

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

*Welcome to the debut issue of 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.*

## Faculty

Professor **Matthew Guterl** is planning on a busy semester! He writes: "I'm revising my second book, tentatively titled *A World Without Slaves: The South in the America*, for Harvard University Press, and putting the finishing touches on an edited collection for the University of North Carolina Press, *Race, Nation, and Empire in American History*, co-edited with James T. Campbell and Robert Lee. I'm also co-organizing (with Vivian Halloran of comparative literature) a Bloomington-based conference for the March 30-April 1 weekend, "Variations on Blackness: Race-Making in the Americas and the World." Iris Rosa and I continue to build a relationship with the University of Guyana, and we will be venturing to Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic in April or May to set up another study abroad class for AAADS. Lastly, I've begun to work on a new book project and a related graduate class."

Professor **Valerie Grim** is presenting a paper this month at the National Conference for African American Farmers. She will also join a team of researchers traveling to several sites in the rural South to investigate conditions influencing and having an impact on rural black education. She continues to work with the PhD Committee on behalf of the department to establish a doctoral degree in African American and African Diaspora Studies.

Professor **Audrey McCluskey** chaired the 2006 Martin Luther King Day Committee, which planned and implemented an outstanding array of events in acknowledgement of King's life and accomplishments, including the annual breakfast at the IMU and an evening of celebration at the Buskirk-Chumley Theater in Bloomington. This year's theme – "the power of one" – focused on empowering each of us to make needed change in our communities.

Professor **Iris Rosa**, with a busy winter schedule, performed a solo and choreographed a group piece for the Evening of Contemporary Dance, a faculty concert at the Ruth N. Halls Theatre, on Jan 12-13. In December, her African American Dance Company presented a studio concert that featured a special performance by the Kenyetta Dance Company.

Professor **Vernon Williams Jr.** is looking forward to the publication of his newest book, *The Social Sciences and Theories of Race*, in August. Published by the University of Illinois Press, the book focuses on anthropology and sociology's engagement with some of the U.S.'s most enduring problems: race and race relations. Williams analyzes the supposedly value-neutral social, cultural, and intellectual forces that influenced the key scholars on these topics. Moreover, he shows how social scientists can improve their own analyses by understanding the mentality of the observer whose work they're evaluating.

## Adjunct Faculty

Professor **Yvette Alex-Assensoh** (political science) was featured in the December issue of the *IU Home Pages*. She is one of 19 authors of the newly released book *Democracy at Risk: How Political Choices Undermine Citizen Participation, and What We Can Do About It*, published by the Brookings Institution Press. Alex-Assensoh brings her broad scholarship and research on poverty to bear in this examination of the disengagement of Americans in public affairs, particularly as indicated by low voter turnout and high levels of cynicism about government. She said to the *Home Pages*: "We're used to thinking about things in terms of problems – the *dilemma* of diversity. One of the *promises* of America is in its diversity."

University Vice President **Charlie Nelms** was the guest speaker at Bloomington's Second Baptist Church on Sunday, Jan. 15, where he spoke in commemoration of Martin Luther King's birthday. Nelms encouraged the congregation to go beyond mere words in the struggle against poverty and injustice, to "speak up and back it up." He looked around the church and said, "In this room, there's a Rosa Parks, there's a Martin Luther King Jr., there's a Mahatma Gandhi."

Professor **Gary Sailes** (kinesiology) was invited by the NCAA Office of Diversity to attend a VIP reception and to view an early screening of the movie *Glory Days* during the NCAA's annual convention earlier this month to commemorate its 100th anniversary. The movie recounts the groundbreaking basketball game between the all-black starting five Texas Western University and the University of Kentucky in the NCAA national championship of 1966. Sailes was also invited to serve on a discussion panel of nationally prominent scholars and journalists and present a paper on student athlete retention. The invitation came from the Drake Group, a student athletes advocacy group, and will take place at its annual convention in Indianapolis. Sailes teaches the course A265 Modern Sport and the Afro-American Experience (formerly named Sport and the Afro-American Experience). Course changes in the fall will have him teaching A264 History of Sport and the Afro-American Experience.

## Graduate students

**Mary Smith-Forrest** is diligently working on the revisions to her master's thesis, which focuses on the roles of African American women ministers in the traditional Baptist and Methodist churches. She has recently completed a project begun many years ago – the writing of her autobiography – and is looking for a publisher. The manuscript is titled "Mary, Then and Now."

**Black Curtain Theater** performed an original skit at the Martin Luther King Day Breakfast on Jan. 16. The five-member troupe, composed of four actors and a director, based the collaborative work on the controversial atmosphere swirling around King at

the time he was arrested and jailed in Birmingham, Ala. The piece showed King at work writing and revising his highly praised "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

*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](mailto:ccedge@indiana.edu) or to the department in care of Paula Cotner at [pmjerr@indiana.edu](mailto:pmjerr@indiana.edu).*