

# DIASPORA

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

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Graduate students (from left to right): Heather Essex,  
Yukari Shinagawa, Carmen Williams, and Holly Mayne

Welcome to *Diaspora*, the electronic newsletter of the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies. We are all part of the African American and African Diaspora in one way or another, yet we are spread far and wide throughout the university, the community, and the world. *Diaspora* will help keep us connected.

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## A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

Hello to all,

It is great to be back! Welcome to our new MA degree seekers and welcome to our first cohort of the newly created PhD in African American and African Diaspora Studies (AAADS). Students from as far as Japan and South America, as well as from each region of the United States, have joined our program this school year. Our undergraduate program continues to grow with majors who are single BA degree seekers and those who are combining AAADS with history, sociology, English, and religious studies. We are continuously building bridges with Latino Studies and Asian American Studies. In addition, this year AAADS celebrates 40 years at IU. We are planning a celebration that will be initiated in the spring and continue into the fall. If you have stories you would like to share about your experiences studying Afro-American Studies, African American Studies, or African American and African Diaspora Studies at IU, please send to Abegunde, our news and public relations manager, at (maehamil@indiana.edu). We look forward to celebrating the success of our department with you. This is a time of great planting, and we look forward to the harvest.

## **NEW PHD PROGRAM BUILDS ON HISTORY**

History is alive, and the AAADS Department is proud to be part of this living, forever changing and shifting set of events. In 1967, black students at IU had a vision for the future: eliminate racism from the university and society. After three years of negotiations between students, faculty, and the Board of Trustees, an Afro-American Studies Program was created in 1970 to study Black America. Courses would include black history, art, literature, and music, and be taught by faculty and associate instructors who were dedicated to teaching about the black experience.

Moreover, in keeping with the philosophy of Afro-American Studies, the classroom would not be isolated from the community, and the community would be the incentive and beneficiary of the classroom.

Now, forty years later, IU-Bloomington is one of the few universities in the United States that offers a AAADS undergraduate major, as well as an MA and PhD in the discipline.

The department continues to grow. There are currently fifteen full-time faculty, and the number of students enrolled in AAADS courses is the highest it has ever been. The department has implemented a new recruitment program, and its success is evident: student interest in and applications for degrees in the MA and PhD, as well as the PhD minor, have already significantly increased.

Courses reflect the commitment to understanding history and creating new scholarship that not only furthers our understanding and appreciation of black communities in the world, but also provides solutions to problems faced by those communities.

The world has come a long way since 1967, but the department does not rest easily. Each year, emerging scholars and faculty join the AAADS community to learn and teach in fields that range from education to health care, and from geographical regions as diverse as Brazil and Japan. More and more, the AAADS Department connects the diaspora through leadership and scholarship.

None of this would be possible without the efforts of those who came before us. Thank you Herman Hudson, the first Vice Chancellor of Afro-American Affairs. Thank you also to Joe Russell, Winona Fletcher, Phyllis Klottman, Bill Wiggins, John McCluskey, and others who helped to get AAADS to this point. We stand on your shoulders and we are poised to carry the torch.

## DEPARTMENT FIRSTS

### *PhD Cohort*

Just in time to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the department, we welcome our first PhD cohort. This is a dream come true, and we are proud to have these young scholars as part of our team: **Maria E. Hamilton Abegunde** from Chicago/Brazil; **Katie Dieter** from Indiana; **Holly Mayne** from California; **Yukari Shinagawa** from Japan; and **Carmen Williams** from Arkansas.

### *New Electronic Journal*

Dr. Vernon Williams, Jr. and Dr. Fred McElroy edited the inaugural issue (Summer 2009) of [Black Diaspora Review](#), a new electronic journal that will provide a forum for scholarly critiques, and debates of every aspect of Black Diaspora Studies, including its mission, curricula, ideology and/or scholarly methodologies. The second issue will be published February 2010.

