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UJIMA

Newsletter of the African American Studies Program



AAS Staff Team for 2013-2014

Director:

James L. Conyers Jr., Ph.D.

University Professor of African American Studies

Assistant Director:

Malachi D. Crawford, Ph.D.

Program Manager:

LaShonda R. Williams

Office Coordinator:

Mary Sias

Secretary II:

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AAS Student Support Staff for 2013-2014

Graduate Assistant:

Gwendolyn Alfred**LaQuasha Burke****Anuja Deshpande**

Work Study:

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UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

COLLEGE of LIBERAL ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

African American Studies

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

As we venture on the 45th anniversary of the African American Studies Program at the University of Houston, reflection can be explained in three ways: 1. Historical; 2. Narrative and 3. Uplift and advancement for the future. Inside the framework of a tier one university, the AAS unit at the University of Houston is one of the oldest AAS programs in the State of Texas. Even more important, the unit has national visibility with receiving the Sankore Institutional Achievement Award from the National Council of Black Studies in 2008. This award marked the highest distinction for an AAS program to receive with regard to teaching, research and service. Indeed, the city of Houston has a vibrant and ongoing history of African American life and culture.



Still, the historical ledger draws emphasis on the role of civil rights, development of Africana institutions and forward movement of progress in H-Town. With regard to this narrative, AAS has played a pivotal role in the history of the university. With the appointment of Dr. Marguerite Ross Barnett in 1990 as president of the university, UH mapped itself as the first university below the Mason Dixon line to hire an African American female as their chief executive officer at a predominantly white or minority serving institution of higher education. Equally important, as a trained political scientist, Dr. Ross Barnett provided leadership, tenacity and a spirit of common sense to advance the university during her tenure period.

Lastly, with reference to uplift and advancement, AAS at this moment in the historical narrative of the university, has postured, to advance the movement of an academic major and to participate in the university's strategic plan to assertively diversify and recruit faculty. Keeping in the tradition of academic excellence and social responsibility, AAS continues to support the aims and objectives of the university and supports the campus community in providing a holistic education for UH students.

Agoo-Amen,

James L. Conyers, Ph.D.

African American Studies, Director

Center for the Study of African American Culture, Director

University Professor of African American Studies

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES ALUMNI ANNOUNCEMENTS

Graduate School Announcements

Two AAS Alumnae were recently accepted into the MA program in Pan African Studies at the University of Louisville with full funding:

Megan E. Pavageau ('11)

Schetauna D. Powell ('11)

Two AAS Alumnae recently received the MFA from prestigious arts schools in New York.

Angela N. Bankhead ('07) — Parsons, The New School for Design

Ryan N. Dennis ('07) — Pratt Institute. Dennis currently serves as the Public Art Director at Project Row Houses.

Law School Announcements

Three AAS alumni were awarded the J.D. upon their recent graduation from law school.

Byron Alfred ('06) — South Texas College of Law

Sha-Kara E. Jackson ('07) — Howard University School of Law

Eronn A. Putman ('08) — Louisiana State University Law Center. Putman currently works as an adjunct professor in African American Studies at UH, where she teaches AAS 3348: *African Americans and the Law*.

Additional Announcements

Jesanda Ellis ('12) currently serves as a financial analyst at Johnson & Johnson Services, Inc. In 2011, Ellis worked at Johnson & Johnson Services, Inc., as the Janssen Supply Group 2011 Summer Finance Intern.

Oliver Rollins ('05) received the MA in Pan African Studies from the University of Louisville. He is currently a doctoral candidate in sociology at the University of California-San Francisco's School of Nursing.

Benjamin J. Woods ('06) received the MA in Africana Studies from Cornell University. He is currently pursuing the Ph.D. in political science at Howard University.

Mica F. Murray ('13) was recently accepted into the Texas Chiropractic College's Doctor of Chiropractic Program.





Diary of a Study Abroad in Africa

By Varshabhanavi Williams

My study abroad trip to Ghana was an experience of a lifetime and certainly a place I must come back to. Mentally preparing for the trip did not take much; if anything it was hard to contain my enthusiasm. For me, travelling to Ghana meant stepping foot into a nation that many Black scholars like W.E.B. Du Bois, Malcolm X and Audre Lorde had journeyed to; however, from my past travels I have learned to arrive in a new place without any preconceived notions, and Ghana was not going to be an exception to that rule. In order to really appreciate everything this nation has to offer, it was important for me to arrive with a clear mind and — looking back on my experiences — I am glad that I made that conscious effort.

The first thing that awed me about Ghana was the scenery and vegetation: tropical fruits, plants, mountains and gigantic trees. Historical sites were the second thing that caught my attention. In the capital, Accra, our group visited Black Star Square, W.E.B. Du Bois' former house (now museum), and Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park. Pan African themes reverberated throughout each site; it was truly a great learning experience.

We visited several museums, which I found to be very interesting given their collection of artifacts and consistent emphasis on times and events always dated after the arrival of Europeans in the area. As informative as these museums were (especially when discovering parallels with Black American culture), as a history major, I have noticed limited information about the history of sub-Saharan Africa prior to European exploration and colonization of the region. Still, the historical preservation of the colonial past is very important, and for me the most significant part of the trip was actually visiting the slave dungeons in Elmina and Cape Coast. This part of our history is so raw, yet important; it is one thing to read about the Atlantic Slave Trade, but quite another to experience it. In both dungeons, similar memorials are in place that read:

“In everlasting memory of the anguish of our ancestors. May those who died rest in peace. May those who return find their roots. May humanity never perpetrate such injustice against humanity. We the living vow to uphold this.”

This message, as important as it may be to have at each location, leaves a bitter taste in the mouth since similar atrocities continue all over the world today.

What is really motivating me to return to Ghana is the Ghanaian people themselves. The environment was quite welcoming, and the people were very accommodating. The concept of family in Ghana goes beyond the American definition; it extends to everyone who will take the invitation. Words like sister and brother are common to hear. The act of giving (I had to adjust to this) is second nature for many of them. When we met our host families, the first thing our host mother did was tie a traditional beaded bracelet around the wrists of my roommate and me. Our host mother explained that it is customary to give something to the people you meet, and for their family it was that specific bracelet. In general, we met many people on our trip that were very helpful, giving and kind.

Upon returning to the States, many of my friends and family were surprised to find that I did not want to come home yet. It was hard to explain that even though I was thousands of miles away from Houston, I still felt culturally at home. In Ghana, I was not homesick but eager to bring my family, what I consider home, to Ghana so they can reflect and experience this culture that was so close to ours.

-Varshabhanavi Williams is a graduate of the African American Studies program. She is currently pursuing the Master of Arts in International Relations at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University.

Amy DuBois Barnett Pays Tribute to Her Mother, UH's Eighth President, at AAS Gala

By Francine Parker



Amy DuBois Barnett has lived what some people would say is the American dream. She studied fashion in New York City and literature in Dublin, received a master's degree in creative writing, authored a book and became the first African-American woman to lead a major mainstream consumer magazine as editor-in-chief of Teen People. And, those are just a few of her accomplishments.

Her success and independence, she said, is the “final gift” from her mother, the late Marguerite Ross Barnett, the first woman and first African-American to serve as president of the University of Houston.

“It took losing her for me to figure out what her real lessons in life were for me,” Amy said.

Amy, Barnett's only child, shared those lessons at the African American Studies (AAS) Program's 45th anniversary celebration and annual scholarship banquet. The event paid tribute to Barnett, who became the first African-American woman to lead a major research university in the United States when she was appointed UH's eighth president in 1990.

