



THE DIASPORA

Department of African American Studies • University of California, Berkeley

SPRING-SUMMER 2011

St. Clair Drake Symposium

Empowering Women of Color Conference

VèVè A. Clark Institute for Engaged Scholars of African American Studies



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.

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THE DIASPORA

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Words from the Chair

by Charles P. Henry

“Berkeley in Transition”

One can't turn on the TV or pick up a newspaper without hearing about the “budget crisis.” It affects everyone reading this newsletter and the African American Studies Department is no exception. Of course, as a public institution, it is the State of California's budget crisis that affects us most directly. Although the talk is about the current crisis, it is worth noting that the state has been spending more than it takes in for some time. And even with that spending the amount going to education has been steadily eroding for years.

Spending for kindergarten through 12th grade has dropped from \$9000 per student per year to roughly \$7,900 per year in less than 10 years. This ranks us 31st among all states nationwide. The decline in our educational investment is reflected in the decline in math achievement where we rank 48th and reading achievement where we are 49th. At a time when we should be increasing our educational investment to compete globally, we are going the opposite direction as we increase our spending for prisons.

Over the last 40 years, per student spending in higher education (in constant 2010 dollars) has declined from slightly less than \$25,000 to less than \$20,000. The University of California system has been asked to take another budget cut this year of approximately \$1.5 billion and the next few years don't look much better. State budget

experts project a \$20 billion yearly deficit through 2015-2016.

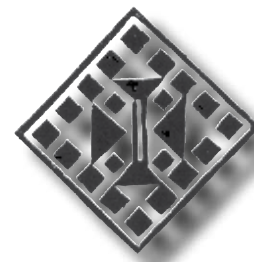
The harsh reality is reflected in the decreasing proportion of Berkeley's revenue that comes from the state. In 2003-4, state funding made up the largest single segment of campus funding followed by federal revenue, philanthropy, and tuition. Next year, federal revenue will comprise our greatest source of financial support followed by student tuition, philanthropy, and lastly state revenue.

This dramatic shift in the university's sources of revenue has some noteworthy consequences. First, federal research funding is skewed toward the natural sciences further exacerbating the gap between “rich” departments and “poor” departments. Second, increasing the tuition burden means more student debt and more students working at jobs rather than studying. Moreover, as the university seeks to make up decreasing state revenue by increasing the number of out-of-state students from 11.6% in 2009 to 31.2% in 2011, it will likely reduce the number of African American students on campus. Most Black middle class families who live out-of-state simply cannot afford the roughly \$50,000 it would take to send a student to Berkeley. Third, philanthropy is an area where Black alumni, friends, and family can make a difference. A great example of a program meeting this new challenge is the Cal Black College Access Scholarship. This program, run by Stiles Hall, gives 25 African American students \$5000 a year for four years. The

results for students admitted over the past two years are impressive. Students with the fellowships have an average GPA of 3.4 versus a GPA of 2.9 for all Black students. Finally, as a public institution we need to refocus the citizens of the state on its responsibility to provide affordable education. Even in the current political climate we cannot give up on the dream of making higher education accessible to every student in California.



Charles Henry,
H. Michael and Jeanne Williams Chair



Shame and Worry as Conceptual Motives and Behavioral Responses to Community Violence Among African American Males

by Jarvis Givens

The following is an excerpt from “Big Boys Don’t Cry, Black Boys Don’t Feel,” coauthored by Waldo E. Johnson Jr., David J. Pate Jr., and Jarvis Ray Givens and published in *Changing Places: How Communities Will Improve the Health of Boys of Color*, edited by Christopher Edley and Jorge Ruiz de Velasco. (c) 2011 by the Regents of the University of California. Published by the University of California Press.

ABSTRACT

In the fall of 2009, Derrion Albert, a sixteen-year-old African American male honor student at Chicago’s Christian Fenger Academy High School, made international news. On his way home from school, Albert was brutally attacked and murdered by a group of assailants. It is alleged that he was caught in a brawl involving factions of two neighborhood gangs. Albert had no affiliation with either of the gangs; he was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. This chapter explores Derrion Albert’s death and situates it within the context of violence between and among African American males more broadly. Specifically, this chapter examines the intersection between the social construction of masculinity among African American young males and violence in low-income urban communities. The authors conduct three levels of analysis to explore the social determinants of health and mental well-being at the individual, community, and social system levels. The first part discusses two current theoretical determinants of community violence: shame and worry. The second part employs an examination of print and Web-based archival data to reassess Derrion Albert’s murder and community responses to that event, within the context of individual and community shame and worry.

The Derrion Albert story can be very easily written off as just another

case of urban youth violence—an all too frequent phenomenon in communities like those that Albert traversed daily. Absent from most accounts, is an analysis of the motivations of the alleged perpetrators of the crime. Thus, subsequent to the initial shock and public outcry, many similar incidents are simply dismissed as black males killing other black males. These young males are typically characterized as innately hyper-aggressive, pre-disposed to both interpersonal and community violence, and intrinsically inhumane. They are perceived as such because society offers little or no critical insight or reasoning as to why these events of community violence are largely situated within African American communities, and in this case, almost exclusively among adolescent and young adult African American males. Frequently reports in newspaper articles, local news stations, and other popular media depict very superficial accounts of Black male violence. Thus, a shallow understanding of these young males has become standard practice in reporting their daily activities and the lack of contextual understanding of their numbing, violent responses to the interplay of individual and structural factors go largely unchallenged.

This essay offers an alternative conceptual argument that affirms that such violent behavior is appalling, yet simultaneously positing that these young males are,

in part, reacting to other structural phenomena. As perpetrators of community violence, these young males are responding to macro structural forces and public policies that inadvertently motivate such behavior. This account builds on two conceptual perspectives, shame and worry, as being significantly part in parcel of community violence amongst African American males.

In this discussion shame is referenced as “an overwhelmingly powerful emotion that is associated with feelings of worthlessness, inferiority, and damaged self image (De Hooge, Zeleenberg, and Breugelmans in press).” The concept of shame challenges one to think more critically about how individuals who commit unprovoked acts of violence against fellow community members view themselves, and how their self-perception may trigger certain behavioral responses to the presence of others. The question of how self-perception develops is critical to this discussion and can be understood as resulting from media depictions, as well as from a sense of diminished socio-economic status. When these young men are socialized to embrace certain gender roles, with respect to male responsibility, and are unable to meet these expectations, the result can become a shameful and conditioning experience.. For these young men, diminished socioeconomic status is widely reflected in virtually every social dimension of their life experience

as well as in the lived experiences of those with whom they associate. It is intergenerational.

However, shame may manifest as something that young men endeavor to hide or mask. Majors and Billson (1992) identify cool-pose as young African American males' attempt to hide their frustration or shame by appearing completely emotionless, and may result in other unhealthy forms of masculine identity to assert and maintain social constructions of manhood. According to this perspective, the idea of being (or at least appearing) apathetic, indifferent or detached to emotions or events that affect the individual is a coping mechanism used to maintain sanity and perceived psychological balance. In other words, these young males appear or choose not to work towards attaining things that may be foreign or unattainable (education, obtaining jobs in the legitimate labor market, being a supportive father or husband). Instead enacting aggression and violence can be used as a means by which they acquire the respect or power that would otherwise escape them, and in the process these young males seek to appear neither ashamed nor weak.

The link between masculinity and aggression can be partly understood from a social learning perspective, in which media images, cultural expectations, and adult male modeling of aggressive responses influence men's beliefs and behaviors associated with anger and hostility. However, expressions of hostility and aggression may serve a more immediate, emotion-regulatory function for men; men may learn to regulate their emotional experiences by using aggression and hostility

to terminate their experience of vulnerable emotions, such as fear and shame (Jakupcak, Tull, Roemer 2005)."

Shame, therefore, can operate as a stimulant for violence. There are a number of reasons why so many young men and boys are ashamed or maintain a negative self-view. In the case of Derrion Albert, the community is poverty-stricken. Drug abuse, broken homes, and lack of educational opportunity largely characterize the environment and likely affect the young men involved in the brawl that killed Derrion Albert. In communities such as these, the intense shame among residents is increasingly manifested as community violence.

In exploring this concept of shame, it is important to also understand how aggression and violence are attributable to the development of masculinity as defined by Western standards. This is important to note because while young African American males may be unable to affirm their manhood in socially acceptable ways such as through work or educational attainment; they may assert their masculinity through violence. Furthermore, to compensate for the diminished sense of power or respect gained through socially acceptable channels (e.g., employment, status or conspicuous display of personal wealth), young black males may come to be hyper-aggressive and violent. Hedgepeth (2006) discusses the intersection of shame and aggression in the following manner:

Among lower working-class, racial minority boys, the youth group or gang is the central arena within which masculinity is enacted. The street, rather than school or workplace, provides gang members with the resources to display manhood. Crime

becomes a means of transcending class and race domination and an important resource for accomplishing gender. In this setting, the gang is the public repository for a collective staging of manhood.

Hedgepeth stresses that community spaces or streets where gangs form, become a stage on which gender can be enacted and defined. As opposed to dealing with the shame associated with the lack of accessibility to jobs or a proper education, violence and aggression in the street becomes the alternative. Community violence serves as a mechanism to escape the powerlessness and shame that comes with being apart of a subordinate group. Within this theoretical frame, the brutal killing of Derrion Albert can be seen as a performance of young black men struggling to maintain a purpose for their existence within the norm of western gender politics. While this may seem extreme, it is important to understand that at the core of one's humanity is the longing to have a positive self-view and to be at peace with one's individuality.

