

# UJIMA

The Newsletter of the African American Studies Program



**Post-Baccalaureate Possibilities:**  
Community Partnerships and Service Learning in AAS

2010-2011  
**YEAR IN REVIEW**

Focus, priority and preparation are distinguishable variables in the process of reflexivity, reflection and advancing substantive issues for results. Phrased another way, the 2010-2011 academic year provided optimism and achievements for the University of Houston. First, the university positioned itself to be recognized as a tier one university. Second, the development and expansion of the university in academics and athletics increased national and international expectations on the performance of students, faculty and staff at the university. In short, these bionomic yields have a direct and indirect impact on the African American Studies program.

Given these changes, AAS revamped its annual scholarship banquet in May of 2011. Each year, AAS recognizes U of H alumni to receive awards in the areas of social, political, economic and community service. Equally important for public memory, AAS has named these awards after distinguished educators, activists and politicians, such as Lynne Eusan, Dr. Margaret Barnett and Dr. Emmet J. Scott. Furthermore, 20 U of H students were honored with awards in the way of graduate assistantships, undergraduate academic scholarships, book scholarships and study abroad scholarships. Additionally, our study abroad trip to Ghana, West Africa, has expanded and grown; whereas, 15 students participated in the 2011 summer program. As an addendum, our assistant director, Malachi Crawford, implemented the idea of establishing the AAS internship program and the collaborative teaching abroad program in Cameroon, West Africa, with the ACE foundation. In just a short period of time, these initiatives will move our impact on the greater Houston community forward.

Moreover, in April of 2011, AAS hosted our annual research symposium on Africana Islamic Studies. We invited 10 scholars nationally to brief on research and writing concerning Africana Islamic Studies. Indeed, selected papers from this meeting have been accepted for a contracted publication agreement.

In summary, AAS is a central component of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS); whereas, students across the university have access to computer and staff personnel—as resources—to support academic and extra-curricular activities on campus. We will continue to contribute and advance the mission, vision and value of the university.

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

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**UJIMA**

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AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM

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# 2011-2012 AAS Visiting Scholars Perry Kyles

By Jasmine Umenyi and Nikala Asante

African American Studies selected Dr. Perry Kyles as one of two AAS Visiting Scholars for both the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 academic years. Kyles received his undergraduate degree in the field of law from Texas Southern University and his doctorate in history from Florida International University.

Although Kyles began his academic career in law studies, a natural curiosity for unlocking the past led him to history. Since then, his commitment to history has extended past the walls of academia into the community. Kyles provides an exemplary model for all Africana Studies historians with his hands-on approach to the discipline.

"I try to be pro-active as a historian. I try to go out and engage the community and teach an African-centered perspective of our history and its relevance to the contemporary world. An important aspect to that is going beyond the idea that the history of African people began with the Maafa—a Swahili word (that means 'great disaster')."

Before relocating to Houston, Kyles was heavily involved in community events and tutoring. For three years, he coached at-risk middle school students how to improve academically. Kyles took a "well-rounded" approach, "dealing with issues of character, history, and English, and always from an African-centered perspective."

As a young man, Kyles took an interest in researching on his own. "I would say that I learned much more in the public library than I learned in actual school," Kyles said. "That's why I'm a proponent of African-centered education today."

Critical and independent thinking remained a hallmark of Kyles' character during his collegiate career. While studying for his doctorate in history from Florida International University, he took note that the institution's positions were "mainstream" and "conservative." Although he learned a lot, "what I got most from Florida International is kind of the position of the mainstream scholars. I learned their position very well and I learned the weaknesses of their arguments very, very well."

During his time at Florida International, what Kyles gained most was a familiarity with global cultures. "A high percentage of the students there—be it a graduate student or an undergraduate—were not socialized in the United States," he shares. "You learn sensitive areas for various cultures. What not to say. You learn to appreciate various cultures and the various aspects of (their) ethnicity like food, language, even religion."

Exposure to great diversity during college led Kyles to an enhanced understanding of racial and ethnic dynamics. Now residing in Houston, a city known for welcoming cultures from the world over, Kyles feels he has gained the "kind of background that I need to navigate the terrain."

Kyles will be teaching a new course in African American Studies, AAS 1310: Introduction to Africana Culture. With his guidance and expertise, the course will survey human history as a whole and its evolution over time.

"It also deals with many different methodologies. I introduce DNA evidence and an understanding of DNA evidence,



in an anthropological approach. I use things like fossils and artifacts," Kyles said. "Another thing (that) I do in this particular class is encourage students to look at how they could use knowledge and methodology from their own major to solve some of the problems that we are trying to solve."

"Generally, I see students in Africana Studies as ambassadors. I don't just see them as students who are looking to fulfill their course requirements. So, the approach that I take is to prepare them so well that they can be agents for change. That they can see through many of the things that society generally accepts as truth, but is nothing more than myth."

A global focus combined with an ardor to uncover events that led African peoples to where they are today has led Kyles to research "global factors that led to the plantation society in colonial South Carolina." His emphasis on South Carolina is not, however, distinct from the African Diaspora as a whole. "The primary theme of my research is to look at the relationship between capitalism and racism. And I focus on colonial South Carolina because that is the plantation society in North America that's most representative of plantation societies in the whole of the Americas." He continues, "If you look at South Carolina, you find very similar dynamics as those that existed in the Caribbean and Brazil."

"What I'm looking at is how the economic structure changed over time from a subsistence economy to—in essence—a capitalistic society. And I'm looking at how it affected Africans in particular."

"I am looking forward to teaching the class here at the University of Houston because I want to popularize the African Diaspora perspective. I want to focus on something in addition to the Maafa. If you really look at our history, I would say that we can pinpoint at least 200,000 years of African history," Kyles said. "However, the Maafa only begins, generally, or let's say, it intensified only, about 500 years ago. Simply put, if we focus on that as the beginning of our history, we're looking at far less than 1% of our history on this planet. So, I want to popularize the perspective of the African Diaspora approach, where we look at the whole of African history, the whole of human history, and not just one narrow aspect of it – and particularly not our experience in the Americas."