## EVENTS

**August 24-26:** The AAADS Department welcomed first-year and returning graduate students during its annual orientation session. Over three fully-packed days, AAADS faculty introduced students to the department's resources and to the vast number of resources of IU-Bloomington.

Representatives from the Office of Campus Instructional Consulting, Office of Women's Affairs, Office of Student Ethics and Anti-Harassment Programs, and Teaching and Learning Technologies Centers also reviewed services that are available to help students be successful during their graduate studies.

In addition, a session with Mary Huelsbeck from the Black Film Center/Archives was a mini-lesson on the development of press kits as well as a fine introduction to the types of films that the center currently houses.

The last day of the orientation was held in the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center. Students and faculty had an opportunity to talk more intimately over a "pitch-in" lunch that showcased even more talents.

The department is happy to welcome *the new MA Cohort*: **Malaika Baxa, Floyd Hobson, and Wideline Seraphin** and returning MA students: **Shannon Caldwell, Adeyemi Doss, Heather Essex, Rafik Hasan, J. C. Henry, Caralee Jones, Michael Potts, Roberta Radovich, Shana Riddick, and Breon Tyler.**

**September 11:** **Melissa Stewart**, AAADS Office Manager and Fiscal Agent, celebrated thirty-five years of service to Indiana University. M39 was filled with great energy and excitement as Melissa’s family, colleagues, and friends gathered to offer her thanks and gifts for her dedication. The department presented her with flowers and a certificate of appreciation from IU. Melissa reflected a little on how things have changed: “When I first arrived on campus, university staff still used typewriters, carbon paper, and did spreadsheets by hand. I was one of the first people to get a computer when they first came out!” She also shared the value of a long and diverse career: “I have worked in different departments such as the library, theatre, and now AAADS. With each new position, I have been able to use what I learned and to learn new things.” Thank you, Melissa for all that you do to make our lives easier!



**September 16:** We held our fall reception for majors, minors, and students enrolled in our courses. Over pizza and punch, we had a fantastic time speaking with potential and interested students about the degrees in AAADS and some students shared their artistic talents with us. In addition, we launched the AAADS Undergraduate Club. The mission of the club will soon be posted to the AAADS website. Several graduate students (Ade Doss, Holly Mayne, Carmen Williams, and Rafik Hasan) will work with Professor McElroy to help mentor our majors, minors, and other interested students.



Dr. Valerie Grim, AAADS Department Chair, and Leah McGrath

**September 17:** Students, faculty, and community members viewed and discussed Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* as part of the "(Re) Presenting Race in African American Film," sponsored by the AAADS Department as part of Themester activities. Byron Craig led the discussion. The following films will be shown as part of the series: *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (October 8) and *Nothing But A Man* (November 12). All films will be shown in A201-Theatre and Drama Center, Lee Norvelle.

On **September 19**, AAADS honored the work and service of **Professor John McCluskey** who retired after the academic year 2008/2009. This was an awesome moment of memory and tributes. Faculty and staff from various departments, as well as students from Bloomington and out-of-state, joined the AAADS department at this surprise gala event. Former Chancellor, Dr. Ken Gros Louis, and Linda Jean, former office manager for John when he chaired the department, delivered words of thanks.



Professor John McCluskey Jr. and his wife, Dr. Audrey McCluskey.

Fred McElroy, who was mentored by John when he was an assistant professor, gave special thanks, sharing anecdotes that revealed Professor McCluskey's professional and personal impact on many in the room. Bill Wiggins hosted the event.

We especially thank Trustee Sue Talbot and Dean Patrick O'Meara for their attendance. And we also were fortunate to have many well-wishers from Professor McCluskey's second home, the English Department. Tony Ardizzone, a professor in the department, wished Professor McCluskey well and shared his impact on the department. Special thanks to the College, The English Department, and the Groups Program, an academic unit for whom Professor McCluskey has been a mentor for many first generation college students.

The program would not have been possible without the staff, especially Yunika Jackson, and the faculty in AAADS. The Mahluli-McCutchen Quartet gifted us with beautiful live jazz music.

