

THE DIASPORA

Department of African American Studies • University of California, Berkeley



SPRING-SUMMER 2013

Ula Taylor wins Distinguished Teaching Award

The Reunion of “The Lumpen”

The 2013 St. Clair Drake Symposium



THE DIASPORA

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

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Words from the Chair

by Na'ilah Suad Nasir

The end of this semester marks the end of my first year as chair. It has been quite an adventure so far! I've learned a tremendous amount, been challenged in multiple ways, been encouraged by the amount of support I have found for the African American Studies department on campus, and have come to a deeper understanding of the multiple levels of bureaucracy that one must navigate to get things done at Berkeley.

As I reflect on the highs and lows of this year, what strikes me is that my greatest lesson this year has been coming to a deeper understanding of leadership, and of the power of academic spaces to not only be important spaces of teaching and learning, but also to be important spaces of humanity and healing. Leadership, in any capacity, is partially about getting things done—making sure the classes get scheduled, the faculty cases get reviewed, the meetings are productive, the emails get answered, and the forms get signed. It matters to be efficient; to be accessible; to be productive.

However, there is a deeper, and I think more important kind of work that underlies the productivity. And that is to create and maintain spaces where people find a sense of home, where faculty can do their best and most creative and rigorous research, where students find both stimulating intellectual material, but also where they find voice, find ways to bring their own unique talents, perspectives, and insights to their study. Where people can speak, live, feel and be from their hearts.

It may seem simplistic to talk about the heart, or even the spirit, in academic spaces. Some would argue that such language has no

place in the academy. But that perspective assumes that we leave some parts of ourselves at the door when we come to school or work; to my mind, the very problem with university spaces can be that they require this of us, and thus feel cold, alienating, and unkind. And this is not just a problem of emotion—in fact, it gets to the heart of what people need to grow, learn, and thrive. Without nurturing, kindness, spaces to be *all* of who we are, our development is stunted. We cannot grow or be whole.

My greatest joy this year has been those moments in the department where I experienced these spaces of humanity and community; where we found ways to support one another's growth and healing, spaces that broke from the traditional academic formula and brought us together in new ways. For this reason, I found great pleasure in meetings with our VèVè Clark Scholars, a small cadre of undergraduate students who embarked upon a piece of their own original research this year. A group of faculty and staff met with them monthly over lunch to talk about research, about staying whole and conscious in the academy, and to hear fascinating research presentations. Similarly, our Drake Forum this spring and our new department speaker series talks were opportunities for faculty, staff, graduate students, and undergraduate students to engage with one another around ideas, but also just to be in community, to feel a sense of collective purpose, to check in with one another. This is what I mean by healing spaces—spaces where we can be who we are, laugh with one another, and also engage as scholars.



Na'ilah Suad Nasir

Just as I was finishing up this piece, I took a break to go and sit in on one of our summer courses, "Teaching Freedom: The History of African American Education," taught by PhD candidate Jarvis Givens. The course focuses on understanding the history of African American education. On this day students had read Carter G. Woodson's *The Mis-Education of the Negro*. To my mind, what I observed illustrated exactly what I am writing about here: students talking with one another about a serious and important historical text, and considering the implications of that text for their own responsibility to community. Every so often a joke and laughter would break the rhythm of the serious discussion, and during the break, students used Photo Booth to take pictures with one another on a laptop computer. That's what this work is about, and what our department is about—creating and maintaining spaces within the academy where we can experience ourselves as scholars, even as we continue to be able to experience ourselves as human in connection with one another.



Tips on Teaching and the Successful Academic Job Search

By Ianna Hawkins Owen

At a recent event hosted by the GSI Teaching and Resource Center, a panel of Cal PhD candidates with tenure track offers shared their experiences on the job market over the past year. “RIs are not supposed to care about teaching but they turned out to be the most stressful interviews [on the topic],” shared Sarah Chihaya, a PhD candidate who has accepted a tenure track position at Princeton University in Comparative Literature. Jennifer Carlson of Sociology, soon to be joining the University of Toronto, seconded this stating that teaching played a larger than anticipated role in the application process, on top of the interview and the campus visit.

Curious about the role of teaching from the vantage point of the African American and African Diaspora Studies job search, I caught up with our own department’s recent graduates, Dr. Ron Williams II, soon to be joining the faculty at University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill, and Dr. Lia Bascomb, headed to Georgia State University for a tenure track position in the fall. Williams and Bascomb noted that zeroing in on the needs expressed in the job ad along with the department’s class listings gives you all the information you need to emphasize how you are ideally prepared to fill the holes in their course offerings. Williams shared that the cover letter is a place to convey to the search committee and the hiring institution which courses in their catalogue are within your expertise. However, he cautioned, “don’t name everything because you don’t want to appear desperate and you don’t want to step on anyone’s toes. Instead add a caveat like, ‘if the need should arise, I could teach this other course as well.’”

The GSI Center panelists collectively agreed that the amount of teaching required by UC Berkeley actually works to the advantage of our graduates since each testified to an increasing emphasis on teaching, not just at liberal arts colleges, but at research universities as well. Chihaya shared that she was glad to be from Cal with teaching experience and felt this gave her a competitive edge over applicants from private schools with fewer teaching opportunities. Bascomb tied this insight to African American Studies, “In small departments we have more opportunities to hone our teaching skills.” She added that the GSI experience offers a unique instructional dynamic, “You’re in this liminal space where undergraduates identify you as an authority but you’re also a student and there’s a lot you can do with that.”

Ways To Prepare

A few of the panelists participated in a preparatory program offered by Cal, the Summer Institute for Preparing Future Faculty, and testified to the added benefit of using materials developed in the seminar (such as teaching philosophies and syllabi) during their applications and job talks. In the “teaching philosophy,” a required part of many applications, Chihaya shared that she chose an anecdotal strategy that showcased real experiences as a teacher positioning her ahead of applicants with less classroom experience writing from imagined scenarios. In addition to Professor Ula Taylor’s “Critical Pedagogy” seminar which involves the production of a teaching philosophy, Bascomb and Williams each felt delivering mock job talks to our department allowed them

to strengthen and fine tune their presentations to suit the particular missions of the departments they visited.

Where strategy around recommendation letters was concerned, the three GSI Center panelists made sure their letters emphasized their teaching experience either by asking a particular recommender to solely speak to her teaching experience, by GSI-ing for her dissertation chair in advance, or by asking a recommender to observe one of her classes. Reflecting on interviews and visits, Williams and Bascomb recommended taking time to develop answers to questions like, What might you design or add to the department’s curriculum? Can you train people to do work when you’re gone? These kinds of questions require transitioning from thinking of oneself as a student to recognizing oneself as a potential creative, intellectual peer of the search committee. Williams and Bascomb noted that in each step of the process, and even in campus visits that did not require a teaching demo, job candidates are evaluated on whether undergraduates can see them as someone they want to learn from and whether or not one’s research can translate into the classroom. To this end Chihaya advised, “Teaching is always in the back of their minds therefore it should always be in the back of ours.”

Ianna Hawkins Owen is a candidate in UC-Berkeley’s African Diaspora PhD program.



Book Review:

Ethnicity, Inc. by John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff

by Charisse Burden-Stelly

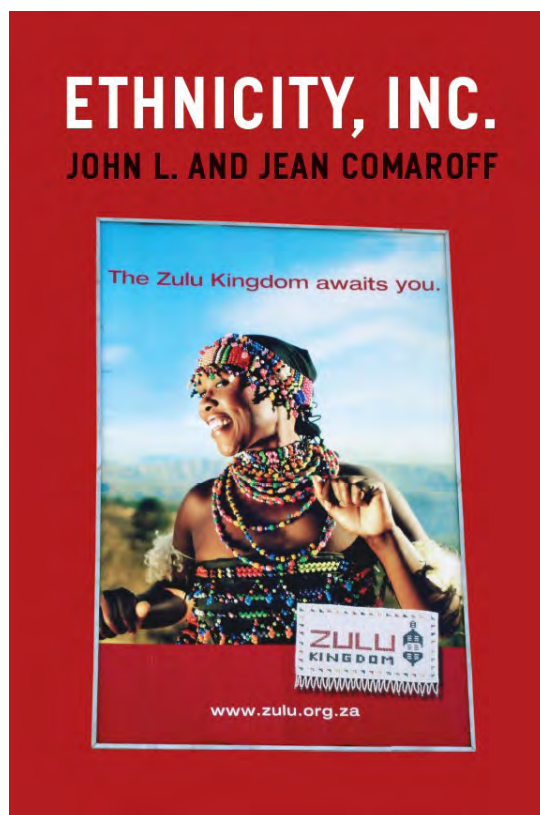
In *Ethnicity, Inc.* by John and Jean Comaroff, the traditional distinction between political economy and culture is problematized. In the age of neoliberalism and mass consumption, economics and politics undergird the configuration of the world, and are virtually indistinguishable. For this reason, fashioning identity is engaged with consumption and the global marketplace more than ever before, so that ontologically and pragmatically, economics—entangled with politics—is the basis for identity.¹ The Comaroffs broach this phenomenon primarily through exploring how different forms of commodifying culture serve to preserve tradition, construct self-identity, redefine citizenship and belonging, and forge space in the global market.² While the “identity economy” is highly contested—from within and without—ethno-business has proliferated, especially in South Africa, as a means of both defining and redefining self-identity, and economic survival. As neoliberal capitalism penetrates the corners of the globe (albeit unevenly, discriminately, and disjointedly), culture, identity, and the market are becoming increasingly intertwined.

While neoliberal globalization is integral to the proliferation of ethno-business, the latter is certainly nothing new. Native Americans have long contended with ethnic branding, albeit as objects as opposed to subjects. The “liberal-modernist materialism” that dictated much of the policy toward Native American reservations and cultural commodification remains the basis for the intellectual property regime that is the impetus for *Ethnicity, Inc.* The proliferation of

intellectual property, coupled with the domination of Neoliberal market economics and the conditions of abject poverty created by increasingly globalized polarization of wealth, have set the conditions for the commodification of culture and identity.

allows them to concretize what their heritage means. Although some aspects of “authenticity” are created or redeployed specifically for consumer-tourists,⁴ insertion into the global market nonetheless binds communities together, and in some cases, keeps them from becoming irrelevant. Thus, “authentic” tradition and heritage are reinscribed and sustained through the global market: “Mass circulation reaffirms ethnicity—in general and in all its particularity—and with it, the status of the embodied ethnic subject as a source and means of identity.”⁵

Citizenship is another important factor in “ethno-preneurship.” Aside from shaping “cultural citizenship in public life,”⁶ ethno-business also serves as a means through which ethnic groups contest their position as “other” in a particular nation-state. *Ethnicity, Inc.* allows ethnic groups to circumvent notions of nationhood and citizenship that have historically been used to keep them in a subordinate position. The Comaroffs write that the consolidation of states and colonies traded notions of universal citizenship for ethnic identity;⁷ this is in contradistinction to the age of neoliberal globalization in which it is precisely *through* ethnic identity that global and national citizenship is asserted. Because the hegemony of the market serves to “breach and buttress sovereign borders” and to “extend and constrain the regulatory ambit of the state,” cultural communities are able to make claims to citizenship by forging space in the global market.⁸ This becomes all the more important as states increasingly approach citizenship economically—measured by



One of the primary issues foundational to “objectifying subjectivity in the market” is authenticity.³ While myriad scholars have asserted that increasing commodification undermines tradition and heritage, the Comaroffs contest this claim by presenting how the Tswana, for example, pursue the authenticity of their culture through the market. Stated differently, by inserting their culture into the marketplace (some) Tswana are able to produce cultural feeling through global recognition that

production and reproduction—as opposed to politically.

