

THE DIASPORA

Department of African American Studies • University of California, Berkeley

SPRING-SUMMER 2010

African American Studies
Celebrates 40 Years

New Faculty Publications

Newly Tenured Faculty

St. Clair Drake Symposium





THE DIASPORA

The Diaspora is the newsletter of the Department of African American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Contributions are welcomed from UC Berkeley's faculty, staff, and students. We also invite submissions from guest columnists and scholars who may not be affiliated with the university. Articles may be edited for length, clarity, and style.

Editor

Lia Bascomb
lia13@berkeley.edu

Layout & Graphic Design

Glenn L Robertson
grobtson@berkeley.edu

Photo Credits

Lia Bascomb, Lindsey Herbert, Kimberly McNair, Nican Robinson, Ronald Williams II.

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Department of African American Studies University of California, Berkeley

660 Barrows Hall
Berkeley, CA 94720-2572
Phone: (510) 642-7084
Fax: (510) 642-0318
<http://africam.berkeley.edu>

Chair

Charles P. Henry

Professors

William M. Banks (Emeritus) University of Kentucky	Michel S. Laguerre University of Illinois
Charles P. Henry University of Chicago	Margaret B. Wilkerson (Emeritus) University of California, Berkeley
Percy Hintzen Yale University	

Associate Professors

Brandi Wilkins Catanese Stanford University	Darieck Scott Stanford University
Sam A. Mchombo University of London	Stephen Small University of California, Berkeley
Na'ilah Suad Nasir University of California, Los Angeles	Ula Taylor University of California, Santa Barbara
Leigh Raiford Yale University	

Assistant Professors

G. Ugo Nwokeji University of Toronto	Janelle T. Scott University of California, Los Angeles
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Adjunct Professor

Robert L. Allen
University of California, San Francisco

Visiting & Non-Senate Faculty

Michael Cohen Lecturer	Hardy T. Frye Professor Emeritus
Aya de Leon Director, June Jordan's Poetry for the People	Aparajita Nanda Lecturer

Staff

Vernessa Parker Management Services Officer	Lindsey Herbert Undergraduate/Graduate Advisor
Stephanie Jackson Administrative Assistant	Glenn L Robertson Computer Resource Specialist

THE DIASPORA

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Sharon Cobb

Jarvis Givens
Charles P. Henry
Lindsey Herbert
Michael McGe

Kimberly McNair
Quamé Patton
Eric-Michael Wilson

Words from the Chair

By Charles P. Henry

Two events during the Spring 2010 semester highlighted the intellectual vibrancy of the work we do in African American Studies. On March 17th I chaired a panel at the annual meeting of the National Council for Black Studies that featured the scholarly work of three of our graduate students. It did not surprise me that all three handled the pressure of appearing before an audience of professionals in the field like seasoned veterans. What was more surprising was the range of topics discussed in just three presentations. Asia Leeds presented a chapter from her dissertation “Whiteness, Garveyism, and Redemptive Geographies in Costa Rica”. Using visual representations of Black and White women in the newspapers she questioned the popular conceptions of womanhood. Michael McGee, in contesting the centrality of movement in notions of African Diaspora, argued that Diaspora cannot begin with dispersal but rather with the people and their movement understood through the factors that led to dispersal. An organizational history of TransAfrica was the subject of Ron Williams’ presentation. Williams places the development of the African American lobby for Africa in the context of 20th century Pan Africanism and also addresses the role of race and class in its evolution. In short, our graduate students amply demonstrated both the range and depth of our Ph.D. program.

On April 9 and 10, the department celebrated the 40th anniversary of African American Studies at Cal. After an informal lunch and greetings from the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, George Breslauer, we

were treated to a panel discussion of pioneers chaired by Hardy Fyre. Professor Frye was joined by Bil Banks, Margaret Wilkerson, James Noel and Roy Thomas. Their stories of the struggle to establish African American Studies at Cal both moved and delighted the audience. Former students will have their own fond memories of the panelists. The pioneers’ panel was followed by presentations emphasizing the current research of our students. Graduate student J Finley chaired a panel of two other graduate students, Shaun Ossei-Owusu and Asia Leeds, and two undergraduate students, Christiana Milton and Obiamaka Ude. Once again, both the topics and methodological approaches of the research varied widely.

One of the highlights of the celebration was a cultural event held the evening of April 9th at the African American Museum and Library in Oakland. The setting, the food catered by RSVP and the music, dance and spoken word performances organized by Michael McGee were all first-rate. A large and very diverse crowd of young and old enjoyed 40 years of soul music and a guest appearance by Congresswoman Barbara Lee, Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus. Representative Lee presented the department with a certificate of special recognition for its 40 years of excellence.

After a continental breakfast organized by Professors Catanese and Taylor, Dr. Julianne Malveaux, President of Bennett College, delivered the keynote address. In her remarks covering a wide range of topics, Malveaux recalled her experiences teaching economics in our department in the 1980s. Our

final panel included presentations by former alumni of the department. Jennifer Madden, president of the California Association of Black Lawyers, talked about how her major in African American Studies has helped her understand the issues and problems of the cases before her as an assistant district attorney in Oakland. Robeson Taj Frazier, an assistant professor in the School of Communication at USC, spoke about the support and guidance he received in doing his doctorate in the department. Quamé Patton thanked Professors Vèvè Clark and Roy Thomas giving his life direction and purpose. He works now as an interdisciplinary program



coordinator carrying on their legacy. Fine artist Rosalind McGary did not major in the department but drew her inspiration from faculty and courses in African American Studies. Our final event was a lunch and dedication of the Vèvè Amasasa Clark Graduate Student Lounge. Former friends and students Lisa Ze Winters, Ula Taylor and Amy Ifatolu Gardner provided intimate and emotional stories of Professor Clark’s profound impact on her students. The Lounge dedicated to providing a comfortable and functional place for students to work, relax and interact is a most appropriate way to remember Vèvè’s loving support of her students and colleagues.

African American Studies Graduates Four New Ph.D.s

NADÈGE TANITE CLITANDRE



Dissertation: "Haiti Re-membered: Exile, Diaspora and Transnational Imaginings in the Writings of Edwidge Danticat and Myriam Chancy "

Committee: Abdul R. Janmohamed (chair), Percy C. Hintzen, Claudine Michel, Dana Jones

Postdoctoral position

School: University of California- Santa Barbara

Department: Department of Black Studies

Position: University of California President's Postdoctoral Fellow

Tenure Track Position

School: University of California- Santa Barbara

Department: Department of Global and International Studies

Position: Assistant Professor

ARIANE RENEE CRUZ

Dissertation: Berries, Bittersweet: Visual Representations of Black Female Sexuality in Contemporary American Pornography

Committee: Leigh Raiford (chair), Percy Hintzen, Patricia P. Hilden

Postdoctoral position

School: Penn State University

Department: Africana Research Center

Position: Postdoctoral fellow



KELLEY DEETZ



Dissertation: "When Her Thousand Chimneys Smoked: Virginia's Enslaved Cooks and their Kitchens"

Committee: Ula Taylor (chair), G. Ugo Nwokeji, Margaret Conkey

Postdoctoral position

School: Randolph College, Lynchburg, VA

Department: American Cultures Program

Position: Ainsworth Visiting Professor of American Culture

ASIA LEEDS

Dissertation: "Representations of Race, Entanglements of Power: Whiteness, Garveyism, and Redemptive Geographies in Costa Rica, 1921-1950."

Committee: Ula Taylor (chair), Robert Allen, Nelson Maldonado-Torres

Postdoctoral position

School: University of California- Los Angeles

Department: Department of History and the Inter-departmental Program in African American Studies

Position: Dean's Social Science in Practice Postdoctoral Fellowship



PETRA RAQUEL RIVERA



Dissertation: "Orgulloso de mi Caserío y de Quien Soy": Race, Place, and Space in Puerto Rican Reggaetón

Committee: Percy Hintzen (chair), Leigh Raiford, Jocelyne Guilbault

Postdoctoral position

School: University of Richmond, part of the Consortium for faculty diversity in Liberal Arts Colleges

Department: Department of Latin American and Iberian Studies

Position: Postdoctoral fellow

2010 Year-End St. Clair Drake Research Symposium

by Kimberly McNair

More than 60 people attended the 2010 Year-End St. Clair Drake Research Symposium, which took place on Wednesday, May 12th in the African American Studies Conference Room in Barrows Hall. The conference was sponsored by the UC Berkeley African American Studies Department and was supported by many social science departments and campus programs.

