

AFRICANA NEWSLETTER

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

Fall 2008



Mural by Nelson Stevens

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About AAAS @ KU

We are where Africa, the Americas, Europe and the Middle East meet.

Founded in 1970, the Department of African and African-American Studies seeks to educate students to function in a multicultural environment and in a global community. In pursuing this goal, our Department contributes in vital ways to the University of Kansas' general education requirements, providing undergraduates throughout the College as well as in other schools with courses through which they can deepen their knowledge and enrich their understanding of the history, culture and experience of African people in Africa as well as the peoples of African descent in the Americas. Our undergraduate major and minor recognize the centrality of Africans to the initial establishment of these United States and the continuing significance of their descendants to the nation's social, cultural, political, economic and spiritual growth and vigor. These realities our Department teaches as integral to the American experience. Our major (BA, BGS) and minor also seek to impart a sound knowledge of Africa and its diaspora in the Americas as a necessary, specialized preparation for effective leadership and service both domestically and internationally.

Our faculty conducts research that not only enhances our teaching of Africana but also establishes KU's leadership in Africana studies locally, nationally and internationally. Ours is the only department of its kind at a public or private University in Kansas and among the Big XII institutions. We provide general service and a specialized interdisciplinary blending of research and teaching that are critically germane to understanding the universality of human intellection, emotion, and development from a pan-Africanist perspective. Though our Department is situated within the humanities in the College, our academic wings are large enough to span a multitude of fields in the humanities, the social sciences and some professional schools. Our allied Centers, the Kansas African Studies Center and the Langston Hughes Center, and the Institute of Haitian Studies help strengthen our centrality to KU's mission.

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Message from the Chair: Dr. Peter Ukpokodu

This academic year marks the tenth anniversary of our "Vision Statement" and the second year of our recent five-year strategic plan for the Department. The year is noteworthy because all the essential pieces of our vision and strategic plan are beginning to fall in place. The Kansas African Studies Center (formerly African Studies Resource Center) is now a million-dollar federal grant recipient, among other accomplishments, and is now a free-standing center directed by Garth Myers. Its counterpart, the Langston Hughes Center (formerly African-American Studies Resource Center) has been reinvigorated by its interim director, Shawn Alexander, and program funding is expected from the College. Our expectation is that the Langston Hughes Center will reach maturity in due time and secure grant funding for highlighting our focus on African-American studies and outreach in a manner similar to the focus by the Kansas African Studies Center on Africa and Africa-related outreach in the US. The MA program in African & African-American Studies is scheduled to admit its first students in Fall 09, pending the Kansas Board of Regents' approval. Two new faculty members—Shawn Alexander and Randal Jelks—have added to our rich intellectual, scholarly and pedagogical distinctions, and two more faculty are expected to join us in Fall 09. These new members join a departmental faculty body that is very productive and

has won awards in scholarship, teaching and service. Our student group, the Africana Club, has brought intellectual and social excitement to the Department, thanks to the dedication and dexterity shown by Sarah Madden (past president) and Steven Groene (current president). Briana Saunders brought favorable attention to our Department during the recent Majors Fair. We are poised on doing new things, such as the Africana Leadership Institute and introducing an annual faculty and staff award, while extending the frontiers of what we already do, such as the Marwa Africana Lecture Series and our multicultural scholars program. We need the financial support of everyone reading this newsletter to continue the work we do. Our former faculty, Chico Herbison, has shown the way to do this by donating \$10,000 to support our multicultural scholars program. No level of gift is too big or too small. Finally, I want to express deep gratitude to my colleagues, Shawn Alexander and Lisa Hall, for their work in putting this newsletter together.



Departmental News:

Randal M. Jelks -- The Department of African & African-American Studies welcomes Randal M. Jelks to its faculty. Dr.

Jelks, an Associate Professor of AAAS and American Studies earned his Ph.D from Michigan State in 1999.

Professor Jelks was born in New Orleans and lived there until he was fourteen, whereupon he resided in Chicago until college. He is a graduate of South Shore High School (Chicago), the University of Michigan (BA in History), McCormick Theological Seminary (Masters of Divinity) and Michigan State University (Ph.D. in History). He is also an ordained clergy person in the Presbyterian Church (USA). Before joining the faculty of the University of Kansas, Professor Jelks taught at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he was an Associate Professor of History and Director of the African and African Diaspora Program.

