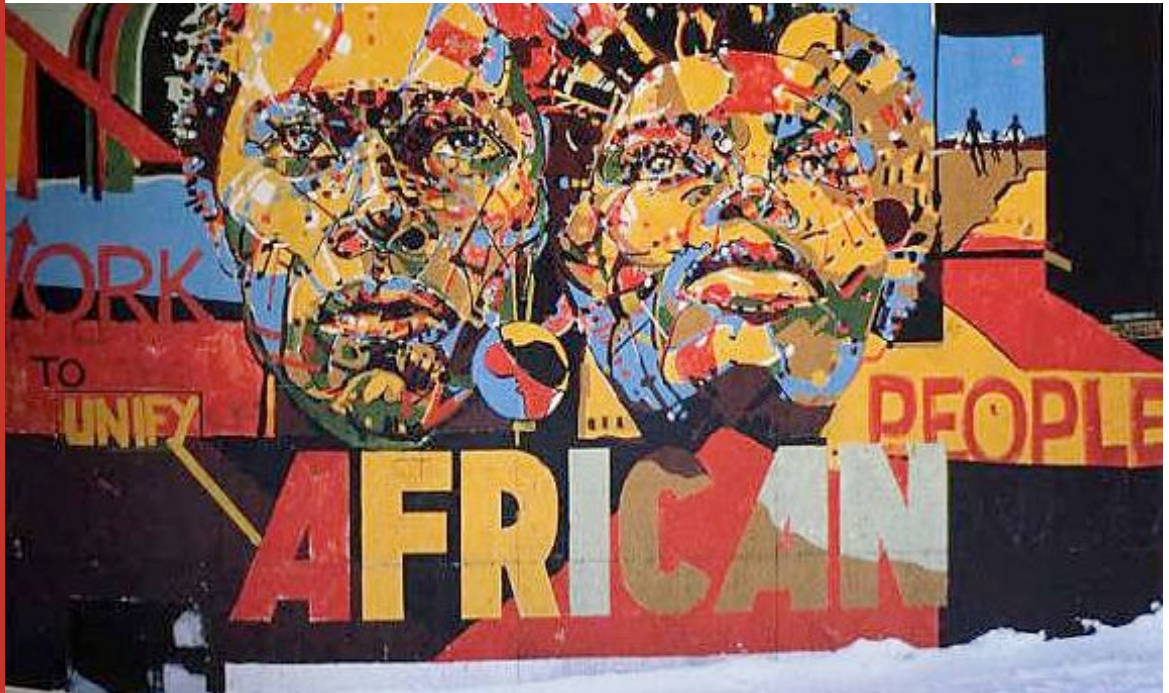


# AFRICANA NEWSLETTER

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

Spring 2009



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

It has been a great semester, judging by what the Department accomplished. Dr. Shawn Alexander organized a symposium to mark the centennial anniversary of the NAACP, making KU one of the few academic institutions to do so. Dr. Randal Jelks organized a conference of the Southern Intellectual History Circle, and the Department held its first Africana Leadership Institute. The MA program received the Kansas Board of Regents' approval, a new concentration in Arabic and Islamic Studies was approved by the College, and Amharic was introduced as a new language offered in the Department, thanks to Federal Title VI grant funding from KASC. The visit of our former colleague, Dr. Chico Herbison, was very invigorating. Our students stand to gain from his endowed scholarship for our multicultural program. Our faculty, staff, students, and our allied centers have been very productive. We have not been able to meet all that we set out to do. We still are to have a permanent director for the Langston

Hughes Center, and a KiSwahili faculty position remains unfilled. We have been hit hard by budget cuts. In this period of economic distress and budget reductions, the generosity of our donors has been uplifting. It is to these donors and friends and alumni that I give hearty thanks as we come to the end of the academic year. Their continuous generosity and goodwill have stimulated our productivity and helped our students. We congratulate our students who graduated this semester, and we wish them good luck out there in the world. Do I need to remind them that they will always be members of our extended family? My special thanks to Dr. Alexander, the editor of this newsletter.



