The Habari

The Department of Africana Studies
State University of New York

Spring 2012    Volume 7, Issue 1

“A Serving Students, Serving the Community, and Serving the World”

AYA
“fern,
endurance
and resourcefulness”
From the Desk of the Chair

Dr. Marcia E. Sutherland

The Department of Africana Studies was established in 1969. The Department promotes excellence in teaching, research, and service. The Department is concerned with the study of the experiences of the people of Africa and the African Diaspora. Through the study of such disciplines as history, politics, economics, culture, literature, sociology, and psychology, the Department aims to engender an appreciation of diversity and emphasize the ways in which Africans and people of African descent in the Americas have constructed and interpreted their own lives and culture. The Department has consistently moved in the direction of growth and development.

The Department’s graduate and undergraduate programs enjoy top national rankings in terms of degree conferrals. Our research findings indicate students’ high degree of satisfaction with our course offerings and with their scholarly interactions with the Department’s faculty. Students also self-report a high level of engagement with the Department. I am very proud of the successful programs sponsored by Nefer Rohu, the Graduate Student Association. Margaret Van-Ess, the President, highlights some of the Association’s recent programs in this issue of The Habari. In spring 2011, undergraduate majors initiated Akwaaba AFS, the Undergraduate...
Student Association. There are increasing applicants to the Department’s Master’s program and an increase in the number of students majoring and minoring in Africana Studies.

The Department’s Study Abroad Program in Africa was instituted ten years ago. In summer 20ll, Dr. Kwadwo Sarfoh was the primary faculty advisor for the graduate and undergraduate student participants who visited Tanzania, Zanzibar Island, and Maputo, Mozambique. Consistent with the Department’s mission and priorities, the Department plans to strengthen this initiative by ensuring that student participants engage in sustainable development projects on subsequent trips to Africa.

The Department’s advancement is a function of the very hard work and commitment of its faculty. With respect to the research activities of faculty members, Dr. Allen B. Ballard recently published his memoirs titled “Breaching Jericho’s Walls: A Twentieth Century African American Life” (20ll – SUNY Press). Dr. Leonard A. Slade Jr.’s poetry book “The Season” was published by Xulon Press in 20ll. Other faculty members are completing their book manuscripts and have published several articles in high impact journals. External funding is another Departmental emphasis.

The Department hosted its Annual Research Symposium last fall. As shown in this current issue, faculty members and graduate students presented essential papers on issues related to people of African descent. We were delighted with the attendance of individuals from our University’s community, as well as from the Albany County community. It is our mission to seek consistently community involvement in our Black History Programs, in our Conversation in Africana Studies’ Series, as well as in the other departmental programs.

Please visit the Department’s website (www.albany.edu/africana) for information on activities for the academic year.
Alumni Support

Keeps Africana Studies Strong

Dear Friends of Africana Studies:

The Department of Africana Studies is celebrating more than 40 years of educating our University’s undergraduate and graduate students. The Department’s graduate and undergraduate programs are in the top ten ranking in this country in terms of degree conferrals. Quality indicators of the Department have been objectified and validated by external reviewers. The Department’s aim is to garner funding so that a larger number of graduate and undergraduate students can take advantage of our excellent program offerings and to maintain its excellent national reputation.

Consistent with the University’s thrust to solicit alumni and external funding, the Department is reaching out to its illustrious alumni and friends for financial support. Many of our students are the first ones in their families to pursue graduate and undergraduate degrees, and many are from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. With the continued rise in tuition costs, many potential new students will be unable to attend the University at Albany unless external funding is generated to help them earn their Master’s degree and Bachelor’s degree in Africana Studies. The Department instituted a book voucher program to assist eligible students in purchasing their books. May we ask you to make a contribution to the intellectual life of our graduate and undergraduate students? This is critical in ensuring their access to higher education and their academic success.

Any contribution you make will be greatly appreciated. Please address your check to the University at Albany Foundation, and use the check memo space or an accompanying note to instruct that your gift be restricted to the Department of Africana Studies. You may also opt to make your pledge by credit card. For more details, visit the University’s website at: http://www.albany.edu/giving/.

With your financial support, our academic programs can continue to be highly ranked in this country. Thank you for considering our request. If there are any questions, please contact me at 518-442-4730 or by email at ms781@albany.edu.

Respectfully yours,

Marcia E. Sutherland
Chair and Associate Professor
Department of Africana Studies

By Professor Allen B. Ballard

*Tasting Freedom,* by Daniel R. Biddle and Murray Dubin, veteran *Philadelphia Inquirer* journalists, is a marvelous historical feast for lovers of Afro-American, Philadelphia, and American history alike. Centered around the life of Octavius Catto, a mid nineteenth century black Philadelphia educator and militant leader, the book reaches far back in time to Catto’s grandparents’ life in the slave and agrarian dominated state of South Carolina and forward to an industrializing Philadelphia in the 1870’s. In the process, the great political and social upheavals of the period—the Abolitionist movement, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, the Underground Railroad, the Civil War, and Reconstruction, are examined and made vivid by their impact on individuals. The particular magic of this book is that it shows how real people, black and white, rich and poor, were tossed about in the historical currents that flowed through Philadelphia.

The book begins with a particularly detailed and nuanced examination of black life in ante-bellum Charleston where O.V. Catto’s father, The Reverend William S. Catto, the offspring of freed slaves, is reared in a city that spawned both the aborted Denmark Vesey Revolt of 1822 and the “Brown Society,” an organization of mulatto blacks, sympathetic to the Southern cause. Reverend Catto, sponsored by a kindly white woman, becomes educated and actually ordained as a Presbyterian minister ready to go, with his family—including the young Octavius—to Liberia as a missionary. Instead, influenced in Baltimore by the great African-American minister, Daniel Payne, Catto heads to Philadelphia, where he becomes active in the anti-slavery movement and a militant colleague of such abolitionist giants as Henry Highland Garnet, William Lloyd Garrison, Robert Purvis, and Frederick Douglass.

Reverend Catto moved to a Philadelphia that in the late 1840’s was a hot bed both of abolitionism and of pro-slavery sentiment among the white elite and the newly arrived Irish immigrants. The latter quite simply hated free blacks and took, as the book demonstrates in great detail, every opportunity to assault them physically and/or destroy and torch their institutions, be they churches, schools, or orphanages. The de facto leader of the anti-black Irish was William “Squire” McMullen,” the Democratic boss of the Moyamensing District of South Philadelphia with its gangs of hoodlums, centered in the fire companies. McMullen, a veteran of the Mexican War and Civil War alike, looms large in this book—a dark and sinister shadow cast over the aspirations of the black community.

It’s in this pre-Civil War environment that the young Octavius Catto comes into manhood, taught at a pioneering Quaker sponsored African-American school, the “Institute For Colored Youth,” the fountainhead of black learning in Philadelphia, for from it sprang forth a cadre of classically educated teachers to man...
the city’s segregated schools in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Upon graduation, Catto becomes a teacher at the school and uses it as a launching pad for a career as a social and political activist in the Civil War era. His accomplishments are chronicled in great detail in the book, from his leading a company of newly formed black Philadelphia troops to fight at Gettysburg (their services were rejected by reason of their color), to his successful struggle against street car segregation, and his leadership of the post war fight in Pennsylvania to achieve the ballot for blacks. It was his role in this latter capacity that was to lead to his fatal confrontation in 1872 with an Irish assassin, Frank Kelly, a minion of McMullen.

The writers weave a wondrous tapestry of historical lore around the clash between McMullen and Catto. In and out of the scenes come Douglass and the brave Quaker suffragette and abolitionist, Lucretia Mott. We see John Brown meeting in Philadelphia with blacks before his raid, eavesdrop on conversations between him and Douglass, and see the latter spirited out of Philadelphia in the aftermath of the failed raid. And Octavius Catto, quoting the French thinker, De Tocqueville, delivers a stirring address to a black Philadelphia regiment about to depart to occupy defeated Richmond. All of this is beautifully portrayed because the authors have thoroughly done their homework both as researchers and as writers. The research led them to documents and books from which they excerpted the actual words of the historical actors in their book and they let the work be propelled by the dialogue and by skillful portrayal of the characters therein. Scene after scene is rendered in chiseled prose, so that the reader is drawn into the action and feels as if he/she is actually present and a witness to the unfolding drama. Sometimes the authors might seem to have cast their historical net too broadly, as is the case when they take the reader off to the assault by black troops of the 54th Massachusetts on Ft. Wagner, but even then we see the black Philadelphia connection as Charlotte Forten, granddaughter of the black leader, James Forten, talks with Colonel Shaw, the regiment’s commander just before the assault and mourns his death in the aftermath of the battle. These writers fell in love with their subject—the struggle of black Philadelphians to achieve citizenship and equality—and have treated it as such. One would have to search far and wide to find a better researched and more compellingly readable biography.

Submitted to the Philadelphia Inquirer by Allen B. Ballard, October 8, 2010.
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Allen B. Ballard, Visiting Professor of History and Africana Studies at SUNY-Albany, is a member of the 189th Class of Philadelphia’s Central High, a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Kenyon College in Ohio and holds a Ph.D. in Government from Harvard University. He taught government at City College of New York for 25 years, served as Dean of Faculty of the City University of New York for five years, and is now CCNY Professor Emeritus of Political Science.

Racial Violence in New York State 1860-1863

By Dr. Oscar Williams
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The Civil War exposed long-standing tensions in American society. Among them were racial hostilities that exploded in several Northern cities such as Cincinnati, Boston, Chicago, and New York City. Anxieties among white working class laborers over job competition with African Americans and the racism of the day pushed hostilities to the breaking point. In the state of New York, numerous incidents of racial violence occurred during the Civil War. The hostilities peaked in 1863 when the infamous Draft Riots occurred in New York City. This presentation will review some of the major incidents that occurred during this period.

As in other American colonies, Colonial Slavery provided the foundation that established the social and legal status of African Americans in the empire state. In 1712, after a slave revolt in New York City, the state legislature passed the toughest slave law in the Northern colonies. The law called for limiting provisions such as prohibiting the gathering of more than three slaves at once, all African Americans not allowed to hold, purchase, or sell property, and masters being allowed to punish their slaves as they saw fit. When the state legislature voted in 1799 to end slavery, they extended the system via a clause that stated that children born after 1799 would be freed at age twenty-eight for men, and age twenty-five for women. The system continued until July 4, 1827. Voting was greatly limited for African Americans in New York as was shown by the state constitution of 1821. White males were granted universal suffrage, whereas African American males had to prove state residency for at least three years and debt free property valued at over $250.

As slavery ended in New York, a new type of system appeared to regulate African Americans to a second-class status: Jim Crow. As with other Northern states, New York practiced Jim Crow policies against African Americans. They were segregated in every aspect of society, supporting C. Vann Woodard’s observation that “the Northern Negro was made painfully and constantly aware that he lived in a society dedicated to the doctrine of white supremacy and Negro inferiority.” In New York City, Jim Crow policies were prevalent in public transportation. In 1854, Elizabeth Jennings, an African American schoolteacher, challenged the city’s omnibus system when she was forcibly removed from a streetcar because she refused to leave and wait for a car for black patrons. Taking her case to the state Supreme Court, the judicial body ruled in favor of Jennings, stating that African Americans “could not be forcibly removed by any rules of the company nor by force or by violence.” Despite this victory, racial segregation would remain a policy vigorously enforced in New York.