Inasmuch as the sale of culture has replaced the sale of labor in terms of subsistence in many places, the line between production and reception, performer and consumer becomes unclear.⁹ Those who produce must also consume in order to determine what is relevant; conversely, those who consume are also producing meaning and demand that dictates what cultural practices will be profitable in the global market. Human subjects and cultural objects are intertwined within the marketplace. While cultural branding can have a homogenizing effect, according to the Comaroffs, intracultural competing interests produce conflicts that minimize this effect. That is, treating tradition as intellectual property in order to produce social benefits is highly contested based on class, gender, and power differences within a particular cultural community.¹⁰ Because neoliberalism produces a doubling of ethnicity—that is, a natural and voluntary component—the way individuals engage with ethno-business is highly varied.¹¹

Interestingly, *Ethnicity, Inc.* does not place value judgment on the trend toward ethno-preneurship. It is acknowledged that there are positive and negative effects, as space is simultaneously opened and closed by the domination of the global market. Cultural communities are able to challenge citizenship, claim recognition, and claim stake in the global market; however, they are doing this as a result of ever-decreasing possibilities and alternatives. The Comaroffs write: “It carries within it a host of costs and contradictions: that it has *both* insurgent possibility *and* a tendency to deepen prevailing lines of inequality, the capacity *both* to enable *and* to disable, the power *both* to animate and to annihilate.”¹² In this, their argument

aligns with that of James Ferguson in “The Uses of Neoliberalism” in that it is necessary to look at the phenomenon of Neoliberalism as more than just a tool to make the rich richer and the poor poorer.

While *Ethnicity, Inc.* is an invaluable resource for looking at the intersections of political economy and culture and complicating the effects of Neoliberal globalization, it also raises a few questions. First, in looking specifically at South Africa (and Native Americans in the U.S.), which is now considered a developed country, are we to assume that *Ethnicity, Inc.* is a phenomenon of the poor in developed countries? Do the poor in Third World countries have the same possibilities? Second, because there are few other alternatives to ethno-preneurship, should we consider it agentive? That is, because cultural communities are now forced to insert themselves into the global economy by commodifying their culture as opposed to their labor, can this nonetheless be seen as empowering? And if it produces the same polarization in wealth, how can it be enabling? Finally, it is unclear whether the Comaroffs are asserting that economics takes precedent over politics, that politics are inherently economic, or vice-versa. This then begs the question of whether the purpose of *Ethnicity, Inc.* is to gain profit or a medium of political power, because while the two are connected, they are not the same. Overall, *Ethnicity, Inc.* is especially valuable to interdisciplinary fields like African Diaspora Studies because it bridges the gap between the humanities and social sciences.

Charisse Burden-Stelly is a candidate in UC-Berkeley's African Diaspora PhD Program.

(Endnotes)

John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnicity Inc.*, (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 45.

Ibid., 9-16.

Ibid., 18.

Ibid., 13.

Ibid., 29.

Ibid., 16.

Ibid., 29.

Ibid., 46.

Ibid., 25.

Ibid., 36.

Ibid., 40.

Ibid., 139-42.



The Reunion of “The Lumpen,” the Black Panther Party’s long forgotten Rhythm and blues band

by Rickey Vincent, PhD

In 2003 when doing dissertation research on Black Power and popular culture while working on my PhD in Ethnic Studies here at Berkeley, I came across a little known aspect of the Oakland based Black Panther Party. A colleague shared a rumor that the Black Panthers had their own “band.” This idea to me was absurd on its face, as the Black Panthers continue to exhibit a mythic status as stoic, unbowed black revolutionaries. A band? No way.

I was to discover that the Black Panther Party was an organization composed of Soul Brothers and Soul Sisters as well. The worldwide black militant organization had indeed created its own rhythm and blues band, which performed for almost a year from the summer of 1970 through the spring of 1971.

stated, was to develop “survival programs pending revolution.”

The organization experienced dramatic growth, ideological shifts and severe government repression during the years 1968-1970. Toward the end of the decade, the Party leadership sought innovative ways to reach the black community on terms the community could relate to, and of course music was central to the daily lives of members of the community.

Party leaders David Hilliard and Minister of Culture Emory Douglas recruited rank-and-file Panthers William Calhoun of San Jose, Michael Torrence of Berkeley, Clark “Santa Rita” Bailey of Oakland, and James Mott of Sacramento, to become the lead singers of the Party’s new group, which would be called The Lumpen.

The Panthers recruited a band of volunteer musicians from the local community (a far simpler task in those days than it would

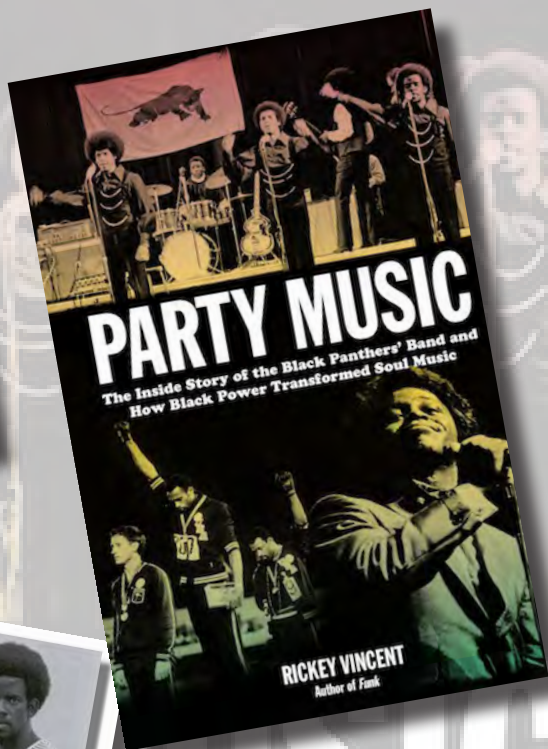


Known for their militant posture, incisive social critiques and fearless challenges to the U.S. power structure, the Black Panther Party was also known for community service programs that included free food giveaways, free clinics and breakfast for children programs in many chapters. The purpose of the programs, as founder and ideological leader Huey Newton

Often in workplaces in which African Americans were toiling away, laborers would start up tunes, make up rhymes and new interpretations of popular or traditional songs to pass the time. In the case of the weekly Panther newspaper shipping detail (performed by dozens of party members each week) four young men distinguished themselves as “singing” party members. Panther

be today), and in the fall of 1970 The Lumpen started performing on stage at various Panther events and rallies, and later union halls, auditoriums and R&B clubs around the Bay area. The group performed politically charged re-makes of well-known soul music standards. They had a rugged rhythmic sound that resembled the James Brown revue, and the four lead singers performed in lock step like The Temptations. The vocalists sang with the authority and performance standards expected of soul singers at the time.

One could hear militant re-makes of Sly & the Family Stone’s “Dance to the Music” and James Brown’s “There Was A Time.”



Their rendition of Curtis Mayfield and The Impressions' "People Get Ready" asked the audience to get ready for revolution. They made fun of the popular soul group The Temptations, who had recently covered the American standard "Ol' Man River." The Lumpen sang the well known verses of the song with precision, but completely changed the lyrics into a challenge to "Old Pig Nixon."

The Lumpen were advertised in *The Black Panther* paper, the weekly media outlet of the Party, and by nearly all accounts, the group was a popular element of the organization's outreach efforts.

In November of 1970 the group went on a tour of colleges and Panther Party chapter events in the northeast, which included Amherst College, Temple University, and events in Boston, New Haven, New York City. Their concerts were often performed in defiance of local law enforcement authorities, and wherever they went on the "tour" they were treated as Black Panthers from California, not as entertainers.

Despite the high turnover of volunteer backup musicians, and the enormous workload of rank and file Panther Party membership, the group continued to perform through May of 1971. The Black Panther Party went through a dramatic rupture that spring of 1971, as Eldridge Cleaver and a more militant faction broke from the Party leadership of Newton and Bobby Seale. As a result, trusted members (such as the Lumpen singers) were given tasks relating to security of the leadership and other concerns.

In 1973 Newton had devised a plan to run Bobby Seale for Mayor of Oakland, and Elaine Brown for City Council. The elections took up all of the time of the rank and file membership, and the Party musical group was a memory shortly afterward. Both elections

were defeats, but they were close races that drew thousands of blacks into the electoral process, and transformed the political landscape of the city. In 1977 Oakland elected its first black mayor, Lionel Wilson, with the help of the Panthers street organizing.

The rank and file Panthers that sang in the Lumpen group remained trusted Party members until each one decided to leave, and the Party ceased operations in 1982. As part of a new generations' interest in the cultural politics of the Black Power era, and because of the popularity of politically charged hip hop artists that reconstruct the ethos of the Black Panthers' image on the national scene, a renewed interest in Panther music has emerged. Former Panther leader Elaine Brown recorded two albums of her revolutionary ballads, in 1969 *Seize the Time* and in 1973 *Until We're Free*. Brown's first album has been reissued on CD by the label Water in 2009.

In 1970 the Lumpen recorded a 45rpm single, "Free Bobby Now" which is available on the compilation *Listen Whitey: Songs of the Black Power Era* on Light in the Attic Records in 2012. The group had recorded an entire live album in November of 1970, but only a grainy cassette copy of that tape has been recovered to date.

In April of 2013, as part of my research, I brought the members of The Lumpen together for a reunion, their first time together as a quartet in 42 years.

They met at the site of the old Merritt College on Martin Luther King Jr. Way in Oakland, where the group recorded their live concert. The former Panthers then discussed their time together at a local café.

The Lumpen members remain proud of their work as rank and file members of the Black Panther Party. "We put together a product that was successful for its time. It

was a unique theory, a unique idea," Clark Bailey recalled.

