

UJIMA

The Newsletter of the African American Studies Program



Education and Pan African Collaboration in AAS:

African-centered Instructional Design p. 2
Cover Story: The Pencil Project p. 5

2009-2010
YEAR IN REVIEW

Commitment to strengthening institutional relationships, advancing new research, and providing original disciplinary and service opportunities for students remained salient priorities for African American Studies during the 2009-2010 academic year.

As part of our ongoing research initiatives, the Center for the Study of African American Culture (CSAAC) hosted a symposium and film festival on Black images in the media and art. The symposium brought together scholars, independent filmmakers, and artists from across the country to discuss issues surrounding the prevalence, problems, and preservation of Black images in film. CSAAC remains dedicated to its tradition of conducting research on Africana life and culture and looks forward to supporting the symposium on Black images in the media for a second year this coming spring, April 14-16, 2011. CSAAC also coordinated a guest lecture on Africana advances in space exploration featuring Dr. Edward Tunstel of John Hopkins University. Dr. Tunstel is the Space Robotics and Autonomous Control Lead in the Space Department of the John Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory in Laurel, Maryland. Similarly, the Institute for African American Policy Research, a subdivision of CSAAC, held a public seminar on Black power in January. The lists of presenters included, Kathleen N. Cleaver, senior lecturer in law at Emory University.

Our program also made significant strides with respect to student advancement in research and service on both national and international fronts. With support and encouragement from this program, three African American Studies alumni entered graduate degree programs in Africana Studies. At the same time, four University of Houston students participated in the Model African Union conference at Howard University in Washington, D.C., under the direction and advisement of Mr. Paul Easterling, AAS program manager. Likewise, the strength and visibility of our study abroad and graduate certificate programs continue to provide students with advanced approaches to critical issues shaping the discipline. In the summer of 2010, seventeen University of Houston students received funding to study abroad in Ghana, West Africa, at the University of Ghana, University of Cape Coast, and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. On the other hand, the number of students actively pursuing the graduate certificate in African American Studies has nearly doubled in the past two years. Each of these facts bode well for AAS as the program seeks to both maintain and move in new directions in the near future.

As we advance into the 2010-2011 academic year, AAS would like to welcome Dr. John Roberts, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and Professor in the Department of English, to the University of Houston.

In closing, our primary job remains to educate and graduate students at U of H. By moving these ideas forward, we look to bring forth stewardship and good fellowship for our goals and objectives.

Sincerely,

Malachi D. Crawford, ABD
*Assistant Director
Adjunct Faculty*

*African American Studies
University of Houston*

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AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM

**AAS Staff Team
for 2009-2010**

DIRECTOR:
James L. Conyers, Jr., Ph.D
University Professor of African
American Studies

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR:
Malachi D. Crawford

FINANCIAL COORDINATOR:
Angela Williams-Phillips

PROGRAM MANAGER:
Paul H. L. Easterling

SECRETARY II:
**Irene Ray
Linda Harris**

**AAS Student Support
Staff for 2009-2010**

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**Rhadheshyam Bang
Baruch Williams
Cynthia Tate**

STUDENT WORKER:
**Alexis Guidry
Mariana Conteh
Tunisha Miller
Kayela Shannon
Jasmine Umenyi**

WORK STUDY:
**Caleb Alexander
Dennis Campbell**

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON
COLLEGE of LIBERAL ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES
African American Studies

629 Agnes Arnold Hall
Houston, TX 77204-3047

Phone: 713-743-2811 • Fax: 713-743-2818

Website: www.class.uh.edu/aas

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African American Studies (AAS) remains committed to recognizing academically talented AAS minors and advancing student interests and participation within the discipline on a national and international level. To this end, the program provides resources and funding to assist today's afriologs critically study the human experience through attendance at national research conferences, study abroad opportunities, and by helping to defray the costs associated with attending college.

INCREASE ACROSS THE BOARD

The 2009-2010 academic year witnessed African American Studies increase its support for deserving students in each of its three main areas of funding: academics, study abroad, and conference participation. AAS contributions to students who distinguished themselves academically more than doubled within the last two years. In fact, the 2009-2010 academic year saw AAS offer more academic scholarships than in any previous year since 2003. From 2003-2009, AAS had never given out more than 10 merit-based academic scholarships at any one time. Last year, however, AAS awarded 25 academic scholarships to University of Houston students. AAS offers two types of academic scholarships to eligible students: tuition based scholarships that help cover tuition related costs associated with attending the University of Houston, and book scholarships that go toward defraying the costs of student textbooks.

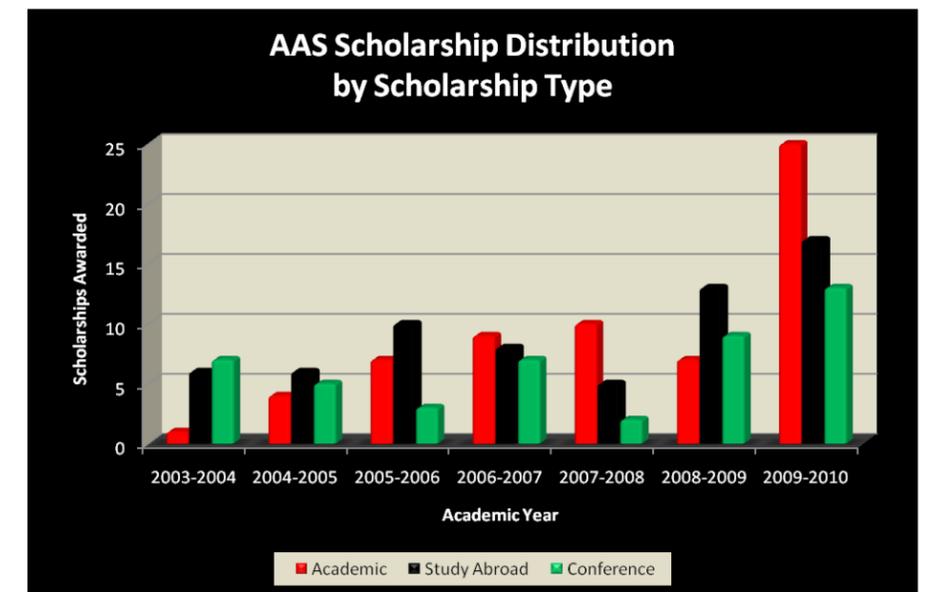
AAS support for student participation and travel to national research conferences has steadily increased over the years.

