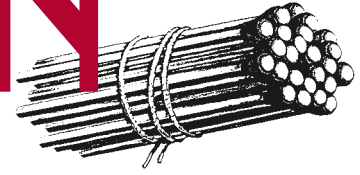


ATUMPAN

(Ah-toom-pähn: "talking drums")



African American & African Diaspora Studies at Indiana University

Vol. 18 ♦ College of Arts & Sciences Alumni Association ♦ Fall 2004

From the chair

Exciting time to be in AAADS

To all of our friends, colleagues, and alumni, I greet you as the interim chair of the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies. We are on the move this academic year.



Valerie Grim

The faculty is deeply involved with the creation of new undergraduate and graduate courses. Each member of the faculty continues to do exciting research and teaching that relates to the experiences of Africans in the diaspora. Because of this focus, the number of students seeking a degree from our program, as well as the enrollment in our classes, continues to grow.

This year, we welcomed many new faces. Twelve new graduate students who are smart and energetic joined us. They come to Indiana University from schools located in the East, Midwest, and Japan. Our returning students continue to work on their theses and prepare papers for conferences. Currently, we have 35 students working toward a master's degree in AAADS. Our two-year program has graduated nearly two dozen students since our initial class in 1999. They have gone on to PhD programs at IU and other universities around the country.

We are enthusiastic about our two new faculty members and visiting professor. Our newest full professors are **Vernon Williams** and **Eileen Julien**. Each brings a rich interdisciplinary approach to the study of the African diaspora. Professor Julien's work focuses on comparative literature, while Professor Williams's research emphasizes the historical works of African

Americans in the behavioral and social sciences. **Alvin Chambliss** joined us this fall as a visiting professor. He is a civil rights attorney who has a landmark case pending at the Supreme Court. His work concerns desegregation and the impact of *Brown* on historically black colleges and universities.

Throughout this academic year, AAADS has been involved in a number of activities. These include a faculty search, a voter registration forum, the second annual Herman Hudson Symposium, the initiation of an online journal, and the development of a graduate student fellowship initiative. We are also growing our adjunct faculty and working collaboratively with other units to cross-list courses.

One of our most exciting initiatives is the PhD program. Professor **John McCluskey** chairs the PhD Proposal Committee, which is making steady and excellent progress in our efforts to have a doctoral program by fall 2006. Many of our current students are hoping to become PhD candidates in African American and African diaspora studies at Indiana University.

To further enhance our graduate studies program and to increase our recruitment efforts, the department is pleased to announce that Professor **A.B. Assensoh** has agreed to be the director of graduate studies and admissions. Professor Assensoh has excellent contacts in the field, which he will use to help the department continue to shape its graduate program and curriculum.

We are excited about the year and look forward to great success in each of these endeavors. Because you are an invaluable resource for the department, we invite you to contact us if you have questions concerning our programs or see a way that you can lend us a helping hand.

— Valerie Grim, *Interim Chair*

Students hold forum to get out the vote

A group of students at IU Bloomington wants to make sure students not only register to vote this fall, but also are aware of current issues. In anticipation of the presidential election in November, the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies and its AAADS Graduate Society, along with Latino Studies and the Black Student Union, presented a panel discussion on Sept. 22 in the Grand Hall of the Black Culture Center.

The panelists, speaking on "Presenting the Issues: Minority Perspectives on Voting," were Yvette Assensoh, professor of political science; Jorge Chapa, professor of Latino studies; Antonio de la Cova, professor of Latino studies; Fred McElroy, professor of African American and African diaspora studies; and Jas Sullivan, doctoral candidate in political science.

According to Associate Professor of African American and African Diaspora Studies Valerie Grim, who chairs that department, "The idea of the voting forum was to create dialogue between students of color and to understand specific issues that concern them during the presidential election."

The panelists critiqued the issues of both political parties and spoke to how these policies and programs affect people of color, Grim explained. "In all, I believe some students realized that they must vote in this election and that, regardless of whether one feels that the election process is inadequate, voting is the only way they can voice their opinion."

Graduate student Danielle Chatman attended the forum and said that the panel encouraged students to think critically about the vote, "especially from the perspective of changing society, so that those typically left out can have representation and achieve greater participation. It is about understanding how to make your voice be heard as a collective."

Departmental Notes

Faculty update

Fred McElroy

Fred McElroy has recently been involved in many activities this year:

On March 20, he chaired and acted as respondent on a panel on "Race, Gender, and Culture" at the 28th annual Conference of the National Council for Black Studies, held in Atlanta. Panel members included **Leila Amine** and **Jennifer Heusel**.

