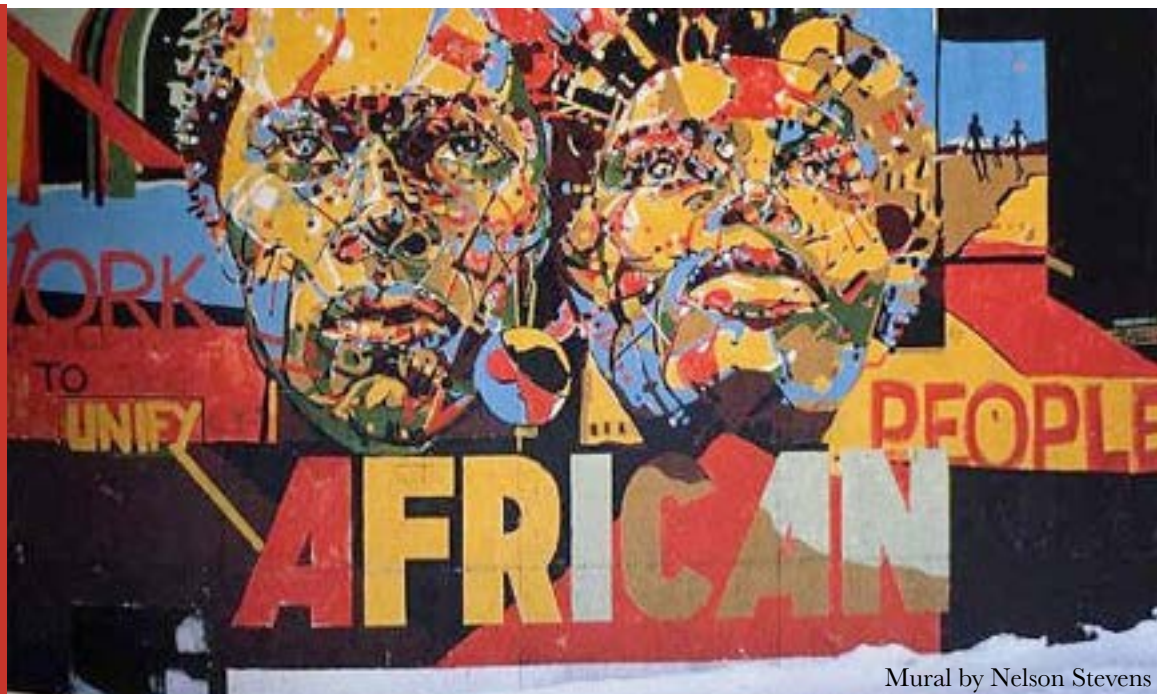


AFRICANA NEWSLETTER

Department of African and African-American Studies (AAAS) @ The University of Kansas

2022



Mural by Nelson Stevens

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About AAAS @ KU

Founded in 1970, the Department of African and African-American Studies (AAAS) provides an interdisciplinary space at the University of Kansas for studying historical and contemporary relationships among African and African-descended people. As a community of scholars and teachers, AAAS offers learning experiences for students to enrich their knowledge of African people on the Continent, as well as people of African descent in the Americas. Our academic wings span the humanities, the social sciences, and some professional fields. The Department's areas of emphasis include art and culture; religion and rhetoric; families, gender and sexuality; and political economy. AAAS boasts concentrations in African Studies, African-American Studies, Arabic and Islamic Studies, and Haitian/Caribbean Studies at the B.A., B.G.S., and M.A. levels.

In addition to our [Undergraduate Major](#) and [Master's Programs](#), AAAS has an [Undergraduate Minor](#) and [Graduate Certificates](#). As part of our mission of developing students' cultural literacy from pan-Africanist, African-centered and Diasporic perspectives, the Department coordinates several languages: Amharic, Arabic, Kiswahili, Haitian Creole, Hausa, Somali, and Wolof, supported by Study Abroad opportunities. The Department also draws strength and vitality from two allied centers

and an institute: [the Kansas African Studies Center](#), the [Langston Hughes Center](#), and the [Institute of Haitian Studies](#).