Toni Morrison, Nobel Laureate and Pulitzer and Grammy award winner, sent a letter of congratulation. We thank April Smith, who received her MA in AAADS, for reaching out to Professor Morrison. Thank you to all for making this a wonderful afternoon.

**September 24-27:** The Triennial Rural Women’s Studies Conference convened at IUB. As the Co-Chair of the International Rural Women’s Studies Association, Dr. Valerie Grim hosted the conference, which was co-sponsored by AAADS other IU departments and programs, and departments and programs from throughout the country. The program brought together scholars from Africa, Europe, Asia, Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Participants included researchers, policy analysts, activists, local growers and farmers, market managers, and others who presented papers on topics ranging from rural women’s responses to voting rights to traditional healing.

**September 25: Professor Iris Rosa** and her Sancocho Dance Company paid special tribute to the rural women during the Triennial Rural Women’s Conference. Sancocho performed religious and secular dances such as *Bailes Orishas* (Orisha Dances), Rumba, and the Conga. Each dance highlighted the roles of women in rural black diasporic cultures. In keeping with the philosophy of AAADS to include the community as part of its work, Dr. Rosa provided the history of each dance’s origin and its function. In addition, audience members had many opportunities to learn some of the dances, as well as to showcase their own steps.



**October 8:** Students, faculty, and community members viewed and discussed *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (based on the novel of the name, written by Sam Greenlee). Dr. Michael Martin led the discussion.

**October 14: *A Positive Place for Kids*, with Heather Essex**



Our first Brown Bag was a success! **Heather Essex** (second-year MA student) presented her research, entitled “A Positive Place for Kids.” The discussion addressed a number of important issues such as the self-perception of Black youth; the role of Black popular and expressive culture in the development and conditioning of Black youth; and the unspoken tensions that exist in the generation gap between the elders and the youth of the Black community.

## DEPARTMENT NEWS

### *Faculty*

#### *Welcome Dr. Horton-Stallings!*



**LaMonda Horton-Stallings** joined the department as an Associate Professor this fall. Dr. Horton-Stallings received her PhD in English from Michigan State University in 2002. Her research and teaching interests include African American Literature, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Cultural Studies, and Black Folklore. She has published essays in *Black Renaissance/Renaissance Noire*, *Obsidian III*, *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, *CR: The New Centennial Review*, *Western Journal of Black Studies*, and *NWSA*. She serves on the editorial board of *Proud Flesh: New Afrikan Journal of Culture, Politics, and Consciousness*. She is a Schomburg Scholar. In a recent interview with *Diaspora*, Dr. Horton-Stallings, shared who and what inspired her to choose her field of research.

*As a scholar, what was most helpful to you in determining a focus for your work?*

Writer Gayl Jones has very much been the intellectual and spiritual foundation for all of my research concerning African American literature and culture, folklore, and gender and sexuality studies. I read *Corregidora* and *Eva's Man* as an undergraduate outside of my regular classes, and came back to them again as an MA student when I decided to do my MA thesis on her work. I chose my research based on what would hold my interest and allow me to contribute to a field most in need of my voice. I've always been passionate about writing and literature, and the focus on gender and sexuality seemed a nice bonus in terms of sustaining my interest. When I initially started graduate school as a MA candidate in a traditional English department at a predominantly white university, it was clear that my interest would be African American Literature and Culture. Though there was little graduate course work at the institution, I worked with faculty very familiar with the field doing independent studies and reading on my own. Thus, by the time I applied to PhD programs I knew that I loved it more than I did British or American literature, and at that time the job market outlook was really great for anyone interested in African American literature. The more I learned and studied, the more I understood that scholarship on Black genders, sexualities, and culture would be where my voice would be best served. Thus far, Gayl Jones has never steered me wrong.

**Congratulations to the AAADS faculty and students for their ongoing accomplishments, community activism, and community service.**

**Dr. Marlon Bailey** attended the 5<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora Conference (ASWAD). The conference was held in Ghana August 6-9, 2009, in commemoration of both the Pan-African Conference of 1900 and the Pan-African Congress of 1919, and in celebration of Ghana's central role in nurturing Pan-African struggles for freedom and justice since 1957.