However, when a person is ashamed his positive self-image is challenged, as is their feeling of self-worth (De Hooze, Zeelenberg, Breugelmans in press). Therefore, the young men involved in the brawl that killed Albert were going to extreme measures to validate their masculinity because in just about every other sector of society they are devalued. As Phillips states, "The harsher the environment, the more accentuated the behavior. The more depleted the resources for augmenting manhood, the higher the stakes for the accrual of honor." (Hedgepeth 2006)

The next stage to this model is worry, or the anxiety that comes with keeping uncontrollable realities or feelings private from the outside world. Worry is the after-thought of shame. If a boy is ashamed, he will worry about others finding out and viewing him as weak. As stated before, shame in a young man by dominant standards is not a positive attribute. Feelings can be interpreted as weakness while on the other hand anger equates to strength. This leads young men to believe that to protect themselves they should suppress the feelings that are characterized as weak and amplify anger. Therefore, worry can be seen as the linkage between shame and aggression. While shame is created internally when a young boy does not measure up, it is the worry about how others will view him that drives him to aggressive

behavior as he seeks to mask his emotions or to maintain respect as a masculine being. Amongst these young boys is the fear of losing face if their shame is exposed (Jakupcak, Tull, Roemer 2005).

The progression from shame to worry and then to violence is a symptom that has become commonplace in Black urban communities. Young African American males have been positioned such that they have far more to be ashamed of than proud, therefore as young males they worry about masking their negative self-image and feelings of worthlessness. Thus they are left with violence as their most adept means of asserting personal agency, protecting their manhood, and validating their worth. This stress and strife serves as a “powerful predictor of future life difficulties

(Rich, 2009).” Rich asserts that “trauma looms even larger in the hostile environments in which these young men live.”

It drives their reactions and decisions and disrupts their normal supportive relationships that all of us depend on. In this same environment, there is great pressure to “be a man” (perhaps in the presumed and real absence of men serving in more traditional roles as residential and custodial fathers) and not acknowledge these [daily] traumas, lest they appear weak. The pressure not to be seen as weak piles on even more pressure to prove that they are strong. All of these pressures prime the pump for the cycle of violence.

Jarvis Givens is a student in UC-Berkeley's African Diaspora Ph.D. program.

2011 Year-End St. Clair Drake Research Symposium



Professor Leigh Raiford
(African American Studies, UC Berkeley) welcomes participants and attendees



Cecilio S. Cooper
Performance Studies, UC Davis



Omar Ricks, Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies, UC Berkeley & Gregory Caldwell, History of Consciousness, UC Santa Cruz



**Marginalization and Mobilization:
Social Movements, History, and Political Activism of the Diaspora** panelled by the AAS Department
Bryan Wagner, Ph.D., English, UC Berkeley, Ronald Williams II, African American Studies,
UC Berkeley, Ugo Edu, Medical Anthropology, UCSF & UC Berkeley,
Robert Connell, African American Studies, UC Berkeley
9:30 – 10:30 am, Genocidal Medi(t)ations: Aesthetic Representations and Antiracism, for Leigh Raiford



Ronald Williams II
UC Berkeley



Bryan Wagner, Ph.D.
UC Berkeley



Ugo Edu
UCSF & UC Berkeley



Robert Connell
UC Berkeley



Professor Abdul JanMohamed
UC Berkeley



**Professors Abdul JanMohamed, English, UC Berkeley & David
Marriott, History of Consciousness, UC Santa Cruz**



Professor David Marriott
UC Santa Cruz



Popular Culture, Visual Culture, and Performance panel
 (l to r) Jasmine Johnson, African American Studies, UC Berkeley, Lia Bascomb, African American Studies, UC Berkeley, Cecil Brown, Ph.D., Berkeley Center for New Media, UC Berkeley and Tracy McMullen, Ph.D., Gender and Women's Studies, UC Berkeley

Join us for a conversation with Professor Abdul JanMohamed, *Consciousness, and Professor Abdul JanMohamed*

2:35 - 3:50 pm: *Popular Culture, Visual Culture, and Performance*

- Lia T. Bascomb, UC Berkeley, African American Studies
"I'm So Proud to Be Your Queen": Representing Barbadian Feminist Postcolonial Identity Formation
- Cecil Brown, Ph.D., UC Berkeley, Berkeley Center for New Media
A Brief History of Gerald Lawson's Life



Aurora Levins-Morales, Ph.D.
 author; *Getting Home Alive and Remedios: Stories of Earth and Iron from the History of Puertorriquenos*



Aya de Leon
 Director of Poetry for the People
 African American Studies, UC Berkeley

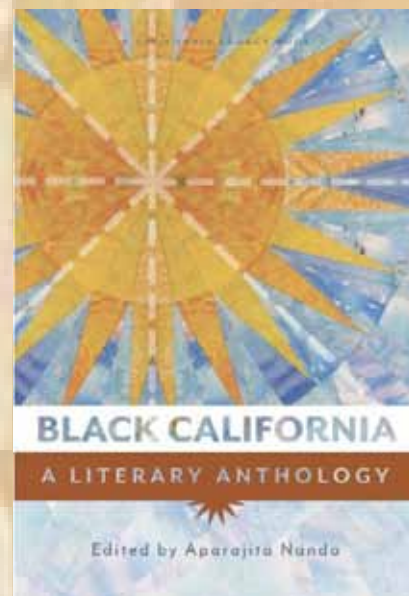
5:05 PM: Join us as Professor Aparajita Nanda, UC Berkeley African American Studies, presents her latest book, *Black California: A Literary Anthology*, in conversation with Professor [Name], UC Berkeley Department Chair, African American Studies.



novelists Jacqueline Fredericks, Ayize Jama-Everett, Stuart McCalla, and Pam Harris

New Faculty Publication

Black California:
 A Literary Anthology
 Edited by Aparajita Nanda
 Heyday Books
 1 March 2011
 978-1-59714-146-8



26TH ANNUAL EMPOWERING WOMEN of COLOR 2011 CONFERENCE

BUILDING ACROSS DIFFERENCE: INCITING A MOVEMENT OF OUR OWN

MSL STUDENT UNION, UC BERKELEY FEBRUARY 19TH, 2011

by Kimberly McNair

EWOC, the nation's oldest and largest Women of Color Conference now in its 26th consecutive year, made history at UC Berkeley's Martin Luther King Jr., Student Union on February 19th, 2011.



The conference hosted Angela Davis, Ericka Huggins, and Dylcia Pagán as keynote speakers, as well as recording artist Goapele. This year's keynotes are internationally known activists, educators, and former political prisoners; and are immensely important to the various Bay Area communities of color our attendees represent. Goapele is a local artist who has performed nationally and has been featured on MTV, BET, in *VIBE* magazine, *Entertainment Weekly*, and *Billboard* magazine; and most recently performed on the 2010 Soul Train Music awards.

The conference theme this year was "Building Across Difference: Inciting a Movement of Our Own" and EWOC 2011 focused on critical questions and conversations relating to activism, mental health awareness, and building across difference amongst each other and with allies. The goal this year was to provide a space for critical analyses as a way to produce generative dialogue necessary for the empowerment of women of color.

A year of planning went into making this one-day event a success. Over 650 women and men, students and community members – representing every generation and spanning the spectrum of racial and ethnic identities, abilities, socio-economic and citizenship statuses, sexualities, religions, and cultural backgrounds – met to honor the legacy of women of color and our struggles; and to engage with allies to develop new strategies to address current struggles as informed and empowered activists on our own terms. The "Artist" panel was a lively discussion featuring Goapele, Favi, and Ka'ra Kersey who are artists and activists who use different mediums of art to express experiences of struggle and activism. These women shared their



cultural and creative experiences and how they influence their work and political activism.

The 26th annual conference was a time for encouraging coalition building and alliances between male feminists of color and white women allies; and this year we incorporated space within our program to foster those relationships. We heard from Yosimar Reyes, Marco Flores, Richard M. Wright, and Kyle Casey during the very popular Male Feminist of Color panel. This panel focused on the social constructs of race, gender, and sexuality and their intersections within the lives of men of color. The panelists discussed how they have taken up the politics of feminism as a means of empowerment for their respective communities of color.



The only misfortunes present in the day's event were the lack



of heat in the building, and a lack of adequate space for workshop attendees. However, these were unavoidable due to the influx of people who attended the conference; we expected 400 participants, but over 650 people actually attended. The building's furnace was broken and out of service, so the MLK Union was cold for the entire day. It also rained all day during the conference. However, the cramped space, cold building, and weather conditions did not deter people from attending and being inspired. The energy in the air was intense and electric, and there seemed to be a party happening in every corner. Attendees remained engaged and lively, because everyone was eager to hear from our keynotes and panelists.

Our goal for this year's conference was to build bridges between women of color and our allies, and to assist women of color in sharing resources, strategies, and visions that will empower them at all levels of society. We also strive to build networks between different generations, ethnic and racial groups, socioeconomic levels, sexual orientations, and physical abilities. Few forums exist wherein women of color are provided the space to dialogue about the issues that matter most to them. EWOCC

provides such a forum. The conference may be a campus event, but it exists to serve the greater Bay Area communities of color. This year we received an overwhelming amount of evaluation feedback that reflected the participants' satisfaction with the event, and their ideas for next year.

We are very happy with the outcome of the conference. We also feel that the 26th Anniversary gave the committee and the participants an opportunity to reestablish our goals for the future of EWOCC and other events. We were able to garner funding from several co-sponsors including the African American Studies Department, the Ethnic Studies Department, the Gender & Women's Studies Department, the Ethnic Studies 5th Account, the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Equity and Inclusion, the Cross Cultural Student Development Office, the Center for Race and Gender, the Gender and Equity Resource Center, the Associated Students of the University of California, and the Graduate Assembly Projects. EWOCC was featured on several media outlets

including *Curve Magazine*, KBLX, KMEL and KPFA radio stations; and the Women of Color Initiative project coordinator, gave several interviews for area newsletters and v-logs including *Shades Magazine*, *SF Bay View*, Wanda's Picks, and More Public Radio International. We documented the event via video and photographs. We had workshop facilitators and participants who came from places such as Toronto, Pennsylvania, Oregon, and Southern California.

