

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 slowed down with spring break (thank goodness!), yet there are many things to do on campus. Here's a sampling of what has happened and what's upcoming. For more upcoming events, check out the AAADS web site: www.iub.edu/~afroamer.

- On March 7, Clenora Hudson-Weems, professor of English at the University of Missouri at Columbia, spoke in the **AAADS Guest Lecture Series** on the topic "Black Farmers and Civil Rights in the Aftermath of Katrina: An Emmett Till Continuum." The talk was part of the department's effort to engage an issue on which the academic voice is too often missing: rural black people and the plight of black farmers. (Soon you can read more about this lecture on the AAADS web site in Events & News.)

- **Rock Against the Wind's** monthly poetry series in celebration of writers of color held its second reading on March 9 in the Monroe County Public Library. The featured poet was Crystal Wilkerson, an associate professor in the IU Creative Writing Program. She is the author of *Water Street* and *Blackberries, Blackberries*. As always, there was an open mic following the reading.

- **"Black Spirit: Works on Paper by Eldzier Cortor"** is on display now through May 7 at the IU Art Museum, Special Exhibitions Gallery. (For detailed information, visit the AAADS or IU Art Museum web page.)

- **Black Curtain Poetry Reading & Open Mic:** Two Big Events! March 21, 7:30 p.m., Grand Hall, Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center, featuring Phoenix and Epiphany, from Detroit; and March 22, 8:30 p.m., Indiana Memorial Union, featuring Versiz. (Both events are free, but donations are greatly appreciated.)
- The **Grand Nites in Grand Hall** series continues on March 23 at 7 p.m. in the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center. There will be "delectable food, inspiring conversation," and live entertainment by **Nathanael Fareed Mahluli** and the Jazz Collectives, plus a fine art showing with Alexis Joi Carter and Bryce Keith.
- On March 24-25, the annual **Herman Hudson Symposium** will get under way, with keynote speaker Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones. The conference topic is "The African Diaspora: The Quest for Human Rights."
- There will be an exhibit of the works of **Kalidou Sy** and a celebration of the Bloomington artist's life at Tutto Bene Wine Café and Gallery (213 S. Rogers St.) from March 26 through April 1. Sy, husband of AAADS Professor **Eileen Julien**, was originally from Senegal. A reception will take place on March 26 at 4-6 p.m.
- The **Project on African Expressive Traditions** and Horizons of Knowledge will present two films by Senegalese filmmaker Joseph Gai Ramaka this month in the TV-Radio Building, Room 245. Both films are in Wolof and French, with English subtitles. *Karmen Gei* (2001), an adaptation of Bizet's opera *Carmen* in contemporary Senegal, will be shown on March 27 at 6:15. *And What If Latif Were Right! (Et si Latif avait raison!)*, a critique of Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade's regime, will be shown on March 29 at 6:15. Both films produced controversy and have been banned in Senegal. Filmmaker Ramaka, who is visiting IU, will be on hand for a discussion following each showing. For more information, contact Natasha Vaubel at nvaubel@indiana.edu or 855-7537.
- On March 29, Francis Q. Farrier, Guyanese journalist and former director of drama for the Guyana Ministry of Culture, will speak in the **AAADS Guest Lecture Series** on the topic "The Influence of America on Guyanese Culture." The talk will be in Swain West, Room 007, at 5-6:30 p.m., and a reception will follow in Memorial East, Room 39.
- On March 30, the **Variations in Blackness Conference** will take place on the Bloomington campus on March 30-April 1.

- The **African American Arts Institute** is offering three spring concerts in the Buskirk-Chumley Theater in Bloomington. The African American Dance Company, directed by **Iris Rosa**, who is on sabbatical this semester, will perform on April 1 at 8 p.m. The concert will feature visiting director and former AADC member Deadra Nelson-Mason. The African American Choral Ensemble's concert, which is the culminating event in retiring director **James Mumford's** 25 years of service at IU, will be on April 8 at 8 p.m. The IU Soul Revue, with its new director, **Nathanael Fareed Mahluli**, will perform on April 14 at 8 p.m.

- On April 5-6, the **Black Film Center/Archive** will present a two-day forum on "Black Women Filmmakers: An Alternative Aesthetic and Vision," featuring three filmmakers who have made their mark as independent filmmakers: Alile Sharon Larkin, Jessie Maple, and Yvonne Welbon. Each one will share her unique passion and artistic purpose with the audience and screen one or more of her films. The forum begins in Woodburn 120 at 4 p.m. with a roundtable discussion about the art, craft, and politics of filmmaking and the present climate for black women and people of color in the industry. **Audrey T. McCluskey**, director of the BFC/A, will moderate. After the forum, there will be a reception in the Rawles Room of Woodburn Hall.

- The annual **Tarkington Lecture**, sponsored by the Department of English, will take place in the Distinguished Alumni Room of the IMU at 4 p.m. on April 6. Jennifer DeVere Brody, the Weinberg College Research and Teaching Professor at Northwestern University, will speak on "Sculpting Afro/Native Subjectivity," concerning the works of 19th-century Afro-Native American sculptor Edmonia Lewis. Brody is the author of *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity, and Victorian Culture*.

- The second biennial **conference on "New Directions in African American Literature, Theory, and Cultural Studies"** is taking place at the IMU on April 7-8. The conference's emphasis is on literature and visual and performance culture. Panels include "Queering Race," "Blackness and Postmodernism," "Politics and the New Negro," "Race and Performance," and "Abstraction in African American Literature and Visual Culture." A panel of creative writers will speak about "the work of persona" and the fictional reconstruction of unrecorded moments in history. There will be a reception at the Lilly Library on Friday evening, lunch at the art museum on Saturday, and a party at the home of AAADS Adjunct Professor **George Hutchinson** on Saturday night.

