

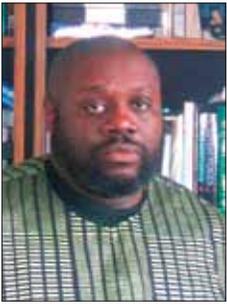
Vol. 16, No. 1 • Fall 2009

# UJIMA

The Newsletter of the African American Studies Program

**Honing the  
Craft of  
Struggle:  
Research  
Networks and  
Global Experiences  
in AAS**





## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

James L. Conyers, Jr., Ph.D.

The 2008-09 academic year was filled with adversity, disputes, and consternation. Throughout the latter part of August and moving into September, Hurricane Gustav pummeled the state of Louisiana. This devastating storm left Baton Rouge and its surrounding communities without electrical power for almost two weeks. One week later, Hurricane Ike ravaged Houston and nearby communities, extending as far south as Galveston. Ike demolished an extensive segment of Galveston's residential and business districts and caused Texans in the region to endure the hardship of going without gas, ice, water, and the availability of grocery stores. Simply put, this was a nerve-wracking experience for residents of the city and the greater community

With respect to African American Studies, our unit resumed operation within two days following the storm. Many of our staff exhibited unit loyalty and commitment by returning to work despite encountering the misfortune of losing power in their residential accommodations. Consistently, university administrators encouraged faculty and staff to get involved in community service distribution and recovery projects, extend flexibility to students regarding course assignments, and continue their respective research and writing. UH faculty, staff, and students responded by communicating with local occupants of Houston's Third Ward and volunteering their service by distributing ice water to local residents.

At the beginning of the spring 2009 semester, AAS was pleased to discover that Dr. John Antel, former dean of CLASS, was named provost and senior chief academic officer at UH. We have worked collaboratively with Provost Antel for more than seven years and feel secure that the university will advance from his administrative leadership.

Notwithstanding two hurricanes, a national election, and an economic recession, each of these events provided context for AAS to continue advancing the objectives outlined in our mission statement: research, teaching, service, and development.

Agoo-Amen

James L. Conyers, Jr., Ph.D.

*Director, African American Studies*

*Director, Center for the Study of African American Culture*

*University Professor of African American Studies*

Fall 2009

# UJIMA

Volume 16, Number 1

## AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM

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# Writing The Future: Reading Race and Gender in Science Fiction



By AYANA ABDALLAH, Ph.D.  
2009-2010 AAS VISITING SCHOLAR

The Visiting Scholars Program in AAS is designed to encourage new scholars to contribute fresh and innovative teaching and research in the discipline of Africalogy. A brief essay by 2009-2010 AAS Visiting Scholar Ayana Abdallah, Ph.D., follows.

In significant ways, science fiction genre originated similar to that of NASA: by white men, controlled by white men, for white America. Roles of women were no less the appendage to brainy male scientists or “wanna be” scientists in science fiction than they were in a privileged white ruled American literary canon. Ostensibly women had nothing of interest to say in the science arena as far as men were concerned and so female characters written by male writers had no opinion, insight, or appreciable mental capacity. But let’s do a little dwelling on that idea as science fiction maverick Octavia Butler once opined. Even early 1900’s America benefited from a few women who managed to overcome misogyny in the sciences and that number has grown significantly evidenced by the increase of female physicians, surgeons, psychologists, biologists, chemists, astronauts, and et ceteras. Nonetheless, when it came to images of women in science fiction, it is sex not genius that most mattered to men writing in the genre.

Feminist scholars have long argued that images of women appear between the pages of evolving science fiction manuscripts less for narrative balance than the need to satisfy nerdy teenage male’s raging hormones. In this respect,

fantastic sex with an alien feminine is a typically glorified characterization effectively reducing the female body on Earth to sexual objectification. Yes, sex sells in capitalist society but at what expense? Precisely what is the value of a literary tradition prescribing gender roles that limit and bind women and girls to romanticized notions of sex, marriage, and family? That science fiction has played a major role in purporting the subordination of women deserves attention in part because of the inherent contradiction of a forward-looking, prophetic, complex vision defining an intriguing genre.

Eventually women science fiction writers will contest the mimicry of patricist values in science fiction hence dominant oppressive male attitudes about women’s roles in American culture. Ursula K. Le Guin will become the first highly celebrated female science fiction author in the US and it is to her literature that we turn for study of competing images of female identity in science fiction.

But what are the images of African Americans in science fiction? And how are other people of color such as Latinos and Asians characterized? When present, which is rare, such images are pathetically unauthentic. Unequivocally, African people past and present will largely

remain invisible and voiceless in the imagination of sci-fi written by the dominant class.

One woman writing beyond the boundaries forever changed the course of science fiction as well as speculative fiction in the United States and abroad. That woman is Octavia E. Butler. Her literature inspires personal, communal, and global change.

Employing hopes, observations, fears, intuition, pain, joys, and genius, Butler’s creativity rivals what had for decades paraded as quintessential potential in American literature. Employing prize-winning imagination, she depicts life on Earth and on other planets, a life rooted in an African American experience. There is no doubt that her portrayal of slavery, dystopia, gender, race, and class gives readers extended pause for thought.

Yet what place has the work of an author whose literature consistently privileges black women’s experience as radical leaders in 2009?