And now, on to next year..... Planning has already begun, and the 27th Annual Empowering Women of Color Conference will be held on Saturday, March 3rd, 2012 at the UC Berkeley MLK Student Union. Save the date! And if you're interested in joining the wonderful collective of women who comprise our planning committee please send an email to woci@ga.berkeley.edu.

Kimberly McNair is a student in the African Diaspora Studies Ph.D. program at the University of California, Berkeley. She is also the EWOCC 2011 Conference Coordinator and the Women of Color Initiative Project Coordinator at UC-Berkeley's Graduate Assembly.



Caramel Apple

by Brionne Janae

we float in
magic of two
shy
awkward
hands held
and warmed
with the heat
of a rocket engine
rumbling slow and steady

together we could've gone
to the stars
but we went
to Starbucks
instead

you open the door
looking more redfaced
than milky
I stare
giggling at apple red cheeks
want to drizzle caramel
fingers over them
and see if I can find
that spot
bet its white hot
where my lips
grazed your cheeks
in a moment of
shy boldness

a woman follows us in
pale and spotted
bent but persistent
silver not gray
you hold open the door for her
then rush back to me

arm eager to rediscover
my waist
shoulder aching
for the weight of
my head
you take my hand
then magically
twirl me into you
I wrestle the urge
to fill dimples
with caramel sweetness
there are too many eyes

and we are soooo shy
young
and new

I spy her
staring
at us

smile
she glares
eyes like two blow torches
aimed to kill
apparently she doesn't
care that the fifteen seconds
spent apart
as you held open the door
for her
was the longest
moment
of our lives

she starts mumbling to herself
voice hissing to other people
I start to feel like a brownie
in a shop full of wedding cakes

people are staring at her
then me
their eyes form an apology
her lips form the word
repeatedly
I grab your hand
twirl around stop
dead in front you
bury myself
in your shirt
you lift my head
your eyes are two
question marks
I kiss your cheek
quick and light
you ignite like a fire
truck siren whirling
towards a lazy kitten
stuck in tree
flushed scarlet

delighted
I turn and find her face
knotted with rage
smile
into her eyes
giggling
you take my hand

we float away
magic of two
shy awkward hands
held and warmed
with the heat of a
rocket engine rumbling
slow steady and

I think
together
maybe
we'll go to the stars

*Brionne Janae is a student in June
Jordan's Poetry for the People
program housed in the African
American Studies department at
UC-Berkeley.*

Book Review:

Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare:

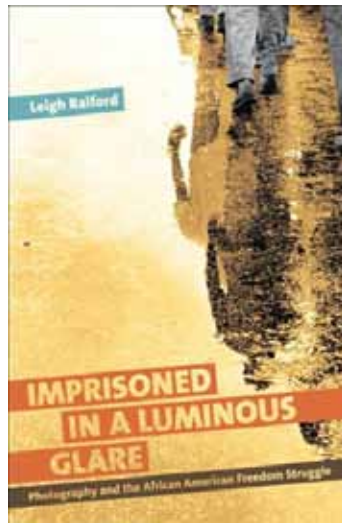
Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle

by Leigh Raiford (The University of North Carolina Press, 2011)

by Jasmine E. Johnson

Leigh Raiford's *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* analyzes the role of photography in three black social movements: the 1930s' Antilynching Campaigns, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. Her text's pursuit is embodied largely by the Martin Luther King Jr. quote from which it borrows its title. In King's 1964 book *Why We Can't Wait*, he signals the important role visual media played in the 1964 Civil Rights Act campaigns: "The brutality with which officials would have quelled the black individual became impotent when it could not be pursued with stealth and remain unobserved. It was caught—as a fugitive from a penitentiary is often caught—in gigantic circling spotlights. It was imprisoned in a luminous glare revealing the naked truth to the whole world." The theoretical thread that stitches together Raiford's text is the very tension that King's excerpt evokes: the photograph both gave attention to and rendered visible the violence hurled against black peoples (and the agency activists enacted to resist such assaults) even while the photograph froze or imprisoned the subjects (and subjectivities) within the photo's frame. This double bind—that of making *legible* that which was previously unseen by those who were not direct witnesses, yet rendering *invisible* the excesses and complexities spilling over the photo's edges—is what anchors Raiford's text. She urges us to read the photograph "as both artifact and artifice, as indexical record and utopian vision, as document

and performance."¹ Raiford goes about this by making a two-pronged argument: 1) that photography had a serious impact on black social movements (insofar as it promulgated its goals, publicized its efforts, and narrated its histories), and 2) that black activists' changing relationship to the photograph proves that black American social movements deeply influenced the politics of photography and black visibility.²



The first chapter, "No Relation to The Facts about Lynching," examines white-on-black lynching and antilynching photographs as sites of contestation between both white and black Americans regarding the possession of the black body. In the hands of whites, lynching photographs were a way of performing white racial identity through the (photographic) possession of dead black bodies; but those same images — of mutilated, burned, dangling black corpses — were also used by blacks to unmake the dominant racial order. Raiford argues that "lynching functioned as both an end and a means of

'reading meaning into blackness' in a postslavery society, a way of containing the black body's ability to pass as citizen by re-reifying, and often disembodiment, it as commodity."³ Offering "critical black memory" as a way in which to understand how black peoples have designed futures out of past events, this chapter also asks readers to think about the ways these lynching photographs "function as a site of struggle over how to memorialize the dead, how to organize for the future, [and] also [reveal] the vagaries of an ossified memory."⁴

In the second chapter, "Come Let Us Build a New World Together," Raiford argues that photography was essential to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's (SNCC) activism in the televisual age. In its early years (1960-64) photography was a way for the organization to control its own image. SNCC used photography to challenge a white racial order through images of "the beloved community": their pictures gave way to the kind of multi-racial and fair society SNCC envisioned. Thus "SNCC photographs served as both performances of liberatory possibility and as documents of democracy in action," the sum of which rendered "Visions of utopia as seen from the frontlines."⁵ The photographs embody/capture both goal and strategy -- they reveal the kind of society SNCC hoped to create while they snapshot the democratic methods that SNCC utilized to achieve such a vision. Later (1964-66) SNCC Photo revealed the multiplicity of opinion on the vision of the organization; Raiford argues that during the next two years (1966-68) the organization's photographs strove

to facilitate a conversation between black peoples on the heterogeneity of black identity that was flattened out by a broad and homogenous “blackness.” Raiford refers to this changing role of photography as “heteroscopic,” an idea which “refer[s] to the range of visions and diversity of photographic expressions of a movement that from the outside appeared uniform and unified.”⁶

In this chapter Raiford also shows how SNCC Photo was more than purely indexical through a consideration of the organization’s main photographers: Danny Lyon and later, Julius Lester. Here she discusses the photographer as “artist and auteur” – a role that generated tension between “photographer” and “activist” and one that proved difficult for SNCC’s movement photographers. The factions that emerged over the role of SNCC Photo (particularly post- “Freedom Summer”) underscore the tensions that were festering within SNCC itself. Rather than seeing SNCC Photo as a homogenous expression of the organization, it conversely reveals the diversity of perspectives that actually characterized the organization.

“Attacked First By Sight,” the third chapter, shifts its attention to the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. Here Raiford traces the Party’s struggle over its own meaning, purpose, and legacy through visual images “that took place between the dominant culture, the state, the party and ‘the people.’”⁷ Such a focus helps us better understand not just the inner workings of the BPP, but the American 1968 social climate more broadly. Advancing technologies and shifts in the ways images and news circulated (for example the strengthening of the underground press and the consolidation of media outlets) influenced the Party’s relationship to the visual. Raiford reads the Panthers as both

subject and commodity. She uses “dialects of seeing” to theorize the relationship between the viewer and the photographic subject, a way to “describe the process by which one can better understand history through its condensation and assemblage in the material, visual object.”⁸ The Panthers sought a different image of blackness and, through a consideration of Emory Douglas’s work, Raiford argues that the shift from the photograph to the collage or bricolage represented a move from the notion of blackness as essence to an understanding of blackness as a series of signs. In short, the visual images sponsored by and about the BPP recast or transfigured the meaning of black bodies in public space. The Panthers revised the black image by taking those things which had previously been cast as “negative” into “positive” representations of blackness.

The conclusion, “Or Was It the Pictures That Made Her Unrecognizable?,” examines the meaning and circulation of black social movement photography contemporarily through readings of *Without Sanctuary, Road to Freedom: Photographs of the Civil Rights Movement, 1956-1968*, and *Black Panther Rank and File*. Through these traveling exhibits Raiford raises questions about the ways in which photographic archives of black social movements have been managed by curators, ultimately urging us to treat memory as itself a mode of criticism. “Photography stands at the crossroads of history and memory” Raiford writes.⁹ Her reading of the vexed nature of photographs and their continued consumption in this concluding chapter drives this point home well.

