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## Illinois Wesleyan Senior Presents Paper at International Conference

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### *Illinois Wesleyan Senior Presents Paper at International Conference*

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — The opportunity for an undergraduate student to present original work at an international academic conference is rare. For Illinois Wesleyan University senior Chelsey Hillyer, the experience came with an unexpected bonus.

An English and sociology major from Macomb, Ill., Hillyer was invited to present her paper, "Omen of Despair: Braithwaite's Call for Pan-Caribbean Unity in 'Dream Haiti,'" at the 6th annual International Conference of Caribbean Literature at the University of the Virgin Islands on St. Croix in November.

Hillyer's presentation was part of a special undergraduate panel, which was chaired by Robert Bray, the R. Forest Colwell Professor of American Literature at Illinois Wesleyan.

Little did Hillyer realize that the poet about whom she had written, Kamau Brathwaite, would be the keynote speaker for the conference and that she would have a chance to discuss her views of the poem with its author.

"After working with an thinking about a poem for so long, it was a truly amazing experience to meet its creator and be able to ask him questions," said Hillyer. "There aren't a lot of critics writing about this particular work. In fact, Brathwaite was quite excited to know I was writing about his poem.

"To be able to work from the ground up with a poem is really a wonderful experience for an undergraduate literature student. Most of the texts with which we work are hundreds, even thousands, of years old and already have a large pool of criticism."

Hillyer will continue to study the poem and revise her paper while conducting her honors research in literature with the hope of having the material published. She was the winner of the Academy of American Poets Prize at Illinois Wesleyan last year for her creative work and has been published regularly in *Tributaries*, an Illinois Wesleyan literary magazine.