Isn’t the struggle against racial oppression so close to over that we would spend our time more wisely engaging color-blind conversation? Multiculturalism? Barack Hussein Obama politics/format? Aren’t women free to do and be whatever they want in the new millennium?



## Student Briefs

# ABPsi forms student circle chapter at UH



*ABPsi Student Circle (UH Chapter) members (L-R) Christine Paul, Janai Smith, Quaniqua Carthan, Ashley Taylor, and Craig Nelson*

The Student Circle of The Association of Black Psychologists is an organization of like-minded Black scholars within The Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi), a professional organization dedicated to enhancing the psychological well-being of individuals of African descent. Composed of graduate and undergraduate level students in psychology or a closely related discipline, the Student Circle (originally The Student Division) was founded in 1993, in response to the need for stu-

dent members within ABPsi to have a body that addressed their needs. With the assistance of the African American Studies program and Nicole Coleman, assistant professor of educational and counseling psychology, the UH-chapter of the Association of Black Psychologists' Student Circle is now underway.

In the spring of 2009, seven undergraduate students at the University of Houston founded a chapter of the Student Circle: Quaniqua Carthan,

Brittney Jones, Craig Nelson, Christine Paul, Brandon Pittman, Janai Smith, and Ashley Taylor. The organization has four primary goals: organize student input into ABPsi, develop programs which benefit students, aid students in the process of entering and succeeding in graduate school, and promote psychology as a major and as a profession among undergraduate and graduate students.

Christine Paul, 2009-2010 chairperson of the Student Circle (UH-chapter), has emphasized community outreach, professional networking, and resource sharing during her leadership of the organization. Ms. Paul, Ms. Carthan, Mr. Nelson, and Ms. Smith are current minors in African American Studies. Ms. Jones and Mr. Pittman graduated with minor degrees in African American Studies during the 2008-2009 academic year. 

## Minors excel at National Conference on Black Psychology

On March 3, 2009 the Departments of Psychology and African American Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) partnered with Virginia State University (VSU) and the Institute for African American Mental Health Research and Training to hold its inaugural Black Psychology Undergraduate Conference at the Student Commons, on VCU's Monroe Park Campus, Richmond, Virginia. A major goal of the conference was to highlight the outstanding research

of undergraduate students at partnering institutions and to promote leadership and community engagement among the participants. The conference also served as a platform to encourage the development of professional networks between faculty and students at respective institutions.

Dr. Shawn O. Utsey, associate professor of psychology and chair of African American Studies, organized the conference around proposed paper presentations, with professional development workshops geared toward preparing for graduate school; conducting programmatic research; and leadership/community educator training.

Brandon Pittman, a spring 2009 graduate in African American Studies (AAS) at the University of Houston, presented a co-authored paper entitled, "Sexuality in the Hip Hop Industry." Brittney M. Jones,

*AAS Minor  
Quaniqua Carthan*



also a spring 2009 graduate in AAS, gave a poster presentation entitled, "Liberating Our Youth from Intellectual Oppression." Quaniqua Carthan, a current minor in AAS, gave a poster presentation entitled, "Influence of Race Related Stress and Coping on School achievement of African American Adolescence."

Dr. Na'im Akbar, a preeminent scholar in the discipline of psychology, gave the keynote lecture on "Promoting a Psychology of Liberation for People of African Descent." 



*AAS Minor  
Brandon Pittman*

## Student Briefs

# Increased Enrollment, Applicants in AAS Graduate Certificate Program

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.



*2008-2009 Graduate Certificate Student in African American Studies, Alieshia Baisy. As part of a growing number of young professionals pursuing the certificate, Baisy is looking to enhance her knowledge and research skills in Africology at the graduate level. She expects to complete the degree within the upcoming academic year.*

Since its initial inception during the 2005-2006 academic year, the African American Studies Graduate Certificate program has steadily increased its appeal to post-baccalaureate, professional, and graduate students. After a rather modest beginning, the number of students actively pursuing the graduate certificate in African American Studies has nearly doubled in the past two years.

Similarly, course enrollment has—at times—outpaced the number of students actively pursuing the certificate as graduate and professional students from other disciplines take courses in African American Studies. In addition to a strong emphasis on learning alternative research methods, the certificate program introduces students to emerging theorists and theoretical designs in the discipline of Africana Studies.

Increased visibility through the matriculation of students and publication of brochures, newsletters, and web pages highlighting the success of the certificate continue to provide a vehicle

for advancing the program's notoriety and prestige. Additionally, advisement of African American Studies minors at the undergraduate level also plays a significant role in student recruitment into the certificate program. In the fall of 2009, Kimberly Keeton, a UH alum who graduated with a minor in African American Studies, became the second post-baccalaureate student to obtain the graduate certificate in African American Studies.

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

Africana Studies is a distinct academic discipline that engages African-centered research and teaching through an interdisciplinary approach to scholarly inquiry. 

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

African American Studies at the University of Houston hosts an annual study abroad program to Ghana, West Africa with the University of Ghana, at Legon in the capital city of Accra. 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 2009, thirteen University of Houston students,

Gabriel Ashcroft, Jasmine Black, Ariel Brinkley, Crystal Edwards, Kaine Hampton, Randryia Houston, Christian Jackson, Ant Kwakye, Hannah McConn,

Christine Paul, Brandon Pittman, Porsché Randall, and Tamara Spiller were provided with funding to participate in this rich and fulfilling program. In all, since 2003 the African American Studies Program has sponsored over forty students to travel to Ghana and continues to encourage students to be internationally minded in this increasingly global world. 