This year's symposium featured performances, paper presentations, and panel discussions on various topics. Highlights include a faculty spotlight which featured professors Robert Allen, Percy Hintzen, Ugo Nwokeji, and Darieck Scott of the UC Berkeley African American Studies Department. As well as paper presentations on the Narratives of Slavery: Identity, Agency, and Performance; It's Bigger than Hip Hop: Literacy, Faith, and Urban Epistemologies; and Conceptualizing the African Diaspora. There was also a performance by Poetry for the People, led by Professor Aya de Leon. Each panel consisted of graduate students from several departments here at UC Berkeley including African American Studies, Performance Studies, Comparative Ethnic Studies, and Folklore; as well as the UCLA Ethnomusicology Department.

The conference was an organizational challenge that first year graduate student, Kim McNair, and Ph.D. candidate, J Finley, both took on with diligence and professionalism. This symposium occupies an important role for our department, and the organizers felt it was important to bring together scholars, performers, and friends to



partake in this event, envisioned by the late Dr. Vèvè Clark many years ago. The symposium continues to be an opportunity for faculty and students to be in conversation with one another about our work, and offers a sense of what it is that we do both individually and collectively by bringing together attendees and speakers from a wide range of disciplines doing work in the areas of African, African American, and Caribbean Studies.

Papers presented at the 2010 Symposium included:

Robert Allen, PhD, UC Berkeley
Department of African American Studies,

"The Life and Work of C. L. Dellums"

Naomi Bragin, UC Berkeley,
Folklore and Performance Studies Dept.,

"Popping and Other Dis/ Appearing Acts"

Charisse Burden-Stelly, UC Berkeley,
African American Studies Dept.,

"Contemporary Manifestations of Development and Dependency"

Kelley Deetz, UC Berkeley,
African American Studies Dept.,

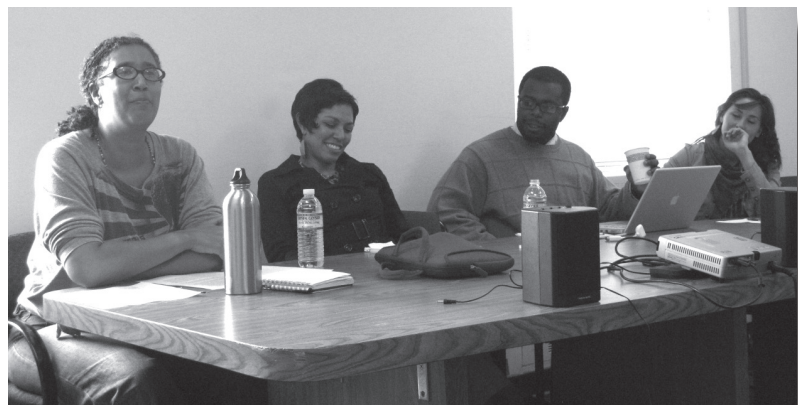
"When Her Thousand Chimneys Smoked: Enslaved Cooks and Their Kitchens in 18th and 19th Century Virginia"

Yomaira Figueroa, UC Berkeley,
Comparative Ethnic Studies Dept.,

"Toward a Reclaimed Humanity: Decolonization and the Politics of Language in Afro-Diasporic Literature"

Percy Hintzen, PhD, UC Berkeley
Department of African American Studies,

"Metaphor, Revelation, Recognition and Consciousness"



Ariko Ikehara, *UC Berkeley, Comparative Ethnic Studies Dept.*,
“Black-Amerasian Body in Spaces in Between Series”

Aya de Leon, *M.F.A., UC Berkeley Department of African American Studies*,

“Spoken Word Practice as Literacy and Young Adult Development from Hip Hop to Standup Comedy”

Ugo Nwokeji, *PhD, UC Berkeley Department of African American Studies*,

“Beyond Trade and Politics Paradigms: Diaspora and Culture in West Africa During the Transatlantic Slave Trade Era”

Shaun Ossei-Owusu, *UC Berkeley, African American Studies Dept.*

“Blackness, Sexual Politics and the Low-Brow Literacy Regime”

Omar Ricks, *UC Berkeley, Performance Studies Dept.*,

“In Search Of...: Ethnography and Anti-Blackness”

Darieck Scott, *PhD, UC Berkeley Department of African American Studies*,

“Torture, Censorship and Samuel R. Delany’s HOGG.”

Christina Maria Zanfagana, *UCLA, Ethnomusicology Dept.*,

“The Audible City: Holy Hip Hop and Geographies of Conversion”

Kimberly McNair is a graduate student in the African Diaspora Ph.D. program.



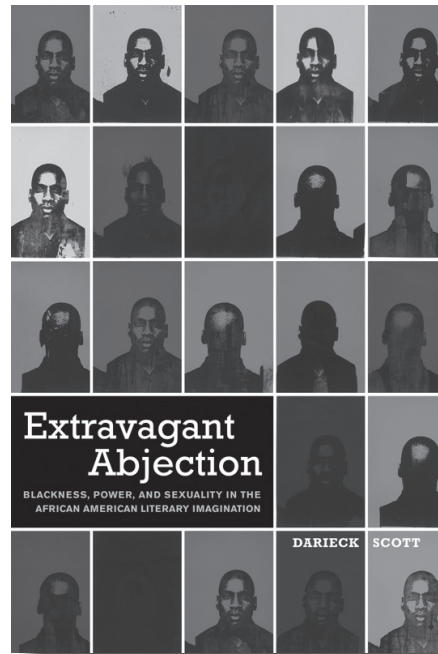
Extravagant Abjection

by Lia Bascomb

Extravagant Abjection is firmly rooted in the academic tradition. It marries theory with literary analysis in order to illuminate the possibilities of a different practice. This book is not for the theoretically shy, but *Extravagant Abjection* may well become a canonized text within Black Studies, Gender Studies, and Literary Analysis.

Darieck Scott bases his analysis on three main points: 1) blackness is a construction, not an essence; 2) categories of race are intimately tied to categories of gender and sexuality; and 3) philosophy needs literature in order to embody its concepts.¹ He uses the concept of the *abject* which he defines as “a kind of lowering historical cloud, a judgment animating arguments and rhetoric in both currents in which the history of peoples in the African diaspora ... is a history of humiliating defeat, a useless history which must be in some way overturned or overcome,”² and seeks to probe the possibilities within such a history. Ultimately the text presents the prospective power within abjection. His argument embraces the lies of blackness, theorizes the position of abjection, and illuminates the hidden and counterintuitive promise of power to be exerted from such a position. Scott posits the idea that however unpleasant abjection may be, it is possible for one to be “utterly without pleasure. But not without a will,”³ and not totally devoid of power.

The author’s argument is based in the realm of possibility rather than existence—or perhaps the possibility that in embracing the lies one can create another existence. Scott’s language relies heavily on words like “might” “may” and “perhaps,” but this does not necessarily place his argument outside of the realm of reality. It does, however, show that



there are still unmined possibilities in the ways in which we as academics and as people theorize power.

Structurally *Extravagant Abjection* is extremely clear. Each chapter builds upon the arguments of the previous ones, expanding the conversation in a different direction. Scott draws on a French Antillean body of thought, supports his arguments using mainly European theorists, and illuminates his words with those of African American literature.

After a lengthy and thorough introduction Scott lays the basis of the theoretical work the book relies on by exploring the work of Frantz Fanon. Chapter one opens by clearly delineating the key terms of power and abjection, and giving a brief critique of Black Power writers and activists’ use of Fanon’s work. He compares two camps of Fanon scholars and situates himself in the middle using Fanon’s metaphor of “tensed muscles.” He posits that Fanon’s tensed muscles represent a preparatory state to revolution which employs both physical and

psychic knowledge, and is caused by the seeming powerlessness of being dominated. After thoroughly exploring the ways in which Fanon’s thought interacts with such theorists as Jean Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Scott reiterates the main premise of the book.

Chapter Two, “A Race That Could Be So Dealt With,” begins to show the importance of literary analysis in Scott’s work. By examining the relationship between body, temporality, and identity in James Weldon Johnson’s *The Ex-Coloured Man*, Scott illuminates his theoretical argument through literature. He explains how *The Ex-Coloured Man*’s refusal of blackness is also a refusal to understand the creative and sometimes triumphant resistance to white domination.