Through scholarship, teaching, campus and community service, and public programming, the Department reflects intellectual and pedagogical practices that recognize the complexity and multiplicity of human experiences; promote critical thinking and creative problem-solving; and expand our understandings of citizenship in a rapidly changing multiracial, global society.

Given the breadth and depth of all that we offer, in course work, degrees, and programmatically, and the fact that we function genuinely as both an African and African-American studies unit, AAAS is the only department of its kind at a public or private university in Kansas and among the Big XII institutions. We demonstrate that a robust racial/ethnic and area studies presence attracts and retains a diverse faculty and student body, creates inclusive learning environments for the campus, produces lifelong learners, and supports KU's leadership in delivering a dynamic, forward-looking Liberal Arts education that (1) encourages an appreciation of different ways of knowing; and (2) prepares informed and productive citizens in Kansas, the region, the nation, and the globalizing community of the twenty-first century.

Contact AAAS

<http://afs.ku.edu>

Phone: 785-864-3054

Fax: 785-864-5330

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Message from the Chair: Dr. Shawn Leigh Alexander

Since the last newsletter, the Department has tried to meet the challenges brought by a continued pandemic alongside budget cuts. Our faculty and staff have been generous with their time and expertise and have taken on additional, often unpaid responsibilities to preserve the quality of what we do while keeping quantifiable loss to a minimum. It is during these times that I am deeply grateful for the support, generosity, and spirit of all the students, faculty, staff, and donors that make up the larger AAAS community. To the donors, friends, and alumni, I give hearty thanks for their support, which includes the continued contributions to our two newest funding streams, the Spearman Family Opportunity and Research Fund and the Ellison Family Academic Research Fund. It is the continuous generosity and goodwill of our donors that have stimulated our productivity and helped our students throughout the past year.

Our productivity and success, as you will see in the content of this newsletter, have been tremendous. Our faculty and students have continued to work steadfastly on their research and service for the unit and the profession. They have won research awards, received research and program grants, and published and presented groundbreaking scholarship. I wish to highlight Dr. Peter Ukpokodu being named a distinguished professor, the first such honor in the Department's history. Congratulations also go to Dr. Nicole Hodges-Persley in being named the Vice Provost for Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Belonging.

We congratulate Dr. Glenn Adams and KASC for receiving the Title VI and FLAS grant funding. The success of KASC is mutually tied to the success of AAAS and our students and faculty. In our shared vision, goals, and action, we continually work to improve the University and bring to the center of

the school's mission the study of African and African Diasporic languages and African perspectives and knowledge production.

We congratulate Drs. James Yékú and Amal El Haimeur on their successful third year reviews. We congratulate our students who graduated this year and wish them luck out there in the world. We extend our gratitude and well wishes to Dr. Abel Chikanda for his contributions and dedication to the well-being of the Department while he was at KU. We also are indebted to Shelly Buerman for her assistance in putting this newsletter together and all her immeasurable work in administrating our office to keep the unit running smoothly. We thank all those in our community who continue to attend our Final Friday Pizza and Discussions, brownbags, lectures, and those who attended our celebrations around the World Cup, particularly the African game watch parties, including those tied to Morocco's fabulous run for the Cup.

Finally, I reiterate our gratitude to our donors and benefactors, especially the Ellisons and the Spearmans, whose continuous generosity has helped sustain our program and to fuel our progress in ways beyond state funding; enabling us to award scholarships and perform other tasks. The Department invites our benefactors to establish endowed scholarships in their names or in honor of others. We will need the strong financial support of all our donors, friends, and alumni as we continually strive to make a stronger Department.