On April 24, he was chair and respondent for a panel at a conference at Chicago's DePaul University. The conference's topic was "The Black Body: Imagining, Writing, (Re)Reading." Panel members included **Valerie Grim**, **Leila Amine**, **Claudia Drieling**, and **Byron Thomas**.

McElroy delivered the keynote address for the annual celebration of African-American graduates at IU in May 2004.

Meanwhile, he continues his research on the past, present, and future of black studies and delivered a panel presentation on "The Cooptation of Black Studies" at a conference on the future of black studies held at Purdue University in West Lafayette on Sept. 23.

Matthew Guterl

Matthew Guterl has just co-authored an essay, "Atlantic & Pacific Crossings: Race, Empire, and the 'Labor Problem' in the 19th Century," to appear in the winter issue of the *Radical History Review*. He is also continuing to work on two book projects: an edited collection for the University of North Carolina Press, titled *Race, Nation, and Empire in American History*, and a book, *A World Without Slaves: Race and Work in the Age of Emancipation*, for Harvard.

His preparations continue for next year's "Variations on Blackness Workshop," hosted by AAADS, which he is co-directing with Vivian Nun Halloran, of the Department of Comparative Studies.

Guterl has also begun to lay the groundwork for a study abroad course to be taught in Guyana in summer 2005.

Vernon Williams

During the 2003–04 academic year, Vernon Williams published three entries in Robert McElvaine's *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression* (Macmillan Reference USA); an entry in Henry Louis Gates and Evelyn Brooks' *Higginbotham's African American Lives* (Oxford University Press); and a dictionary entry in Stanley I. Kulter's

edition of the *Dictionary of American History* (Charles Scribner's Sons). In addition, the *Journal of African American Studies* (Transaction Publishers) brought out one of his articles. Williams also published reviews in *Peace and Change*, *Journal of American History*, *History: Reviews of New Books*, *Sbofar*, and *Transforming Anthropology*.

A.B. Assensoh

At the 22nd annual conference of Association of Third World Studies Oct. 7–9, held in Macon, Ga., A.B. Assensoh, who serves as the association's 2003–04 president, delivered his "State-of-ATWS" address. His tenure was ratified at the 20th annual conference at the National University of Taiwan in Taipei last year.

Assensoh held the 2003–04 Richard Bernstein Research Professorship at the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore. The university sent him to Europe and Africa in the summer of 2004 to complete his research, which is in part for his memoirs. His current research involves the contributions of Ralph Bunche and other African-American leaders to African decolonization. It is being funded through an IU Arts and Humanities Initiative Grant that he received last year.

He has been reappointed as a review editor (along with **Y.M. Alex-Assensoh**, AAADS adjunct associate professor) for *African & Asian Studies Journal*, Leiden, the Netherlands.

Trica Keaton

Trica Keaton's current research explores the lived experiences of blacks in Paris in relation to migration politics — a topic that will be developed into an overseas study abroad course and related research projects. Her publications include "The Other France: The Case of African Origin, Muslim Girls in the French Outer-Cities" (tentative title), which examines national identity (*Anthropology and Education Quarterly*), and "Arrogant Assimilationism: The Case of African Origin, Muslim Girls in the French Outer-Cities." She will be presenting on this topic at the 2004 American Anthropological Association conference on Nov. 17–21 in San Francisco.

Graduate program

The Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies' graduate studies program is continuing the fine recruitment job done by former graduate studies and admissions director, and now interim chair, Professor Valerie Grim. We are endeavoring to recruit additional committed and intellectually rigorous graduate students from every corner of America, as well as internationally, with emphases on recruiting Hoosier graduate students. We are also expanding our existing academic offerings. Among our immediate plans is to ensure that graduate students attend professional meetings in and out of Indiana, in addition to completing publishable scholarly work for refereed journals before they graduate from the program. Above all, grantsmanship — whereby we work hard to attract external funding to augment what is currently available to our graduate students and graduate teaching faculty — will be a major objective this year.

— A.B. Assensoh

Undergraduate corner

Last year, 15 students graduated with bachelor's degrees in the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies. We are proud of these students and wish them immense success as they enter various graduate schools, medical schools, and law schools and embark upon exciting new careers. Notably, three of the graduates have moved on to pursue the AAADS master's degree. We are delighted that they decided to stay at Indiana University Bloomington for this outstanding program.

