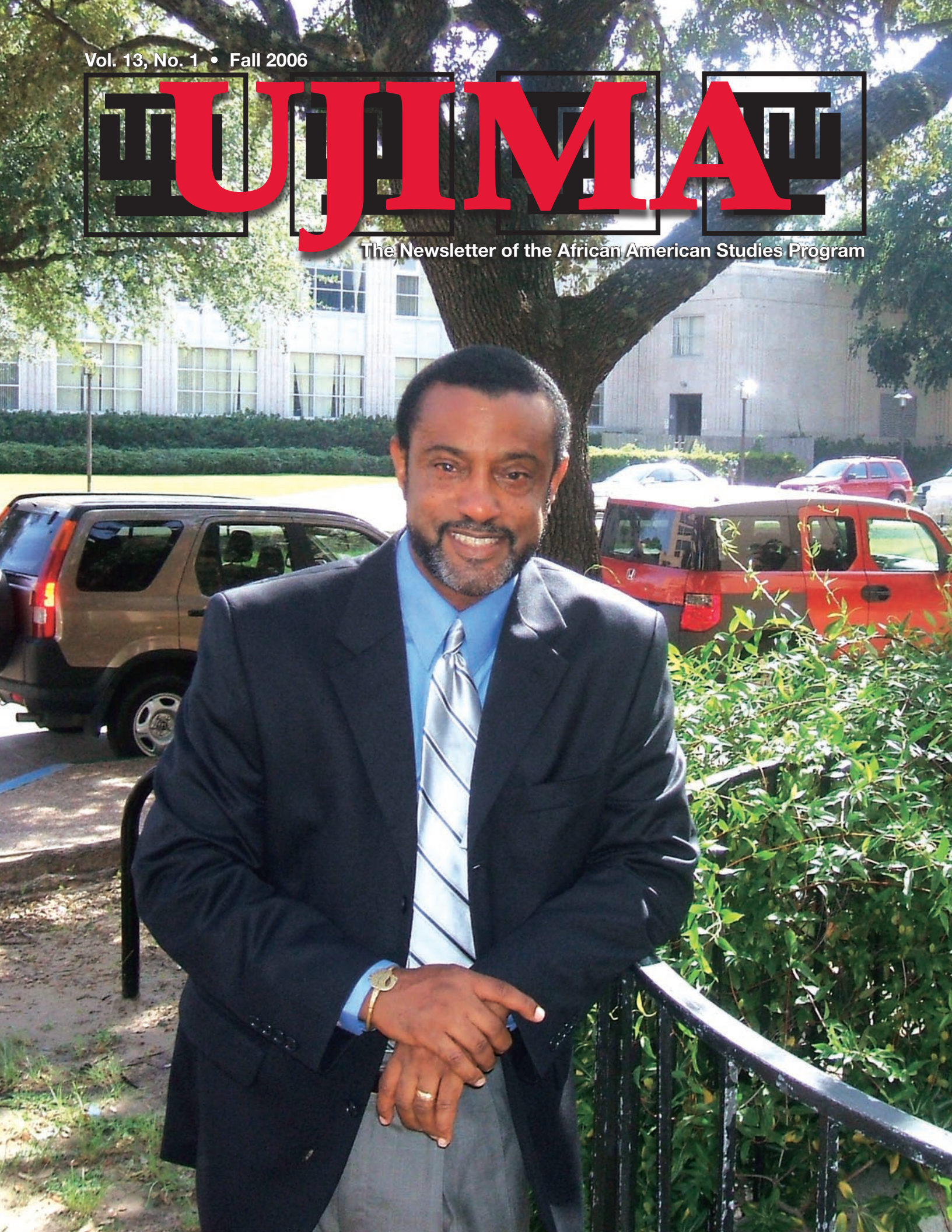
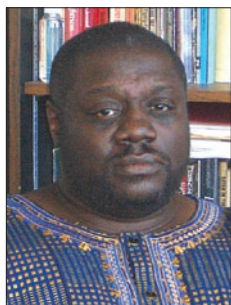


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UJIMA

The Newsletter of the African American Studies Program





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

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Reflecting over the year, there were a number of local, national, and international issues which directly and indirectly affected the African American Studies program at the University of Houston.

One of which was the crisis in New Orleans, Louisiana, with the advent of hurricane Katrina. This squall played a major role in the evacuation, loss of lives, destruction of housing, closing of institutions of elementary, secondary, and higher education, and the loss of accessibility concerning financial assistance to millions of Americans in the gulf coast region.

Our campus was impacted tremendously, with admitting students from colleges, universities, and professional schools in New Orleans. I am proud of the participation of U of H students, staff, faculty, and the greater African American community in Houston, to assist transplanted residents from New Orleans, during this period of crisis.

Moreover, the AAS unit at U of H has continued in advancing research, teaching, service, technology, and international education. In short, our mission and vision is to advance the organizational structure of the unit to an autonomous department. With an inventory of undergraduate courses over forty-six credit hours and the implementation of a graduate certificate, AAS currently exists as a quasi-agency of academic curricula.

Again, one of our top priorities has focused on undergraduate and graduate scholarships. The scholarship banquet was successful last year and we will continue to advance this initiative as a top priority of the program.

Furthermore, during the spring of 2006, we hosted the 30th Annual National Council of Black Studies Conference. Admittedly, this was one of the most successful national conferences organized by NCBS, whereas, hotel space and occupation was sold out.

A number of the leading scholars in Africana Studies attended the program. Also, the Shrine of the Black Madonna provided free shuttle service to the Cultural Center of the Shrine of the Black Madonna for a community program evening lecture presented by Dr. Molefi Kete Asante, Professor of African American Studies at Temple University.

Overall, the year was exciting and exhibited stimuli with hosting visiting lecturers, artists, and student programming. Let us march onward!

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

Director and University Professor of African American Studies

COVER: Dr. Clyde C. Robertson, New Orleans native and Katrina survivor.

Fall 2006

UJIMA

Volume 13, Number 1

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM

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New Orleans Native and Katrina Survivor Comes to AAS

By Ifadunmade Obanla

When on 29 August 2005 Hurricane Katrina struck an estimated 90,000 square miles of the Gulf Coast, devastating portions of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, Dr. Clyde C. Robertson, the 2006-2007 Visiting Scholar in African American Studies, found himself and his family among its stunned survivors.

"Hurricane Katrina is one of the largest natural disasters in American history. In New Orleans alone the storm and related flooding killed over 1,000 people," the New Orleans native recalls. "Over 100,000 New Orleanians have lost their homes and livelihoods. Katrina has caused the largest displacement of Americans since the Civil War."

Unfortunately, Dr. Robertson knows these facts all too well. Hurricane Katrina damaged his New Orleans home and forced him to relocate his family to Atlanta, abruptly terminating both his residency in the city and his 12-year tenure as Director of Africana and Multicultural Studies for the New Orleans Public School District, where he had served since 1993.

The disaster's impact is one of the reasons -- as a visiting scholar at the University of Memphis's Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change last year -- he conceived "The Saddest Days: Katrina, Its Aftermath and Impact on the New Orleans African American Community Project."