*AAS Minors and Nkrumah Scholars Kaine Hampton and Hannah McConn tour the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG) in Ghana, West Africa*

## Student Briefs

# Minors Debate International Policy in the Nation's Capital

By CHRISTIAN JACKSON

Last February, six African American Studies minors at the University of Houston were invited to attend the Eighth Annual Session of the National Model African Union, held at Howard University, Washington, D.C., from February 26 to February 29, 2009.

The Model African Union is essentially a collegiate simulation of the intergovernmental proceedings of the African Union. It provides a unique opportunity for university and college students to study the

role, structure and performance of the African Union in its search for solutions to key economic, social, and political-security issues facing the continent of Africa.

Through simulation, augmented by briefings at African embassies in Washington, D.C., participants gain a better and clearer understanding of the multi-various determinants, capabilities and constraints that shape the domestic and foreign policies of African countries, as well as the patterns of cooperation and conflict that characterize intra-African diplomacy.

The Model AU assigns each university with the task of representing the political, social, and economic interests of one of the member states within the institution.

The team from the University of Houston represented Malawi's interests at the Model AU on three different technical committees: the Committee on Union Government; the Technical Committee on Economic Matters; and the Technical Committee on Social Matters.

Having the opportunity to be a part of this exercise was important as an African American Studies minor. At the University of Houston, a key part of our education on African affairs and issues emphasizes the concept of Pan-africanism, the political and economic unity of all African countries and peoples. The exercise was difficult, but students came away with a concrete understanding of the many demands and challenges that shape the foreign policies of African Union member states.

I will be attending again and suggest that any interested African American Studies minors research the trip and apply. The experience provided a wonderful educational opportunity in more ways than one. 



## Minor Gains Exposure in National and International Politics

Alumni of the African American Studies program at the University of Houston have a long tradition of providing dedicated public service to the domestic and international interests of the nation's citizenry. Two years ago, it was Eronn Putman (Class of FA08) who received an opportunity to work on Capitol Hill as a congressional intern. This fall, however, Leniqua'dominique Jenkins (Class of SP09) accepted an offer to intern for Rep. Alan Grayson (Dem. Florida).

As a student, Ms. Jenkin's developed a deep concern for many of the major social challenges effecting people in the world today. In the fall of 2005, she received a Benjamin A. Gilman

International Scholarship to study abroad in India. While there she worked with sexually exploited children and women by designing therapeutic activities to assist clients through their healing processes. Her interest in international politics further matured after she received a 2007 Kwame Nkrumah Study Abroad Scholarship in African American Studies to study in Ghana, West Africa. After returning from Ghana, Ms. Jenkins mentored prospective AAS study abroad applicants on the political and social dynamics of international travel.

A former Dean's List honoree and member of Anhk Maat Wedjau, the honor society for student minors in African American Studies, Ms. Jenkins



Leniqua'dominique Jenkins

continued her extraordinary academic performance a year later by receiving the prestigious Mrs. Debbie Haley Academic Scholarship and a Julius E. Thompson Memorial Book Scholarship in African American Studies.

She capped off a stellar undergraduate career in May 2009, when the College of Liberal Arts & Social Science recognized Ms. Jenkins as a finalist to deliver its spring commencement speech. 

## Fraternity supports African village



AAS Minors (L-R) Ibikunle Ashcroft and Kaine Hampton

By CECILIA SMITH, *The Daily Cougar*

Faced with foreclosures, a rising deficit, on ongoing war, high unemployment and contentious debate on health care, Americans seem secluded from the plights of those outside the U.S., particularly those in poorer countries, whose problems are often relegated to late-night infomercial appeals to donate to starving children.

Students from UH's Eta Mu chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha, the first historically black fraternity, in tradition of social service, have taken an interest in developing nations.

"We adopted a village off the west coast of Africa. Every month we send supplies to the schools out there, and now we are opening up the program to the public," Kaine Hampton, former NAACP-UH president and secretary of the Eta Mu chapter, said.

Hampton said that Africa in particular has become a caricature of struggling nations. While there are some flourishing African economies, colonization and internal strife, which have plagued many African countries for years, have resulted in Africa being one of the poorest and underdeveloped parts of the world.

"I didn't think that it was that big of a deal until I (visited Africa) and saw for myself the disparity firsthand," Hampton said.

After returning from study abroad, Kaine made a vow to take action by offering assistance to the schoolchildren he

came across in his travels. A collaboration with his fraternity resulted in the adoption of an orphanage in Accra, the capital of Ghana.

"It's amazing to see the contrast between their kids and ours. Here, if a student doesn't have a pencil, they can get one from their teacher. Over there, pencils are scarce," Hampton said.

"The school that the orphans attend is literally outside, no doors, no discernible walls, just a roof," Hampton said.

More than 170,000 children in Ghana are orphaned by AIDS, according to Inter Press Service statistics from 2006. In a country with little government assistance, education is seen as one of the only means by which abandoned youth can attain a better living. However, a lack of common school supplies threatens to extinguish that hope.

"I was there. I witnessed first-hand how they cried over something as little as a pencil. They don't have federal funding like we do, so their schools survive almost exclusively on donations," Hampton said.