Raiford is at her best when reading photographic images. Her readings are clear and rich—often lovely—revealing complex dynamics that are so revelatory

they make you wonder how you hadn’t thought of them before. Her readings of antilynching photos strike a particularly incisive note. For example, in reading “A Man Was Lynched Today” (a photograph of the NAACP antilynching campaign wherein they announced news of lynchings on a banner outside the organization’s New York City Fifth Avenue office), Raiford reveals how this particular campaign (and the photograph of it) signals the fragmentation of black peoples, even in its effort to “constitute a unified and resistant black spectatorship.”¹⁰ She reads, in this image, evidence of the very real geographic distance between the lynching referent (rural south) and the location of the NAACP’s announcement of it (cosmopolitan north). She goes on to further explicate structures of inequality embodied in this photo: “Void of people and place, and with no mention of race, the text of the banner stands in for all. The white lettering on the black background provides a visual meditation on the racial dynamics of lynching. The use of text as a surrogate for a corpse suggests an attempt to bridge the distance of life journeys and produce a uniform context below 69 Fifth Avenue. [...] Place and distance each determine one’s proximity to the terror of lynching and to the experience of viewing its representation. Gender clearly does as well. By referencing the lynching of men only, the NAACP banner stands in textually for the absent black male corpse; it functions as a surrogate.”¹¹

Raiford reads iconic images with a refreshingly savvy insight. Such an analysis as the one above is just one of the author’s many successful readings. By resisting a reading practice of lynching photographs as, in the hands of black folk, wholly “positive” representations Raiford achieves an incredibly nuanced reading that maintains (throughout

the text) a raced, classed, and gendered analysis. It must also be said that throughout *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare* Raiford practices a black feminist cultural criticism, excavating the gender politics that have been usurped by issues of race and (sometimes) class that have proven to be the predominant readings of the photographic archives which concern the book.

Raiford's book is a great example of what rigorous interdisciplinarity can look like and will prove useful to the disciplines of Black Studies, Visual Studies, Gender and Women's Studies and also Performance Studies. One of Raiford's most profound interventions is that of moving past the photograph-as-indexical and ushering us into more compelling wrestlings with photography as a strategy toward black self-making. Raiford excavates the aporetic nature of photographs and insists that we read them as working performatively. More than simply "revealing" what is supposedly there to be plainly read, the author argues that these photographs did and continue to do their own kind of ideological, activist, and cultural "work." *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare* achieves the goal it sets out early in the text: to examine the role of photography in African American social movements as a struggle "through and for the black body, the black eye, and black memory."¹²

(Endnotes)

- 1 p. 23.
- 2 p. 24.
- 3 p. 54.
- 4 p. 64.
- 5 pp. 127-128.
- 6 p. 128.
- 7 pp. 155-156.
- 8 p. 143.
- 9 p. 235.
- 10 p. 54.
- 11 p. 52.
- 12 p. 31.

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Editor's Note

Why the *Diaspora*? When UC-Berkeley's African Diaspora Ph.D program was founded it expanded the scope of the African American Studies department by bringing top graduate students into its fold and widening the content of its vision

The *Diaspora* newsletter continues the work of expansion that the graduate program began. It serves as a connection to our comrades across the campus and throughout the field, allowing the department to present its work and to share its rhythms of scholarly movement. Through these pages, readers get an idea of the progress of graduate students, the publications of faculty, as well as the triumphs and concerns of our undergraduates and alumni. It is my hope that this publication serves to expand our conversations, our audiences, and our modes of thought, while it helps us (as scholars, artists, and intellectually curious people) to speak through and about the many voices of diaspora and African diaspora studies.

The *Diaspora* provides the space where social science explorations of the role that emotions such as shame and worry play in community violence can meet theatrical reimaginings of a history of black representation "At Buffalo." This issue is colored with the personal tales of an unpopular love, which, like a "Caramel Apple," contains a healthy core that meets the world with a dangerously sweet coating. It gives insight into one of the largest Women of Color Conferences in the nation and honors one of the founders of our Ph.D. program by announcing the VèVè A. Clark Institute for Engaged Scholars of African American Studies. Her colleagues' are featured through their work: Aparajita Nanda's reconstruction

of California through the many voiced history of black literature, and Leigh Raiford's understanding of the traps, possibilities, purposes, and effects of photography and its potential to create change as well as fix perspective.

The work that the department does sustains and furthers the field of Black Studies. I hope in the hands of you, the reader, such work can grow and continue; that it inspires you to act, to share, to continue to build the networks of knowledge that the *Diaspora* represents; and that it allows you to find a space for your own voice in the chorus of the African Diaspora and its associate communities.

I would like to thank the editors before me and everyone who has contributed their words, advice, time, effort, and support. Publications such as this one allow us to document the pulse of our department. I hope the next editor enjoys the honor as much as I have. In the words of Dr. Clark, "A final comment: to defamiliarize our tidy, binary constructs is in *marasa* practice to divine: the rhythm is gonna getcha, the rhythm is gonna getcha, the rhythm is gonna getcha."¹

-Lia T. Bascomb



(Endnotes)

- 1 Clark, VeVe. "Developing Diaspora Literacy and *Marasa* Consciousness." In *Comparative American Identities: Race, Sex, and Nationality in the Modern Text*, edited by Hortense Spillers, New York: Routledge, 1991. p. 57.

Introducing the VèVè A. Clark Institute for

The Department of African American Studies is very pleased to announce the development of the VèVè A. Clark Institute for Engaged Scholars of African American Studies. The Clark Institute is a small cadre of scholars majoring (or intending to major) in the discipline of African American Studies who will form an intellectual community that will prepare them to meet the rigor and intellectual demands of top graduate programs, professional schools, and postgraduate careers. The program is open to students who have declared (or intend to declare) the African American Studies major and who have at least two years remaining in their undergraduate career at UC Berkeley.



Inspired by Professor VèVè A. Clark (1944-2007), the Institute seeks to continue her legacy of using the intellectual concerns and research methods of African American Studies to



prepare students to understand the purpose and function of research institutions and to thrive within this structure. Professor Clark's interest in this issue was spawned by her recognition of the fact that efforts to recruit African American students to UC-Berkeley were incomplete without equally sustained efforts to retain these students upon their arrival here. While Professor Clark noted these issues in the early 1990s, they remain acute today. Given the negative impact the recent budget crisis has had on all students, a spate of events highlighting a climate within the UC system that is often hostile to students of color, and the ongoing

challenges presented by Proposition 209 in recruiting and retaining African-descended students, we believe that the Clark Institute makes a necessary intervention into the experience of students who want to study the central role of racial blackness in the development of world history and culture by preparing them to function as leaders within the classroom and in the broader campus community as well.

In 1992, Professor Clark developed African American Studies 39B: Introduction to the University, a course that helped to demystify Berkeley's elaborate infrastructure and to cultivate the skills and



Engaged Scholars of African American Studies



behaviors that would ensure students' successful progression through any undergraduate curriculum. Since that time, generations of students have benefited from this program, which has been expanded to include courses taught by Cara Stanley (AAS 39D: Eyeing the Spirit – Black and Female, AAS 39F: Owning Your Seat – Black Student Identity); Quamé (AAS 39E: Investigating Life Journeys); and Leigh Raiford (AAS 39G: Expressive Cultures of the African Diaspora).

The Clark Institute aims to formalize and expand the pedagogical goals of the AAS 39 series by developing a cohort of scholars specifically within the African American Studies major who can help form the core of an undergraduate intellectual community in the department. Students in the Institute will receive priority enrollment in African American Studies courses, priority access to advising from our Student Affairs Officer, individualized mentorship from departmental faculty, networking access to successful African American Studies alumni, support in applying for internships to develop their

professional profiles, and support in the graduate school application process. Clark Institute scholars will participate in monthly seminars that help them to refine their academic work by preparing them to make presentations in end-of-year research symposia, as well as to pursue publication

opportunities for their research. One of the primary goals of the Institute is to help students move through the major in a timely and effective manner by taking coursework in a sequence that allows them to receive the maximum benefit from the information and skills that the major is designed to develop. To this end, we are pleased to be working with the Summer Bridge program to offer an R1A (reading and composition) course this year that reflects the Institute's goals and introduces students to the university and to the department and discipline of African American Studies before the fall semester begins.

Clark Institute Committee Members

Brandi Catanese
Lindsey Herbert
Na'ilah Nasir
Quamé
Leigh Raiford
Cara Stanley
Ula Taylor

The Clark Institute will launch formally with its first cohort in the Fall of 2011, and will be reaching out to friends and alumni of the Department to create a robust community of off-campus contacts with whom our scholars can connect. The steering committee invites applications from continuing students as well as incoming freshmen and transfer students. Please visit the Clark Institute's website (<http://africam.berkeley.edu/clarkinstitute>) for additional information, including application procedures, prerequisites for the program, and opportunities to donate. To contact the steering committee, please email veveclarkinstitute@berkeley.edu.

VèVè A. Clark Institute for Engaged Scholars of African American Studies



VèVè A. Clark
Associate Professor of African American Studies
UC Berkeley
1944 – 2007

Join a New Network of
Peer Scholars
Fall 2011

Ntela Mama (Tell My Mother)

by Lia Bascomb

*Nawo tse tsa mu nde ko nzari,
Ntela mama ka mbanza kandi tchadi
Ntela mama ka mbanza kandi
Ntela mama ka mbanza kandi
Ntela mama ke ndjeme kela muana...*

(Who has left me lost in this river?
Please tell my mother not to think
of me.

Tell my mother not to think of me
Tell my mother not to think of me
Tell my mother to feed and nurture
my baby...)

A young mother unexpectedly drowns in the river she visits often, the same river where she bathes, washes her clothes, and communes with the people and spirits of her world. Her death is sudden, and foul play is suspected. Her spirit cannot find rest. The young woman is troubled by the forces that pulled her under, but her main concern is with the young daughter who survives her. The community mourns the loss of the young woman, but her spirit calls to her own living mother. The young woman's spirit sings to her elder to remind her that there is still a young life to be cared for. Without a mother, who will dress this child? Who will teach her? How will she learn her customs? Who will she become? *Butsieleka Mu Zanza Dia Ngola Bue...* the truth is in the water.