The project is a massive, multi-state effort to preserve and teach the



Dr. Clyde C. Robertson, 2006-2007 Visiting Scholar in African American Studies

oral and archival history of the hurricane's African American New Orleans survivors, including the children. It is intended to serve, he explains, as "a teaching and learning methodology for healing the wounds of distance, displacement, and loss" caused by the hurricane and the American government's apparent reluctance to respond to disasters occurring within "majority African American cities and communities."

Dr. Robertson says the idea of it came to him during the early days of the humanitarian crisis, when he saw that "both national and local media almost exclusively reported on the storm's impact on New Orleans's Caucasian community, virtually ignoring Katrina's African American victims."

In collaboration with Dr. Joyce E.

King, Benjamin E. Mays Chair for Urban Teaching, Learning and Leadership at Georgia State University, and Dr. Hassimi O. Maiga of the University of Bamako in the capital of the West African nation of Mali, Dr. Robertson says he sees one of the project's central aims as giving "voice and volume to the voiceless."

The emphasis upon oral history, archival retrieval, and curriculum development highlights the richness and diversity of his skills and training in academic and professional life. This includes teaching, administrative, and professional experience in public education, Africana Studies, and mass communications. Perhaps it is not at all surprising, as he earned a Ph.D. in Africana Studies at Temple University in 1998, an MA in communications theory from Howard University in 1982, and a BA in broadcast management and mass communications from Clark College in 1981.

This multidisciplinary training is well reflected in his many initiatives as Director of Africana and Multicultural Studies for the New Orleans Public School District. Among them were the international study programs he launched that took students to Senegal, South Africa, Gambia, Ghana, and Benin in Africa and to Peru, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic in South America and the Caribbean islands.

Aside from his work in primary and secondary public education, he has also maintained his connection to

Continued on page 8

Nkrumah Scholar Plans Move to West Africa

By Dante Eglin

At the time LeQuintiss Steven Taylor won a scholarship to study in Ghana during the summer of 2003, he never imagined he would be going to live in the West African nation. But the Georgia native and information system technology sophomore would soon discover that enrolling in Africana Studies courses would introduce him to an opportunity that would dramatically change his life.

“One evening while going to my African American Experience

Through Theater class, I saw a flyer stating, ‘African American Studies 2003 Summer Study Abroad in Ghana, West Africa meeting,’” Taylor, now a graduating senior, recalls.

“Growing up I always heard of different study abroad programs, but never thought twice about taking part in one. The next day I went to the AAS Department to inquire about the study abroad program, and from that moment on the rest is history.”

As it turned out, Taylor says his success in winning one of four Dr. Kwame Nkrumah International Study Scholarships awarded by African American Studies to UH students for Summer 2003 changed everything.

“My first trip returning home for the first time was truly a life-altering experience that I

will cherish the rest of my days.”

Among other things, his studies in Ghana sparked within him a growing interest to explore how he might combine his studies in information systems technology with what he was learning in his Africana Studies classes. Out of it, he would be inspired to devise a project that would blend business and education with Pan Africanism and social responsibility.

In the following spring semester, the Dr. Kwame Nkrumah International Study Scholar for Summer 2003 applied for and won another Nkrumah scholarship for Summer 2004. This time, amid his studies at Ghana’s premier university, he would experience an epiphany. How he would use his training at the University of Houston suddenly became clear.

“I remember the day as if it was earlier today,” Taylor says. “I was

Taylor instructing guide on picture taking atop Ghana’s highest mountain called Afadjato.

The background photo is Ghana’s Lake Volta.





LeQuintiss Taylor

walking on the University of Ghana campus, when the Lord spoke to me and gave me the vision that I would take part in building up the ICT (information and communications technology) infrastructure in Ghana.

"I did not know how I would begin this process but I am a true believer that what God has for you no man can take it away. I know that everyone has a calling on his or her life and this is my calling: building up the technology infrastructure in Ghana and throughout the continent of Africa."

Upon his return to the United States, Taylor began making inquiries, educating himself, and speaking with insiders on the process of creating a business project to launch in Africa. In June 2005, he founded Technology In Africa, Inc. (TIA), a non-profit technology institute. Taylor's vision for TIA is to supply the latest information and communications technology (ICT) in communities and areas throughout

Ghana and to offer "first class technological development and training that will provide individuals with the knowledge, skills, and tools to function and succeed in the growing world of information and communications technology."

Education will be the institute's primary focus, with the additional intent to take part in research, as well as the development of Ghana's ICT infrastructure. Taylor hopes that TIA's launch will help spark a global technological revolution, generating innovative ideas and establishing skills that will reduce the poverty rate and stimulate economic growth throughout a developing Africa.

"I wanted to see what I could do to give back to my sisters and brothers," says Taylor, who plans to pursue advanced studies in political science at the University of Ghana.

"I hope that the younger generations will pick up and return home,



2004 Nkrumah Scholars relaxing between lectures at the Department of Geography Resource and Development at the University of Ghana.



On the University of Ghana campus

versus waiting until they are up in age and then deciding to leave. We cannot continue to sit around and wait for things to change; we are the changing that we are looking for."

Dante Eglin is an African American Studies minor and Communications junior. He writes for the Daily Cougar and plans to pursue a career in journalism upon graduation in Fall 2007.

A Resplendent Affair

By Ahati N. N. Toure

On Thursday evening, 4 May 2006, African American Studies hosted a very elegant annual awards and scholarship banquet.

Organized by the Friends of African American Studies, the event featured a keynote address by Ambassador Charles A. Ray, Diplomat in Residence at the University of Houston, a marvelous musical performance by the Nigerian drumming and dance troupe Ikenga Cultural Group, and a scintillating array of items donated by generous national and Houston area individuals, institutions, and businesses to a silent auction that generates scholarship support to African American Studies students.

In addition to announcing scholarship awards to African American Studies students for 2006-2007, the annual banquet also awarded recognition to two prominent members of the Houston community.

Mr. John J. Moores, Sr. was recognized with the Humanitarian Award for his generous charitable contributions to the University of Houston. State Senator Rodney Ellis received the award on his behalf.

State Representative Sylvester Turner received the Public Service Award for his considerable contributions to public service to the people of the city of Houston and the state of Texas.

Ms. Melanie Lawson, news anchor at Houston's ABC affiliate Channel 13 KTRK-TV, served superbly as the mistress of ceremonies. Reverend Terry B. Land, pastor of Loyal Missionary Baptist Church of Houston, gave the invocation and benediction.

The African American Studies scholarship and awards banquet annually raises funds for UH student scholarships. Donations have contributed to undergraduate and graduate student summer and international study in Ghana, Jamaica, Belize, and Washington, DC, and to undergraduate study at the University of Houston.

African American Studies is especially grateful to Houston attorney Dr. Clara Meek, whose leadership and generosity are responsible for the banquet's stellar success.



Friends of African American Studies organizers



State Senator Rodney Ellis



Melanie Lawson



Ambassador Charles Ray



State Representative Sylvester Turner



UH President Jay Gogue



Ikenga performance

AAS ALUMNI News Briefs

Lamar C. Johnson, who completed his undergraduate studies in Summer 2006, will be earning an MA degree in Pan African Studies at the University of Louisville beginning Fall 2006.



