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‘A TIME FOR TREMENDOUS POLITICAL COURAGE’: AUTHOR TEJU  
COLE SPEAKS AT STONEHILL COLLEGE IN EASTON

By Emma-Cate Rapose, October 18, 2017



EASTON – Acclaimed author Teju Cole spoke to a crowded audience at Stonehill College’s Martin Auditorium to promote his latest book, “Blind Spot,” and discuss issues including Black Lives Matter recently.

Cole spoke at the college Oct. 3 through the Chet Raymo literary lecture series. Raymo is professor emeritus of physics at the college, and his weekly newspaper column Science Musings appeared in the Boston Globe for 20 years. Raymo was not able to attend.

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Cole, 42, is a Nigerian-American writer, photographer and art historian. Born in Kalamazoo, Michigan, he spent the first 17 years of his life in Nigeria before returning to the United States to attend Kalamazoo College, where he received his bachelor's degree.

He is also the author of four books: a novella, "Every Day is for the Thief," a novel, "Open City," a collection of essays, "Known and Strange Things," and his latest, "Blind Spot," a collection of essays and images.

Cole spent a majority of his lecture reading from "Blind Spot," focusing on one image, projected onto a screen in the auditorium, of an assortment of foldable metal chairs leaned up against a fire hydrant for a length of time.

"This may not get me a lot of likes on Instagram," he said. "But the professors know that this stuff is good."

The image was taken on the way to a Black Lives Matter march after the acquittal of the police officer who killed Eric Garner on the streets of New York City.

"Of course black lives matter," said Cole. "How do we go about saying that in a not so obvious way?"

Cole described the chairs in the image as leaning on each other for support, like those supporting the Black Lives Matter movement.

MeiRose E. Neal, 19, a math major at Stonehill, attended Cole's hour-and-a-half-long lecture for her English class and said she enjoyed the event.

"I liked how he talked about the way the mind moves from one thought to another, and I really enjoyed listening to him read parts of his book even though I'm not much of an English person," Neal said.

Colleen J. Pekrul, 19, attended the lecture as a requirement for her American studies course, where students had read Cole's works.

"I thought it was fascinating how he was able to see ordinary things such as foldable metal chairs as something greater, something more meaningful," Pekrul said.

During the question and answer session at the end of the lecture, one audience member asked the author if he had any advice for Stonehill students.

"This is a time for tremendous political courage," Cole said. "We need to love each other; it requires radical honesty. Be courageous, be free, don't be afraid. Go on."