Lumpen member Michael Torrence remembered how serious their work was at the time: "The music was just another tool or another weapon to further that cause but we were Panthers first and so in that regard we were required to do all that was required of any Panther—to get up in the morning and feed the children for the breakfast program, to sell the newspapers, to secure the offices to do whatever community work was needed, to pick up donations. Because we were Panthers first."

Bandleader William Calhoun was a veteran stage performer before joining the Panthers, but had given that up for the revolution: "When I first came into the Black Panther Party I don't think anybody would have paid any attention to the Lumpen, because we were too busy organizing around other things. But as the Party was maturing and getting ready to start doing more community stuff without us all walking in with .38s strapped on our sides, the atmosphere [became] conducive to the Lumpen coming into being."

"By no means were we entertainers" each of the Lumpen insisted. "We never saw a penny for what we were doing" Bailey recalled. The men did their part for a cause they believed in strongly enough to commit their lives, and still support to this day.

Rickey Vincent is an alumni of UC-Berkeley's Ethnic Studies PhD program and a lecturer in the Department of African American Studies. The story of the life of The Lumpen, and the larger relationship of Soul Music and Black Power is explored in Rickey Vincent's new book Party Music: The Inside Story of the Black Panthers Band and How Soul Music Transformed Black Power which is due out in October 2013 from Lawrence Hill Books.

Whitey on the Move (an emulation of Gil-Scot Heron's
"Whitey on the Moon")

by Reginald James

a rat foreclosed my aunt Jodie
(with Whitey on the move)
predatory loan on 1-6-2-4 Foley
(and Whitey's on the move)
she can't pay that extra interest
(but Whitey's on the move)
fighting cancer in her breast
(while Whitey's on the move)
The Man broke in, changed her locks last year
(watch Whitey's on the move)
now Occupy Oakland's Home Defense is here
(cause Whitey's on the move)
foreclosing on a cancer patient
(heartless whitey on the move)
cause foreclosures equal bank profits
(with whitey on the move)
Tax money bailed out the banks
Morgan Stanley still tryna gank
Black homeownership ain't goin' up
An' as if all that shit wuzn't enough
a rat foreclosed my aunt Jodie
(with Whitey on the move)
predatory loan on 1-6-2-4 Foley
(but Whitey's on the move)
we thought low-interest would be good
(for Whitey on the move?)
guess who want back in the neighborhood
(Hmm! Whitey's on the move)
Y'know we call it gentrification
(when Whitey on the move)
urban renewal = negro removal,
Black elimination, but U-Haul be patient
(cuz' Whitey on the move)
... but auntie AIN'T!

Kurudi Amerika

by Reginald James

“Welcome Home!” said he
Words strike me with irony
arrogant not-so-random customary bag inspection
Agent Act-Nice invades my luggage
offensively rummaging my memories
passport privileges of an American citizen yet permission to enter pending
my journey’s ending, into the place of my birth
possessed latex gloves molest my possessions like hands carve colonial sections
human beings extracted by Europeans
dispossessed, displaced from homeland, now
I roam like mobile phones thru multiple time zones
over 4 oceans, 3 continents, 2 planes, 1 aim
discovering who I be. Originally.
before Uncle Sam stole hue-man, back from the Motherland. Damn!
watching latex hands hover over Swahili books
my mind reaches back to beaches on the Indian Ocean, bahari ya hindi
Transcontinental transit rider, holla’n at daladala dereva
‘Mwenge! Mwenge!’ Shusha! It’s my stop;
hop off the *daladala*, hit Mwenge market to bargain
Hapana! price way too much, *bei ghali!*
Tafadhali kaka yangu! My Brotha! Mimi si mgeni!
Rising before sun, daily before dawn
University of Dar es Salaam, Hall 4, next to masjid, I hear Athan!
‘Allahu akbar! Allahu akbar!’ The Call to Pray.
Every Tues/Thursday I ride the *daladala* to Vetenary Primary
teaching *kiingereza* in packed windowless classroom,
watoto wearing high striped socks, blue skirts, black loafers, white hijabs
children packed on wooden desks like ancestors packed beneath wooden slave decks
English lessons by *Mwalimu Reggie*,
lakini wanafunzi wangu, my students *sema* “Teacher Reggie”
In Tanzania, living forever in five months.
Now Back at SFO. Yo, you still ain’t finished yet?!?
getting a custom Customs check
Traveling While Black
in Afrika, *mimi ni* Afrikan
in Amerikkka just anotha nigga again
Naw, not me never no more, my wide eyes wandering differently
wondering if possibly I will ever return when my reminiscing ruptured—
“Thank you for your patience”
Flashing fake smile cause all the while the long arm looked
Mama yangu been patient
As I cross through guarded double doors, passing Arrival signs,
striding across carpet strands into the arms of My Mama
“Welcome Home!” said she.

Reginald James is a poet in the Department of African American Studies’ Poetry for the People Program and a Vèvè Clark Institute Scholar

Check Race Box

by Lashon Daley

Reluctantly, I choose Black though my skin caramel

My nose broad, my cheekbones high.

Reluctantly, I choose Black though my hair dreaded

My thighs thick, my lips full.

My breakfast table consists of ackee and pear

Fried plantains, and dumplin' browned in a pot of hot oil.

My Jamaican mother speaks Patois

Can use a machete

And thinks sickle-cell—an African-American disease.

When/confronted/with/the/words: "Check Race Box"

I hesitate.

But, I choose Black because my face oval-shaped

My feet wide, my eyes almond-brown.

I choose Black *because* Caribbean doesn't make the list

Schools bus me in, the South shelters me.

Yet, my dinner table consists of gungo peas and rice,

Cooked cabbage, and bun and cheese.

My Jamaican mother speaks English with a heavy accent

Prays like a Baptist minister

And lists her employment status as "The help".

This race box, squares me in

Sized too small to fit this 5'9" tall,

This internal brawl,

This colorful head shawl,

Worn by my mother because she got that cancer—that American disease.

How do I squeeze the 29 of my years

54 of my mother's

72 of my grandmother's

88 of my great-grandmother's

90 of my great-great grandmother's

333 years of story, song

Into this tiny box?

Where do I mark my Irish heritage?

The box where I tell you of my paternal lineage

British Hegemony, the name of a cruise ship

Destined for the clear blue waters of Jamaica.

Enslaved Irishmen worked, beaten, and buried in the sugar cane fields where they fell.

My last name means "to assemble" in Gaelic.

To gather together: Irish and West African slaves armed with similar stories, kissed with hope, handed down to the next generation.

Their hues like paints mixed and inter-mixed resulting in various shades of brown,

But Brown doesn't make the list either,

So I *choose* Black.

Lashon Daley is a member of the Poetry 4 the People program

Guilty

by Brandon Thomas

Born and raised in pit of poverty
Molded in a pot of dirty pennies
Weekly trips to grocery store
sounded like the clinking and clanking
of a Coinstar Machine
summing up scavenged
copper tokens and
spitting out meal tickets

But get to college
and government starts
giving a shit
Financial aid
Scholarships
Work-study
Starts filling pit of poverty
Pushing me out, making
sure my fingers won't
ever have to pinch again –

not just pinching pennies but
pinching out that
last extra drop of toothpaste or
pinching pant seams together
as mom sews up
my only pair of jeans or
pinching wet clothes between
wringing hands because
*The Laundromat down the street
costs too damn much to dry*

Pinched thin in the space between
Poverty and success
Between
“low-income” and “living comfortably”
Once vague concepts like
“networking” and “professionalism”
Materialize in
internships and luncheons
too embarrassed to ask which
fork my salad requires
(Who the fuck needs this many
utensils anyway?)

Mom's eyes shine with pride
Watch me explore a tax bracket
She's only seen in movies
Mama you want me to
“live comfortably”
but I find no comfort in
a million J. Crew crewnecks
My comfort lies in

Van Nuys and Panorama City
where roaches rule the night
where boomboxes don't boom
where cold showers wash
city smog off weathered skin.

So as I fall asleep under thick
Berkeley blankets
I feel guilty
Guilty because I sign job offers
My wallet growing fat
while, mama, you sign welfare checks
stomach growing fat because
Whole Foods doesn't
accept food stamps
I feel guilty because I only take
midterms a few times a year
While, mama, you get tested daily
But no Scantron can grade
single motherhood
an A+ can never encompass your
worth

I feel guilty.
As I wonder if you still pad
drafty windows with torn sweaters
If faucet still drips and drops
you to insomnia
I wonder these things while
Grateful and sleepy under blankets
that warm my bones
Blankets stitched thick with
Guilt
towering high as
Ivory towers

*Brandon Thomas is a poet in the Department of African
American Studies' Poetry for the People program*



Poetry for the People Participants Win National Honors

The 2012-2013 CalSLAM team, composed almost entirely of P4P participants made it to semi-finals at this year's CUPSI (College Unions Poetry Slam Invitational), the national college slam. The team won 7th place out of 59 teams and took home four coach's awards: Best Poem for "Samson" by Brandon Melendez, Best Political Poem for



Brandon Melendez



Isabella Borgeson

"Oakland" by Isabella Borgeson and Jade Cho, Best Individual Poet for Natasha Huey, and Best Writing By a Team. This year's team was composed of Ben Grenrock, Natasha Huey, Isabella Borgeson, Jade Cho, and Brandon Melendez, and was coached by Terry Taplin and Gabriel Cortez. All but Grenrock and Cortez have been Student Teacher Poets in P4P. Grenrock is a P4P student.

MYSTIC BLACK ROSE

by Joshua G. McRavion

IMAGINE THAT YOU'RE WALKING DOWN A BUSY CITY STREET, AND YOU SEE A
BEAUTIFUL MAJESTIC BLACK ROSE, THAT'S NOT DEAD, GROWING UP
THROUGH THE CONCRETE
NO MATTER HOW THE PEOPLE TRAMPLE AND STOMP UPON IT. IT NEVER IS
DEFEATED.
IT NEVER DIES. IT ONLY RAISES BACK UP TO ITS ORIGINAL HEIGHT. AND
REACHES FURTHER UP INTO THE SUN.
ALWAYS BENDING UNDER FOOT. BUT NEVER BREAKING UNDER FOOT. ONLY
SWAYING IN THE STORM, NO MATTER HOW SEVERE ITS WINDS MAY BLOW.
WHEN THE CITY IS PARCHED.
THIS ROSE LOOKS AS IF IT'S SEEN RAIN. THIS BEAUTIFUL BLACK ROSE THAT
GREW FROM CONCRETE.
IS SYMBOLIC TO EVERY BLACK CHILD THAT REFUSED TO DIE IN THE STREETS.
EVERY BLACK
WOMAN THAT WENT HUNGRY SO HER CHILDREN COULD EAT. EVERY
GRANDMOTHER THAT PRAYED LONG AFTER THEIR KNEES BECAME WEAK,
AND FOR EVERY BLACK MAN THAT TRIES TO BE THE BEST FATHER HE CAN
BE. MY PEOPLE!
THE BEAUTIFUL BLACK ROSES THAT GROW FROM CONCRETE.
THEY CONTINUE TO PERSEVERE, FIGHT BACK AND REFUSE TO ACCEPT DEFEAT.
IMAGINE, WALKING DOWN A BUSY CITY STREET AND SEEING A BEAUTIFUL,
MAJESTIC BLACK
ROSE, GROWING UP THROUGH THE CONCRETE.