Lamar C. Johnson

Through sponsorship by African American Studies, Johnson participated as a Fellow in the 2006 Young People For National Summit

for Progressive Leaders and Activists, which met from 13-16 January at the headquarters of the National Education Association in Washington, DC. He was one of 165 outstanding university students selected from a national pool of more than 1,000 applicants.

The national summit met to exchange ideas and acquire skills to create lasting social change. He was also a Dr. Kwame Nkrumah International Study Scholar for Summer 2006, studying at the University of Houston, University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and University of Cape Coast in two courses: AAS 4377: Seminar on W. E. B. Du Bois and AAS 3330: African American Studies Oral History and Field Research.

"African American Studies at the University of Houston offered the most comprehensive package that I have experienced. My experience began, like most, to fulfill the humanities undergraduate core requirement, but ended with a desire to study the Africana experience as a profession," he relates. "No matter what your level of consciousness, the African American Studies Program at the University of Houston can and will add profoundly to your query on the Black experience. Granted in the beginning it's a challenge, the information is heavy,

and the curriculum can be rather difficult to grasp, but once you accept the truth, then it is only up to you to choose your place in the field."

Benjamin J. Woods, who completed his undergraduate studies in Spring 2006, will be earning his master's degree in Africana Studies at Cornell University beginning in Fall 2006.

A student scholar-activist, Woods was a Dr. Kwame Nkrumah



Benjamin J. Woods

International Study Scholar for Summer 2004, taking AAS 3350: Slavery and Race Relations and AAS 3356: Africana Thought and Philosophy at the University of Houston,

University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and University of Cape Coast. He was a 2005 Fellow of the Young People For National Summit for Progressive Leaders and Activists, one of 125 outstanding students chosen from 40 campuses across the United States to participate in a national summit from 13-17 January in Washington, DC. He also served as president of the UH chapter of the NAACP.

• AAS minor **Quincy J. Fisher**, who graduated in Summer 2004 as a psychology major, was admitted to the master's degree program in clinical psychology at the University of Houston-Clear Lake for Fall 2006. Upon completion of his studies, he intends to go on to earn a doctorate in psychology.

• AAS minors **Mardiech McGowan** and **Derrick King** graduated during the Spring of 2006. They received their teaching certifications. Mr. King is working for Aldine Independent School District and Ms. McGowan works for Cy Fair Independent School District.

• Other graduates are:

SPRING 2006 Ogechukwu Agina, Latoya Easter, Collins Idehen, Syble Ingram, Katarus Jackson, Derrick King, Mardiech McGowan, Adrienne Thomas, Barbara Walker, Benjamin Woods

FALL 2005 Chioma Akuchie, Lanitra Alexander, Sheena Fox, Kelechi Meremikwu, Alexis Murphy, Brandi Overshown, Shantell Pruitt, Kenyetta Wakini

SUMMER 2005 Ragayle Pellum, Oliver Rollins, Crystal Simpson, Kimyata Walker

SPRING 2005 Esther Adesina, Roderick Ball, Tresha Charles, Danielle Devore, Kelli Douglas, Danetta Henderson, Milton Manson, Evette Mason, Quiana Patterson, Sinclair Ridley, Edmayia Riggs, Jhillian Tillis, Leroy Tolliver, Damon Walker, Jamila White, Stacie Wilson

FALL 2004 Farouk Adelekan, Cynthia Carter, Shannon Clark, Tina Clayton, Debbie Deslouis, Suzonne Dixon, Christopher Gisentaner, Melissa Gregory, Crystal Hadnott, Jakalia McCadney, Erica Seddens, Tiffany Smith, Evelyn Terry, LaCrystal Washington, Corealia Williams
SUMMER 2004 Quincy Fisher, Charla Gilliam, Natalie Harrison, Yolanda House, Erica Goodman Lohse, Gregory Lozano

SPRING 2004 Maureen Eledu, Aaron Field, Nitara Hardnett, Queen Idowu, Chukwu Iloabachie, Desmond Jackson, Makayla Shumaker, Anthony Smith, Ri-Chard Thomas, Linda Truscott, Darien West

FALL 2003 Senait Andemicael, Tiffany Bryant, Monique Fisher, Krystal Gilliam, Jaime Guillory, Franchell Jones, Hamin Milligan, Christopher Robertson, Terron Stevens

SUMMER 2003 Kevin Harris, Denise Horvilleur, Courtney Smith

SPRING 2003 Kirk Chargois, Rasheeda Chavful, Sharon Daniel, Tana Fitch, Arlene Gordon, Devin Hans, LaMoya Jackson, Leah McAlister, Ruby McIntyre, Janette Vinson Semien, Dionne Victor, Chante Wheeler

AAS STUDENT News Briefs

AAS Minors Awarded Scholarships

Three undergraduate students who are declared minors in African American Studies won academic scholarships for the 2006-

2007 academic year. **Kimberly Keeton**, a sophomore and creative writing major, and **Natasha Wade**, a sociology senior, were each awarded \$1,000 from the Mrs. Debbie Haley Academic Scholarship.

Sarita Minor, a chemistry junior, was awarded \$1,000 from the John Rueben Sheeler Memorial Scholarship.



Natasha Wade

2006 Nkrumah Scholars Study in West Africa

In Summer IV, 11 UH students participated in African American Studies' summer international study program to Ghana, West Africa, ten of them awarded Dr. Kwame Nkrumah International Study Scholarships for travel and lodging. The ten 2006 Nkrumah Scholars enrolled in AAS 4377: Seminar on W. E. B. Du Bois and AAS 3330: African American Studies Oral History and Field Research, which were taught by Dr. James L. Conyers, Jr., Director and University Professor of African American Studies. The courses, which were held from July 5 through August 10, integrated lectures by Ghanaian professors at the University of Ghana, University of Cape Coast, and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology with work at the University of Houston. The one graduate and nine undergraduate scholars were **Karla Anderson** (senior/nutrition), **Paul Burgman** (sophomore/English/AAS minor), **Ryan Dennis** (junior/communications/AAS minor), **Sha-Kara Jackson** (senior/biology/AAS minor), **Lamar Johnson** (senior/psychology/AAS minor), **Kaylyn Nicholas** (senior/finance/AAS minor), **Brittany Paley** (Masters of Social Work), **Jasmine Parker** (senior/natural science/AAS minor), **Kalaiah Vaughn** (junior/creative writing/AAS minor), **Natasha Wade** (senior/sociology/AAS minor). **Ogechukwu Agina**, a psychology senior and AAS minor, also participated, enrolling in both courses.

Nkrumah Scholars for Summer 2006 with King



AAS STUDENT News Briefs

International Study and Writers' Workshop

African American Studies also supported undergraduate and graduate students in pursuing advanced studies in international cultural studies and creative writing. AAS minor **Caleb Alexander** received scholarship support for summer study in Jamaica and Belize in a course titled "Jamaica and Belize: African Spirituality in the Caribbean," which was sponsored by the Brattleboro, Vermont-based School for International Training's study abroad program. From 14 June through 26 July, Alexander engaged in intensive study of the African diasporan religious cultures of the Garifuna people in the Central American nation of Belize (formerly British Honduras), which borders Mexico and Guatemala, and of Rastafarianism in the Caribbean island nation of Jamaica.