**Dr. Claudia Drieling** (Visiting Assistant Professor) was recognized in August by the Office of International Services (OIS) for “valuable contributions to Fall 2009 International Student Orientations.” This was the first time that the OIS had involved faculty representation. Dr. Drieling presented several sessions on “Academic Life at IU.” Her team included a doctoral student and an undergraduate student panel. More than two hundred international students attended the sessions, which included topics such as plagiarism, professional relationships with professors and peers, and the usual classroom norms.

In October, students of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholars program nominated Dr. Drieling for participation in the program’s recently created IU faculty/student dinner series designed to foster better relationships between students and IU faculty.

This semester Dr. Drieling has continued working on fostering closer ties between AAADS undergraduate and graduate students. The peer-mentoring initiative she started last year now involves two tandems of students, one based on their shared work and interest in the visual arts: Robyn Coleman and Breon Tyler; the other one pairs poets: Nqobile Denee` Hawes with Maria Hamilton Abegunde.

**Dr. Valerie Grim**, Department Chair, hosted the Triennial Rural Women’s Studies Conference on September 24-27 at IUB. In addition to chairing several panels, Dr. Grim, international co-chair for The Rural Women’s Studies Association (RWSA), also presented the following papers: “The PEW Charitable Trust and the Patterson Research Institute’s Project on Early Childhood Education Among Rural African Americans: My Work as a Commissioner of Rural Education,” “Studying Abroad in Diasporic Communities: A Conversation About Students’ Preparation and Readiness for Engagement in Diasporic Rural Cultures,” and “They Needed Voice and Help Too: Women's Involvement with the Black Farmers Class Action Lawsuit Against the USDA, 1997-2010.” Dr. Grim will also co-sponsor two upcoming conferences to be held at IUB: *The Haitian Studies Association Conference* (November 12-14) and *Reclaiming the Right to Rock: Black Experiences in Rock Music* (November 13-14).

Dr. Grim also edited a special issue of *Journal of Black Women, Gender, and Families* (University of Illinois Press): Spring 2009, Volume 3, Number 1. The four-article issue, entitled *Rural Women, Families, and Children of Color in Global Communities*,

examined HIV-AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa; religion among black women in Brazil; ways in which rural black children in the U.S. unlearn racism; and the role of the federal government in addressing rural poverty, literacy, and cultural needs. Her essay, "The Experiences of Rural Women, Children, and Families of Color in U.S. and Global Communities" was published in this special volume. In addition, Dr. Grim's essay, "Our Stories of Mentoring and Guidance in a Higher Education and Student Affairs Program," (with Kandace Hinton and Mary Howard-Hamilton) was published in Standing on the Outside Looking In: Underrepresented Students' Experiences in Advanced-Degree Programs. Several book reviews were published in MS Magazine, Western Historical Quarterly, Journal of Ohio History, and Journal of Agricultural History.

In the Agricultural History Society, Dr. Grim was appointed to serve a three-year term on the Carstensen Awards Committee, which chooses the best article published in the Journal of Agricultural History in a calendar year. At the national meeting of the Agricultural History Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas, she served as chair and commentator of a session.

**Dr. Michael Martin** served as a peer review panelist for the Faculty Research Fellowship Program of NEH, Washington, D.C., August 23-24, 2009. In addition, the following works were published: "Joseph Gaï Ramaka: "I am not a filmmaker engagé. I am an ordinary citizen engagé,"" in Research in African Literatures, Volume 40, No. 3 (Interview, Fall 2009); an interview with Julie Dash in Cinema Journal, Volume 49, Number 2 (Fall) 2009; and "Podium for the truth?: Reading Slavery and the Neocolonial Project in the Historical Film—*Queimada! (Burn!)* and *Sankofa* in Counterpoint," will appear in Third Text, Number 101 (Fall) 2009. Dr. Martin also served as the discussant for the screening of the film *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, as part of the "Themester," film series on "(Re) Presenting Race in African American Film," October 8, 2009. And, on October 22, 2009, he will introduce and discuss the Algerian film, *The Yellow House*, at the Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA).