Professor Jelks was the 2008 Langston Hughes Visiting Professor and in 2006-2007 a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow at the National Humanities Center in Research Park Triangle, North Carolina.

Professor Jelks has published both scholarly and journalistic articles. His research and writing interests are in the area of African American Religious, Urban, and Civil Rights History. He recently wrote an article titled "Obama, Wright, and Trinity" for

the Social Science Research Council blog, *The Immanent Frame*. He has also published an award winning book titled *African Americans in the Furniture City: the Civil Rights Struggle in Grand Rapids, Michigan* (The University of Illinois Press, 2006). He is currently finishing a book on Martin Luther King Jr.'s mentor titled *Benjamin Elijah Mays: A Religious Rebel in the Jim Crow South: An Intellectual Biography* to be published by the University of North Carolina Press.

Other Departmental News:

AAAS MA -- In May, the MA degree in African and African-American Studies was approved by the College Committee on Graduate Studies and by the College Assembly. In September it was approved by the Executive Council of Graduate Faculty and is now on the way to the Board of Regents.

Promotions -- Elizabeth MacGonagle was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure. Professor MacGonagle teaches African history in AAAS and the History Department. She has training in Comparative Black history and interests in social and cultural history and gender studies.

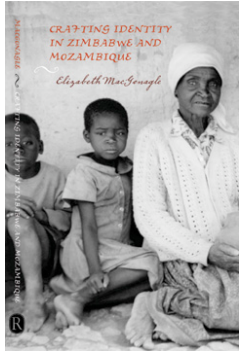
Garth A. Myers was promoted to full Professor. Professor Myers is the Director of the Kansas Africa Studies Center and teaches courses in AAAS and the Department of Geography. His research interests are in African political and cultural geography, developmental studies, and environmental geography in Africa.

Retirement -- Professor Bryant Freeman, founding Director of the Institute of Haitian Studies and professor of AAAS, retired from the University in 2007.



Faculty News: Book Publications:

Elizabeth MacGonagle, Associate Professor of AAAS and History, published *Crafting Identity in Zimbabwe and Mozambique* (Rochester University Press, 2007).



With this first comprehensive history of the Ndaus of eastern Zimbabwe and central Mozambique, Professor MacGonagle moves beyond national borders to show how cultural identities are woven from historical memories that predate the arrival of missionaries and colonial officials on the African continent. Drawing on archival records and oral histories from throughout the Ndaus region, her study analyzes the complex relationships between social identity and political power from 1500 to 1900.

Ndauness has been created and recreated within communities through marriages and social structures, cultural practices that mark the body, and rituals that help to sustain shared beliefs. A sense of being Ndaus continues to exist into the present, despite different colonial histories, postcolonial trajectories, and official languages in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Dr. MacGonagle's study of ethnic identities among the marginalized Ndaus sheds light on the conflicts and divisions that haunt southeast Africa today. This compelling interpretation of the crafting of identity in one corner of Africa has relevance for readers interested in identity formation and ethnic conflict around the world.

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Shawn Leigh Alexander, Assistant Professor of AAAS, published an anthology of African American journalist and political activist T. Thomas Fortune's writings, *T. Thomas Fortune: The Afro-American Agitator. A Collection of Writings, 1880-1928* (University Press of Florida, 2008).

Born into slavery, T. Thomas Fortune was known as the dean of African American journalism by the time of his death in the early twentieth century. The editorship of three prominent black newspapers--the *New York Globe*, *New York Freeman*, and *New York Age*--provided Fortune with a platform to speak against racism and injustice.

For nearly five decades his was one of the most powerful voices in the press. Contemporaries such as Ida B. Wells, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Booker T. Washington considered him an equal, if not a superior, in social and political thought. Today's histories often pass over his writings, in part be-



cause they are so voluminous and have rarely been reprinted. Dr. Alexander's anthology will go a long way toward rectifying that situation, demonstrating the breadth of Fortune's contribution to black political thought at a key period in American history.

Other Faculty News:

Beverly B. Mack, Professor of AAAS, spent the month of July in Fes, Morocco, working with women scholars in the region.

Naima Omar, Associate Professor of AAAS, was granted a sabbatical leave for Fall 2008. Among other things, Professor Omar will be working on her new project tentatively entitled, *Two Presidents, Two Voices, One People*, for which she recently conducted some archival research in Tunisia.