African American Studies also awarded fellowship support to **Van Garrett**, who is earning his Masters of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) at the University of Houston-Victoria and is completing the graduate certificate in African American Studies at the University of Houston. Garrett was one of only 12 poets selected nationally as a participant in the poetry workshop of the Hurston/Wright Writers Week 2006 held at American University in Washington, DC, from 16-22 July. The event was sponsored by The Hurston/Wright Foundation of Hyatsville, Maryland, which was founded in 1990 by acclaimed author Marita Golden and bibliophile Clyde McElvene, and named in honor of the celebrated African American geniuses of literature, Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright. The foundation is committed to the development of Africana writers and literature. "At Hurston/Wright my poetry became more sophisticated," Garrett recounts. "I, with the help of my workshop leader Tyehimba Jess (author of *Leadbelly*, which won the National Poetry Series Prize in 2004), and other participants became more attuned to technical elements in poetry.

Additionally, I was able to establish a literary network that has already proven effective, as I have been asked to publish and perform my poetry in other states." After graduation, Garrett intends to teach at a junior college and to pursue doctoral studies.

TechnoMerica Awards Computers to AAS Scholars

A non profit Houston organization that assists in training youth in computer skills has awarded 13 personal computers to the African American Studies scholarship winners for the



Terence Drew

2006-2007 academic year.

Terence Drew, executive director of TechnoMerica, told African American Studies Program officials he was happy to contribute for a sec-

ond consecutive year to the retention of University of Houston students who were scholarship awardees and declared minors in African American Studies. In 2005, Drew awarded seven refurbished Compaq personal computers to AAS scholars.

The 13 students were **Caleb Alexander, Karla Anderson, Paul Burgman, Ryan Dennis, Sha-Kara Jackson, Lamar Johnson, Kimberly Keeton, Sarita Minor, Kaylyn Nicholas, Brittany Paley, Jasmine Parker, Kalaiah Vaughn, and Natasha Wade.**

Africana Studies Essay Winners

African American Studies minor **Wesley Deason** won first place in the national undergraduate essay competition of the National Council for Black Studies. Deason, a senior and theatre major who is on the dean's list,

was recognized at a special awards banquet for essay winners at NCBS's 30th annual national conference, which was held in Houston from 15-18 March. His paper was titled "Amiri Baraka's *The Dutchman*: An Africana Studies Reflection on Black Theatre." Second and third place winners were Vassel Max Spencer of Georgia State University and Patricia A. Wright of the University of California-Berkeley.

Oliver Rollins, an AAS alumnus, won second place in the national graduate essay competition of the National Council for Black Studies. Rollins, who is completing his MA in Pan African Studies at the University of Louisville, submitted an essay titled "Freeing the Captive Mind and Striving for Liberation: An Afrocentric Investigation of Optimal Consciousness as Voiced through Hip Hop." Other winners in first, second, and third place recognized during NCBS's 30th annual conference were four other graduate students in Africana Studies programs at the University of Connecticut, Temple University, and Cornell University. In 2004, Rollins won third place in an annual national undergraduate student essay competition at the NCBS's 29th annual conference.

Graduate Assistantships Awarded

Andre P. Ball, Tawana Cummings and Brittany J. Paley secured graduate assistantships in African American Studies for 2006-2007. Both Cummings and Paley are pursuing the Masters degree in Social Work, while Ball is pursuing his Masters degree in Sociology. Cummings is returning for a second year, having been awarded a graduate assistantship in 2005-2006.

AAS Students at Model African Union

Three UH students joined in African American Studies' participation in the third annual National Model African

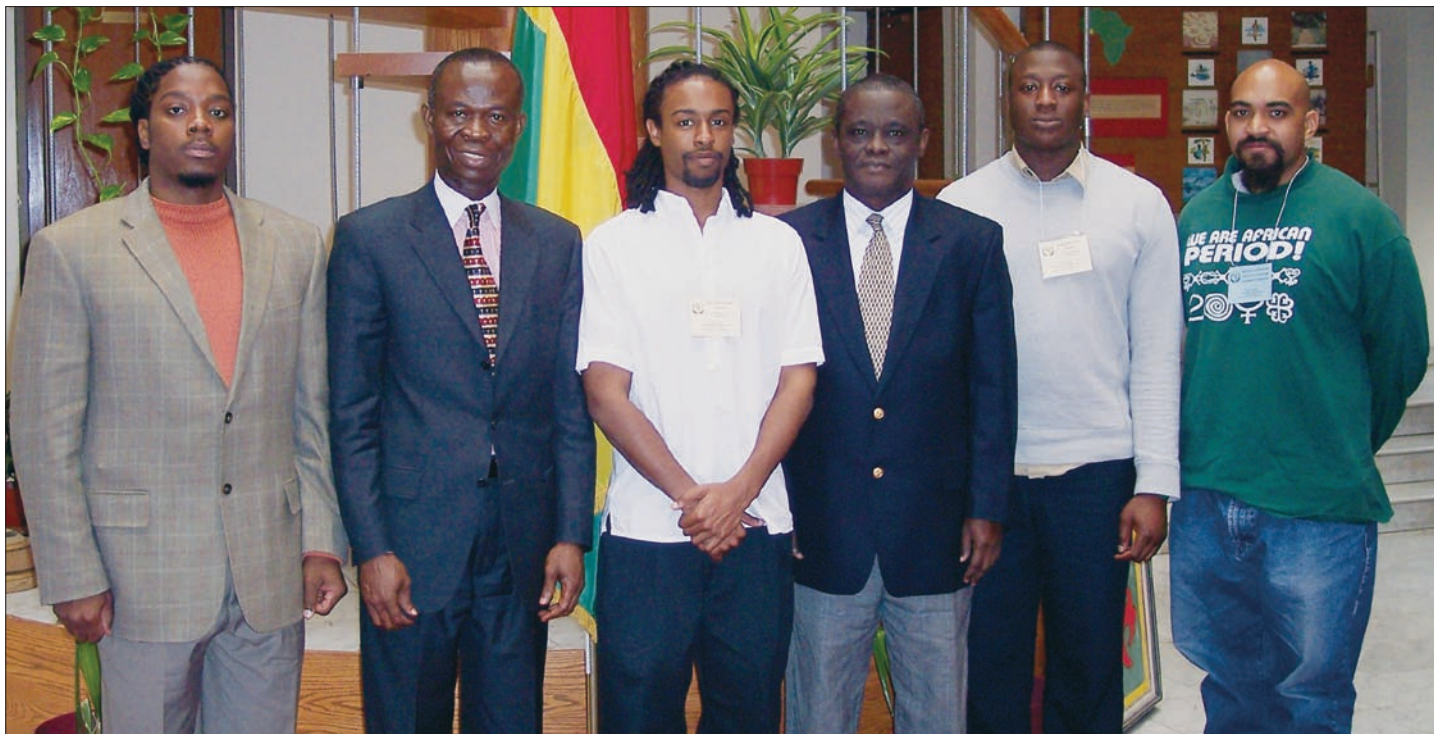
Continued on page 8

AAS STUDENT News Briefs continued from page 8

Union hosted by Howard University in Washington, DC, during the first week in March. The students represented the national competition's delegation from the Republic of Ghana, one of 53 countries that are members of the actual African Union. Olowatosin Adeyinka, LeQuintiss

Taylor, and Benjamin Woods were among some 300 students who served as delegates from some 30 or more colleges and universities from across the United States. The UH delegation and its faculty advisor, AAS Program Manager Paul H. L. Easterling, met with Ghanaian diplomatic officials at

their embassy in Washington. All three students had previously traveled to and studied in the West African nation. Adeyinka and Woods were Dr. Kwame Nkrumah International Study Scholars for Summer 2004. Taylor was a Dr. Kwame Nkrumah International Study Scholar for Summers 2003 and 2004.