# Kameelah Samuel

By AAS News Staff

The Visiting Scholars Program in AAS is designed to encourage new scholars to contribute fresh and innovative teaching and research in the discipline. African American Studies selected Dr. Kameelah Martin Samuel as one of two AAS Visiting Scholars for the 2011-2012 academic year.

Samuel earned her undergraduate English degree from Georgia Southern University and her MA in African American Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles. She received her Ph.D. in English from Florida State University in 2006. Her area of focus is twentieth century African American literature with an emphasis on folklore and the African American conjuring tradition.

Samuel recently completed a manuscript, currently under review for publication, on the conjure woman as a folk hero in literature. Her research engages the ways African American authors have shifted, recycled, and reinvented healing women in twentieth century fiction. Arguing that the conjure woman is one of the most adept agents of mobility, resistance, and self-determination in the realm of African American womanhood, the objective of Samuel's study is to construct a historiography of the conjure woman as a literary archetype, which investigates the authority of her power, the negotiation of gender and body politics, as well as questions of African-based spirit work and Christian spiritual ethics.

She is busy researching and writing a second monograph, tentatively titled "Envisioning Voodoo: African Diasporic Religion in the Popular Imagination" which questions the representation of women and spirit work in film, graphic novels, and the art work of Romare Bearden and Kara Walker.

Other areas of interest include the novels of Tina McElroy Ansa, Toni Morrison, Sea Island Culture, black women and the blues tradition, genealogical research, and the writing of family histories. She is a member of the American Studies Association, National Council for Black Studies, College Language Association, and the African American Historical and Genealogical Society.

In the spring 2012 semester, Samuel will be teaching a new course in African American Studies, AAS 3394: Women and Voodoo. The class is designed to both introduce students to African-based religion practiced in the Americas and to examine the role of women in such religions. It will engage current research, fiction, and other critical resources to assess how gender and spirituality function together. It will also consider such topics as representation and body politics; gender performance and the negotiation of power; spiritual authority and religious syncretization; as well as sexuality, blues music, and ancestral presence.

# RECENT EVENTS IN AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

## SPRING 2011 EVENTS

- April 14-16, 2011—Black Images in the Media Symposium & Arts Festival: The Black Images in the Media Symposium & Arts Festival, sponsored by the University of Houston's African American Studies program, was inclusive of some of Black America's top scholars and discussed historic, current, and futuristic issues involving African Americans on stage, in film, and in music. There was 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." There also was a two day film festival featuring the best in film shorts, features, documentaries, and music videos. Lastly, there were plans for stage plays featuring the best there is to offer.
- April 21-23, 2011—(CSAAC) Symposium on African American Islam: The Center for the Study of African American Culture (CSAAC) at the University of Houston hosted its Eighth Annual Africana Studies Research Symposium on New Approaches to the Study of African American Islam, April 21-23, 2011. CSAAC invited senior and junior level scholars to present groundbreaking research that broadens academic understanding of African American Islam within three thematic concentrations: Myth, Motif, and Urban Folklore; Faith and Community; and Sacred Space and Public Policy. Of concern are recent developments in Islamic organizations such as the Moorish Science Temple of America, Nation of Islam, and Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission to America, as well as issues related to identity, nationalism, gender, and culture. Research presented will be compiled into an edited volume for publication to further discussion and understanding of African American Islamic traditions.

## FALL 2011 EVENTS SCHEDULE

- September 1, 2011—Donna Blair, "US State Department—Internship Opportunities" (AH 7 @ 4:00 pm)
- September 8, 2011—Lisbeth Gant-Britton, "African American History" (AH 629 @ 10:00 am)
- September 20, 2011—Reliand Rabaka, "W.E.B. Du Bois and Critical Race Theory" (AH 7 @ 4:00 pm)
- October 13, 2011—Shalom Gorewitz, "Syncretic Visions: Video Art by Shalom Gorewitz" (AH 7 @ 4:00 pm)
- October 17, 2011—Huey Copeland, "Preacher Politics: 19th Century African American Women Ministers as Public Intellectuals" (AH 629 @ 10:00 am)
- October 25, 2011—Angela Walker, "What is Slam Poetry" (AH 629 @ 12:00 pm)
- November 1, 2011—Rochelle Brock, "New Methods in Qualitative Research: Understanding My Blackness" (AH 629 @ 10:00 am)

## 2011 National Council for Black Studies Annual Conference, (Cincinnati, OH)



From March 16-19, 2011, the National Council for Black Studies held its 35th Annual National Conference in downtown Cincinnati, Ohio. Five undergraduate and graduate students taking coursework in African American Studies—Randryia Houston, Emilie Koenig, Hannah McConn, Toya Roberts, and Edward Vincent—presented papers on a research panel entitled "Africana Studies: Religion, Biography and Internationalization." The session addressed

research issues in Africana Studies, with emphasis on cognitive areas in religious studies, biography, and internationalization, focusing on Ghana. Collectively, the students' work offered mixed methodologies, metatheory, and analysis to support an African centered worldview in describing and evaluating Africana phenomena.

Dr. Perry Kyles, 2010-2011 AAS Visiting Scholar, also presented at the annual conference. His paper, entitled "Cultural Unity and Variance Among African Captives, 1700-1740," examined the degree of cultural conformity and variance among Senegambian and Central African captives to the Americas, South Carolina specifically, between 1700-1740. Kyles employed a multidisciplinary approach that included explorations of linguistic, genetic, historical, mythological,

structural, and cosmological evidence to form his conclusions.

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.

# Student Briefs: Internships, Service Learning, and Community Partnerships in AAS



Tré magazine editorial staff (L-R): R. Christian Tucker, Karla Robinson, Imani Fisher, and Stephanie Coleman

## Background

African American Studies provides students with a comprehensive quality undergraduate and graduate education and the opportunity for a creative intellectual experience based on the critical and systematic study of the life, thought, and practice of African peoples in their current and historical unfolding.