The fraternity will host "The Shirt off My Back" at the Cougar Den at 7 p.m. next Thursday. The event will showcase the culture of West Africa, as well promote the initiative to assist schools in Ghana. Donations of school supplies as well as gently used clothing will be collected. Donations will continue to be accepted in Room 51B of the campus activities office until the close of the semester.

"It's amazing to see how appreciative these kids were, to be that thankful over a pack of paper or a pencil. These kids just want help to get an education," Hampton said.

Note: Original article published 24 November 2009, reprinted with permission of *The Daily Cougar*. 

## African Identities in the age of Obama

From October 8-10, 2009, Fairfax, Virginia's George Mason University hosted a unique conference entitled, "African Identities in the Age of Obama." The conference was organized by George Mason's African American Studies Program in order to deal with the complexities of African identities in this modern world.

The African American Studies Program at the University of Houston sponsored six students (Randryia Houston, Hannah McConn, Ibikunle Ashcroft, Crystal Edwards, Christian Jackson, and Kaine Hampton) to attend this conference so that they could have an opportunity to be active participants in this important conversation.

Christian Jackson remarked, "This conference gave scholars the chance to share and combine significant research and ideas. I'm positive that the conference will help the discipline of Africana Studies and the students in attendance advance."

The students gleaned a lot from the sessions of the conference. Randryia Houston found herself reflecting on a presentation by one of the conference's guest lecturers, Joseph Miller, professor of history at the University of Virginia. "I agreed with his research, which supported two noticeable differences between Africans and African Americans," Houston said.

*Continued on page 9*



UH students Hannah McConn, Randryia Houston, and Crystal Edwards



## Event Briefs • 2008-2009 AAS Programming

### CSAAC: AAS Media Symposium on Africana Art & Film

The African American Studies Program's Center for the Study of African American Culture (CSAAC) conceived the Black Images in the Media Symposium and Arts Festival after the recent controversy involving racially insensitive statements by Keith Richards and Don Imus. In the wake of those comments, many media pundits offered little critical analysis or context of the issues involved and ultimately blamed Black pop culture for creating a climate that facilitated such statements. With African American communities suggesting that this was yet another case of blaming the victim, the need to recognize and discuss the primary role of African American institutions in promoting positive black images became apparent. The Black Images in the Media Symposium and Arts Festival aimed to do just that. Participants had an opportunity to engage in discussion and dialogue about African American images as well as celebrate the beauty of black images.

The symposium was inclusive of some of Black America's top scholars who discussed historic, current, and future issues involving African Americans on stage, in film, and in music. The symposium included informative workshops for "industry" professionals on such topics as "Independent Film Production 101", "Strategies to

Preserve Stage Theatre", and "How To Get a Record Deal". A two-day film festival featuring the best in film shorts, features, documentaries and music videos complimented the research-based symposium.

The Black Images in the Media Film Festival was held in Houston, Texas April 8-11 at the University Hilton Hotel on the campus of the University of Houston. Also sponsored by the University of Houston African American Studies program, the festival was a major part of the Black Images in the Media Symposium and Arts Festival and involved scholars and artists from across the country. The event provided a wonderful opportunity for networking as well as a platform for African American independent filmmakers to showcase their work in ways that depict positive black images.

The symposium, as a CSAAC research initiative, focused on the presentation and publication of thematic ideas that contribute to the growth and dissemination of knowledge and research in Africana life and culture. It contributes to the growth and expansion of research and publication at the University of Houston, bringing together scholars from across the country in a moderated and academic forum. 

### AAS Seminar on the Politics of Black Power



On January 31, 2009, African American Studies hosted a Seminar on Black Power at the Shrine of the Black Madonna. The program invited several distinguished faculty from around the nation to present critical research on the issues and people that guided the Black Power Movement. The list of presenters included Kathleen N. Cleaver, senior lecturer in law, at Emory University; Scot Brown, associate professor of history at the University of California-Los Angeles; Jane Rhodes, dean for the study of race and ethnicity and professor and chair of American Studies at Macalester College; and, Andrew P. Smallwood, assistant professor in the Center for Ethnic Studies Department of Social Sciences at the Borough of Manhattan Community College. The event was free, catered, and open to the public. 



*AAS Minors Christian Jackson and Ibikunle Asbcroft in Ghana; A Ghanaian workshop on making Adinkra cloth; Erron Putman, AAS alumnus; 2009-2010 AAS Graduate Assistant Baruch Williams; Alexis Guidry, AAS minor; making Adinkra.*

## Scholar Examines African Advances in Space Exploration

On Monday, 16 February 2009, The African American Studies Program at the University of Houston hosted a guest lecture on robotics in space exploration by Dr. Edward Tunstel. Dr. Tunstel is the Space Robotics and Autonomous Control Lead in the Space Department of the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (JHU/APL), Laurel, MD. He leads and defines the technical direction of robotics technology development and related capabilities needed for space missions. He joined JHU/APL in September 2007 after 18 years at the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, CA where he was a Senior Robotics Engineer.

Dr. Tunstel punctuated his lecture on robotics with a discussion on the development and current progress of space programs in Africa. Broadly outlining the long traditions of space observation in Kemet civilization and among such peoples as the Dogon of Mali, Dr. Tunstel examined relevant and known advances in the space exploration programs of countries such as Nigeria and South Africa. He followed this discussion by offering reflections on how the numerous African Americans that populate America's space program often go unaccounted for in popular portrayals of NASA.