Joshua G. McRavion is a participant in the Department of African American Studies' Prison Outreach Program.



Introducing the American Cultures Engaged Scholarship (ACES) Course: Gandhi and Civil Rights in America, 1883-1993

by Megan Flautt

“Gandhi and Civil Rights in America” examines national and transnational non-violent movements including the Pan-African anti-slavery movement and Gandhi’s campaign for Indian independence from the British Empire.

Cross-listed with African American Studies, American Cultures, and Religious Studies, the course looks at the moral and ethical underpinnings of divergent threads of non-violent practices including the emergence of Gandhian non-violence in America. The course explores an extensive constellation of American civil rights leaders’ freedom struggles including those of Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, the famous work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the lesser known but equally important work of Berkeley’s own Pauli Murray who wrote *Jane Crow and the Law*.

International non-violent movements rooted in the Gandhian tradition are also examined including Aung San Suu Kyi’s democratization struggle in Burma and Nelson Mandela’s crusade against apartheid in South Africa.

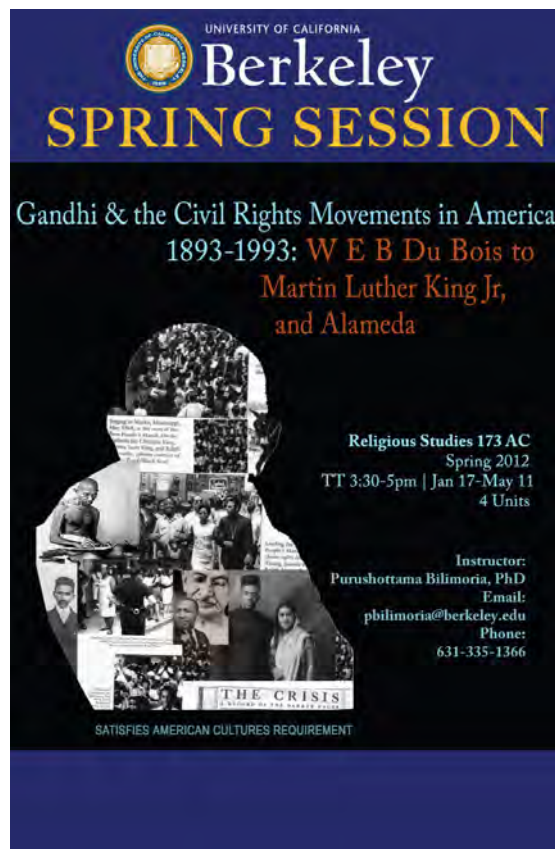
Alongside the course, a select group of American Culture Engaged Scholarship (ACES) students are participating in an exciting internship at the Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute (MCLI), an NGO located in Berkeley, California. Founded in 1965, Meiklejohn’s mission is to help individuals exercise their civil rights by using their human rights. In addition to publishing the quarterly newsletter, *Human Rights Now*, Meiklejohn advocates for human rights by shining a light on local, state, and national laws which

violate United Nations’ treaties including the right to healthcare, freedom from all forms of racial discrimination, the right to clean air, and many other basic human rights. During their semester long internship at the institute, students collect information about human rights violations and enforcements at the local level to help Meiklejohn advocate for human rights and justice. Meiklejohn has become so beloved as a human rights advocacy group that many simply know it as the “Civil Liberties Church.”

Faculty Profile

Professor Purushottama Bilimoria is a visiting professor at UC Berkeley. His faculty affiliation is with Religious Studies (UGIS) and African American Studies. He is also an interdisciplinary visiting scholar with The Institute of International Studies and The South Asia Studies Collective at UC Berkeley. He has taught and has had professorships and research fellowships at University of Melbourne (Australia), Oxford University, Harvard, and Columbia Universities. His research areas of interest include South Asian Diaspora studies, comparative philosophy, philosophy of religion, ethics and law, and folk psychology. He is Editor-in-Chief of ‘Sophia’ Springer Journal in Philosophy & Religion. His work on Gandhi and African American Civil Rights began at Emory University and the King Center in a Public Knowledge Program, in Atlanta, Georgia from which emerged the syllabus for the course described in this article.

Megan Flautt is the Graduate Student Instructor and Course Design Collaborator for “Gandhi and Civil Rights in America, 1893-1993.”



In both the classroom and the internship program, students develop a deep understanding of the connection between civil rights and economic, political, and social rights, a skill which will help them excel as future business, academic, and professional leaders.



Congratulations

Staff Announcements by Vernessa Parker

The past year has been challenging for the staff. As a result of Operational Excellence, the Ethnic Studies Department became a cluster with African American Studies and Gender and Women's Studies in July 2012. Jeannie Imazumi-Wong was working 50% time as the Financial Services Coordinator and she had to service all three units at this level. The department was fortunate to hire Jeannie full time as of January 1, 2013. Sadly, during the time of the reorganization, our highly valued administrative assistant, Lourdes Martinez, went on leave and subsequently passed away. On February 19, 2013, the Ethnic Studies Department hired Angelica Gonzalez as the new Administrative Assistant. Angelica is a recent graduate of the Chicano Studies Program. Angelica oversees and ensures the daily front line administrative operations of the Ethnic Studies Department. Under the direction of Jeannie Imazumi-Wong, she will assist with many of the cluster's financial responsibilities including reimbursements, honorariums, travel and entertainment. She will plan and organize functions, including seminar series and workshops.

Each year the Chancellor's Outstanding Staff awards (COSA) are presented to individual staff members. These awards are among the highest honors bestowed upon staff by the Chancellor. This year Gillian Edgelow and Jeannie Imazumi-Wong will receive the COSA Award on April 29, 2013. Gillian's work performance remains, throughout the years, nothing less than brilliant, both in its initiative and its results. In the

GWS Department's restructuring process, Edgelow was a team player who embraced change, helped to put new structures in place and to ensure their optimal functioning. Her functions expanded from managing The Beatrice Bain Research Group to dealing with three departments' Visiting Scholars: Gender and Women's Studies, Ethnic Studies, and African American Studies.

Positively in the face of seeming impossible staff shortages, outstanding individual initiative to learn and undertake new administrative tasks, and the utmost generosity to share her knowledge and training with other staff members are the things that come to mind when we think of Jeannie's invaluable contributions to the Department of Ethnic Studies and its administrative cluster. Jeannie positively embraced the change and acted as a change leader to move the department into the new cluster.

There were only four Spot Awards available for non-represented staff this year in the cluster. Spot Awards are designed to recognize special contributions, as they occur for a specific project or task. The Spot Award recognizes and reinforces the behaviors and values that are important at UC Berkeley. A Spot Award lets employees know that someone has noticed their noteworthy contributions. The nominees for this year are Lindsey Herbert from African American Studies, Althea Grannum-Cummings from Gender and Women's Studies, Dewey St. Germaine and Francisca Cazares from Ethnic Studies. Each of them will receive an award of \$400. Each one of the nominees has provided exemplary service to their departments.

As Manager of the Cluster I want to thank each and every staff member for his or her commitment and work effort.

Vernessa Parker is the Manager for the Administrative Cluster that serves the Departments of African American Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Gender and Women's Studies

CLS Achievement Award by Catherine Ceniza Choy

I am so pleased to announce that MSO Vernessa Parker has been selected to receive an inaugural 2012-2013 College of Letters & Science Achievement Award. This award honors staff for "sustained, exceptional performance and/or significant contributions above and beyond normal performance expectations."

Chairs Na'ilah Suad Nasir, Juana María Rodríguez and I wrote a detailed letter explaining Vernessa's many contributions to our administrative cluster and individual departments: "Excellence, professionalism, and grace under pressure in the face of major administrative challenges and transitions at the campus and departmental levels characterize Vernessa's leadership and work ethic. . . . Finally, in addition to all of her responsibilities and achievements detailed above, Vernessa has consistently nominated cluster staff members from all three departments for SPOT (now known as STAR) awards over the years. These acts of professionalism, respect, support, and kindness are further evidence of Vernessa Parker's leadership and achievements."

Catherine Ceniza Choy is an Associate Professor and the Chair of the Department of Ethnic Studies

Congratulations

Congratulations to Dr. Ula Taylor, 2013 Recipient of The Distinguished Teaching Award



On Wednesday April 24, 2013 Dr. Ula Taylor was honored for her dedication to teaching undergraduates and graduates. Dr. Taylor teaches three of the department's required courses for undergraduate majors and graduate students, and advises numerous undergraduate honors theses and dissertations. In accepting her award Dr. Taylor called on a history of teaching excellence within the department, acknowledging previous recipient Barbara Christian, friend and favored scholar VèVè A. Clark, and a number of scholars past and present who have inspired her, supported her, and helped to shape a space for her to excel as an instructor and an intellectual. The Distinguished Teaching Award is the University's highest honor for teaching. For anyone who has taken a class with Dr. Taylor, heard her laugh echo in the corridors of Barrows Hall, or been touched in anyway by her scholarship we know that this is a well-earned achievement.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Essence Harden, Selina Makana, Zachary Manditch-Prottas, and Brukab Sisay who earned the Masters of Arts Degree April 3, 2013.



