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Editorial Team

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Messages from African American and African Studies
AAAS@MSU Going Digital: E-Sankofa and the Black Studies Re-Imaginary

R. Kiki Edozie (PhD)
Professor and Director,
African American and African Studies

If we were to choose a core disciplinary methodology to capture the distinctiveness of our academic imprint at African American and African Studies programs/departments writ large; it would be cultural studies. By focusing on the “transient” rather than the “transcendental”; as a field of study, cultural studies examines areas of culture largely ignored by other disciplines. Like African American and African Studies, cultural studies is a site for marginal or minority discourses, offering emphases on every life. It is interdisciplinary, underscoring critical literacies, works with multiple public and community spheres, and especially – privileges the image and the politics of visibility (Sarah Nuttal and Cheryl-Ann Michael, Senses of Culture, Oxford University Press, 2000).

This spring 2015 at MSU’s AAAS, through the launching of our Project E-Sankofa, we have attempted to embody our discipline this way as a “cultural study”! We developed Project E-Sankofa to leverage cultural studies in ways that would engage
new digital disciplinary platforms for teaching, research, and community engagement for African Diaspora Studies. For example, as the Sankofa bird symbol demonstrates, “imaging”, “visual representation” and “artistic expression” represent longstanding forms of creativity and mass communication among African heritage communities.

Leveraging this tradition of “going back to bring forward”, we are engaging our discipline’s traditional literacies such that are West African Adinkra visual and oral philosophies to transform them to contemporary “electracies”- seen as digitized learning medias of knowledge production of the present and the future. We have had a semester of help in engaging these technological innovations. For example, according to Dr. Adam Banks, who visited us this semester as part of our E-Sankofa theme,

"The Black scholar and artist working for liberation must create more than just content: s/he must also work to create free spaces where Black folk can work together, love each other, and just be. I mean physical, virtual, and imaginative spaces. We have lived in a state of continual-force and searching, but still continual-migration. We have to reconnect, reconstruct, what is continually torn asunder."

In this vein, all semester, we at AAAS have attempted to use Project E-Sankofa to create a space to engage in a public conversation. We hope that the knowledge drawn from the conversations will cultivate and foster our own development of

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virtual learning environments, such as MOOCs, digital archives, and e-publishing in African American and African Studies.

Indeed, the E-Sankofa speaker series was launched by an Africana Studies professor at Arizona University, Dr. Bryan Carter, who the Chronicle of Higher Education calls a “Top Tech Innovator of 2015”. Through his own work, Carter enables students to inhabit history-through his course on the Harlem Renaissance-through digital environments such as “Second Life” and “Videoliscious”.

While a traditional classroom would use texts and listen to and observe audio-visual mediums to acquire African American history and culture; Carter has developed storytelling apps for presentations and conducts live-streamed broadcasts to enliven teaching and learning in African American Studies.

Emphasizing digital public history through blogs that connect scholars and communities of the African Diaspora from Detroit, to Grenada, to West Africa and back, Dr. Eric McDuffie, professor of African American Studies & History at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign re-imagined the histories of the Black Midwest—“without walls”.

Presenting his own new research titled, Humanities without Walls: Garveyism and Diaspora in the Midwest. McDuffie drew

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3 https://pbs.twimg.com/profile_images/427367160604655616/Rxwnia6m.jpeg
from primary research conducted in Trinidad, Grenada, and the United States to recover the life and times of Louise Norton Langdon Little (1884-1991), a dynamic Grenadian-born, Garveyite thinker and activist who is best known as the mother of Malcolm X.

And...what would it look like if Black women's perspectives were at the heart of social and technology oriented problem solving strategies? This was the main question that shaped Dr. Tiffany Russell's live video-conference talk from Georgia State University.

Dr. Tiffany Simpkins Russell

Self-describing herself as pro-woman and pro-geek, an identity that she argued will change the world, Dr. Russell argued that at the center of who women are is what needs to be brought to the technological world and workforce. With Dr. Russell, we saw how issues in Black feminism and gender identity work together with technology.

In helping us to ‘re-imagine’ and ‘re-image’ creative Black Studies spaces at AAAS@MSU this spring ‘15; we concluded the semester with the discourses of University of Kentucky’s “Digital Griot”, Dr. Adam Banks. Banks' talk creatively linked oral, print, and digital productions together in ways that centralize African American discursive practices and represents them as part of a multicultural set of ideas and pedagogical commitments.

We took E-Sankofa with us to Detroit to infuse a weekend of community events in the city around the related theme, “Detroit and the Digital Divide”.

4 http://ecx.images.amazon.com/images/I/51VvhlkJcL._SY344_BO1,204,203,200_.jpg
There, we convened a panel of Detroit educators, community activists, and scholars who discussed and debated distinctive initiatives that the city is embarking on to re-constitute the city through technology.