Born and raised in New York City, Dr. Tunstel attended Howard University in Washington, DC where he earned the B.S. and M.E. degrees in Mechanical Engineering, with a concentration in robotics. In 1989, JPL recruited him to perform research and technology development on NASA rover projects to enable space science missions on planetary surfaces. He served in this capacity for several years before being awarded a JPL Fellowship to pursue doctoral studies at the University of New Mexico where he earned the Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering in 1996.

Dr. Tunstel develops autonomous control and navigation algorithms, software, and systems for planetary rover research and space flight projects. He maintains expertise in areas of robotics and intelli-

gent computer-based systems with current research interests in mobile robot navigation, cooperative robotics, and applications of soft computing to autonomous systems. Dr. Tunstel has 22 years of research and applications experience in these areas in which he authored over 110 journal, book chapter and conference publications, and has co-edited 4 books. His recent assignments include: development of JHU/APL planetary surface robotics capability, the NASA Mars Exploration Rovers (MER) mission, and JPL Principal Investigator for distributed science instrument survey systems on mobile robotic platforms.

Dr. Tunstel is Chief Technologist of NSBE Space, an alumni special interest group of the NSBE-Alumni Extension and a Senior Member of IEEE. He has served on the IEEE Systems, Man, and Cybernetics Society Board of Governors and is its current Vice President for Conferences & Meetings. Recent recognitions of his accomplishments include the NSBE-Alumni Extension Technologist of the Year Award in 2008 and the NASA Equal Employment Opportunity Medal in 2007. Dr. Tunstel and his work have been featured on national radio and TV programs including The Tavis Smiley Show, BET Nightly News, and CNN Headline News. 



## Event Briefs • 2008-2009 AAS Programming

### 2008-2009 AAS Events

*AAS graduate certificate student Van Garrett in Ghana; Texas State Reps. Sylvester Turner, Dist. 139, and Dr. Alma Allen, Dist. 131, attend the annual AAS Scholarship Banquet.*



**On Monday, 22 September 2008,**

hosted lecture “Liberated Africans in Grenada and St. Vincent, 1835-1861” by Edward Cox, associate professor of history, Rice University

**On Thursday, 14 October 2008,**

hosted lecture “I am Annie May: An Extraordinary Black Texas Woman in Her Own Words” by Barbara Bullard, a Houston based independent researcher/author

**On Thursday, 4 November 2008,**

hosted lecture “The New Scramble for Africa: Resource and Trade Challenges in the 21st Century” by Serie McDougal, assistant professor of Africana Studies, San Francisco State University



**On Monday, 17 November 2008,**

hosted lecture “The Essentiality of African (Black) Psychology”

by Marcia Sutherland, associate professor and chair of Africana Studies, University of Albany—State University of New York

**On Monday, 1 December 2008,**

hosted lecture “Artivism: By Any Medium Necessary,” by M.K. Asante, Jr., Assistant

Professor of English, Morgan State University



**On Wednesday, 11 February 2009,**

hosted lecture “Re-imagining the Race and Re-presentation: Elijah Muhammad, Transcendent Blackness, and the

Construction of Ideal Black Bodies” by Stephen C. Finley, assistant professor of African and African American Studies at Louisiana State University.

**On Friday, 13 February 2009,**

hosted lecture “Chinua Achebe’s Blue(s) Notes: Things Fall Apart and the Blues (Aesthetic)” by Christopher Okonkwo, associate professor of English, University of Missouri-Columbia

**On Monday, 16 February 2009**

hosted lecture “African Americans and Space Exploration: Links and Legacies” by Edward Tunstel, the Space Robotics and Autonomous Control Lead in the Space Department of the John Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (JHU/APL)

**On Monday, 16 February 2009,**

hosted lecture “The Making of Modern America: The African American Diaspora” by Oscar Williams, associate



professor and director of undergraduate studies in the Africana Studies Department of the University at Albany.

**On Thursday, 19 February 2009,**

hosted lecture “African American Business History: Lost, Stolen, or Strayed?” by Robert E. Weems Jr., professor of history, University of Missouri-Columbia



**On Tuesday, 24 February 2009,**

hosted lecture “Freaks, Gold Diggers, Divas & Dykes: Framing Black Female Sexual Risk Outcomes” by Dionne

Stephens, assistant professor of psychology and African Diaspora Studies.

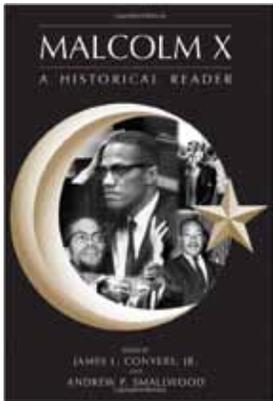
**On Monday, 2 March 2009,**

hosted lecture “Atlantic World Combat and the Creole Label” by T. J. Desch-Obi, professor of history, Weismann School of Arts & Sciences, Baruch College

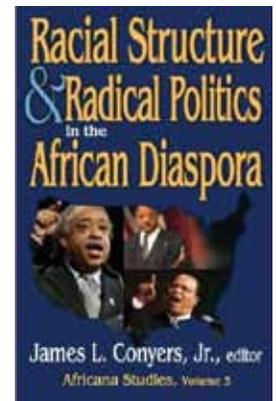
**On Tuesday, 28 April 2009,**

hosted lecture “On a World Tour: Issues in International Hip Hop” by Daniel Levine, doctoral candidate in religious studies at Rice University. 

