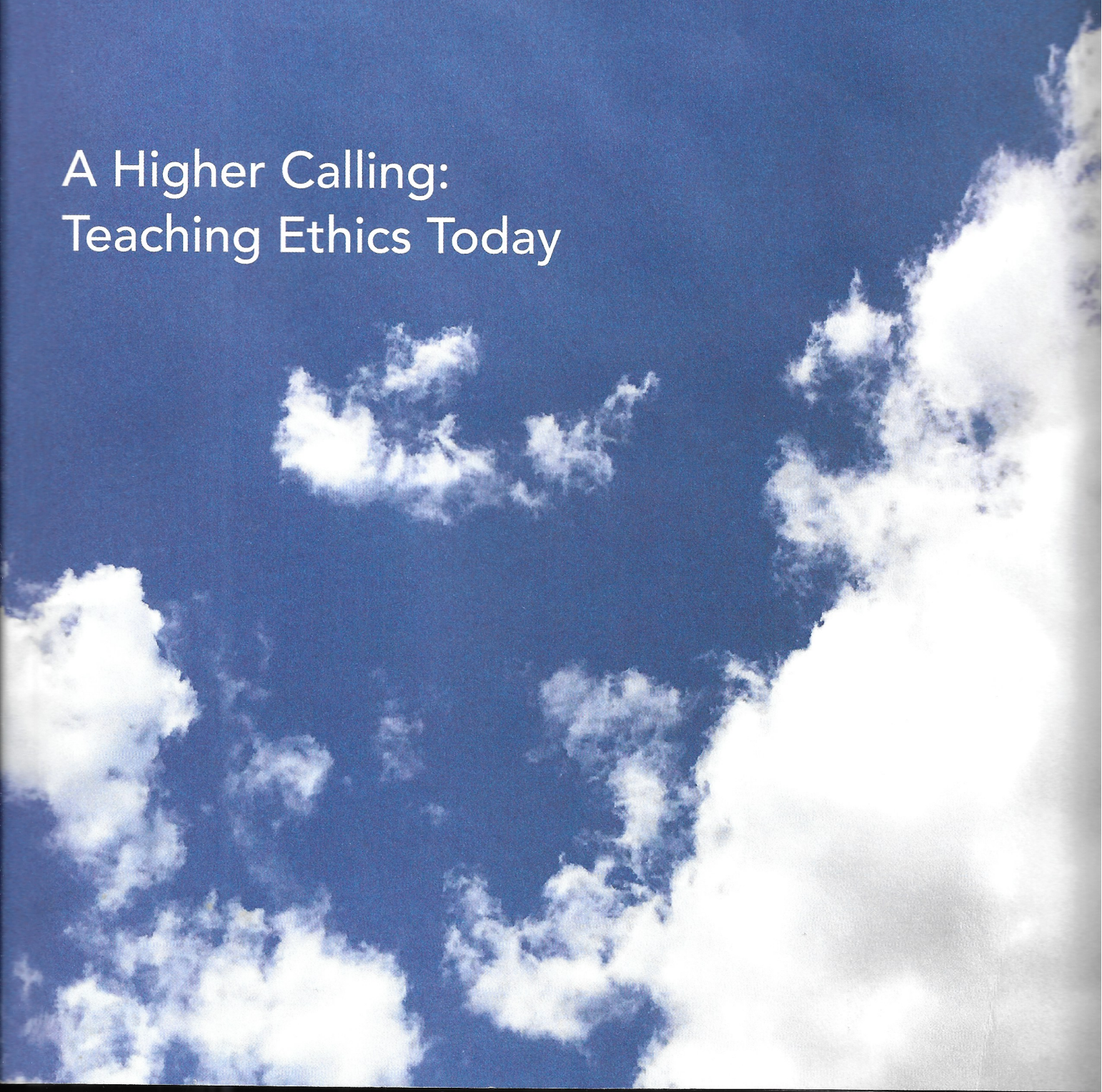


# Saint Michael's

SAINT MICHAEL'S COLLEGE MAGAZINE | SPRING/SUMMER 2019

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Teaching Ethics Today





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# royal hartigan '68\*

## Global Vision

by Mark Tarnacki

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**W**e Are One is a film that royal hartigan '68\* recently produced about his ensemble's global outreach and activism through jazz and indigenous world music traditions. The title, he says, also represents his feeling about the Saint Michael's community, which set him on a journey of self-discovery, with answers emerging in music and service to humanity.

hartigan has continued to return the favor to Saint Michael's, a spot he considers one of Earth's special places, by "coming home" to campus frequently through the decades for workshops and alumni weekends, most recently a workshop residency in the Fine Arts Department in November 2018 just months after he became a Golden Knight with his Class of 1968 during Reunion Weekend. Both times he performed in the Chapel with his brother musicians.

