

A monthly publication of the Department of African American and African
Diaspora Studies at Indiana University



Welcome to Diaspora, the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies' electronic newsletter. We are all connected to AAADS in one way or another, yet we are spread far and wide throughout the university, the community, and even farther afield. We are the AAADS Diaspora.

Events

This semester is filled with many must-attend events! Here's a sampling of what has happened and what is to come:

- **Rock Against the Wind**, a monthly reading series that celebrates the literary achievements of writers of color and encourages community members to tell their own stories, had its Black History Month kick-off on Feb. 7 at the Monroe County Public Library. Each month the group features a local poet and open-mike readings. Rock Against the Wind gets its name from a line in "A Love Poem" by Etheridge Knight, a U.S. Army veteran who penned his first book of poetry from the cell of an Indiana prison. For more information, contact Asha French (aslfrenc@indiana.edu) or **Ryon Cobb** (rycobb@indiana.edu).

- The **2006 Black Knowledge Bowl** entertained and enlightened the audience that filled the Grand Hall of the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center for two hours on the night of Feb. 9. Seven teams came to compete in the eight knockout rounds that left two teams vying for first place. AAADS professors **Valerie Grim** and **Fred McElroy** acted as judges, MA student **Ketwana McCormick-Wilson** was the graduate volunteer, and several undergrad students participated in the contest. In the end, the Black Student Union took third place, the Caribbean Student Association came in second, and carrying away first place, to the sound of rapturous approval, was the Delta Sigma

Theta sorority. First prize was \$300, second \$200, and third \$150 — all going to the winning organizations. How would *you* have fared in the Knowledge Bowl? Here is a sample of some questions the teams had to answer:

1. Who was the founder of black Masonry?
2. What is a maroon settlement?
3. Who was the first black mayor of Atlanta?
4. What black astronaut lost his life on board the space shuttle Challenger?
5. Who invented, in 1935, the first automatic refrigeration system for long-haul trucking?
6. Who was the first African American to earn a PhD in folklore?

Answers: 1. Prince Hall; 2. an enclave of escaped slaves; 3. Maynard Jackson; 4. Ronald McNair; 5. Robert M. Jones; 6. IU's own AAADS Professor Emeritus William Wiggins

- Elias Blake Jr., former president of Clarke/Atlanta and director of the Benjamin Mayes Center, a nonprofit think tank in Washington, D.C., visited campus during the second week of February. In addition to his Black History Month lecture and other activities, Blake spoke at a **conversational gathering in AAADS M-39**. He compared the first case of African Americans suing a board of education (Boston, 1812-1815) with the 1954 case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, and detailed how each case, while different in circumstance, was about equity of resources leading to the best education for black children. Blake went on to tell how virtually all parties involved in *Brown* became sidetracked from that fundamental issue and into the issue of segregation vs. integration. Blacks, as well as whites, knew that better education might lead to better jobs, which might lead to better income, better housing, etc., which was the outcome of full citizenship. *Brown* was a lawsuit for full citizenship through the mechanism of education. In actuality, over time, the public education system resegregated to large extent, and blacks became heir to a broken public system that was, once again, less than the best. It is from this analysis of education history that Blake objects to Indiana University's raising SAT score requirements for admission. He says that higher admission scores will not help IU increase its minority enrollment, another of the university's goals. He said the university has no legal obligation to sustain minority enrollment, only a moral obligation. Blake condemns public universities that decide to become elite and selective, calling it a "betrayal of the public-interest purpose of higher education in America."

- This month, the **Black Film Center/Archive** is sponsoring a film series, called "Nollywood: Nigerian Cinema on the Rise," featuring three Nigerian films. *Osuofia in London* was shown on Feb. 7 and *Thunderbolt "Magun"* on Feb. 14. The third, *Agbeke*, will be presented on Feb. 23 in room 245 of the Radio/Television Building at 7:15 p.m. All are free and open to the public.

- A **workshop on finding primary sources in African American studies** was held by SLIS on Feb. 15. If you missed it, you can go to the second one on Feb. 22 at 4-5 p.m. in the Information Commons, Instruction Cluster 2. This is an excellent opportunity for anyone in our discipline.

- The **African American Arts Institute** has launched a new series of events called "**Grand Nites in the Grand Hall**," which will take place in the Grand Hall of the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center. The first Grand Nite of the series, on Feb. 16, featured book-signings by black faculty and music by the George Middleton Trio. Professors of Ethnomusicology **Mellonee Burnim** and **Portia Maultsby** signed copies of *African American Music: An Introduction*. The book is a compilation of essays by Maultsby, who also directs the Archives of African American Music and Culture, and Burnim, along with 24 other authors, in what they believe is the most comprehensive examination of African American music to date. It covers sacred and secular music from the time of slavery to the present and represents a wide array of perspectives. Vice President of Institutional Development and Student Affairs **Charlie Nelms** signed copies of *Start Where You Find Yourself*, which presents his thoughts and experiences in nuggets of wit and wisdom. All proceeds from Nelms' book are donated to Hurricane Katrina relief efforts, the United Nations Food Program, and a Bloomington food bank. The next Grand Nite will be on Feb. 24-25 as the **African American Arts Institute's 9th annual Dance Workshop** presents dance master classes and a panel discussion on Friday and a dance showcase in Willkie Auditorium on Saturday. Classes are taught by professional artists in the African American and African Diaspora perspective: Paschal Younge, professor at Ohio University and director of Azaguno African Drumming and Dance Ensemble, Athens, Ohio (Ghanaian dance); Jose Rivera, dancer and soloist with Ballethnic Dance Company, Atlanta, Ga. (jazz); Elana Anderson, performer and teacher

with Deeply Rooted Dance Theatre, Chicago (modern-Horton); Yang Xiao and Erin Lamb, with "Into Salsa," Indianapolis (salsa).