Over the last two years, we have added four new faculty members whose research interests range from blacks in Paris to race. We are expanding our undergraduate curriculum to include sociologically based courses and additional interdisciplinary courses to provide students with a broader perspective on peoples of African descent in the diaspora. Therefore, we will continue our recruitment efforts this year and beyond to introduce more undergraduate students to our courses and to increase the number of majors and minors in AAADS.

— Virginia Githiri

Talk to the Talking  Drum:

Use the form on the back page to send us a note about what you're doing.

We'd love to hear from you!

Student Notebook

AAADS Graduate Society takes helm on important projects

Formed in 2002, the African American and African Diaspora Studies Graduate Society is an organization devoted to the intellectual stewardship of all graduate students in our department. All currently enrolled graduate students are automatically members of the AAADSGS.

The group is actively involved in

- Developing professional skills through networking, conference attendance, and grant writing;
- Offering outreach to the university, the community, and the media;
- Cultivating a dialogue to address pertinent and timely issues through forums, panels, and talks;
- Creating and maintaining collegiality among students both inside and outside of our department;
- Mentoring new students;
- Publishing graduate student work; and
- Preparing students to field media questions concerning topics in our emerging discipline.

After formalizing its existence as a registered IU student organization in 2003, AAADSGS played a pivotal role in the planning and development of the first annual Herman C. Hudson Symposium, which was held April 3, 2004. This international event featured a variety of papers around the theme “New Directions in the 21st Century.” AAADSGS members were involved in a number of activities during 2003–04, such as presenting papers at the National Council of Black Studies Conference in Atlanta, participating in an anti-racism study group, delivering excellent papers during the departmental Brown Bag Series, providing much-needed teaching and research support to the faculty, and deepening knowledge of the personal and professional expectations of a career in African American and African diaspora studies.

AAADSGS is already off to a great start for the 2004–05 academic year. Recently, members participated in departmental Graduate Student Orientation Week activities by presenting such workshops as “Developing a Teaching Portfolio,” “Living in Bloomington,” “Teaching and Grading in African-American Studies,” “Working as a Research Assistant,” and “Preparation for Conference Presentation.” The week

culminated with an awards luncheon, during which various AAADSGS members and alumni were recognized with the Outstanding Teaching, Outstanding Graduate Assistant, Outstanding Research Assistant, Outstanding Service, and Master’s Thesis with Honors awards.

During the early weeks of the semester, the society has been engaged in the development of its first official fund-raiser — an AAADSGS T-shirt to sell. The membership selected quotes by Toni Morrison and James Baldwin, as well as an AAADSGS logo for the first T-shirt, an item they hope to have available for members of the department soon. In September, AAADSGS members participated in a soul food picnic at Karst Farm Park as part of its commitment to outreach and also worked to promote a voting campaign in conjunction with the BGSA (see page 1 for related story).

The society is in the process of seeking nominations for leadership positions. Meetings are held every other Thursday at 7 p.m. at the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center. One thing all the graduate students have agreed on so far: Participating in AAADSGS is rewarding, both personally and professionally.

ATUMPAN

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Talking Drum

1980s

Rhonda D. (Buggs) Byrd, BA’86, a producer/project manager for Pristine Capital Digevents in California, writes, “My husband and I just welcomed our new baby girl, Anyah.” Rhonda also has a 3-year-old son with her husband, Damen. She lives in Riverside, Calif., and can be reached at rbyrd@pristine.com.

1990s

R. Christopher Reynolds, BA’93, JD’96, was named IU’s associate athletic director. He also serves as the department administrator for men’s basketball while working as the liaison to the Big Ten Advisory Commission and the IU Athletics Coordinating Council.

Erica R. (Newman) Allenburg, BA’96, is a marketing manager at GE Fleet Services in Eden Prairie, Minn. She recently was

married to Tom Allenburg.

Erin K. McAlister, BA’99, AC AfS’99, of Greenbelt, Md., works in the Office of International Services in Maryland.

2000s

Cynthia E. Muhammad, BA’01, is working in the accounting department of New Line Cinema in Los Angeles.

We also heard from:

Doctoral candidate **Claudia Drieling** has temporarily moved to the lands of the Navajo nation, where she is writing her dissertation in the quiet of Arizona’s high plateau desert. In October, Drieling attended the Yari Yari Pamberi Conference in New York City, where she had the opportunity to meet with writer Gloria Naylor, whose work is the subject of her dissertation.

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