Departmental News:

AAAS MA Program -- L. Haley Bajorek successfully defended her thesis, "A History of Black Museums in the United States: An Ecology of Museum Knowledges as 'Wake Work,'" becoming one of our first graduates from the dual MA with Museum Studies. Her thesis committee, co-chaired by Drs Nicole Hodges-Persley (AAAS/AMS) and Elizabeth MacGonagle (AAAS/History), also included Drs. Shawn Leigh Alexander (AAAS), Peter Ukpokodu (AAAS), and David Tell (COMMS). After completion of her thesis Haley joined the faculty at Bishop Seabury Academy in Lawrence, Kansas.

Tyler Allen successfully defended her thesis project "[Inquiry as Activism: Social Research & Achievement in the National Urban League](#)," and completed her dual MA in AAAS and Museum Studies with an African-American Studies concentration. Her committee, co-chaired by Drs. Nicole Hodges-Persley (AAAS/AMS) and Casey Mesick Brown (Spencer Museum of Art) also included Katie Rhine (AAAS/GEO) and Peter Welsh (MUSE).

Faculty Announcements -- Tracking Promotion --

James Yékú and Amal El Haimeur both successfully passed their third year reviews by the Department and College.

Professor Amal El Haimeur received a STARTALK grant for 2023-24 to teach Arabic for Middle school and High school students

Professor Dorthy Pennington was honored at the Central States Communication Association's annual meeting for her contributions to the Association and the field of Intercultural Communication.

Professor James Yékú received the Pius Adesanmi Early Career Research Excellence Award from the Canadian Association of African Studies and a residential fellowship in Bochum, Germany, at the Center for Advanced Internet Studies.

Professor Liz MacGonagle received a Hall Center Residential Faculty Fellowship for fall 2022.

Professor Peter Ukpokodu was named a Roy A. Roberts Distinguished Professor. He is the first member of the AAAS faculty to receive a university distinguished professorship in the Department's 52-year history.

Professor Nicole Hodges-Persley was appointed to the Provost's office as the Vice Provost for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB).

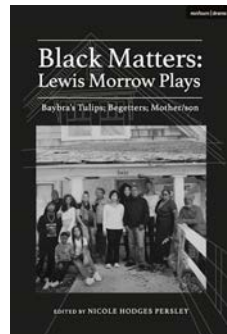
Aya Fayed joined the Department as a Fulbright scholar for the 2022-2023 academic year. Ms. Fayed is a multilingualist who is teaching sections of our elementary and advanced Arabic courses, and is participating in other activities within our African and African Diasporic Language Program.

General Announcements -- AAAS Scholarship/Award -- AAAS awarded \$10,800 in scholarships to undergraduate and graduate students in the 2022-23 academic year.

Title VI & FLAS -- The Kansas African Studies Center (KASC), an allied center to AAAS, was successful in the 2022-26 Title VI National Resource Center and Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS) grant competitions, being awarded more than \$2,000,000 over the next 4 years to support the study of African languages and knowledge perspectives.

Faculty News:

Nicole Hodges-Persley, Associate Professor of AAAS and AMS, published an anthology of the Lewis Morrow plays, *Black Matters: Lewis Morrow Plays*. She also directed a Morrow play, *Mother/son* at the KC Melting Pot Theatre, where she serves as Artistic Director.



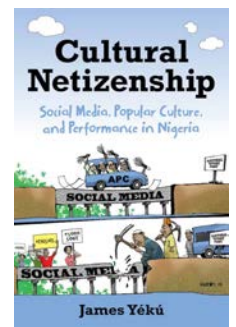
Tony Bolden, Professor of AAAS, published an essay, "Afrofuturism in Black Music," as the lead essay on Carnegie Hall's *Timeline of African American Music*, which is curated by the acclaimed ethnomusicologist Portia K. Maultsby. Additionally, Bolden's essay, "Blue Notes 2.0: The Diachronic Resonance of Langston Hughes During the George Floyd Protests: A Foreword," appeared in a special issue of *The Langston Hughes Review* titled "Montage of a Dream Deferred: Projecting Langston Hughes's Vision During COVID-19 (In Remembrance of George Floyd)." And, finally, Bolden's poem, "Blues People," appeared in Kim McMillon's new anthology *Black Fire—This Time: Volume 1*, which was published by Willow Books, reprising

Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal's historic 1968 anthology *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing*.