Majid Hannoum, Assistant Professor of AAAS and Anthropology, published "The Historiographic State: How Algeria Once Became French" in *History and Anthropology* (June 2008) and "What is an Order of Time?" in *History and Theory* (forthcoming October 2008). Professor Hannoum also spent the summer in Tangiers conducting fieldwork on African clandestine immigration to Europe.

Elizabeth MacGonagle, Associate Professor of AAAS and History, published "Living with a Tyrant: Ndaus Memories and Identities in the Shadow of Ngungunyana," in *International Journal of African Historical Studies*. Professor MacGonagle was also granted a sabbatical leave for Fall 2008. Among other things she will work on a book project about Ghana, South Africa, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe titled *Beyond Remembrance: History and Heritage at African Sites of Memory*.

Randal M. Jelks, Associate Professor of AAAS and American Studies, was selected to be a Fulbright Specialist. Professor Jelks is planning workshops for graduate students and other professors entitled "African American History and Culture in the American Experience."

Shawn Leigh Alexander, Assistant Professor of AAAS, received the 2008 Frederick C. Luebke Award for outstanding regional scholarship from the *Great Plains Quarterly* for his essay, "Vengeance Without Justice, Injustice Without Retribution: The Afro-American Council's Struggle Against Racial Violence."

Other Noteworthy News:

Africana Leadership Institute

The Center for Black Leadership (CBL) is inviting applications for admission to the 2009 Africana Leadership Institute (ALI) at the University of Kansas from May 18-29, 2009.

The ALI is a two-week workshop designed in the form of a roundtable where current and aspiring leaders in the public and private sectors

and in various fields are brought together to discuss and learn matters related to Africana leadership, especially in African countries north and south of the Sahara, and the Caribbean. The workshop explores leadership and discusses governance from multiple perspectives—educational, civil, legislative, judicial, economic, environmental, health, religious, and municipal—especially as they adapt to a multicultural and global world. Matters related to ethics, social justice, accountability, transparency, and good governance in these various spheres will be addressed.

The Institute is open to legislators, public service personnel, department heads in private and public sectors, educational leaders (deans, department heads, registrars, deputy registrars, school principals), city leaders, local government council chairmen and chairwomen, state attorneys and judges, religious leaders, business leaders, law enforcement agents, officials of customs and immigration, health care providers at the senior management level, state commissioners, board leaders, and leaders of political parties at the local government and state levels.

Participants will visit the Kansas State Legislative Assembly and observe legislators at work if they are in session, visit the Governor's mansion in Topeka, the Kansas City Mayor, the Dole Institute of Politics, the Museum of Natural History, the Boeing Aircraft Corporation of Wichita, Pendleton Farms of Lawrence, the Lawrence Memorial Hospital, and the Kansas State University School of Agriculture. The Institute thus matches discussion with practical observation.

John S. and Yoshino Harmon Scholarships

Former AAAS Professor and KU American Studies Ph.D., Chico Herbison, along with his sister Tonya Farmer, have established two endowed scholarships, in the memory of their parents, to benefit multicultural scholars majoring in AAAS and American Studies at KU.



Professor Herbison earned all four of his degrees at KU and taught in the AAAS Department from 1998-2007. He is currently teaching at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington.

2008 Marwa Africana Lecture

On April 14, 2008, Professor Martin Bernal, Professor Emeritus in Near Eastern Studies and Government at Cornell University, presented the third Marwa Africana Lecture. His lecture was entitled "Black Athena and the Reaction to It." The lecture particularly addressed the

research, publication, and reaction to the first volume of his *Black Athena* series.

The Marwa Africana Lecture Series (MALS): Established in 2003 through a generous donation by Dr. Mohamed Buba Marwa, a Nigerian businessman, politician, and philanthropist, MALS brings in a speaker annually to address matters related to Africa and/or the African Diaspora.

Previous speakers in the Marwa Africana Lecture Series have been: Molefi K. Asante, (2005) and Ali Mazrui, (2004).

A Slave No More

On April 24, 2008 AAAS and the Dole Institute of Politics sponsored a lecture by David W. Blight, Professor of American History and director of the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition at Yale University. His lecture was entitled "A Slave No More: Two Recently Discovered Narratives and the Story of Emancipation." The lecture was based on his most recent book, *A Slave No More: Two Men Who Escaped to Freedom, Including their Narratives of Emancipation*.