Racial violence against African Americans in New York and other Northern states was a common occurrence in 19th Century America. Although some Northern cities were centers of abolitionist activity, the same cities had significant white working class populations that objected to the abolitionist movement and anything African American. New York City was such a metropolis that would experience its share of racial hostilities. In July 1834, a riot occurred in the city when a mob attacked an abolitionist group meeting at the Chatham Street Church. Immediately, the mob

1 Details of racial violence in these cities can be found in Williston H. Lofton, “Northern Labor and the Negro During the Civil War,” Journal of Negro History, July 1949 (Vol. 34, No. 3), 251-73.
3 Ibid., 83.
4 Ibid., 85-86.
targeted African Americans and abolitionists, destroying a number of churches and terrorizing the city for three days before authorities arrested the mob leaders. Albay, the state capital, also experienced its share of racial violence in 1832, when a white mob destroyed a house that held African American and white residents, with the mayor and constable looking on.

Irish immigration was another factor that increased racial tensions in New York. Although other European immigrants shared the same racist feelings, it was the Irish that competed directly with African Americans for the same low-level jobs as laborers. Ironically, many of the Irish pushed African Americans out of jobs when their numbers increased in the 1830s through the 1850s. Complicating matters was how management manipulated both groups in labor disputes. In industries such as manufacturing and railroads, the Irish tended to be favored as laborers. However, African Americans, largely excluded from industrial jobs, were quickly used as strikebreakers. When the Civil War began, many of the Irish sided with the Confederacy not out of a support for slavery, but out of a fear that freed African Americans would come and take their jobs. Given the circumstances, it is not surprising that violent confrontation would intensify during the Civil War.

Newburgh, a small city an hour North of New York City, was the scene of early Civil War-era violence. On New Years’ Eve, 1860, a white mob attacked the AME Zion Church and its worshipers gathered for watch services. Bent on destruction, the mob broke all the windows and destroyed the front door of the church. Sadly, the church would experience another attack on December 30, 1862, when drunken Union soldiers damaged the church and seriously wounded several worshipers. Reporting the attack, the Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle was moved to ask, “What sort of officers must they have where the soldiers are allowed to go in this style?”

New York City would experience a preview of what was to come in August 1862, when an Irish mob of two to three thousand attacked African American workers at two Tobacco factories in Brooklyn. Angered over the use of African-American labor, the mob demanded that the workers, comprising of women and children, leave the factories. When they refused, the mob stormed the factories, threatening the workers with violence. Captain M.T. Holbrook, a police officer, testified that there were at least a thousand people that composed of the mob that attacked Watson’s Tobacco Factory. Throwing bricks and stones, they charged the building, dragging out at least one male worker, and screamed “Hand out the damned niggers!” “Fire the buildings – burn out the damned niggers!” Seeking refuge on the second floor of the building, the African American workers were successful in forcing mob members who broke into the factory down the stairs, before the police dispersed the mob.

The watershed for racial violence in New York occurred in the summer of 1863, when riots broke out in New York City, Buffalo, Troy, and other towns and cities throughout the state. Apprehensions over the Emancipation Proclamation possibly causing formally enslaved African Americans to come to the North to take jobs from Whites fueled racial animosity to a fever pitch. Leading the political charge were Peace Democrats such as Governor Horatio Seymour, who stoked the

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8 Ibid., 98.
fires of racial hatred with statements of emancipation substituting “niggerism for nationality.” Not surprisingly, New York Democrats had a strong following among Irish immigrants, who agreed with Seymour’s objection to the Emancipation Proclamation. However, the spark that led to mass rioting was the National Conscription Act passed by Congress in March of 1863. The act called for the enforcement of a draft of men between twenty and thirty-five via a lottery. The law allowed exemption from the draft either by providing a substitute or paying a $300 fee, thereby making the draft practically unavoidable for working class and low income people. For many working class whites in New York, this was seen as the last straw. To be forced to fight a war to free slaves to take their jobs was seen by many as grounds for violent rebellion. Governor Seymour led the fight against the draft, arguing that it was unconstitutional and unfairly targeted New York City and other Democratic strongholds. At a protest meeting held the Fourth of July, Seymour proclaimed, “Remember this—that the bloody and treasonable and revolutionary doctrine of public necessity can be proclaimed by a mob as well as by a government.” These words would prove to be tragically prophetic.

Prior to the New York City draft riots, Buffalo was the scene of mass rioting when a white mob attacked African Americans in July 1863. Buffalo, a major trading port city that served as a gateway to the Midwest, had attracted a variety of European immigrants and African Americans competing for stevedore jobs in the city’s busy harbor. Predictably, the city was ripe for violent confrontation between the two groups. The riot started when a fight between an African American man and a white man resulted in the shooting of John McLaughlin, a white man who intervened in the fight. Although the African American man was arrested, a white mob quickly formed, bent on revenge for McLaughlin. Immediately the mob swept through the harbor district, attacking African American workers and establishments. Many African Americans sought refuge at Douglas (or Dug’s) Dive, a boarding house and saloon that catered to them. The mob concentrated its efforts on storming the establishment before police intervened and rescued those inside. Order was restored the following day, but the mob had claimed two African American lives and injured several, including policemen.

Roughly one week after the Buffalo Riot, the infamous New York City Draft Riots began. Tensions between African Americans and Irish immigrants had been brewing months before the summer. In March and May, the two groups clashed in two separate incidents involving African American stevedores being attacked by Irish workers. The stage was set for an explosive confrontation. The spark for the riot was the draft, which began on July 11. Two days later, when the draft resumed, protesting groups attacked the conscription office and brutally assaulted its personnel. The mob then attacked symbols of those they felt oppressed them: homes of rich families, stores and restaurants that catered to them, Republican supporters, and abolitionists. It did not take long before the mob directed its fury on their most despised target: African Americans.

Spreading throughout lower and midtown Manhattan, the mob attacked African Americans on the street and sought them out at establishments and their neighborhoods. The level of violence was staggering as stories poured into newspapers about the mob’s brutality. African Americans who were caught by the mob were mercilessly beaten or killed. Several African American men were lynched from lampposts, their corpses mutilated and burned to the delight of the mob. Others were drowned in the East or Hudson Rivers. None were spared as the mob assaulted women and children.

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12 Burrows and Wallace, 886.
13 Ibid, 888.
14 Ibid.
16Dabel, 114.
One woman, infirmed with a three day old baby, was savagely attacked by a mob while the baby was thrown out a two story window and instantly killed. The Colored Orphan Asylum was attacked by a mob of four hundred and set on fire. Fortunately, the two hundred children and their caregivers were able to escape and found safety at a city arsenal.  

White women who were involved in interracial relationships were targeted as well. Ann Derickson, a white woman married to a black man, was killed when she attempted to save her son’s life from a mob. Rioting occurred in Brooklyn, where two grain elevators were destroyed. Although there were attacks on African Americans in the borough, the free black communities of Weeksville and Carrsville were seen as safe havens by African Americans because the residents armed themselves and took in refugees from Manhattan. After three days of rioting, order was restored when Union soldiers dispatched from battle-torn Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, brutally suppressed the mobs with fixed bayonets and howitzers. It is unknown the exact number of people killed in the New York City Draft Riot. Conservative estimates begin at one hundred and twenty, but others contested that the death toll was higher. For years, some scholars claimed that the death toll ranged around two thousand. What is clear is that the riot had a devastating effect upon the African American population in Manhattan. It is estimated that the population decreased twenty percent primarily because of the riot. African Americans fled the city for Brooklyn, New Jersey, upstate New York, and elsewhere they could escape the bitter racial hatred that created the riot.

The Draft Riots spread to other cities throughout the state. Poughkeepsie, a city midway between New York and Albany, experienced mob violence when the Catherine Street AME Zion Church was threatened. Experiencing an attack the previous January by drunken Union soldiers, male members stood guard over the church with rifles, ready to prevent the church from being burned. Order was restored when the Vermont Volunteers, at the request of Governor Seymour, came to the city to quell the disturbance. Tarrytown, a town South of Poughkeepsie, experienced racial violence as well, causing many African Americans to flee the area until Union warships sailed up the Hudson River to restore order. The most notable incident of mob violence outside of New York City was the riot in Troy, New York. Situated a few miles North of Albany, the city was the site of a dramatic rescue of a fugitive slave in 1860 and the one-time home of African American abolitionist Henry Highland Garnet. Simultaneously, it attracted a large number of Irish immigrants because of its dominance as a manufacturing and industrial center in the mid 1800’s. Although the African American community in Troy was not as large as New York City or Buffalo, Irish workers in the city were motivated by the Draft Riots to attack them on July 15.

On that day, a group of Irish workers met at the Rensselaer Iron and Nail works to form a procession march to protest the draft. Marching throughout the city, the group encouraged other white workers to walk off their jobs and join the march. When their numbers reached between two and three thousand, the marchers turned violent and began attacking various establishments. The first target was the office of the Troy Daily Times, a pro-Republican newspaper that supported the draft. The crowd proceeded to destroy the office of the Times and marched to the city jail, where they overpowered officers and released thirty prisoners who joined the mob. 

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17 Ibid., 118.  
18 Ibid., 120.  
19 Burrows and Wallace; 895, 897.  
20 Ibid., 895.  
21 Ibid., 895, 897.
The mob then turned its attention to the African American community in Troy, and began indiscriminate attacks on individuals and establishments that had African Americans. The mob visited the Troy House, a hotel that had African American waiters, but were turned away by John Morrissey, a former Irish boxer who was proprietor of the hotel. The mob then attempted to destroy the Liberty Street Presbyterian Church, but was prevented from damaging it by two Catholic priests urging the mob to leave. Their destruction continued into the night, as they attacked two German “houses of ill repute” before order was restored by a large police presence in the city. Most accounts of the riot state that there were no deaths, but The Brooklyn Daily Eagle reported that the mob killed at least one African American man when he was seized and “beat into a jelly.” Steamships from New York were forced to pull anchor from Troy and Albany because of threats of mobs coming aboard to kill African American workers. Whether the mob had claimed lives or not, they established terror in the hearts of African Americans as they fled the city. One letter addressed to the mayor by Charles Gidiney, an African American waiter, expressed this in rough but succinct words:

As I learn that you are in town I now inform you of my Grief, and no doubt all the rest of my people are under the same grievances. I have been advised by white gentlemen and ladies for to stay in my house and not to be seen in the streets because it is not safe the Irish mob was going about seeking the coloured peoples lives. Since the mob, I cannot go out to get groceries but there is something thrown at my head, I have been staying in my house for two days. And we are afraid of our lives being destroyed. Therefore I now pray to you for protection so that I may walk the streets undisturbed you know that I cannot live without my daily labor. And when I pass through the streets I heard them say Kill the Nigger, Kill the Nigger, Kill the Nigger. And even yesterday little boys stood before my door at a short distance and my wife stood in her door, and there they stood with clubs and saying Nigger, Nigger, Shaking their clubs at her and &c**. I pray you to forthwith put out a proclamation against all such offenses so that we Coloured people may walk the street in perfect Peace and &c.**

Despite a strong condemnation of the Draft Riots among many, racial violence in New York would continue after the war. A riot between Irish and African-American workers occurred in Poughkeepsie in 1868. In 1900, white mobs once again roamed the streets of Manhattan to attack African Americans when an Irish plainclothes policeman was killed by an African-American male trying to prevent his girlfriend from being arrested. Sadly, the racial violence in Civil War-era New York proved to be a precursor to the numerous brutal race riots and lynchings that would plague African Americans well into the next century.

