

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



Welcome to Diaspora, the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies' electronic newsletter. We are all connected to AAADS in one way or another, yet we are spread far and wide throughout the university, the community, and even farther afield. We are the AAADS Diaspora.

Events

- Go to the AAADS web site (www.indiana.edu/~afroamer) in the Events & News section to read about the **Herman C. Hudson Symposium** (March 24-25), the **Francis Farrier guest lecture** (March 29), and other special events of the spring semester.
- On April 18, the department held its annual **Undergraduate Reception** to show appreciation for outstanding undergraduates in AAADS. The social hour was hosted by undergraduate studies director Professor **Fred McElroy**. Nine current AAADS students were presented with the AAADS Certificate of Appreciation: **Tyrone Allen, Terrance Dennie, Brettany Ervin, Corinna Manion, Demetria McGrew, Paul Moore, Tykia Rodgers, George Walker, and Judith Williams**. Students looking for information about majoring in AAADS and the opportunity to be mentored also attended.
- On April 20, the department held the third forum discussion in its **Forum Series** this year. A panel of five administrators, faculty, and students presented views on the topic "Minorities and the Changing Structure of Higher Education: The Quest For Excellence with Diversity — What It Means for You at Indiana University." Organized and hosted by Professor **Fred McElroy**, the discussion was held in response to student concerns over IU's plans for more stringent admissions policies and changes by the federal government in the allocation of financial aid that mean students will rely more on loans with higher rates of interest to pay their fees. Serving as panel members were AAADS adjunct professors **Charlie Nelms** (vice president for institutional development and student affairs), **Kevin Brown** (professor of law and director of the Hudson and Holland Minority Scholars Program), and **Mary Howard-Hamilton** (professor of higher

education, Indiana State University, Terre Haute) and students **George Tardy Jr.** (president, Black Graduate Student Association) and **Courtney Williams** (president, Black Student Union)

- On April 27, the annual **Graduate Student Appreciation Celebration** was held in the lounge of the Office of Women's Affairs, hosted by graduate studies director Professor **A.B. Assensoh**. Attended by special guests emeriti professors **Phyllis Klotman** and **Williams Wiggins**, the event marked the first year for several merit awards to be presented. Named in honor of the department's first three faculty members, who are now retired, the Winona Fletcher Outstanding Leadership Award was given to **Ryon Cobb**, the William Wiggins Outstanding Associate Instructor Award was presented to **Femina Ajayi**, and the Phyllis Klotman Outstanding Thesis/Creativity Award went to **Kellie Hogue**. The Community Outreach Award was presented to **Garlia Jones** for her Black Curtain Theater productions on AIDS-related topics. Medals of Honor went to **Giva Wilkerson**, for her work with the Herman Hudson Symposium; **Damien Strecker**, for his assistance with BFA/C programming; and **Amina McIntyre** and **Jennifer Heusel** for their work with the AAADS Graduate Society.

- A reception in honor of Professor **Audrey T. McCluskey** to show appreciation for her outstanding work as director of the Black Film Center/ Archive was held on May 4 in the lounge of the Office of Women's Affairs. A large crowd of well-wishers, including several IU administrators who spoke of the BFC/A's growing significance at IU and in the nation, gathered to celebrate McCluskey's achievements during the seven years of her tenure as director, which ends on June 30.

- On May 3, an impromptu **protest rally** was organized and carried out by students who became justifiably outraged when information revealed the university's intention to permanently close the **African American Cultural Center Library**, located in the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center, this summer. Following a mass march from the center, where AAADS Adjunct Professor **Grace Jackson-Brown** is head librarian, to the Wells Library, several student leaders, including AAADS graduate student **Garlia Jones** and alumna **April Smith**, met with the dean of libraries to discuss the matter, which resulted in a commitment to keep the library open for now. Meanwhile, a petition to save the library permanently is being circulated, and Vice President **Charlie Nelms** has thrown his hat in the ring to defend the resource. Of the swift student response, Jones said, "The solidarity was BEAUTIFUL!"

Faculty

- Professor **Valerie Grim** chaired a session at the Conference on Race, Roots, and Resistance at the University of Illinois in April. She also traveled to the Dominican Republic with colleagues **Iris Rosa** and **Matthew Guterl** to explore opportunities for a study abroad course. In hosting an appreciation celebration for Professor **Audrey T. McCluskey** in recognition of her seven years of service as director of the Black Film Center/Archive, Grim presented McCluskey with the department's Distinguished Service Award. To recognize the achievements of AAADS graduate students, Grim has established three awards, each named for emeriti professors in the department: the Phyllis Klotman Outstanding Thesis/Creativity Award, the William Wiggins Outstanding Associate Instructor Award, and the Winona Fletcher Outstanding Leadership Award. The awards were presented for the first time at the Graduate Student Appreciation Celebration in April. (Descriptions of these individuals and the criteria for the awards can be found on the AAADS web site in the graduate section of Programs & Admissions at www.indiana.edu/~afroamer/new_site/programs.)