During the 2009-2010 academic year, the program saw six times the number of students making appearances at national conferences, up from a seven year low in 2007. AAS provides funding for student participation at three major conferences: the Model African Union Conference at Howard University; the National Council for Black Studies National Conference; and the Black Psychology Undergraduate Conference at Virginia Commonwealth University.

A key measure of the program's strength in introducing students to advanced research opportunities and original sources is student participation in its study abroad program. In July of 2010, 16 students from the University of Houston received the Dr. Kwame Nkrumah International Study

Abroad Scholarship in African American Studies to study abroad in Ghana, West Africa, totaling more than \$51,000 in funding from AAS. In addition to conducting field research and oral histories, student participants in the study abroad to Ghana received instruction at the University of Ghana, the University of Cape Coast, and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.

AAS will continue its advancement and support for student education and research initiatives at the University of Houston. The program's commitment to each of its three areas of student funding remains imperative to providing a robust and logistically sound platform upon which to make these objectives concrete realities.



A Message from CLASS Dean Dr. John W. Roberts



As the new Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS), I am pleased to welcome our new students to the University of Houston and to

welcome back our returning students. The website for CLASS (www.class.uh.edu) is our portal to the world, and we invite you to enter and explore its pages and learn about the faculty, staff, students and programs in CLASS that make the University of Houston one of the most exciting places in the world to pursue an education in liberal arts and social sciences.

CLASS is the largest college on the UH campus with 15 departments and a variety of other interdisciplinary programs, research centers and institutes. In these thriving aca-

demical units, we afford students the opportunity to secure a world-class education in liberal arts and social sciences.

Our faculty are uniquely positioned to provide a quality education based on knowledge and perspectives that will be essential for success in the twenty-first century and in an increasingly global culture and economy. Not only is ours one of the largest faculties on campus, we are also home to top scholars and creative artists in a number of fields who genuinely enjoy working with students. CLASS faculty know that the continued vitality of the arts, humanities and social sciences at UH is a result of the critical knowledge and comparative and interdisciplinary methodologies that characterize much of what they do as scholars and teachers. These approaches respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing global landscape and demographic patterns.

Our faculty are well aware that, in order for the liberal arts and social sciences to

remain attractive to students, they must remain committed to expanding knowledge and modes of representing the human condition that reflect existence in the contemporary world and in the face of evidence that challenges our understanding of the past. Our commitment in CLASS is to enable students to discover a framework that will gain them a decided advantage in being able to address the social, cultural, economic and political challenges that they will face in the 21st century. This commitment reflects our fervent belief that the academic experience in CLASS will provide students with knowledge of self, society and the world that will enrich their lives and provide them with a foundation for success regardless of the career or professional endeavor that they choose to pursue.

Dr. John W. Roberts

Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences at UH

Lamar Johnson: AAS Alumnus Develops African-centered Instructional Design in Cameroon



Over the years, the African American Studies program has provided many students with opportunities to take part in a variety of experiences that have helped further their interests and passion within the discipline.

Lamar Johnson, an alumnus of African American Studies, entered the University of Houston as a pharmacy major but quickly discovered that he did not have the study habits to further pursue such a demanding field. At the same time, he discovered his attraction to psychology and decided to transition from pharmacy to psychology.

Towards the last two years of his psychology program, Johnson enrolled in an African American Studies course and became immediately intrigued with how subjects within his psychology curriculum correlated with issues being discussed within his African American Studies course.

As a result, he committed himself to both programs, successfully graduating in the spring of 2006 with a bachelor of science in psychology and a minor in

African American Studies.

"I went to Ghana my graduating year, and, with support from African American Studies, I received a full scholarship to attend the University of Louisville to get a masters degree in Pan African Studies (PAS). In PAS, I concentrated specifically on history, the history of urban schools and film," Johnson said.

Johnson currently teaches social sciences and social studies to seventh and eighth grade students at one of Houston's most renowned charter schools, Kipp Liberation Academy. "In the way of my hobbies, I've been playing with short film making, photojournalism, so on and so forth." He spends his free time documenting his experiences.

But, it's Johnson's next year that's going to be truly interesting, as he describes it. "I landed a teaching position in Cameroon," Johnson said. He will be working for an international school that is African-centered called African American Education.

"It is a dual program. It is designed to give students an African-centered education while still making them competitive with their international counterparts," Johnson said. "They earn the equivalent of a high school degree and then go on to top colleges or universities in the United States and other continents."

"It's a blessing how I found out about this expe-

rience," he explains. After two of his students experienced an educational program in Cameroon, they came to Houston and attended Kipp Liberation. At the time, Johnson was teaching social sciences over the summer, a co-curricular class on African studies. He was able to utilize the skills and knowledge that he acquired from taking African American Studies courses at his undergraduate level.

"One day after class, one of my students who had been to school in Cameroon had a conversation with me and was saying, 'I went to this school in Cameroon and this is exactly what they're trying to do with their curriculum,'" Johnson said. Following that conversation, one of the seventh grade students took the initiative in contacting the school leader so that she and Johnson could touch base whenever she came to Houston.

Johnson, in complete awe, expressed gratefulness at the fact that a young child noticed something that he possessed that would be of value in another country and took his own initiative to contact her personally.

African American Education educates students starting at age two all the way to their senior year in what Americans call high school. The students are required to dress in uniforms in order to set apart age groups. "There are differences between what's expected from the two year olds and the three year olds all the way up to what's expected from high school students," Johnson explains. "But for the most part, they start the students very, very young. There is very strong culture at the school and an understanding to respect authority."

The positions offered to Johnson are teacher and administrator. He is responsible for writing the curriculum and giving guidance to the program while creating a lesson plan and gathering tests. "It's almost like a research administrator."

Since most instructors are not equipped with the proper tools to teach from African-centered material, Johnson is responsible for getting the appropriate texts that will allow them to teach from that specific perspective. "You have to tear down the way you see things and rebuild it back with respect to whatever body of people that you'll be studying," Johnson says.

Eventually, he plans to leave behind a structure that will allow a person who does not have the background he has to be able to put what was taught into practice. This is the plan that Johnson hopes to fulfill.

With this incredible and innovative plan, Johnson hopes that his students will be well equipped to articulate the complex ideas that they may encounter upon enrolling in colleges and universities. Additionally, he wants his students to gain an alternative perspective through travelling abroad. Ultimately, he believes that a college prep education built around an African-centered curriculum will add to the skills and knowledge base of the students he will meet.