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2“Terrible Riot in Troy.”
3“The Mob in Troy.”

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4Letter from Charles Gidiney, July 18, 1863; taken from Ilene Frank and Jaclyn Stewart, Blast the Trumpet of Liberty: African Americans in Troy During the 19th Century (Troy, New York: Rensselaer Historical Society 2005), 88.

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National Baptist Convention USA Inc. HIV/AIDS Initiative in Southern Africa

By The Rev. Dr. Roxanne Jones Booth

Introduction

The social and religious conditions under which the Foreign Mission Board (FMB), an auxiliary of the National Baptist Convention USA Inc. (NBC-INC) began mission ministry in southern Africa over one-hundred years ago are not the same conditions today. Both Swaziland and South Africa have been evangelized and have larger Christian populations than at the turn of the century, in both countries Christians are 80 percent of the population.\(^1\) In South Africa, apartheid has been dismantled and the social and political rights of all South Africans are recognized and upheld by law. The new “site of struggle” against death and dehumanization identified by Tinyiko Sam Maluleke is Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS).\(^2\) Tackling the spread of HIV/AIDS is the new battle ground for FMB mission practice in southern Africa.

Since 1896 the FMB has pioneered social reform by planting churches, establishing academic and vocational schools and clinics, paying stipends to pastors, teachers and administrators, and retired and aging clergy. In the process, the FMB, operating in a paternalistic fashion, initiated all mission projects and objectives, selected candidates for pastoral and deacon ordination, and controlled spending of FMB finances even when funds were in the hands of the nationals. By entering into the struggle against the spread of HIV/AIDS alongside Swazis and South Africans, the FMB is challenged to re-examine its mission approach for ways that it can be relevant for the conditions that southern Africa now faces.

Although the FMB has had over one-hundred years of service in southern Africa, and takes pride in

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Walker was chosen to give leadership through this transition period.  

Also in 2002, Walker embarked on a fact-finding trip to the various mission-stations in Africa and Barbados where the FMB is engaged in ministry. He wanted to assess the needs of the mission-stations. Walker discovered in southern Africa alarming death rates due to HIV/AIDS related illnesses. By 2005, South Africa, with an estimated population of 45 million people, estimated that 5.5 million people would be living with HIV/AIDS. This is the second highest number of any country in the world and the highest on the continent of Africa. Approximately two million South Africans who are HIV positive do not know that they are infected. In 2000, an estimated 200,000 South Africans died of HIV/AIDS. In Swaziland, in 2000, with a population of approximately 990,000, there were an estimated 150,000 people living with HIV/AIDS and an estimated 6,000 deaths. At the National Baptist Church Pre-school in Mbabane, Swaziland, from 2000 to 2002, four out of nine National Baptist Church Pre-school teachers had died due to HIV/AIDS related illnesses.

Because of the number of deaths at the mission in Swaziland due to HIV/AIDS related illnesses, Debra Townes presented to Walker the urgent need for the FMB to develop a health care plan for the mission staff. Realizing that a project of this nature would need to be strategically presented to the FMB, Townes wrote and submitted a proposal for the construction of the National Baptist Mission Clinic in Swaziland. The intent of the clinic was to provide general health care, as well as HIV/AIDS counseling and testing. The clinic would also be the resource center of information for HIV/AIDS prevention awareness education for all the National Baptist churches in Swaziland and the wider community. As a result of her writing and submitting this proposal, the FMB began to formalize a response to the spread of HIV/AIDS in southern Africa.

Though Walker served as Executive Secretary for less than two years, he was instrumental in initiating FMB involvement in addressing HIV/AIDS in southern Africa. In his Vision Plan for the FMB published in the 2002 July-August issue of the Mission Herald, Walker endorsed and recommended to the FMB the proposal submitted by Townes for the construction of a clinic in Swaziland. Consequently, in July 2004 the clinic in Swaziland was officially opened by William J. Shaw, then the President of the NBC-INC. The National Baptist Mission Clinic in the Kingdom of Swaziland provides HIV/AIDS counseling and testing, general health care and immunizations.

The NBC-INC Initiative

Upon reviewing the findings from the fact-finding trip Walker made to southern Africa in 2002, Shaw presented the parent body of NBC-INC with the challenge to engage the HIV/AIDS pandemic in southern Africa. At the 2003 Annual Session of the NBC-INC held in Kansas City, Missouri, a new direction for international mission ministry was introduced with the announcement that the NBC-INC would address the HIV/AIDS pandemic in southern Africa. By partnering with sister churches in Swaziland, South Africa, Malawi and Lesotho; national governments, non-government organizations (NGO), faith-based organizations (FBO) and community-based organizations (CBO) in the respective countries, the NBC-INC through the FMB, would seek to develop programming that would help mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS. In February 2004 a fact-finding team was sent to Swaziland, South Africa, Malawi and Lesotho to meet with clergy and church leaders for the

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1 The Reverend Dr. Wendell Mapson, Chair of Search Committee of the FMB, letter written to author thanking her for her interest in the position of Executive Secretary of the FMB dated February 8, 2002.
4 Debra D. Townes served as a missionary with FMB NBC from 1995-1998; 2001-2004
5 The Reverend Dr. William J. Shaw, pastor of the White Rock Baptist Church in Philadelphia, PA and president of the National Baptist Convention USA Inc.
purposes of hearing from them their view of the scale of the pandemic and how they envisioned the FMB could assist them in the fight to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. As a result of the February 2004 Fact-finding trip, a HIV/AIDS Leadership Empowerment Conference was held in July 2004 in South Africa. This Conference, sponsored by the FMB, brought together not for profit community and faith-based organizations as well as governmental agencies in South Africa to facilitate workshops on bereavement counseling skills, home-based care training, and provided resources in the country for setting up HIV/AIDS support groups for people living with AIDS and care givers in churches, as well as provided participants with listings for local and nationwide agencies who train individuals in HIV/AIDS testing and counseling.

A New Paradigm

The fact-finding trip brought the FMB to a realization that it was no longer in the driver’s seat of mission ministry in southern Africa. The HIV/AIDS pandemic had already provoked clergy and church leaders to act independent of and without consulting the FMB. Some churches were utilizing retired nurses and other professionals to assist them in ministering to people infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. There were others who had started monthly support groups for people living with AIDS (PLWA), and for care givers. Some members of churches were feeding orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) on a weekly basis. Witnessing this new energy from the National Baptist churches in southern Africa taught FMB fact-finding team that the FMB could no longer give directives; rather it needed to sit, listen and learn from those it viewed as its “children in ministry” so that the FMB could develop effective mission practices.

Why A New Paradigm?

Disciplines agree that the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa is more than a medical condition. The spread of HIV/AIDS is driven by social, cultural, political, economic, religious and traditional beliefs and practices that are part and parcel of the African worldview. Saayman and Kriel, two noted South African theologians, state that “A physical cure and or vaccine (even though it may affect individual lives) will not break the epidemic, because it is maintained by social, economic and cultural and spiritual factors and not by physical ones.”¹ For example, migrant labor, with its legacy of dislocating families, as well as cultural marriage practices that devalue women, promote the spread of HIV/AIDS.

African theologians like Maluleke contend that combating the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa involves a critique of African culture which would expose injustice, discrimination and other forms of oppression that help promote the spread of HIV/AIDS.² Also, the fight to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS involves a critique of Western Christian mission practices that negated African cultural practices and robbed African Christianity of some basic and valuable African foundations ³ that contribute to behavior change. An example of a valuable African cultural foundation is the African understanding of community. The significance of community is a powerful enough concept in Africa to change behaviors that threaten the sanctity of this deeply rooted notion.⁴ Such an analysis could enable Swazis, South Africans, and the FMB to develop ministry practices which are contextual and in line with African ways of thinking.

Clergy and church leaders of the National Baptist churches in southern Africa find themselves overwhelmed by the fierce and horrendous spread of HIV/AIDS. They are confronted with the rising number of deaths of congregants in the prime of their lives due to HIV/AIDS related illnesses. They have found themselves depleted of comforting words to say to the families as they officiate over

² Ibid.
weekly funerals. Deaths have led to an increasing number of orphans. In most cases, orphaned children are in the care of aging grandparents who often survive on limited incomes, if any at all. Pastors and churches are often called upon to help feed and clothe families where grandparents are caring for their sick and dying children and multiple grandchildren.

In Swaziland there is no free education. Families with orphaned children who are in the care of aging grandparents or sick parents have no income to pay school fees, uniforms and school supplies. In South Africa, there is free education, however; fees are often charged for uniforms, pencils, paper and books. Pastors and churches are often asked to assist families in paying school fees, and in purchasing uniforms, books and other school supplies.

In February 2004, clergy and church leaders of the National Baptist Churches in Swaziland and South Africa, at meetings with the fact-finding team asked the FMB to help them to minister more effectively in their churches and communities which are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. The clergy and church leaders contended that, “We are all affected; we all have HIV/AIDS.” They primarily wanted training in caring and bereavement skills, along with pastoral counseling skills on death and dying. They expressed the need for the entire church body to be educated about HIV infection and how it is transmitted; to be made aware of prevention and treatment strategies; also they wanted to know of locally available resources for training in HIV/AIDS testing and counseling, as well as home-based care skills and methods.

The socio-cultural complexity of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in southern Africa is the catalyst that is bringing about a shift in mission leadership between the FMB and the National Baptist churches in Swaziland and South Africa. The FMB now needs its sister churches in southern Africa to help it interpret the social, cultural and traditional issues that perpetuate this disease. It needs its sister churches’ guidance regarding how it can best assist their efforts in ministering to those stigmatized and affected by this disease. The FMB needs its sister churches so that its mission practice can be vital and relevant in the “new site of struggle against death and dehumanization.”