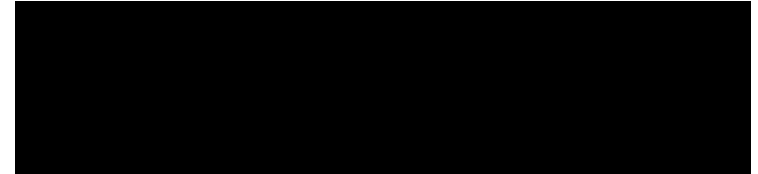
## Departmental News:

**NEW MA PROGRAM IN AAAS** -- On January 15, 2009, the Kansas Board of Regents approved the establishment of a Masters of Arts degree program in African & African-American Studies at the University of Kansas. The Program will begin in the Fall of 2009.

The African and African-American Studies M. A. program is designed to take two years of full-time study. A total of nine upper-division and graduate courses, in addition to a thesis or additional course work for a non-thesis option, are required for the degree -- 33 credit hours. There are four core courses, Introduction to Africana Studies I: African-American; Introduction to Africana Studies II: African; Research Methods in Africana Studies; and Seminar in Africana Studies. The students are then expected to choose five courses, fifteen credit hours, within their area of specialization. Students are able to take six credit hours outside of the Department

in related course offerings including, among others: American Studies, Anthropology, Art, Communications, Economics, Education, English, Geography, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Religion, Sociology, Theater & Film and Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies.

**NEW MAJOR CONCENTRATION IN AAAS** -- A new AAAS concentration in Arabic and Islamic Studies will be offered beginning in the Fall of 2009. It is offered as a B.A. or B.G.S. major in Arabic and Islamic Studies. This new major concentration will offer students grounding in Arab culture and Islamic Studies, especially in relation to African and diaspora cultures that have



integrated Arab/Islamic cultural features over the past millenium in world history. It will provide a forum in which KU students of Arabic language and related (i.e Arabic language and Arab/Islamic culture-influenced) languages like Hausa, KiSwahili, and Wolof, all four of which are offered through the AAAS Department, can deepen the context for their studies. The creation of the concentration derives from consistent student requests over the past five years. No other unit in the college provides the combination of courses required for this major. Over the years our Department has consistently taught courses in this area which makes this major a feasible and a beneficial addition to our offerings.



## Faculty News:

**Beverly B. Mack**, Professor of AAAS, spoke as part of the Scholar's Forum for the KC Rep production of *Arabian Nights*, 14 Feb., 2009. She presented a paper "American 'Yan Taru', A 19th Century Model for the 21st Century Muslimahs: How Historical Women's Roles are Shaping Modern Islam" for the KU Hall Center Gender Seminar series (30 Jan, 2009). She also presented a paper at the Gender and Power in the Muslim World conference (6-7 March, 2009) at the Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, NY. She attended the Arab-American Women Conference held in Manhattan KS, March 13-15, presented a paper April 17, 2009 at UNC (Chapel Hill) for the "Gender, Islam, and Health in Africa" conference there, and attended the International Sufi Culture Conference in Fez, Morocco, April 18-24, 2009. Additionally, as a board member of the Kansas Humanities Council, she attended a board meeting in Topeka on April 2, 2009.

**Elizabeth MacGonagle**, Associate Professor of AAAS and History, presented a paper on "Contesting the Past in the Present: Identities in Ghana and the Diaspora 200 Years after the Abolition of the Slave Trade" at the African Studies Association of the United Kingdom annual meeting in September, 2008. (The paper is part of a collaborative project on slavery and the Diaspora with Kim Warren in the KU History Dept.) Aside from attending the ASA-UK and ASA (US) meetings, this fall she devoted her sabbatical to a book project on history and heritage at several African sites of memory.

**Dorothy Pennington**, Associate Professor of AAAS and Communications, received a top paper award at the annual National Communication Association Convention for her paper titled, "The Rhetorical Condition as Mediator in the Response of African Americans to Perceptions of Terrorism: Condoleeza Rice as Symbol." Professor Pennington also recently became an invited member of the Editorial Board of the journal *Forum on Public Policy*, which is an academic journal of the Oxford University Scholars' Roundtable.