"The main messages from my film and from the campus workshops that I did in November are that we are all one as family, and until the world understands that, we can never escape the inequities resulting in hunger and violence and achieve our full humanity, until you eliminate the causes of inequities," he says. "The name of my recent CD is the other message—Time Changes, meaning we need to have radical, evolutionary new



photo: martin adi-chako

*blood drum spirit with tijan dorwana and isaac birituro dorwana in medie village, ghana*

consciousness of what it means to be human and of this planet and of our moral responsibilities. For both of these messages, and my role in trying to make them a reality in our world, the groundwork was laid at Saint Michael's."

His CD and themes from the film about his group are based on a philosophy of peoples of Africa, hartigan said, and he is completing a book along with a DVD on visual symbols and musical expressions about these philosophies from the Asante people of Ghana. He explained that all African languages are tonal and can be reflected on drums, his main instrument (hartigan also is a tap dancer and skilled pianist).

For him, it all connects to a new "consciousness about humanity" that has roots in South America after World War II and in liberation theology within Catholicism (which also has a musical expression, he says, in *Neuva Cancion* or "New Song"). These are ideas that he has long studied and thought about, he says. Key themes in this world view, based on global cultures and their histories and wisdom, are advocating against colonialism, against the accumulation of wealth by the 1 percent, and for indigenous peoples.

His new CD espouses his philosophy "almost like a manifesto—and that philosophy is establishing and creating a new consciousness, not just in Africa but all over the world in the face of what we regard as



the inhuman, immoral history of colonialism and neocolonialism and tyrannical regimes," which he and his fellow musicians believe destroy cultures through technological and political forces. "In effect, it's a manifesto for standing up for human rights for all people against forces of inhumanity, violence, and insanity," he explains, which these days for him sadly includes the U.S. under the "treasonous, criminal Trump regime."

hartigan says that "while I'm just one human being," he has always had a gut impulse to stand up to bullies, going back to his early school days when sometimes he was a bullying target. "St. Mike's crystallized that and put it in a context that I could rationalize and understand better, and it helped me apply it to my life going forward as a human being, an environmental and political activist, and an artist."

hartigan feels that "there is a moral responsibility for every person to take a stand. Even if you don't believe in God, you must stand up and put yourself on the line for what you believe, or you are no different than the person instituting the inhumanity."

He goes on, "A lot of this was something I learned at Saint Michael's, through music that I learned in the Glee Club and Jazz Ensemble, and especially in philosophy and theology classes—I still remember the teachers and what they taught us," he says. "I believe there is an objective reality outside of us, not just moral relativism, and that there's something that really does matter ... and St. Mike's crystallized that for me."

Beyond those memorable college classes, he says, his life was enriched through sports (he can still reel off the jersey numbers of the basketball team's starters from his student days), a jazz club led by the very musical and intellectually formidable Rev. (and later Bishop) Moses Anderson, SSE, and himself, plus musical gigs and plays that he joined along with general dorm life. "We had a very diverse experience at St. Mike's," he says, "and I was lucky to have that and was able in my studies and informal non-academic activities to talk about and discuss life issues."

It inspired him to join the Peace Corps soon after college and go to the Philippines, where his years of service radically changed his world view. He responded with shock to Third World people's struggles, witnessed firsthand and up close, compared with lives of people in the West. This newly awakened consciousness set the course for his future, as he sought out ways to channel his own personal gifts as a musician with a philosopher's heart and move toward concrete actions to address those inequities. "As Fr. VanderWeel used to say in my St. Mike's philosophy classes, things matter for their own sake, not for reasons of ego and wealth," hartigan says. "Everything I learned at Saint Michael's was really true for me in my later life."

The film *We Are One* that he produced about the travels and philosophy of his ensemble, blood drum spirit,\* is

\*Editor's note: royal hartigan explains his preference for spelling his own name and his musical group's name (and for that matter, all things) with lowercase letters: "my reason is that i read poetry by e. e. cummings in my humanities course at st. mike's with dr. marie henault in 1967, and liked its feel because, while a small textual thing, it expressed the egalitarian impulse i believe in for all aspects of life. i started it some years after st. mike's but that was the origin, and i continue with it."

directed by Sara Pettinella and features fellow musicians David Bindman, Wes Brown, and Art Hirahara along with hartigan, documenting their global music adventures. He showed it at Saint Michael's during his November residency.

"I always miss Saint Michael's when I'm not there," hartigan says. "There's a certain way that part of you stays there, and it's nice going back to remember and reconnect with yourself—the past in the present toward the future." ♪

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*arjlo ketē drumming in anyako village with master drummers olu nudzor gbeti (standing in blue) and e. k. yevutsey (seated next to drumset); also leading but not visible, master drummer agbolosu yevutsey*

photo: martin adi-dako