Faculty

- Professor **Valerie Grim** was invited to participate in the National Affairs Lecture Series, sponsored by Iowa State University. At the recent forum on “Defining Values in American Politics,” she made a presentation on “The Forgotten Populations: Rural Communities in the Aftermath of Katrina.” Responding to Grim’s paper were Peter F. Orazem, University Professor of Economics and director of the Industrial Relations Program at Iowa State, and Steven Garasky, human development and family studies expert on public policy.

- On May 3 at 12:15-1 p.m., the "Noon Talk" at the IU Art Museum will be presented by Professor **Matthew Guterl**. He will speak on "The Return of the 'The Folk' in African American Art," describing how Eldzier Cortor’s early works reflect American popular art and culture.

- Professor **Audrey T. McCluskey** was the invited lead-off speaker in the Women's History Month Renowned Authors Series. Sponsored by the National Park Service, the event was held at the Bethune Council House, a historical landmark in Washington, D.C., on March 2. She discussed, and signed copies of, her co-authored book *Mary McLeod Bethune: Building a Better World*. McCluskey is a newly elected member of the National Speaker's Bureau of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. Her most recent lecture in that series was "African American Women in Hollywood During the Golden Era," presented at IUPUI in February. Following the death this month of famed filmmaker, novelist, poet, painter, and composer Gordon Parks, at age 93, the *Bloomington Herald-Times* interviewed McCluskey, who directs the IU Black Film Center / Archive. She summarized by saying, "Gordon Parks, more than anyone else I know, understood the power of an image. His autobiography was called *A Choice of Weapons*. You could actually see how the camera was a weapon for him."

- Professor **John McCluskey** has been invited to teach the Fiction Intensive Workshop at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, in early July.

- Professor **Iris Rosa** has choreographed a dance performance based on the works of artist Eldzier Cortor. The performance will take place at 6:45 on March 30 during the opening festivities of the “Black Spirit”: Works on Paper by Eldzier Cortor” exhibit at

the IU Art Museum (see Events). Rosa hosted the ninth annual African American Dance Workshop on Feb. 24-25 at the Neal Marshall Black Culture Center. The workshop culminated with a Dance Showcase, held at the Willkie Quad Auditorium.

- Professor Emeritus **William Wiggins** presented a workshop for graduate students on how to apply for fellowships in the Ford Foundation Diversity Fellowships Program that fund graduate research. The meeting was held on March 3 in Memorial Hall East.

Adjunct Faculty

- Professors **Mellonee Burnim** (Folklore & Ethnomusicology) and **Portia Maulsby** (Folklore & Ethnomusicology; director, Archives of African American Music & Culture) presented papers at the 32nd annual conference of the Society of American Music and national conference of the Center for Black American Research on March 15-19 in Chicago. Their papers addressed issues of marginalization and transformation in African American religious and popular music.

- Professor **George Hutchinson** (Tarkington Professor of English) is co-chairing, along with Margo Crawford, the second biennial conference on "New Directions in African American Literature, Theory, and Culture Studies" (see Events). Hutchinson's book *In Search of Nella Larsen: A Biography of the Color Line* will be published in May by Belknap Press, a division of Harvard University Press. He delivered the Evangeline Bollinger Lecture at St. Xavier University in Chicago in February. Beginning in July, he will take the reins as the newly appointed chair of the Department of English.

- Professor **James E. Mumford**, who is retiring as director of the African American Choral Ensemble, was the special guest on WFHB's Bring It On radio program, which covers the African American community in the Bloomington area, on March 19. Mumford spoke of the highlights of his musical career and his time at IU. Taking the place of the program's regular co-host Delia Alexander was **Sherhara Williams**, who is active with Black Curtain.

Staff

- **Paula Cotner**, departmental secretary in AAADS, worked the registration desk for the ninth annual African American Dance Workshop on Feb. 24-25. Students from

surrounding high schools and universities came to participate, and professional dancers and musicians from various states helped to make the workshop a huge success. Cotner says: "Plans are being made for next year's 10th annual workshop, and we hope that more of you will be able to join us!"

- **Carol Edge**, an AAADS alumna and PR/media specialist for the department, recently read *Four Spirits*, a novel by Sena Jeter Naslund, and recommends it to anyone interested in fiction pertaining to the modern Civil Rights Movement, as well as in good literary fiction. The story follows several characters in Birmingham, Ala., from May 1963 to January 1965, a particularly eventful period in the U.S., the South, and Birmingham. She would welcome a conversation about the book with anyone else who has read it.

- **Shirley Stephens**, undergraduate adviser for AAADS, has been going to various classrooms to speak to students about the value and prospects of majoring in African American and African diaspora studies.

Graduate students

- **Tahirah Akbar-Williams**, a student in the joint AAADS/SLIS master's program, received the 2005 GLBT Spirit Award last November for her work in helping to create a community of acceptance for African American lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender residents in the area. She has been a campus leader for GLBT causes, founding the student organization Blacks Like Us in 2004. Keeping up the good work this year, she facilitated a panel of Indiana ministers. "Religious organizations lay the groundwork for how people will treat each other in their communities," says Akbar-Williams.

- **Jennifer Heusel**, MA double major in AAADS and art history, is co-curating, along with Matthew Backer, the "'Black Spirit': Works on Paper by Eldzier Cortor" exhibit at the IU Art Museum. She will be conducting tours of the exhibit at 7, 7:30, and 8 p.m. on March 30.

- Later this semester, a group of **MA students** will be attending a conference on "Race, Roots, and Resistance: Revisiting the Legacies of Black Power," sponsored by the African American Studies and Research Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana. AAADS professors **Valerie Grim** and **Fred McElroy** will accompany the students.



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.