# AAS Faculty Publications



In the spring of 2008, James L. Conyers, Jr., University Professor and director of African American Studies, edited the third volume of Africana Studies, the annual series published by Transaction Publishers. This edition of the serial is entitled *Racial Structure & Radical Politics in the African Diaspora*. Racial structures can be referred to as the study of Africana communities and their formation globally. The essays aggregated in this volume aspire to query, precipitate analysis, and offer a contribution to the forward flow of knowledge, as it pertains to social scientific approaches to describing and evaluating Africana phenomena. Dr. Conyers also published a co-edited work on Malcolm X, entitled, *Malcolm X: A Historical Reader*. The other editor on the project was Andrew P. Smallwood, assistant professor in the Center for Ethnic Studies/Department of Social Sciences at the Borough of Manhattan Community College. Dr. Smallwood is a former AAS visiting scholar. 



## AAS Adjunct and Affiliate Faculty Publications

Gerald Horne, John and Rebecca Moores Professor of History, published *Blows Against the Empire: U.S. Imperialism in Crisis* (International Publishers, 2008).

Janis F. Hutchinson, professor of anthropology, published several journal articles during this period, including: 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.

Hutchinson, Janis Faye and Richard Sharp, "Karma, Reincarnation,

and Medicine: Indian Views on Biomedicine." *Journal of Genomic Medicine*, 2 (2008): 107-111.

Patterson, Thomas, Hutchinson, Janis Faye, and Alan Goodman, "Minorities in Anthropology: 1973 versus 2008, Progress or Illusion." *Anthropology News* 49, no. 4 (2008): 23.

Hutchinson, Janis Faye, "Medical Racism." In: *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism*. Ed. John Hartwell Moore. Vol. 2. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, pp292-298., 2008.

Demetrius Pearson, associate professor of health and human performance,

published a series of abstracts and two book chapters: Pearson, D. W. (2008). Sport in contemporary society. In K. C. Longest (Ed.),

Teaching the sociology of sport: ASA resource materials for teaching (5th ed., pp. 79-81). Washington, DC: American Sociological Association.

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. 

*Continued from page 5*

Dr. Miller informed students that Africans traditionally embraced a communal ethos versus one that prioritizes individuality, as exercised here in the United States. "The well known African proverb 'I am because WE are' articulates this sentiment."

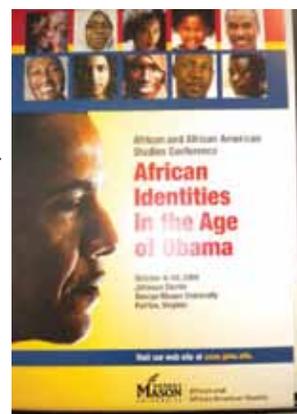
In addition, Dr. Miller discussed the different understanding of economics inherent in traditional African social systems. In Africa, communities use their economic resources to build and establish relationships among different peoples. In contrast, American economics emphasizes the exploitation of resources for profit and controlling other people's property and possessions.

As might be expected, race was an important topic of this conference because President Obama's race has received national and international atten-

tion. Philosophy student Ibikunle Ashcroft, suggested, "Given Obama's choice to identify chiefly with his African-ness, any espousal of an African/African-American ethos would receive negative press in the media. The construction of the African/African-American ethos as 'Blackness' was put at the center of analysis in the various panel sessions.

One such panel was "The Black Body and Black Identity: Era of Change or Continuity?" The question of change or continuity, which the panel sought to investigate, can be restated as follows: "Has the discussion of Obama as a 'Black President' changed the way African Americans are viewed in a "Post-Racial Society"?

Lighter subjects, such as the media's



portrayal of the Obama family, were also discussed. Kaine Hampton remarked, "One of the seminars hosted during this conference showcased the effect the media has on the First Family portrayal. Michelle Obama and her physical appearance became a major focus. Her dress and body type were analyzed in order to explain why people perceive her as they do."

Added Crystal Edwards, a political science major and AAS minor, "It was great to finally be in an arena that featured an open dialogue with individuals who have spent time studying these particular issues. Plus, it was an excellent opportunity to travel and attain other perspectives on issues influencing African Americans." 