Essence



Selina



Brukab



Zach

Selina Makana also earned the Andrew and Mary Thompson Rocca Summer Pre-Dissertation Research Award in African Studies

Congratulations



Congratulations to Rob Connell on completing his Qualifying Exams in the areas of Diaspora Theory, Political Ecology, and Caribbean History, on the 8th of April 2013. He submitted the following position papers in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the PhD Qualifying Exam in African Diaspora Studies:

“Forever Turning the Lathe of Heaven: The Function of Utopia within African Diasporic Connectivity”

“Ecological Crisis, Biocentrism, and the Politics of Gender, Race, Nation and Class in the Social Construction of Nature: Maroon Case Studies”

Congratulations to Jarvis Givens on completing his Qualifying Exams in the areas of African American Education & The Black Freedom Struggle (Prior to 1954); African American Education & The Black Freedom Struggle (1954 - Black Power); Policing Black Bodies; and Iterations of Diaspora Through Coloniality, on the 8th of April 2013. He submitted the following position papers in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the PhD Qualifying Exam in African Diaspora Studies:

“Linking Up: Diaspora Consciousness, Recognition and Shared Projects”

“On Black Education: Conflict and Agreement Through Time”



Congratulations



Congratulations to Amy Wolfson on completing her Qualifying Exams in the areas of African Studies: Development and Neoliberalism; Globalization Studies: Development, Humanitarianism, and Theories of the Global; and Cultural Studies: Theories of Race and Representation, on the 23rd of April 2013. She submitted the following position papers in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the PhD Qualifying Exam in African Diaspora Studies:

“Reclaiming Africa, Reclaiming Humanity: Theory, Methods, and Projections for African Diaspora Studies”

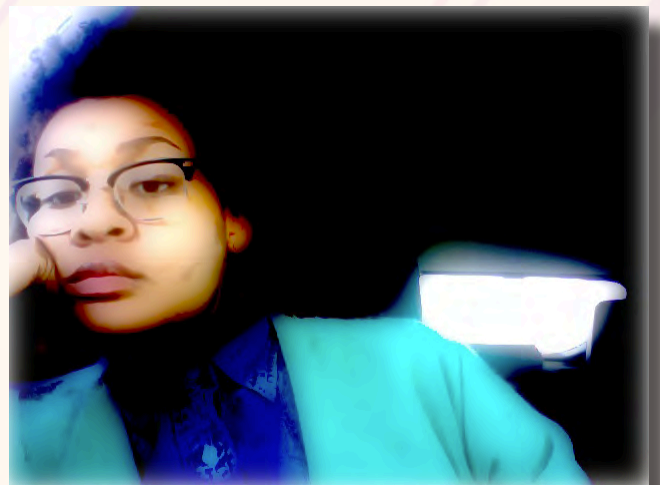
“‘Modern’ Moral Interventionism: Constructions of Race, Humanity, and Subjecthood in Global Regimes of Rights and Reason”

Amy Wolfson is also the recipient of a UC-Berkeley Mentored Research Award

Congratulations to Christina Bush on completing her Qualifying Exams in the areas of Black Performance Theory; Representing the Black Masculine; Black Cultural Studies; and Queer Black Diaspora Theory, on the 14th of May 2013. She submitted the following position papers in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the PhD Qualifying Exam in African Diaspora Studies:

“Outside in Diaspora Studies: Reading From a Queerer Place in the Diaspora”

“Theorizing Blackness in/as Popular Culture”



Congratulations

It is with great pride and excitement that I “hood” Lia Tamar Bascomb. In fulfillment of the PhD, Lia has written a wonderful dissertation entitled *In Plenty and in Time of Need: Popular Culture and the Remapping of Barbadian Identity*. Taking its title from the Barbados national anthem, it is an interdisciplinary examination of the construction of gender, race and Barbadian national identity in the global marketplace through the lens of Barbadian popular culture.

In Plenty and in Time of Need is a cultural history of Barbadian music and its visual interlocutors (music videos, internet, print materials as well as live performance). The project offers a theoretical interrogation of the ways in which popular culture has been key to forging “Barbadian-ness” for both citizens of the island and audiences of the African diaspora. The project starts with a history of the island from its favored status as a jewel in England’s colonial crown during the period of slavery and colonialism, through its post-World War II stirrings for decolonization, to its emergence as an independent nation-state in 1966. The dissertation then turns to its primary focus on three post-independence Barbadian musical performers: the Queen Alison Hind, Rupee and perhaps Barbados’ most well-known daughter, Rihanna. Lia argues that since the island’s emergence as an independent nation, Barbados has struggled to articulate an identity that can sit comfortably at the crossroads of a colonial history, an (imagined) African past and a present and future marked by cultural exports and an economy increasingly dependent on tourism. Through this project Lia reveals, in her words, the intersections “between the colonial past and the global present within popular culture.”

In Plenty and in Time of Need is marked by extensive primary and secondary research, including oral interviews, archival research, and the assemblage of visual materials for analysis. Lia has conducted research in the University of West Indies, Cave Hill archives, and the archives of the Barbados National Cultural Foundation, as well as interviewing a number of key figures in her study—musicians, cultural figures and music industry players. Lia makes excellent use of a wealth of materials and offers elegant and incisive readings of sources both familiar (the work of George Lamming for example) and unexpected (including travel brochures, artist fan pages, and promotional literature).

This project is in conversation with similar monographs, about Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago most notably, but *In Plenty and in Time of Need* is one of only a handful of books to examine the crossroads of national identity and popular culture in Barbados.

Lia Bascomb is not only distinguished by her rigorous pursuit of a unique and timely dissertation. She has also demonstrated herself to be an excellent teacher, a devoted mentor and a hardworking departmental citizen, committed to her home Department, to the University, to her chosen fields and perhaps above all her students. She is the recipient of not one but two teaching awards. Lia has twice served as editor of the Departmental publication, *Diaspora*. She was easily selected (from among a competitive group of applicants) as the first writing instructor for our Department’s new undergraduate mentoring program, the VèVè A. Clark Institute for Engaged Scholars of African American Studies. Recognized for her commitment and service, Lia was also selected as the first graduate researcher for UC-Berkeley’s American Cultures Engaged Scholarship program (ACES). Finally, I would just like to mention that Lia is a kind and generous person, at once professional and collegial; she is an ideal colleague. Lia turned down a postdoctoral fellowship in African American Studies at Washington University in St. Louis to take a tenure track assistant professor position in the department of African American Studies at Georgia State University in Atlanta, where she will help build their new graduate program. They are very lucky to have her.

Leigh Raiford is an Associate Professor in the Department of African American Studies, Lia Bascomb’s dissertation advisor, and graduate advisor for the department’s African Diaspora Ph.D. program.

Congratulations



I have the distinct pleasure of presenting to you Dr. Jessyka Finley. Jessyka Finley, affectionately known to all of us as J, wrote an amazing dissertation entitled *Fire Spitters: Performance, Power, and Payoff in Black Women's Humor, 1968 to the Present*. Her dissertation is concerned with black performance, feminist theory, and racial politics. She explores how stand-up comedy performed by black women enables a certain kind of politics and a certain kind of empowerment. She coined the phrase “black women comic literacy.” It is a theoretical concept to engage in the intimate ways that particular cultural and historical knowledge is produced among black women comics. Through a close reading of jokes, performance, as well as audience reception J frames how black women’s comic literacy operates on both a conscious and unconscious level. In order to write this amazing dissertation, J interviewed numerous comics including Miss Laura Hayes from *The Queens of Comedy*, legendary Paul Mooney, and she corresponded with comics like Aisha Tyler. Most impressive, however, is that Jessyka enrolled in a class in San Francisco to learn how to write jokes, and ultimately performed stand-up herself. Her last chapter details what it feels like to perform and the challenges of self-reflection on the stage. Jessyka is an intellectual dynamo and she has cranked out an awesome dissertation. This dissertation is filled with humor, it’s filled with nuance, analysis, and it’s filled with her own passion. She has a promising academic future ahead of her and I am so honored to have worked with her because she has written a brilliant dissertation. So please join me in honoring Dr. Jessyka Finley.

I would like to profoundly thank her family, her friends, her committee, and colleagues who helped her achieve this goal. She says, “All of you have been absolutely, positively wonderful.”

Ula Taylor is an Associate Professor in the Department of African American Studies and J Finley's dissertation advisor.

Congratulations to the first VèVè Clark Institute Graduates:



Antonio Cascio-Zuleta, Theodore Roper, Naomi Wilson, and Reginald James

Clark Institute News:

Naomi Wilson is headed to New York University's Masters in Education program.

Theodore Roper will begin a post baccalaureate program in medicine at Mills College.

Reginald James is the 2013 recipient of the African American Studies Departmental Citation and the Judith Lee Stronach Baccalaureate Prize.

Peace El Henson has been accepted into UC-Berkeley's Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program.

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Congratulations to Reginold Royston and Maxine McKinney de Royston on the birth of their son Rueben Oba Qaaim McKinney de Royston born March 11, 2013 18.5 inches, 7.3 lbs.



Reginold Royston is also the recipient of the 2013-2014 UC Dissertation fellowship

The 37th Annual National Council for Black Studies Conference 2013

By Kimberly McNair

In March of this year, a group of UC-Berkeley graduate students and one faculty person presented at the 2013 *National Council for Black Studies (NCBS)* conference. The “Commodity, Occupy, and Ratchet Blackness: New Provocations and Perspectives on Race, Class, and Gender” panel featured Christina Bush, Kimberly McNair, and Ameer Loggins. Na’ilah Suad Nasir and Jarvis Givens also presented a co-authored paper during the “Education, Equity, and Blackness” session, and Jarvis Givens later presented an individual paper at the “Black Leadership and Black Power” session.

Indianapolis, Indiana, home of the Madame C. J. Walker Theater Center and the Crispus Attucks Museum, was the site of this year’s four-day conference. The weather was cold, but the debates ignited inside The Westin Indianapolis made for a very intellectually stimulating experience. The conference included a variety of panels focusing on education, gender, race, identity, and representation, and theorizing contemporary political developments in the diaspora. Notable conference appearances included those of groundbreaking scholars Molefi Asante (Temple University) and Maulana Karenga (California State University, Long Beach) who both presented papers during the “Classical African Studies” session and chaired various panel discussions.