Chapter Three turns the reader’s attention to what the author calls the urtext of his project, Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. He focuses specifically on the brief mention of Paul D’s rape on the chain-gang. In a manner similar to E. Frances White’s in *Dark Continent of Our Bodies*, Scott explores the ways in which this literary occurrence speaks about constructions of black sexuality under conditions of white domination. Scott explains how *Beloved*’s “project is the recovery of painful and traumatic memory,”⁴ and that its purpose is to “mine that history for various possible meanings that, heretofore largely hidden from histories and absent from popular consciousness, seem available only in metaphor.”⁵ It is here that Scott’s definition of the “bottom” as both the nadir of hierarchy and a sexual position becomes central to the argument. In analyzing how the chain-gang scene positions the black male body as abject and the way in which the author’s brevity reflects a historical attitude about the black

male body, the author repositions that body as possibility.

In the next section, a brief pseudo-chapter entitled “Notes on Black (Power) Bottoms,” Scott pursues the uneasy possibilities of pleasure within such abjection and the power that such pleasure might hold. He clarifies the relationship between psychic domination and sexual domination, and the roles that power and pleasure can play within each.

“The Occupied Territory” focuses on the work of Black Arts and Black Power writers, specifically Amiri Baraka. Here Scott uses literary analysis to demonstrate how the tropes of rape, power, and abjection interact within African American literature and constructions of black masculinity. He shows the ways in which blackness has been “queered” by abjection, and the possibilities that working from a position at the “bottom” may afford.

The last chapter of the book takes the previous arguments through their most uncomfortable illustration by examining blackness, masculinity, rape, pleasure, and power within a pornographic novel’s representations of sexuality and sadomasochism. In “Porn and the N-word” Scott uses Samuel R. Delaney’s *The Mad Man* in order to demonstrate the possibilities of power from the “bottom”; the ways in which blackness, queerness, and sexuality are intertwined; the relationship between discomfort and fantasy, and potential pleasures within that relationship; and by calling on the genre of pornography, the author demonstrates how power and abjection interacts within a body-psyche nexus.

The text is difficult in many aspects. The thoroughness of the analysis can become dense. The subject themes are largely taboo, and thus require the reader to constantly reopen her/his mind to analysis that has previously been on the outskirts of academia. The violent nature of

the subject matter (lynching, rape, revolutionary war) tugs at emotional strings and open wounds. But even more difficult is that it is supposed to be hard. Scott’s analysis relies on power *within*, not divorced from, pain. In order to understand his argument, the reader is made to struggle with the text because struggle is essential to the understanding.

Scott’s background as a novelist makes appearances in phrases such as “the foxy persistence of the people,”⁶ but other than these brief spots of color the language is very academic. This is not weakness of the text but, perhaps, a necessity. In order to work through such difficult subjects and bring together such a wide array of bodies of thought it is necessary to be as thorough as possible in the wording of the arguments.

Overall *Extravagant Abjection* explores the power of positions of powerlessness. Scott traverses the rocky terrain of embracing the lies of blackness in order to assert power from denigrated positions, whether these positions be social, sexual, or within a racial hierarchy that incorporates both. In exploring the uneasy subject of the rape of the black male body, Scott is able to open uncomfortable but thought-provoking and ultimately useful conversations about power, pleasure, pain and positionality. This is a text that repositions power within abjection, such that abjection is not only a site of domination, but also a position with extravagant possibilities.

(Endnotes)

- 1 p. 258.
- 2 p. 4.
- 3 p. 243.
- 4 p. 129.
- 5 p. 131.
- 6 p. 55.

Lia Bascomb is a Ph.D. candidate in the African Diaspora Studies program.



Newly Tenured Faculty

BRANDI WILKINS CATANESE

B.A. in African American Studies and Dramatic Art/Dance, UC-Berkeley

Ph.D. in Drama and Humanities, Stanford University

An alumni of the program, Dr. Catanese returned to UC-Berkeley to teach in the African American Studies and Theater Dance and Performance Studies departments in the fall of 2002. She earned tenure July 2009. Dr. Catanese's research focuses on the role of performance in constructing our understandings of black identity.

"Brandi juggles her joint appointment gracefully. She treats her students as whole people. Her expectations are always high. Her lectures are written and delivered masterfully. Professor Catanese's tenure is so well deserved." –Jasmine Johnson



"Prof. Catanese has been my mentor, as a teacher and a scholar for the past couple of years. She is sophisticated, but accessible-- with a sharp and critical eye for detail. I'm inspired by the energy and passion she brings to her lectures, which has undoubtedly influenced my style. The department of African American Studies will benefit for many years to come, most of all from the high expectations Dr. Catanese demands of us and herself as educators and as scholars." –J. Finley

"Dr. Catanese has never ceased to amaze me with her support, her integrity, and her pleasant attitude even in the midst of adversity. Her professional standards have served as an exemplary guide, and her honesty is both refreshing and inspiring. She has a way of making her extremely high standards seem very attainable so that even the harshest critique becomes a welcomed challenge rather than a demeaning experience. Congratulations!" –Lia Bascomb

LEIGH RAIFORD

B.A. African American Studies and Women's Studies, Wesleyan University

Ph.D. African American Studies and American Studies, Yale University

Woodrow Wilson Postdoctoral Fellow at the John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute at Duke University

Dr. Raiford began teaching at UC-Berkeley in 2004 and was tenured July 2010. Her areas of interest include race, gender, visual culture, film, photography, black feminism, memory studies, black popular culture, and racial formations in the United States.



"I was in a class at Columbia last semester that assigned Leigh's essay 'Photography and the Practices of Critical Black Memory.' The students in the class were going on about how clear and helpful the piece was to the broader conversation we were having about the utility and limits of photography. At one point the professor said, 'well you know Dr. Raiford is on Jasmine's committee' and they were like, 'ugh, lucky!'. That is completely how I feel about being in Leigh's intellectual company – very fortunate indeed." –Jasmine Johnson

"Professor Raiford is totally phenomenal. I couldn't be more pleased about her tenure. Llongyfarchiadau! I am so blessed to have her as my advisor. She has exposed me to countless texts that were not only exciting with the first read, but remain useful and inspiring each time I return to them. Her guidance to resources, courses and professors has been essential in helping me to navigate the Ph.D. process. She has been and continues to be my strongest source of support at Cal in my intellectual endeavors, my personal growth and my activism in education." –Ianna Owen

“Dr. Leigh Raiford has been one of the most encouraging and accessible faculty members in the department. Her substantive pedagogy, critical engagement with students and innate interdisciplinarity make her tenure timely and rightly deserved. Congrats Professor Raiford!” –Shaun Ossei-Owusu

“Dr. Raiford has had the misfortune of getting stuck with mentoring and advising me since I was a second-year undergraduate--6 and a half years ago. I, on the other hand, cannot remotely explain in this short paragraph how much I have benefitted from our relationship. Quite frankly, there is not a single person at UC Berkeley more responsible for my matriculation through higher education than Dr. Raiford. In fact, I would not even be pursuing a Ph.D. were it not for Dr. Raiford. I will not bore you with details of all of the ways she has sharpened my reading, writing, and critical thinking skills, or how I would have no conception of the work of this or that theorist without Dr. Raiford. What I would like to emphasize is the way in which Dr. Raiford has invested herself in my life outside of school. She attended my wedding and has invited me into her home. She makes it a point to know as much about my family as she does my work. This quality of Dr. Raiford is rare among her colleagues but an entirely common experience among her mentees. To say she is everything a student hopes for out of an adviser is a gross understatement because she has exceeded every expectation I, the department, or the university could possibly place on her. To be blunt, my philosophy as a student has been quite simple: do exactly as Dr. Raiford instructs; and I hope to have a long career in academia trying to mimic her professorial style.” –Justin Gomer

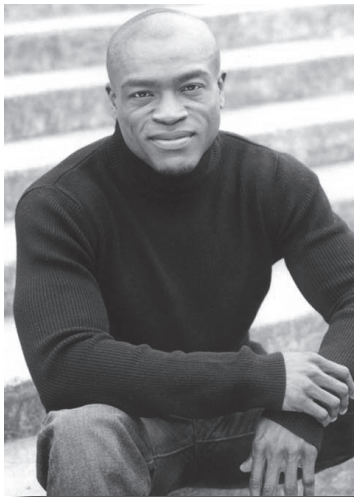
DARIECK SCOTT

M.A. African American Studies, Yale University

J.D., Yale University

Ph.D. Modern Thought and Literature, Stanford University

Dr. Scott joined the faculty here at UC-Berkeley in 2007 and was tenured July 2010. His areas of interest include 20th century African American literature, gender and sexuality studies, race and sexual fantasy, and science fiction.