RECENT EVENTS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

FALL 2010 EVENTS SCHEDULE

- September 20, 2010 Dr. Edward Cox, "Pan-Africanism in the Caribbean at the End of the Nineteenth Century," (AH 7 @ 4:00 pm)
- October 7, 2010 Prof. Rebecca Hankins, "Countering the Master Narrative: Muslims and Islam in Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Comics," (AH 629 @ 10:00 am)
- October 11, 2010 Dr. Yaba Blay, "Yellow Fever: Skin Bleaching and the Politics of Skin Color in Ghana," (AH 7 @ 4:00 pm)
- October 18, 2010 Dr. Phylisa Smith Deroze, "Domestic Violence and African American Women Playwrights," (AH 7 @ 4:00 pm)
- October 21, 2010 Dr. Toneisha Taylor, "Preacher Politics: 19th Century African American Women Ministers as Public Intellectuals," (AH 629 @ 10:00 am)
- October 22, 2010 Ms. Randryia Houston, "Resume Workshop," (AH 629 @ 12:00 pm)
- November 16, 2010 Atty. Jeffery Hass, "The Assassination of Fred Hampton," (AH 629 @ 10:00 am)



THE PENCIL PROJECT

HOPE WITHIN REACH

Hannah McConn and Randryia Houston are students in the African American Studies program at UH who have created a new nonprofit organization that aids school children in Ghana, The Pencil Project. Their mission is to help alleviate educational disparities within Ghana's primary and secondary school systems by providing educational tools and resources. It was a comment made by a school administrator in Ghana to a studying abroad group of UH African American Studies students that started it — the revelation that elementary school students in the African country drop out at an early age as a result of something as little as not having a pencil to do their work with.

That single complaint frustrated Randryia Houston and Hannah McConn, two of the students who participated in the AAS Summer Study Abroad in Ghana trip that summer in 2009. A friend of theirs, Tiffany Lester — an English major and former president of the Resident Hall Association — came up with the idea that they should start a big school supply drive.

"When we got back, we were really frustrated," McConn said. "We knew that we wanted to help the Ghanaian people in some way, but we didn't really know how, and we kind of felt that as students, we didn't have the means or revenue to do so in a huge way. So, she (Lester) suggested we just start with pencils."

From that frustration, The Pencil Project was born — and this summer, when Houston and McConn returned to Ghana for the AAS Summer Study Abroad program, they brought with them more than 30,000 pencils to donate to children



“When we were given this opportunity to go to Ghana, it just opened up a new world to me,” Houston said. “Our professors in the African American Studies program really pushed the idea of, ‘Americans always go to places, and they take and they never give back.’ So, that’s why they asked that we bring school supplies on the trip to give back to the local people and to give back to the communities and the cultures that we visit. So, I guess we took that idea and, we ran with it. It was simple — it’s just a pencil and it’s very inexpensive and it’s something we take for granted here, that the children really need there.”

Houston is currently pursuing a master’s degree in international social work from the UH Graduate College of Social Work, and her background — and passion — is philanthropy. She previously graduated with a sociology degree from the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and is pursuing a Graduate Certificate in African American Studies, and has spent time balancing her coursework with internships through the American Humanics Nonprofit Certificate Program and Families Under Urban and Social Attack — now called Change Happens!, a local nonprofit organization. She’s from northwest Houston and is a Westside High School graduate.

“If I’m going to live here, because all of my family is here, why not go to an institution that has alumni that are still in the city?” Houston said. “At the end of the day, it’s about building those networks while you’re in college that can guarantee you the connections that you need.”

McConn is starting her last year as an undergraduate and plans to attend the UH Law Center next fall. A graduate from Nimitz High School in Humble, she was the president of the UH chapter of the Keep a Child Alive foundation, a nonprofit organization started by Leigh Blake and singer Alicia Keys. Her passion is politics and international law, and she has been an intern in State Senator Rodney Ellis’ office whose district includes the UH campus. In 2009, she participated in the Texas Legislative Internship Program through the Hobby Center for Public Policy.

“I went to Ghana wanting to study the politics, but ... I couldn’t study anything about it because the education system was so broken there,” McConn said. “I don’t think people can put the right people in office and make the right decisions for the country to move forward until all the people are educated.”

Houston and McConn recently registered The Pencil Project as an official nonprofit 501(c)3 organization, and they hope to expand its outreach to other continents and African countries. Houston said that their five-to-seven year plan includes opening a boarding school in Ghana.

In some respects, the logistical challenges of coordinating a donation effort as massive and extraordinary as The Pencil Project required overcoming psychological hurdles more pronounced than physical or financial barriers.

“It was just hard to communicate to people here—especially African Americans—the need to give back to Africa, and the extreme necessity of being philanthropic. People really didn’t understand why we would give to schools in Africa and not to schools here in America,” Houston said.

Yet, many African American social, religious and civic organizations did support The Pencil Project once they became aware of the historically important cultural links and shared interests that African Americans have with West Africa.

In fact, the overwhelming generosity and support shown by donors contributing across local, state and national boundaries came as a surprise to quite a few of the students and staff at the schools, many of whom remembered Houston and McConn from their earlier visit in the summer of 2009.

“There were people who we had come in contact with and said, ‘Okay, we’ll be back; we’re going to bring back supplies,’ and they didn’t believe us. And so, when we saw them again, they were actually surprised, because Americans say they’re going to do stuff all the time but never follow through,” Houston said.

McConn was quick to agree, saying emotions ran high on both sides. “When we would get to a school, everyone would be excited; we’d hear screaming and shouting. The students would just be excited to see you. But after they got the pencils, they were extremely grateful and kept thanking us.”

“At one of the schools they did a huge performance for us. They sat us up on a stage and started singing and dancing. The embrace lasted for almost an hour.”

When Houston and McConn first started their initiative, they initially had concerns about whether they would be giving to the right schools or if their efforts would be better utilized elsewhere. As they visited with each school, however, those concerns quickly disappeared. They soon discovered that even at the seemingly prestigious boarding schools, most of the institutions had taken-in significant numbers of orphans who were wholly dependent upon the sporadic support of outside donations to maintain their enrollment in school. “We learned as we were going along that no matter the size

of the school and how much money it looked like they had, there’s always a need,” Houston said.

“There was one young girl at the Matter Ecclesiast School, named Caroline, who I connected with immediately,” McConn stated. “As I was about to leave, I found out that she was one of the orphans. So the pencils—in the end—are going to help her stay in school.”