Within this framework, one of the primary goals of African American Studies is to maintain and strengthen existing links within the community through expanding joint educational and practical projects and exchanges. Student internship experiences are critical to providing a broad architecture of support for the program's overall mission.

The 2010-2011 academic year presented unique challenges to the overall mission and goals of the African American Studies program at the University of Houston. Despite a sluggish national economy and expected state budget cuts to higher education, the program set about discovering new ways to grow its student outreach, research, and service opportunities. In taking these challenges and goals into consideration, African American Studies instituted a student internship program in the fall of 2011.

The internship program provides UH students holding minors in African American Studies with supervised practice and educational experiences that allow them to study, address, express, or resolve contemporary issues influencing African and African-descended communities.

In addition to providing UH students with a focused and practical learning experience, students receive three credit hours that are directly applied to their minor in AAS.

## Internship Opportunities

### *Houston Area Urban League*

The Houston Area Urban League (The League) and African American Studies have partnered to provide internships for AAS minors seeking practical learning experiences in community development, including: workforce training, health and wellness initiatives, housing and social services, and education and youth development. The League was founded in 1968 by a group of business professionals. Its leaders have included: Quentin Mease, Leo Linbeck, Judson Robinson, Sr., Gerald Hines, C. G. Hardy, J. J. Susberry, Mrs. Clarence Higgins, Carl Walker, James Middleton, and Attorney Aloysius M. Wickliff.

Since then, the Houston Area Urban League has been a voice for disadvantaged people of all races and has a long and distinguished record as an agency that offers tangible, lasting benefits to all members of the community without regard to age, sex, race, physical limitations, or ethnic background.

Local agency directions and policy are set by a 37 member Board of Directors chaired by Mr. Morris Clark. Program services are provided by a 50+ member staff, over 500 volunteers, and an ever-growing membership dedicated to the League.

The mission of the Houston Area Urban League is to enable African Americans and other minorities to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power, and civil rights.

### ***S.H.A.P.E. Community Center***

African American Studies has partnered with S.H.A.P.E. Community Center, a non-profit holistic community institution that specializes in providing educational resources and professional services in the Greater Houston Community. The partnership aims to provide AAS students with hands-on training and exposure to community development projects and educational leadership initiatives.

S.H.A.P.E.'s mission is to improve the quality of life for people of African descent (all people) through programs and activities, with emphasis on unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith.

As one of the most visible and involved community centers in the Greater Houston Community, as well as in the State of Texas, S.H.A.P.E. has led the way toward justice, equal opportunity, human rights, and institution building in the city, state, nation, and world. Because of its deep commitment to the community, human rights, and family strengthening and empowerment, S.H.A.P.E. has actively sought ways to oppose injustice and to improve the community for all people.

### ***Tré Magazine***

African American Studies has partnered with *Tré* magazine, a non-profit news magazine published in Houston's Third Ward community, to provide internships for AAS minors seeking real world experience in the field of print, photo, and online journalism. The magazine is looking for interns to provide publication assistance in the following areas: photography, filmmaking, graphic design, historians, writing, sales, and grant writing. In addition to providing students with a focused and practical learning experience, students receive three hours of special topics credit that are directly applied to the AAS minor. For more information on how to become an intern with *Tré*, please review the attached announcement.

*Tré* is a community-driven magazine designed to enhance Houston's Third Ward village by being a platform for discussion. Each month the magazine focuses on seven key topics in the areas of business, community, education, faith, art & culture, health & wellness, and politics. *Tré* strives to maintain trustworthy and meaningful relationships with its readers and has recently secured partnerships with academic institutions, faith communities, and industry leaders, as well as many other organizations and groups. *Tré* is driven to make a positive difference and is well positioned to be "the definitive voice of Houston's Third Ward" community.

### ***University of Houston Libraries—Houston Hip Hop Collection***

The University of Houston Libraries and African American Studies have forged a new bond as they seek to preserve one of America's most creative artistic traditions – the Hip Hop Movement in Houston, Texas. When Julie Grob, coordinator for digital projects and instruction for special

collections, initiated a project to collect the physical culture of Houston hip hop, she enlisted the support and expertise of Paul Easterling, African American Studies program manager. The creation of a new internship in the Houston Hip Hop Collection will further this collaboration and help ensure that this vibrant Houston culture is preserved for future generations to explore, research, and enjoy. With its distinctive sound and style, exemplified by the "chopped and screwed" production method of DJ Screw, Houston has made an indelible contribution to the cultural landscape of Hip Hop music.

The Houston Hip Hop Collection is an archival collection being developed by the University of Houston Libraries to document the unique hip hop music and culture of Houston. This growing collection includes audio, video, photographs, publicity materials, and handwritten raps. The collection is housed in Special Collections, the department of the Library that collects rare books (approximately 60,000) and archival collections (approximately 6,000 linear feet). Once cataloged, the Houston Hip Hop Collection will be available for use by students, scholars, and the general public in the Special Collections reading room.



### ***U.S. Dream Academy***

Through aggressive and innovative academic enrichment and mentoring, the U.S. Dream Academy is working to build the dreams of children with a family history of incarceration and those falling behind in school, and provide the tools that they need to achieve their dreams. The U.S.

Dream Academy recognizes that the "digital divide" exists in many of the nation's disadvantaged communities and further separates the haves and have-nots. Development of computer skills and access to the Internet are central elements of the U.S. Dream Academy's service delivery.

In the fall of 2011, African American Studies partnered with the U.S. Dream Academy in Houston, Texas to provide AAS minors with practical learning experiences in community development, educational leadership, and youth mentoring opportunities. The partnership resulted in the creation of several student internships that will assist the U.S. Dream Academy with providing at-risk youth focused programming through mentoring and preparation in the use of technology.