- **Black Curtain** will offer two salon performances during Bloomington Arts Week □ at 7:30 p.m. on March 2-3. The salon is located above Subway at 6th and Walnut. The ensemble will celebrate the black experience by exploring playwrights, poets, and authors whose work explores identity, loss, slavery, and □ death, including works by Toi Derricotte, **Garlia Jones**, Dael Olandersmith, Pedro Pietri, □ and George C. Wolfe. The event is free (donations greatly appreciated), and there will be a Talkback with the Audience after each performance. □
- The **Herman Hudson Graduate Symposium**, an annual two-day, international □ conference, will be held on March 24-25 this year, on the theme "The African Diaspora: □ The Quest for Human Rights."

Faculty

Professor **A.B. Assensoh** and AAADS Adjunct Professor **Yvette Alex-Assensoh** (political science) have been invited to contribute an article about Coretta Scott King for publication in the March issue of *Africa Week* magazine, headquartered in London. Both Assensohs worked in different capacities in the 1980s for the Martin Luther King Jr. Papers Project of Stanford University and the King Center in Atlanta. They also have been re-appointed co-review editors for the Leiden-based *African and Asian Studies Review*, a peer-refereed journal published by Brill European Publishers. Assensoh joined several international scholars in attending a leadership conference in Ghana last fall. He and John Pinfold, head of the Rhodes Scholars Library at Oxford, had an audience with Ghana's president, John A. Kufuor, at his Osu Castle office. Assensoh and Pinfold are actively involved in an ongoing Ghana presidential research project at Oxford, which is led by presidential biographer Ivor Agyeman-Duah, of London. Assensoh was the featured speaker at an IU Christian Fellowship event on Feb. 17, during which he gave a lecture on Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1957 "Birth of a Nation" sermon. He spoke on Coretta Scott King at Second Baptist Church in Bloomington on Feb. 12, offering

reminisces of working closely with Mrs. King at the King Center in Atlanta when he was director of research and associate editor of the King Papers Project of Stanford University and the King Center, which is publishing 13 volumes of papers on King and the Civil Rights Movement.

Professor **Valerie Grim** gave a paper in Memphis, Tenn., at the National Conference on African Farmers and Land and Legacy Issues this month. She also was the coordinator for the Black History Month program at Bethel AME Church in Bloomington, which showcased the African diaspora with a gumboot dance performance, an emphasis on researching and writing on black music, the poetic voice from a black perspective, and African singing and drumming.

Professor **Eileen Julien** is presenting a paper, "Now You See It, Now You Don't: Josephine Baker's Films of the 1930s and the Problem of Color," at the symposium on "Black Europe and the African Diaspora," to be held at Northwestern University on April 21-22. She will be a member of the panel on "Creating Blackness."

Professor **Trica Keaton's** new book *Muslim Girls and the Other France – Race, Identity Politics, and Social Exclusion* (IU Press) is "an in-depth analysis of French Arabs and Africans living in the suburbs of Paris" – timely subject matter indeed following the recent (and ongoing) strife in that country. Keaton draws on both ethnographic research and her own lived experience as a non-Muslim black woman in France. She finds contradictions between the ideals of universalism and the reality of ethnic distinction and racialized discrimination in one of the world's first democracies. In addition, Keaton is a co-convener, with Darlene Clark Hine, of the upcoming symposium on "Black Europe and the African Diaspora," to be held at Northwestern University on April 21-22. As a member of the panel on "Belonging and Membership," she will speak on "The Idea and Practice of Black Europe."

Professor **Audrey T. McCluskey** has been selected for the Association for the Study of African American Life and History Speaker's Bureau. She is presenting a lecture, titled "Images of Black Women in Hollywood: The 1930s and Today," at IUPUI this month.

Adjunct Faculty

Professor **Portia Maulsby** (ethnomusicology), in addition to appearing at the Grand Nites in Grand Hall event (see above), presented two lectures this month: "*Carmen Jones: A Reinterpretation of the Opera Carmen*" at the College of New Jersey and "One Nation Under A Groove: Black Nationalism and the Ideology of Funk" at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum/Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. In September 2005, she presented "The Interaction of African American and Suriname Gospel Ensembles in the Netherlands" for the Atlanta History Center's Black World Series in Atlanta. Maulsby is serving on the Search Committee for the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Professor **James E. Mumford** (African American Choral Ensemble) received the 2006 City of Bloomington's Martin Luther King Legacy Award during the annual King Day ceremonies. The African American Choral Ensemble, directed by Mumford, joined other choral groups in performing for the event.

Graduate students

Claudia Drieling, visiting scholar and doctoral candidate, has recently joined the recruitment team for AAADS's master's program. She is currently engaging in building ties with four-year colleges and other schools.

Undergraduate students

Eboni Gatlin, who minors in AAADS along with her major in journalism, plans to go into broadcast journalism as a television reporter. She is currently job searching and welcomes any leads! Gatlin says she "hopes to make a career of telling the stories of the forgotten and the ignored, especially those of African American descent." A recent contender in the 2006 Black Knowledge Bowl, she says that preparing for the contest

was "a lot of work." Even so, congratulations are in order: Gatlin, a member of Delta Sigma Theta, was on the winning team!



All faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students, please send your comments, suggestions, and information on your activities and interests to Carol Edge at ccedge@indiana.edu or to the department in care of Paula Cotner at pmjerr@indiana.edu.