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# Future Faculty Update

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Indiana University Office of Strategic Hiring and Support Newsletter Summer/Fall 2002



IUB Memorial Hall. Photo courtesy IU Archives.

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## **Summer/Fall 2002 Fellows**

The IUB Faculty Fellows Program aids departments in hiring A.B.D.'s and recent Ph.D. recipients to summer and academic year teaching appointments. Fellows assume IU assistant professorships and make career-enhancing contacts. Some accept tenure-track positions at IU.

We have hosted 30 fellows since 1999-2000, including four professors in summer 2002, and one this academic year.

We are proud to present profiles of the 2002 fellows, whose knowledge and experience enrich our students and campus.

Uraina Pack of the University of Kentucky at Lexington taught undergraduate course "Folklore from the Plantation to the Present," for the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies.

Three fellows visited during summer session two, including Will Harris of the U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs. Harris taught "Introduction to Fiction," for the Department of English.

Phyllis Burns of Michigan State University at East Lansing also taught "Introduction to Fiction."

Genie Deerman of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor taught "Religion and Society," for the Department of Sociology.

Finally, IUB doctoral candidate Fernando Orejuela continued teaching "Hip Hop Music and Culture," this year, for the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology.

Please read about each scholar inside.

## **We seek candidates year-round.**

Contact us (left this page), to find out more about the IUB Faculty Fellows Program. We accept summer and academic-year applications through November 1. Departmental deadlines vary.

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# Scholar envisions American grass roots activism

## Phyllis Burns

Phyllis Burns fanned her passion for literary research this summer.

The Michigan State University Ph.D. candidate mixed African American women's literature, black radical tradition and violence theory into IU English department course "Introduction to Fiction." She also worked on her dissertation, which includes all of the above themes.

The Ph.D. project compares African American slave narratives with "neo-slave narratives" of the 1960s, such as works about the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army. Slated for completion in May 2003, her work is titled "I kill white men ... Cause I Can': Black Revolutionary Women and Their Quest for True and Total Liberation."

Burns seeks to understand how racism, imperialism and colonialism have affected the African Diaspora. She focuses on America because she was born and raised here.

"We live in a racist world," she said. "People are going to have problems no matter where they are."

She works to eradicate racism through teaching, research and participation in grass roots activism.

Burns wonders why groups such as the Black Panther Party, representing successful black radical tradition, lost notoriety in the United

States. She says black people now subscribe to "racial uplift" in writers like Booker T. Washington.

"The Black Panther Party seemed at one point to be the vanguard of African American political activity in the United States, but they also were like a government," she said. "They were so powerful, and now people talk about them as in past tense."

Burns attended church day camp across the street from Black Panther Party headquarters while growing up in Detroit, Michigan. She saw Panther members, and knew that others feared them.

She has attempted to focus on African American women's roles in political groups, studying biographies, autobiographies and newspaper articles.

Questions about black women revolutionaries have led her to study violence theories. Why, she asks, were black women denigrated for espousing violence against institutional racism, when the U.S. government "regime" perpetrated physical repression?

Burns credits much personal development to academic research and reading.

"It is kind of fun to see who is in line with your thinking," she said. "Sometimes you shift when you read what other people are thinking."

And she hopes her writing can



Phyllis Burns

"spur others into action," against racism. She aspires one day to trade writing for grass roots political activism. No matter what, she wants to teach.

Burns enacted her objectives while teaching a women's literature class last year, assigning all readings by African American authors. Some students questioned why the syllabus included no white authors, when the class was said to encompass women's literature throughout the United States. Burns explained that she wanted to fill a temporary void of African American literature in Michigan State's curriculum.

"I think the most rewarding thing I've ever done in my life is teach," she said. "You can consider teaching a form of activism, too, because you're passing along the word."

Burns hopes her students evolve during college; everyone should graduate a changed person. She wants graduates to help eradicate poverty and oppression throughout the African Diaspora.

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# Sociologist examines U.S. politics of religion

## Genie Deerman

Californian Genie Deerman explored uncharted territory this summer.

She taught new material in IU sociology class “Religion and Society,” in a new setting - Bloomington. Fortunately, her subject knowledge and Midwest experience paved a smooth transition from graduate school in Michigan.

Deerman received her doctorate in sociology from the University of Michigan (UM) in 2001. She pursued graduate studies in social movements, race-gender formation, and politics and religion, eventually focusing on conservative and liberal U.S. Christian movements.

She had designed and taught UM courses on gender and social movements, and social problems, but the IU summer course allowed her to explore religious politics in the classroom. In fact, she was excited to integrate her dissertation work on race and gender in the New Christian Right’s politics.

Outside class, Deerman worked on a manuscript about “virginity narratives,” 1990s news magazine articles about virginity and abstinence. She analyzed content in the popular press, identifying a conservative agenda toward sexual politics, which

claimed that young people were choosing abstinence. She worked to name major interests in the debate, such as the Christian Right.

She studies how religion informs politics in order to better understand “how people live their religion.” And, “It’s more about how people live their religion that makes the difference.”