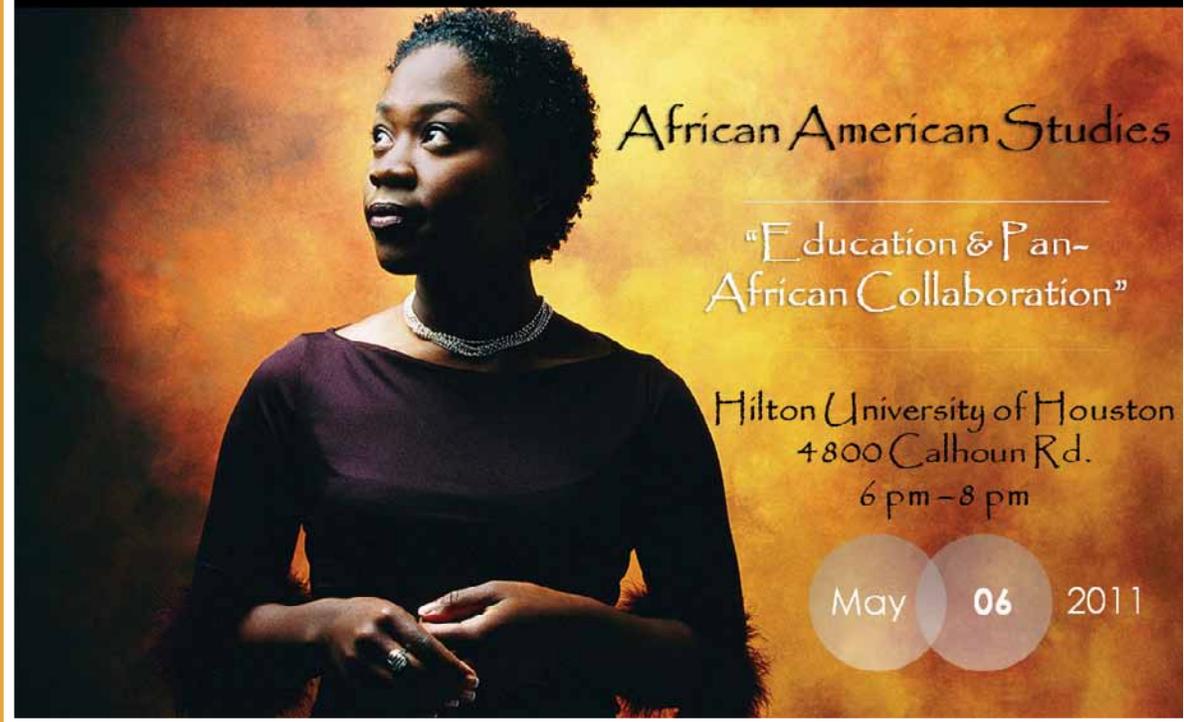
The U.S. Dream Academy seeks to build a youth-focused program that speaks to the alarming cycle of multi-generational involvement in the criminal justice system, effectively lifting the children of prisoners, and those failing in school, out of this devastating cycle.



# 6TH ANNUAL scholarship BANQUET



The Strength of Our Spirit Will Lead Us to See All Things



## African American Studies

“Education & Pan-  
African Collaboration”

Hilton University of Houston  
4800 Calhoun Rd.  
6 pm – 8 pm

May 06 2011

# African American Studies 6th Annual Scholarship Banquet:

## 2011-2012 AAS Alumni, Community, and Student Awards

On May 6, 2011, the African American Studies program held its long anticipated sixth annual scholarship banquet at the Hilton University of Houston Hotel. Tabled for two years because of the national economic downturn, the banquet quickly became a tremendous success with more than two hundred persons in attendance before the night's end. Delores P. Aldridge, Grace Towns Hamilton Professor of Sociology and African-American Studies at Emory University, highlighted the banquet's theme—education and Pan African collaboration—with her keynote speech covering historical, ongoing, and future developments in African American Studies.

Live entertainment and a silent auction provided a touch of class to an otherwise elegant affair. The KoumanKe'le' African

Dance & Drum Ensemble treated guests to two dance performances, and Dwayne Hildreth, a nationally renowned jazz musician, played an assortment of contemporary jazz selections throughout the evening. Pastor Reverend Jacque Dinkins, Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, delivered the opening invocation prayer.

The evening's main event came when African American Studies honored UH students, alumni, and community leaders in the City of Houston for making outstanding achievements in their academic and professional lives. In all, the program awarded 20 students with scholarships and assistantships to help further their education at the University of Houston.

The list of 2011-2012 student award recipients in African American Studies includes: Hal Allen, Fred Bryant, Jr., Angela Calhoun,

Tiffany Cebrun, Christin Clark, Chanel Deal, Julian Dunn, Jesanda Ellis, Randryia Houston, Hannah McConn, Megan Pavageau, Toya Roberts, Erin Shanks, Samrawit Sium, M'Kina Tapscott, Edward Vincent, Monica Whitfield, Jamillia Wren, and Courtney Wyatt.

Additionally, Lynden B. Rose, UH alumni and former UH System Regent, received the Dr. Marguerite Ross Barnett Alumni Award; Gene L. Locke, UH alumni and partner with Andrews Kurth law firm, received the Lynn Cecilia Eusan Alumni Award; and Chris K. Wilmot, president and chief executive officer of WCW International, received the Emmett J. Scott Award for Community Service.

## Interview With Paul Easterling on

# The William A. Lawson Institute for Peace and Prosperity (WALIPP)

WALIPP-TSU Preparatory Academy is a unique HISD Charter School founded by the William A. Lawson Institute for Peace and Prosperity, WALIPP. It was conceived by Mrs. Audrey Lawson and was founded to meet the critical academic and social development needs of youth. Targeting middle school males, the Academy is an authentic (real-world) learning community. In the fall of 2011, the Academy will open an All-Girls Middle School for grades 6, 7, and 8. In the spring of 2011, Paul Easterling, African American Studies program manager, visited the academy as an area mentor. The interview below details his experiences there.

*Ujima* : What is WALIPP and how did you get started working with them?

