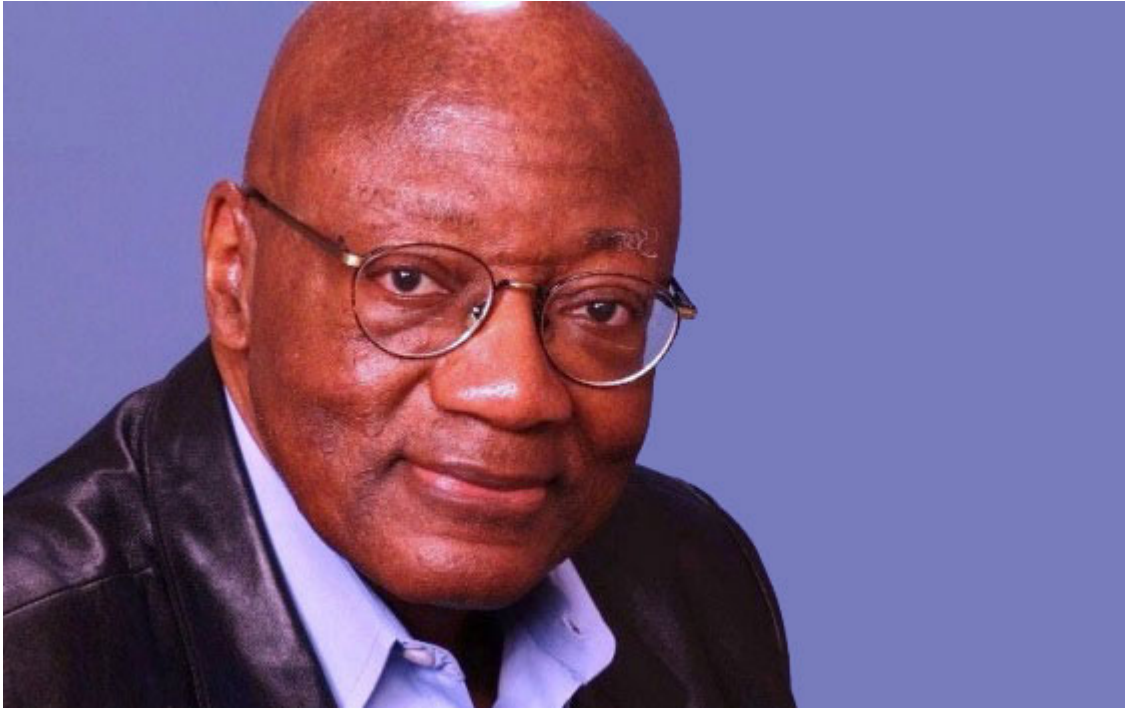


“Words of Pain Become Passion”

By Imani McCalla



After years of deaths and protests, a movement continues to be pushed - Black Lives Matter, which urges all people to join the fight in ending innocent killings among blacks. Purchase College students and staff joined Professor Emeritus of Sociology Dr. John Howard in his 10th annual lecture on law and society this month in the Natural Sciences building to learn more.

The presentation featured a screening of the film, *In Search of Justice*, edited and co-written by Purchase film program graduate Minoo Allen. This film focuses on the police brutality among unarmed blacks in Westchester between 2008 and 2011.

Before the screening, Howard educated the audience about recent stories of people of color being mistreated by white cops. The movement, Howard said, “is not about people who are dead, it’s not about those who were shot, it’s about the system. It spoke to the living and showed

aspects of society.” He continued, “It’s true to say all lives matter, but not all lives are equally at risk.”

The audience later discussed their thoughts on the film and how they can support the movement with Howard and Allen, as well as Corrections Officer and Reform Activist Damon Jones, Attorney Mayo Gregory Bartlett and Police Reform Activist Kenneth Chamberlain Jr., whose 68-year-old father was killed by police at his home in White Plains in 2011.

The film first introduced Kenneth Chamberlain Sr., a retired former Marine and 20-year veteran of the Westchester County Department of Corrections. He suffered from a chronic heart condition and wore a Life Aid medical alert bracelet, which accidentally triggered, sending police to his home. When they broke in, one officer called him a “nigger.” In an audio clip, Chamberlain had repeatedly said, “I’m okay, do not do that.” While trying to get help from Life Alert, he was tazed and fatally shot twice in the chest.

“If he said he was okay, why were they still there?” asked Kenneth Chamberlain Jr. Before speaking on the radio program Democracy Now with Amy Goodman in 2012, Chamberlain created a petition to not only bring awareness to his father’s death, but to demonstrate how police can get away with murder.

When a student asked for the best way to stay informed about the movement, Chamberlain stated that he did not know another way to tell the world of his father’s tragedy, so he spoke about it on Facebook. He also encouraged the youth to get involved. “A hashtag is not supporting the movement,” Chamberlain said, “it’s following it.”

Just like Allen used her skills to educate people on the corrupt justice system, she encouraged the audience to do the same. “You have to take that information and follow

through,” said Allen. “I wanted to listen before I actually did anything. I wanted to hear the problem and ask how I can help. I got the answer from social media.”

“What can I do to break down the underlying racism as a white person?” asked someone in the audience.

“85% percent of my support base is white,” said Chamberlain. “I would encourage you all,” Chamberlain referred to the predominately white audience. “There is something you all can do. Encourage people to vote because your vote does matter. You have to put people in office that will really hold law enforcement accountable. How can you have an accountability when a system always fails? What is justice? We don’t know.”

Lastly, Coordinator of Diversity Programs Geovanna Borden asked, “How realistic is it to reform a system?”

In response to this question, Jones asked the audience to raise their hands if they had attended a city council meeting. When very few hands were raised, he said, “You see, that’s the problem. This is the reason why we don’t see change.”

“If black lives don’t matter, no one’s life is going to matter,” said Bartlett.

Chamberlain has met the families of several African American men who were killed while unarmed and expressed his motivation to prevent these tragedies. “I do not want any other family to be a part of a club that I belong to,” Chamberlain said.

Senior psychology major Delino Saintil said the film was educational and informational. “I didn’t even know White Plains had those kind of issues,” Saintil said. “I’m glad I went to the lecture.”

“While watching it, you got a sense of how the police were able to get away with murder,” said Barbara Carter, a co-host for the talk show *Wildest Dreams*, a show that presents

acts of kindness. “You got a true sense of what happened by just listening to the audio. It was powerful.”