- Professor **Audrey T. McCluskey** is presenting a paper at the African Literature Association in Accra, Ghana, this month. Her topic, "Dancing with History: Filmmakers in the New South Africa," is based on her recent trips to South Africa to interview filmmakers about the evolving film culture in the former apartheid state.

- On April 21, Professor **John Stanfield** hosted a conversation with the newly established African Diaspora Seminar, a group dedicated to pursuing research on the diaspora.

Adjunct Faculty

- Professor **Kevin Brown** (law) has collaborated with AAADS to establish a network with women in the Hudson-Holland Program.

- Professor **Mary Howard-Hamilton** (education, ISU) has been named Big Sister of the Year by Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Central Indiana for her commitment to mentoring youngsters. Howard-Hamilton has mentored 13-year-old Robin Myrick since 2003. The two have enjoyed such projects as gardening and putting up bird feeders, and

outings of all sorts. But, says the Big Sister, what matters more than going places is developing a friendship. Congratulations!

- Professor **Samuel Obeng** (African studies, linguistics) has been promoted, with approval by the trustees, to professor of linguistics in the College of Arts and Sciences. In March, he was an invited speaker at Yale University's African Studies Center, where he spoke on "Language Maintenance and Shift Among Immigrants in the United States." He also gave a talk at the conference on "Movements, Migrations, and Displacements in Africa" at the University of Texas at Austin in March. As co-editor of two internationally refereed journals (*Issues in Intercultural Communication* and *Issues in Political Discourse Analysis*), he invites submissions on African American and African diaspora political discourse, as well as cross-cultural and intercultural discourse between African Americans and other Africans in the diaspora.

- Professor **Charles Sykes** (African American Arts Institute) hosted an amazing evening of fun and well-deserved acknowledgements at the annual Arts Institute Banquet on April 25.

Graduate Students

- **Femina T. Ajayi**, a dual graduate student in African American and African Diaspora studies and SPEA, has been particularly busy these last few weeks gathering some much-needed sources of inspiration for her research. In two conferences in different regions of the country, she presented her working paper on "Effective Federal, State, and Local Programming for African Refugees." The first conference, held at the University of Texas at Austin, was on "Movements, Migrations, and Displacements in Africa." There, Ajayi presented her paper twice and networked with the conference director, Toyin Falola, and the director of the African World Press. She also received valuable contact information and source ideas that she can use in her paper. At the second conference, the IU School of Public and Environmental Affairs PhD Student Conference, Ajayi was one of only a few MA students to present among a sea of PhD students. Again, she was able to gather valuable information and contacts. Of the dual learning adventure, Ajayi says, "I had a wonderful experience with both conferences, which gave me the confidence I needed to jumpstart my research this summer!"

- **Ryon Cobb** helped to organize a forum, titled "Racism's Pulse: Black Religion and the

Problem of Race in America," to address issues in African American religion and politics. The well-attended event took place in the Neal-Marshall's Grand Hall on April 19. Panel participants included AAADS adjunct professors professors **Claude Clegg** (history) and **Lawrence Hanks** (political science).

- **Mary Smith-Forrest** coordinated a very successful reunion at Second Baptist Church over Mother's Day weekend on May 13-14, bringing back those who went to Sunday school at the church and sang in the children's choir between 1970 and 1990. Smith-Forrest directed the choir for more than 10 years. On another front, Smith-Forrest, whose MA thesis was recently approved by her committee, attended the Graduate Student Appreciation Celebration to congratulate her fellow graduates. Of the event, she says, "Dr. Grim has set a new standard in the department with this celebration! The awards and the winners were very impressive, but the crowning touch was the presence of the emeritus professors who gave us a sense of the department's history and the debt we owe both the past and the future."

Comings & Goings

- AAADS wishes Professor **Trica Keaton** well in her new position at the University of Minnesota and thanks her for three years of service to our department.
- AAADS welcomes Professor **Michael Martin**, the incoming director of the Black Film Center/ Archive. He will begin his tenure with the center in July.
- A hearty welcome is also extended to the **incoming graduate students** for fall 2006! They are David Amposah, Sara Bagby, Regina Barnett, Cory Brodnax, Katie Hollingsworth, Bergis Jules, Peters Omoregie, Phillip Wagner, Hassan Wahab, and Langston Wilkins.
- Congratulations to the 2006 **graduating class of MA students!** They are Femina Ajayi, Tahirah Akbar-Williams, Danielle Chatman, Ryon Cobb, Tiffany Combs, Enya Hargett, Jennifer Heusel, Kellie Hogue, Amina McIntyre, Allana Radecki, Mary Smith-Forrest, Giva Wilkerson, and Marshawn Wolley.



All faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students, please send your comments, suggestions, and information on your activities and interests to Carol Edge at ccege@indiana.edu or to the department in care of Paula Cotner at pmjerr@indiana.edu.

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