*Easterling* : WALIPP is a small academy that was started by Wheeler Ave. Baptist Church to teach young men—and women, but mostly men at this point—how to be proper citizens and do well in school. It's a preparatory academy for high school.

*Ujima* : Is there a specific clientele or ethnic demographic that the Academy works with?

*Easterling* : Oh yeah, definitely, young black men between the ages of 11 to 14, middle school.

*Ujima* : How did you get started working with them?

*Easterling* : I went and talked to Mr. Carlton Land, who is one of the major supervisors over the program, and we got started about February of last year.

*Ujima* : In terms of service, what types of activities were you involved in with WALIPP?

*Easterling* : I mentored two young men. The major thing was to get with the young men and talk with them. See how they're doing in school and their family life. And just try and relate, not as an educator, not as a parent, but to try and just talk with them—be a mentor.

*Ujima* : How or in what ways does your involvement with WALIPP reflect the overall mission of African Studies?

*Easterling* : I think very well in that we are trying to catch students before college and high school and be an influence in their lives, trying to get them to understand issues of culture—to prepare them.

*Ujima* : How do you feel your presence impacted the services at WALIPP?

*Easterling* : Opening up the minds of the young men that I worked with... one in particular, was very...very interested in college. So knowing that I'm a college professor, he had plenty of questions about what college life is like. I feel my presence also served as an example of what they can do. Not only educationally, but also by being a productive member of the community.

*Ujima* : What have you taken away from your experience at WALIPP?

*Easterling* : There's a serious need for black men to mentor young black boys. It's just a reminder of the continued need for service in our community.

*Ujima* : How long did you work for WALIPP and how long do you anticipate working with WALIPP? Is this a short term project?

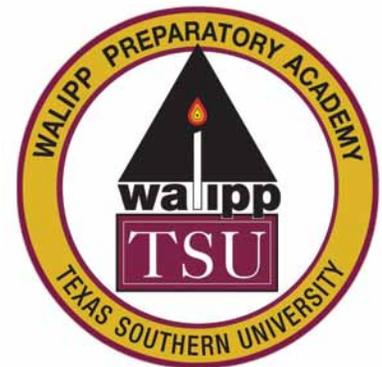
*Easterling* : Just the last three months before the end of the semester. Yes, I would like to continue the project. As I said before, I'm supposed to connect with Mr. Land today. And, hopefully, it will be a long term project that AAS can be involved in.

*Ujima* : Have you set any new goals for yourself in respect to this project?

*Easterling* : No. I'm just getting my feet wet and still trying to find my own balance at the school.

*Ujima* : Finally, how do you think African American Studies can continue to be of help to WALIPP in the future?

*Easterling* : Provide more mentors. I think that's something that more of our students should be doing. It was a very good experience working with WALIPP, and I look forward to continuing my service there.



# AAS Alum Pursues Doctorate in Africology:

The Department of Africology at UW-Milwaukee Admits AAS Alum Crystal Edwards into its Doctoral Program

By AAS News Staff



This coming fall semester, Crystal Edwards, an alumna of the African American Studies program, will join the incoming class of students accepted into the new doctoral program in africology at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. The Department of Africology at UW-Milwaukee ranks among the nation's most elite academic units for the Afrocentric study of African people.

In addition to receiving a teaching assistantship, Edwards will receive the distinguished Chancellor's Graduate Student Award. The award allows UW-Milwaukee to attract and retain graduate students with exceptional academic records and high promise of future success. News of the achievement was met with applause and jubilation in AAS.

"We're very proud of Crystal, as this is quite an extraordinary achievement. It is our understanding that this is the first time a University of Houston student has been admitted directly into a doctoral program in Africana Studies with only a bachelor's degree," said Malachi Crawford, assistant director of African American Studies (AAS).

As an undergraduate minor in AAS, Crystal Edwards excelled in her academic coursework, independent research projects, and community service initiatives. In

addition to receiving the merit-based Kwame Nkrumah International Study Abroad Scholarship and Julius Thompson Memorial Book Scholarship, AAS awarded Ms. Edwards with its prestigious Sylvester Turner Academic Excellence Award. The Sylvester Turner scholarship is one of the most competitive scholarships offered by AAS, awarded in recognition of a student's scholastic achievement and commitment to service.

In 2009, Edwards was one of six AAS students to represent the state of Malawi at the Eighth Annual Session of the National Model African Union conference. Additionally, the program is proud to acknowledge Edwards as a former member of its Ankh Maat Wedjau Honor Society. It was in this capacity that Edwards volunteered as a student mentor at KIPP Liberation College Preparatory Academy.

African American Studies congratulates Crystal Edwards on her recent achievement and looks forward to hearing more of her accomplishments as she advances in her doctoral coursework. One of a small group of students selected in this year's cohort, Edwards plans to study political theory and praxis in the African Diaspora.

## Willie Wright is a 2007 Graduate of the African American Studies Program.

Since graduating he has traveled the country from New Orleans, LA to Albuquerque, NM, gaining practical knowledge of innovative small-scale agricultural methods. In May 2010, he earned a Master's of Arts in Pan-African Studies at the University of Louisville. His thesis was an exploratory study into factors that led to the loss of black farmers/landowners in Central and Eastern Kentucky.

Currently, he is a research associate with Research on Food and Farming for All (ROFFA), a project sponsored by the Center for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Future interests include obtaining a doctorate in sociology, with an emphasis on rural culture and identity, as well as owning and managing a small sustainable farm near his birthplace of Houston, TX.





## A Personal Assessment: The African-American Librarian in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

By kYmberly Keeton

African-American librarians are the gateway conservators of our history; their existence in the profession will play a vital role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I will never forget when I opened up Mildred Taylor's, *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*; I was in the fifth grade. The writer took me into the world of a family who believed in love, perseverance, and faith. It was also the first time that I started to understand what race meant in the United States. An African-American librarian suggested that I read the book, and I will forever be grateful that she did. From that point on in my life, I started collecting books. It never occurred to me that I would one day be entering the profession of librarianship. I have come to understand today that research librarian Julius Jefferson, Jr., is right when he says, "African-American librarians are culture-keepers."