Even as a child, Deerman often asked “why.”

“[Asking] Why power relations are the way they are, why we live the way we do,” she said. She grew up with diverse neighbors “on many different levels” - fertile

ground for pondering groups and relationships.

However, Deerman said she experienced culture shock, of sorts, when moving to Ann Arbor, Michigan - a less culturally and ethnically diverse area than that of San Diego. She said she noticed more churches in the Midwest, and that family members tend to settle nearby their places of origin (in contrast to San Diego).

Before visiting IU this summer, Deerman taught an English-as-Second-Language course in Ann Arbor,

becoming inspired by 60-year-old students who “don’t want to be held back.”

Her fluency in Spanish language eased communication with the majority Spanish-speaking class. She grew up speaking the language with her mom, a native of Mexico.

“I love my students so much, they’re so wonderful,” she said. “I feel I’m part of this process of helping people help themselves.”

Having completed her graduate studies, Deerman hopes to volunteer more. She has provided instructor support to a women’s self-defense course in Ann Arbor, from uplifting words to ice packs. She also presented information about the program to community groups.

Deerman served as a court and hospital advocate for Sexual Assault Crisis Agency in Long Beach, California, from 1991-1993. She also prepared Spanish-language pamphlets as program coordinator for the agency’s Communities of Color program.

The go-getter helped provide weekly hot meals to needy persons through Food Not Bombs, in Long Beach, from 1989-1993.

Deerman wants to keep researching American conservative politics. She was excited to establish good working relationships at Indiana University.



Genie Deerman

**“It’s more about how people live their religion that makes the difference.”**

**- Genie Deerman**





Will Harris

## Will Harris

Literati Will Harris quietly completed his 21-year U.S. Air Force career this summer.

He left IU shortly after teaching second session, English department course, “Introduction to Fiction,” to attend retirement ceremonies in Colorado Springs.

While reflecting fondly on his military service, Harris said he was ready to move on.

“... I got the chance to travel the world, to live in other cultures, and I think that has done a lot for my academic work,” he said. “But I don’t expect to be in a crisis at all [upon retirement].”

Recently, he has researched Harlem Renaissance works, while teaching various literature and writing courses at the Air Force academy. This summer, he worked on a trilogy about Zora Neal Hurston and Africanized religion in the Americas. The first of his three essays recently

# Literati bids military farewell

ran in *Zora Neale Hurston Forum*.

But just like he traveled around the world, Harris’ interests strayed far and wide from periodic African American literature.

For example, he has been writing a review of popular Vietnamese poet Nguyen Duy’s 2000 book *Distant Roads: Selected Poems of Nguyen Duy*. And he is crafting a review of translator John Balaban’s *Vietnam: A Traveler’s Literary Companion*. Both pieces are slated for the journal *War, Literature and the Arts*.

Will Harris began graduate studies in British Romanticism. Thanks to his father’s military career, he had attended elementary school in England and junior high in Germany, where he formed a strong foundation in English literature - his “first love,” academically speaking. He would turn to English literature after completing one semester of

engineering classes at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. He got hooked on African American literature just in time for his dissertation work, while taking a course on African American women playwrights.

He joined the U.S. Air Force in 1981, taking a tour of military duty and pursuing graduate studies until 1987, when he earned his master’s degree in literature from the University of Illinois.

Between the M.A. and his 1998 Ph.D. commencement at Illinois,

Harris took an enlightening tour of duty in Saudi Arabia. At work, he helped expedite post-Gulf War logistical negotiations between the U.S. and the Arabian Gulf states. And off duty, he traveled around the Middle East, cherishing the opportunity to “get outside” his American perspective. He then learned about the cultural influences on and reactions to U.S. involvement there – preeminent factors, he believes, in September 11th attacks.

Harris’ experiences in Saudi Arabia widened his views on minority literature, in general, he said. He wants to pursue a civilian career teaching literature and critiquing Af-

frican American works of the Harlem Renaissance period.

“I would like to think that my [literary] criticism can change the way that people view and even respond to the world,” he

said. “And if it can’t do that, I would hope that I could at least change the way people view and respond to African American culture and literature.”

Harris left IU Bloomington to wrap up a 20-year career in literature, military logistics and cultural studies. And he wanted to retire his service with as little fanfare as possible.

“The work, itself, was the reward, as odd as it may sound,” he said.

**“I got the chance to travel the world, to live in other cultures, and I think that has done a lot for my academic work.”**

**- Will Harris**

# IU alum explores folklore, dance and body

## Fernando Orejuela

Folklorist Fernando Orejuela juggles multiple disciplines at IU. But he focuses all scholarship on the human “body as cultural artifact.”

In fact, he wove the theme into his Ph.D. dissertation, which he plans to defend this spring. The degree crowns graduate studies in American material culture, folk art, body lore, popular music, socio-linguistics, dance, games and sports.

His Ph.D. in folklore will carry minors in ethnomusicology and sociology. He found the dissertation topic, bodybuilding, while riding a stationary bike at the HPER gymnasium.