“Darieck Scott embodies what it means to be an intellectual as an academic. He works in a groove between the academically theoretical and the creative so proficiently in ways scholars and scholars-in-training need to note. As an advisee, student, and teacher’s assistant to Darieck, he exudes a reassuring calm while never compromising rigor in his teaching, advising, and research. His presence and contributions in the field and to the department are necessary, enlightening, and nothing short of inspirational.” –Michael McGee

“I had the pleasure of being a student in Professor Darieck Scott’s course on Black Masculinity and he was the faculty’s last line of defense before I scored and touched down on the other side of a Masters Degree in African American Studies. His ability to convey core academic values via non-conventional text all while preserving this air-condition like cool is a trait that few have and many try to mimic. To sum it up, I recruit people to read from his assigned readings list and enroll in his courses and to me that is one the purest signs of respect a student can pay his or her professor.” –Ameer Loggins

“Taking class with Professor Scott has greatly improved my ability to engage with the most abstract and discursive of theoretical propositions while staying on-task in terms of clearly relating these to real-world issues concerning the way in which cultural, economic, social, political, and gender-based classifications positively influence or negatively detract from our “human” ability to come into calibration with levels of subjectivity that illustrate our respective achievement of what, at-the-end of the day, we may be satisfied to call “a life well lived”. Professor Scott has an alacrity of mind that is truly deft and he extends his mind to his students with compassion and a willingness to both learn and teach. I am so fortunate to have been his student.” –Gabrielle Williams

“It’s been a Wonderful Ride:”

Reflections on African American Studies at Cal by Stephanie Jackson

By Lindsey Herbert



Stephanie Jackson was born and raised in the Bay Area; born in San Francisco and raised in Oakland, California. After graduating from Oakland Tech, Ms. Jackson went on to Heald Business School and began her career working for a life insurance company and accounting firm. Shortly after, she saw a position open at Cal in African American Studies after her sister-in-law encouraged her to begin looking at UC Berkeley for jobs. As soon as Ms. Jackson saw the advertisement she said to herself “that is a place where I want to work.” After a long wait, Ms. Jackson received a call from then manager, Fran Carter and shortly thereafter her tenure in the department began.

Ms. Jackson began working for the department in 1980, when African American Studies was housed in Dwinelle Hall under the leadership of Chairperson Barbara Christian. This was a peak time for African American students at Cal, and Stephanie was excited to be a part of an interesting and evolving department. At the time of her hire, she was a senior clerk, however over the years both her job title and her duties changed due to structural changes on campus and career growth opportunities. Ms. Jackson worked steadily to obtain higher positions and made a point of learning new things to keep up with

the changes in the University and the growth of the department. For example, Ms. Jackson began as a senior clerk with primarily receptionist duties. However, now she is an administrative assistant and does scheduling, payroll, student hiring, purchasing supplies, supervises the Reading Room staff, and works on issues related to the graduate program (payroll for GSI’s, Block Grants, Admissions, etc.).

When asked how things differed back then from how they are now, Ms. Jackson stated that the most notable change is the student presence in the department. In the 1980s there would be lines of students in the office and down the halls waiting to get approved for courses and get their schedules approved. However with computers and tele-bears, most of these issues are not dealt with in person, and the department does not have the same amount of students waiting to be helped. Another difference also related to technology is the amount of staff and the duties they perform. Back in the 1980s staff were hired to type for faculty. They would assist with all work that needed to be typed (publications, syllabi, etc.). Once faculty began using computers the need for typists waned and consequently the need for staff did as well. The overall picture Ms. Jackson paints is one of a bustling and energetic department with lots of staff and students around. Ms. Jackson also points out that the students seemed to be more supportive of, and had allegiance towards the Department back then compared to the present day.

Similar to former department Manager Fran Carter, Ms. Jackson was heavily impacted by Professors (and Chairs) Barbara Christian and Erskine Peters. She recollects being mesmerized by Professor Christian’s deep, somewhat raspy voice that commanded attention and uttered wisdom. She learned a great deal from Professor Christian through

informal conversations, public events and tasks as simple as ordering books or coordinating guest speakers. Through these experiences, Ms. Jackson claims to have been exposed to many African American (and African Diaspora) women writers she never knew existed; writers like Paule Marshall, Toni Morrison and Mary Helen Washington. This was inspiring and intellectually engaging for Ms. Jackson and one of the reasons she remained in her position in African American Studies. According to Ms. Jackson this down to earth leadership style and positive energy was also how Professor Erskine Peters operated, and both were able to infuse that into their work and the Department, which created a great environment to work for.

One of the major changes Ms. Jackson notes witnessing while working here was the planning and implementation of the graduate program. According to Ms. Jackson, the graduate program shifted the focus of the department from the undergraduates to the graduates. Her job changed with the hiring of graduate students and the high volume of work associated with admissions and fellowships. But in the end, the changes gave her more experience and kept her actively engaged with her work, learning new skills and being part of a larger extended campus community

As the longest staff member in the department (30 years!), Ms. Jackson is now looking towards retirement. However, she feels good about her time here and what she has contributed. Stephanie Jackson has made it a point to always be helpful, do her job to the best of her ability and to represent the department in a good light. All in all she feels “it’s been a wonderful ride.”

Lindsey Herbert is Student Affairs Officer for the Department of African American Studies.

The African American Studies Department
celebrated its
40th anniversary with two days of events
Friday April 9th and Saturday April 10th, 2010



APRIL 9

Greetings

George Breslauer; Executive Vice Chancellor & Provost

Pioneer Panel

Hardy Frye- Chair, Professor Emeritus

Margaret Wilkerson, Professor Emeritus

Bill Banks, Professor Emeritus

James Noel, Former student

Roy Thomas, Distinguished Senior Lecturer

Student Research Panel

J Finley- Chair, Graduate student

Christiana Milton, Undergraduate student

Brandi Howard, Undergraduate student

Obiamaka Ude, Undergraduate student

Shaun Ossei-Owusu, Graduate student

Asia Leeds, Graduate student, Ph.D. candidate



40 Years of Soul

By Michael McGee

In April 2010, the African American Studies department at the University of California, Berkeley celebrated the institutionalization of Black Studies some 40 years prior. Over the course of two days, the department reflected on the vision and contributions of the program pioneers, recognized the work of present students, and honored the achievements of the department's alumni. Commemorations are necessary and special because they recall and recount the occurrences—both positive and negative—that comprise the history we celebrate.

Equally as important as the events we recognize are the moments from which these events emerge. In commemorating the strides of those who worked to establish and maintain African American Studies at Berkeley, we also acknowledge the climate within which our forerunners and pacesetters labored. This was the purpose of April 9th's evening event: an appreciation of a portion of a black cultural aesthetic present alongside the development of African American Studies.

The intellectual, political, and activist fervor in the air during the department's inception was so dense it spilled into the streets—particularly Telegraph Avenue. This one street connected downtown Oakland, regional headquarters for black activism, with Sproul Plaza, the stage for campus protest and rally. The 40th Anniversary was about acknowledging African American Studies on campus as well as the routes and connections concerning the mission of the program. As part of the celebration, the department travelled to downtown Oakland to host “40 Years of Soul” at the African American Museum and Library at Oakland (AAMLO). The event physically represented the



presence of both campus life and community life in the history of the department. AAMLO opened their gallery space to a mixed audience of affiliates and non-affiliates of the department, gathering to witness the performances of the “Theory & Soul” collective.

The performance collective for the night consisted of a live band, vocalists, dancers, and a spoken word artist. Arranged and directed by Oakland native Douglas Barron and myself, “Theory & Soul” offered a critical cultural narrative of the past 40 years through rhythm and blues, funk, soul, and hip-hop. The performances were contemporary reverberations of the politically charged messages that artists over these 40 years have expressed through their music, voicing the sentiments and experiences of those living in the interstice of racial, economic, and political neglect. The music, dance, and recitations purposed to loosely span the 40 years chronicling the changes and consistencies in the social and political climate across the decades.

Congresswoman Barbara Lee was among several special guests in attendance. Lee offered

acknowledging remarks about the presence, history, and work of African American Studies in the Bay Area and across the nation. In addition to her comments, Lee's presence alone brought to the fore what the evening event sought to capture and what resonated throughout the two day celebration: the symbiotic relationship between social, political, and cultural climate and intellectual and academic intervention.

Michael McGee is a student in UC-Berkeley's African Diaspora Ph.D. program.