Dating back to the 1800's, African-Americans preserved their history, though they were denied the right to read or write. As bibliographers they saved literature, memoirs, slave documents, and academic papers—with limited resources. Since that time, there have been numerous African-American librarians who have created library collections and archives. Dolly B. Davis Hoover, was a pioneer librarian in the field. Born in Washington, D.C., in 1923, she saw the need for African-American librarians to be experts in the profession. Hoover attended Catholic University of America, where she obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in library science. She then went on to work as an assistant cataloger at

their Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, from 1945-1949. Hoover moved to Indiana State University in 1958, where she worked as a senior librarian. Although she experienced racism and segregation, Hoover became the first African-American female librarian to receive tenure in 1961.

As I continued to research African-Americans in the field of librarianship, I became familiar with the American Library Association. The organization's mission statement on their website states that their role is, "...to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all." Black librarians, however, did not receive acceptance into the ALA until the 1960's. Dr. E. J. Josey, a noted administrator, scholar, librarian, and educator formed the Black Caucus of the American Library Association in 1970. He worked tirelessly to improve racial disparity in the field, penning the critically acclaimed, *The Black Librarian in America*, in 1970. Dr. Josey's contribution to librarianship in the United States has opened many doors for the 21<sup>st</sup> century African-American librarian.

In order to be an African-American librarian in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, you have to be well-informed about history, technology, culture, information, and censorship. Traits that will help in the profession include people skills, listening skills, being innovative, and non-judgmental. After reading Alma Dawson's essay,

"Celebrating African-American Librarians and Librarianship," I knew that librarian science and information technology was a journey that I was ready for. As an African-American librarian/student it is important to connect with an individual who can mentor you throughout your journey, whether it is through a book, in person, or by email. I became enamored with Regina M. Anderson through Alma Dawson's article. She was a librarian, playwright, an arts patron, and advocate for improving race-relations. The professional librarian played an intricate role in the Harlem Renaissance Movement by opening her home and turning it into a salon for intellectuals and artists. Regina M. Anderson's story acknowledged that librarians do more than just stamp books; they are also creative and advocates for change.

All in all, there is a dire need across African-American communities to understand the importance of literacy and technology. In 2009, the National Kids Count Program documented that 58% of African-American fourth graders nationwide scored below proficient reading levels. I wonder if these same students have ever had access to a library in their home, school, community, or church. Reading is a global passport to the future. Similarly, according to an interview given by Julius Jefferson, Jr. (a research librarian at the Library of Congress) on National Public Radio's *The Bryant Park Project*, 572 out of 19,000 male librarians employed in the United States were African American in 2008. More

*Continued on page 17*



## Event Briefs • 2010-2011 AAS Programming

**On Monday, 20 September 2010**, hosted lecture “Pan-Africanism in the Caribbean at the End of the Nineteenth Century,” by **Edward L. Cox**, associate professor of history, Rice University

**On Monday, 4 October 2010**, hosted lecture “5%’ers: Gods of New York,” by **Michael Muhammad Knight**, author and graduate student in Islamic Studies, Harvard University



**On Thursday, 7 October 2010**, hosted lecture “Countering the Master Narrative: Muslims and Islam in Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Comics,” by **Rebecca**

**Hankins**, associate professor and Africana resources librarian and curator, Texas A&M University



**On Monday, 11 October 2010**, hosted lecture “Yellow Fever: Skin Bleaching and the Politics of Skin Color in Ghana,” by **Yaba Blay**, visiting assistant

professor of Africana Studies, Lafayette College

**On Monday, 18 October 2010**, hosted lecture “Domestic Violence and African American Women Playwrights,” by **Phylisa Smith Deroze**, assistant professor of English, Fayetteville State University

**On Thursday, 21 October 2010**, hosted lecture “Preacher Politics: 19th Century

African American Women Ministers as Public Intellectuals,” by **Toneisha Taylor**, assistant professor of communications, Prairie View A&M University



**On Tuesday, 16 November 2010**, hosted lecture “The Assassination of Fred Hampton,” by **Jeffrey Hass**, attorney and cofounder of the People’s Law Office

**On Tuesday, 18 November 2010**, hosted lecture “Ghanaian Eco-Tourism” by **Kwaku Passah**, chief-executive-officer of Galaxy Tours, Ghana

**On Tuesday, 30 November 2010**, hosted lecture “US Foreign Policy with Africa” by M-1, from the hip-hop group Dead Prez

**On Thursday, 3 February 2011**, hosted lecture “Black Nationalism in Britain,” by **Mark Christian**, associate professor of sociology and Black World Studies, Miami University



**On Thursday, 10 February 2011**, hosted lecture “African American Women, Nationalism & Islamic Reform, 1960-1975,” by **Bayyinah Jeffries**, assistant chair and

assistant professor of African American Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University

**On Thursday, 17 February 2011**, hosted lecture “Research Methods in Africana Studies,” by **Joye K. Lanier**, associate professor of Pan-African Studies, University of Louisville

**On Tuesday, 22 February 2011**, hosted lecture “Poison in the Well: Environmental Racism and African American Migration,” by **Rhonda Ragsdale**, graduate student in history, Rice University

**On Tuesday, 21 February 2011**, hosted lecture “Poetry as Remembrance, Resistance and Revolution” by **Christine-Jean Blaine**, African American poet and cultural artist



**On Saturday, 26 February 2011**, co-hosted play “From Jail to Yale: Serving Time on Stage” by **Charles S. Dutton**, African American stage, film, and television actor and director

**On Friday and Saturday, 22-23 April 2011**, hosted research symposium “New Approaches to the Study of African American Islam” through the Center for the Study of African American Culture



## Event Briefs • 2011 Programming

### Center for the Study of African American Culture (CSAAC)

#### **Annual Research Symposium—New Approaches to the Study of African American Islam**

On April 22-23, 2011, the Center for the Study of African American Culture at the University of Houston hosted its eighth annual research symposium on New Approaches to the Study of African American Islam. CSAAC invited senior and junior level scholars to present groundbreaking research on new academic understandings of African American Islam within three thematic concentrations:

myth, motif, and urban folklore; faith and community; and, sacred space and public policy. The symposium highlighted recent developments in Islamic organizations such as the Moorish Science Temple of America, Nation of Islam, and Ahmaddiyah Muslim Mission to America, as well as issues related to identity, nationalism, gender, and culture.