He was an IU master’s degree candidate at the time, interested in children’s folklore, games and sports. But while watching adults work out, he noticed, “How little conversation goes on at the HPER.”

The observation riveted him. People made frequent eye contact, but did not directly introduce themselves or even greet each other.

That spurred him into writing papers on nonverbal communication, and about how people design their bodies for different reasons. He contends that bodybuilders, especially competitive bodybuilders, develop physiques as abstract art, instead of for health or beautification.

Orejuela traveled throughout the U.S., for two years, to meet and study bodybuilders. He interviewed the athletes and lifted weights with them.

“You can’t study cultures or subcultures without having contact or participation in some way,” he said.

He found many of his contacts through fitness magazines and word-of-mouth, and by approaching them at bodybuilding competitions.

His research branched into women’s body building issues, and the physiology of adding muscle. Meanwhile, spending every other weekend on the road in various city gyms, Orejuela changed his lifestyle for good.

He continues to lift weights, and to contact his subjects.

“They’ve become more important to me than just informants,” he said. “They have become my best friends.”

The doctoral candidate has more on deck. He wants to explore the competitive nature of hip-hop dance (“breakin”), and its relation

to the traditional, underground African American martial art, “Knockin’ and Kickin’” - a close relative to the Brazilian fight-dance tradition, “Capoeira.”

Orejuela knows a lot about American hip-hop, already, having taught, “Hip Hop, Music and Culture” (F389), to IU undergraduates since 1997 (first as associate instructor). The IUB Faculty Fellows Program awarded Orejuela a fellowship to continue F389 this year.

Along with ethnomusicology Professor Portia Maultsby, Orejuela helped build a 20-chapter interactive Website for the class, including 300 musical clips, 275 images and extensive timelines.

He has become techo-savvy - compiling F389 video and music clips on DVDs for class, and designing the original folklore Website.

The F389 Website allows students to see and hear hip hop pioneers such as Run DMC.

Orejuela appreciates that folklore has allowed him to combine interdisciplinary skills and interests. The Cincinnati native will continue exploring cultural themes at IU.

“To really grasp the culture, you do have to go into other fields,” he said. However, “The body is always central to me in terms of my research.”



Fernando Orejuela

**“You can’t study cultures or subcultures without having contact or participation in some way.”**

**- Fernando Orejuela**

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# Professor follows African American heritage

## Uraina Pack

Professor Uraina Pack shared her love of African American narratives with IU students.

She taught “Folklore from the Plantation to the Present,” for the African American and African Diaspora Studies department. She based the undergraduate course on her Ph.D. dissertation work - four chapters collectively titled “The Trickster in African American narratives and Autobiographies.”

The New York native has pursued a doctorate in English at the University of Kentucky, Lexington, for five years. She teaches American literature, business writing, African American literature, British literature and English writing. She also has taught English and “Developmental English” at Jefferson Community College in Kentucky. She earned her master’s degree in English from Clark Atlanta University in Georgia.

At Clark, she wrote thesis paper “Afrointratextuality as a Means of Examining Folklore in the Emancipation Narratives of Frederick Douglass, Williams Wells Brown, and Harriet Jacobs.” The paper represented her coming of age in academia.

She had not known where to focus her graduate studies until taking a folklore class with Professor Mary Twining, at the University of Kentucky. Twining talked about African

American street games, stories and traditions, and historical narratives that Pack knew - elements of the African American experience she wanted to explore.

“Boom. It just came to me and it was very familiar,” she said. “It was always there, because I come from a South Carolinian family, and growing up, I always heard stories, songs and expressions.

... But I didn’t always know the larger meaning from a socio-political perspective.”

She launched what has become an eight-year study of slave narratives, poetry, songs, journals, books, and, more recently, jazz and hip hop performances.

She has studied how the “trickster” figure evolved through African American storytelling - from oral to written form, and specifically in autobiographies. The trickster is a traditional character type, expressed in many cultures, which often uses wit and cunning to outsmart its oppressors.

“I’m basically seeking to uncover trickster behavior, be it literal or rhetorical.” She discusses tensions

experienced by narrators who attempted to explain and/or validate the behavior.



Uraina Pack

Pack has worked to give her daughter, Athena, a critical perspective of literature and history. She hopes the 16-year-old will use critical thinking to succeed in college. And she recognizes that the girl has had to live up to rigorous aca-

democratic standards.

“I would say she’s particularly burdened by living with an English teacher,” she joked.

Looking back, Pack can’t explain how she managed to raise a daughter, while pursuing higher education. But she believes she follows a long tradition of African American women, who tirelessly support their families.

“And, you know, children also motivate us, because we’re not just doing something for ourselves, and I think they really help to keep you going.”

After graduation in Lexington, Pack plans to retire trickster research (for awhile, at least). She wants to study the abolition poetry of Quaker John Greenleaf Whittier, as well as depictions of blacks in reconstruction novels. This fall, she and a colleague are investigating Frederick Douglass’ relationships with women during the abolition and women’s movements.

**“I’m basically seeking to uncover trickster behavior, be it literal or rhetorical.”**

**- Uraina Pack**