All semester, through E-Sankofa, we have been engaged in a discussion of how the infusion of digital manifestations into African Diaspora storytelling traditions can help us as students, professors, and scholars to innovate and re-represent our disciplinary study in dynamic and engaging ways.

No doubt, our 10th edition newsletter, The Emerging Black Studies Scholar, brought to you in a digital platform of its own right serves to fulfill this kind of Black Studies’ re-representation.

As usual, our 10th edition themed around the topic of “digital Black Studies”, contains several articles written by our student body and that capture the essence of yet another exciting semester at AAAS-MSU!

Connect, Read Digitally, and Re-imagine!

R. Kiki Edozie
Community, Outreach, and Technology at AAAS

by Dr. Ransaw
Research Specialist

No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.

— Aesop

The current social climate in America has created a need as well as a desire to learn more about people of African descent. One important thing to know about people of African descent is that conscious community activism is a hallmark of African cultures (Asante, 2003). MSU’s African American and African (AAAS) Studies Program continues that African tradition of community consciousness through its outreach mission. In fact, AAAS’ symbol the Andinkra Sankofa bird was chosen because it represents remembering what has worked in the past to inform communities today.

Every year AAAS works with as many Black owned and Black centered community partners as possible in an effort to remember that sustaining and reinforcing community relationships create a better future for all of us. The Charles Wright Museum, The Motown Museum, Roberts Riverwalk Hotel and Eli’s Catering were all Black owned businesses that we partnered with for our 5th Annual Community Day this year.

While scholarship is imperative at AAAS, so too is using what we learn to inform and improve community. That is why this academic year, we at AAAS have themed our year as “digitization.” E-Sankofa or producing “electracies” from traditional “literacies” as we do when we reach into Akan histories has been the hallmark of our outreach mission this year. We are passionate about helping to make this planet a better world for us all. If you would like to know more about what we do here at AAAS, please go to the link at: https://www.msu.edu/~aaas/ or feel free to drop us a line at: aaas@msu.edu.

Links
Adinkra Symbols and Their Hidden Meaning https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqNac3Te0F1

References
Campus Events
Celebrating Martin Luther King And Black History Month

by Tiffany Caesar
2nd Year Ph.D. Student

AAAS had two wonderful events to celebrate Black History Month that included the 26th Annual National African American Read-In directed by Dr. April Bell and the Martin Luther King Lecture featuring Dr. James Conyers. The Martin Luther King Special lecture occurred on January 23, 2015 in the MSU International Center. He spoke on his newly released book called Race in American Sports. Dr. Conyers' examined the issue of race in college and professional sports. He analyzed the effects of stereotypes on black female college athletes, and the self-handicapping of black male college athletes. He also discussed the movement of colleges between NCAA designated conferences, and the economic impact and effects on academics for blacks. Dr. James Conyers is the Director of the African American Studies Program and the Center for the Study of African American Culture at the University of Houston. He is the author of several books, including: The Evolution of African American Studies, and Qualitative Methods in Black. Conyers is also the editor of Africana.
The Read-In was on February 24, 2015 in Bessey Hall’s Writing Center. It was open to MSU students, faculty, and community members alike. The objective of the Read-In was to get students to read an excerpt of their own writing, or their favorite African American author/writer. All of the following readings were welcomed: fiction, spoken-word, lyrics, and essays. Dr. April Baker Bell has her PhD in Rhetoric and Writing from Michigan State University. Her research interests include Language and Literacy, English Education, Urban Education and Cultural Rhetorics. Her current publications include "I Never Really Knew the History behind African & American Language": Critical Language Pedagogy in an Advanced Placement English Language Arts Class and Re-thinking Personal Narrative in the Pedagogy of Writing Teacher Preparation. AAAS looks forward to more innovative and engaging Black History events!
Augmenting Reality, Augmenting Black Studies: The Work of Bryan Carter

by Kristin D. Rowe
Spring 2015 M.A Graduate

Virtual reality, artificial intelligence, big data, and or… Black Studies? The work of Assistant Professor in Africa Studies at University of Arizona- Tucson, Dr. Bryan Carter, brings together cutting edge technology and Africana Studies literature, art, and history, to create brand new and exciting educational praxis. For some, digital humanities and Black studies theory seem worlds apart; however, Dr. Carter’s work bridges this gap by allowing his students to explore 1920s Black art and culture through the technological advances of today.

