

2 American masters topics for seminar

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Two American masters -- self-exiled intellectual and author James Baldwin and "Record Man" Ahmet Ertegun -- will be the topics of discussion at Georgetown University on Oct. 5 when Magdalena J. Zaborowska of the University of Michigan and Georgetown history professor Maurice Jackson, a jazz specialist, lead a seminar titled "African American-Turkish Connections Through the Arts."

The seminar -- set for 6:30 to 9 p.m. at the Copley Formal Lounge and co-sponsored by the Turkish Coalition of America, the Institute of Turkish Studies, Howard University and Georgetown -- will look at the lives of two arts masters who were born as their homelands emerged from World War I and reborn as post-World War II America grappled with the meaning of civil rights and civil liberties.

Mr. Baldwin, a native New Yorker who lived in Istanbul and elsewhere in Europe for decades, once proclaimed that Turkey "saved my life" because of the freedoms he lived and breathed there but was denied as a black man in America. In the meantime, Mr. Ertegun, who grew up in Washington and whose ambassador father opened the family home to blacks who entered through the front door, was becoming a prolific arts entrepreneur whose love of music eventually led to the formation of Atlantic Records. The label's hit artists included Ray Charles and the Clovers.

"TCA is proud to sponsor this program that highlights the shared history of Turkish Americans and the African-American community in D.C.," TCA President Lincoln McCurdy told The Washington Times. "The legacy of Ahmet Ertegun of breaking down racial barriers through music should inspire all Americans. Additionally, James Baldwin's works and his courageous stance on gender, race and sexual equality should remind us that local activism and the arts have always been close together in African-American communities, that they have always had a transnational and global dimension."

Said Ms. Zaborowska, author of "James Baldwin's Turkish Decade: Erotics of Exile," "Baldwin's claim, [that] Turkey 'saved my life,' referred to the freedom he felt in Istanbul from racial and sexual oppression, the freedom that transformed him and his writing as a black writer, novelist, playwright and civil rights movement activist."