Liz MacGonagle, Associate Professor of AAAS and History, was selected as the recipient of the 2022 [George and Eleanor Woodyard International Educator Award](#) at KU. As part of her leadership in international education, she worked with a team of KU faculty and students to plan a [Global Humanities Institute](#) held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in August 2022, that focused on childhood and social suffering in Global Africa. She spoke about decolonizing museums and history at the National Museum of Tanzania during the institute as well as at a Brazilian virtual conference on *Africa e Africanidades* in November 2022. She developed and co-directed a study abroad program that took 11 KU students to Salvador, Brazil, for two weeks in January 2023 to examine African and African-descended perspectives about [Race, History, and Health](#) as expressed through religion, art, music, and other avenues. She also gave two talks about her research project that maps memories of slavery across the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and was invited to Emory University's Sawyer Seminar on "Visions of Slavery: Histories, Memories, and Mobilizations of Unfreedom in the Black Atlantic."

Amal El Haimour, Assistant Teaching Professor of AAAS, received a STARTALK grant for 2023-24 to teach Arabic for Middle school and High school students. Her paper, "Verb Derivation Patterns among Moroccan Arabic Heritage Speakers in France: Pedagogical Implications," will be published by NCOLCTL journal. She provided commentary & explanation for the *Yahoo* reporter Henry Bushnell's "Mystery solved: How to pronounce Qatar, the World Cup host whose name everybody says wrong." Recently, she conducted fieldwork research in Morocco; she completed a paper and submitted it to *African Annual* "Assayeda al-hurra: Forgotten North African Queen and War leader." She presented a paper, "The role of music in educating and empowering North African women," at the 5th International Conference on Gender and Sexuality. She also presented a paper, "The acquisition of unshared Arabic sounds by L2 Learners of Arabic," at the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages. Finally, she presented at MWALLT "The use of technology in enhancing the three modes of Communication."

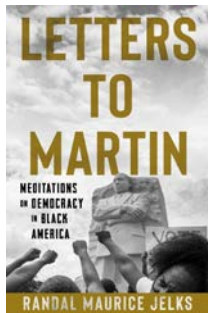
James Yékú, Assistant Professor of AAAS, published *Cultural Netizenship: Social Media, Popular Culture, and Performance in Nigeria*, as well as the edited poetry volume *Sòròsòke: An #Endsars Anthology*. He directed the African Digital Humanities initiative, which convened numerous programs, including the Third Annual African Digital Humanities Symposium. Yékú also published a number of essays in both popular and academic journals, and was named the managing editor of the Department's new academic journal, *Africana Annual*.



Peter Ojiambo, Associate Professor of AAAS, is completing a book chapter entitled, “Leading the Way in Kenyan Higher Education Leadership: The Contributions of Kenyan Pioneer Women University Leaders.” Over the Fall, Dr. Ojiambo published two book chapters. The first chapter titled, “Pan-African Women Empowerment: Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)- Ghana Chapter,” was published by Springer in an edited volume by Felix Kumah-Abiwu and Sabella Abidde. The second chapter, “My Encounters with Micere Mugo the Teacher, the Educationist and the Human Being,” was published by BookCraft in an edited volume by Ndirangu Wachanga. In addition to the writings, Dr. Ojiambo participated in two conferences this academic year: African Studies Association Conference, November, 2022, where he presented a paper titled “Making the Dream a Reality in Women and Girl-Child Education: The Story of Starehe Girls Centre,” and Education Conference, July, 2022 at the University of Nairobi, Kenya, where he gave a talk on “Leading the Way in Kenyan Higher Education Leadership: The Contributions of Kenyan Pioneer Women University Leaders.”

Randal Jelks, Professor of AAAS and AMS, published *Letters to Martin: Meditations on Democracy in Black America*.