Notes:

Bill Tuttle, Professor of American Studies, and friend and ally of AAAS, retired from the University in 2008. Professor Tuttle is the author of, among other works, the influential *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919*.

Fatou Diop, Chair of the Sociology Department at Gaston Berger University at Saint Louis, Senegal, was at KU as a visiting Professor in AAAS and Women's Studies during the Fall of 2007. She taught a course entitled, "Gender and Development: Challenges for African American Women."

African Americans and the Classics -- In February 2008, AAAS in cooperation with the Department of Classics sponsored two lectures by Eugene O'Connor (Managing Editor, The Ohio State University Press) & Kenneth Goings (Professor and Chair, African American and African Studies, The Ohio State University). Their lectures were entitled: "Creating a 'Culture of Dissemblance': African American Resistance to the Suppression of the Classics at Historically Black Colleges" and "Teaching the 'Forbidden Subject': The Role of the Classics in African American Uplift and Resistance."

Student News:

AAAS 2008 Graduates -- In 2008 AAAS had its largest graduating class. The Department graduated 19 majors and 7 minors.

Derrais A. Carter, a graduating senior and double major in AAAS and Sociology, will begin graduate studies in the American Studies Department at the University of Iowa in the Fall.

Arabic Summer Institute -- Dr. Elyes Salem led AAAS and KU students to the Arabic Summer Institute at Al-Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco, in June 2008. Apart from studying Arabic intensively, the students visited interesting sites in Casablanca, Marakesh, Meknes, and Fes.

Christopher De La Cruz, a graduating senior and AAAS major, spent the Spring 2008 semester studying abroad at the University of Cape Town in South Africa.

Africana Club

The Africana Club is a social and intellectual gathering of AAAS majors and minors, and of students interested in Africa, African-America, and the African Diaspora in general. It is also affiliated with the Global Awareness Program (GAP). As an active member of the Africana Club, a student could receive 5 points per semester and an additional 5 points for each event that the student participates in. Officials of the club represent students in departmental matters.

At this time the plan is to meet the first and third Tues. of each month. For meeting dates please contact Steven Groene.

For more information please contact Steven Groene at biolit21@ku.edu, or the club at africana@ku.edu

AAAS would like to hear from its students and alumni!

Please send us news about yourself to:

afs@ku.edu

News from our Allied Centers

Kansas African Studies Center (KASC)
Garth Myers, Director and Professor of AAAS and Geography.

Spring 2008 was a very busy term for KASC. We hosted the symposium on "Literary Studies and Environmental Studies in Africa," four seminar talks on "Culture and Events in North Africa," three Ujamaa Brownbag lunch talks, and a forum to honor the late Babacar Ndiaye. The FLAS competition was the most competitive process in KASC history. We ran a second competitive student grant process, with support from the Oswald Foundation for Applied Health and Development research. I had the unique opportunity to get to know many of our exceptional graduate students in the inaugural graduate seminar in African Studies in Spring, as part of the new Graduate Certificate program. KASC's 2008 Summer Institute, on the theme of "An African Renaissance?," drew a wide variety of teachers, students, graduate students, faculty, and friends of the Center over the two weeks of its run. My own Summer trip to Tanzania followed the Institute, and the trip was largely shaped around building formal linkages with Tanzanian universities. I think we have finally turned a corner in the journey toward a greater University of Kansas presence in Africa.

For more information about KASC including programming and scheduling go to <http://www.kasc.ku.edu/>

Langston Hughes Center (LHC)

Shawn Leigh Alexander, Interim Director and Assistant Professor of AAAS.

The Langston Hughes Center (LHC), formerly the Langston Hughes Resource Center, is relaunching its activities at the University of Kansas and throughout the region. The Center is currently working with African Americanists and scholars generally interested in the study of race and culture in American society at KU to outline the activities of the LHC. Central to those activities will be the LHC's commitment to becoming a strong academic research and educational center built upon the legacy and creative and intellectual insight of African American author, poet, playwright, folklorist and social critic, Langston Hughes.

To begin this activity, during the 2008 Fall semester, the LHC will hold a series of brownbag lectures, the Jesse B. Semple Brownbag lectures, as well as co-sponsor a seminar series on African Americans and Africa with KASC.

For more information about the LHC including programming and scheduling go to <http://www2.ku.edu/~lhcaas/>

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.

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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Thank you for your support.



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