Model AU Students with Ghana Embassy officials

New Orleans Native continued from page 2

university teaching. In the 1990s, Dr. Robertson taught courses in Africana Studies and in African American history as an adjunct or visiting scholar in the Department of History at Loyola University and in the Honors College of Southern University at Baton Rouge, and from 2002 to 2004 in the Department of African World Studies at Dillard University.

Likewise, from 1990 to 1993 he worked as news director of Temple University's Public Radio Network, which broadcasts beyond Philadelphia in westward and northern directions in Pennsylvania and in the bordering states of New Jersey and Delaware. In the 1980s he taught media and communications at Alabama State University and Xavier University.

Dr. Robertson has also won recognition for his radio and video documentaries, which have variously probed such issues as the transatlantic slave trade, the 1963 Birmingham, Alabama, civil rights movement, the Black Panther Party, the first Persian Gulf War, and the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott of 1955-1956.

He brings this impressive range of experience to the African American Studies Program. During the Spring 2007 semester, UH students will have the opportunity to study one of Dr. Robertson's areas of specialization -- typologies of African American leadership -- in AAS 4373: Black Leaders of the 20th Century.

He will also be working on an edited volume that will examine

Africana history and culture from antiquity to modernity through the writings of some of the leading scholars in Africana Studies. One of the volume's most important aims, he says, is to "reveal the rich heritage and total global impact of Africa and Africans."

Not only will the work highlight the depth and diversity of Africana Studies scholarship, work in which he had been engaged in New Orleans, he adds, but "these scholars will examine the important and multi-disciplinary issues impacting Africana Studies and history by discussing vital topics within ancient Africa, the African Diaspora, African America, and contemporary Africa."

AAS Events Briefs 2005/2006

September

On Tuesday, 13 September 2005, co-sponsored and participated in the discussion following the screening of the feature film **Hotel Rwanda** at the University of Houston.

On Wednesday, 14 September 2005, participated in the **Cougar Resource Fair** at the University of Houston.

On Friday, 16 September 2005, attended the **Women's Studies Program Open House** at the University of Houston.

October

On Tuesday, 4 October 2005, co-hosted with Dr. Gerald Horne, John and Rebecca Moores Professor of African American Studies and History, a presentation by **archivist Barbara Rust of the National Archives-Southwest Region**, in "Are The Answers in the Archives? A Series of Presentations By Leading Archivists."

On Saturday, 8 October 2005, participated in the **8th Annual Sankofa: Caravan** to the Ancestors, Spiritual Warfare Part II, in Galveston.



Sankofa Caravan to the Ancestors

On Tuesday, 18 October 2005, co-hosted with Dr. Gerald Horne, John and Rebecca Moores Professor of African American Studies and History, a presentation by **archivist Gary Spurr of the University of Texas-Arlington Libraries Special Collections**, in "Are The Answers in the Archives? A Series of Presentations By Leading Archivists."

On Tuesday, 25 October 2005, participated in **The Event College-Readiness Conference** at the University of Houston.

On Saturday, 27 October 2005, interview aired on reflections on the **contributions of Rosa Parks** to the civil rights movement on 30-minute magazine show Black Voices, hosted by Jose Grinan of Fox 26, KRIV-TV and UPN 20, KTXH-TV, in Houston.

November

On Thursday, 3 November 2005, hosted talk by **Dr. Antonio Tillis**, Assistant Professor of Spanish and African American Studies at Purdue



Dr Antonio Tillis

On Monday, 14 November 2005, attended discussion of senior scholar **Dr. John Hope Franklin** of his memoir titled *Mirror To America: The Autobiography of John Hope Franklin* at Texas Southern University.

On Friday 18 November 2005, participated in the symposium titled "**The Human Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina: An Analysis of Federal, State and Local Governmental Challenges; Race, Class and Gender Issues; First Amendment and Media Controversies; Immigration and International Law Implications**," hosted by the Earl Carl Institute for Legal and Social Policy, Institute for International and Immigration Law, and Thurgood Marshall School of Law, Texas Southern University.

December

On Friday, December 2, 2005, hosted **annual holiday reception** for the university and Houston community titled "A Walk Through the Cajun, Caribbean and Soul Food Wonderland."

On Monday, 5 December 2005, hosted a presentation of research by **Dr. Denise Lovett**, African American Studies Visiting Scholar for 2005-2006, on the subject of "Dating Violence & Prevention Among Youth of African Descent."

2006 January

On Thursday, 19 January 2006, **Dr. Fred McGhee**, African American Studies Visiting Scholar for 2005-2006, presented a lecture titled "The Texas Revolution and Annexation Re-considered: Revisiting the Abolitionist Thesis" at The Heritage Society Tea Room in Houston.

February

On Thursday and Friday, 2 & 3 February 2006, hosted a talk and performance by **Umar Bin Hassan** of the legendary poetry and music group The Last Poets at the University of



Houston and at the Shrine of the Black Madonna Cultural Center and Bookstore in Houston.

Umar Bin Hassan

On Monday, 6 February 2006, hosted film showing in the Pan-African Teachings and Academics Honors (PTAH) **Africana Film Festival**.

On Tuesday, 7 February 2006, hosted lecture by **Dr. Conrad Worrill**, a member of the faculty and coordinator of Inner City Studies Education in the Department of Educational Leadership and Development at Northeastern



Illinois University, and national chairman of the National Black United Front, at the University of Houston.

Dr Conrad Worrill

Continued on page 10



AAS Events Briefs 2005/2006 continued from page 9

On Wednesday, 8 February 2006, presented the **AAS Summer International Study Program** to interested students at the Information Sessions program hosted by the Office of International Studies and Programs at the University of Houston.

On Thursday, 9 February 2006, participated in the **Study Abroad Fair** hosted by the Office of International Studies and Programs at the University of Houston.

On Monday, 13 February 2006, hosted film showing in the Pan-African Teachings and Academics Honors (PTAH) **Africana Film Festival**.

On Thursday, 16 February 2006, co-sponsored the poets of **HBO Def Poetry**, hosted by BET Style and Video host Melyssa Ford at the University of Houston.