During her brief tenure at UH, Barnett was successful in increasing the University's community outreach and service. Under her leadership, the university received a \$51.4 million gift from John and Rebecca Moores. The gift was the largest single donation ever given to a public university in one year. Her presidency came to a tragic end less than two years after her appointment. On Feb. 26, 1992, Barnett died from a blood disorder involving hypoglycemia and metastatic cancer at the age of 49. At that time, Amy was 22 years old, a recent graduate of Brown University and working in finance at a job that she admittedly disliked in New York City.

Barnett's death devastated Amy, who battled depression for nearly a year until she saw a photo of her and her mother taken in India when she was a child. It was a “revelatory moment” that would redefine her life.

“I realized she was not coming. She was not coming to save me. No one



2014 AAS Student Graduates and Scholarship Awardees



Amy DuBois Barnett and Vicki Pink



Robin Marks, Eronn Putman (Esq.),
Shelia Sims



(L-R) State Rep. Sylvester Turner
(D-Houston), Judge Hillary Green,
Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX)



(L-R) State Rep. Sylvester Turner (D-Houston), Judge
Hillary Green, Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX)
Bottom Row (L-R): Dr. Clara L. Meek and
Vernon Landers



Dr. James L. Conyers, Jr., Mr. John Guess, Jr.,
and Dr. Malachi D. Crawford



Alumni Honoree
Cheryl D. Creuzot, CFP®, J.D., LL.M., MBA



(L-R) Dr. Willie Trotty, Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), Catherine Roberts, Dr. Scott Roberts, Ben Davis,
Ramona Davis, Dr. Sarah Trotty



(L-R) Leonard Coleman and Wayne Luckett



Amy DuBois Barnett



(L-R) Amy DuBois Barnett and Janelle Brown



State Rep. Sylvester Turner (D-Houston)



(L-R) Irene Ray and Mary Sias



Byron Alfred, J.D.

was coming—not my friends, not my family, not my boyfriend,” Amy said. “I truly understood for the first time in my life no matter how much somebody loves you, they can’t crawl into your skin and live your life for you ... They can’t make you happy.”

It was a “terrifying yet empowering” revelation that motivated her, and using her mother as a role model, Amy wasted no time creating the life she wanted. She quit her job, and over the next two decades, she pursued a career in fashion, literature and journalism. After stints as *Essence* magazine’s lifestyle editor and as editor-in-chief at *Honey* magazine, Barnett was named the managing editor of *Teen People*. She also served as the deputy editor-in-chief of *Harper’s Bazaar* and recently was the editor of *Ebony*, the oldest and largest magazine targeted to African-Americans.

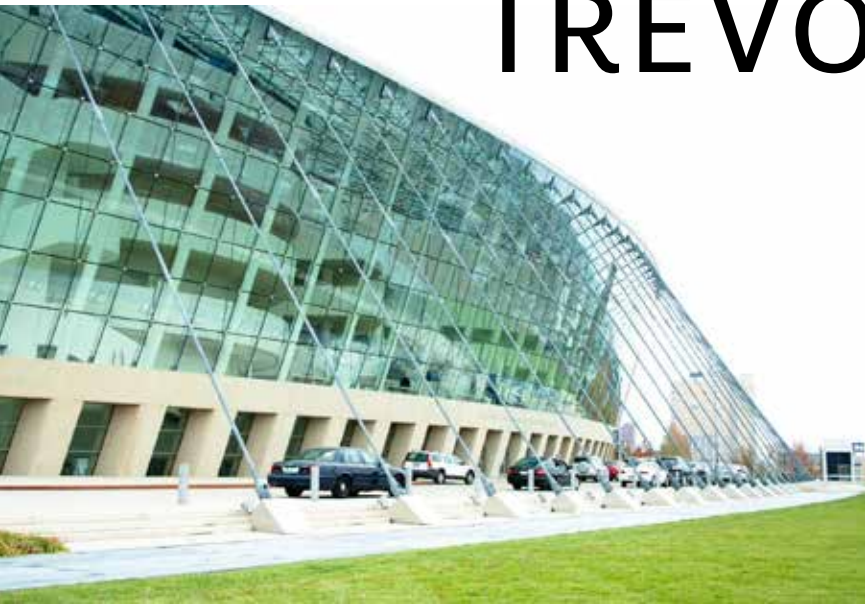
Now, Amy has begun a new chapter in her life: teaching as an adjunct professor of management and organizations at Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management. Her mother, Amy noted, not only inspired her but also prepared her for success.

“By example, she showed me true competency, how to discover who I really am and how to be who I am, how to achieve at a high level and how to live my own life and be happy,” Amy said. “That was her gift to me, and she also showed me how much impact one person can have on another person’s life... I live to have a positive impact on people’s lives in some kind of way.”

In addition to Amy’s speech, the program also highlighted the remarkable achievements of eight alumni and community leaders. More than 20 students were also honored.

CULTURAL AESTHETICS

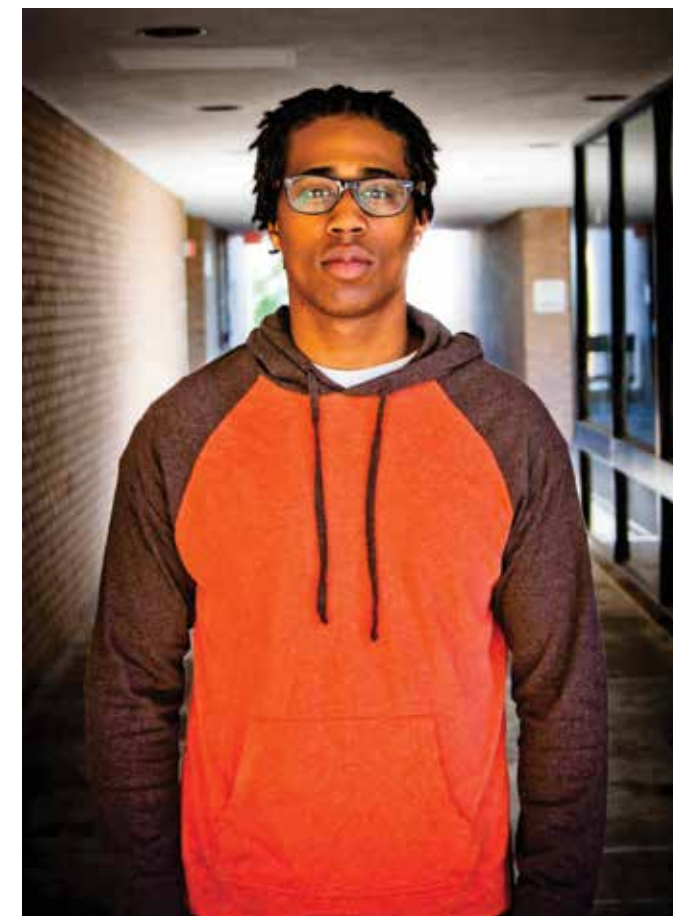
TRÉVOY R. KELLY



TréVoy Kelly is a native to Houston, TX and is currently a senior at the University of Houston, where he is pursuing a bachelors in art and a minor in African American Studies. He is an inspiring artist, teacher, mentor and philanthropist. His goal is to, one day, use his gift to convey an impactful message to the world in relation to African American culture, politics and spirituality. Also, he desires to assist other young artists on their road to success by providing a community where they can be creative and have the liberty to express themselves in an artistic light. His desire is to convince the world that art is an important aspect in our daily life.