Jessica Gerschultz, Associate Professor of AAAS, was awarded a Hall Center for Humanities Research Fellowship and a sabbatical in 2021-22 for her second book project, *Fiber Art Constellations: A Critical History of Modern Tapestry*. She published an essay “SafiaFarhat’s Hybrid Creatures in Civic Spaces” on MoMA’s Contemporary and Modern Art Perspectives (C-MAP) digital platform [post|notes on art in a global context](#). In June, she gave a plenary lecture for the *Moving Biography* Summer School of the Max Weber Foundation, the American University of Beirut, and the Global (De)Centre, held at the Sursock Museum in Beirut. She also co-directed a workshop in Tunis for the CAORC/Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship Program for Modern Art History. Gerschultz is leading research on the practices of art history in the Maghrib as part of a multi-year Getty Foundation *Connecting Art Histories* grant entitled “Mapping Art Histories in the Arab World, Iran and Turkey.”



Other Noteworthy News:

Global Humanities Institute held at University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, over Summer

From August 1 to August 12, over 30 KU graduate and undergrad students, faculty and staff participated in the Global Humanities Institute, “**Chronic Conditions: Childhood and Social Suffering in Global Africa.**” This is a partnership between four universities: the University of Kansas, who admin-

ister the project, the University of Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, Senegal, the University of Dar es Salaam, and the Federal University of Bahia in Salvador, Brazil. It was supported by a \$175,000 grant from the Consortium of Humanities Centers & Institutes (CHCI) and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. CHCI and the Mellon Foundation have supported numerous Global Humanities Institutes beginning in 2017.



The overarching goal of the Institute was to discuss new ways to understand and approach the historical, cultural, spatial, and structural processes that have given rise to chronic health conditions among African and African-descended youth and children. Both senior scholars and early career researchers focused on African and Afro-diasporic communities, exploring the legacies of slavery, colonialism, and segregation, and debating topics such as racism and social inequalities.

Planning for the Global Humanities Institute started before the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019. Teams from the four universities met regularly, first to submit the grant application, and then to start planning the different phases of the project. The grant included funding for a week-long pre-Institute planning meeting that would have happened at the Federal University of Bahia in the city of Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, the city in the world with the largest Afro-descendant population outside of Africa. Due to the pandemic, this meeting was held virtually. The research teams, aided by translators in English, Portuguese, and French, determined that one of the goals would be to organize an event that has the characteristics of an academic conference, but would go beyond, including workshops, site visits, and other experiences that allow participants to have the critical and meaningful reflections on the theme that the Institute proposed. For example, there were capoeira and percussion workshops, which led to experiences and discussions about the therapeutic role of the arts for African and Afro-descendant communities. There were also visits to museums and health facilities.



The Institute brought together 90 experienced and early career scholars from the four universities and beyond. The core objectives were to provide participants not only with an opportunity

to share their work but also to create and strengthen interdisciplinary professional networks to foster future collaborations. Presentations and discussions centered around four main thematic clusters: “decolonial methodologies,” “violence, suffering and iniquities,” “medicine and health,” and “arts, culture, and heritage.”

Professor Kathryn Rhine (KASC Associate Faculty Director, AAAS, Geography) was the University of Kansas Co-PI and the lead organizer. The KU organizing committee also included Professors Glenn Adams (KASC Interim Director, Psychology), Elizabeth MacGonagle (KASC, History, AAAS), Marta Caminero-Santangelo (English, CLACS), and Antonio Luciano Tosta (CGIS Interim Director, Spanish and Portuguese). Among the other KU faculty that attended the Institute were Shawn Alexander (AAAS Chair), Kim Warren (Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, School of Social Welfare, History), and Sarah Crawford-Parker (University Honors Program Director). Graduate and undergraduate students came from departments across the university.



The 2022 Global Humanities Institute will also lead to many other opportunities of collaboration between these universities. There will be a post-Institute meeting at the University of Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, Senegal, in 2023, to evaluate the Institute and plan future avenues of collaboration. In the meantime, the teams have organized a series of events that will allow for the attendees to maintain the discussions that animated the Dar es



Salaam event. For example, some participants presented their work at the Inaugural Kansas African Studies Center Virtual Symposium on September 27. Professors Antonio Luciano Tosta, Kathryn Rhine, and Elizabeth MacGonagle led a Winter Break study abroad program on race, history,

Other Sponsored and Co-Sponsored events

AAAS sponsors and co-sponsors many educational and cultural programs throughout each academic year and many of them can be watched on our [YouTube](#) channel.