In the past, the FMB alone determined its ministry practice in southern Africa. As a result of engaging the HIV/AIDS pandemic, there has been a change in the flow of leadership. Aware of the tremendous responsibility they have to care for the sick, feed the hungry, minister to the broken hearted, give relief to those who are suffering, and to clothe the naked, Swazi and South African clergy and church leaders have enlisted help from the FMB to assist them in becoming better trained to be effective as fellow workers in the cause of Jesus Christ. As Engel and Dyrness indicated, the FMB is now in the position in an enabling and facilitating manner to help increase the impact of all that God is doing in an HIV/AIDS era in southern Africa.

Conclusion

Although the FMB has been operating in a new paradigm of partnership with its sister churches in southern Africa as a result of the HIV/AIDS Initiative and the HIV/AIDS Leadership Empowerment Conference, it is continually challenged to not revert to past practices of domination and control. Partnering with sister churches in southern Africa calls for the FMB to function in a field-governed process whereby the sister churches, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit determine where to work, how to work, and how to solve problems. They then inform the FMB as to how collaboration and partnership in ministry practice can be carried out in the best way. This may prove to be the most difficult challenge for the FMB, who has for over one hundred years, been solely responsible for and the initiator of their mission practice. Engel and Dyrness point out that

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5 Meeting with African United National Baptist Church clergy and church leaders in Middlewater, South Africa February 7, 2004.

6 Maluleke, 133.

7 Engel and Dyrness, 20.
partnership and collaboration can be eroded when partners assume a dominant role and are unwilling to function in submission to others. However, even though the challenge of maintaining the spirit of partnership may prove to be the most difficult for the FMB, it is not impossible.

Johnson's Medal of Honor is Long Overdue

By Joseph E. Bowman Jr. and Eleanor Powell Bartlett

Another Veterans’ Day has passed without any indication as to if or when Sgt. Henry Johnson will receive his rightful honor.

On Nov. 11, we honored the memories, patriotism and heroism of our men and women who served in all branches of the armed forces. But the question about honoring Johnson inevitably comes to mind for those in the Albany area who strive to keep this effort alive.

Then a private, Johnson distinguished himself with extraordinary heroism against German forces in World War I. While on a double sentry night duty, Johnson and a fellow soldier were attacked and wounded by a raiding party of Germans numbering almost 20.

When the Germans were within fighting distance, Johnson returned fire, killing one and seriously wounding two more. As the Germans advanced, Johnson drew his bolo knife from his belt and attacked them in a hand-to-hand encounter. Though he had sustained grenade and shotgun wounds, Johnson went to the rescue of his fellow soldier who was being taken prisoner. He kept fighting until the Germans were chased away, saving himself and his fellow soldier.

Despite this incredible act of heroism, Johnson was never appropriately recognized by his own country because of the color of his skin. It wasn't until 1997 that he was awarded the Purple Heart, a combat decoration routinely given to members of the military who are wounded by the enemy or posthumously to their next of kin. In 2003, Johnson's son, Herman, accepted the Distinguished Service Cross on his father's behalf. We are grateful that these distinguished awards were finally bestowed on Johnson, but we believe his actions in World War I merit the Medal of Honor as well.

The Medal of Honor is the U.S. government's highest military decoration. It is bestowed by the President, in the name of Congress.

We believe that Johnson's act of heroism meets the standard for this award, which is bestowed upon members of the armed forces who distinguish themselves through "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his or her life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in action against an enemy of the United States".

The Skanner News, a newspaper and website in Portland, Ore., reported on Oct. 5 that Oregon's two U.S. Senators, Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, had written to U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, asking him to award the Medal of Honor to Johnson, and to speed up the process. An Associated Press report appeared in the Times Union on Oct. 6.

At a news conference last March in Albany, U.S. Senator Charles Schumer announced that new evidence had been found that showed Johnson's bravery was recognized at the time by his

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8 Engel and Dyrness, 96.
commanding officers and also by an independent evaluator who investigated the case.

Over the last several years, the campaign has gained widespread support throughout the community, 500 letters have been written in support by Albany school children, veterans groups, and by others in our local and state government. Now they have been joined by the two Oregon senators.

It has been more than 92 years. We here in the Albany community respectfully ask again — of U.S. Sens. Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, U.S. Rep. Paul Tonko, Gov. Andrew Cuomo, Secretary Panetta, and President Barack Obama — "If not now, when and why not?"

Joseph E. Bowman, Jr., is an Associate Professor of Educational Theory and Practice and director of the Center for Urban Youth and Technology at the School of Education at SUNY Albany. He is an alumnus of the Africana Studies Program at the University at Albany.

Eleanor Powell Bartlett is a retired educator. She has served as a special education teacher for all grades, assistant middle school principal, elementary school and high school house principal, as well as assistant and deputy superintendent. In addition, she is a former member of the New York State Board of Regents, serving the 3rd Judicial District. She has been the recipient of many awards: Capital District Leader in Education, Capital Region Center Principal of the Year and the NAACP Freedom Award.

Dr. Joseph E. Bowman Jr. and Dr. Eleanor Powell Bartlett are former members of the NYS Board of Regents.

Times Union photo by STEVE JACOBS, 3/19/02, Albany, NY-- JOHNSON STATUE -- Henry Johnson memorial statue in Washington Park, Tuesday, March 19, 2002 (for story)
A Few Years with My Mentor and Friend Vincent O’Leary

By Frank G. Pogue, Ph.D.
President, Grambling State University
President Emeritus, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania

To all of my colleagues in attendance today, I deeply regret that I am unable to join you in remembering our personal friend, Vincent O’Leary. Instead, I will share a few thoughts about my relationship with “The Man.”

I was approached in the Fall semester of 1972 and invited to apply for the position of Associate Professor and Department Chair of African and Afro-American Studies at the State University of New York at Albany. I had only spent one year as Senior Research Associate and Assistant Professor of Family Health at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. I had only recently moved to Nashville from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where I had received a newly minted Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Pittsburgh. Returning to the northeast, especially to Albany, the snow belt, was the farthest thing from my mind.

The University administration knew that and used rather unusual methods to interest me in the position. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Dean of the Undergraduate Program flew to Nashville and spent two days with me and my family. They visited my home, played with my two-year old daughter, and literally followed me around the Nashville community- even attended a Nashville Branch NAACP meeting of which I was president. Immediately following that visit, I agreed to visit the Albany campus but, frankly, had little interest in joining the faculty. My goal had always been to return to the south after completing the requirements for the Ph.D. Again, I think the administration knew that. So, while I visited the campus, arrangements had been made for me to spend time with Vincent O’Leary, Dean of the School of Criminal Justice; they wanted me to know that, in addition to my responsibilities in African and Afro-American Studies, that there would be an additional research connection with Vincent O’Leary.

The moment I met Vince, I already felt entirely comfortable. It was as if we had known each other for many years. From that meeting, it was a done deal. I had already received strong support from the faculty and students in African and Afro-American Studies and from the administration. Vince and I worked on several research projects and committees. I spent much time interacting with the other faculty in criminal justice, and several of my graduate students in African and Afro-American Studies were enrolled in his course.

Then Vincent O’Leary became the President of SUNY at Albany. I can recall the first meeting I had with this new president. He commented that “there must be a clarion call for creating a diverse educational environment, not just on the basis of skin colors, but ideas, disciplines, religions, orientation, disability, socio-economic backgrounds and country of origin.” Vince was a true believer in diversity, equality, fairness and collegiality. Quite frankly, as a black southerner myself, I grew up in legally segregated Alabama. Vince was probably the first Caucasian with whom I had interacted who did not remind me of skin color.
Vince O’Leary was a strong supporter of African and Afro-American Studies, as could be attested to by former black employees like Dr. Seth Spellman, Dr. Vernon Buck, Dr. Carson Carr, Dr. Vivian Gordon, and Yolanda Nix; and current employees like Dr. Leonard A. Slade, Jr., Dr. Kwadwo Sarfoh, Dr. Allen Ballard, Dr. Marcia Sutherland, and other black faculty in African and Afro-American Studies. He was always available to participate in and support departmental activities. He had a special relationship and respect for Dr. Seth Spellman and Dr. Leonard A. Slade, Jr. It was his support that led to a nationally known academic department. It was Vince O’Leary who supported the creation of “World Week,” an annual university-wide event to celebrate our diverse community, especially focused on recognition of world cultures. I will always thank Vince for his strong support and commitment to my personal and academic success. He was relentless with his support for my success—almost like a big brother who wanted the best for me. Under his leadership, I served in several administrative capacities, including Chair and Associate Professor of African and Afro-American Studies, Associate Vice-President for Research and Educational Development, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, and the University’s first Vice President for Student Affairs.

Some of you will remember that when there was an age change in the alcohol consumption law from age twenty-one to eighteen, Albany essentially became a “dry” campus. As Vice President, I created and implemented a policy that banned beer kegs from our campus. Of course, students had a strong reaction to this policy and decided to show their disapproval by rolling twenty or thirty beer kegs (empty, of course) down the academic quad. Several hundred demonstrated outside of my office window, and naturally a huge number went to President O’Leary’s office. Vince called me to his office, and I thought we would meet with the students together in his conference room. I learned better—Vince told me that this was my job and urged me to have fun at the meeting and to call him only if necessary. The meeting went well and the next day the student newspaper (ASP) had a cartoon of me holding a beer mug that read “Pogue did not make the right decision, but he demonstrated that he had BALLS.”

Vince did the very same thing when during a World Week cultural celebration, Jewish and Palestinian students became embroiled in a highly intense exchange. He did it again when Minister Louis Farrakhan came to campus as an event speaker, and some students and community members objected to his presence. Again, I was out there alone. Vince wanted me to know that although he supported me, there was a role the President played and a role the Vice President for Student Affairs was to play. These were teachable moments. These and other experiences were his way to empower me to lead.

During my weekly one-on-one meetings with Vince, he would stand at his office window and say, as we looked across the academic quad, “Frank, we need to see more diversity on this campus.” He always made it very clear that he saw the university as a very special place because students and faculty from virtually every culture and religion were brought together in ways never experienced before in their lives. Among our students were the poor, the rich, high academic achievers, academically marginal, different religions, different races, and different ethnic backgrounds. He always felt that the university community was the perfect setting for cross-cultural exchange and learning to live together.

As I said, I was always convinced that President O’Leary was committed to creating professional opportunities for me. I will never forget that day in 1986 during one of our weekly meetings when the telephone rang. Unlike other times, he actually took the call and proceeded to answer questions being raised by the caller. After he finished speaking to the caller, he turned to me and said, “You will never guess who that was calling, and you will never guess the person we were discussing.” Of course, I said no to each question. “It was Chancellor Clifton Wharton and we were talking about you.” I was quite surprised and wanted to know why he was
talking about me. Vince said he wanted to know if you would consider leaving your position as Vice President for Student Affairs at Albany and serve as Interim Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs for the SUNY Administration. I would become the first person in the history of SUNY to hold this title. After talking about it a bit, Vince and I agreed to think about it over the next week.

To my surprise, the very next morning Vince telephoned to see if I had made a decision. He informed me that the Chancellor had called again to determine my interest and to invite me to SUNY Systems Administration to discuss the details. Vince turned to me and said, “Well, Frank, how do you say ‘NO’ to the Chancellor?” we didn’t say no. I spoke with Chancellor Wharton, informed my staff and the campus community and began working the following week.