Life in Action

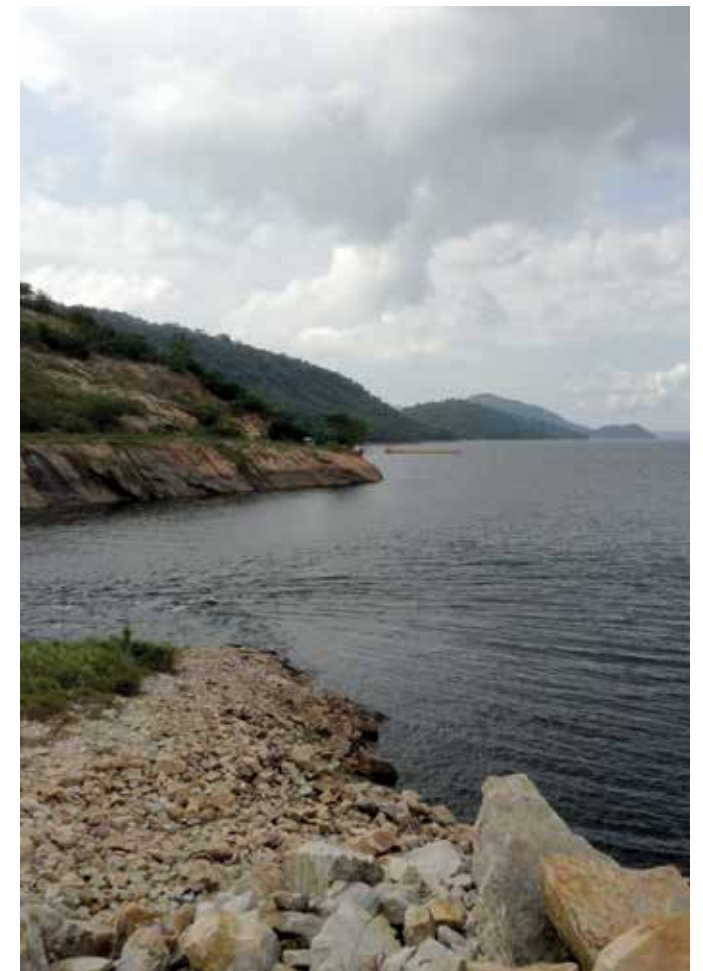


Persona of Life

MUNTU

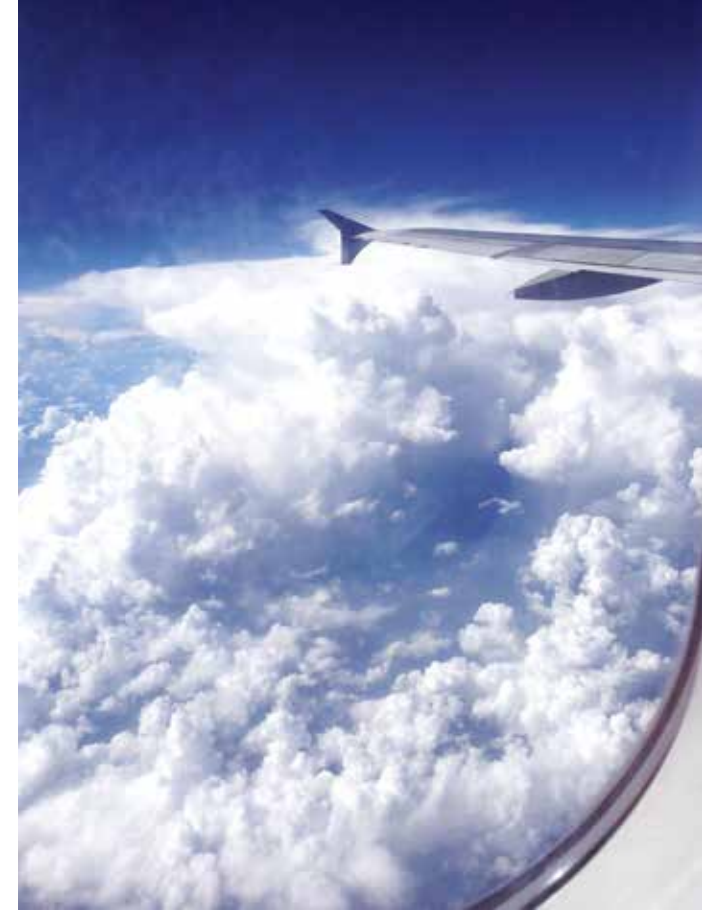
TYSHAMERA BRYANT

Tyshamera Bryant is a graduating senior at the University of Houston, majoring in sociology with a minor in African American Studies. Initially only a hobby, photography has become her passion and her mastery of the art continues to grow rapidly as she matures. The pictures here are from the Study Abroad trip to Ghana. Ty embraces her appreciation of earth's beauties through the photos taken in Ghana. She took around 4,500 pictures while on a recent study abroad, with most of these being of the beautiful country than of herself—a demonstration of her enjoyment for the art.



Motion of Art





The Professor's Country:

Reflections on John Evans Atta Mills

By Edward S. Garza

Tuesday, 24 July, 2012 marked day four of my studies in Ghana. Midday found me in the Volta region near Ho, a town surrounded by mountains. Though lush, these mountains kept a thick, imposing quality. Just above them, a layer of gray clouds hung from a low sky.

Near 2:15 that afternoon, John Evans Atta Mills died of a stroke. Ghana's third-ever president and its first to die in office, Professor Mills lived sixty-eight years. I called him "Professor" here not only because he was one, but because that's what his electorate often called him, even after his victory in 2008. Likewise, Ghanaians frequently referred to him by his full name. (I found this second fact particularly admirable, since Americans often prefer to shorten the names of presidents. I think of "Ike," "JFK" and "W.")

The immediate aftermath of Mills' death highlighted the strength of Ghana's government. I watched the country's Westernized constitution kick smoothly into gear. Vice President John Mahama was sworn in only hours after the tragic news. (He spoke in Houston just 11 days earlier to promote his book "My First Coup D'Etat.") I will forever remember sitting on my hotel bed watching Mahama deliver his elegy before parliament:

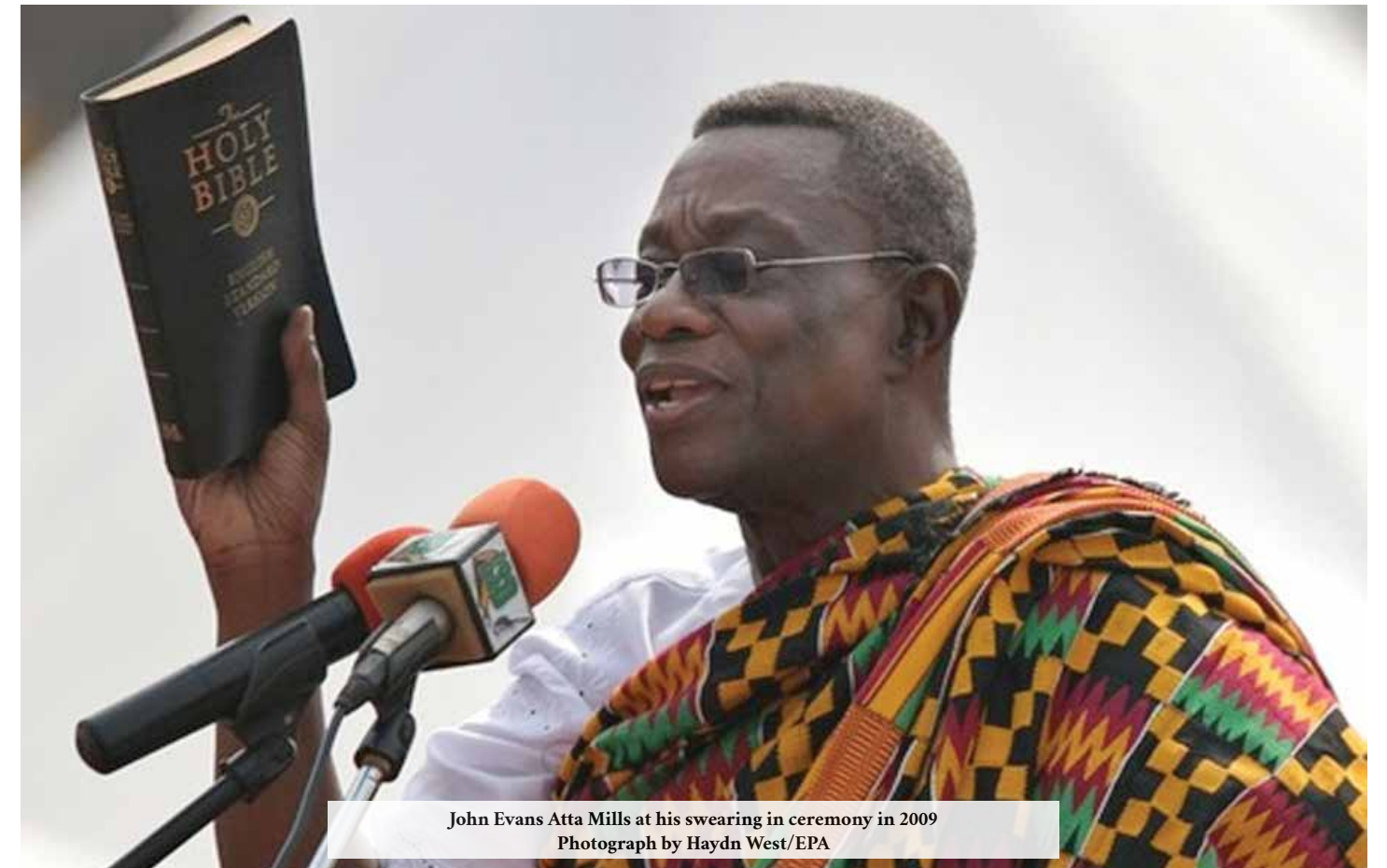
I've lost a father. I've lost a friend. I've lost a mentor and a senior comrade.

Ghana is united in grief... President Atta Mills had deep respect for the office he held and the people he served... He remained humble, honest and modest throughout his years in public service. He left his mark as a world leader and was a good example and an inspiration

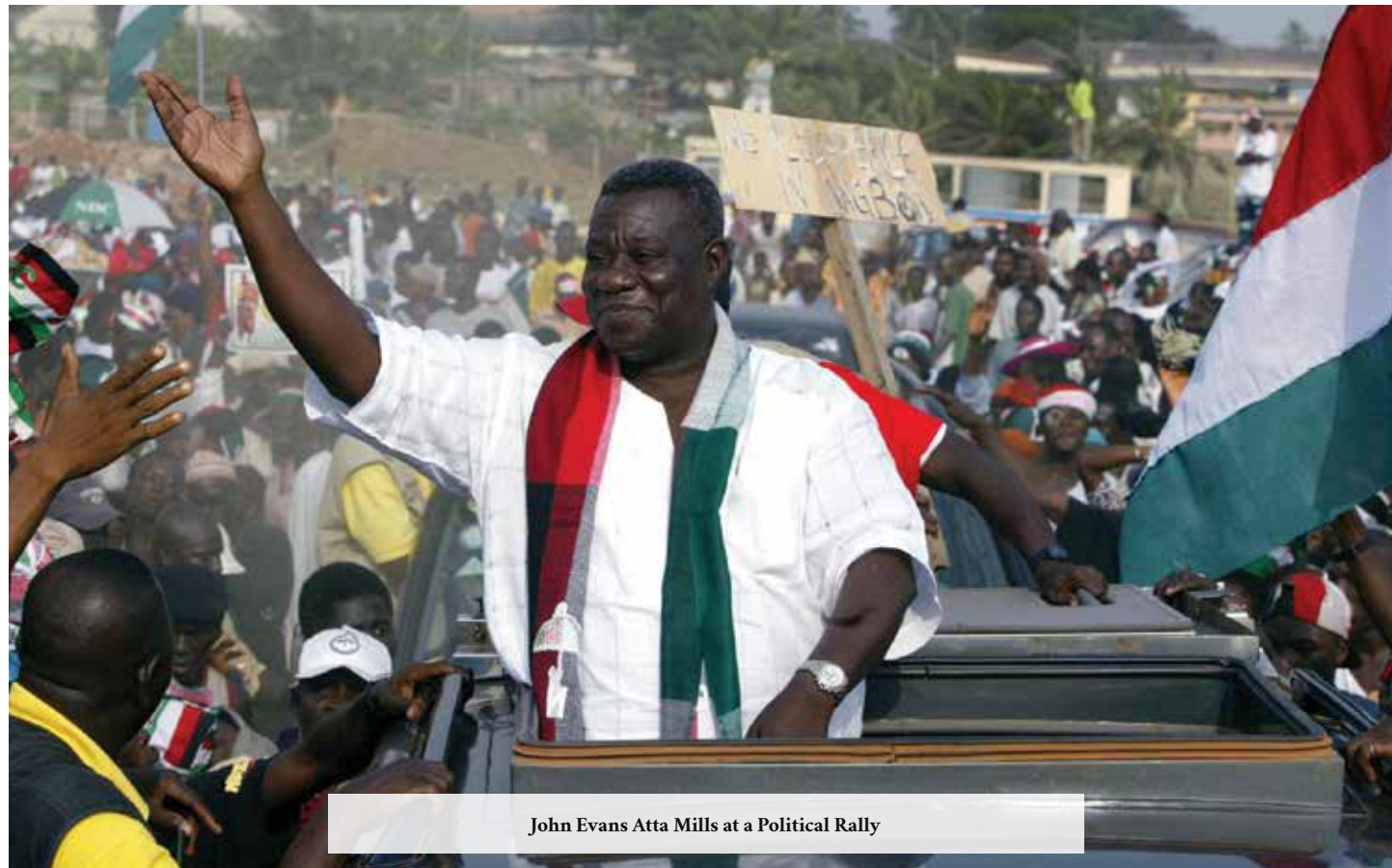
to all of us... Our finest tribute to him at this moment is to maintain the unity and stability of our nation.

Mills' death also allowed me to observe Ghana's attitudes toward mortality. I found it significant that, when relaying the sad news to each other, folks often said that Professor Mills "passed on" rather than "passed away." Indeed, "passed on" suggests that death is more of a progression than an ending. It implies that death simply moves the soul further along some larger cycle, a life beyond this one. Conversely, "passed away" carries a tinge of gloom, as if the deceased person has floated into some unreachable void.

In key ways, Ghanaians responded to Mills' death as they would a family member's. In line with Akan tradition, the country did not conduct burial



John Evans Atta Mills at his swearing in ceremony in 2009
Photograph by Haydn West/EPA



John Evans Atta Mills at a Political Rally

services for Mills until several days after his death, so as to give people time for reflection and remembrance. After this came a week-long celebration of the president's life. Often you would see trees wrapped in red and black fabrics signifying grief. The same went for women's dresses and men's shirts.