Houston, who has a young daughter, also felt a personal connection to the students. “Just being in an environment where there were kids the same age as my daughter really touched me, and I actually cried. I really didn’t get to talk with anybody at the Matter Ecclesiast School, because it was so emotional for me to know that these could have been our own kids.”

“A lot of the families, farm there, so the kids are needed to help with the farming, and school supplies are an additional expense that the family might not be able to afford,” Houston said. “I think that minimum wage there is like less than two dollars a day. This is our small way of lessening that burden so that the kids will continue to be in school. Pencils are used primarily for the lower grade levels as they are here, so if the kids don’t have the pencils, they never advance and even get to middle school because they are left in elementary school.”

AAS is exceptionally proud of Houston and McConn’s thriving service initiative. “When presented with the opportunity, they used their education and background in African American Studies to solve a problem facing African people. That is exactly what we ask our students to do,” Malachi Crawford, assistant director of African American Studies, said.

For more information about the African American Studies program and its Summer Study Abroad in Ghana program, visit <http://www.class.uh.edu/aas/>. For more information about The Pencil Project, visit www.pencils4ghana.org. Drop off donations for The Pencil Project in the African American Studies office, Room 629 Agnes Arnold Hall.

The Pencil Project By the Numbers	
6,368	Miles traveled to hand deliver first shipment of pencils to students throughout Ghana.
675	Students who have received educational supplies through the Pencil Project to date.
429	Lbs. first shipment of pencils weighed.
50	Days: the average lifespan of a pencil for primary through tertiary school students in Ghana.
36	Thousand pencils acquired for the education of students in Ghana.
10	The total number of years of schooling that a student can expect to receive.
1	Pencils it takes to make a profound difference in the life a student.



Levels of Giving

Friends (500 pencils or less)

Dierdra Houston
 Dr. Cache Steinberg
 Dr. Danny Hoey
 Dr. Louis Sportelli, D.C.
 Dream Academy Houston
 Felix Robinson with UH Bookstore
 Garden Oaks Elementary
 Houston Dynamo
 Kim Ba
 Lawanda Hill
 Lindsay Moody
 Lt. Daniel Walker
 Malachi & Karla Crawford
 Malika Mitchell
 Margaret O'Donnell
 Mark Griffin
 M.K. Asante
 Mrs. Mary Muhs
 Nghia Phan
 Phyllis Simmons with Yetter, Warden, and Coleman, L.L.P.
 Ro' Linder Wright
 Sam Sium
 Samantha Ary
 Suburban Bayou City Chapter of Top Ladies of Distinction
 Telissa Thornton
 Tim & Judy Edwards
 UH Council of Ethnic Organizations
 UH Graduate College of Social Work
 UH Metropolitan Volunteer Program
 Uniquely Chosen Chapter of Order of the Eastern Star

Victoria Bias
 Vietnamese friend

Partners (501-1000 pencils)

Aaron Brown with Abel Lodge #16 AF & AM
 Adowa Sankofa
 Alexis Guidry with the New Covenant Fellowship Church
 Kevin McKee with Nationwide Insurance
 Latoyra Houston with AT&T
 Lucia Gonzalez
 Pamela Owens
 Porsche Randall with the Phi Epsilon Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
 Sam Dike
 Shauna Pittman with Sheltering Arms Inc.
 Sloan- Coleman Family
 Smart Marketing Inc.
 Sugar Land Lions Club
 UH American Humanics Student Association

Sponsors (1001- 3000 pencils)

Angel Roden- Lewis with Alief Holmquist Elementary
 Christine Paul
 Crystal Fox
 David Anderson with 2010 Media
 Edmar Ordonez
 Gene Harper
 Jackie Thomas

Leadership Circle (3001-5000 pencils)

Clair Kugler of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius, L.L.P.
 Dr. Kieke and Dr. Bloom with the Koala Health

and Wellness Centers, Inc.
 Jeremy Davis
 Rev. Edward Lockett with Methodist CME Church

Ambassadors (5001+ pencils)

Crystal Edwards with Providence Missionary Baptist Church
 Dr. Simon Bott
 Houston Community College Vocational Nursing Program

Visionaries (In-kind)

Benjamin Martin
 Cathedral of Faith Church
 Christian Jackson
 Ghana Study Abroad 2009
 Ghana Study Abroad 2010
 Karen McConn
 Kimberly Gay
 Scott Wharton
 Toan Joey Tran
 Victor Ekpo
 UH African American Studies Department
 UH College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
 Wanda Carr

Special thanks to our Ghana, West Africa partners: Kwaku Passah and the entire Galaxy Tours staff <http://galaxytoursghana.com>



Hannab L. McConn, Rev. Edward Lockett, and Randryia L. Houston



Dr. Joel Bloom (UH-HHP), Hannab L. McConn, Randryia L. Houston, and Dr. Ed Kieke of the Koala Health and Wellness Centers, Inc.



Hannab and Randryia with Lori Stutt, Director of Dynamo Charities, and Marisela R. Vasquez, Marketing Manager of the Houston Dynamo.



Hannab and Randryia deliver supplies at St. Anthony Preparatory School.



A tableful of pencils awaits schoolchildren.



Students at St. Anthony Preparatory School stand in line for a midmorning snack.



Alumnus Paul Burgman, center gives lecture on Venezuelan Social Movement Organizations



UH students at VCU's Undergraduate Conference on Black Psychology



AAS students at the Model AU, Washington, D.C.

Event Briefs • 2009-2010 AAS Programming

2009-2010 AAS Events

On Monday, 10 September 2009, hosted lecture "Islam in the U.S.: The Twenty-First Century," by Dr. Aminah Beverly McCloud, professor of religious studies, DePaul University

On Monday, 12 October 2009, hosted lecture "The Possessive Investment in Consumption of the Black Women's Body," by Dr. Kaila Story, assistant professor, Audre Lorde Chair in Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Department of Pan-African Studies, Department of Women's & Gender Studies, University of Louisville



On Thursday, 29 October 2009, hosted lecture "African nationalism from Paul Cuffee to Minister Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam," by Dr. Clifton

Marsh, professor of social and public services, Tidewater Community College



On Monday, 2 November 2009, hosted lecture "The Critique of Racial Normativity. The Assimilative Coercion of Post-Civil Rights Ideology on Race

Theory," by Dr. Tommy Curry, assistant

professor of philosophy, Texas A&M University



On Monday, 9 November 2009, hosted lecture "Cultural Trauma and the Psychological Well-Being of

African Americans," by Dr. Shwan Utsey, Chair, Department of African American Studies, associate professor, Department of Psychology, Virginia Commonwealth University Producer

On Monday, 16 November 2009, co-hosted with the Department of Modern & Classical Languages and the Women's Studies Program "Territories of the Breast: A Documentary Screening & Discussion," co-directed by award winning artist and documentary filmmaker Sonia Baez-Hernandez.