The “Commodity, Occupy, and Ratchet Blackness” panel discussion, chaired by Joseph F. Jordan of UNC Chapel Hill, introduced new questions regarding Black expressive culture, commodity culture, questions of authenticity, and performances of race and

gender. The papers explored the tension between black cultural production on the periphery and mainstream articulations of blackness in national markets and an increasingly web-based society. Christina Bush’s paper, “‘I’m a Shoe Connoisseur, I Been Gettin’ Shoes’: Race, Masculinity, and Sneaker Fandom,” troubled the notion of sneakers as “just shoes.” Through her examination of the 2011 Air Jordan Concord release and what she terms *commoccupation* she suggested that Black men use sneakers as a commodity through which to mediate racialized and gendered performances of authenticity. Bush contested the discourse around Black men and sneakers marked by mindless consumption and gratuitous violence, and in its stead, offered the concept of fandom as a more apt and generative frame for interrogating Black men’s consumption of sneakers. Kimberly McNair’s exploration of Black t-shirt culture in “Cotton Framed Revolutionaries: T-shirt culture, from Black Power to Occupy Wall Street” explored the circulation of current-day products featuring prominent individuals, organizations, and themes from the Black Power Movement that have emerged within the African Diaspora political t-shirt genre. By examining t-shirts as a material form, she explored not only the commodity culture associated with the t-shirt industry, but further explored t-shirt culture as a type of performance and an illustration of African American protest tradition articulated beyond aesthetic means. Ameer Hasan Loggins’s paper, “Progeny of the Persecuted: The Carceral Class and the ‘African’ Diaspora,” explored his theory

of *selfploitation*, the manner by which African-Americans are represented in reality television, and how these televisual displays of “Ratchet Blackness” affect the perception of African Americans in contemporary society. He argued that the construction and promotion of Blackness as represented within pseudo-reality television programs and modernized minstrels contribute to the stacked stigmatized stereotypes of African Americans, most notably those that make up what he calls the *Carceral Class*.¹

Na’ilah Suad Nasir and Jarvis Givens presented their co-authored paper entitled “Modeling Manhood: Interrogating and Reframing Representations of Black Masculinity in School.” This research presentation focused on the ways that instructors and students in all-Black, all-male manhood development classes for 9th graders in five urban public high schools worked to disrupt existing stereotypes of Black masculinity, and created new local meanings for the definition of Black manhood. Their research explored how instructors worked to disrupt four main stereotypes that students thought were applied to them in their lives outside the class: 1) Black males as “hard,” 2) Black maleness as separate from anything viewed as feminine, 3) Black males as being disengaged from school, and 4) Black males as criminals. The “safe” space created in the classes allowed students to enact identities of Black masculinity that included expressing emotion and care (which includes allowing themselves to be cared for), displaying intellectual and analytical skills, drawing on examples from the historical record and developing a social

consciousness. Jarvis Givens also presented an individual paper, “On Black Education: Conflict & Agreement Through Time,” that surveyed the educational philosophy of mainstream black intellectuals/educators (Martin Delany, Anna Julia Cooper, Carter G. Woodson, and Molefi Asante) at four major historical junctures (the Civil War, the Nadir, The New Negro, and Black Power eras) and explored the ideals that carried over from one generation of scholars to the next and where they differed. He illustrated how the social, political, and economic climate influenced the ways in which these four scholars engaged the project of African American education.²

Everyone enjoyed the conference and they were honored to represent UC Berkeley’s African American & African Diaspora Studies department in a national venue. Department Chair Na’ilah Suad Nasir stated that, “In particular,

it was amazing to see the graduate students present such interesting and theoretically innovative work. I was very proud of our students. They were articulate, knowledgeable, and represented the department beautifully, and I felt that the work was really well received.” The graduate students who attended believed that they also benefited from the conversations initiated out of session, both academically and personally. Kimberly McNair expressed that, “It’s the sense of community that I enjoyed the most. How we encourage, support, and challenge each other is important for career building and character development as scholars.” Jarvis Givens agreed, and added “It was a good experience being out with others from the department. If nothing else I feel like the time we had together was the most valuable experience at the conference. The off line conversations amongst those of us that were there was

extremely helpful.” These generative conversations have inspired their plans to attend conferences and develop collaborative projects in the future. The next major conference will be the *Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH)* conference in Jacksonville, Florida on October 2-6.

So in the words of our esteemed Professor Hardy Frye, “This is Berkeley, let’s get it!”³

Kimberly McNair is a candidate in UC-Berkeley’s African Diaspora PhD program.

(Endnotes)

1 Abstracts and conference schedule available at <http://convention2.allacademic.com/one/ncbs/ncbs13/>

2 See endnote 1.

3 AAS 241: “The Origin and Development of African American Studies,” with H. T. Frye, Fall 2009.

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The Ratchet of the Earth: The Rise of Ratchetness

by Ameer Hasan Loggins

On March 14, 2013, my colleagues (Kimberly McNair and Christina Bush) and I presented at the 37th Annual National Council for Black Studies (NCBS) conference. I felt that the conference’s interest could be met by bringing ratchetness into the spaces of academic discussions. I explored a particular Black experience locally/nationally that had the potential of affecting the way that blackness is consumed globally via its widespread visibility by way of social networking spaces such as Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr and Facebook. The exploration of ratchetness also allows for gender-centric conversations to emerge when one looks into who is designated as being a ratchet and how then is said ratchetness performed. It is within this frame of mind that I

attempted to “academize” and hold a larger conversation on the rise of ratchetness, while also introducing my theory of “*selfploitation*.” This conversation carried over to the 2013 UC Berkeley, St. Clair Drake Symposium within a panel discussion entitled, “‘Ain’t Nobody Got Time for That’: A Panel Discussion on the Rise of Ratchetness.”

All of this poses a larger philosophical question: What does it mean for someone to be ratchet? According to Issa Rae, the creator of the popular webisode series *Ratchetpiece Theatre* (who says that she doesn’t know the “dictionary definition” of ratchetness), the terminology is, “like if ghetto and hot shitty mess had a baby. And that baby had no father and became a stripper, then made a sex-tape with

an athlete and then became a reality star.”

Now, that’s a lot to unpack, but what we can see from Issa Rae’s observational definition is that the conceptualization and realization of ratchetness is fettered to poverty, abandonment, hyper-sexuality, gender specificity and what I call “*selfploitation*.” By situating the ratchets as being born of parent “A” (“ghetto”) it places them as inhabitants of the impoverished, policed and melanin-dominant inner city, but also as being born of the ghetto as if the ghetto serves as one of the ratchets’ parents—in other words the ghetto is in the ratchets’ DNA. We can also notice that the ratchets (according to Issa Rae) have the characteristics of “strippers,” amateur pornographers, and aspiring reality television stars that seek stability and fame by way

of having sexual relationships with professional athletes. If we can come to the understanding that the ratchets are behaving in a particular way for another group of people, i.e. an audience, then ratchetness can be seen as the performance of stigmatized and stereotyped norms of Black femininity through formulaic exaggeration. The result is a stereotypical hyper-performance or staging of poverty stricken Black womanhood that confirms and conforms to stigmatized ghetto Blackness as affixed to Black women, diva-typical gay Black men or heterosexual Black men acting out ratchetness by way of imitating a stereotypical Black femininity via performances of “ratchet-face” minstrelsy.

At both the NCBS conference and the UC Berkeley St. Clair Drake Symposium, it was quite clear that not only were the majority of the people attending both events aware of the concept of ratchetness, but it was also clear that their understanding of ratchetness was tethered to technology. When the audience was shown Emmanuel and Phillip Hudson’s “Ratchet Girl Anthem (SHE RACHET!),” the majority of them were quite familiar with Emmanuel and Phillip Hudson’s work. This is not hard to believe being that the “Ratchet Girl Anthem” has accumulated over fifty million views on Youtube alone. To put the “Ratchet Girl Anthem” Youtube views into perspective, the Martin Luther King Jr. “I Have a Dream” speech has two million plus views on Youtube. Why is this important? This is important, because we not only see society’s continued fascination with stigmatized and stereotyped performances of Blackness, but also, we are looking at a historical fascination within a specific moment in history.

Stuart Hall asked the question, “what sort of moment is this in

which to pose the question of Black popular culture?” Hall sees these moments as always being a combination of circumstances, or as Hall says, “conjunctural.” Hall goes on to say: “They have their historical specificity; and although they always exhibit similarities and continuities with the other moments in which we pose a question like this, they are never the same moment. And the combination of what is similar and what is different defines not only the specificity of the moment, but also the specificity of the question, and therefore the strategies of cultural politics with which we attempt to intervene in popular culture, and the form and style of cultural theory and criticizing that has to go along with such an intermatch.”¹ I see this Stuart Hall quote as being central to the contextualization of the moment in Black popular cultural representation known as ratchetness. We are in a series of historically specific moments. We are experiencing the unparalleled hyper-black female visibility on not only television (primarily by way of reality television), but also on the Internet. We are dealing with unpacking race, racism and Black representation in the propagation of post racial ideological frameworks, thus leading to underdeveloped conversations surrounding issues of race, because (as I have heard and read too many times to count) we have, “moved beyond race.” Also, we are dealing with a social networking “*selfploitative*” explosion that has led to the online representation of the self (in many cases) being as important as the lived self in the offline world.

The spread of ratchetness is fastened to a specific moment—the rise in what I will call “fun phones” and the applications/features that accompany them. It is my belief that the technological cocktail of camera phone advancements, handheld high speed Internet accessibility

and application availability that has led to the rise of hyper ratchet Black images being uploaded and shared throughout cyberspace. This moment in Blackness and its tethering to technology leads to an additional overlapping moment. The moment that I am speaking of is the moment couched in my theory of “*selfploitation*.”

I will expound on my theory of “*selfploitation*” within my dissertation, but for the sake of brevity, here is a brief introduction. First, I think that it is important to provide a brief explanation of the theory of exploitation (as I am employing it), because whenever I talk about my theory of “*selfploitation*,” ideas of exploitation are immediately infused into the conversation. The initial task of a theory of exploitation is to provide the truth conditions for an exploitation claim. At least one such condition is a moral criterion: a transaction is exploitative only if it is unfair. Exploitation necessarily involves benefits or gains of some kind to someone. Exploitation resembles a zero-sum game, vis-à-vis, what the exploiter gains, the exploited loses; or, minimally, for the exploiter to gain, the exploited must lose.

In my theory of “*selfploitation*,” the exploiter and the exploited are one in the same. The exploiter (which is the self) is seeking social networking celebrity/popularity in order to accumulate views, likes, retweets, friends, followers, etc. and in order for the exploiter to win, the exploiter must take advantage of the exploited (which is also the self). In other words, in order for the self to win, the self must lose—the self must exploit itself to achieve the aforementioned goals of social networking celebrity/popularity. “*Selfploitation*” requires simultaneous victory and defeat in a quest for social networking personal attention and equity. This becomes

problematic, because the moment you commit to “*selfploitative*” acts in an attempt to achieve social networking celebrity/popularity, you open the door to being exploited by an outside person or group potentially seeking similar or the same social media driven attempts to gain likes, retweets, friends and followers at your expense. Once people see that there are potential benefits to the exploitation of a “*selfploitative*” subject, it tends to lead to an online herd mentality. A perfect example of the “*selfploitative*” and the exploitative synthesizing and being propagated is when “*selfploitative*” photos, also known as “*selfies*,” are provided with exploitative outsider narratives via memes. What tends to happen in this conversion from “*selfploitative*” to exploitative via picture sharing is that a photo or “*selfie*” is uploaded by a person on a social networking site (Twitter for example), and that photo is then taken from their personal profile and provided with a meme. Common meme themes that accompany uploaded photographs that are deemed ratchet are, “Hoes be like...” “Bitches be like...” and (of course) “Ratchets be like...”