Before politics, Mills earned a Fulbright scholarship to study at Stanford Law School. He eventually earned a Ph.D. in Law from the University of London, writing his thesis on taxation. As an academic, he taught courses on international policy and economic development, in addition to publishing essays. During the 80s, he served as visiting professor at both Temple University Law School in Philadelphia and Leiden University in Holland. By 1992, his abilities earned him the position of Associate Professor of Law at the University of Ghana-Legon.

Besides Mills' résumé, what most impressed me was Ghanaians' deep

respect for his mind. Their attitude typified a political culture different from that of my United States, which has its own professor-turned-president in Barack Obama. (When Mills campaigned four years ago, his and Obama's faces sometimes appeared together on billboards.) As the U.S. election looms, I can't help but think of how Obama's opponents still tend to confuse intellectualism with elitism. Whereas many Americans evoke the image of the ivory tower when criticizing someone as being out of touch with "the people," such insults seem absent from the Ghanaian vocabulary.

History will likely be kind to Professor Mills. Leading a nation that just turned 50, he guided it to unprecedented levels of economic health. He nurtured Ghana's stalwart industries (cocoa, timber) as well as its burgeoning ones (energy). Though some critics might say that Mills accommodated too many investors – China, namely –

his work sustained an era of national production. Ghana annually appears on the list of highest GDPs in Africa. This all bodes well.

But perhaps more importantly, Mills helped implant a culture of stability and hope in Ghana. (In a nod to Obama, he used "hope" as a buzzword in his 2008 campaign.) As Ghanaians prepare for their own presidential elections this December, they should perceive a nation with more and more potential. I expect that, when tracing their country's growth a generation or two from now, Ghanaians will fondly speak the name of Professor John Evans Atta Mills.

Edward Garza is a senior at the University of Houston, where he majors in English-Literary Studies. He completed the Kwame Nkrumah Study Abroad Program this past summer. Edward works as a consultant at the university's Writing Center and serves as Editor-in-chief of the literary journal, The Aletheia, which you can read online at www.thealetheiajournal.wordpress.com.

AAS Student Awarded Internship at the National Museum of Accra

By AAS News Staff

This summer Chanelle Nicole Frazier, a graduating senior, will be returning to Ghana for an internship at the National Museum of Accra. Soon after returning to Houston last summer, Frazier began to communicate with the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, as well as the director of the museum to set up the internship. Frazier, who has also worked in the Contemporary Art Museum of Houston for five years, will be working on museum conservation, audience development, and museum marketing and branding under the direction of head curator Akousa Saah Backman.

Frazier is excited about the opportunity and offered insights into how her first experience in Ghana influenced her decision to return, saying, "My experience in Ghana last summer was amazing, to say the least."

"Not only did I learn important historical, philosophical and cultural concepts, but I was also allowed to learn a lot about myself. From sunrise to sunset, our days were packed with experiences that we could later reflect on during our long bus rides in between cities. On the dirt road, while gazing into a sky littered with stars, the overwhelming

feeling that I was in the place I needed to be came over me. I promised myself I would return to Ghana within a year's time."

Frazier is a 2013 recipient of the Kwame Nkrumah Study Abroad Scholarship, 2012 recipient of the Friends of African American Studies Scholarship and will be graduating this May with a Bachelor's of Arts in Art History with a minor in African American studies. The program congratulates her on the receipt of a paid internship at Ghana's foremost museum.



Dallas-Area Students Visit AAS Classroom

By AAS News Staff

On Saturday, 1 March 2014, African American Studies (AAS) hosted 20 female students from Lancaster High School's (Dallas, TX) Act Like a Lady: Think Like A Boss program. Mrs. Stephanie Boyce, Master Teacher of Lancaster High School's English Department and founder of the program, coordinated the event's logistics, which gave students first-hand exposure to the college experience and classroom environment.

AAS invited the students to its weekend course AAS 2320: Introduction to African American Studies, taught by Professor Aswad Walker. The lecture focused on the African antecedents and historical evolution of African American religion, and the class engaged in a lively debate about the current role and place of theology in African American communities.

Mrs. Boyce, an alumna of the African American Studies program at UH, founded the program, which provides mentorship and guidance to young ladies through community service, etiquette and character-development lessons and critical commentary on socially relevant issues.



Students from Lancaster High School's in Dallas, TX



AAS Students Attending the 2014 National Council for Black Studies Conference

AAS Minors Attend 2014 National Council for Black Studies Conference

By AAS News Staff

African American Studies supported four UH students in their travel to the 38th Annual National Council for Black Studies (NCBS) Conference in Miami, Fla., from March 5-9, 2014. Dana M. Maule, Renee A. Richardson, Da'Vonte Lyons and Mic'eal Thomas each presented individual research papers at the conference. The conference theme for this year was "Challenging Racial Terrorism: Black Resistance and Community Building Across the African Diaspora."

NCBS is the major professional organization for African American/Black Studies. Each student worked with AAS to draft and revise their research papers from the course AAS 4377: Senior Seminar on W.E.B. Du Bois. Student presentations varied in scope, with discussions of Du Bois' influence on mixed methodology, sociology, philosophy and the Harlem Renaissance. The depth, organization and soundness of each student's research received high praise from both panel chairs and audience members alike. Moreover, one student, Mr. Lyons, received induction into the NCBS national honor society Ankh Maat Wedjau. This was only the second time in five years that AAS has taken students to the conference.

Program Manager Brings Wealth of Experience to Post in African American Studies

By AAS News Staff



LaShonda R. Williams

It was during this time teaching at Davis that Ms. Williams started to build on her professional experience that shapes her current career. As a teacher, Ms. Williams did not limit herself to the classroom; she served on various committees, sponsored fundraisers for many of the schools' athletics and even directed a senior play her last year at Davis.

After three years of teaching public speaking, journalism and English at Davis, Ms. Williams returned to Prairie View to work as a recruiter where she assisted and coordinated events and tours, acted as the Community Liaison and developed recruitment strategies. Ms. Williams left Prairie View to help start Project GRAD Atlanta; what Ms. Williams describes as the "birth child" of the Tenneco Scholars Program she was once a part of. "It was a very moving experience to be a part of a new initiative that would help students that were just like me." Ms. Williams explains her part in forging the program in Atlanta.

Ms. Williams took this opportunity in Atlanta to complete her Master's at Troy State while working full-time with Project GRAD Atlanta. For Ms. Williams, "It was a tremendous sacrifice but a great reward." After her time in Atlanta, Ms. Williams returned to Houston and performed contract work with the University of Houston's College of Education. Her job at the University of Houston entailed working in the Consistency Management and Cooperative Discipline component of Project GRAD.

African American Studies proudly welcomes the latest addition to its administrative staff, Ms. LaShonda R. Williams, the program's new program manager. Ms. Williams received her Bachelor of Arts in Journalism at Prairie View A&M University and her Master of Public Administration at Troy State University-Atlanta. In "inner-city northeast Houston" Ms. Williams was a part of the Tenneco Scholars program at Jefferson Davis High School.

"I had an opportunity to be a part of what actually led to Project GRAD; back then it was called Tenneco Scholars," Ms. Williams explained. "The program was designed to help increase the number of inner-city students going on to college, so they offered a four-year scholarship, and my class, class of '92, was a part of that initiative."

Ms. Williams chose Prairie View A&M University to pursue her undergraduate degree. In Ms. Williams' last semester at Prairie View, she had the opportunity to give back to her former high school. Her former principal offered her a job teaching public speaking at Davis, and Ms. Williams did not turn down the offer.