On Tuesday, 5 February 2010, presented "500 Years Later," as part of our annual Africana Film Festival

On Tuesday, 9 February 2010, hosted lecture "Still Seeking 40 Acres & a Mule: African American Economic Empowerment in the 21st Century," by Dr. James Stewart, professor emeritus of labor studies & employment relations, Penn State University—Greater Allegheny



On Thursday, 11 February 2010, hosted lecture "Beginning Family History," by Mrs. Debra Blacklock-Sloan, historian, Rutherford B.H.

Yates Museum, chair, Harris County Historical Commission Marker Review Committee

On Thursday, 18 February 2010, hosted lecture "African Cosmology, Spirituality, and Knowledge," by Dr. Denise Martin, associate professor of Pan-African Studies, University of Louisville

On Monday, 22 February, 2010, hosted lecture "A Historical View of the Nation of Islam," by Dr. Claude Andrew Clegg, III, professor and chair, Department of History, Indiana University—Bloomington

On Tuesday, 23 February, 2010, hosted lecture "Cultural Considerations of Grounded Theory as a Research Method: A Case Study," by Dr. Evelyn Curry, assistant professor, School of Library & Information Studies, Texas Woman's University

Student Briefs

VCU Undergraduate Conference on Black Psychology

Since the spring of 2009, African American Studies at the University of Houston has supported undergraduate student travel to the Black Psychology Undergraduate Conference at the Student Commons, on Virginia Commonwealth University's (VCU) Monroe Park Campus, Richmond, Virginia. The departments of Psychology and African American Studies at VCU partners with Virginia State University (VSU) and the Institute for African American Mental Health Research and Training to host the conference each year.

African American Studies provided support for three students to attend the conference in the spring of 2010: Natarsha Johnson, Christine Paul, and Ashley Taylor. With the professional guidance of Fedora Biney, doctoral student in neuropsychology and former graduate assistant in AAS, Johnson, Paul, and Taylor presented groundbreaking research in several critical areas of psychology.

The conference highlights the outstanding research of undergraduate students at partnering institutions and promotes leadership and community engagement among the participants.

Model African Union—An African American Studies International Initiative

Every spring the African American Studies Program sends a team of

University of Houston international scholars to Washington, D.C. to participate in the annual Model African Union conference sponsored by Howard University. This conference hosts 30-40 different universities every year with each institution bringing anywhere from four to ten students to engage in mock sessions of the African Union. Likewise, the Model African Union conference is an excellent way for students to network with other universities, other students from these universities, and gain an international experience within this increasingly interdependent world.

Last spring, four University of Houston students went to the Model AU. Randryia Houston, Hannah McConn, Morgan Osborne, and Christine Paul collective represented the interests of Mali at the three day conference.

AAS 4440: Model African Union Seminar is open to all students with an interest in traveling to Howard University in Washington, D.C., for the Model African Union Conference. This course is designed to prepare students for participation in the spring conference. As such, it is primarily focused on the ideological development of global Pan-Africanism. If you have an interest in this program and the opportunities it provides for educational enhancement and social networking, please contact Paul Easterling, AAS Program Manager, at peasterling@uh.edu.

This program is open to all students

to participate. Further, we strongly encourage students to participate in any and all activities related to some form of international studies because it is imperative for students to know and understand the issues affecting the world community.

Summer International Study Program—Ghana, West Africa (Summer Session IV, annually):

UH students take three (3) or six (6) credit hours of African American Studies courses that integrate lectures by Ghanaian academics at the University of Ghana, University of Cape Coast, and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology with work at the University of Houston. Study includes educational travel. In 2010, 17 University of Houston students were provided with funding to participate in this rich and fulfilling program: Oluwakemi Akereolu, Fred Bryant, Jr., Quaniqua Carthan, Jahnin Davis, Brian Harris, Randryia Houston, Le Huang, Janae Ladet, Hannah McConn, Deidra Motton, Craig Nelson, John Nicklos II, Nwabundo Okongwu, Nwadiogo Okongwu, Angel Rhoden-Lewis, Whitney Welch, and Alexandria Wilkerson. In all, since 2003 the African American Studies Program has sponsored over 60 students to travel to Ghana and continues to encourage students to be internationally minded in this increasingly global world.

AAS TO OFFER COURSE ON HIP HOP



For students wanting to study the evolution and current manifestations of Hip Hop today, African American Studies at the University of Houston (UH) is offering a course that will discuss and analyze Hip Hop as a cultural phenomena, expression and experience for African American people. Paul Easterling, program manager and adjunct faculty in African American Studies, will instruct AAS 3301: Hip Hop History and Culture during the spring 2011 semester. The course covers the history of Black music, religion and resistance in America, including the history of Hip Hop and its cultural, sociological and religious manifestations. Course assignments also place emphasis on examining the views of Hip Hop artists and critics.

The course hopes to contribute to the growing research and discussions on Hip Hop already taking place in and around many institutions of higher learning throughout the world, but especially here in the city of Houston. With its unique array of artists and distinct sounds, Houston has made an indelible contribution to Hip Hop culture. Artists such as the Geto Boyz, Lil' Flip and Trae the Truth have had national appeal through radio air play and record sales, while the late DJ Screw invented an entirely new method of Hip Hop musical production through the development of Screw Music.

A similar effort to study the complexities of Hip Hop music is being undertaken by Anthony B. Pinn, Agnes Cullen Arnold Professor of Humanities and Religious Studies at Rice University. In addition to the course in African American Studies at UH, the Department of Religious Studies at Rice will offer a course under the instruction of Dr. Pinn focusing on the religious aspects of Hip Hop in the spring of 2011, RELI 157: Religion and Hip Hop.

For more information, please contact Paul Easterling via telephone at (713) 743-2814, or by email at peasterling@uh.edu.