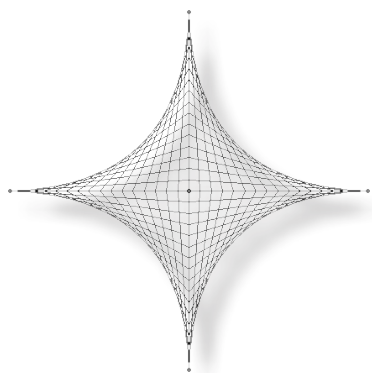
In the images above you see examples of both *selfploitation* and exploitation in action by way of the aforementioned “*selfies*” and the addition of memes. Again, the *selfploitative* act takes place in the taking of the picture, and uploading it to social networking sites like Twitter, in hopes of gaining attention while the exploitative act takes place in the construction of memes via photo editing cellular phone apps like PicsArt, BeFunky, and Picsay. These images are then archived for all to exploit and share on websites such as RatchetMess. Tumblr.com, RatchetMemes.Tumblr.com and EpicNonSense.com. These particular images (and their subsequent viral spreading) essentialize the potential relationship between *selfploitation* and exploitation in several senses, but if we are looking for a stable trait of consistency, it can be the theme of Black women being linked to a history of stigmatized stereotypes that all congeal at the idea of what it means to be ratchet.

And here we are, back at the term that led to the development of me writing this article in the first place—ratchet. Similar to Issa Rae, I do not know of a universal dictionary definition of ratchetness (although I did attempt to provide my own definition of the term). And quite honestly, as the terminology becomes more nebulously utilized and normalized within colloquial conversations (both online and offline) one thing remains clear is that the rise of ratchetness is tethered to cell phone technological advancements/accessibility, and its underpinnings rest in the carnivalesque depiction of Black women as being the embodiment of social defectiveness.

Ameer Hasan Loggins is a candidate in UC-Berkeley’s African Diaspora PhD program.

(Endnotes)

1 Stuart Hall, “What is This ‘Black’ in Black Popular Culture,” in *Black Popular Culture*, ed by Gina Dent (Seattle: Bay Press, 1992), 21.



21ST ANNIVERSARY ST. CLAIR DRAKE SYMPOSIUM

BLACK FOLK HERE AND THERE: EXPLORING THE LIFE & HISTORY OF THEN & NOW

10:30 A.M. - 4 :30P.M.

652 Barrows Hall (UC Berkeley Campus)

Friday May 3, 2013



SYMPOSIUM AGENDA

10:30 Welcome (Dr. Na'ilah Nasir, Department Chair)

10:40 The Mobile Home: Identity, Mutability & Diaspora

Presenters: "The Work of Disapora," presented by Mario Nisbett (UC Berkeley)

"The Hiplife in Ghana: Western African Indigenization of Hip Hop,"
presented by Dr. Halifu Osumara (UC Davis)

"Queer Biomythographic Intervention: Zami and the Future of Black Studies,"
presented by Kianna Middleton (UC Berkeley)

12:00 VèVè A. Clark Institute Presentation (Dr. Ula Taylor)

Presenter: Reginald James on "The Estuary Projects"

12:30 Lunch

1:30 Portraits of Blackness: Representation
& Visuality in the Diaspora

Presenters: "Rude Girl, Big Woman: Power and Play in Representations of Caribbean Women,"
presented by Lia Bascomb (UC Berkeley)

"Let the Dead Bury the Living: Hollywood Imagines America's Colorblind Past,"
presented by Justin Gomer (UC Berkeley)

"Laboring in Silence and Solitude: Slave Representations in Colonial Jamaica,"
presented by Rachel Newman (Stanford University)

"The Aberrant Form," presented by Dr. Leigh Raiford (UC Berkeley)

3:00 "Ain't Nobody Got Time for That":
A Panel Discussion on the Rise of Ratchet

Panelists: Christina Bush (UC Berkeley), Ameer Loggins (UC Berkeley),
and Dr. Ronald Williams (UC Berkeley)

Presented by The Department of African American Studies, UC Berkeley



Kianna Middleton explains Audre Lorde's importance to Black Studies and theorizes the figure of the zami.



"Portraits of Blackness: Representation & Visuality of the Diaspora" panel including panel chair Dr. Brandi Catanese, and panelists Rachel Newman, Justin Gomer, Lia Bascomb, and Dr. Leigh Raiford.



Dr. Ula Taylor introduces Reginald James as he represents the VèVè Clark Institute for Engaged Scholars by presenting his research on the Estuary Housing Projects of Alameda, CA.

Presented by The Department of African American Studies, UC Berkeley



Jarvis Gives introduces "'Ain't Nobody Got Time for That': A Panel Discussion on the Rise of Ratchet," including discussants Dr. Ronald Williams, Ameer Hasan Loggins, and Christina Bush

10:30 Welcome (Dr. Na'ilah Nasir, Depa



Dr. Halifu Osumara (left) and Kianna Middleton (right) listen as Mario Nisbett answers a question from the audience



Dr. Halifu Osumara and Mario Nisbett chat between panels

"Laboring in Silence and So
presented by Rachel Ne
"The Aberrant Form," pres

3:00 "Ain't Nobody Got Time for That":
A Panel Discussion on the Rise of R
Panelists: Christina Bush (UC Berkeley)
and Dr. Ronald Williams (UC Be

Presented by The Department of



Ameer Hasan Loggins and Christina Bush discuss ratchetness

Editor's Note

The Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies at UC-Berkeley has been my intellectual home for many years now. In 2009 I had the opportunity to interview one of the former chairs of the department, Dr. Margaret B. Wilkerson. In speaking of the department she said, "We're trying to preserve something, but you don't want to preserve it in such a way that you kill it. Because when you think of preservation, you're preserving something that's dead... So you've got to have the push pull, the tension. It's what I call creative tension, and you need that ...that's part of growing."¹ In looking at where our department stands now I believe we are achieving that goal. As debates around educational funding continue across the state and the nation our department has found ways to maintain itself and flourish. We continue to honor our intellectual founders while growing as a community, and the number of congratulations throughout this issue is testament to our collective success. From undergraduates to graduates, faculty to staff, within and outside of academia we continue to excel at what we do.

The numerous staff awards speak not only to the phenomenal job that the staff is doing, but also to the sense of community they foster in nominating one another for recognition. For the second time in the history of the department one of our faculty has received the university's Distinguished Teaching Award. In her acceptance of the honor Dr. Ula Taylor stood tall on the shoulders of those before her, giving the university audience a history of the work the department has done and the sense of community we foster. Scholars within the VèVè

Clark Institute continue to thrive. Many of the department's doctoral candidates are teaching their own courses across the campus, across the Bay Area and across the nation, while pursuing their own research and moving through the doctoral program. A special congratulations is warranted for the four doctoral students who passed their qualifying exams this semester. They are the first full cohort of doctoral students to pass on to candidacy in the same semester. As the individuals that make up the department mature as scholars, the department's community develops as well.



The structures that allow us to share the work of the program (across academia and beyond) and foster conversations across intellectual audiences are integral to this development. The Poetry for the People Program has received national recognition for the work its student poets produce. The Prison Outreach Program continues to foster discourse. And the St. Clair Drake Symposium allows for us to share the details of our work with one another while being in conversation with scholars outside of the department as well.

As editor I have been privy to the writing process of my colleagues, I have tracked the events of the department, and had the privilege of bringing the work of this department to our colleagues across the field of Black Studies. As a student the faculty and staff welcomed me into the doctoral program, gave me the chance to learn its structure, and provided numerous opportunities to help to shape it. Sitting on various department committees and volunteering at department functions I have discovered how important service is to maintaining the spaces for research and scholarship. I found it a privilege to apprentice with the department's faculty as a GSI and to work with Cal's students as an instructor. I am so very pleased to have had the opportunity to work with the VèVè Clark Institute Scholars and especially with my mentee Chioma Amaechi. As a scholar, I cannot imagine a better place for me to have honed my skills than the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

The way in which this department has preserved the legacies of Black Studies while continuing to grow is indicative of the field itself. Thank you to all of the staff, faculty, students, and scholars who have contributed to this issue of the *Diaspora*. It has been my pleasure to be a part of this endeavor, and I only hope to continue and further the lessons I've learned here as I move on to the next step of my scholarly journey.

(Endnotes)

1 Lia Bascomb, "An Interview with Margaret B. Wilkerson," in *40 and Counting: An Anthology Commemorating Four Decades of African American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley*, ed. Ronald Williams, 2010: 45.

BLACK GRADUATION 2013

The following speeches were delivered during the 2013 Department of African American Studies Graduation May 25, 2013

Congratulations to the 2013 Valedictorian of the Department of African American Studies, Erica Duncan

Words from the Valedictorian

First and foremost, I would like to use this moment to thank everyone who helped guide and support me throughout my life and undergraduate experience. This includes faculty who have given me the tools to expand my knowledge beyond my expectations; my friends who have supported me and helped shape my UC Berkeley experience into something memorable; and finally my family, especially my parents. Specifically, without your love, encouragement, wisdom, and willingness to deal with me even when I thought I was too grown to listen to you two, you remained my number one support system. Again, I am forever thankful for your strength, love, and wisdom.

In general, the everyday experiences and the unexpected events have made Cal exciting. Like many of you, I remember receiving that call while a senior in high school from BRRC, telling me about senior weekend. Prior to that call, I was not even considering UC Berkeley, but as soon as they offered to fly me up for free from San Diego, I had to take it. When I visited the campus for the first time during Senior Weekend, I knew this environment would not only offer me a chance to have fun and explore, but be challenged in ways that I most likely could not experience at home.

Although I may be a nerd at heart and love the academics at Berkeley, my peers made my experience worthwhile. Moments like pulling all-nighters with friends at the Student Learning Center and downing a large coffee and a Red Bull within a two hour period in order to stay awake during finals. After each all-nighter you would look at your friends and promise each other that you would not do it again, but in the back of your mind, you always knew you would be suffering with friends. The annual Yard Show, football and basketball games were fun, but socially the most challenging moments tended to occur outside of the classroom.

Cal has a history of activism and protest, but never did I imagine myself as a participant.

As a naturally introverted and occasionally shy person, I tended to stay out of the spotlight. However, it became hard for me to remain silent. Events like the Compton Cookout at UCSD and the infamous bake sale on campus, were moments where I stood with my peers in a silent protest, dressed in black under the hot sun. Although this may sound depressing, and my parents are probably questioning why they sent their child to an institution with black students numbering only 3%, it was within during these political times that I learned the most. The right to be seen and heard sometimes demands struggle.

In a few moments we will walk across this stage having officially earned our diplomas. Like many of you I am beyond excited, but I am also nervous, scared, and constantly doubting myself if I am truly on the right path or making the right decisions about my future. I am filled with uncertainty. But, despite my nervousness, I know that my time at Berkeley has given me a new perspective that made me realize that no matter where I go, I have gained the tools and earned the privileges of an elite education. This will no doubt jumpstart a career but more importantly anchor a life filled with compassion.