December 11th, 2010 marked the return of one of the staple performances of a pillar within the San Francisco Bay Area's artistic community. After a three year absence, Fua Dia Congo presented its 2010 Home Season, *Malaki Matanga: Butsieleka Mu Zanza Dia Ngola Bue*.¹ The performance brought together

various artistic traditions of the African diaspora by collaborating with Rara Tou Limen Haitian Dance Company, Latanya D. Tigner, and Asatu Musunama Hall-Allah, as well as producing partners Brass Vision Inc. and ARTSproduction.² Dancers, musicians, and techs from the Congo, Oakland, Trinidad, Minneapolis, Barbados, New York, and Haiti collaborated artistically and symbolically to answer one main question: what happens, literally and figuratively, to those who lose their mothers?

Malaki Matanga: Butsieleka Mu Zanza Dia Ngola Bue is based on a popular song "Nawo Tsetsa." The song tells the story of a young mother who mysteriously drowns. It has made appearances in Fua Dia Congo's repertoire for decades, but *Malaki Matanga 2010* adds another dimension by telling the story of the daughter left behind.

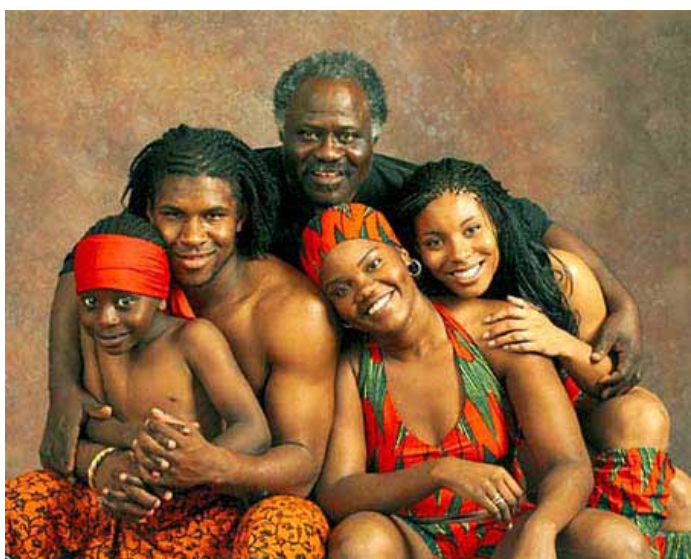


Fua Dia Congo is a performing arts company founded in 1977 by master artist and Congolese

immigrant, Malonga Casquelourd. The company's name, Fua Dia Congo, means heritage of the Congo, and embodies its founder's vision to study, preserve, and present his culture to the rest of the African diaspora and to the world. Based in Oakland, Fua Dia Congo has used the stage to present the traditions of the Kongo Kingdom, which includes the present day Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, and parts of Gabon and Central African Republic. Malonga Casquelourd envisioned the artistic community as a site where he could counter the image of the Congo as violent, poor, and primitive.

Malonga's mission is the performative complement to scholarly texts such as Simon Bockie's *Death and the Invisible Powers: The World of Kongo Belief* in which the author hopes to "help preserve the knowledge and wisdom of the community for the young people who feel, as [he] did, the need to return to their roots; [and to] inspire African-Americans to realize that they have an important spiritual heritage to draw on for strength and a sense of identity; and that Westerners can learn that there is actually light in the heart of what they have imagined to be darkness."³ Four decades later, Fua Dia Congo continues the creative vision of its founder, and like Bockie's text, relies on the here and now, the present personalities of the company and their collective and individual histories, in order to offer an artistic representation of their lived experiences.

Malonga Casquelourd passed away in a car accident in 2003. It was a great blow to the artistic community and the Congolese community in the San Francisco Bay Area who now work to honor his legacy. None have worked harder than the three of his children who have taken the reins of Fua Dia Congo Performing Arts Company. Muisi-Kongo Malonga now serves as co-artistic director; Kiazzi Malonga is co-artistic director; and Lungusu Malonga serves as choreographer and artistic lead.



The Malongas grew up in their father's tradition, both on and off the stage, but they also grew up in the African American communities of Oakland and East Palo Alto. Shows such as *Malaki Matanga 2010* present this unique position. As artistic director, Muisi-Kongo Malonga uses her position to both continue her inherited artistic tradition and to speak from her own personal view. She says: "I need to be a bridge...to connect these two entities that are separated by water, continental Africans and Africans throughout the diaspora. A lot of times we have all of these notions depending on what side we're looking from, that are usually

fueled by whatever propaganda, or divisive measures that are used by those folks who are in power to keep us from rising up, finding truth, pressing forward, healing. Again and again this theme about reconnection comes back."⁴

Fua Dia Congo manifests this theme of reconnection in many ways. There is a historical reconnection practiced by watching old shows of the company; a physical reconnection of returning to the Congo to study with and connect with artists on the continent;

and a reconnection with disparate audiences of different levels of personal, artistic, and historical knowledge. Muisi-Kongo relates how maintaining this base in the artistic and historic communities can be achieved through collaboration: "Whenever I have the opportunity to bridge those gaps, to make those connections between things that are, in my mind, very much the same, I want to do that. And so, with this story, with the element of water, with the theme of motherhood, which everyone can relate to on some level, it just was a natural fit with connecting, making that connection with diaspora dancers in the Bay area."⁵

Muisi-Kongo called upon another young artistic director and shared with her the vision of the show. Portsha Jefferson of Rara Tou Limen Haitian Dance Company had already been working on a piece that fit perfectly into the vision. The two companies share similar purposes. "Congo and Haiti share so many things in common ...just if you think about the torment and the toil and the struggles that each are going through right now, the various ways and perspectives that the world looks at these places, I think we share a lot in common."⁶ Both companies fight tragic images of the places that birthed their respective traditions and strive for unity and strength through performance. "It's empowering and we're able to draw a lot of inspiration from each other."⁷ In collaborating with Rara Tou Limen, Muisi-Kongo hoped "to share the beauty of the work, and to show those healing aspects."⁸

It is with this sentiment that Rara Tou Limen opens *Malaki Matanga 2010* premiering a new choreography, "Three Streams." The choreography pays tribute to the millions who died in the Middle Passage and to the spiritual forces of the water.⁹ The conversation between movement and music shows respect towards the power, both dangerous and healing, that water holds. Rooting the symbolism of the story in this stage presentation, Rara Tou Limen's premiere of "Three Streams" places the story of a drowning mother within a larger story of those who drowned leaving a motherland.

One woman symbolizes all that was lost in the Middle Passage. Covered in blue she writhes beneath a sea of malaise. Rescued from the water the healing begins. The conch shell calls to Met Agwe.¹⁰ The blue, white, and sea greens of costumes

turn into an ocean of undulating hips and backs. Bodies navigate the water as vessels. Arms become oars. Faces lock in determination as the rhythms speak for them. La Sirene enters, mirror in hand, her domain of deep water reflecting beauty even after struggle.¹¹



Once the stage has been christened by the ritual of purification that “Three Streams” represents, we meet the mother whose spirit will sing to her child. She and a friend have come to the river to wash their clothes. Their movements are ordinary. They speak through their bodies accompanied by the drum and the voice of Daniel Brevil of Rara Tou Limen. As the friend finds that she is missing something and must return, the mother bids her farewell and begins her washing. She carefully places her child comfortably in her basket.

Reaching cautiously into the river, she is suddenly overtaken by the fierceness of the water—so violent by nature, but still beautiful. As her limbs stretch across the stage, her body rolling and reaching towards her child, a chorus of dancers stand still. Their voices carry a lament of this woman’s experience. The woman dances fervently, her body echoing both

the beauty and ugly of the water’s force all the while reaching for her child at the river’s edge. The chorus of bodies remains unmoved, draped



in a beautiful blue, their voices rise in harmony as their song haunts the space. *Kyrie, Kyrie, Kyrie eleison...* Lord, have mercy. Drowning, the young mother becomes an unsuspecting spiritual sacrifice.¹²

As the day progresses, more and more women come to the river to carry out their daily tasks. The young mother’s absence is noted and a search party is organized. Set to the Haitian battle rhythm of *nago*, the community looks high and low searching for the missing woman. The intensity of the rhythm mirrors that of the search as the women of the community pass back and forth across the stage. The drums accent each movement, each look, until finally the young baby is found near the river and everyone understands that the woman is gone. The village mourns the loss of the young woman, while celebrating the fact that the child has been found.

The community continues as a living breathing entity made up of each individual’s wants, fears and triumphs. The rhythms of life quicken, but the motherless daughter seems lost, moving slowly through the village. She grows,

getting older and more solemn, but even as she becomes a young woman, spiritually she is still a child.

Nawo tse tsa mu nde ko nzari...
Sung in call and response, the song issues forth from the spirit world and is answered by the material world across the distance of time and space. Distorted by the waves of emotion that constantly wash over her, the young daughter finds it hard to hear how the past calls for her to move forward. *Ntela mama ke ndjeme kela muana...* She doesn’t understand how the haunting melody—sung so clearly, so beautifully, in a familiar voice—is urging her to rely upon her present community in order to orient herself in the world and bring both the spirit



of her mother and her own troubled soul to peace.