#### **AAS Media Symposium on Africana Art & Film**

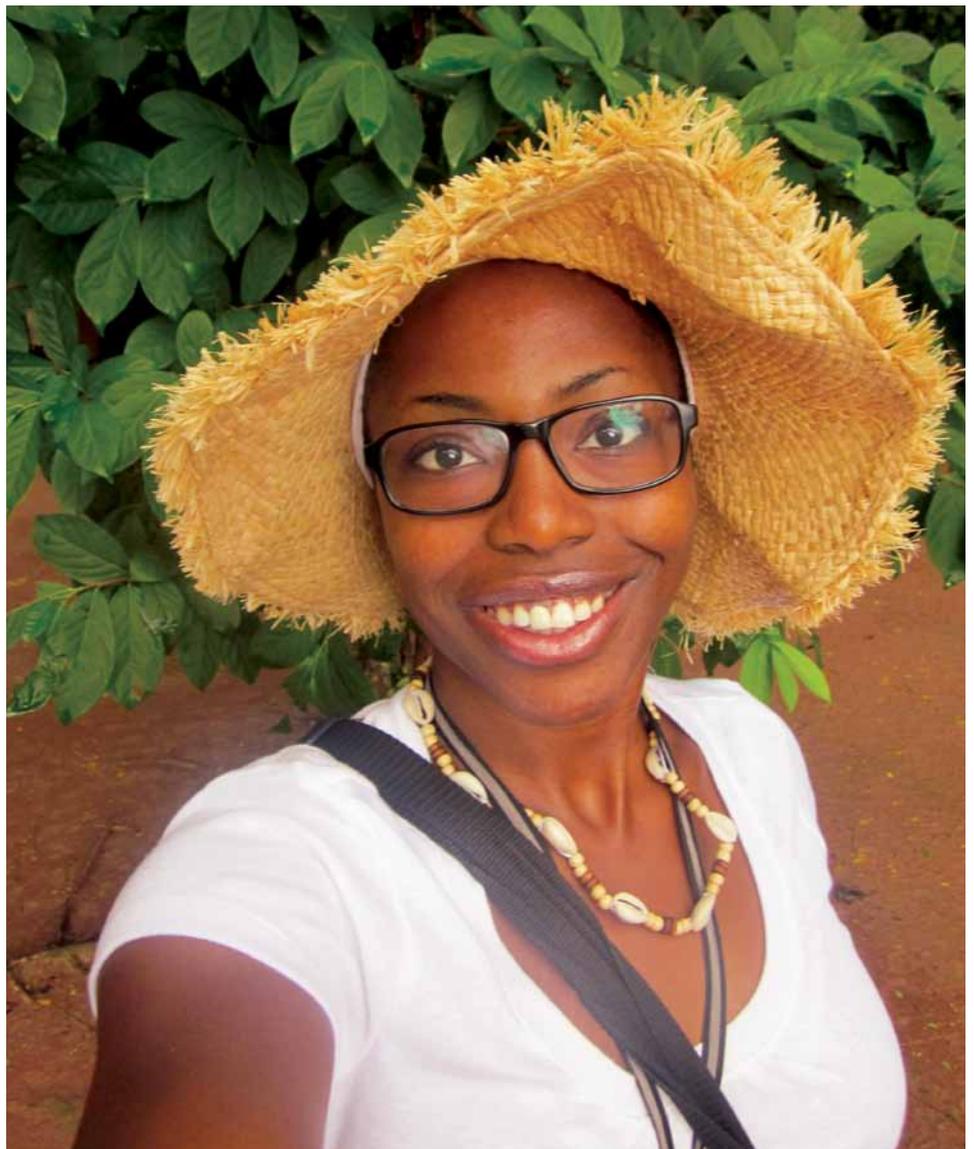
The Center for the Study of African American Culture hosted the Black Images in the Media Symposium and Arts Festival for the second consecutive year, April 13-15, 2011. The symposium involved nationally recognized scholars and artists discussing historic and current issues influencing African American images in film, music, and on stage. Additionally, the event served as a platform for African American independent filmmakers to showcase their work in ways that depict positive black images.