The understanding I had with Vince and Chancellor Wharton was I would be Interim Vice Chancellor for two years and return to the Albany campus. Again, surprisingly, two days into the position of Interim Vice Chancellor, Chancellor Wharton offered me the permanent job. Three days later, he announced that he was leaving SUNY to assume the Chairmanship of the Board of TIAA-CREF.

I will always feel that Vince and Chancellor Wharton pulled one over on me. This was their plan from the beginning.

After ten years as Vice Chancellor, including the year I served as Interim President at SUNY at Cobleskill, I was appointed president of Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, a position I held for eleven years.

Vince was a mentor for many people. Although I am serving in my fourth presidency and have retired three times, I am still benefitting from the lessons I learned from his management style. Indeed, if a person will live as long as he is remembered, then Vince will live forever.

Vincent O’Leary served as the President of the University at Albany, State University of New York, from 1977 until 1990. O’Leary died April 22, 2011, at the age of 86.
Nefer Rohu
Africana Studies Graduate Student Organization

Margaret Van Ess
President of Nefer Rohu

Nefer Rohu is the Africana Graduate and Professional Studies Organization of the University at Albany. The meaning behind the name refers to a prophet and priest of Bastet (the cat goddess) in Kemet (Ancient Egypt) who predicted the downfall of the Old Kingdom and the reunification of Kemet by Amenemhet I, founder of the Twelfth Dynasty and the Middle Kingdom.

As President of Nefer Rohu, I have worked with many of the graduate students in the program in trying to develop programs that would help stimulate and serve the needs of the student population. One program held in the past was “African American Identity in the Obama Era”, which focused on whether Blacks considered themselves as being hopeful that progress was being made with the presence of a Black president.

Nefer Rohu has also hosted a movie night followed by a discussion, “For Colored Girls,” which examined the struggle and oppression women of color faced. This past December, Nefer Rohu took part in hosting a program on the dangers of AIDS, which focused on educating students about AIDS in addition to providing precautionary steps that need to be taken in order to assist in the reduction of the disease.

For the spring semester, Nefer Rohu is looking toward hosting a program on Black Feminism: Black Beauty in a Western Culture. This program will explore the issue of the acceptance of Black beauty in a society that is saturated with Eurocentric idealism.

Overall, the goal of Nefer Rohu is to help educate our student body on the contemporary issues that affect the Black community and also work toward developing solutions that can assist in solving these problems.

Nefer Rohu Spring 2011 Executive Board

From left to right Thomas Rouse- Program Coordinator; Octavia Clarkson- Secretary; Margaret Van-Ess- President; Shaquana Gadsden- Public Relations; and Keadrick Peters- Vice President

Not Pictured: current Public Relations Officer Charlene Bradt.

Fall 2012 Executive Board

President Elect- Charlene Bradt
Vice President Elect- Shannon Missick-Wood
Secretary/ Treasurer Elect- Gretchen Schwalbach
Vice President of Public Relations Elect- Dominic Green

Representatives to the Graduate Student Organization
- Angelica Bullock
- John Paul Craig
- Abigail McPhail
Student Commencement Speech

Spring 2011

By Aysha Kai Robinson, MA 2011

Good evening. First I must give all honor and praise to Jesus Christ who is the head of my life. My deep gratitude and love to the two most beautiful and incredible women that I know, my mother and sister who are here with me for their continuous love and support. My mother singlehandedly reared my sister and me and sacrificed so many of her wants and needs so that we could succeed in life. I am the woman that I am because of you. To the faculty and staff of the Department of Africana Studies at this fine institution, thank you for such a wonderful experience, and to Dr. Sutherland for the opportunity to speak before you today.

Class of 2011, congratulations! You have made it to the end of your journey. You have accomplished what many did not. Anyone can say that he or she is going to reach a goal, but those that actually accomplish the goal show true integrity and character. You stayed the course. You finished the race. You endured. Therefore, give yourselves a round of applause.

You can now be considered as members of the Talented Tenth that Du Bois so passionately believed in as being the trailblazers that would reach back to elevate the rest of the race. From this day onward, you are members of the group of scholars who will propel your generation forward, lifting them to a level of incomparability. You are the shining examples of what accomplishment looks like, especially in a world that believes that our generation is full of people who are not hard working, ambitious, serious or moral. Today alone many have been proven wrong. And because of you, today many are eating their words.

Although in this moment we are extremely proud of ourselves, we must remember to maintain a level of humility. For if we do not, all that we have learned will have been in vain. Why? Because people will merely hear us. We need people to listen. So I say, humility is of the utmost importance. Be proud of what you have accomplished, but understand that people are more willing to learn from you when you are approachable. Sometimes it is easy for people to forget where they came from and who they were before they walked the halls of academia. We should never seek to make others feel inferior.

The faculty of this Department has shown us this with their gracious demeanors: allowing us to drink until we were quenched from their wells of knowledge, gently shaping our minds, and honestly answering our questions. On a national scale, the finest example of brilliance coupled with humility is President Obama. I believe that we can all learn a thing or two from his character. Simply stated, it is imperative that we remember to be balanced scholars who are confident and powerful, yet also humble.

We are now torchbearers and if we are to teach the world of the injustices that have been done to the descendants of the African Diaspora: the Maafa, the horrors of colonialism, Jim Crow, apartheid, the contemporary effects of hundreds of years of enslavement, discrimination, forced assimilation, and the environmental injustices that continue to plague people of color worldwide; then we mustn’t give people any excuse not to listen. We must give them no other choice but to listen!

Now it is left up to you to decide what you will do with what you have achieved and all that you have learned. The world is at your feet. What will you do with it? Will you be selfish with your knowledge or will you be selfless? I charge you to be the latter. With your feet firmly planted in an African centered worldview, conquer the world. Prove that the study
of African peoples is imperative and is just as important as any other field of study and worthy of learning about: that it does cause you to analyze history and the current world from a more critical viewpoint; that it does cause you to delve deep within yourself and question all that you have ever known to be factual in this life. Thus you are no longer naive, but wise. Acknowledge prejudice and discrimination for what they are and the injustice that they always lead to. In other words, you cannot leave this program without being convicted to make a difference.

Make the difference that so many served prison time for, begged for, bled for, and died for. Let not our ancestors’ struggle have been in vain. Take hatred up by its root of ignorance, and kill any chance of it flourishing. Somebody has to do it, why not you? Yes, you! You are capable. You have been equipped with the knowledge. Do not be mistaken; leaders today are still necessary, which means that followers are inevitable. Whether you decide to pursue another degree, launch a business, teach, write literature, travel the world, or perfect your craft to become a respected artist…Whatever it is, do it and do it well. Just remember not to compare your journey to anyone else’s; hear advice but listen to your own heart. Dance to the beat of your own African drum.

And when people ask you why you are dancing so strangely to such a unique tune, tell them that it is because…you embody the ghosts of your ancestry and they have forbidden you to keep quiet.

Thank you.
**THE DEPARTMENT OF AFRICANA STUDIES RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM**  
**FALL 2011**

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**BLACK HISTORY MONTH SERIES**

- **February 15, 2011**  
  Jazz Concert by Annette Harris and Azzaam Hameed

- **February 18, 2011**  
  Mr. Donald Hyman

- **February 9, 2012**  
  “What Does Black History Month Mean To You?”  
  Sponsored by Nefer Rohu

- **February 9, 2012**  
  Movie, The Help

- **February 23, 2012**  
  “Images of Black Women in the Media”  
  Dona Bulluck, Attorney
Where Are Our Department of Africana Studies’ Alumni/Alumnae Now?

Annelies Verdoolaege, Ph.D.
MA, 2001
Ph.D. in African Languages and Cultures. She is with the Department of African Languages and Cultures, Ghent University Rozier, Belgium. Editor-in-Chief of the Journal “Afrika Focus.”

Michael Tillotson, Ph.D.
MA, 2004
Assistant Professor, University of Pittsburgh.

Maria (Ife) Flannery
MA, 2011
Ph.D. Candidate, Temple University, Department of Africana Studies.

Rukayatu Tijani
BA, 2011
University of California at Berkeley, School of Law.

Fikile Mahlangu
MA, 2007
Ph.D. Candidate, SUNY Binghamton.

Miciah Yehudah
MA, 2007
Ph.D. Candidate, Temple University, Department of Africana Studies.

Marquita Pellerin, Ph.D.
MA, 2007
Assistant Professor, Department of Pan African Studies, California State University, Northridge.

Ivette Rubiera
MA, 2003
Special Agent for the FBI

Serie McDougal, Ph.D.
MA, 2003
Assistant Professor, San Francisco State University.

Ahari Toure, Ph.D.
MA, 1988
Assistant Professor, Delaware State University.

Candace Rowser, Ph.D.
MA, 2004
St. John’s University, 2010, Adjunct Professor, Westchester Community College and LaGuardia Community College.

Nenad Filopovic
MA, 2007
Writer/Editor, Office of the Secretary, Department of Homeland Security, Washington, D.C.

Miguel A. DeJesus, II
MA, 2007
Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy at the University of Massachusetts.

Risa Faussette, Ph.D.
SUNY Binghamton
MA, 1990
Professor of History
The College of Saint Rose

Kelly Bates, J.D.
Boston University
BA, 1992
Legal Consultant
Boston, Massachusetts
A Journey Into Africa

By Charlene Bradt, MA Candidate

When I arrived, I was greeted by a crowd of shouting boys who had just finished a soccer game. Beside me stood a dilapidated brick building with broken windows, yellow shutters and a corroded sign that read “Streetwise Shelter for Boys.” Inside, a young woman smiled at me from behind the front desk and answered the telephone while tending to her baby.

I had arrived on a flight from New York just hours before. I reached Streetwise with a sense of uncertainty about my decision to spend a summer in Africa and became instantly aware of the vast differences between life in Africa and the United States. While studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal through a study abroad program at SUNY Albany, I volunteered at Streetwise as part of a service learning project in Durban, South Africa. Despite a vague job description, I knew the position required me to lend my time and skills to benefit orphaned children. I did not know that the most profound experience of my life lay ahead of me.

At Streetwise, I had the opportunity to work closely with youth throughout Durban. I spent my days organizing recreational activities, teaching, and offering English lessons. I used my free time to get to know the boys at the shelter individually and learned that each had been affected by HIV/AIDS, few had been consistently enrolled in school, and none had access to adequate health care. Most spoke Zulu or Xhosa and had little command of the English language. Consequently, their ability to complete high school, attend college or obtain a job was limited. Each boy expressed a sense of hopelessness and felt trapped inside of the very system that was designed to subjugate them. My encounters with the children at the shelter taught me that institutional racism persists and oppressed populations continue to live in poverty. I completed my term abroad and left South Africa with an overwhelming feeling that people deserve better. This experience fueled my interest in human rights and development throughout Africa.