**Garth Myers**, Professor of Geography and AAAS and Director of KASC, presented papers at the annual meetings of the Institute of British Geographers and Mid-America Alliance for African Studies in Fall 2008, and at the annual meeting in Spring 2009 for the Association of American Geographers. Garth also visited South Africa the first part of January to meet with colleagues at the University of Cape Town and our partners for the Summer Study Abroad program at Rhodes University. He hopes to be taking students to Grahamstown in June. He

earned a Humanities Research Fellowship from the Hall Center for the Humanities for Fall 2009 and will be on sabbatical in Spring 2010.

**Shawn Leigh Alexander**, Assistant Professor of AAAS, presented papers at the annual meetings of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History and the American Historical Association, entitled "A Negro Nation within a Nation": The W. E. B. Du Bois Controversy of 1934-35" and "Bartow Black and the Heritage of Reconstruction." Professor Alexander also organized KASC's Fall 2008 seminar series, "Come to Africa and It's Here: African Americans and Africa," for which he presented an essay entitled, "'An Army of Christ': T. McCants Stewart and his quest to create a 'Negro Nationality.'" In addition, Professor Alexander organized the Langston Hughes Center's symposium in February 2009, *Fight for Freedom: A Century of the NAACP and the Struggle for Racial Equality*, and is completing his manuscript, *We Know Our Rights and Have the Courage to Defend Them: African American Civil Rights Organizations in the Age of Accommodation, 1883-1909*, for the University of Pennsylvania Press.

**Majid Hannoum**, Assistant Professor of AAAS and Anthropology, has a book, entitled *Violent Modernity: France in Algeria*, accepted for publication by Harvard University Press. Professor Hannoum also has an article, "Notes on the (Post)Colonial in the Maghreb" accepted for publication by *Critique of Anthropology*. In addition, Professor Hannoum made two presentations entitled: "Islam in North Africa" at the Missouri Community College Association, Jefferson City, Mo., August 23, 2008, and "Colonial Politics of Naming: The Maghreb, for Example" at the African Studies Association, Chicago, November 14, 2008.



**Randal M. Jelks**, Associate Professor of AAAS and American Studies, made four presentations: "The Schoolmaster of the *Movement*: Benjamin Mays, Black Religion and The Black Freedom Struggle," at Yale University, February 3, 2009; "Benjamin Elijah Mays Schoolmaster of *The Movement*: Liberal Arts Education, Vocation, and the Call of Democratic Social Engagement," at Swarthmore College, February 5, 2009; "The History of Black Protestant Churches," "Grand Valley State University; and "Black History Month After Obama: Is America Really Post-Racial?" at Grand Rapids Commu-

nity College, February 18, 2009. Professor Jelks also published two scholarly reviews for the *American Studies Journal*, *Hollywood Be Thy Name: African American Religion in American Film, 1929-1949* by Judith Weisenfeld and *The Early Black History Movement, Carter G. Woodson, and Lorenzo Johnston Greene* by Pero Gaglo Dagbovie. In addition, Professor Jelks organized and hosted the Southern Intellectual History Circle, February 25-28, at KU.

**Naima Omar**, Associate Professor of AAAS, was on sabbatical leave for Fall 2008. Among other things, Professor Omar worked on her new project tentatively entitled, *Two Presidents, Two Voices, One People*, for which she conducted some archival research in Tunisia. In April, Professor Omar attended the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages conference. In addition, this summer Professor Omar will take a group of KU students to the Arabic Summer Institute at Al-Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco.