HBO Def Poets

On Monday, 20 February 2006, hosted film showing in the Pan-African Teachings and Academics Honors (PTAH) **Africana Film Festival**.

On Tuesday, February 21, 2006, hosted lecture by **Dr. Richard B.**



Dr Robert B Turner

Turner, Associate Professor of African-American World Studies and Religious Studies, on the subject of his book titled Islam in the African American Experience at the A. D. Bruce Chapel Religious Center at the University of Houston.

On Tuesday, February 21, 2006, co-hosted with Dr. Gerald Horne, John and Rebecca Moores Professor of African American Studies and History, a presentation by **archivist Katherine Salzmänn of Texas State University-San Marcos Special Collections**, in "Are The Answers in the Archives? A Series of Presentations By Leading Archivists."

On Thursday, 23 February 2006, hosted lecture by **Dr. Christel Temple**, Assistant Professor of Africana Studies at the University of Maryland-Baltimore County, on the subject of her book titled Literary Pan-



Dr Christel Temple

Africanism: History, Contexts, and Criticism at the University of Houston.

On Thursday, 23 February 2006, co-hosted with the Department of Economics a lecture by **Dr. Charles M. Becker**, Research Professor of



Dr Charles M Becker

Economics at Duke University, on the writings of the first Afrikan Nobel Laureate in economics W. Arthur Lewis.

On Monday, February 27, 2006, co-hosted with Women's Studies Program a screening of a film in the Pan-African Teachings and Academics Honors (PTAH) **Africana Film Festival**.

March

On Thursday, 2 March 2006, co-sponsored with the Black Leadership Network and the Black Alumni Association a reception for University of Houston Regents Lynden Rose and Calvin Stephens.

On Tuesday, 7 March 2006, co-hosted with Dr. Gerald Horne, John and Rebecca Moores Professor of African American Studies and History, a presentation by **archivist Sarah Jackson** of the Harris County Archives-Houston, in "Are The Answers in the Archives? A Series of Presentations By Leading Archivists."

From Wednesday through Saturday, 15-18 March 2006, hosted the **30th Annual National Conference of the National Council for Black Studies (NCBS)** at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Houston.

On Friday, 17 March 2006, hosted a talk by **Dr. Molefi Kete Asante** at the Shrine of the Black Madonna Cultural Center and Bookstore in Houston.

April

On Friday 28 April 2006, presented a motivational talk on Afrikan history to an assembly of 400 sixth graders in the **Strive for the Best and Don't Accept Less! Program**, sponsored by graduate students of the UH Graduate School of Social Work, at Missouri City Middle School, Missouri City, TX.

June

On Friday 30 June 2006, presented a **briefing on Nigerian history and culture** to managing staff of Parkway Place, a residential facility in Houston.



Four Experiences with African American Studies

The Africana Studies Experience: A Personal Retrospective

By Benjamin J. Woods

I transferred to the University of Houston from a Dallas community college in the Spring of 2004. As a native of Oklahoma, I did not have any family or friends in the Houston area, but I quickly found a home in the Africana Studies Program.

After speaking with Dr. James Conyers and Professor Ahati Toure about the benefits of Africana Studies, I quickly declared my minor. This has been perhaps one of the greatest advantages of the program, elder guidance. I had many in-depth and edifying conversations with Professor Toure in which he has insightfully clarified political and historical issues concerning African people. Also my communications with Dr. Conyers has enlightened me on how to move strategically in academic and other circles.

The program is a hub of emerging intellectuals, professionals, and activists at the university. It was difficult to come to the program and not engage in some intense political/philosophical discussions. This was an excellent opportunity to meet other young inquiring minds. Through the program I was able to go to several conferences and come in contact with other like minds, thereby establishing a national network for whatever career field I should pursue.

And finally, the greatest experience I had in the program was my first taste of international travel. In the summer of 2004 I and five other Africana Studies students returned to Ghana, West Africa, where we studied at the University of Ghana, Cape Coast, and Kwame Nkrumah University. I gained so much from the trip, but the most important aspect was understanding the common experience of African people around the globe, specifically in Ghana and the United States.

This fall I begin graduate school at Cornell University in Africana Studies, which would not have been possible without the support of Dr. Conyers, Professor Toure, and the Africana Studies staff.

Why I Became an Africana Studies Minor

By Alexis S. Guidry

When I first came to the University of Houston I was totally lost about what I wanted to major in, let alone what my minor would be. There were so many things that interested me — photography, art, history, English, etc. — I just didn't know what I really wanted to focus on. Eventually I decided on English because I really have a passion for writing. I decided on African American Studies as a minor because it is multi-dimensional in scope.

While taking my Introduction to African American Studies course I was exposed to a breadth of knowledge and perspectives about African peoples, both continental and diasporan. As the semester progressed I just became more and more engrossed in the subject matter, and soon I began to realize that it was Black art that I was so drawn to, and Black history and Black issues that always peaked my interest in grade school.

Finally, I was being fed information that I was starved for, and this time it was not rationed to me. No, this time I received large helpings.

My first AAS course cultivated in me a divergent way of thinking and armed me with information that was more than just required reading material for a course, but rather intellectual and analytical perspectives that have become an integral part of my thought process and understanding of the unique position of Black people within American society.

This course activated a sense of agency in me. I realized that education is more than what you learn, but what you do with the acquisition of knowledge to better self and community.

Thus, my ultimate goal is to become an educator of Black Studies, in the hope that I might help to cultivate the minds or be an influence in the lives of future advocates and activists committed to the advancement of Black causes -- be they academic, social, and/or political.



Poetry and Graduate Studies in African American Studies

By Van G. Garrett

For many, writing is a solitary exercise, an exercise that often requires self-reflection. Others are often included in the writing process at the end of the engagement—when the draft is “finished”.

Hurston/Wright Writers’ Week is a unique experience that does not subscribe to the belief system that argues writing is a solitary engagement. Rather, it is a workshop that promotes writing as a communal experience, as writers at various stages in their careers fellowship and become more proficient in their genres.

The workshop, the nation’s first multi-genre summer writers’ workshop for Black writers, practices the African principle of unity from the time participants “check-in” to the time they “check-out”, as participants have the opportunity to take an African-centered tour of Washington, D.C., attend panels and discussions, workshop with celebrated African American writers, and regularly dine with writers from across the nation.

As a graduate student with concentrations in literature and African American Studies, I found my Hurston/Wright experience to be a rewarding extension of the knowledge I have gained in “traditional” graduate courses. I had a base of knowledge from which to dialogue with my peers, because of the preparedness I have received in the graduate African American Studies courses offered at the University of Houston.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the graduate certificate courses I have taken in African American Studies. Being the first graduate student nearing the completion of the graduate certificate program in AAS, I am aware of how important the program is on UH’s campus as well as in the community.

The education that I have received has made me more familiar with Africana Studies theory, research method-

ology, biography and religion, as well as other elements pertaining to the Black Diaspora. I have learned how to triangulate research in literature and the arts, and do comparative studies in other disciplines with more confidence and mental acuity.