Her confusion mounts as she dances solo, alone with the sound of her mother's distant voice mingling with her own response. *Ntela mama ka mbanza kandi*. Troubled in sleep and waking moments, she reaches out and curls back into her body. Her movements mark the journey between herself and the rest of her world, and since she does not yet understand how little distance there is between the two, it is a turbulent and emotional passage. The drums overpower the confusion as she is joined by the physical embodiments of her spiritual obstacles on stage. In movement that is both flowing and jerky, halting and fluid, the tradition of *ganza* sounds through the *ngoma* and the bodies of the dancers engulf the young woman.¹³ The movement and the rhythms end suddenly and abruptly. The time has come for her spirit to grow.

The second half of the show is about assessment and healing. Bockie writes that "far from being a place of primitive blankness that has to be filled in by supposedly superior Western values, this region [the Congo] of Africa has its own sources of vitality, sophistication of thought, and spiritual enlightenment. In spite of the enormous—and destructive—impact of the West, the social fabric of life in the Kongo is still held together by its traditional beliefs and spiritual practices."¹⁴ This is reflected on stage as the second half opens with the men of the village going about their usual business. Their rhythms come to support the women who begin preparing a meal of cassava.

The daughter, now a fully grown, yet spiritually young woman, has trouble learning the customs. She is encouraged by the women of the village, but she

resists them, refusing to dance and isolating herself on the outskirts of the communal activities. Confused by their efforts, she isn't sure whether they want to harm or help her. But without learning *mayaka*,¹⁵ the young woman will never be able to feed herself—physically or spiritually. Ultimately the community, including both the living and the dead, forces her to confront her legacy. She is taken to the *nganga*,¹⁶ who performs a ritual of healing. The community celebrates the young woman's newfound harmony, and welcomes her back into its fold with the rhythms and movements of Congo and Haiti working together to unify the entire cast.



In 1993 Simon Bockie wrote "the culture of the Kongo people is very much alive and adaptive to change while preserving the integrity of its unique inner life."¹⁷ In 2007 Saidiya Hartman described how African children born in the Americas "created a new language out of the languages they had known and the languages foisted upon them. They danced the old dances for new purposes."¹⁸ *Malaki Matanga 2010* displays both of these statements. Hartman is correct in saying that "every generation confronts the task

of choosing its past. Inheritances are chosen as much as they are passed on."¹⁹ This generation of Fua Dia Congo (and its artistic partners) melds various traditions and legacies in order to show that the inheritance they choose is rooted in what has been passed down, but is also one of their own creation.

The artists of Fua Dia Congo, Rara Tou Limen, Dimensions Dance, Brass Vision, and soloist Asatu Musunama Hall-Allah all draw on specific lived experience as well as historical tradition in the work that they do. The individuals that make up these companies, the communities that they represent, and the diasporic connections that they enact, have all been cleansed in the fires of pain and loss. But they also remember that those who have crossed into the spiritual realm are still present, guiding their steps in each moment. Jacqui Alexander writes: "knowing who walks with you and maintaining that company on the long journey is a dance of balance in which the fine lines between and among will and surrender; self-effacement and humility; doing and being; and listlessness and waiting for the Divine are being constantly drawn. This dance of balance is the work of healing."²⁰

Fluid, powerful, ubiquitous, all-consuming, dangerous but necessary, *butsieleka mu zanza dia ngola bue*...the truth is in the water. Like the water they represent, the movements, sounds, stories, and traditions of the performers have similar qualities. The stories they tell through dance, music, lighting, and affect, are simultaneously literal and symbolic. In *Malaki Matanga 2010*, the theme of water becomes a vehicle to display the fluidity of culture, history, and the healing power of art.

Rooting the story of *Malaki Matanga 2010* in water displays Jacqui Alexander's sentiment that "Sentience soaks all things. Caresses all things. Enlivens all things. Water overflows with memory. Emotional Memory. Bodily Memory. Sacred Memory."²¹ Just as fire can be both painful and cleansing, so can the water that cools it. The theme of water is pregnant with memory. The artists of *Malaki Matanga 2010* encourage their audience and themselves to remember "that in the same way the breaking of waves does not compromise the integrity of the Ocean, so too anything broken in our lives cannot compromise that cosmic flow to wholeness."²²

The rhythms, the movements, the spirits sing *ntela mama ka mbanza kandi* ...tell my mother not to think of me. Performing diaspora in such a way provides a perspective on the "motherland" that calls on both remembrance and continuance. The child has grown, physically and spiritually, as has the mother. Their relationship continues to change. But all that has been lost lives on, differently, in each generation that passes. We are different, and the same. Individual and collective histories separate us, but in each moment of intersection, with each collaborative effort, we find and create a shared space. One that is to be celebrated. *Malaki Matanga*: celebrate the celebration of a lifetime, celebrate the spirits of all that have crossed and all of us who live on in the present.²³

Altered by the specificities of circumstance, shows such as *Malaki Matanga: Butsieleka Mu Zanza Dia Ngola Bue* serve to remind us all of how it is possible to find a place in our worlds, not forgetting the past, but living through it here and now by forging connections across physical, temporal, and spiritual

distance. What happens to those who lose their mothers? With the help of community ...they live.



(Endnotes)

1 I will also refer to the show as *Malaki Matanga 2010*.

2 Rara Tou Limen is led by Portsha Jefferson and Daniel Brevil. Latanya D. Tigner is a part of Dimensions Dance Company, and Asatu Musunama Hall-Allah represents Sacred Grove Traditions Women of Color Wholistic Health Exchange.

3 Bockie, Simon. *Death and the Invisible Powers: The World of Kongo Belief*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993: xi.

4 Malonga, Muisi-Kongo. personal interview. 16 December 2010

5 *ibid*.

6 *ibid*.

7 *ibid*.

8 *ibid*.

9 www.raratoulimen.com

10 Met Agwe is a Vodun lwa from the Rada nation. He reigns over the seas.

11 La Sirene is the wife of Met Agwe. She resides deep within the water and is often depicted as a mermaid. She owns all the treasures the seas.

12 This solo was choreographed by Latanya D. Tigner of Dimensions Dance Company. She drew on her extensive dance knowledge, the story

of the show, as well as her experience in seeing the "beautiful ugly" water of the coasts of the Kongo Kingdom. Tigner, Latanya D. personal interview. 15 December 2010.

13 *Ganza* is a rite of passage celebration from the Central Republic. The *ngoma* is a traditional drum of the Congo.

14 Bockie, *Death and the Invisible Powers*, ix.

15 *Mayaka* means cassava in Lari a dialect of Kikongo. It is also the name of a dance in Fua Dia Congo's repertoire which choreographs the stages of preparation for a cassava meal.

16 An *nganga* is a traditional healer (both spiritual and physical).

17 Bockie, *Death and the Invisible Powers*, ix.

18 Hartman, Saidiya. *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007: 97.

19 *ibid*, 100.

20 Alexander, M. Jacqui. *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on feminism, sexual politics, memory, and the Sacred*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005: 311.

21 *ibid*, 290.

22 *ibid*, 321-322.

23 *Matanga* is a Kikongo word. It is a huge celebration, and because of the material and spiritual expense, it usually occurs only once in a lifetime. *Matanga* celebrations mark the end of a mourning period and honor everyone in the community who has passed into the spirit realm since the last *Matanga* celebration. It bridges the spiritual and material realms with a sense of community, remembrance, and celebration. (see Bockie, *Death and the Invisible Powers*)

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At Buffalo: The History of Black Performance at the 1901 Buffalo World's Fair

by Jarvis R. Givens

In January of 2011 the students in the Black Theater Workshop started with no script, no music, and no idea of the striking performance they would bring to the Berkeley community. From the archives, photographs, and newspaper clippings provided to them by Dr. Amma Y. Kootin they created, under her direction, a musical that would bring rage, laughter, and insight to the hearts of their audience. In the stage performance entitled, *At Buffalo*, these students rendered the story of the 1901 World's Fair in Buffalo, New York. The World's Fair was a historical international attraction for a number of reasons. Most people recall it because it was the place of President William McKinley's assassination; however, the students of Black Theater Workshop revealed that this was the one World's Fair where the American Negro was represented in three forms: "Darkest Africa," "The Old Plantation," and far away from these two attractions was "The American Negro Exhibit." This marked the first year that American Negroes, under the leadership of W.E.B. DuBois, demanded that there be proper representation of their race at the exhibition. The goal of this exhibition was to make note of the Negro's progress in American society both socially and professionally.

"Thus far not a single representative of the race has been properly placed by the management," these being the words cried out by those Negro Americans who witnessed the World's Fair's poor representations of Blacks up until the 1901 Pan-American Exposition.

These reenactments were threaded together by visual aids from 1901 newspaper clippings, as well as original photographs from the exhibits themselves, and narrations taken from DuBois's *Souls of Black Folks*. The images of 96 year old Laughing Ben, Mary Talbot, and falsely portrayed "savage" Africans all presented the American Negroes and their history in a fragmented manner—similar to Du Bois's concept of double consciousness. At the 1901 World's Fair, the Negro people were forced to not only struggle in hopes of providing accurate depictions of themselves, but also to see how they were being portrayed and perceived by America through the images of "Darkest Africa" and "The Old Plantation." This dual perception, or twoness, was overtly portrayed in the final act where one of the characters, played by Yahya Abdul-Mateen, is encompassed by the various characters represented by the three exhibitions. He struggles to free himself, and all the while goes through a somewhat schizophrenic monologue where he is simultaneously Uncle Ben of "The Old Plantation," a Congolese Chief from "Darkest Africa," and a young man studying under DuBois. In the post show discussion, Dr. Amma and the cast engaged the audience with questions that forced everyone to ponder how the images displayed at the 1901 World's Fair still live even today in performance and media images.