As the new program manager for African American Studies, Ms. Williams will utilize her experiences and ideas from Davis High School, Prairie View and Project GRAD to develop programs that support the mission and goals of the department. "This is the dream position: it includes the instructional portion; it also includes the student interaction which is really important to me, and it appeals to my philanthropist side which is my passion. I enjoy doing things that help contribute to making the world a better place, and for me it brings intrinsic joy, which ultimately, to me, is priceless."

Ms. Williams already has an "infinite list of responsibilities" and ideas for this academic school year. "I think that this program has no boundaries, and I'm very open and anxious to help take it to the next level in any capacity that is within reach, and as far as I'm concerned, the sky is within reach. I definitely see the program making its mark, and I think that one of the precursors to bringing some notoriety to the program will be when we start to showcase the study abroad program, and then we'll transition into the film festival, which will show another facet of the contributions that the African American Studies and the Cultural Center provide."

Overall, Ms. Williams' goals are congruent with those of the program: engage the community on a local and global scale; be accessible to students, faculty and staff and promulgate the department to attract more students to the minor. Ms. Williams invites all to her cozy office to share ideas or seek advice, and to students she just has one message, "My advice to any student is if you have a passion always follow through, and my philosophy is very simple embrace change and insist on excellence." Ms. Williams is a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

2013-2014 AAS Events and Briefs

SEPTEMBER, 24 2013

Hosted health fair "Distilling the Gossip, Sharing the Truth" at the Rockwell Pavilion in M.D. Anderson Library

OCTOBER, 26 2013

Co-hosted book review and signing of Charles H. Houston: An Interdisciplinary Study of Civil Rights Leadership, edited by **Dr. James L. Conyers, Jr.**, Director, African American Studies Program

OCTOBER, 29 2013

Hosted lecture by **Mr. Kwame Ansong**, CEO & Owner of Sunseekers Travel, on Ghanaian Cultural Practices



Dr. Burnadette Pruitt

NOVEMBER, 4 2013

Hosted book review and signing of *The Other Migration: The Movement of Rural African Americans to Houston, 1900-1941*, by **Dr. Burnadette Pruitt**, Associate Professor of History, Sam Houston State University

NOVEMBER, 13 2013

Hosted law school preparation panel with representatives from the University of Houston School of Law, South Texas Law Center and Thurgood Marshall School of Law

DECEMBER, 3 2013

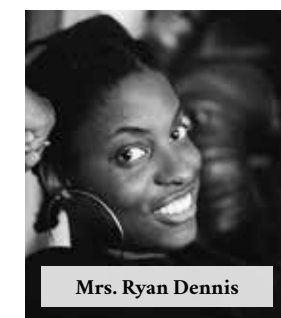
Hosted celebration for fall 2013 graduating AAS Minors



Mr. Lee Hampton

FEBRUARY, 3 2013

Hosted lecture by **Mr. Lee Hampton**, Director, Amistad Research Center, on Celebrating African American Heritage



Mrs. Ryan Dennis

FEBRUARY, 4 2014

Hosted discussion by **Mrs. Ryan Dennis**, Director of Public Art Projects, Project Row House, as part of AAS Distinguished Lecture Series

FEBRUARY, 6 2014

Hosted lecture by **Mrs. Debra Blacklock-Sloan**, Historical Education and Research Advisor, Rutherford B.H. Yates Museum, Inc., on historical and genealogical research

FEBRUARY, 11 2014

Hosted 2014 Africana Aesthetics Conference: Blacks in Media, Film and Communication with plenary session speakers: **Prof. M.K. Asante, Jr.**, **Ms. Charnele Brown**, and **Mr. Fred Thomas**



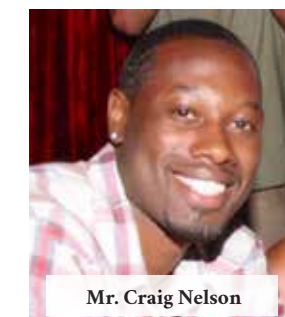
Conference Panelist with African American Studies Faculty & Staff



Ms. Crystal Edwards

FEBRUARY, 13 2014

Hosted discussion by **Ms. Crystal Edwards**, doctoral student, Department of Africology, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, as part of AAS Distinguished Lecture Series



Mr. Craig Nelson

FEBRUARY, 20 2014

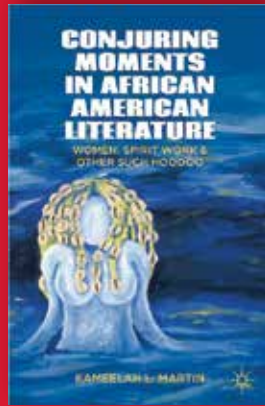
Hosted discussion by **Mr. Craig Nelson**, Partner Operations, Indoor Google Maps, as part of AAS Distinguished Lecture Series



Dr. Marcia Walker

MARCH, 20 2014

Hosted lecture by **Dr. Marcia Walker**, 2013-2014 AAS Visiting Scholar, on African American Women's History



Conjuring Moments in African American Literature: Women, Spirit Work & Other Such Hoodoo

(New York: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2013)

By Kameelah Martin
2012-2013 Visiting Professor in African American Studies at the University of Houston

The monograph engages the ways African American authors have shifted, recycled and reinvented the conjure woman in twentieth century fiction, constructing a historiography of the conjure woman as a recurring literary archetype. Samuel develops a new vocabulary and framework (conjuring moments) with which to articulate a critical discourse surrounding the black conjuring woman and the use of African-centered cosmologies as a trope in African American literature. Samuel argues that within the last century, African American writers have subverted the negative connotation of women and spirit work through their literary expressions. The conjure woman figure has evolved as a bio-mythography used to resist the subjugation and marginalization of black women and provides critical socio-cultural commentary, a role currently unmatched by other black female models and characterizations.

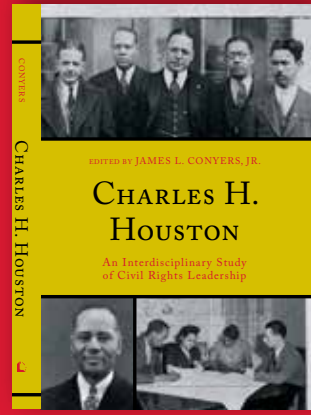


Postmodernism, Traditional Cultural Forms, and African American Narratives

By W. Lawrence Hogue

This book explores how African American social and political movements, African American studies, independent scholars, and traditional cultural forms revisit and challenge the representation of the African American as deviant other. After surveying African American history and cultural politics, W. Lawrence Hogue provides original and insightful readings of six experimental/postmodern African American texts: John Edgar Wideman's ; Percival Everett's ; Toni Morrison's ; Bonnie Greer's ; Clarence Major's ; and Xam Wilson Cartier's . Using traditional cultural and western forms, including the blues, jazz, voodoo, virtuality, radical democracy, Jungian/African American Collective Unconscious, Yoruba gods, black folk culture, and black working class culture, Hogue reveals that these authors uncover spaces with different definitions of life that still retain a wildness and have not been completely mapped out and trademarked by normative American culture. Redefining the African American novel and the African American outside the logic, rules, and values of western binary reason, these writers leave open the possibility of psychic liberation of African Americans in the West.

W. Lawrence Hogue is John and Rebecca Moores Distinguished Professor of English at the University of Houston. He is the author of several books, including , also published by SUNY Press.



Charles H. Houston: An Interdisciplinary Study of Civil Rights Leadership (Lexington: Lexington Books, 2012)

by James L. Conyers, Jr.