To cultivate my growing interest in African affairs, I joined the Peace Corps and found myself in Niger one year later. While volunteering in Niger, I spent most of my time in Hamdallaye, a rural village where I ate meals and drank tea with my host family and, in the process, learned French and Hausa. My host family and neighbors throughout the village were eager to introduce me to the wide range of cultures that dwell in Niger, and they were equally interested in learning about my life in the United States.

After only a few days in Niger, I quickly learned why Nigeriens have earned a reputation for being the most hospitable people in the world. After being invited to eat at the homes of several neighbors in Hamdallaye, I noticed the limited food resources on which people were forced to survive, as their diet consisted primarily of millet or rice with little access to fresh fruits or vegetables. Given these conditions, I was baffled by their generosity and eagerness to accommodate me with such limited food supplies. Reminiscent of my experience in South Africa, my time as a Peace Corps volunteer in Niger left me perplexed by the vast differences between the standard of living in African nations and the United States. Furthermore, I was disappointed by the world’s willingness to allow these conditions to persist.
Though I returned to the United States after only several months due to a medical condition, my brief experience in Niger prompted me to confront the social, educational and economic gaps that exist between impoverished regions in Africa and the industrialized world. During both visits to Africa, I was most affected by the positive disposition and hospitality of my neighbors against the backdrop of overwhelming poverty and oppression. These experiences will remain imprinted in my mind for the rest of my life. My time in Africa has given me a new lens with which to view the world, and has ultimately reshaped my goals and interests.

Alumni and Friends…

Support the Future of the Department of Africana Studies.

Donations can be made by credit card on the University Website.

For more details, visit the website at: http://www.albany.edu/giving.

Please instruct that your gift be restricted to the Department of Africana Studies.

Summer Study Abroad Program

The Department has conducted Study Abroad Programs in the following countries: South Africa, Namibia, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Ghana, Zanzibar Island, Tanzania, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Togo.

Stay tuned for the 2013 Summer Study Abroad Program in Africa. Details will be posted on the Department of Africana Studies’ website www.albany.edu/africana.
A Home Away From Home

By Jason Harrell, BA Candidate

My study abroad experience was truly amazing and provided me with a learning experience as well. The study abroad trip was faculty led, which actually turned out differently from what I had anticipated. Dr. Sutherland and Dr. Sarfoh were the professors who led this excursion through a few countries in East Africa; they helped with many different aspects of the trip: dining options, extracurricular activities, and travel and transportation arrangements, not to mention helping the students, including myself, to develop ideas about the travel abroad experience and what we found to be significant. The faculty led trip allowed us to travel to more than one country, which led to new experiences every time we had to board a plane or hop on a ferry to cross borders into a new culture with yet another language to study and know.

My favorite part of the whole trip was the first leg of the trip in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. I immersed myself into a foreign country and new culture, staying with a home-stay family. Although it did not have the amenities of a five-star hotel or the familiarity and comforts of being in my own home, my host family welcomed me into their home with open arms. Living with my host family for fewer than two weeks provided me with firsthand experience with the culture and family life in Dar es Salaam. They provided me with shelter, food, and family. My host family in Dar es Salaam consisted of a mother or mama, a father or “baba”, two sisters or “dadas”, and one brother or “kaka.”

The comfort of having a sense of family while studying abroad was helpful in understanding the culture in which my host family lives. Waking up every morning to breakfast and happy faces was how my days there began, then walking to the University of Dar es Salaam among Tanzanians and others that may have been studying abroad as well gave me the feeling of being home. Although I was not home in Albany, New York, I felt a sense of belonging and familiarity. Not only was my home-stay family considered family during my stay, they also became friends that I continue to communicate with via social networking sites and email.

Talking with the home-stay family about what we did that day or what we had planned for the day also provided me the feeling of being home, this is what we conversed about when waiting for dinner or after dinner. Also, conversations about the differences between universities here and in Africa seemed to be a popular subject to talk about. Conversations usually entailed questions regarding the wild life and questions about how Tanzanians viewed or perceived America. The family members viewed America as a nice place to live and also have the idea that America is a very large country.

In the near future I hope to travel abroad to the countries I travelled to this past summer and I hope many more. Whichever country I travel to next, I hope to have the feeling of being home, while immersing myself in a new and exciting culture.
Why I’m Not Black

By Nieema Foster, BA Candidate

Skim down a little on a standardized test sheet, college or job application and you will likely find the words that read: “Race (check one): American Indian/Native Alaskan, Anglo (non-Hispanic White), Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African American, Hispanic, Multi-Racial, Other, or Unknown.” I choose Other; I can’t check off Black and I can’t choose African American since it’s tied to Black. I could also choose unknown since the kidnapping of my ancestors from Africa to the U.S. left me and many others of the African Diaspora with both the lack of culture and of a place to call home. In cases where different organizations that I am a part of have the term black in it, I have to accept that black is my identification. While I am proud to be a part of organizations with distinction, the term black troubles me. Most people who see me would consider me black, but if you understood why I do not wish to be referred to or categorized as black, you might think quite differently.

Two years ago while attending Nassau Community College in Long Island, NY, my African-American History Professor Marquita James challenged her class to find out what black and white meant. We were instructed to make a list of all the words associated with each term and to compare and contrast the differences between the two. I immediately walked over to the school library after class pulling out every dictionary and thesaurus I could find. The first thesaurus I came upon was by DK Pockets. On page 46 I located black defined as dark, dusky, murky, depressing, dismal, distressing, doleful, foreboding, funereal, gloomy, hopeless, melancholy, lugubrious, mournful, pessimistic, ominous, sad, somber, bad, devilish, diabolic, evil, foul, heinous, iniquitous, nefarious, villainous, and wicked. As I took in each definition, I couldn’t believe all the negative words that were associated with black. Then, turning to page 501, I found white defined as cream, ivory, snow white, clean, bright, immaculate, and spotless.

Growing up I heard and sang the lyrics to “Say it Loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud” by James Brown, and read about the Black Panthers and the Black Power Movement, and I had always taken pride in calling myself a black woman. For the first time I was questioning my race and wondering what I could use as a replacement since clearly black wasn’t it.

Why are so many things that are black considered bad? Just take for instance other terms and idioms linked to black. 1) Black mood- a bad or depressed mood; an irritable mood, 2) The black sheep- the least respectable member of a family or group, 3) Black mark- an unfavorable comment or item on one’s record, an indication of wrongdoing or failure, 4) Go Black- to become unconscious, 5) Black hole- a place where lost things go, 6) Black eye- a disgrace or discredit; something which attracts unwanted negative attention, 7) Black listed- a list of people or organizations that have received disapproval or suspicion or are to be rejected and otherwise punished, and lastly the ever popular Black Friday- originating from James Fist and Jay Gould’s group of speculators that tried to take over the gold market. Due to their failure it became routine for the market collapsing to be deemed as “Black.”

After learning of these negative connotations, you may not feel that black is a degrading term. Maybe like the “N” word you’ve decided to change its meaning around and make it into something positive. At the end of the day, the origins of the word will always be negative no matter what you try to make it into. What I ask of my brotha’s and sista’s is to take time to re-evaluate what black
means. You have to decide for yourself who you are and what you want to represent.

Racism as a Distant Cousin: America’s Continuing Phenomenon

By Keadrick Peters, MA 2011

I’m not interested in anybody’s guilt. Guilt is a luxury that we can no longer afford. I knew you didn’t do it, and I didn’t do it either, but I am responsible for it because I am a man and a citizen of this country and you are responsible for it, too, for the very same reason. Anyone who is trying to be conscious must begin to dismiss the vocabulary which we’ve used so long to cover it up, to lie about the way things are.

- James Baldwin
“Words Of A Native Son,” Playboy, 1964

Born in 1987, I am two generations removed from overt racism and nearly 125 years removed from chattel slavery. However, when one is born with brown skin in America, descendants of Africans in particular, we still feel the impact of racism that was originally fueled during the Antebellum period. Today, America reflects on racism and slavery as a thing of the past. In the past, slavery and racism functioned like fathers and mothers who were tangible reminders of who was inferior. The father served as the law of the land which determined one’s social standing and the mother nurtured society to employ the unfair racial hierarchy practices. Today racism is a subtle system that acts as a distant cousin that you know exists but seldom refer to as such. It is important to recognize because you do not overtly see your distant cousin often does not mean he or she does not still exist just as racism. In this paper, I will assess race relations as it pertains to racism from my observations and personal theoretical framework.

The Color Line

In 1903, the renowned scholar W.E.B. Du Bois predicted that the problem of the twentieth-century would be the color line. Du Bois stated, “Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black here in the dawning of the Twentieth Century. This meaning is not without interest to you, Gentle Reader; for the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line.” One can infer that his prediction was an egregious warning that American citizenship values were at stake. In other words, parity between Whites and Blacks was restricted to rhetorical amendments to the Constitution such as the thirteenth, fourteen, and fifteenth. As attorney Nathan Newman described, the color line serves as a reservation for the best jobs for one group, while denying them to another through the law and private institutions. Beyond job opportunities, the color line permeates several facets of American culture today as it did in 1903. Immense disparities exist in the attainment of education, housing, bank loans, income, and much more that manifest the color line today.

21st Century Color Line

Despite the racism as a distant cousin mindset, which can also be referred to as colorblind ideology, where one resides on the color line has multiple predictors of life opportunities and privileges. Countless empirical findings illustrate the color line is employed through unconscious or

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aversive racism. Could this explain why the unemployment rate is always worse for people with brown skin? According to the Department of Labor’s statistics, the unemployment rate in November 2011 was 16.1 percent for African Americans and only 7 percent for White Americans. The unemployment rate within the African American community rival those in Third World countries. Moreover, this is with affirmative action. The Department also noted that even controlling for college graduates, African Americans are far worse off in the unemployment sector than their White counterparts with similar backgrounds. Specifically, according to the study, the unemployment rate for African Americans with a four-year college degree was 6.5 percent compared with 2.9 percent for Whites with college degrees.

The book, *The New Jim Crow* (2010), by Michelle Alexander highlights the color line dilemma within mass incarceration. Legal scholar Alexander argues that the nation has not ended the racial caste system, rather it has been redesigned. Alexander persuasively shows that African American men are targets of discrimination through the “War on Drugs,” with the criminal justice system functioning as a contemporary form of racial control. Although Alexander provides ample empirical findings, one salient finding is that African American youths are six times more likely than Whites to be sentenced to prison for an identical crime. In cases of identical crime, one would think there would be similar sentencing practices. However, when one possesses white skin leniency is likely. Equally important, in cases where capital punishment is a possibility at sentencing, victims with white skin acutely determines the fate of the accused. According to the Death Penalty Information Center (2010), 76% of the murder victims in cases resulting in an execution were Whites compared to 15% African Americans, and 6% Hispanic. The aforementioned criminal statistics are not alarming to the masses in this country because it is a behavioral expectation of people of color. The behavioral expectation is often cultivated and maintained through the evening news. Alexander stated: “For more than three decades, images of black men in handcuffs have been a regular staple of the evening news. We tell ourselves they deserve their fate, even though we know-and don’t know—that whites are just as likely to commit many crimes, especially drug crimes.”

