



# LaGuardia Community College

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It is my pleasure to write a letter of recommendation for Donna McRae-Smith, who was in my writing class in 2009. Although 15 years have passed since this outstanding student was in my class, I have recently had the opportunity to peruse two essays, one of which appeared soon after in a substantial CUNY publication, that she wrote for the course. These texts testify to the impressive qualities of her prose and her ability to assemble research elements in an extremely coherent and compelling way.

In an essay involving interpretation and contextualization of Jose Orozco's mural, "The Epic of American Civilization and Jacob Lawrence's "Migration Series," Ms. McRae-Smith employs cogent insights from leading art historians (and general historians) to establish distinctions and commonalities in the iconography and aesthetic strategies of these two major twentieth century artists' works. The most salient contrast delivered in this essay, which far outshone 99% of the student work that I read that year and since, is between the complexity of Orozco's sociopolitical symbolism involving labor and machinery and the relative simplicity of Lawrence's celebration of the ordinary African American worker.

"Energy and Environment in the Recovery Act of 2009," the piece that was published, beautifully captures the hopeful yet cautious atmosphere of President Obama's first forays into ecological meliorism coupled with his administration's response to the subprime mortgage crisis. Thanks to Ms. McRae-Smith's masterfully ordered and concisely presented account of the Obama eco-agenda and her critically astute assessment of the potential of the initiatives, I enjoyed a nostalgic return to the promise of that time—one that has, sadly, been disrupted but not destroyed.

Given the seriousness of purpose and the alacrity with which she sought instruction from me, I have no doubt that, in the intervening decade and a half, the qualities I have just articulated in Ms. McRae-Smith's writing have become even more evident. She has my enthusiastic recommendation as a prose-writer of clarity, sophistication, depth, and verve.

Sincerely,

Thomas Fink, Professor of English  
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