This study seeks to examine the life and work of Charles Hamilton Houston, and the scope of this project will focus on the implementation and organization of the proposed plan in three ways: philosophical ideas, constructive engagement and lasting contributions of this legal scholar activist. When compiling scholarly articles for this volume, the challenge was examining not just legal precedents of Houston, but his contributions to the study of civic engagement, with emphasis on privilege, racism, disparity and educational philosophy.



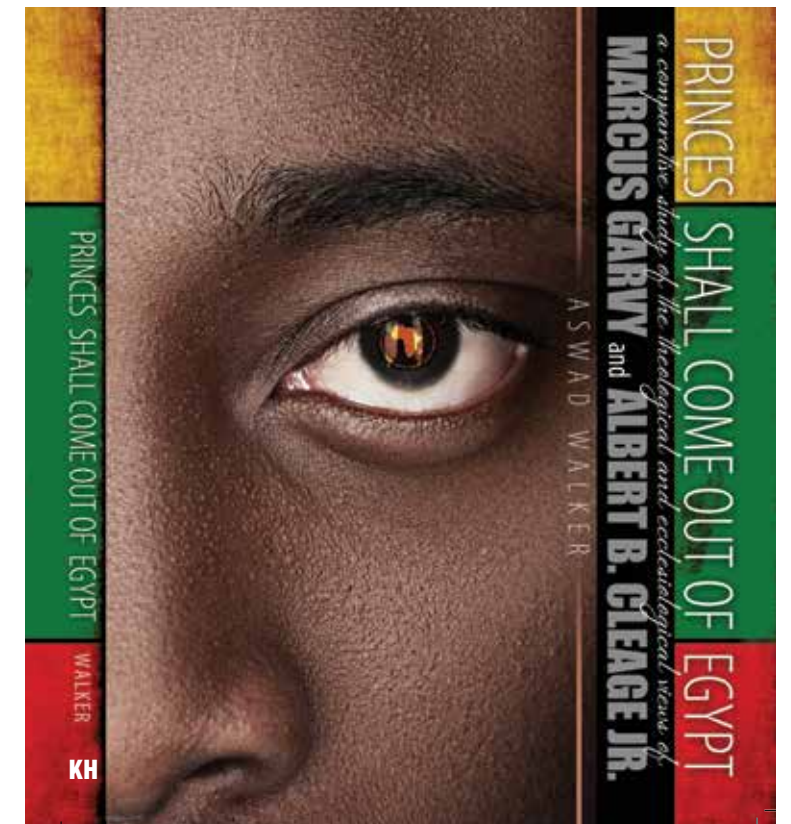
Negro Comrades of the Crown: African Americans and the British Empire Fight the U.S. Before Emancipation (New York: NYU Press, 2012)

By Gerald Horne
Moore's Professor of History and African-American Studies at the University of Houston

While it is well known that more Africans fought on behalf of the British than with the successful patriots of the American Revolution, Gerald Horne reveals in his latest work of historical recovery that after 1776, Africans and African-Americans continued to collaborate with Great Britain against the United States in battles big and small until the Civil War.

Many African Americans viewed Britain, an early advocate of abolitionism and emancipator of its own slaves, as a powerful ally in their resistance to slavery in the Americas. This allegiance was far-reaching, from the Caribbean to outposts in North America to Canada. In turn, the British welcomed and actively recruited both fugitive and free African Americans, arming them and employing them in military engagements throughout the Atlantic World, as the British sought to maintain a foothold in the Americas following the Revolution.

In this path-breaking book, Horne rewrites the history of slave resistance by placing it for the first time in the context of military and diplomatic wrangling between Britain and the United States. Painstakingly researched and full of revelations, *Negro Comrades of the Crown* is among the first book-length studies to highlight the Atlantic origins of the Civil War, and the active role played by African Americans within these external factors that led to it.



RESEARCH ON THEOLOGY & RELIGION

Congratulations to Cardinal Aswad Walker, adjunct professor of African American Studies, who recently published *Princes Shall Come Out of Egypt: A Comparative Study of the Theological and Ecclesiological Views of Marcus Garvey and Albert B. Cleage Jr.* (Kendall Hunt Publishing, 2012). Cardinal Walker is the pastor of the Shrine of the Black Madonna #10 of the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church in Houston, Texas and author of *Weapons of Mass Distraction: And Other Sermons for a New World Order* (iUniverse, Inc., 2004).

Cardinal Walker holds a Master of Divinity from Emory University's Candler School of Theology ('98). Prior to attending Emory, Cardinal Walker earned a B.S. in Advertising from The University of Texas at Austin ('88), where he co-edited *The Griot*, UT's Black student newspaper.

Cardinal Walker teaches several courses for African American Studies, including: AAS 2320: Introduction to African American Studies; AAS 2330: Black Liberation Theology and AAS 4330: The Black Church in America. He also works as senior writer/editor for Texas Southern University.



AAS Visiting Scholar Interview Dr. Marcia Walker

By Gwendolyn Alfred

Visiting Scholar, Dr. Marcia Walker, attended Northwestern University in Evanston for her undergraduate education, majoring in Social Policy and Education and African American Studies. At Northwestern University, Walker enjoyed the advantages of having one-on-one attention from a small program with classes that were taught by the faculty, allowing her to be involved in discussions, defend arguments and engage in conversations about important topics of African American history. After experiencing such involvement, Walker entered graduate school with a tough skin and equipped mental state that would allow her to stand her ground at a much larger university. Finding her niche in the area of Black Studies, Dr. Walker decided to earn her doctoral degree in History, with emphasis on African American History, at the University of Chicago.

Before moving to Houston, Walker was involved with a project called "Mapping the Stacks," which included the University of Chicago graduate students visiting local community repositories of African American History. Walker was stationed at the Chicago Public Library for three years, where she processed documents for the Chicago Defender. This program provided finding aids and research sources, which were later placed online for scholars who may access the information for books,

programs etc. for the enhancement of African American history in Chicago. Also, presentations were made to community educators who may be interested in the information for students of all ages.

Walker holds great interest in becoming involved in the AAS program at the University of Houston, interacting with the students in person that she is currently instructing in her online course. Additionally, she is scheduled to give a talk during Women's History month, focusing on her current research topic. She also looks to offer assistance at the Gregory School, which emphasizes genealogy, archives and African American history.

Walker is currently working on a biography of Rev. Addie Wyatt, an activist, labor leader and ordained minister who was influential in the labor movement in the United States from the 1950s-1980s. Wyatt was also involved in demonstrations against police brutality, and she also marched with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Chicago as he went for open housing. Walker's research focuses on Rev. Wyatt's ability to become involved in different movements, yet still have the same philosophy of promoting working rights and an understanding of human equality. Wyatt emphasized the subjugation of women in important movements for civil rights and hoped to one day

achieve universal human equality. In early 2014, one of Walker's biographies of Rev. Addie Wyatt will be published through the American National Biography. Other published biographies can be viewed online at blackpast.org. Walker is also currently working on editing her dissertation and expanding it into a book.

Walker is currently teaching an African American History and Biography undergraduate course, tailored to enhance the understanding of the biography as a genre. Walker strives to get an understanding of the student interpretation of biographies, while exposing them to African Americans who are not viewed as central figures of African American history. Walker's course features biographies of Harriet Tubman, George Edwin Taylor, Stepin Fetchit and a controversial biography of Malcolm X.

Walker hopes to bring out a more human experience through her research topic of Rev. Addie Wyatt, expecting people to see parts of themselves and directly relate to her fight for equality in work, religion, gender etc.