40 Years of Soul

African American Museum & Library
659 14th Street
Oakland, CA 94612



Band:
Douglas Barron
Michael McGee, Jr.
Justin Sharpe
Tim Tyler
Shawn Wilson

Singers:
Kiyoko Guillory
Sandra Lawson
Ashly Lawson, Berkeley alumna

Dancers:
Erik Lee, Berkeley alumnus
Mikhaila Fendor, Berkeley alumna
Justin Sharlman
Speaker:
Michecia Jones, Berkeley alumna

**Open House/Dedication of the
VèVè Amasasa Clark Graduate Lounge**

Ula Taylor; Associate Professor, UC Berkeley
Lisa Zé Winters; Assistant Professor, Wayne State
Laurie Rolfe, Architect and Interior Designer
Amy Ifatolu Gardner; MD, MPH



APRIL 10

Keynote Address

Dr. Julianne Malveaux, President, Bennett College

Alumni Panel

Brandi Catanese- Chair; Associate Professor, UC Berkeley
Jennifer Madden; President, California Assoc. of Black Lawyers
Robeson Taj Frazier; Assistant Professor, USC
Quamé Patton; Interdisciplinary Prog. Coordinator, SLC UCB
Rosalind McGary, Fine Artist



Love and Fear

by Quamé Patton

Love is having everything but possessing nothing. Love is more than an emotion or feeling felt within one's body. Love is the magnetic force that bonds the universe and allows energy to become matter. The force of love resonates within every atom and cell throughout the entire universe and can be felt through powerful vibrations within the body. As humans we feel these vibrations and are led by them. Our objective minds interpret these vibrations as emotion. Love forms the matrix through which all other emotions are born. Fear is the weakest state of love, thus becoming love's opposite self. As love's opposite self, fear is necessary so that love may be perceived. As with all things in the entire universe, the opposite self gives birth to the authentic self. Darkness gives birth to light, stillness gives birth to movement, woman gives birth to man and love gives birth to fear. Thus organically fear is neither negative nor positive, fear is a vibration felt within the body that gets interpreted by the mind. While fear is a product of the conscious mind, love is the essence of the subconscious mind. The subconscious mind or spirit learns about fear from and through the conscious mind. Fear arises when there is an absence of love (or a disconnection from one's true spirit). This is because as one's emotional vibration level decreases, the mind interprets the sensation as a lack of connection with the world and the universe. Thus, the reaction produces emotions such as anger, jealousy, sadness, greed and revenge. These emotions that arise from the state of fear are distorted states of love. However, when one's state of mind is ruled by love a

person sees her/himself in all things throughout the universe. Everything becomes simply just another version of her/himself – the universe is understood as one whole existing as fragments. Thus through eyes of love the universe is abundant and ideas such as death and loss become concepts that only serve to reinforce love's opposite self. Faith being the ultimate acknowledgement of God or Love (the unseen) cannot exist wherever fear is most prominent. Through eyes of fear one becomes afraid that she/he has lost something or may potentially lose something. This idea undergirds the notion that things may be finite and ruled by time. A fearful state of mind causes a person to try and control circumstances and others, because she/he has been convinced that her/his connection to things and others can only be achieved through physical connection. This is why as a person becomes more and more attached to events and things in the physical world a sense of fear begins to eat away at her/his light (spirit). The mind begins to think that what the body experiences is "real". In becoming overly attached to material items and phenomena experienced in the physical world (through the five senses), a person moves further away from pure love or her/his true "self" toward the distorted end of love. It is a distorted sense of love because the greater the idea (or fear) that one may lose something, then the greater the sensation or illusion of love. It becomes like a pain that feels good. In order to maintain possession of this feeling (created by a false idea/interpretation) one believes is love, a person may try to control that which she/he has become attached to.

Are you the type of person that tries to control people? If you're not sure, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do you get upset when others do not do and/or say what you expect or like from them?

2. Do you offer people advice so that they will not make "mistakes"?

3. Do you find yourself trying to understand another person's choices and/or actions?

If you answered yes to any of the three questions above, then you have tried to control someone, whether consciously or unconsciously. The issue of control relates directly to love and fear. The issue of control is an issue of power; power is a ruling force. The ultimate power derives from Love and Love's opposite self, Fear. However, this is not true love because true love is unconditional. True love does not seek to control others. Thus, in order to experience true or pure love, one must be willing to let go of love's opposite self, fear. "There is nothing to fear, but Fear itself."

However, when a person lacks balance they try to control others in fear of losing her/his attachment. For example, when a person drives a car she/he is trying to arrive at a destination by controlling the vessel. This requires that the person: 1) has a vehicle, 2) knows how to drive, 3) has a destination in mind and 4) stays focused on her/his path and journey. Before a person even begins her/his trip she/he must first have faith in her/his own ability to drive as well as faith in others ability who also share the road along the way. Through faith a person controls the vessel with love. Once a person begins driving, she/he cannot control how others drive (though

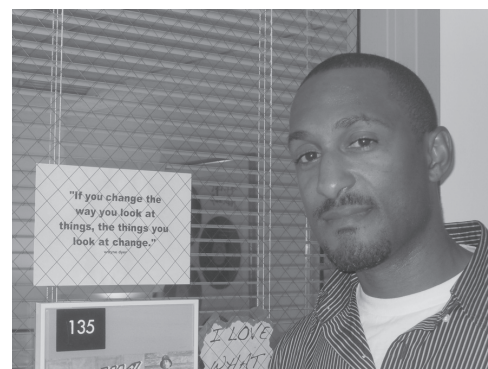
many still try anyway and end up in road rage). A person can only control her/his car. We are the captains of our own ship. To have the ultimate faith one must be willing to let go of fear – fear of accidents, how others drive, fatalities, not making it to the destination at a certain time and fear of the unknown or detours. If one cannot trust her/himself to be able to properly control the car (our body, thoughts and emotions) then one is not ready to drive (live). Driving implies movement and movement is life. Whenever a person tries to control another person, that person actually loses partial and sometimes complete control of her/his own vessel. Constructive driving stops because the driver is no longer focused on her/his own path and is more so concerned about the driving maneuvers of another. Though it can be frustrating to watch others driving dangerously or in a way that may bring harm or simply just irritating, the honest truth is that no matter how much one may try, a person can only effectively drive her/his own car. However, many people do choose to abandon their own car so that they can either ride with others or help someone else drive their car. Whatever the case, a person's self journey is abandoned or put on hold. Life is put on hold and ultimately this seemingly act of love (in seeking to help control someone else's vessel or thoughts/actions) stems more so from fear. The ultimate act of love in this case would be to *consciously* drive one's own car with complete trust and belief in one's own abilities as well as the abilities of others. Even if another lacks the driving skills one currently possesses, through faith one may be understanding and compassionate in knowing that others have the ability to potentially possess these same skills and greater. Love is not bound by time or circumstance. Our behavior and actions will inevitably

influence those of others. To impress upon others the act of effective driving, simply be an effective driver yourself.

A man once came to Ghandi after learning that sugar was detrimental to the man's health. He asked Ghandi how to go about stop eating sugar. Ghandi said come back in two weeks for the answer. In two weeks the man returned and asked Ghandi, "Why did you have me wait for two weeks to get the answer?" Ghandi replied, "Because I had to stop eating sugar." Instead of controlling others, one must first experience and be the lesson that one wants others to learn. To spread love one must BE love.

As the Universe in totality is connected through an invisible magnetic force, humans in totality are connected through this same magnetic force that we call love. But to experience love one must let go of fear, fear that others are incapable of making the correct choices for her/his own life path and the fear of death. Because death is a human concept to symbolize that something is lost, has ended or is finite. Death represents one's attachment to the physical world. But energy cannot die, only transform. Life is infinite and humans are constantly transforming. When this transformation is viewed through a lens of loss or fear, one suffers emotionally because she/he believes that happiness; love and peace are not theirs to experience forever. Yes, love cannot exist without faith. Faith cannot exist without both internal (spirit) and external (the outside world of the mind) awareness. Awareness cannot exist without pure consciousness (alignment of the mind, spirit and body). Pure consciousness cannot exist without focusing and being fully present in the eternal moment. Only within the eternal moment can one utilize her/his power of choice, our ultimate power as humans. By

choosing to have faith, awareness and live fully in the moment, a person chooses love. By choosing love, that person is able to let go of the need or desire to control others. We may provide road maps, give a person driving tips when requested, provide assistance to others in need of engine maintenance and even pull over from time to time to take a break in the journey. But love does not require that we abandon our journey in order to control traffic.



Quamé Patton works with the Student Learning Center specifically Interdisciplinary Resources for Transfer Students. He is an alumnus of UC-Berkeley's African American Studies Department. "Love and Fear" is an excerpt from his upcoming book The Power of Letting Go.