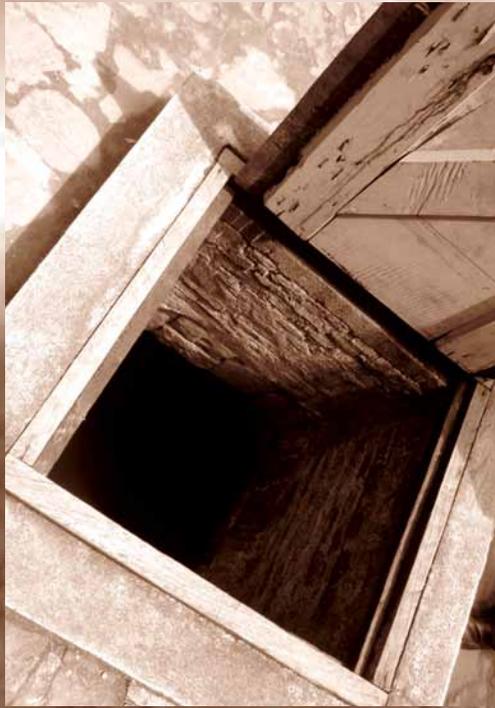


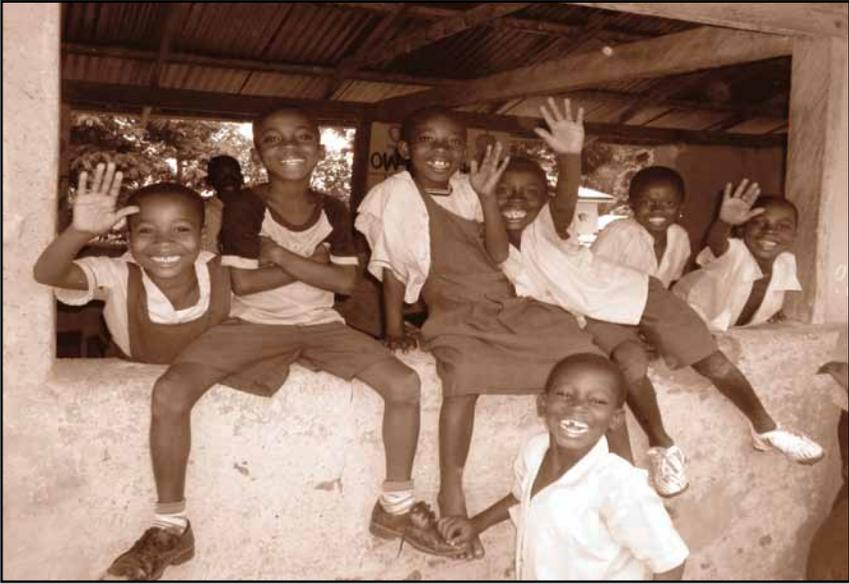
## A 2011 Study Abroad Experience: Courtney Wyatt

African American Studies provides UH students the opportunity to participate in a study abroad experience in Ghana, West Africa. Students take six (6) credit hours of African American Studies (AAS) 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. In the summer of 2011, Courtney Wyatt, a creative writing major and AAS minor, traveled to Ghana as part of the study abroad program. A brief photographic essay documenting her encounters in Ghana follows.









# 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 for 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.

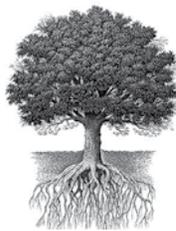


**John J. Moores, Sr. Academic Achievement Scholarship:** Established in 2006 to provide funding to students who have declared minors in African American Studies and show GPAs of at least

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.



**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 four to 10 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.

**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.

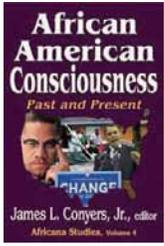
The graduate concentration in African American Studies introduces students to advanced discussions, analyses, theoretical perspectives, and research methodologies in the discipline of Africana Studies. In addition, it provides intellectual breadth to a student's course of study, increasing the depth 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

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## 2010-2011 AAS Faculty Publications



In the fall of 2011, **James L. Conyers, Jr.**, University professor and director of African American Studies, edited the fourth volume of *Africana Studies*, the annual book series published by Transaction Publishers. This edition of the series is entitled *African American Consciousness: Past and Present*.

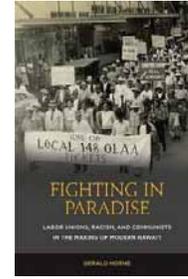
*African American Consciousness* focuses on ideas of culture, race, and class within the interdisciplinary matrix of Africana Studies. Even more important, it uses a methodology that emphasizes interpretation and the necessity of interdisciplinary research and writing in a global society. Worldview, culture, analytic thinking, and historiography can all be used as tools of analysis, and in the process of discovery, use pedagogy, and survey research of Africana history. Advancing the idea of Africana Studies, mixed methodology, and triangulation, the contributors provide alternative approaches

toward examining these phenomena, with regard to place, space, and time.

The essays in this volume include authors Reynaldo Anderson, "Black History dot.com;" Greg Carr, "Black Consciousness, Pan-Africanism and the African World History Project;" Karanja Carroll, "A Genealogical Review of the Worldview Concept and Framework in Africana Studies;" Denise Martin, "Reflections on African Celestial Culture;" Serie McDougal "Teaching Black Males;" Demetrius Pearson, "Cowboys of Color;" Pamela Reed, "Heirs to Disparity;" and Andrew Smallwood, "Malcolm X's Leadership and Legacy."

The researchers in this volume investigate, explore, and review patterns of functional, normative, and expressive behavior. The past and present of Africana culture is represented, showing how reflexivity can be an adjustable concept to organize, process, and interpret data. Moreover, humanism and social science demonstrate how researchers establish, extract, and identify the limitations and alternative approaches to research of the historic conditions of black Americans.

## AAS Adjunct and Affiliate Faculty Publications



**Gerald Horne**, John J. and Rebecca Moores Chair of History and African American Studies, published, *Fighting in Paradise: Labor Unions, Racism, and Communists in the Making of Modern Hawaii* (University of Hawaii Press, 2011).

**Demetrius Pearson**, associate professor of health and human performance, published a book chapter, book review and received several grants. His publications include: Pearson, D. W. (In press). Cowboys of Color: The Perceived Social and Cultural Significance of U2 Rodeo. In J. L. Conyers Jr. (Series Ed.), *Africana Studies: A Review of Social Science Research*, Vol. 4. Pearson, D. W. (in press). *Arena Legacy: The Heritage of American Rodeo* [Review of the book *Arena Legacy: The Heritage of American Rodeo*]. *Western American Literature*.

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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 series 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 series inaugural issue was 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.

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African Americans should enter the profession of librarianship to ensure that our children can compete in the future. Throughout history, our ancestors in the field of librarianship have shown the importance of preserving our culture. African-American librarians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will play vital roles in the advancement of our history in the digital age. James Baldwin puts it all into perspective: "It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, or who had ever been alive."

*kyMBERLY KEETON is a nationally published journalist, fiction writer, and web-designer. She is a graduate of the University of Houston, with a B.A. in English Creative Writing and a minor in African American Studies. Keeton is a recipient of the Graduate Certificate in African American Studies from UH and has a bachelor's degree in English, from the Honors College-UH. The talented writer is currently pursuing her master's degree in library science at Texas Woman's University.*

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