In June, **Dr. Micol Seigel** attended the Latin American Studies Association's international meeting and the Laboratório de Antropologia e História conference at the Museu Nacional, the anthropology branch of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Both conferences were held in Rio de Janeiro. While in Rio she conducted research at the Biblioteca Nacional and the Arquivo Nacional. In July she attended the Tepoztlán Institute for the Transnational History of the Americas in Tepoztlán, Morelos, Mexico, an annual conference that she helps organize and of which IU is an institutional sponsor. In August, Dr. Seigel completed the week-long training program for the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, a transformative pedagogical workshop that aims to provide the support and skills for faculty to teach Inside-Out courses in prisons near their home institutions. Dr. Seigel hopes to teach such a course during spring 2010, with fifteen "outside" students, IU undergraduates, and fifteen "inside students" from the correctional facility.

**Dr. Stephen Selka** is on leave this semester but spent August and part of September in Bahia, Brazil studying the Afro-Catholic Sisterhood of Our Lady of the Good Death. He will be presenting on his work this November at the American Academy of Religion meetings in Montreal. In addition, he has been invited to talk about cultural heritage politics at the Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies at the CUNY Graduate Center in December. In the meantime, he's also serving as the guest editor of a special issue of the journal Nova Religio on new religious movements in Brazil. This special issue should be published in 2010.

**Dr. David Wall's** (Visiting Professor) article, "Meddling with the Subject: The Imperial Dialogics of Race and Language in Uncle Tom's Cabin," has been accepted for publication in Nineteenth Century Studies. In addition, he has co-authored, with Dr. Michael Martin, an essay on Ed Bland's 1959 documentary *The Cry of Jazz*, which is currently under review for publication. Dr. Wall also has two entries in the forthcoming Encyclopedia of African American Popular Culture, and book reviews appearing in the forthcoming issues of Black Camera, Journal of Southern History, and Journal of American Studies. Dr. Wall has also been appointed the book and film reviews editor at Black Camera. He is also coordinating this year's AAADS Brown Bag. In addition to all this, he is continuing to work on his book project Film, History, and the Black American Experience.

## ***Students***

**Maria Hamilton Abegunde** presented a public lecture, discussion, and performance of her poetry on August 27 at the Indiana State Gallery. The lecture and discussion focused on the collaborative process that helped create "Becoming," an installation that Abegunde completed with Indianapolis artist LaShawnda Crowe. "Becoming," a full-sized, hand-made costume, honors African American women, and draws from the African American quilting, West African masquerading, and ancestral traditions. The installation was part of the *Poetic Dialogue Project* that opened in Chicago in January 2009. The entire project was exhibited at the Indiana State Gallery from July 14-September 9. Beginning October 2009, it will be featured at Bowling Green State University.

**Heather Essex and Caralee Georgianna Jones** participated on a panel on diversity issues at IUB. The discussion was held on September 24 at the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center. This was the first in the "Choice of Color" Brown Bag Series, a collaboration among various campus cultural centers that will provide students an opportunity to discuss controversial issues related to race. Other panelists were Eric Love, Director of the IU Office of Diversity Education and Jacob Levin, a columnist at the Indiana Daily Student.

**Roberta M. Radovich** (with David Hummons and Alrick Banks) worked with the City of Bloomington to create the Soul Food Festival Village as part of the

Bloomington Multicultural Expo. The Expo took place on Saturday, October 10, at Bryan Park, and brought together the Festival Latino, Chinese Moon Festival, and what has traditionally been the Bloomington Multicultural Festival in one space for a one-day cultural feast. **Malaika Baxa, Holly Mayne, Del Criscenzo** (who performed on the main stage with the IU Gum Boots dance group), and **Carmen Williams** also volunteered in the village to help this wonderful event be successful.