Thus, no matter what path we take and how much uncertainty and anxiety plagues us, I have faith that as long as we continue to strive for what's important: dignity, fairness, and of course a little joy, we will move humanity forward. Whether one majored in one of the sciences, engineering, English, or like me, African American Studies, we have gained the tools and the strength to empower ourselves as we empower others.

Once again, I would like to say congratulations to the class of 2013.



Proclaiming our Freedom: Paving the Way for a Better Black America

by Salih Muhammad

Today, we have a moment of celebration. After four long, arduous, and difficult years we culminate this process of development walking across this stage cheered on by supporters, family, and friends as we embark upon another phase of this journey we call life. Our life here on campus is a giant collage of priceless moments, late night study sessions, noon time protests, the craze of finals, but it is the time we invested into this institution and the community we built that creates the sense of joy that we currently feel.

Frantz Fanon once wrote, “Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it.”¹ What can we do with our time that will impact our world to live on past us. Our degree formalizes access to social mobility for the individuals who walk across this stage, but by no means does it equate to freedom for the Black nation. So the question that reigns upon our generation is how do we transform this degree of personal gain into a means toward accessing freedom for our people? What is the mission of our generation?

“You can tell the mind of a man or woman by the workings of their hands.” We look up and we see light. But somebody put in the necessary sacrifice, commitment, and faith to make that light possible. So when you flipped your light switch this morning, nobody said thank God for Brother Lewis Howard Latimer. We turned it on and went on through our day but that Black man made a sacrifice hundreds of years ago so that today we can turn on the light.

The time in which he lived created the circumstances and context that prompted the creation of the light bulb. The idea found a firm resting place in the sanctuary of his mind and became a reality. So although Brother Latimer passed away three centuries ago, he lives on. For every time you switch that light on, Brother Latimer lives.

Well, what is the context of today’s time? And what is our responsibility to meet the needs of our time? Since time dictates our agenda, then in accord with our current realities, we are able to discern the mission of our generation.

Our generation must find a way to connect, and unify every part of Black America with a collective vision and purpose in our onward march toward freedom. As we graduate from what is considered the number one public university, a worthy accomplishment, we must remember the many who did not make it while also recognizing that our graduation today signifies that we had the strength, the courage, and the determination to persevere against all odds for nearly twenty years. It means we are born uniquely qualified to take hold of our freedom as we never have.

As many of us embark upon the journey to climb the ladder of social mobility, we have to remember the old African adage “Ubuntu.” The journey of any individual does not surpass the collective journey of our people. Or as Elijah Muhammad once put it, “No man can rise above the condition of his people.” In practical terms, that means in the last four years we’ve seen the collapse of the economy and the death of the so-called Black middle class, whereas the median net worth for white households is \$97,860, the median net worth for black households is \$2,170. For every dollar a white family has, Black families have two cents. In the same four year period, more than 400 Black people were the victims of homicide in the city of Oakland alone and as these atrocities occur, as Trayvon Martin and Oscar Grant repeated history, there was no litmus test on where they received a degree.

Our time begs us, the condition of our people yearns for, cries out for, somebody that will be willing to make the necessary sacrifice to reach our **freedom**. We have that capacity. We were born to be impactful, a generation designed to actually get us to that long awaited promised land.

Today we can’t just march on toward a new freedom. We can’t just protest to freedom. And we can’t walk toward our freedom. Today, in the words of our ancestors we must STEAL Away toward freedom. We must take our freedom as our inherent natural right in this world.

When that song was created by Brother Nat Turner, he alerted the slaves that now is the time that we must act. *Steal away to Jesus for we ain’t got much time to stay here*. We have to ask ourselves as a people, how much longer will we fill up the prison system before we steal away?

Today, the Black world suffers – at home and abroad- and true freedom seems far off. As of 2004, more Black men were disenfranchised than in 1870 when the 15th amendment was passed. Even worse, less than 14% of Black people are in good health. Stop and think on that. It is in this context that we remember the words of Frantz Fanon – each generation has a mission. I submit to the audience and the class of 2013 that it is time for us to make our mark on history—to pave the way toward a new freedom.

Deep in the motionless nights, I imagine the enslaved were on their knees asking, like I ask, “How could this be? How could our just, loving, and merciful father permit this? Didn’t my lord deliver Daniel? Didn’t he deliver Daniel from the lion’s den and Jonah from the belly of the whale?” The answer is yes. But God always tasks the mission of human development on **us**. Jonah had to accept the task to work to save his people before God could save him. The question is

more poignantly asked in an old hymn, “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?” While the masses of Black America are suffering, an increasing minority of us are blessed to have been allowed to climb up the ladder of social and economic mobility. Every year the number one public institution in the world sends hundreds of graduates into the world who should be charged with the mission of improving our society. In the U.S., Black people make up 14% of all undergraduate degrees. Nearly 20% of Black people have a college degree and we acquire 6% of all PhDs.

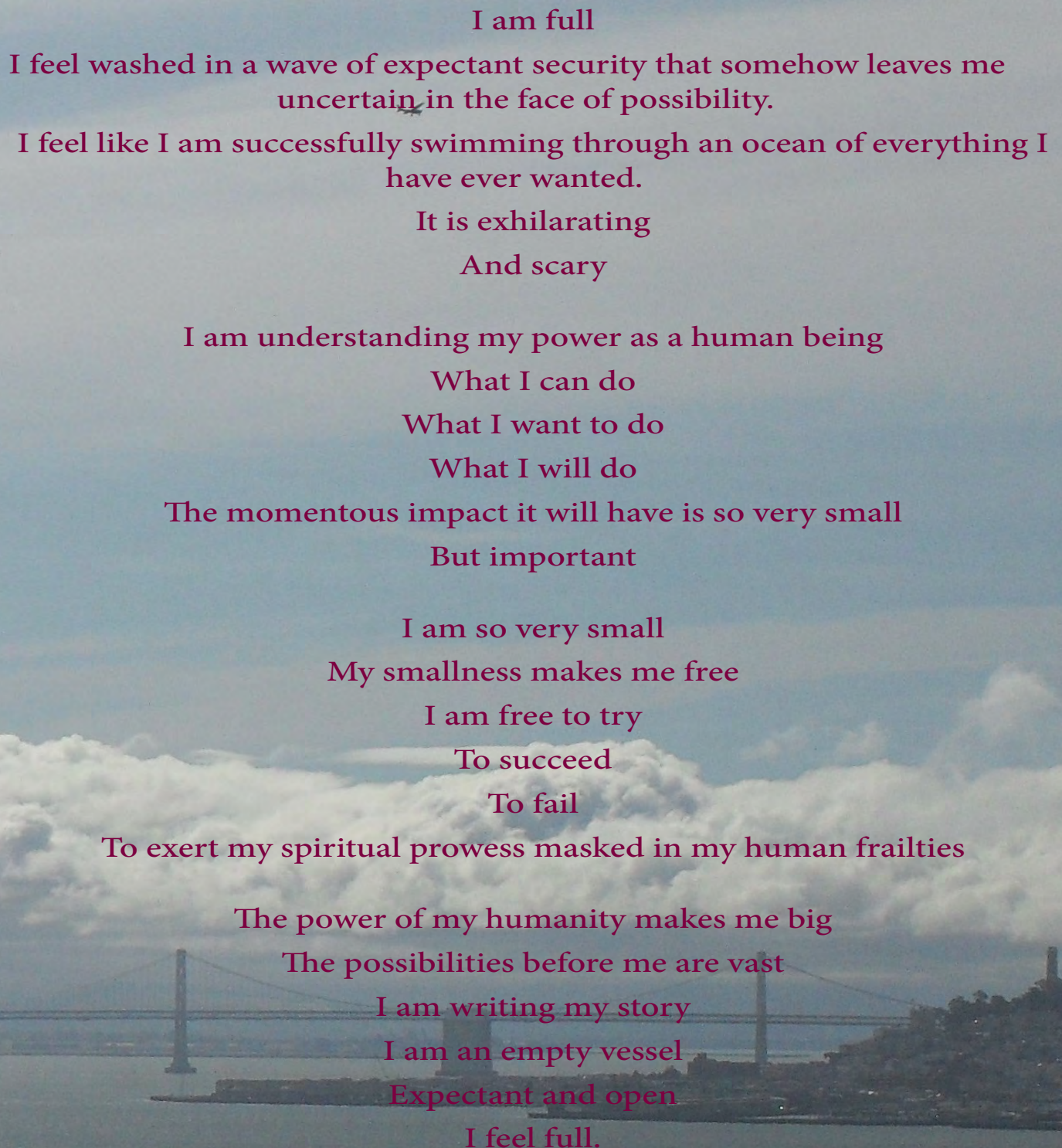
There are physicians here. Those who can heal our wounds are here in this room. In this room, right now, are the future doctors, physicians, architects, engineers, educators, physicians of the soul, the leaders of today and tomorrow, and so much more. We casually refer to them as the graduating class of 2013, but we are our people’s future. The precious reality of tomorrow will be molded by the people in this room. If we are to be free as a people, we must accept our responsibility to build our community. We have to declare, “ain’t nobody going to turn us round from paving our road to freedom.”

It is for this reason that our generation has immense potential to finally move us to the promised Zion land. This moment in our time is so full of the unparalleled potential for change. At this time the choice is not Freedom or slavery. The choice is not Freedom or oppression nor Freedom or discomfort. Today, our real choice is Freedom or death. And whenever one makes that kind of choice the ramification is of epic proportions that we may be the generation that changes the course of history. So to borrow a note from Dr. King, if I could sit with God at the beginning of time and take a survey of human affairs with the option of going to any epoch in our history, I would look at Queen Hatshept and King Tutankhamen, I would look at Harriet Tubman and Nat Turner freeing the slaves, and keep going. I would even go to time of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King and keep going.

I would go past all of these times of past, and come right down to this present moment. It is only in the present that we can truly change the world tomorrow. I would come down to this moment of a new inception, the birth of a new vision for the world. I would come to the graduating class of 2013 as we take our first steps to embark on the journey of life and make the Black world better. The road will be tough and the journey will be long but let us march on, let us roll forward until victory is won. Let us declare for once and at last, *freedom now, freedom now, freedom now (or free at last)*.



The Department of
African American Studies
would like to Congratulate the
Graduating Class of 2013



I am full
I feel washed in a wave of expectant security that somehow leaves me
uncertain in the face of possibility.
I feel like I am successfully swimming through an ocean of everything I
have ever wanted.
It is exhilarating
And scary

I am understanding my power as a human being
What I can do
What I want to do
What I will do
The momentous impact it will have is so very small
But important

I am so very small
My smallness makes me free
I am free to try
To succeed
To fail
To exert my spiritual prowess masked in my human frailties

The power of my humanity makes me big
The possibilities before me are vast
I am writing my story
I am an empty vessel
Expectant and open
I feel full.

by Gwendolyn Yvonne