I have enjoyed studying with and listening to the lectures of some of the premier scholars in Africana Studies. Additionally, I have experienced the African concept of “community”, as I have fellowshipped with my peers in classrooms, symposia, banquets, and at community events.

The education I have received in the African American Studies graduate certificate program is paramount. The foundation that I have received and continue to receive is instrumental in enabling me to become a scholar of African American history/heritage.

My education will help me to further promote the ideals of scholarship and “community,” as I plan to reciprocate the quality of higher education African American Studies has afforded me.

Van G. Garrett, a secondary school teacher and graduate student at the University of Houston-Victoria, is an up and coming poet. He has won the Danny Lee Lawrence Prize for poetry in 1999 and the Callaloo Creative Writing Fellowship for poetry in 2002 and 2004. Mr. Garrett was one of only 12 persons selected nationally to participate in the poetry workshop of the Hurston/Wright Writers Week 2006, sponsored by the Hurston/Wright Foundation. What further distinguishes Mr. Garrett is that he is the first graduate student to enroll in the graduate certificate program in African American Studies at the University of Houston. At the conclusion of the Fall 2006 semester, he will also be the first graduate student to complete it.

A Letter from Cali By Eric Michael Brown

Life can be messy and confusing, but it can also be surprising. The next rock in your path might just be a stepping stone. Never rule out something you have never considered because it just may be what the universe has in store for you. I know you are sitting there reading this and wondering what the heck is this guy talking about. Continue reading and you will find out exactly what I mean.

I remember it like it was yesterday. I was sitting in Dr. Conyers’s graduate seminar and he walks in and began telling my classmates and me about a conference he attended over the weekend. Out came this story about a program at the New College of California that has a concentration in Afro-Centered Psychology and Spirituality. I sat up in my chair and began to listen closely. I immediately thought to myself “Eric, this may be what you have been waiting for.”

I went home that evening, read all about The New

College and its Psychology Department, downloaded the application, and began thinking “what if?”

Well, I submitted my application, which required a 10 to 15 page personal statement, which in my panic struck me immediately as an impossible task. But my statement turned out fine. Within a few weeks, and after two telephone interviews, I received a letter in the mail saying that I had been accepted into the program and I had also been awarded two different scholarships.

The transition to Oakland, California, has been great: a new city, a new experience, and a new path to walk! I am extremely grateful that I took this chance and stepped out on the limb. I urge you, too, to step out on the limb. It won’t break. I promise!

Sincere thanks go out to Dr. Conyers and Dr. Lovett for all the words of encouragement. The support I received from them will resonate for an eternity.

AAS in a Nutshell

Student Funding 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 whose 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.

International Study Initiatives

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 Model African Union-Washington, DC (First week in March, annually):

UH students participate in the annual National Model African Union hosted by Howard University in Washington, DC, during first week in March. UH students compete with undergraduate and graduate students from colleges and universities from across the United States who represent the 54 states on the African continent. The African Union is the newly founded continental structure created to replace the Organization of African Unity, which was formed in 1963.

New Teaching Initiatives

The Graduate Certificate in African American Studies:

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, policy makers, and others) interested in enhancing their knowledge and understanding of Africana phenomena.

Undergraduate Minor Degree Program:

Established in 1989, the undergraduate minor draws from the African American Studies Program's 42-credit hour inventory of permanent courses. Students take 18 credit hours in Africana Studies courses in areas of both humanities and social sciences.

Ankh Maat Wedjau Honor Society of the National Council for Black Studies, University of Houston Songhai Chapter:

The honor society's overall mission is to establish for students a strong foundation in the discipline of Africana Studies at the University of Houston through extracurricular engagement in intellectual and active learning experiences.

Publication and Research

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.

African American Studies monograph series,

Transaction Publishers: The series features original studies and recovery works within the discipline of Africana Studies.

Continued on page 14

Learning and Research for faculty and students

By Paul H. L. Easterling

As always, the African American Studies Program maintains a prodigious output in teaching and research opportunities for both students and professors. The following provides a brief glimpse of some of our major past, present, and upcoming program initiatives.

National Council for Black Studies

In mid-March 2006, during spring break, March 15th–18th, the African American Studies Program hosted the National Council for Black Studies Conference at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in downtown Houston. This historic conference celebrated NCBS's 30th year of academic excellence and social progress. Further, this was the first time the African American Studies Program has hosted an event of this magnitude, a national conference in the discipline, in its 37-year



history. The success of this year's conference will give good reason for it to return. It was one of the most well attended NCBS conferences in recent memory.

Despite the fact that it was spring break for U of H students, many still managed to attend several of the conference's activities and break out sessions. Moreover, they enjoyed an unprecedented opportunity to interact with the undergraduate and graduate students in Africana Studies from across the United States. For students, as well as for faculty, the four-day conference was alive with ideas and discussion.

Some notable names in attendance were Dr. Molefi Kete Asante, professor of Africology at Temple University, who gave a community talk at the Shrine of the Black Madonna Cultural Center and Bookstore; Dr. Linda James Myers, Dean of the Graduate School of Psychology, New College of California; Dr. Julius E. Thompson, professor of Black Studies and History at the University of Missouri-Columbia; and Cardinal Aswad Walker of the Shrine of the Black Madonna in Houston.

AAS Honor Society

The AAS honor society known as PTAH will be going through major changes this year. PTAH, which stood for Pan-African Teaching and Academic Honors, will now be an extension of the national honor society of the National Council for Black Studies (NCBS), the Ankh Maat Wedjau Honor Society. The African American Studies Program par-

AAS in a Nutshell continued from page 13

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.

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 centuries.

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.

Annual Africana Studies Research Symposium: Hosted annually by the Center for the Study of African American Culture, the symposium explores critical issues in Africana Studies research through presentations by scholars from across the United States and with designed academic publication outcome.

ticipates as the national society's University of Houston Songhai Chapter. The Ankh Maat Wedjau Honor Society is for Africana Studies undergraduate students who strive for academic excellence and social progress. The honor society is an excellent opportunity for students to become more



involved with the activities of the African American Studies Program, such as participation in national conferences and its international study initiatives. Membership as well as participation in AAS's activities will be important for the professional development of undergraduate students.

CSAAC's Annual Research Symposium

In April of 2007 AAS's Center for the Study of African American Culture (CSAAC) will hold its third annual research symposium, which will be centered on the life and legacy of the legendary legal scholar and attorney Charles Hamilton Houston. The symposium, as a CSAAC research initiative, is focused on the presentation and publication of thematic ideas which contribute to the growth and expansion 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.

National Model African Union Conference

Every year African American Studies sponsors and coordinates UH student participation in the National Model African Union conference hosted by Howard University in Washington, DC. This will be the fifth year AAS has participated in this national conference and the program is looking forward to another opportunity to represent an African country in February 2007. The conference offers undergraduate students from various colleges and universities across the nation the opportunity to engage each other regarding important issues of policy that affect Africa and the African Union. This mock exercise is meant to simulate the real deliberations of the international organization, which unionizes 53 of the 54 states on the African continent. Further, participation in this conference is also important for the professional development of undergraduate students who desire to work in the international legislative and policy making occupations offered in the growing global economy.