2010 AAS Study Abroad Experience LE HUANG (THE ARTIST)



For some students, college is little more than a four to five year hurdle to becoming gainfully employed—at least that is the expectation. Le Huang, a studio art and art history major who studied abroad in Ghana this summer as an African American Studies Nkrumah Scholar, looks at her collegiate experience from a different angle.

After studying fine arts design at Shanghai Normal University in her native country of China four years ago, Huang moved to the United States and completed her core undergraduate courses at Houston Community College before transferring to the University of Houston in the fall of 2007. Despite being cautioned by friends and relatives against embracing art as a field of study during the peak of America's economic recession, Huang believed that making a career out of her professed love for painting would be the least of her concerns.

For Huang, art was not simply a means to getting a job; it was also a form of self-expression, and potentially a prism for understanding the world. The traditional style of art, she says, involves picking up a brush and painting—an intimate interaction between artist and canvas. "It's a whole process involving your mind and body, while expressing your spirit to the format at hand."

To enhance her appreciation and knowledge of the field, Huang studied art history at Yale University during the summer of 2009. The experience left her looking for more concrete and practical ways to encounter artistic creation on a global scale.

Huang saw AAS's study abroad to Ghana as a unique opportunity to broaden her exposure to art and enrich her personal relationship with African people. Incorporating her skills as a lay photographer, she decided to create paintings from the pictures she took documenting Ghanaian life and culture. "My goal is to go to those countries that I'm unfamiliar with and can offer me a different background and cultural experience," Huang said.

Huang's aspirations were soon realized when she became aware of her presence as a foreigner in the country. The trip was her first time travelling in large urban areas without a significant population of Chinese nationals.

"I remember once where we went to a village and met with one of the local leaders. When we went to shake each other's hands, [it seemed] we automatically noticed the extreme contrast of our skin tones. I felt like our two cultures were meeting at that moment," Huang said.

Her perception of differences increased when she was made to question her position of privilege as a tourist. During a rest stop in the village of Ho, Huang leaned out of her window seat and photographed a row of houses off to the right of the group's bus. Ten minutes later, a man appeared in the door of the bus demanding that Huang explain herself. "Who gave you the permission to take a picture of my house?" the resident asked. "That's my property. You Americans think that you can take whatever you want."

Surprised and somewhat startled by the encounter, Huang apologized and agreed to delete the photos from her camera. It was both a lesson in humility and being sensitive to the human dimensions of other people's lives.

The rest of the trip went smoothly. From that point forward, Huang made it a point to ask permission before capturing any more images.

Her photos turned out beautifully, and we offer a few here for our readers.

NOTE: Le Huang, "thanks African Americans Studies and the University of Houston for supporting her financially and by many other means."



Class Insights: Student Writing and Research in AAS

*Class Insights is a new section in Ujima featuring selected excerpts from student research papers and critical essays. AAS 3394: Writings in Octavia Butler (Spring 2010)



“Future Spaces, Social Change, and African Identity Through Octavia Butler” By Ibekunle Ashcroft

In her speech “How Does Change Happen”, Angela Davis suggests that as a “potential agent of social change” there is a critical stance one should adopt in their relationship to how they perceive social realities. This stance is a “critical impulse” that makes “use of knowledge in a transformative way,” and takes a “critical posture towards the conceptual tools” used in marginalization. This posture, which Davis terms feminism, appears in Octavia Butler’s *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents*.

Speculative fiction set in the dystopian world during the year 2024 and beyond, Butler’s fictive narratives transgress various conceptual paradigms by empirically using the experiences of the historical past and present to inform possibilities within the future through the concept of change. Lauren Oya-Olamina, her protagonist, and also a potential agent of social change is located within an Africentric paradigm. Which is to say, that while Oya’s local identity is African American, her identity is also tied to her African past in relation to her surrounding social realities.

Oya, as the protagonist name suggests, is representational of an Orisha in Yoruba mythology. A

Goddess of the Niger River, her characteristics, which can be construed as radical, are such that she is known as “one who puts on pants to go to war” or “one who grows a beard to go to war.” Oyas’ reality, set in future fiction America, is a gated community in Robeldo, a racially diverse community operating as a boundary confronted by the encroachment of social ills where the plight of the human condition has deteriorated into such a state that gated communities are created to protect societies from the outside world.



“Literary Uplift: Octavia Butler, Poverty, and Despair in African Communities” By Alexandria Wilkerson

As a response to the problem of despair within the Black community, Octavia Butler’s *Earthseed* can be used to show people living in economically strained conditions that they can change their situation without any negative consequences. When Lauren Olamina says, “shape God,” she is referring to shaping one’s own reality and the society around them. If a person shapes their reality, there is no longer a need for them to rely on a higher being for their success—they become the individual in control. If these ideas were properly presented to groups in need of reform, positive reinforcements of success could eventually replace defeatist mindsets. Moreover, communities desiring liberation from oppressive forces must collectively come together and fight for their beliefs. Olamina’s struggle affirms this notion and her story, although it is fictional, is inspiring to say the least.

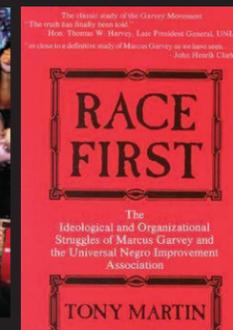
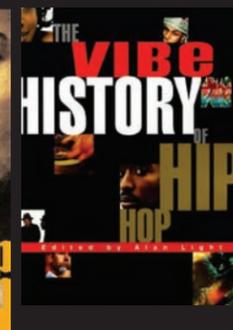
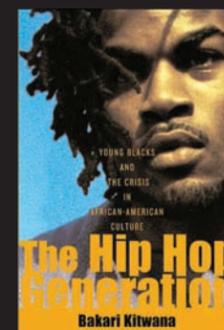
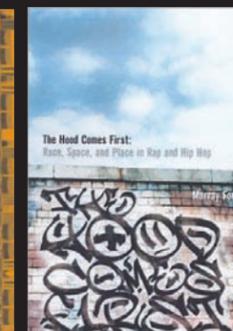
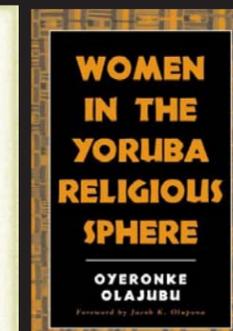
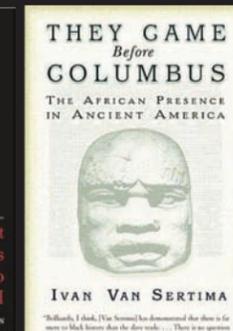
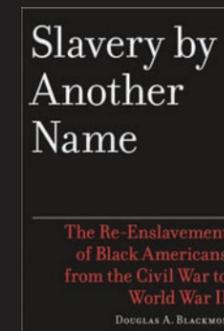
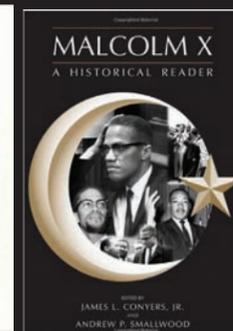
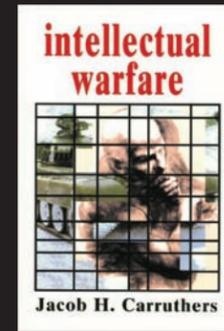
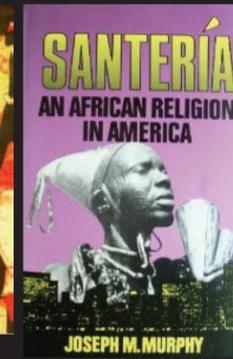
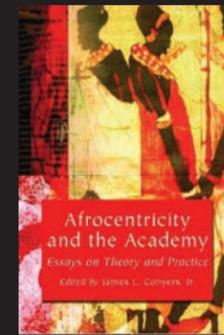