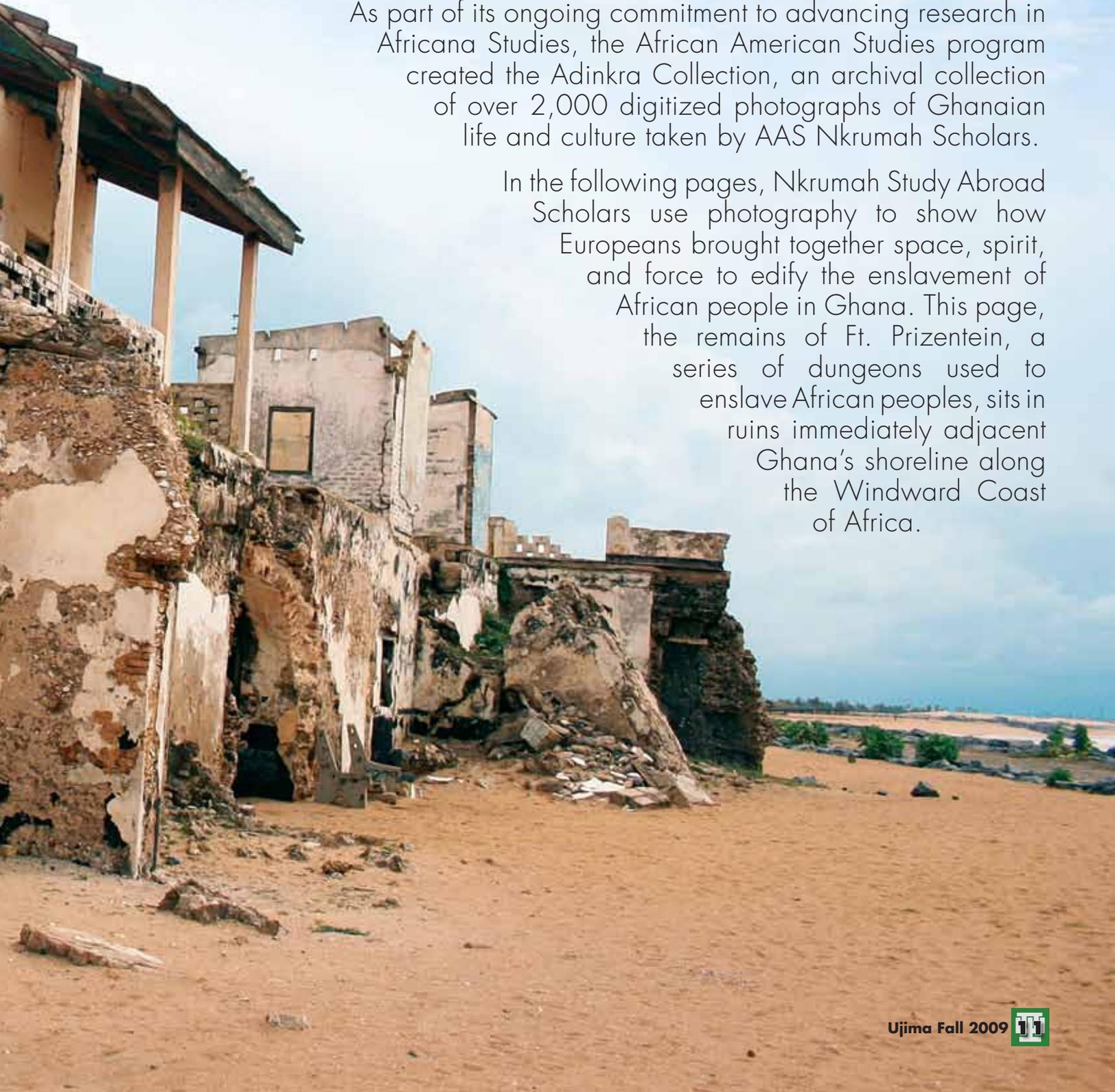




# The Architecture of Enslavement

As part of its ongoing commitment to advancing research in Africana Studies, the African American Studies program created the Adinkra Collection, an archival collection of over 2,000 digitized photographs of Ghanaian life and culture taken by AAS Nkrumah Scholars.

In the following pages, Nkrumah Study Abroad Scholars use photography to show how Europeans brought together space, spirit, and force to edify the enslavement of African people in Ghana. This page, the remains of Ft. Prizentein, a series of dungeons used to enslave African peoples, sits in ruins immediately adjacent Ghana's shoreline along the Windward Coast of Africa.





### EL MINA DUNGEON—EL MINA, GHANA

**B**uilt by the Portuguese in 1482, the dungeons at El Mina became the principal point of departure for the enslavement and transportation of Akan speaking Africans into the Americas. The fact that Europeans employed religion to justify the enslavement of African people is reflected in both the written record and in the structural engineering they created as well. Although the Portuguese initially constructed the building on the opposite page for religious services, the English converted the building to the Anglican Church when they took control of the dungeons in the late eighteenth century. The building is physically located at the center of the compound. *Above*, sunlight peers into a courtyard where resident administrators of El Mina would select enslaved African women to satisfy their sexual desires.

UH students take 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 2009, thirteen University of Houston students, Gabriel Ashcroft, Jasmine Black, Ariel Brinkley, Crystal Edwards, Kaine Hampton, Randryia Houston, Christian Jackson, Ant Kwakye, Hannah McConn, Christine Paul, Brandon Pittman, Porsché Randall, and Tamara Spiller were provided with funding to participate in this rich and fulfilling program. In all, since 2003 the African American Studies Program has sponsored over forty students to travel to Ghana and continues to encourage students to think internationally in this increasingly global world. 



The portuguese church is at the center of the dungeons at El Mina, Ghana.

## CAPE COAST DUNGEONS— CAPE COAST, GHANA

Cape Coast served as the seat of governance during England’s rule in Ghana. The dungeons at Cape Coast provide a clear example of how involved the England’s government proved to be in the enslavement of African people.

*Top*, protected by a phalanx of iron cannons, a dark tunnel leads to the dungeons at Cape Coast where Africans were imprisoned before being shipped to the Americas.

*Center*, an opening is placed above the “Door of No Return” so that an African collaborating with European interests in Ghana could eavesdrop on the conversations of other unsuspecting Africans as they went aboard ships bound for the Americas.

*Below*, 2008 AAS Nkrumah Study Abroad Scholars receive a lecture on the history of Cape Coast. The building that housed the acting governor during colonial times appears in the background.