## CHECK IT OUT

IUB, Bloomington, and Indianapolis offer many opportunities to learn more about African American, African, and African Diaspora cultures. Here are just a few.

### **Indiana University Art Museum**

Form and Surface: African Ceramics, Baskets, and Textiles from the William Itter Collection - **September 26–December 13, 2009**

Special Exhibitions Gallery, first floor

### **Black Film Center/Archive**

*The Great Depression in Black and White* film series presents “Remember Harlem: The Depression Years” (1980) - Wednesday, October 21, 2009.

## SAVE THE DATE!

### **Wednesdays Noon-1:30 pm, M39: 2009-2010 BROWN BAG SERIES**

Taking place each Wednesday during the fall and spring semesters, the AAADS Brown Bag Series is a forum for the presentation of your work/research –



completed or in-progress – to peers and colleagues for discussion and feedback. While all faculty and students are encouraged and welcome to present their work/research, the series is especially encouraging of graduate students to present their work to become accustomed to the process of public engagement with arguments and ideas.

October 14 Brown Bag Participants from left to right:  
Dr. Wall, J. C. Henry, Dr. Seigel, and Del Criscenzo

*For more information and sign-ups please contact:*

Visiting Professor Dr. David Wall  
Memorial Hall East – M35/812-855-7805  
dcwall@indiana.edu

**November 12, 2009.** *Nothing But A Man* - Dr. Audrey McCluskey will be the discussant. A201-Theatre and Drama Center, Lee Norvelle.

### **The African American Arts Institute Performance Season!**

Website: [www.indiana.edu/~aaai](http://www.indiana.edu/~aaai)

**November 18, 2009**, 9:00 p.m. - IU Soul Revue at Bear's Place.

**December 5, 2009**, 8:00 p.m.-Potpourri of the Arts at Buskirk-Chumley Theater

**December 10, 2009**, 7:30 p.m. - African American Dance Company Studio Concert at Willkie Auditorium

## **CONFERENCES**

**November 12-14, 2009**, *Bloomington, IN: Haitian Studies Association Conference - New Ecologies: Actualizing Global Contributions and Development in Haiti.*

Conference website: <http://www.haitianstudies.umb.edu/conference.html>

**November 12-15, 2009**, *Atlanta, GA: National Women's Studies Association Conference - Difficult Dialogues: NWSA 2009* will examine how feminist intellectual, political, and institutional practices cannot be adequately practiced if the politics of gender are conceptualized (overtly or implicitly) as superseding or transcending the politics of race, sexuality, social class, nation, and disability.

*Keynote Address:* Angela Y. Davis

*Plenary Speakers:* Pearl Cleage & Natasha Trethewey

*Conference Website:* <http://www.nwsa.org/conference/>

**November 13-14, 2009:** *Reclaiming the Right to Rock: Black Experiences in Rock Music.* Sponsored by Indiana University's Archives of African American Music and Culture. Conference website:

[http://www.indiana.edu/~aaamc/br/brconf\\_2009.html](http://www.indiana.edu/~aaamc/br/brconf_2009.html)

**November 13-14, 2009:** *Men and Women of Color Leadership Conference.*

Sponsored by Indiana University's Office of Mentoring Services and Leadership Development. Conference website: <http://www.iub.edu/~moc/index.html>

### **DIASPORA SUBMISSION GUIDELINES**

All faculty, graduate students, undergraduate students, staff, alumni, and friends of the department are invited to send your comments, suggestions, and information on your activities and interests to *Diaspora*. Submit news and information for upcoming issues of *Diaspora* newsletter to Maria Hamilton Abegunde at [maehamil@indiana.edu](mailto:maehamil@indiana.edu) or to the department at [aaads@indiana.edu](mailto:aaads@indiana.edu)  
**Submit texts and photos as attachments in a Word document or JPEG image. Include a caption or description with photo(s). All documents should include your name and contact information.**