“Black Estrangement in Octavia Butler” By Rebecca Ramirez

Through her protagonist, Lauren Oya Olamina, Octavia Butler portrays the image and elements of “cyberpunk” - a subgenre that presents a dystopian alternative to the utopia of mainstream science fiction as a fertile ground for exploration. Butler’s tone consistently illuminates three socio-political conditions: urban decay, highly technological societies, and political disillusionment appropriated through literary and “creative transgression,” and featuring aspects of black invisibility. Commenting on science fiction as a genre, Greg Tate, author and cultural critic, writes, “Black people live the estrangement that science fiction writers imagine.” Tate is referring here to the reoccurring theme of abduction in science fiction and its relation to the Black experience.

Perhaps, at the risk of simplifying the history of the African Diaspora, it could be surmised that aliens from imprecise origins invaded African societies, abducted them, and transferred them into “alien” lands. The inescapable passage of time and general necessity, promoted eventual assimilation and the formation of

locality. New World African culture, having to struggle with foreign impositions, formulates original aesthetics that result in a bridge between western science and African lived traditions. Furthermore, this New World African culture is a result of the three aforementioned socio-political conditions and the productive tension of alienated Africans in the Americas, a theme Butler employs into her works. The brilliance and relevance of Butler’s writing in *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents*, as a reflection of African American deconstructionist thought, lies in its ability to “crack complex cultural codes,” as Tate argues. Thus, black estrangement elicits an expressive response, allowing it to creatively critique long-established narratives.



BOOKSHELF AFRICANA:

1. Afrocentricity in the Academy (Conyers, James L., editor) 2003
2. An Essay On African Philosophical Thought (Gyekye, Kwame) 1995
3. (The) Autobiography of Malcolm X (Malcolm X) 1987 [reissue]
4. Fighting for Honor (Desch Obi, T. J.) 1999
5. Intellectual Warfare (Jacob H. Carruthers)
6. Malcolm X: A Historical Reader (Conyers and Smallwood, eds.) 2008
7. Medical Apartheid (Washington, Harriet A.)
8. Muntu (Jahn, Janheinz) 1994
9. Slavery By Another Name (Blackmon, Douglas) 2008
10. They Came Before Columbus (Van Sertima, Ivan) 2003 [reprint]
11. Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere (Olajubu, Oyeronke) 2003
12. The Hood Comes First (Forman, Murray) 2002
13. The Hip Hop Generation (Kitwana, Bakari) 2002
14. Vibe History of Hip Hop (Light, Alan, ed.) 1999
15. Hip Hop Culture (Price, Emmett G.) 2006
16. Race First (Martin, Tony) 1986

AAS In A Nutshell

Student Funding and Support



• **John Rueben Sheeler Memorial Scholarship:** Established in 1981 by the widow of Dr. John Rueben Sheeler, historian and chair of the Department of History and Geography at Texas Southern University, this scholarship provides funding to academically talented students who have declared minors in African American Studies and whose GPAs are at least 3.0. The amount of this award is \$1,000.

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• **Mrs. Debbie Haley Academic Scholarship:** Established by Mrs. Debbie Haley and African American Studies, this scholarship provides funding to students who have declared minors in African American Studies and whose GPAs are at least 2.5. The amount of this award is \$1,000.

whose GPAs are at least 2.5. The amount of this award is \$1,000.



• **Friends of African American Studies Scholarship:** Established in 1999 by supporters of African American Studies throughout the Houston community, this scholarship provides funding to students who have declared minors in African American Studies and whose GPAs are at least 2.5. The amount of this award is \$1,000. Scholarships are awarded annually in the name of an important person of African world heritage.

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• **Sylvester Turner Academic Distinction Scholarship:** Established in 2006 to provide funding to students who have declared minors in African American Studies and whose GPAs are at least 3.5. The amount of this award is \$1,000.

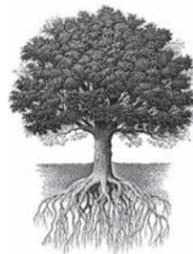
award is \$1,000.



• **John J. Moores, Sr. Academic Achievement Scholarship:** Established in 2006 to provide funding to students who have declared minors in African American Studies

and show GPAs of at least 3.0. The amount of this award is \$1,000.

• **Dr. Ira B. Bryant, Jr. Academic Scholarship:** Established in 2005 in honor of the great Houstonian educator and civil rights leader, this scholarship provides funding to students who have declared minors in African American Studies.



• **Dr. Kwame Nkrumah International Study Scholarship:** Available to UH-matriculated undergraduate students enrolled in six (6) credit hours of African American Studies Summer IV Session International Study courses to the University of Ghana, University of Cape Coast, and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana, West Africa.



whose GPAs are at least 2.5. The amount of this award is \$1,000.

• **African American Studies Graduate Assistantship:** This award, established in 1995, was initiated to recruit outstanding students for graduate study at the University of Houston pursuing M.A. or Ph.D. degrees in research related to or in the disciplinary field of African American Studies. Graduate assistants work 20 hours weekly on various assignments as required by the African American Studies Program.