Dr. Amma Y. Kootin

Dr. Amma Y. Kootin, who received her doctorate degree in Performance Studies from NYU, has come to the end of her two-year Mellon Mays post-doctoral fellowship. However, with *At Buffalo* she has added tremendously to the history of the Black Theater Workshop started by Dr. Margaret Wilkerson. Dr. Wilkerson praised Dr. Kootin and the cast for a riveting performance during the post show discussion after the opening night performance (April 28, 2011). As one freshman, Darrin Wallace put it, "The show was beyond amazing...it forced me to feel angry, unfortunate, blessed; all the while exhibiting the refreshing talent of my classmates. I won't forget this, as I'm sure no one else will." Praise to Dr. Kootin and the students of Black Theater Workshop Spring 2011 for a job well done!

Jarvis Givens is a student in UC-Berkeley's African Diaspora Ph.D. program.

Yea, I have Graduated; Now What?

by Brandi Howard



My decision to major in African American Studies was based solely on emotion. For the first time in my life I was able to learn the truth of my history in an academic setting and felt it was my responsibility to anchor my education in this discipline. As I continued my studies from Merritt College in Oakland, California to the University of California, Berkeley, I could not deny my lifelong passion for women's reproductive health, which created some confusion as I tried to create a clear path of completion of my degree. I evaluated my dilemma and came to the realization that African American Studies was the foundation for my passion. I took classes in Public Health, Gender and Women Studies, Sociology, Anthropology, Anatomy, and Legal Studies. I was able to understand and witness the inclusion, or lack thereof, of African Americans

in these disciplines. At this point it became clear: African American Studies is not only interdisciplinary, but it creates the lens with which to focus various disciplines.

Many people ask me, "What can I do with a degree in African American Studies?" It is unfortunate that this question has to be asked, furthermore how devalued my degree is to some who lack understanding. To shed some light on the

importance of African American Studies as it pertains to my academic and professional life I will share just a few opportunities that have been afforded to me.

First my degree is in African American Studies with an emphasis on Women's Health. I have conducted independent research as a McNair Scholar on the disconnect between Medical Discourse and Medical Practice during the Black Power Movement. With my understanding of African American history and medicine, I was able to uncover more intricacies in African American Women's lives. Professionally, I have practiced as a Doula (Birthing Coach) for 15 years and an apprentice Midwife. My degree has afforded me the opportunity to speak at San Francisco General Hospital on cultural competency in birth.

I also was invited to assist in the implementation of the Volunteer Doula Program at the University of California, San Francisco, which has a high number of low-income African American women birthing at their facility. These are all in addition to the research assistant position I held at USCF and travels abroad in a medical capacity. So for those that may ask what could I do with my degree, I would answer: my degree is the foundation in which my emotions, intellect, passion and responsibility to my community have intersected, and my options are endless. With my enriched experience in gaining my degree in African American Studies, I can immediately apply to a Masters in Nursing Programs, Law Schools, and multiple Ph.D. programs across the country. So if you still want to know what can one can do with a degree in African American Studies, it would be less time consuming if I tell you what one cannot do.



AMERICAN STUDIES?

Miss Educated Fool:

by Jasmine Butler



Four years ago, I entered a Cal classroom full of student athletes and a plethora of people that looked like me. I felt utterly out of place... Black students at Cal often say they feel alone in large classrooms because they are one of few. At my high school, being the only Black person was normal in honors courses. I never experienced a classroom full of such diversity until this course. Unfortunately, this was a rare experience and I assumed the diversity was code for easy A.

After the first lecture, I was in awe at what I learned in one day. Black history is more than slavery and MLK Jr., *who knew?* I desperately wanted to thank the professor but felt ashamed for my ignorance on the subject and for my judgmental attitude. I scuttled away to the Afro floor lounge and proceeded to work on math problems to reaffirm my intelligence. Of course, the class was easy as was the major, not because teacher gave A's to anyone but because I loved

learning, reading and confronting authors.

Gradually I fell in love with the class, the department, and Black history. The African-American Studies Department taught me to challenge current notions that I have internalized about myself and about other people of color. I never realized my ignorance until I had to confront it head on.

Once I declared my major, people questioned my motives. Fellow students and strangers often ask why I chose this major and what kind of career do I expect to have. While they are not trying to be condescending (*mostly*), I understand their reservations. My simple answer is, for personal growth. This department not only provided me with a unique education, it provided me with a history. Thank you for allowing me to learn how to control my own thinking, and regulate my own actions.

*Congratulations to
Jasmine Butler
as the 2011
African American
Studies
Valedictorian*

Congratulations to



Congratulations to Mario O. Nisbett

on completing his Qualifying Exams in the areas of diaspora studies, African diaspora history, and resistance and maroon studies, on the 4th of April 2011.

He submitted the following position papers in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Ph.D. Qualifying Exam in African Diaspora Studies:

“The African Diaspora, Critical Practice and Politics: The Historicization of the “Black” Experience”

“The African Diaspora, Resistance and Political Autonomy: The Significance of the Formation of Maroon Communities”



Congratulations to Shaun Ossei-Owusu

on completing his Qualifying Exams in the areas of urban history, gender studies, critical race studies, and black politics, on the 10th of May 2011.

He submitted the following position papers in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Ph.D. Qualifying Exam in African Diaspora Studies:

“Ruminations of the Origins, Assets, and Limitations of African Diaspora Studies”

“A Rough Sketch on the Origins of Urban Inequality”



Congratulations to



Congratulations to Bryan Mason

on completing his Qualifying Exams in the areas of diaspora studies, history, and performance, on the 12th of May 2011.

He submitted the following position papers in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Ph.D. Qualifying Exam in African Diaspora Studies:

“The Right Tool for the Job: Towards a Function Based Approach to the African Diaspora”

“African Warfare and the Development of Africana Combative Traditions”

Congratulations to Jasminder Kaur

on completing her Qualifying Exams in the areas of diaspora theory, queer theory and queer of color critique, and visuality and visual culture on the 14th of June 2011.

She submitted the following position papers in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Ph.D. Qualifying Exam in African Diaspora Studies:

“Turns Towards Affect”

“Politics of Feeling”



Congratulations to

Congratulations to

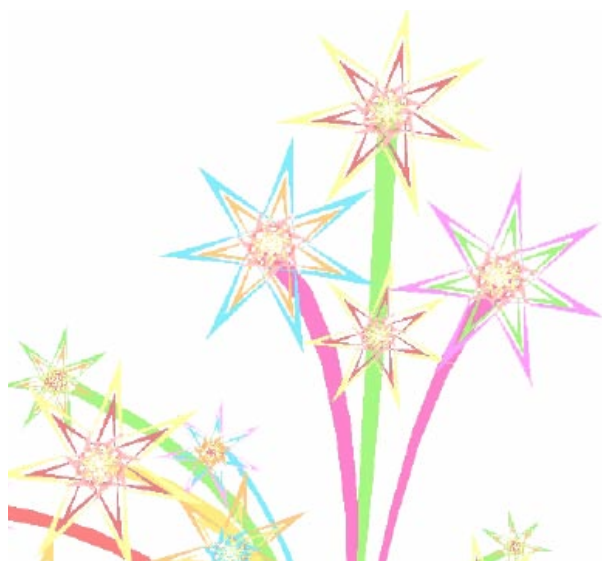
Charisse Burden-Stelly, Megan Downey, and Christopher Petrella

who earned the Master of Arts Degree in African American Studies on the 10th of March 2011.



**Congratulations to
Ameer Hasan Loggins**

on receiving the Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award



African American Studies Graduation Speeches

Welcome Speech by Shola Shodiya

Graduates, family and friends, professors and guests, greetings and welcome to the two thousand eleven Black Graduation. My name is Shola Shodiya, and as a major in the African American Studies department, it is my honor to welcome you to this time of reflection, celebration, and jubilation. This is the time to receive our reward for the long hours we've spent in Main Stacks; the less than delicious food we've eaten from Crossroads; for juggling our academic responsibilities with jobs, extracurriculars, and internships while still trying to maintain a social life; and last but certainly not least, being broke- although that may not change for many of us right after graduation. Despite all of that, in a few moments we will be able to say that we have graduated from the number one public university in the country, and in the world.

As African American students, we can take pride in knowing that we have risen above the statistics and stereotypes that tell us we could never be in these seats, and that we don't have the ability to accomplish what we have. For this reason, we must take a few minutes from our celebration to reflect on the lives of those who have sacrificed to bring us the privilege of attending the University of California. Remember that it was not too long ago that the first Black student enrolled in this university, and it was only in 1971 that the Afro-American Studies department graduated its first class of students. Forty years later, as we find ourselves fighting a very similar battle to maintain the integrity and sovereignty of this department, it is crucial to remember the legacy of courage and determination that we stand upon.

So graduates, as you take this day to celebrate your accomplishments, remember all those to whom you owe your gratitude. Be grateful for the family members, friends, professors, and mentors that have supported you, guided you, and pushed you through your challenges. And as you develop a heart of gratitude towards those who have been your foundation, make a commitment to serve and inspire those who will come after you, those who will stand on your legacy here at Berkeley, and those who may not have been granted the same opportunities that have been afforded you. Never miss a chance to use your passions, your talents, and your gifts to bless the lives of others and find creative ways to change your communities for the better.

As you receive your diploma today- or the blank paper that is supposed to symbolize your diploma- lift your head high in remembrance of those who have gone before you and those who will come after you. And finally, to our dear loved ones that are here to cherish this day with us, thank you for committing your lives to our growth and success. We certainly could not have come to this milestone without your love and support. We love you, and we honor you for all that you have been in our lives. Please continue to support us through our journey because in the words of Michael Jackson, "If you enter this world knowing you are loved and you leave this world knowing the same, then everything that happens in between can be dealt with". Thank you, congratulations graduates, and go bears!