# 2009 AAS Study Abroad • Learning Experiences

## Batik Shop (Tie Die Process)



- Select white cloth and stamp design(s)
- Stamp with dye made from tree bark
- Continue dyeing process with color dyes
- Allow to dry for 24-48 hours for the most beautiful cloth



## Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG) - Cocoa Extraction Process



- Extract cocoa seeds from pods
- Lay out seeds to allow fermentation and drying (banana or plantain leaves help in this process)
- After fermentation and drying, lay in sun to complete drying process
- Extract cocoa from seeds and process into finished products



# AAS Teaching Initiatives

## New Courses In AAS



### **AAS 4440: Model African Union Seminar**

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 in February. This course is designed to prepare students to participate in the spring conference. As well, it is a course focused on the ideological development of global Pan-Africanism. This is an excellent opportunity for students considering graduate school, law school and/or studying abroad. If you have an interest in this program and the opportunities it provides for educational enhancement and social networking, please enroll in the course this coming fall.

### **AAS 3301: Hip Hop History & Culture**

The purpose of this course will be to discuss and analyze Hip Hop as a cultural phenomena, expression and experience for African American people. This course will cover the history of Black music, religion and resistance in America, the history of Hip Hop, the cultural, sociological and religious manifestations in Hip Hop as well as the views and understandings of Hip Hop artists and critics. It is hoped that this class will contribute to the growing research and discussion already taking place in and around many institutions of higher learning throughout the world.

### **Improved Learning Opportunities for Students in AAS 2320: Intro to African American Studies**

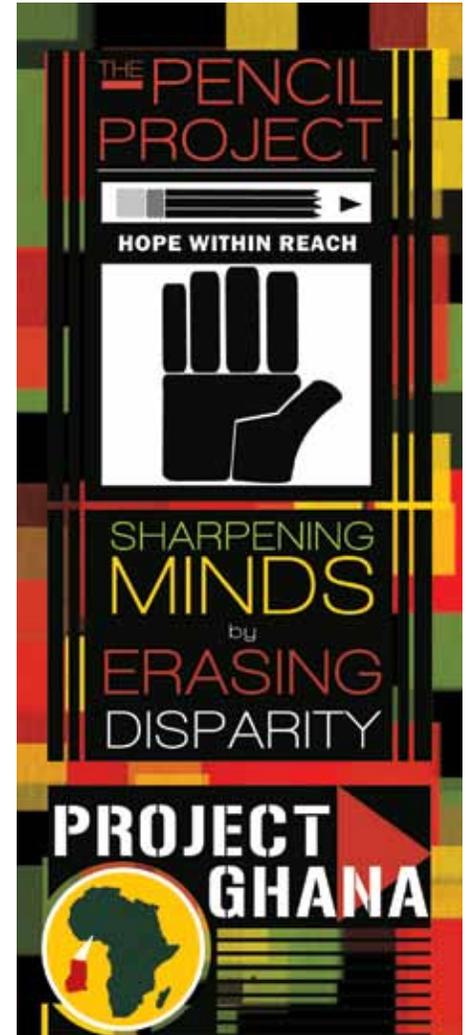


*Mariama Conteh*

African American Studies now provides tutoring for all sections of AAS 2320: Intro to African American Studies. Mariama Conteh, AAS minor and honor society member, will be available for tutoring during the spring 2010 semester on Mondays (11:30am – 2:00pm), Wednesdays (11:30am – 2:00pm), and Thursdays (11:30am – 4:00pm). Instruction sessions are held in AH 628. Ms. Conteh's email address is [maconteh-haffner@uh.edu](mailto:maconteh-haffner@uh.edu). AAS encourages any student having difficulty with AAS 2320 to schedule an appointment with Ms. Conteh as early as possible.

### **AAS 3354: African Nationalist Thought and Ethics in the US**

This course surveys the various intellectual traditions and historical developments that contribute to the quest by African people to build or recover cultural sovereignty within the U.S. 



## The PENCIL PROJECT IS IN EFFECT!

Various students and student organizations have teamed up to help school supply disparities in Ghana, West Africa. Children drop out of school everyday because THEY DON'T HAVE PENCILS! You can help this by simply donating pencils. If you are interested in donating, contact Randryia Houston at [dryia@pencil4ghana.org](mailto:dryia@pencil4ghana.org) or Hannah McConn at [hannah@pencil4ghana.org](mailto:hannah@pencil4ghana.org). A pencil can make an immense difference in a child's life, get involved today!

**The Pencil Project**  
PO Box 62752  
Houston, TX 77205

# 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.



- **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.



- **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.



- **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

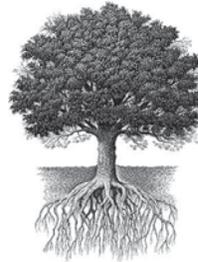
3.5. The amount of this award is \$1,000.

- **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 are 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.

- **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.

## 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 4-10 students with them to engage in the mock sessions of the African Union. Given this, the Model African Union conference is an excellent way for student to network with other universities, network with other students from around the country and gain international experience which is vital for a growing global world.

- **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 stu-

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*Continued from page 5*

dents in all UH graduate and professional degree programs. It is also open to post baccalaureate professionals (including teachers, social service providers, policy-makers, 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 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 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:** Africana Studies, A Review of Social Science Research: 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 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.
- **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. 