The ability to obtain an education is a national crisis that continues to be ignored. In particular, the high school graduation rate among African American men is atrocious. Yes We Can: The 2010 Schott 50 State Report on Black Males in Public Education, for example, showed that the overall 2007-2008 high school graduation rate for African American males in the United States was 47 percent, and that half of states graduation rates for African American males were well below the national average. The report highlighted that states such as Florida, South Carolina, and New York had graduation rates below 39% for African American males.

The fundamental question is why elected officials continue to be so lackadaisical in rectifying the crisis. Is it because society does not care about African American young men, or is it a societal norm for African American male students to drop out of school? Scholar and activist Tavis Smiley provides insight to the national crisis of African American young men in his recent book entitled, *Too Important To Fail*. Smiley explains to readers that if we do not save African American males, the school to prison pipeline will continue to flourish. Smiley acknowledged empirical projections that African American young men born in 2001 are more than five times as likely as White males to be incarcerated at some point in their lifetime. He concludes the book with a resource guide for readers to implement a plan of action in their communities to help save African American young men.

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5 Ibid., p. 74

6 Ibid., p.177
As the nation continues to drop the ball on African American males in public schools largely due to monetary resources, the institution of prisons continue to be a lucrative business. Reports conducted by the National Association of State Budget Officers showed that in the fiscal year 2008-2009 the economic downturn limited all state spending. However, funding for jails and prisons grew as expenditures in every other category, including education declined. Education in state budgets still out paces funding for the prison system, but the percentage of dollars being used for incarceration is increasing. In fact, the same report found that in 33 of 50 states, correctional related costs surpassed the spending proportion of the general fund from the previous fiscal year, while K-12 and higher education spending decreased. Teacher layoffs, declining after-school programs, school closings, and rising tuition at college and universities, are astonishing to contemplate when prison spending grows. Priorities on prison spending over public education expenditures should alarm any American who believes in the mantra of pulling yourself up with your own boot straps. The ability to pull oneself up has a strong foundation in public education, but when public education is not adequately afforded to youths what message are we sending?

**Multidimensional Racism**

To be fair, as described by scholar Patricia Collins, one’s experience with discrimination or racism is based upon not only race, but on other factors such as gender and class. Collins’ conceptualization of race, class, and gender is often described as intersectionality which impacts the experience of individuals based on varying levels of oppression. Collins contends that her experience as a working class African American woman has stark differences from a middle class African American man. Readers can infer from Collins’ intersectionality concept that some groups have it harder than others due to multiple layers of oppression. Minorities in America who belong to the middle and upper class are afforded privileges that impact their experience with racism, and the same goes for gender privilege for minority men. Alexander explains that middle class African Americans who have access to resources such as a car and the ability to live in better neighborhoods, affords them protection against frequent harassment from police. In spite of middle class status for African Americans, research has indicated that not much has changed in terms of discrimination. Tim Wise, *White Like Me*, explains how, regardless of how much money or prestige an African American acquires, they still have to cope with their blackness. He uses Oprah Winfrey’s experience of discrimination at an upscale retail store in the summer of 2005 as a prime example of how race trumps class. Wise stated, “What strikes me as the most important issue here is that even Oprah Winfrey, with all her money, and all her influence, still had to wonder, even if only for a moment, whether her race had trumped all of that in the eyes of someone else.” Northwestern University scholar Mary Pattillo-McCoy would suggest that Ms. Winfrey’s experience is a result of the continuing existence of racism. In her piece, *Middle Class, Yet Black*, she illustrates that discrimination and racism are still evident in the lives of middle class African Americans. Pattillo-McCoy, for example, described how Dr. Cornel West was reminded of his blackness as one empty cab after the next passed him. Pattillo-McCoy noted, “Neither money, nor education, nor prestige negated the fact he was black.”

**Minority Guide in Racism as a Distant Cousin**

Ibid., p. 65

Ibid., p. 65


our history and progress, and are misinformed as to the principles and ideas that control and guide us, as a people. The great mass of American citizens estimates us as being a characterless and purposeless people; and hence we hold up our heads, if at all, against the withering influence of a nation’s scorn and contempt.

- Frederick Douglass
National Colored Convention
Rochester, New York, July 1853

During my adolescent years, my parents and caretakers repeatedly encouraged me to work twice as hard in order to succeed. To this day, I reminisce on my parents saying, “Mediocrity is never an option for a Black man.” As a result of my parents and caretakers direct guidance, I have done well for myself. However, I recognize that if those who raised me would have led me to believe that parity amongst the races was a reality, my odds of success would have decreased significantly. In my personal opinion, when a minority, especially an African American, believes he or she is afforded the same opportunities and privileges as a White American, they become psychologically damaged in the event of exclusion or discrimination. Du Bois assessed the result of Blacks exclusion after the Civil War as a double consciousness. In his words, double consciousness is “a two-ness” of being a Negro; two warring ideals in one dark body, who dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.”


Another experience north of the Mason-Dixon Line took place three years after the historic election of President Barack Obama. One evening I ventured to a northern downtown city to celebrate a friend’s birthday at a private tavern. The tavern bouncer allowed each person of European descent to enter, but denied access to those of us with African ancestry. The bouncer claimed that our driver’s licenses looked fake and said we could not enter. The denial of entry for the African Americans in the group baffled our White friends who were hesitant to call it for what it was - discrimination. On the other hand, being denied entry for us was not a shock, but something we knew could happen as an element of being Black in America. Rather than feeling excluded or hurt from the situation, we decided to address the issue directly to make a change. The bouncer was not aware that he was discriminating against middle and upper class African Americans who possessed resources to react appropriately. The next business day, on the advice of our family’s attorneys, we reported the matter to the Better Business Bureau, Civil Rights Division, and to the local news station. Within a month of the incident, the tavern owner sent each of us a formal letter of apology.

In my eyes, the apology letter showed that racism as a distant cousin fosters discrimination and only after those faced with discrimination react, are they treated fairly. With that in mind, in order for America to make progress beyond the Civil Rights Era, we must treat racism as a distant cousin ideology as an even more dangerous threat. If we only applaud how far the nation has come on race relations and refer to successful African Americans as evidence, we will impede the progress toward equality for all Americans. We must do away with the racism as a distant cousin ideology, for it is only crippling us as Americans. If one group of
Americans lags due to the institutional system, we all fall behind. We must live by the old African proverb, “I am because we are.”

A letter James Baldwin wrote to his nephew in 1962 is relevant today, and further explains the need to change the racism as a distant cousin ideology.

This is the crime of which I accuse my country and my countrymen, and for which neither I nor time nor history will ever forgive them, that they have destroyed and are destroying hundreds of thousands of lives and do not know it and do not want to know it...It is their innocent country set you down in a ghetto in which, in fact, it intended that you should perish. The limits of your ambition were, thus, expected to be set forever. You were born into a society which spelled out with brutal clarity, and in as many ways as possible, that you were a worthless human being. You were not expected to aspire to excellence: you were expected to make peace with mediocrity...You have, and many of us have, defeated this intention; and, by a terrible law, a terrible paradox, those innocents who believed that your imprisonment made them safe are losing their grasp on reality. But these men are your brothers-your lost, younger brothers. And if the word integration means anything, this is what it means: that we, with love, shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it. For this is your home, here, and will again, and we can make America what it must be become. It will be hard, but you come from sturdy, peasant stock, men who picked cotton and damaged rivers and built railroads, and in the teeth of the most terrifying odds, achieved an unassailable and monumental dignity. You come from a long line of great poets since Homer, One of them said, The very time I thought I was lost, My dungeons shook and my chains fell off ... We cannot be free until they are free. God bless you, and Godspeed.¹³


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Up Against the Wall:

The Black Students Movement

By Shannon Missick-Wood, MA Candidate

Throughout the 1960s, college and university campuses across the nation were on fire. A large segment of America’s youth was involved in anti-war protests, Civil Rights demonstrations, women’s rights demonstrations and the Black Power movement, and this new so-called “counter-culture” was not going to settle for the status quo. Political assassinations and various marches on Washington only added fuel to the fire of discontentment and revolution.

The “Occupy Wall Street” movement of today, its causes and effects, the general tenor of the nation, and for that matter the world, has reached a point that is, in many ways, reminiscent of the protest movements of the 1960s. However similar they might appear to be on the surface, their dissimilarities are far greater. While in both movements, protestors felt as though they were up against the wall, the goals of Occupy Wall Street are broad and not well defined, whereas the goals of the 1960s protest movements, the Black Students movement in particular, were very specific. Those that participated in the Black Students movement were highly motivated, actively campaigning with a clear message and a clear goal.

While the Black Students movement and the Black Students Unions throughout the country did occupy buildings, doing so was generally seen as a tactic of last resort, something that was done when the lines
of communication had broken down and in some instances when the Black students themselves, were physically threatened and without other options. Ultimately, the Black Students Movement resulted in the addition of Black Studies Programs at colleges and universities throughout the United States. In doing so, the issues of Blacks, their history, culture, literature and politics have left an indelible mark on this nation’s institutions and occupy a place within the collective consciousness of our society.

African Americans fought an uphill battle to obtain the rights that they had been granted, following the 1954 Brown v. Board ruling. Reform was slow in coming, and Blacks encountered resistance at every turn. Ten years passed before significant reform began under President Lyndon Johnson’s administration. This reform was later continued under President Richard Nixon. Reform came with the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Housing Act of 1968, and other legislation. However, to attempt to accomplish the goal of true equality, some effort needed to be made on the part of the government and institutions in general. As President Johnson stated in the commencement speech he gave at Howard University in 1965, “You do not take a person who, for years has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say ‘you are free to compete with all the others,’ and still justly believe that you have been completely fair.”

However, simply mandating that henceforth, Americans would be color blind in all aspects of life and within society itself would do nothing to achieve true equality. The system had kept Blacks in a state of inferiority for so long that without additional measures taken, Blacks, due to their historic disenfranchisement, would be in a permanent state of inferiority.

To attempt to level the playing field, Johnson began a series of programs that came to be known as affirmative action. The goal of these programs was to give African Americans the ability to obtain jobs, start successful businesses, gain admission to universities and colleges, and in general gain a real chance at opportunities that were previously denied to them.

As part of the affirmative action programs, institutions of higher learning, thinking themselves progressive in their mission of educating young minds, began to actively recruit and admit larger numbers of African Americans (though proportionately speaking still in insignificant numbers). This represented a beginning, however, problems arose once larger numbers of Blacks were admitted to colleges.