Community as a Reflection of the Self by Brittani A. Hamilton

Class of 2011, members of the African American Studies Department, family and dear friends. I am beyond honored to be standing before you today as a graduate of this esteemed university. For four, or even five years, members of the class of 2011 toiled relentlessly through some of the most competitive and difficult midterms, finals, and lectures this nation's higher education system has to offer, all the while combating the prejudices and stereotypes still present on this very campus. As a result, before you today at this very moment, sit the future leading doctors, lawyers, artists, community leaders, philanthropists, CEOs, and athletes of this generation. And while it is the University of California, Berkeley we will be proudly receiving our diplomas from today, it is with the utmost respect and humility that we must recognize the one body that made this possible: our communities.

In times of celebration and in times of need, we all have had to rely on the comfort, stability, and unyielding strength that our communities continue to provide. From our parents to our grandparents, from our aunts and uncles to our neighbors, everyone in this room can attest to at least one individual that is as equally responsible for our own accomplishments as we are ourselves.

I am a testament to this. Had it not been for a set of parents who wholeheartedly believed in the power of their own children's achievement, I would not be standing before you today. Or had it not been for the countless Black groups on campus, such as the

Black Recruitment and Retention Center or the African American Student Development Office, this young woman that stands at this podium would have been lost and alone within this immense institution. And would not have gained the critical understanding of what it means to be a servant to one's community.

Here at Cal we've had a Black community that has seen the triumph of our nation's first Black president. As well as witness the definition of immeasurable solidarity, with the 2010 Blackout. But together, we've also seen our nation enter into the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, which has left many of our loved ones struggling and created a job market that is all but promising. We've watched percentages of blacks on college campuses take severe downturns as the state budget continues to spiral out of control. And with a great sense of unease, we've realized that the expectation that success is an automatic guarantee of hard work, is not always the case.

But let us not forget that with every generation comes a test. Looking back at our history, there has been not a single obstacle that has not been overcome. Despite the uncertain world that we face, we have to remind ourselves that excellence on this campus must mean excellence in communities that lie outside Sather Gate. Because there is always an overarching dream that must be advanced.

Class of 2011, education is not something that one keeps to oneself. We have to share it, for the simple fact that someone or someones took the time to share it with us. That is what community is founded on. So take a look around you. You may or may not be close with the person to your left, right, in front, or behind you, but DO NOT forget their faces because you

don't know who they may become. They have no idea who YOU may become. But more importantly you do not know the need you will have for each other. As Dr. Martin Luther King once humbly stated, "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." I ask you all to remember this for today and for whatever life brings you tomorrow.

Best of luck, graduates, and congratulations. Thank you

Valedictorian Address by Jasmine Jeanise Butler

Good Afternoon faculty, family, friends, fellow graduates. I am so blessed and so honored to celebrate the achievement we have all made today as the Class of 2011. Thank you for such a wonderful introduction Professor Cohen and for continuing your dedication to research and mentorship at this amazing public university.

I want to recognize Professor Charles Henry for his dedication to the African American Studies department and for challenging me these last few months as I completed my research. In addition, I would like to give a very special thanks to Professor Ula Taylor who has contributed to my development as a student and as a Black woman.

These faculty members exemplify why this department is so important to the University of California. Very seldom are students able to find a department that is truthfully like an extended family. They challenge you to think beyond the obvious and construct your own path.

Graduates, let us all take a moment to honor those that have truly stood by us, our family and friends. These people have pushed us to study when we really wanted to watch the new season of *The Game* or update our Facebook status. This

is their day as well so please take a moment today to thank them.

From the day I arrived on Move In day, I knew that I would share amazing experiences with ambitious Black intellectuals. I appreciate the members of *Ebony Empire* for amazing memories in the 5th floor lounge. I have tremendous respect for all students who participated in the Blackout, standing up for our rights as fee-paying students on campus.

Fellow graduates, think about how far we have come in the past few years. For many of us this journey has not been easy. People may label us as first generation college students, low-income students, or, my favorite, underprivileged minorities. Whatever names the system assigned to us matters no more. Now we are CAL Alum... College Graduates...Privileged Minorities... We all have different stories, different struggles and yet we have all made it to this stage. It should remind us that no path is a clear path to success.

Many of us grew up in poor neighborhoods, surrounded by negativity and paths that lead to destruction. Like me, you knew that you wanted something more; you knew that you deserved more. Others may have been afforded a comfortable lifestyle but still endured challenges and prejudices of simply being Black in America. The drive that enabled us ignore evils of this world, to gain admission to Cal and graduate is the same drive that we will need to carry with us throughout life.

Success will not be easy nor is it guaranteed because we have a degree. I challenge you to find the value in struggling to succeed. Never settle for what is easy. Embrace challenges that you face with courage and tenacity. Most important have faith in yourselves as you persevere through life.

Furthermore, remember to lift as you climb. It is simple-minded

of us to believe that we made it to this stage alone. Consider this moment as a victory for all those who you have encountered that have positively influenced your lives. Today is also a victory for those who came before us to fight for our rights as Black students. As Black people, we must continue to build a strong community and bridge the gap between ourselves and those who lack the privilege of attending a top university.

Celebrate those you love, Struggle to succeed, embrace this moment and may God bless our class of future leaders. Thank You

From Campus to Community: Advancing the Dream

by Samantha Doyle

As we come to the end of this year's commencement many thoughts have run through my head, and trying to think of the words to express how I feel hasn't been easy. Over the last four years our lives have been a series of advances that not only include this prestigious campus, but the amazing community around it. I think of us as graduating seniors from high school so wide eyed and excited to begin a new journey here at Berkeley and ready to confront our future.

UC Berkeley has exposed us to the rigor and excellence necessary for greatness, and living up to being a graduate at the number one public institution in the country is wonderful training. But the most important lessons I have learned have been from the community: both here at Cal and in the surrounding areas. This community is one comprised of fighters, leaders, caretakers, and so many vital personalities that ensured our success and matriculation through the system.

A quote by Starhawk states that "We are all longing to go home to some place we have never

been — a place half-remembered and half-envisioned we can only catch glimpses of from time to time. Community. Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free."

If it were not for this community and the communities in Oakland, Berkeley, Richmond, and the rest of the east bay we would not be exposed to the wealth of knowledge that we have been for the past 4 years.

As we go our separate ways I would like to thank God, for if it were not for him and his many blessings we would not be here today; my family, for constantly supporting me and expecting nothing less than my best; all my friends who have accepted me as I am and stuck by my side; and the African American Studies department for being a place that has not only stood strong in maintaining our cultural and intellectual integrity, but also being a second home for many of us. All of you have made this day possible.

And for the class of 2011 I would like you to remember these words: It's not how much you accomplish in life that really counts, but how much you give to others. It's not how high you build your dreams that makes a difference, but how high your faith can climb. It's not how many goals you reach, but how many lives you touch. It's not who you know that matters, but who you are inside. Believe in the impossible, hold tight to the incredible, and live each day to its fullest potential. You can make a difference in your world.



African American Studies Summer Sessions 2011 schedule.berkeley.edu

Freshman Composition
(AAS R1A and R1B)
with Aparajita Nanda

Africa: History and Culture
(AAS 4A)
with Ugo Nwokeji

Africa: History and Culture
(AAS 4B)
with Arif Gamal

Race, Class, and Gender
(AAS W111)
with Stephen Small
(internet course)

**The Philosophy of
Martin Luther King**
(AAS W124)
with Charles Henry
(internet course)

Paul Robeson, an American Life
(AAS 139)
with Paul Von Blum

**Black Popular Music and Culture:
From Be-Bop to Hip-Hop**
(AAS 159)
with Rickey Vincent

**African American Stand-Up
Comedy and
the Performance of Resistance**
(AAS 159)
with J Finley

Congratulations to Ronald Williams II



The graduate program in African Diaspora Studies attracts some of the best scholars in the country, and we are proud of all the ways that our graduate students enrich the department through their research, their teaching, and their service to the program. This year we are pleased to recognize Ronald Williams II, whose dissertation, “The New Adversarial Diplomacy: TransAfrica, Randall Robinson, and the Origins of the African American Foreign Policy Lobby,” will offer the first sustained investigation of TransAfrica Forum, which describes itself as “the oldest and largest African American human rights and social justice advocacy organization promoting diversity and equity in the foreign policy arena and justice for the African World.”

In order to write this dissertation, Dr. Williams traveled the country to consult historical archives, and contributed to the archive himself by conducting dozens of oral history interviews with people affiliated with TransAfrica during the late 20th century, including the legendary Harry Belafonte. In addition to highlighting his skills as a historian, Dr. Williams’s dissertation also makes an intervention into political science

discourse by redeploying the term “adversarial diplomacy” to characterize the political activity of African Americans within a broader American political framework whose interests are not always synonymous with those of African Americans who see themselves as diasporically connected to the African World.

In addition to his important dissertation, Ronald has demonstrated his breadth as a scholar through work on President Barack Obama, issues of food justice, the African American business community of Oakland, and other important projects, all while teaching and mentoring undergraduate students within our major in courses across the curriculum. Throughout his time at Berkeley, Ronald has also been a steadfast member of the African American Studies community, frequently volunteering to serve on committees, assisting with graduate admissions and recruitment efforts, serving a term as the editor of the *Diaspora* newsletter, and most recently editing *40 and Counting*, the department’s anthology marking the 40th anniversary of the Department of African American Studies.

We thank Ronald for his years of dedicated participation in the program, and are delighted that we will continue to be graced with his presence in the coming academic year while he holds a Gray Lectureship teaching reading and composition courses within the department. Congratulations, **Dr. Ronald Williams!**

