It was only in my fifth year at Oberlin as a double-degree student that I joined the Oberlin College Dialogue Center. It was after four years of focusing on French, viola performance, and African American studies that I found I was lacking critical skills that would allow me to make sense of my interests in linguistics and musical performance, as well as my long-lasting dedication to education and social justice. It was the OCDC’s mission of “multi-partiality” that prompted me to push for greater communication between students and trustees in my tenure as Class Trustee of 2005.

My experience at OCDC prepared me for an ongoing voyage, which began with my experience as a Fulbright English teaching assistant in Guadeloupe, French West Indies. While in Guadeloupe, I collaborated with local musicians, learning national music forms—such as beguine and gwoka. At the same time, I attended symposia dedicated to reconciling the memory of slavery and the ways in which it is represented in the national education system. In France, I performed for soccer player Lillian Thuram, writers Maryse Condé and Françoise Vergès, and French politician Christiane Taubira.

Most recently, I taught Haitian Creole at Duke University, in the wake of the 2010 earthquake. Training in the OCDC’s reflexive social justice model allowed me to apply this model to humanitarianism and articulate a curriculum to a diverse group of students. In 2012, I presented “The Violin Hero or the Knights Blues” at the Institute of Cultural Diplomacy in Berlin, Germany. My paper focused on the famed Guadeloupean composer, Le Chevalier de Saint Georges (1745-1799). After completing research in France and the French West Indies, I am now completing my doctoral thesis, focusing on the production of Creole fables and their trans-oceanic circulation in the 19th century.

I am pleased that since my departure from Oberlin, OCDC has evolved into a fully fledged center, allowing more students to gain access to the same invaluable training I received there. My experience at OCDC allowed me to understand the importance of stories and self-representation. The experience with OCDC has made me more open to seeking additional training, as I move on to the next step in my career. I am so pleased that OCDC has expanded and is able to offer more such invaluable experiences. The 10th anniversary of OCDC is indeed a cause for celebration.