New Publications in AAS

Reevaluating the Pan-Africanism of W. E. B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey: Escapist Fantasy or Relevant Reality, edited by James L. Conyers, Jr. (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), was released in January. The book features 14 essays by Africana Studies scholars exploring four associated areas: global Pan Africanism, the intellectualism of W. E. B. Du Bois, the cultural and economic ideas of Marcus Garvey, and a critical assessment of Africana historiography. Dr. Molefi Kete Asante, Professor of African American Studies at Temple University, praised the work as bringing "together in a unified and concerted way some of the best essays dealing with Pan Africanism." Dr. Julius E. Thompson, Professor of Black Studies and History at the University of Missouri-Columbia, assessed the work demonstrates "the chief importance of the theme of Pan-Africanism within black consciousness." Dr. Jean Latting, Professor of Social Work at the University of Houston, said "Dr. Conyers and colleagues provide an exciting look backwards with the promise of a more accurate, collective, and culturally concordant future examination of the experiences of Africana people."

Ahati N. N. Toure, Assistant Director of African American Studies, celebrated the publication of his essay titled "Reflections on Paradigms in Power: Imperialism and Americanization as a Modal Relationship Explaining the Treatment of Afrikans in the United States During and After Hurricane Katrina." The essay appears in the Thurgood Marshall Law Review 31, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 427-462.

Ghana International Study-Summer 2006





"As a child, I learned 'The Creation' by James Weldon Johnson. This summer, I saw 'the creation' for the first time. My trip to Ghana, West Africa, was a spiritual experience. I was inspired by Africa's resiliency, collectivity, and humanity. Seeing African people in Africa shattered every stereotype I'd heard into oblivion. To be black is beautiful, but to be African is unstoppable."

—Kalaiah A. Vaughn,

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah International Study Scholar for Summer 2006

"The Ghana study abroad program was a once of a lifetime chance to look in the past to direct my future endeavors. The experience gave me first hand knowledge of the rich history from which Africans originate. Through the viewing of sites such as the Cape Coast and Elmina Castles I was given a sense of pride and empowerment. I took great pride in knowing that my ancestors survived such sacrifices and hardships, and a sense of empowerment from the knowledge that African people can accomplish anything."

—Sha-Kara E. Jackson,

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah International Study Scholar for Summer 2006

"Having the opportunity to travel to Ghana was one of my most fulfilling experiences thus far. The study abroad trip focused on social, political, and economic issues that affect the country in present day and in the past. The things that we saw and learned affected us in different ways. It's imperative for individuals to go and develop their own ideas and see Africa for what she truly is rather than how the media would have it to be. I will never say bye to Ghana; I will only say 'see you later,' because I will return."

—Ryan N. Dennis,

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah International Study Scholar for Summer 2006

"Any student interested in the African experience must participate in the Study Abroad to Ghana program. There are countless opportunities to enjoy the people, the culture, the land, the weather, and the environment as a whole. The trip to Ghana is definitely an experience in of itself. With the waterfall, the markets, the dungeons, the seminars, to the lectures, one truly gets a chance to experience education at its best. Personally my experience was breath taking and my life will never be the same. The question is are you ready?"

—Lamar C. Johnson,

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah International Study Scholar for Summer 2006

"During our stay, there was great attention paid to the life works of W. E. B. Du Bois and Kwame Nkrumah. Both scholars devoted their entire lives to liberating Africans from physical and mental slavery. Most importantly, they emphasized the vital importance of uniting African peoples wherever they live in order to gain social, political, and economic power. What was impressed upon us is that there has always been an ongoing exchange between Africans in America and those on the Continent, but they have rarely been publicized or promoted. There is an enormous responsibility on the younger generation to fertilize and continue relations with Africa."

—Natasha D. Wade,

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah International Study Scholar for Summer 2006

"My trip to Africa was the most life changing experience that has ever happened to me, because I honestly felt that I had returned home. The food, the people, and the strong sense of Pan-African Nationalism gave me the weapons that I needed to battle against negative American media images of continental Africans. The most powerful aspect of the entire trip was people who loved to embrace their African culture. Arriving in Africa, I felt a sense of peace and tranquility that I have never felt before in my entire life and that I have not felt since I've returned."

—Paul R. Burgman,

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah International Study Scholar for Summer 2006



THE LAST WORD

African American Women and Resistance

By Kymberly Keeton

African American women have played major roles in resistance movements in the United States. Many of these women have led full-fledged battles against Europeanized ideals in order to uphold the right to know one's culture, history, and rear the family. From being warriors, queens, educators, and mothers, the love for her family has always been at the central core of her existence on earth.

African American women must be recognized in history and academia as a major force that has taken the torch to change society's conformation to the idea that "what looks white must be best." Young girls and boys should learn and know that they too can be warriors in the African American struggle for civil, economic, and political rights for social change. This is the only way that the entire race of Black people can achieve, maintain, and pursue their heritage.

The challenge to be free of white supremacy and its influences in culture has been waged since Africa was colonized and its people were subjected to slavery. Through tireless efforts by such women as Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Fannie Lou Hamer, African American women

have all played significant roles in opening the doors for men and women to obtain an education, document Black history, and formulate cohesiveness amongst the Black Family.

One facet of struggle in which African American women have worked endlessly is education. Though African American children have been given the right to attend schools that are now integrated, they have been taught white history. Many Black children have never seen great leaders of Black descent in history books because the powers that be have always believed that their race was the epitome of all mankind. This type of alienation from knowing our history has led the youth of the 21st century in Black America to go astray and delve in drugs, abuse, prison, and so forth.

Black women writers in America, such as Alice Walker, Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison, bell hooks, and Alexis De Veauz, have written about the complexities of Black life in the United States and abroad. They have shown that the demise of our people and a lack of knowing who they are has contributed to the many downfalls and rights they have since lost.

In addition to the educational system that is currently in place, and how it has robbed African American children of basic skills in reading, math, science, and history, African American women have also touched on art. With this in mind, African Americans have always had to struggle to exist in a foreign land that did not accept their contributions to society.

The Black woman was origi-

nally brought up in a matrilineal setting that valued her role and importance in all aspects of society. She was later, through captivity and enslavement in the Americas, forced into a patriarchal society which has affected her livelihood and brought on various ills that include depression, drug abuse, a lack of education, and physical abuse. If she is to be the Black mother, educator, and backbone of the family, and is not recognized for her true value and contributions to this society by her country, peers, and community, how can she lead?

The continued fight for resistance is still an ongoing battle being fought today. Without Angela Davis, Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Jordan, Coretta Scott King, and Katherine Dunham, and countless other African American women, our existence may become less certain. Our children must understand and learn this in order to achieve success on all levels.



Kymberly Keeton is a junior in the Honors College, majoring in Creative Writing and minoring in African American Studies. Ms. Keeton is the recipient of the Texas Pioneers Scholarship, The Sylvan N. Karchmer Fiction Prize, and the Mrs. Debbie Haley Academic Scholarship in African American Studies for 2006-2007. She is also a member of the Ankh Maat Wedjau Honor Society of the National Council for Black Studies, University of Houston Songhai Chapter.



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