Walker is happy to be a part of the University of Houston AAS program, loves the diversity of the area and hopes to become a Houston resident.

Visiting Scholar Encourages Black Youth to be Uncomfortable in the Face of Injustice

By LaQuasha Burke AAS Graduate Assistant

The African American Studies Program at the University of Houston annually invites two scholars with unique perspectives and research interests in the discipline of Africana Studies and Africology for a yearlong visiting appointment. Visiting scholars are to enrich the African American Studies curriculum by creating a course for undergraduate students as well as contribute to the discipline of Africana Studies and Africology through research and publication.

African American Studies selected Dr. Vincent Willis as one of two visiting scholars for the 2013-2014 school year. Upon graduation from high school, and not feeling academically prepared for college, Willis matriculated into Pulaski Tech, a vocational school in Little Rock, Arkansas. After taking his prerequisites at Pulaski Tech, he transferred to Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, where he received his Bachelors in African American Studies in 2003. Willis completed his Masters in African American Studies in 2007 from Ohio State University and his doctorate in Educational Studies from Emory University in 2013.

Dr. Willis originally began his academic studies as a political science major with the intentions of becoming a lawyer. His interest in African American Studies happened by accident due to a computer technicality. Morehouse mistakenly put his major in the system as African American Studies instead of political science. Upon realizing the mistake, he visited with the chair of African American Studies, Dr.

Barksdale, to get the error corrected. In speaking with Dr. Barksdale, he realized how African American Studies allows one to look at problems through various lenses, such as sociology and psychology. He left the office with a new understanding of the discipline and decided to make AAS his minor. In time, he changed his major to African American Studies.

During his time at the University of Houston, Dr. Willis wants to be productive as a writer and actively pursue publishing his work. He also wants to be a mentor and a resource to students in the U of H community by having an open door policy for students to discuss anything with him. Dr. Willis is also open to participating in speaking engagements addressing issues that profoundly impact students of color. His main goal is to use the opportunity as a time of servitude.

Dr. Willis' research interests examine activism of Black youth, specifically from 1954 to the early 1970s, and also encourage activism in today's Black youth. His research is geared towards understanding the impact of youth involvement in the various issues that African American youth face, such as lack of access to a quality education, high incarceration rates and high unemployment rates. His research interests will be showcased in an article being published this fall in the *Journal of Citizenship, Technology and Learning* named, "Let Me In, I Have the Right to Be Here" and also in an edited volume based on a study conducted by members of TITUS (Teaching in the

Urban South)—an organization that focuses on bridging the gap between colleges and primary schools.

Next spring, Dr. Willis will be teaching a class named, Education, Citizenship and Policy in African American History that attempts to operationalize what being African American is historically and the education inequalities that they face in the U.S. He wants students in this course to understand that desegregation was not one of the main tenets that African Americans have been consistently fighting for since slavery. He suggests African Americans have wanted their humanity acknowledged and their intellectual prowess recognized.

Dr. Willis is unsure what impact his research or work will have on the world since he states impact is hard to measure. He realizes that as a teacher your impact is not immediately recognized, but he hopes that people in the future will be in a state of uncomfortableness. Dr. Willis believes that if people are uncomfortable with the injustices they see in the world they will continue to fight against those injustices. If people settle for injustice, injustice will continue to occur. He wants people to look back on his life without being able to blame him for not trying to promote a positive image that advanced African American communities. Dr. Willis's message to readers is to love yourself and know your worth.



2014 Africana Aesthetics Film & Media Conference

Story by Dana M. Maule

During African Heritage month African American Studies hosted the Africana Aesthetics: African Americans in Film, Media and Communications conference, sponsored in part by a grant from the Houston Arts Alliance. Students from the University of Houston, Prairie View A&M and Texas Southern University were in attendance for the workshops and panel discussions. The event panned two days in Houston, Texas at the Harris County Department of Education and hosted media industry professionals.

Students aspiring to become filmmakers, writers and producers as well as Africana Studies scholars arrived with anticipation to see the main plenary session: scholar, filmmaker and best-selling author of BUCK, MK Asante Jr.; former cast member of A Different World, actress, writer, producer Charnele Brown and R&B Divas producer Fred Thomas. University of Houston Professor Dr. John Childs, Esq., introduced the session and gave the audience a specific purpose for their participation. This gathering was more than a conference event; it was a forum to bring awareness to the aesthetics of African American art. The emphasis was to focus all attention on “the visual, the audio, the various representations of our imagery in media film and other modes of communication,” said Childs.

MK Asante debuted his memoirs BUCK, a masterful work endorsed by the late Maya Angelou. “Young buck, buck wild, buck shots, buck town, black buck, make buck, slave buck, buck now,” is how he gives the audience a preview of the memoirs. Immediately, the audience understood what Asante meant when he said he was multilingual in the various mediums of art. His works engage all the senses by utilizing movies, music, literature and kinematic performance to formulate a unique aesthetic. BUCK is a must read.

Day two of the Aesthetics conference continued conversations critiquing and analyzing Black film and their content. There was a panel discussing the responses mainstream audiences have toward Black films. Another addressed the effect of message content in Black films on the dominant culture as well as minorities.

Dr. Carol L. Adams-Means, Huston-Tillotson University associate professor, presented the trailer for Beasts of the Southern Wild starring child-actress Quvenzhané Wallis. Means discussed the ongoing disparities the public has between people of color and Whites in the media. She discussed the responses from twitter upon the announcement of Quvenzhané Wallis as the lead role in the film remake of Annie.

Means posed the question of why people would have a problem with Wallis, an African-American, playing the role of Annie. She felt the story was universal and not limited to color, although many tweets that she referred to in her presentation commented that Annie was not Black and even used racial slurs and obscenities to refer to Wallis, who at the time was nine years old.

Melanie E. Bratcher, University of Oklahoma associate professor, offered a physically stimulating session during the Aesthetics conference. She stood behind the panel table to introduced herself, and then politely asked every audience member to stand and repeat after her. Everyone stood and repeated her every word and movement as she recited, “turn, now return, turn, now return and turn again.” These words were inspired by Sankofa, a term used in the Akan language of the Ghanaian people. Sankofa means “to reach back and get it,” and according to Bratcher is a strong theme in African aesthetics. She shared that ones ability to look back,

and move forward simultaneously is to share in African values.

Bratcher presented clips from the film Sankofa, directed by Haile Gerima. Her presentation commissioned the audience to internalize the meaning of Sakofa, and as aspiring filmmakers and actors to turn and return and turn again in every aspect of their artistry. During each movement, Bratcher and the audience looked over their shoulders to view the past and honor it; then they returned forward facing to view the present and move forward, repeating the movement multiple times until turning and returning became a continuous action with no beginning or ending position.

Lashonda Williams, University of Houston African American Studies Program Manager, closed the conference by thanking all the panel participants and guest speakers, which included radio personality Franklin Anderson, Director of the Challenger Program, and two student-presenters, Gabrielle Shepard from Agnes Scott College, and Tristan Jones of Texas Southern University. The success of the conference was evident by the number of students and scholars who remained after the conference ended to network and shake hands with the guest speakers as well as take a selfie with MK Asante while picking up their copy of BUCK.



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Dr. James Conyers, AAS Director; Ms. Mary Sias, Office Coordinator; Amy Barnett, Keynote Speaker; Ms. LaShonda Williams, Program Manager Mrs. Irene Ray, Secretary; and Dr. Malachi Crawford, Assistant Director