Congratulations to

Reginold Royston



on completing the
**Qualifying Examination in
African Diaspora Studies**
and advanced to candidacy
this past Spring

Bryan Mason



Ianna Owen



who received the
Master of Arts Degree
in African American Studies
this past Spring

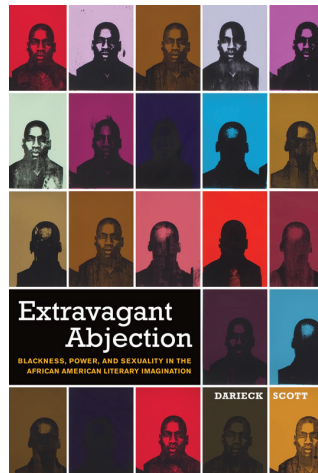
Faculty Book Announcements:

Long Overdue:
The Politics of Racial Reparations
by Charles P. Henry
New York University Press
1 September 2009
978-0814737415

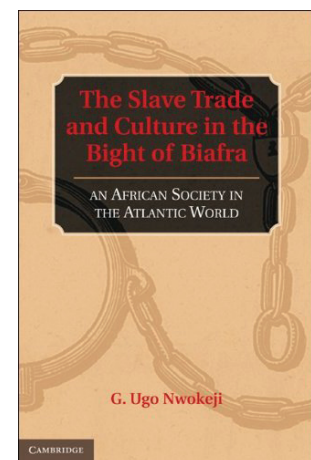


Extravagant Abjection:
Blackness, Power, and Sexuality in the African American Literary Imagination
by Darieck Scott

New York University Press
12 July 2010
978-0814740958

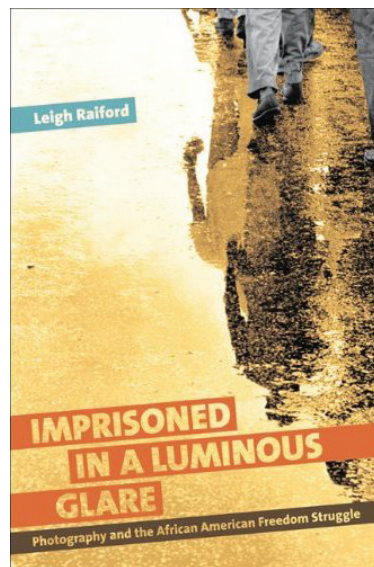


The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra:
An African Society in the Atlantic World
by G. Ugo Nwokeji
Cambridge University Press
30 September 2010
978-0521883474



***The Problem of the Color[blind]:
Racial Transgression and the Politics of Black Performance***
by Brandi Wilkins Catanese
University of Michigan Press
28 October 2010
978-0472051267

***Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare:
Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle***
by Leigh Raiford
University of North Carolina Press
12 January 2011
978-0807834305



***Network Governance of Global Religions:
Jerusalem, Rome, and Mecca***
by Michel Laguerre
Routledge Press
1 Feb 2011
978-0415888790

African American Studies Graduation Welcome

by Sharon Cobb

This speech was prepared for the 2010 African American Studies Graduation

Good afternoon! Today we celebrate the graduates who have shown an affirmation of their commitment by completing this difficult journey here at UC Berkeley. The African American Studies Graduation recognizes the achievement of its majors and graduating students who appreciate the rich history and culture of the African Diaspora. This occasion symbolizes the shedding of labels and stereotypes that are forced upon us and seeing our expectations fulfilled today. People believe that college is an easy path and you will finish in exactly four years and know exactly what you want to do. Instead, you experience the boundaries and limits of sleep and procrastination and the financial and academic successes and conflicts. There were obstacles and roadblocks that we faced throughout our college

life, yet our presence here today is a demonstration that we grew from the mistakes and feats, learning the lessons of value and worth and how beautiful it is to take the time to appreciate your surroundings and grasp a true understanding of your passions. Now we stand before the world as a testimony of our achievement at Cal.

Each of us graduates has left a strong legacy on this campus, just by participating in a student organization such as the Black Recruitment and Retention Center or Haas Undergraduate Black Business Association, engaging in research programs or summer internships, partaking in monumental events such as the Blackout of 2010, or simply passing a class at this renowned institution. We sit here today as a catalyst and a physical manifestation of the dreams of those who came before us who endured several afflictions and gave their lives so that we could have this chance today. We are proud of the

phenomenal people who paved the way and showed us that we CAN do this and hope to do the same for the future generations.

I would personally like to thank the faculty and staff of UC Berkeley, community members, and especially our families and friends who are here today and have helped us to see this grand occasion and start the beginning of a new stage of our lives. Today, I hope that throughout this entire ceremony, in walking across the stage and receiving our diploma, that we all truly understand the victory we have achieved as students, family members, and friends. In the words of Yvonne Thornton, “Just keep trying! Never give up, never, never give up! Because the only person that can stop you is you!” With that said, I officially welcome you to the African American Studies Graduation.

Sharon Cobb graduated from UC-Berkeley in 2010 as an African American Studies major.

Living the Legacy

by Jarvis Givens

This speech was prepared for the 2010 African American Studies Graduation.

I was once told a story about a people who could fly. I remember sitting in my third grade class listening to Mrs. Todman speak of a people with the magical ability to transcend. As the story is told, in their homeland they would stretch their black wings across the blue horizon just as an eagle would—free of bondage. These people were taken from their homelands; wings shaved off to make space on a tightly packed shipped, exported

to a distant land where they were forced to forget about their ability to fly and beat while working from sun up to sun down. As the story is told, there was a man who remembered the traditions of his past and chose to pass it on to the other slaves. And once they learned their heritage and innate strength, they once again took flight—black wings stretched across the blue horizon.

As we engage the theme of this commencement ceremony, “Living the Legacy: Celebrating 40 years of African American Studies at UC-Berkeley” let us remember that the people could fly and that

they continue to do so. The African American Studies department here at the University of California, Berkeley represents the cognitive liberation of black scholars during a time when they decided to stand up to this institution and demand that the history of Black people within this country was intensely part in parcel of America as a whole. The 70s is often a time associated with black militancy and rightfully so. The creation of this department represents the aggressive intellectual militancy that permeated black communities during these years.

Over the course of these forty years the African American Studies department has been working to uncover the stories of those black men and women who have taken flight in the past and those that continue to do so today: the flight of Robert Smalls, a slave who freed himself and his family by way of a daring escape during the civil war; the flight of Fannie Lou Hammer, a woman who had nothing but her faith in God and a desire for equal rights which led her to be the Vice-Chair for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party; the flight of Charles Houston, a man known as the mastermind behind the death of Jim Crow.

The African American Studies Department, here, on this campus, is one that has a long legacy of black social thinkers who passionately cultivate the social consciousness of young scholars to take daring flights of their own. Intellectuals such as the late Dr. VèVè Clark who coined the term “diaspora literacy” which describes the lived

and learned lenses necessary to comprehend stories, histories, and words across the African Diaspora. Scholars who unveil the forgotten stories of women such as Amy Jacques Garvey who was strongly influential in the development of the UNIA and Pan-Africanist thought, or the unknown stories of noble black men who lost their lives in the event known as the Port Chicago Mutiny which erased the practice of segregation amongst US navy personnel. This department has become a center for the unearthing and preservation of those stories of black flight in the past and for developing the ability of young scholars of today who will soon take flights of their own—my peers and I whom you see here today.

To the graduates, as we stand here on this day let us remember that we too have the ability to fly. This is a quality that is both intrinsic, and one that can be relearned by looking to the flight of our predecessors for both inspiration and guidance. Here, today, we are adorned with

these distinguished black robes—let them be a symbolic replacement of the wings that were once shaved from our ancestors. On this day let us stretch our wings, and as the story is told: Man and woman began rising from the fields and rising above, flying like hawks and eagles. And while the master tried to deny that this ever happened everyone knew that the people flew towards freedom. They flew like blackbirds up above with their wings shining against the blue sky. Through the African American Studies Department and its 40 year legacy we have been equipped with the tools, the tips, and the techniques of our predecessors who had the courage to challenge societal norms and create social change. Class of 2010 we are the people, and now is our time to take flight.

Jarvis Givens graduated from UC-Berkeley in 2010 as an African American Studies minor. He will be entering the department's African Diaspora Ph.D. program in the fall.

Words from Summer Bridge

by Eric-Michael Wilson

This speech was prepared for the closing reception of the 2010 Summer Bridge program.

This summer, I, along with my 200 plus fellow group of Freshman have endured a series of highs and lows, battles and triumphs, and mind changing experiences that will affect us for a long time after this next week.

