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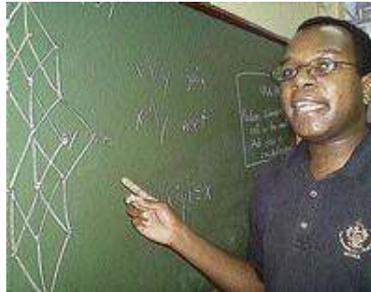
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The 'NUMB3RS' man - UWI professor plies his subject in Hollywood and counter-terrorism

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Professor Jonathan Farley points to the example of a lattice diagram he drew on his office chalkboard at the Department of Mathematics and Computer Sciences, University of the [West Indies](#) (UWI), Mona. - Photo by Ross Sheil

Ross Sheil, Staff Reporter

If you find mathematics boring, then 36-year-old [University](#) of the West Indies (UWI), Mona professor, Johnathan Farley, may be the one person to convince you otherwise.

Growing up interested in astrophysics and [computer programming](#), Prof. Farley contends that mathematics is a "beautiful art", explaining through a diagram of a 'lattice' on his office chalkboard.

"Lattices are a more visual form of [algebra](#) ... You are trying to prove a theorem and you can just draw a picture in a notebook as the proof and you can't do that in most forms of mathematics," he said.

Overachieving family

Born in the United States (U.S.) to a Jamaican mother and Guyanese father, he has followed in their footsteps by becoming a lecturer at the Mona campus. He is part of an overachieving family of four sons, all of whom attended Harvard University.

Having co-founded Hollywood Math (with other scientists and mathematicians), a company which consults for U.S. television and film studios, he also works - through his other company Phoenix Mathematics - on the practical applications of lattice theory and reflexive theory (behavioural mathematics) in predicting terrorist structure and behaviour.

Phoenix has been hired by defence contractor Lockheed Martin on a border security project and also organises annual conferences on counter-terrorism.

Citing the work of the Allied code breakers who were able to crack and decipher coded communications of the Nazis in World War II, Prof. Farley believes the United States Government should listen to its modern day equivalents.



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"But it seems clear that the Department of Homeland Security are not interested in homeland security, perhaps in giving contracts to their friends, but if they were serious they would go to mathematicians to find ways of decreasing the cost without increasing the risk," he contended.

The common complaint of scientists is that they often lack the political clout to get their ideas across.

After coming to the UWI, he was offered and then bypassed to head the Department of Mathematics and Computer Sciences. Subsequently, he said, support for his proposed counter-terrorism institute dissipated.

He had envisioned the institute as a way to raise funds for the university and raise the profile of the department, but he claims the UWI feared that it represented U.S. foreign policy, a charge that he denies. UWI Mona Principal, Professor Elsa Leo-Rhynie, also insists that UWI's change of heart was not political.

Importance of mathematics

But Prof. Farley appears undaunted. Having written articles on the importance of mathematics in publications such as **The New York Times**, he has long been attempting to convince others of the importance of this his subject.

"It's hard to convey the beauty of mathematics. The only people that can approach it as people are mathematicians who unfortunately don't get it across well. But when you can show its applications, it does become exciting," he said.

NUMB3RS, a CBS drama which he has worked on, provides some encouragement with over 10 million viewers regularly tuning in to watch a mathematical-genius help his brother, a Federal Bureau of Investigation agent, tackle crime in Los Angeles.

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