Student and Alumni News:

Jamail Luster, a member of our 2022 graduating class, presented at the Spencer Museum of Art as part of his Field Experience course (AAAS 496). He curated a group of works from the Spencer collection and led a discussion on the selected artistic works for the general public.



Niya McAdoo, a member of our 2022 graduating class, started graduate school in Educational Administration at the University of Hawaii, Mānoa.

Godson Nwachukwu, AAAS MA student, presented a paper, “Oil Exploration and Health Challenge in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria,” at the Mid-America Alliance of African Studies’ 26th Annual Meeting.

Greta Jackson, who is completing her African & African Diasporic Language Minor in AAAS, received a Fulbright-Hays to study Kiswahili in Kenya during the summer of 2022.

Michael Stigler, AAAS alum, joined KU Endowment in the College office.

Owen MacDonald, AAAS graduate alum, received a Fulbright Fellowship for dissertation research in Brazil. Owen is doing work on his project, “Caribbean Amazon: Race, Migration, Labor, and Gender on the Madeira-Mamoré, 1878-1913.” He is doing his doctoral work at the University of Illinois in the Department of History.

Allison Lewis, AAAS graduate alum and current doctoral student in KU’s Department of American Studies, presented her work on the Black Opera and institutional racism at the annual conferences of the American Studies Association and American Musicology Association.

Alyssa Cole, AAAS graduate alum, defended her dissertation in KU’s Department of History. Her dissertation was co-chaired by David Roediger (AMS/History) and Shawn Leigh Alexander (AAAS). After completion of her dissertation, Dr. Cole joined the University of Florida’s African American Studies Program as a visiting professor.

Thank you to our donors and supporters

Because of the generous support of our donors, alumni, and family, during the past two years AAAS was able to create two new endowment accounts to assist our students and faculty for years to come. In conjunction with our 50th anniversary celebration,

AAAS launched the [Spearman Family Student Research and Support Fund](#). The fund, named in recognition of the Spearman family’s long history of activism and support for the Black community of Lawrence and the University of Kansas, was created to directly support undergraduate majors, minors and graduate students in the Department.

Additionally, with the generous support of Drs. Nolan & Carole Ellison, and their family, the Department has a new endowed research fund, the [Ellison Family Endowed Research Fund for Academic Research](#), to support academic research into the Kansas African-American Experience.

The Department of African & African-American Studies gratefully thanks the Ellisons and the Spearmans, and all those who contributed to these funds. It is because of support like this that AAAS has been able to be one of the country’s leading Black Studies departments over the past 50 plus years, and will continue to create scholars, teachers, and transformative research in the field for years to come.

Support AAAS

Why support African and African-American Studies @ KU?

By giving to AAAS, you contribute to the continued development of African and African-American academic activities, outreach, lectures, seminars and research programs at KU and throughout the region. You also strengthen our international outreach.

Your donations will also aid in supporting student scholarships, faculty research, teaching awards, service awards, and overall improvement of the Department.

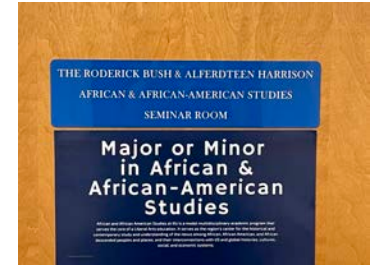
To support AAAS, please send your donation, clearly marked for the **Department of African and African-American Studies**, to the following address:

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or go [here](#) and make your donation today.

Thank you for your support.



DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN &
 AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES
 1440 Jayhawk Boulevard
 Room 9 Bailey Hall
 Lawrence, KS 66045, USA