• **Dr. Julius Thompson Memorial Book Scholarship in African American Studies:** Established by African American Studies in 2008, this scholarship assists students with their book fees.

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International Study and Conference Exposure

• **National Model African Union-Washington, DC (First Week in March, annually):** Every spring the African American Studies Program sends a team of University of Houston international scholars to Washington D.C. to participate in the annual Model African Union conference sponsored by Howard University. This conference hosts 30-40 different universities every year with each institution bringing anywhere from four to ten students to engage in mock sessions of the African Union. Likewise, the Model African Union conference is an excellent way for students to network with other universities, students from these universities, and gain an international experience within this increasingly interdependent world.

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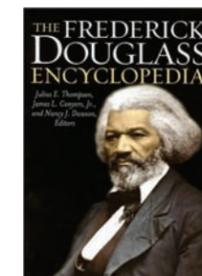
• **Summer International Study Program—Ghana, West Africa (Summer Session IV, annually):** UH students take three (3) or six (6) credit hours of African American Studies courses that integrate lectures by Ghanaian academics at the University of Ghana, University of Cape Coast, and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology with work at the University of Houston. Study includes educational travel

• **National Council for Black Studies Conference (Third Week in March, annually):** The National Council for Black Studies is the leading organization of Black/Africana Studies professionals in the world. In addition to establishing standards of excellence within the discipline, NCBS serves as a major outlet for the scholarly dissemination of African-centered knowledge and modes of inquiry regarding the life and experiences of African people. UH students are encouraged to attend and present research-based papers at the annual conference. In the past, AAS minors have presented papers and achieved academic distinction such as placement in the NCBS Student Essay Competition

Advanced Study Initiatives

• **Graduate Certificate in African American Studies:** The Graduate Certificate in African American Studies is a nine-hour disciplinary concentration open to students in all UH graduate and professional degree programs. It is also open to post baccalaureate professionals (including teachers, social service providers, policymakers, and others) interested in enhancing their knowledge and understanding of Africana phenomena. The graduate concentration in African American Studies introduces students to advanced discussions, analyses, theoretical perspectives, and research methodologies in the discipline of Africana Studies. In addition, it provides intellectual breadth to a student's course of study, increasing the

2009-2010 AAS Faculty Publications



In the fall of 2009, James L. Conyers, Jr., University Professor and director of African American Studies, co-edited *The Frederick Douglass Encyclopedia* (Greenwood) with Julius E. Thompson and Nancy J. Dawson. The encyclopedia offers more than 100 alphabetically organized entries covering Douglass's extraordinary journey from childhood in bondage to forceful spokesperson for equality and freedom before, during, and after the Civil War. In addition to biographical details, the book looks at the full breadth of Douglass's writings and speeches, as well as the events that shaped his intellect and political views. Together, these entries create an enduring portrait of one of the nation's most iconic figures, a

Continued from page 16

depth and coherence of the student's work within her/his primary field of study on critical issues concerning Africana phenomena.

• **Ankh Maat Wedjau Honor Society:** In the In the spring of 2008 the African American Studies Program at the University of Houston reestablished its chapter of the Ankh Maat Wedjau National Honor Society of the National Council for Black Studies. The overall mission of the Songhai Chapter of the Ankh Maat Wedjau Honor Society is to establish a strong foundation of knowledge and wisdom in the field of Africana/Black Studies at the University of Houston. It is the hope that the knowledge and wisdom shared will help students to grow within themselves academically, mentally and spiritually. The goal in this would be to grasp conceptually the interconnectedness of African people worldwide and to stimulate conversation and thought.

Publications and Research

• **Journal in African American Studies:** A new peer-reviewed academic annual serial published by Transaction Publishers in New Brunswick, New Jersey, the new journal offers an important contribution to research and scholarship in the discipline

man who went from slavery to invited guest in Abraham Lincoln's White House, whose commitment to freedom for all led to his participation in the first women's rights conference at Seneca Falls, and whose profound influence ranged well beyond the borders of the United States.

AAS Adjunct and Affiliate Faculty Publications

Demetrius Pearson, associate professor of health and human performance, published two book chapters, two abstracts, and received several grants. His publications include: Pearson, D. W. (2009). "Black in the Saddle: The Best Bull Rider You Never Saw." In J. L. Conyers Jr. (Series Ed.), *Africana Studies: Vol. 3. Racial Structure & Radical Politics in the African Diaspora* (pp. 183-196). New Brunswick: Transaction.

Pearson, D. W. (2010). "Absence of Power: Sheroes in Sport Films Post-Title IX." In L. K. Fuller (Ed.), *Sports, Rhetoric, and Gender: Global and universal contexts* (pp. 233-247).

of Africana Studies. The annual serial's inaugural issue will be published in 2004.

• **Monograph Series:** African American Studies monograph series, Transaction Publishers: The series features original studies and recovery works within the discipline of Africana Studies. African Americans in the American West monograph series, University Press of Colorado: The series publishes original studies and recovery works on the Africana experience in the western United States from diverse disciplinary perspectives.

• **Public Policy Research Initiatives:** The Black Houston History Project: An initiative committed to the research, study, and preservation of the history of African American people and institutions in the city of Houston, Texas, from the nineteenth through the twentieth century.

• **Center for the Study of African American Culture:** Approved by the University's Division of Research, the Center for the Study of African American Culture is committed to interdisciplinary research revived in the multiple dimensions of African American life and culture.

New York: Peter Lang. Lam, E. T. C., & Pearson, D. W. (2010, March). "Preference of Promotional Strategies and Their Relationship with Game Attendance." *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 81 (1), A-100.

Pearson, D. W., & Lam, E. T. C. (2010, March). "Film Analysis as an Integrated Part of Sport Sociology Courses." *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 81 (1), A-65.

Janis F. Hutchinson, professor of anthropology, published Issa, A.M., Tufail, W., Hutchinson, J., Tenorio, J., and Poonam, M. "Assessing Patient Readiness for the Clinical Adoption of Personalized Medicine." *Public Health Genomics* 12 (2009): 163-69.

• **Visiting Scholars Program:** Each year, at least two scholars from across the United States participate in a one-year visiting appointment in African American Studies. They teach one course of their own design while working toward the completion of a research project. The Visiting Scholars Program is designed to encourage new scholars to contribute new and innovative teaching and research in the discipline of Africana Studies. 

0073017880
University of Houston
African American Studies
629 Agnes Arnold Hall
Houston, TX 77204-3047