Black students who previously had been excluded from white society were now being faced with the reality of institutionalized racism in their classes, in the internal structure of the schools themselves and with professors, administration, and staff in general. Blacks who attended white institutions found themselves not only on display but also carrying the burden of having to prove themselves worthy of admittance. As Dr. Allen Ballard described his experience at Kenyon College, “Our existence on that campus was defined not by us but by the constant necessity to be everything that negated the white man’s concept of niggers. We were, in fact, forced to suppress our inner natural selves so as to conform to the mores of a campus dominated by upper-middle-class Americans. For eighteen hours a day, our manners, speech, style of walking were on trial before white America. Classes, particularly in the freshman and sophomore years, although sometimes intellectually rewarding, seemed frequently to us as tests to prove to both teachers and students that Jefferson’s views on the Black mentality were incorrect.”

Furthermore, Black students were taught material from a white European male perspective, one in which they were inferior, their entire way of life was the reason for their inferiority, and Blacks as a race had made few or no contributions to society in

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part or as a whole.\textsuperscript{16} They were often treated with disdain and suspicion by fellow students and professors, isolated from the general student population and made to feel unwanted and unwelcome, and they deeply resented it. Resentment and frustration led to action and protest by both Black and White students for courses more relevant to the current student population.

As a result of the protests, schools were forced to develop Black Studies programs. These programs were to be taught from a Black point of view, taking African American contributions to society into account. However, like the Civil Rights programs that came before them, the Black Studies programs were highly controversial and in many ways still are. Some programs came about after protests (some of which included armed occupation of buildings), disagreements over who would be allowed to participate in the newly developed programs (some Blacks did not want any non-Blacks to be eligible to participate in the programs), and in most cases, professors and universities were concerned with the academic integrity of the institutions and academic validity of such programs. But, the Black Students Movement which began with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the South in the early 1960s and evolved into what Dr. Ibram Rogers called the “Black Campus Movement,” \textsuperscript{17} would not be deterred and as of 2007, three hundred eleven African American studies departments have been created within universities throughout the United States.\textsuperscript{18}

For the majority of white Americans, the Black Students Movement was one of the most frightening to come out of this social revolution. This fact was in part because much of the rhetoric of the Black Students Movement mirrored that of the Black Panther Party, but also because, until this point, African American students were a relatively small and largely ignored segment of the student population. The system of racial segregation and outright exclusion at colleges and universities had kept the number of Black students admitted to institutions of higher learning to almost non-existent levels, which allowed for those Blacks that attended the few institutions that would admit them, to be virtually invisible. Furthermore, the Black students, like many in both the Civil Rights and Black Power movement, were no longer willing to be patient and wait for change. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. put it in his famous \textit{Letter from a Birmingham Jail},

\begin{quote}
Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society… when you take a cross county drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy"…- -then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{17} Ibram Rogers, “Remembering the Black Campus Movement: An Oral History Interview with James P. Garrett.” (Journal of Pan African Studies, July 2009), 30.

\textsuperscript{18} Abdul Alkalumat, “Africana Studies in the US” (University of Toledo, March 2007), 12.

\textsuperscript{19} Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” \textit{The Atlantic}, August 1963,
Five years had passed since Dr. King had written these words, the Black students felt they had been patient long enough and the frustration with the tactic of non-violent protest gave way to large numbers of angry Black students demanding equality, and they were determined to obtain it by any means necessary.

The Black Students Movement was able to make major advances toward their goals in the latter part of the 1960s when anti-war protests were at a climax and affirmative action programs were crystallizing. The major objectives of the movement were Black Studies programs, greater numbers of Blacks recruited and admitted to universities and colleges, and greater representation of African Americans among faculty and staff hired at institutions of higher learning. Major institutions across the nation from historically Black universities, such as Howard University in Washington, D.C. to previously all white institutions, such as San Francisco State College (now San Francisco State University), to colleges that were thought to be insulated due to their remote locations, like Cornell University in upstate New York, were drawn into the Black Students Movement. Even the hallowed halls of Harvard University did not escape the movement and none of these institutions emerged unaltered.

Black students took significant steps toward obtaining their demands by forming Black Student Unions and later forming a loosely affiliated nationwide Black Student Alliance. Having previously participated in organizations such as SNCC, CORE and SCLC, the students were highly organized and well trained in the art of protesting, declaring “non-negotiable” demands, communicating with the media, and in communicating with each other. The Black Student Alliance (BSA) and Black Student Unions (BSU) were also well united and concise in their lists of demands. However, unlike other political student organizations including Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the New Left, the Black Students Movement, while not happy with the current state of the system, was simply trying to reform it rather than destroy it. Their goals were to make the institutions more relevant to them and to the changing social and societal structure, and also to making a place within the universities for Black students where they would feel included and wanted.

By the late 1960s, the Black Student Movement had progressed at colleges and universities throughout the country. The Black Students Movements at San Francisco State College, Cornell University, Columbia University, and Harvard University are four of the most notorious. There are iconic images of Black students marching out of Willard Straight Hall at Cornell University, fists held high in the “Black Power” salute, carrying rifles, wearing bandoliers, with beret adorned Afro’s heads fixed stoically forward Three of these schools developed a Black Studies program as a direct result of the students’ actions. The events leading to the formation of these programs are indicative of the times and in some ways helped to influence the decision to create the Africana Studies program at the University at Albany. While the program at the University at Albany was officially created before some of these events transpired, it is easy to recognize the administrations haste in creating the program in an attempt to prevent similar situations.

There is much controversy surrounding the Black Student Movement; however, what is undisputable is the effect it had. Without this movement, Black Studies programs might not have been established, or have been much later in coming. Also, because of the influence of this movement, larger numbers of African Americans have advanced degrees, teach at institutions of higher learning, and positively influence the nation’s discourse on black culture, history and politics. America today is in a state of social revolution similar to that of the 1960s. However, the organization and perseverance of those who took part in the Black Students Movement sets it far apart from the protest movements of today.
How Powerful
By Leonard A. Slade, Jr.

How Powerful
and courageous
you appeared always

From the time
I played with rocks
until your last whisper.

Many attempted
to destroy you cursing
the light of your destruction
in the world community.
Yet you outlived them all,
divinely happy

Leonard A. Slade, Jr., is Professor of Africana Studies, Adjunct Professor of English, Collins Fellow, and Citizen Academic Laureate at the University at Albany. “How Powerful” was recently published in the Peace and Freedom International Journal in the United Kingdom. It is published here with permission.

Dr. Slade, former Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Kentucky State University and the past Director of the Humanistic Studies Doctoral Program and the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Program at SUNY Albany, is the author of 21 books, including 15 books of poetry. His books have been published by McGraw-Hill and State University of New York Press. His latest collection of poetry, Chasing the Wind, was recently published (2012).

I Am My Own Friend
By Ama Boatema Sarpong

Longing for acceptance,
Craving for peaceful ambience,
In my head I see the deception,
I'm deeply immersed in my creation,
I'm watching yet they know nothing,
I'm saddened at the betrayals,
my friends are now my enemies,
I'm still watching,
True friendships are o so rare,
I think as I shed a tear,...but wait, it's such a wonder,
I have a friend beyond all that,
she makes me happy,
cares for me entirely,
and that friend is me, me and only me

The System Has Failed
By Jimmie Covington, MA Candidate

The system has failed
Johnny’s momma looks out the window and yells
As his boys sit around and watch him inhale
To take his last breathe
Now they all have a taste of death
Just a week ago he was in a 6ft cell
Now he’s buried 6ft closer to hell
His mother stands at this funeral with a black veil
Now married to death
She has nothing LEFT
A Mother’s Fear

By Abena Adom, BA Candidate

Fear for not myself
But for my children
Horrified of the world
And the danger it holds
Afraid for my children being judged
Not for their knowledge
Or for their gender
But for the color of their skin
Afraid that my children
Will be treated different
Wanting a better future for them
But discouraged of what the future may hold
Afraid that my children
Will not be treated equal
Fighting for not only my life
But for the life of all my children out there
For our chance to stand up
And make a difference
For our voices to be heard
My fear of the discrimination
Afraid that my children
Will not receive the education
They need
A mother’s fear is fatal
But a mother’s struggle
And hard work to make a difference
Is permanent!!

De-Railed Path

By Jimmie Covington, MA Candidate

Once controlled by whips and chains
Now all we want is a whip and a chain
Nat turner once rebelled
Now a burner keeps us locked in jail
Harriet led us down the right track
The underground rail
What tract do we go down now
When they all seem de-railed

Home Sweet Home

By Abena Adom, BA Candidate

Living in a new country
Is like becoming a whole new person
Meeting new people
And seeing new surrounding
Ghana is where I call home
It’s a place I was raised
It’s a place where I embraced the true meaning of Africa
Ghana is my home
Home sweet home
A place where I felt loved
Where I grew up wise and strong
A place where I lost my heart but gained faith
Home sweet home
It’s where I shed tears of hope
A place where I felt safe
One place is home to me
Ghana
Home sweet home!!
Fallen From Grace

By Brenda Lewis, Department Secretary

The trials, the temptations,
The tangled webs we weave.

Please release me;
Set me free.

Selfishness and pride.
Help me to be humble.

Restore my dignity;
Renew my faith.
Make me whole;
Restore my spirit and soul;
To be refreshed and alive.

Unhappiness,
Loneliness,
Despair.

Wanted –
Caring friendships,
Stability,
Inner peace.

Desired –
Compassion,
Kindness,
Understanding,
Forgiveness,
Repentance,
Love and respect for others,
To be caring and nurturing.

Needed—
Grace,
Prayer,
Loving relationship with my Savior,
Devotion to the one and only true God,
Desire for scripture and quiet times with Him.

Lord,
I have sunken into a deep trench,
Please help me.
Revitalize me,
Create in me a cleaner spirit,
A purer heart,
A desire to serve you fully and faithfully.

Mend my broken spirit,
My unclean heart,
My selfish thoughts.

Grant me wisdom,
Teach me patience,
Guide me to love unconditionally.

I need a fresh start;
A new beginning;
A return to grace.

I Am Here!

By Brittney Carlos, BA Candidate

Here I am doing I can. Everything they say is right. Everything they say is acceptable. So why do I feel as though I am still doing everything wrong. Pushing against an oncoming current. Losing my sanity, losing myself.

I am no Einstein but a genius in my own Right. I believe that I am great and only greatness can come from the things that I decide to do. Rather than what society decides for me. The focus that one within me one greater than those that try to construct me. I am a gift from the Gods.

I too will rise above the idiocy of my society. I am a force to be reckoned with. I am a fierce Black woman that cannot be silenced or moved. I am who I say I am, and I will do what I was sent here to do. I am here!


The Habari

Department of Africana Studies Mission
The objective of the Department of Africana Studies is to provide a multi- and interdisciplinary education in African/African-American Studies and related fields. Students are expected to possess the knowledge and skills necessary to understand the social, political, and historical consequences of institutional arrangements as they affect the life experience of African/African-American people. The Department offers full programs leading to the B.A. and M.A. degrees. Students may specialize in African Studies and African-American Studies. Undergraduate students are provided an opportunity to apply theory through community projects, both within formal courses and other such special programs such as the Study Abroad in Africa Program.

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Articles, Essays and Poetry are original writings submitted by students and faculty of the Department of Africana Studies and may not be re-produced without the permission of the Department or the author.

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