**Gitti Salami**, Assistant Professor of AAAS and Art History, gave presentations at conferences of the African Studies Association and the College Art Association. She published “Umor Revisited: A Diachronic Study of Sacrosanct Principles embedded in the Yakurr Leboku Festival” in *African Arts*. 41:3 (Autumn 2008): 54-73 and “Towards ‘Radical Contemporaneity’ in African Art History: The ‘Glocal’ Facet of a Kinship-based Artistic Genre” in *Critical Interventions: Journal of African Art History and Visual Culture* 3/4 (Spring 2009): 26-47. A third article, “Saa, Saa: The Instrumentality of Indigenous Yakurr Culture to Nation Building in Nigeria” is about to be submitted to *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*. A contribution to the New Orleans Museum of Art’s new catalog, *Ancestors of Congo Square: Selections from the African Art Collection at the New Orleans Museum of Art*, ed. William Fagaly, has been accepted. A chapter for *African Terra Cottas: A Millenary Heritage in the Barbier-Mueller Museum Collections*, ed. Floriane Morin and Boris Wastiou, came out in January. Professor Salami also reviewed *Traditional Institutions in Kembong (Cameroon), Baessler-Archiv, Beiträge zur Ethnologie*, by Hans-Joachim Koloss for *African Arts*. She is preparing a prospectus for Blackwell Publishing’s Companion Series for an edited volume on *Contemporary African Art*. Further, Professor Salami has received a Smithsonian Postdoctoral Fellowship at the National Museum of African Art and the National Museum of Natural History, where she will take up residence from January to August 2010, to work on a monograph on Yakurr culture (Nigeria).

## Other Noteworthy News:

### Africana Leadership Institute

The Center for Black Leadership (CBL) held the 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.

## Notes:

**Hiwot Zegeye**, AAAS Amharic lecturer, organized Vision of the World: Ethiopian Connection Day, April 11, 2009. Amharic is a new offering in AAAS. The department now has courses in Amharic, Arabic, Haitian Creole, Hausa, KiSwahili, and Wolof.

**Ashford Njogu**, AAAS KiSwahili lecturer, successfully completed the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Tester Training and has been contracted by ACTFL as an Outside Reviewer for KiSwahili translation.

## Student News:

**Andrew Pilsner**, a graduating senior presented paper at the “Future of an Illusion, Future of the Past,” at Monmouth University. He will also present a paper, “Arboreal Dialogics: An Ecocritical Exploration of Octavia Butler’s *Dawn*” at the HERA conference. This essay has also been accepted for publication in *African Identities*.

**Derrais A. Carter**, an alum of the program and currently a graduate student in American Studies at the University of Iowa, has been accepted to the National Council of Black Studies’ Summer Institute. He is also co-editing a collection of essays on representations of Barack Obama in popular culture for McFarland Publishers.

## 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](mailto:biolit21@ku.edu), or the club at [africana@ku.edu](mailto:africana@ku.edu)

**AAAS would like to hear from its students and alumni!**

**Please send us news about yourself to:**

[afs@ku.edu](mailto:afs@ku.edu)

## News from our Allied Centers

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

In this, the Spring of Change, Hope, and Progress, we at KASC have been busy, like so many Africanists across the world, playing 'Six-Degrees-of-Separation-from-Barack-Obama' (I have three routes to him, with two or three degrees of separation, if anyone is really playing).



But we have also had a lot of more tangible investment of time into other transnational and diasporic connectivities, thanks to our Fall seminar series, "Come To Africa and It is Here:

African-Americans and Africa," led by Shawn Alexander, and our November Workshop on African Diasporas and Development. We submitted a huge pre-proposal to NSF for a major grant built from the themes of the seminar and workshop. We are working with the other two NRCs (CREES and

CEAS), the Center for Latin American Studies, and our CIBER on a "revolutionary" semester this Spring. We have a record number of research grant proposals pending for our grad students' fieldwork in Africa at present, and more Africa-related graduate student qualifying exams than ever.

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, relaunched its activities at the University of Kansas and throughout the region in 2008-2009. In its first year as a revived center, the LHC co-sponsored a seminar series with KASC, "Come to Africa and It's Here: African Americans and Africa," held a nationally recognized symposium in February 2009, *Fight for Freedom: A Century of the NAACP and the Struggle for Racial Equality* and sponsored eight brownbag presentations throughout the year.

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 future 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.

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



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[afs@ku.edu](mailto:afs@ku.edu)

# 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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**Thank you for your support.**



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