Bridge: a structure that allows people to cross an obstacle; and/or connect or reduce the distance between.

We all came here looking to get an early start at the work and environment of the university, and to literally bridge the gap between our senior year and the first year

leading to the rest of our lives. UC-Berkeley gave us all of that, and then some.

At the beginning of Summer Bridge, we were all thrown into a world that was obviously going to take some getting adjusted to. In addition to this new environment, we've often had to deal with sleep deprivation, moments of frustration, and the occasional regret of having not viewed the menu before swiping our cards at Café 3.

On top of all of this, the egos that came to us in the mail along with our letters of acceptance were not only shot down to the ground, but trampled over by the work load of our UC Berkeley summer courses.

Yet, we're all still here—proving to the world why we were able to make it here in the first place.

For many of us, the idea of Berkeley alone was enough to intimidate us and question what it was that we did or said throughout the process of filling out our college applications that could have possibly convinced these people to let us in.

Some of us still questioned that even throughout our experiences here at Summer Bridge. But—our R.A.s, councilors, peer advisors and professors made it an important aspect of their everyday discussions with us to let us know that we made it here for a reason—and that message goes much deeper than

just referring to our good grades, past experiences and astonishing good looks. I know this because it's become more than evident to me throughout my time here – through the conversations I've had, talents I've witnessed and the beauty that's emanated from the sea of diverse faces that I've shared a hall with this summer.



In the fall, our comfortable setting is going to be filled with a much larger group of individuals that we're all going to have to adjust to. At a school of over 24,000 undergraduate students alone, all coming from a wide array of different settings, backgrounds, and beliefs – it's got to be difficult to come upon a solid group of people that can genuinely understand your story, share your values, and relate to your struggle.

One reoccurring theme throughout Summer Bridge has been the subject of *community*. We've heard the word repeated since the get-go, over and over again. It's easy to realize, now, though, just how important this concept is and has been since the start.

What's been amazing about the Summer Bridge program is that it has not only been able to initiate and develop this cohesive group of strong and intelligent individuals, but it has also found a way to ground, empower, and further strengthen each one of us in ways that many of us were not expecting.

At the third week of Summer Bridge while on a bus with a group of fellow Bridge students and

R.A.s, I got a phone call from my grandmother that would change my life forever. I'll always remember where I was, who I was with, and the mounds of comfort and embrace that I was given on the day I found out my father had lost his battle to throat cancer.

That night I received a phone call from my cousin, telling me that she felt my pain and letting me know how much she loved and missed me. She said "I know you're up there with nobody to hug and hold onto, but you know your family's always going to be here for you."

It wasn't a moment after that that my R.A., Barira, walked up to where I was sitting on the ground and fell to her knees to give me a long, heartfelt hug that allowed me to realize right then and there that I had everything I needed right where I was at. From then on, I've felt right at home.

Despite the adversity, the stress and the frustration that comes with moving out of our familiar environments and into one marked by both social and academic work and endeavor, we've all been fortunate enough to participate in a program that's paid attention to who we are and to focus on our needs so that when we do come here in the fall, we'll all be able to look back on the community that we were able to form here months beforehand and identify with others in ways that most won't be able to. And find it within ourselves to be able to see this vigorous atmosphere as a source of both comfort *and* audacity. Wisdom *and* fulfillment. And a place that we as a community can call '*home*.'

Community: a group of people living in a particular area; a group of nations having common interests; agreement as to goals.

Before I get to my next point I would like to say that, above all I'm grateful for my experience here at Summer Bridge, and I'm looking

forward to pursuing my goals and interests here at one of the world's leading academic institutions.

I would like to challenge myself within the next four years to seek out opportunities above all odds, and seize them in order to further myself daily.

I challenge myself to travel the world and embrace the beauty of mankind, as well as serve it in as many ways as I possibly can. I challenge myself to study hard and smile as often as possible, and make my family proud of me by all means. And, as a community, I challenge you all to agree to these sorts of goals and pursue your own by any means necessary, and to endure the struggles that will come with our being here.



I want to say thank you to the beautiful staff that has helped us all to succeed in these past five weeks, and supported us through the hard times. To my own R.A., Barira, who will be leaving us two weeks after this is over to pursue her own academic goals in Egypt for a year . . . I love you, and thank you for everything.

Summer Bridge of 2010: You guys are amazing. We've got this. Good luck to everyone on their finals. We'll do great.

Bridge Love. 2010. 2010. 2010.

Eric-Michael Wilson is an incoming freshman at UC-Berkeley.

On Black Awakening in Capitalist America

by Charisse Burden-Stelly

Black Awakening in Capitalist America, originally published in 1969, is a poignant analysis of the Black Nationalist movement in racist, capitalist America. Against the backdrop of a waning Civil Rights movement; lax enforcement of civil rights legislation; massive urban rebellions; progress of the Black middle class but not for the masses; Malcolm X, Elijah Muhammad, Stokely Carmichael, Maulana Karenga, and others espoused Black nationalism as a means to foster group solidarity and as an alternative to integration and outright separatism. This is where Dr. Robert Allen's critique enters. The central thesis is threefold: first, African Americans make up an internal (neo)colony within the United States; second, Black rebels—made up primarily of the Black middle class, CORE, NAACP, most cultural nationalists, and others serve as the “comprador” class (or indirect rulers) of the Black community; and finally, Black radicals have good intentions and rhetoric, but this doesn't translate into a viable radical program.

The argument is grounded in political economy for two reasons. First, if it is true that colonialism and imperialism are primarily driven by (capitalist) economic forces—cheap labor and raw materials, creating Third World markets in which to sell commodities, opening up Third World economies for foreign investment, etc.—then colonialism is part of the base. Racism, oppression, enslavement, ghettoization, etc., then, are part of the superstructure. In other words, the argument seems to be that it is the capitalist formation both nationally and internationally that

requires the “haves” to oppress the “have-nots.” It is important to note, however, that oppression can and does occur under other economic forms.

African America is an internal (neo)colony in much the same way that African countries are (neo) colonies of European imperial powers. That is, ownership resides outside of the Black community; a few elites (house Negroes during slavery, preachers and members of the middle class after emancipation) collaborate and identify with the oppressor for their own personal gain; and resources (in the form of labor) are extracted from the Black community. The transition from an internal colony to an internal neocolony is manifested through the replacement of white direct rule of Black communities with the indirect rule facilitated by the Black, bourgeois, co-opted elite. Black Nationalism (of the 1960s), much like the nationalist movements in Africa and throughout the Third World, is a response to the gross disparities in wealth between the colonizers and the colonized. Capitalism is at the heart of this inequity.

Black capitalism is scrutinized as a means of Black liberation for several reasons. First, it would primarily benefit the middle class (those who need it least) because they are the ones with managerial and entrepreneurial skills. Because the group has an investment in the values of the dominant society, they are easily co-opted and would likely perpetuate domination over the masses. Second, capitalism requires privatization, which undermines the social nature of the Black community and puts resources in the

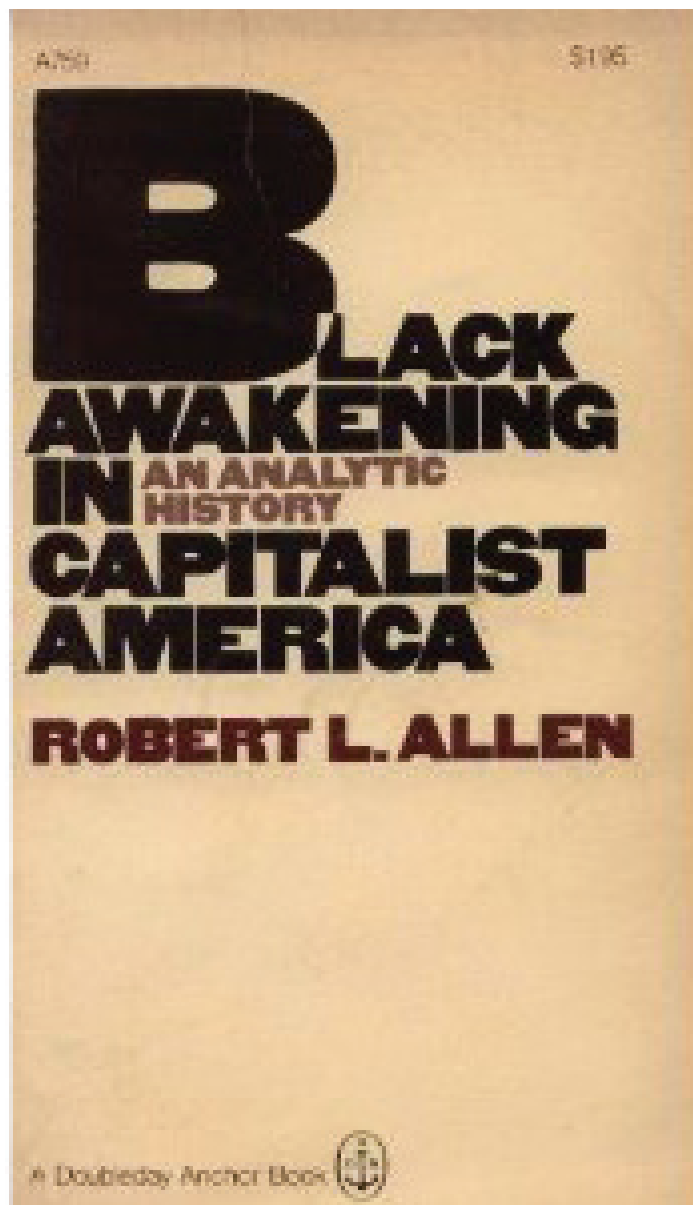
hands of a few. Third, as evidenced by the Ford Foundation, CORE, the National Urban Coalition and others, emphasis on Black capitalism and Black entrepreneurship is meant to undermine the radical Black Nationalist currents in the liberation struggle; the Black capitalist class tends to be more conservative.¹ White corporations and white liberals alike have a vested interest in the Black capitalist class because the latter provides a buffer zone between urban rebellion and the larger society; can palliate the masses; control the Black Liberation movement as a whole; and allow for continued exploitations of the ghettos by white corporations. In addition, Black capitalism is not viable in the long run because it is not competitive with large corporations and there has actually been a decline in black business ownership.

Cultural nationalism fares little better in the eyes of Allen. Because it places an emphasis on culture above politics and economics, valorizes Africa and Blackness to the likely possibility of fascism, and leads to the commodification of Blackness, it is seen by revolutionary nationalists as reactionary. Furthermore, embedded in cultural nationalism is male chauvinism and sexism. Karenga asserts, “The role of the woman is to inspire her man, educate their children and participate in social development. Equality is false it's the devil's concept.”² This can hardly be the basis for liberation. While cultural nationalism has its place in the overall revolution, it cannot be the basis for it.

So what of Black radicals, like Carmichael, SNCC, Rap Brown, and the Black Panther Party; the

true revolutionaries? While they are certainly less likely to be co-opted, according to Allen, because they are typically from the masses; maintain an international outlook and emphasis on coalition building; mobilize students effectively (as evidenced by the takeover of HBCU campuses as well as the formation of Black Studies on several campuses due to agitation); and have implemented programs (such as free breakfast) that have a direct impact on the Black masses, they lack a cohesive revolutionary program. Ambiguous and sometimes contradictory rhetoric, overemphasis on arms and violence, and a tenuous relationship with Black criminals are a few of the shortcomings of Black radicals. Further, the inability to find a balance between a purely nationalist and a purely economic program added to the inability of this group to form a cohesive plan of action.³ Despite this, Allen maintains that the potential for revolution lies with this group.

Allen revisits *Black Awakening* in his 2005 article “Reassessing the relevance of the Internal (Neo) Colonialism Theory.” He argues that while neocolonialism was in its nascent stages in 1969, it has indeed come into full fruition in this particular globalized moment. The prison industrial complex, the contemporary manifestation of Black fears of concentration camps in the 1960s, has served to incarcerate and disenfranchise the Black community (specifically Black males).⁴ “The Black professional middle class has become the indirect ruler, serving as the buffer zone between white affluence and Black abjection.



They serve as the model of Black progress, although the majority of the Black community is still mired in unemployment, homelessness, and economic destitution.⁵ The Black capitalist class, as Allen predicted, has failed to proliferate due to increased white corporate competition in Black communities and budget cuts of the 1970s-1990s.⁶ While there has been an increase of Black Elected Officials, they are increasingly subjected to the whims of the white power structure, as Black unemployment, crime, etc. have turned inner cities into “rebellious colonies and urban battlegrounds.”⁷ Allen argues that globalization, with its massive

displacement of workers of color, can be the basis for social change—that is, the increase of immigrants of color in the US and other developed nations can serve as the basis for multiethnic progressive coalitions. While right-wing conservatives are doing all that they can to disenfranchise people of color, advance market globalization, and continue racial and class hierarchies, Allen sees social globalization as a way to fight back.

While Allen’s book is convincing in its analysis of the Black communities’ response to the dominant racist, capitalist society, it is not without its shortcomings. First, Allen’s critique of the Black bourgeoisie throughout the book is at times inconsistent, especially in his reliance on W.E.B DuBois, who was an unapologetic member of the Black middle class. His treatment of Stokely Carmichael as well is contradictory—he is a

revolutionary, yet his ambivalent rhetoric is attributed to his being of the middle class. Despite his bourgeois background, Carmichael is an example of a revolutionary leader. Second, while Allen asserts that colonialism prevents the proliferation of a competitive middle class, it has been evidenced that colonialism (both domestic and international) aids in the formation of a middle class because a chosen few are allowed to prosper so that they can be the “eyes and ears” of the colonial masters. Third, the gendered nature of his book is glaring, with less than five pages dedicated to a discussion of Black

women. While this may be a product of the Black Power movement itself, it seems hypocritical in that he laments the male chauvinism of the cultural nationalists. Fourth, Allen valorizes the Black masses as if they cannot be co-opted with the promise of stability and prosperity. The fact that they have less than the middle class does not necessarily mean that they do not share the same values. Frankly, if it is status that alienates the Black bourgeoisie from the rest of the community, putting the masses in charge of the struggle could very well yield the same results. Finally, in the last chapter, Allen advocates for a “cooperative commonwealth” as the basis of Black economics, rejecting capitalism all together. This is because he equates America’s particularly ruthless form of neoliberal corporate capitalism with capitalism in toto. Before socialism can be achieved, even according to Marx, a form of capitalism must be implemented to generate capital.

The two points of contention in Allen’s 2005 article are as follows. First, he sees social globalization as a means of coalition building between ethnic groups, discounting the fact that as inequality increases, groups tend to retreat into ethnic particularities, some of which are opposed. As unemployment increases, groups have the propensity to blame the other for “taking jobs,” increasing interethnic tension. In addition, I would call into question Allen’s contention that we are in a post-industrial era of globalization. While western countries have switched to a primarily service-based industry, industrialization has simply moved offshore to Global South countries, and is indeed one of the sources of unemployment on the one hand, and increased corporate profits on the other.

Despite these shortcomings, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America* has proven to be extremely

prophetic in its analysis of the trend toward pushing Blacks out of corporations; the unsustainability of corporate programs in the ghetto during recession; and the overall ineffectiveness of Black capitalism in liberation. The shift toward Neoliberalism and retrenchment in the 1980s that is still pervasive today seems to be, at least in part, emblematic of white corporations’ success in co-opting the revolutionaries, palliating uprisings, and creating that small Black business class that supposedly represents the community at large. Allen makes this point evident in his 2005 article. As Latinos replace Blacks as the largest minority, and neoliberal politics downsize government and social programs, Allen correctly sees the writing on the wall when corporate and bourgeois interests take precedent over solidarity and community.

(Endnotes)

- 1 Allen, Robert. *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*. Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1992. p. 155.
- 2 *ibid.* p. 160.
- 3 *ibid.* p. 265.
- 4 Allen, Robert L. “Reassessing the Internal (Neo)colonialism Theory. *The Black Scholar*. 35:1(2005): 2.
- 5 *ibid.* p. 6.
- 6 *ibid.* p. 8.
- 7 *ibid.* p. 9.

Charisse Burden-Stelly is a graduate student in UC-Berkeley’s African Diaspora Studies Ph.D program.

Editor’s Note

We are all deeply saddened to hear of the sudden passing of former editor and colleague Carmen Mitchell. Her presence will be deeply missed within the department. We hope that as a community we will come together to support each other and continue to foster a space where we can all grow as people and as scholars, and in this time especially that we create an environment of peace and healing to complement our intellectual rigor.

To Carmen:

Working with you has been a pleasure. Your smile always shined before you as you walked through the halls of Barrows. Your soft voice always had kind words. Your presence brought a welcomed peace to our department. Your memory will warm our hearts and your quiet grace will always remain with us.

Ashé



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Carmen Mitchell

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