On Friday, February 27th, 2015 Dr. Bryan Carter gave a talk called “Digital Africana Studies: Virtual Harlem and Walking the Black Spirit in Paris.” This lecture was the first installment of the African American and African Studies (AAAS) program’s Speaker Series entitled, “Project E-Sankofa: Literacies and Electracies of Community Transformation.” Dr. Carter’s work uses digital tools such as “augmented reality” and “virtual reality” to help his students visualize historic moments in a new way. During Dr. Carter’s talk, he spoke of two of his projects: 1) “Walking the Spirit” and 2) “The Virtual Harlem Project.” Both of these projects allowed students to explore the historical context of 1920s Black expatriate Paris, as well as Harlem, New York, respectively.

“Walking the Spirit” is a project that uses “augmented reality” to help represent certain points throughout a tour of African American expatriate Paris during the 1920s. “Augmented reality” is when one can view a physical, real-world space augmented by digital sounds, videos, graphics, etc. With Dr. Carter, the students actually flew to Paris in real life via a study abroad, and then educationally enhanced their trip by using
augmented reality. The students visited sites where entertainer Josephine Baker and writer Richard Wright frequented, and visited many other historic landmarks. Eventually, the class created digital projects in order to record their travels. On his innovative project, Dr. Carter said, “It’s one thing to experience something, then to join the conversation digitally. This [project] is just another form of visualizing information.”

Similarly, Dr. Carter’s “Virtual Harlem Project” uses “virtual reality” to allow students to view Harlem, New York during the 1920s Jazz Age/ Harlem Renaissance. Students created virtual avatars of themselves, in order to experience the sights and sounds of a virtual Harlem world. Dr. Carter suggested that Virtual Harlem was one of the first educational projects focusing on an African American experience of its kind by a major company. He maintained that this kind of project is important for its emphasis on “interaction, role play, and critical thinking.”

Dr. Bryan Carter has worked on the aforementioned projects as an Assistant Professor of Literature and Africana Studies at the University of Arizona, Tuscon. He specializes in African American Literature of the 20th century, while focusing on the Harlem Renaissance and digital culture. He has published numerous works on his research, and his most recent book is called *Digital Humanities: Current Perspective, Practices and Research*. He teaches courses such as “Introduction to African American Literature,” “Africana Studies,” and “Topics in Africana Studies: African Americans in Paris.”

Despite that African American Literature and digital humanities might seem unrelated, Dr. Carter maintains that his work is integral to the aims and goals of Black Studies. He describes work such as his as “radical,” while acknowledging that this radicalness, “does not look the same as it did in the 1960s”—likely referencing the arguably more radicalized time and space when Black Studies as an academic discipline began. He suggests that using this technology for Black people and experiences is in itself subversive, and that his work allows his students expanded room for critical thinking. “That’s what digital Africana Studies does,” he notes. “It allows you to ask different questions that you couldn’t ask before!”
Digital Black Women’s History with Dr. Erik McDuffie

by Shelby Pumphrey
1st Year Doctoral Student

Erik S. McDuffie is associate professor of African American Studies and History at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, he has also taught at the University of Delaware. McDuffie is the author of Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism (2011), which won the 2012 Wesley-Logan Prize from the American Historical Association – ASALH as well as the Letitia Woods Brown Book Prize from the Association of Black Women Historians in 2011.

He is currently working on two projects, the first titled, Decision in Africa: The Council on African Affairs, Diasporic Radicalism and the Global Cold War at Midcentury. The other project, entitled Garveyism in the Diasporic Midwest: The American Heartland and Global Black Freedom, 1920-1980, is more directly tied to his lecture, “The Diasporic Journeys of Louise Norton Langdon Little: Grassroots, Garveyism, Women, the Midwest and Global Black Freedom,” during which he charted a historical trajectory of Little’s life from her travels from Grenada to Canada and eventually to the United States, up until her death in 1990. McDuffie’s work serves as a corrective to the historical record that recognizes her only as a tragic figure who lived in the shadow of her son, Malcolm X. Instead his work depicts Little as a staunch activist dedicated to the liberation of Black people globally.

Using primary source documents, like Little’s baptismal record found during his trip to Grenada, her writing in the United Negro Improvement Association’s The Negro World, as well as interviews with descendants of the Langdon family in Grenada,
McDuffie was able to give voice to a narrative that hasn’t been thoroughly unpacked. McDuffie’s uses Little as an example of how Caribbean women created Diasporic networks, additionally he uncovers the ways that Caribbean women played integral roles in building and sustaining the Garvey movement at the grassroots level. Similar to how Little’s story has been left out of historical narratives, Caribbean women’s leadership and activism have also been by and large erased from research done on the Garvey movement and the UNIA. While only briefly, McDuffie’s lecture also included one of the darkest portions of Louise Little’s life, which was her involuntary commitment to Kalamazoo State Hospital in 1939. The lecture was primarily framed by her transnational activism but by highlighting this lesser known aspect he was able to identify another one of the many ways that Black women suffered under the weight of racist state systems.

Additionally Dr. McDuffie invited Ms. Deborah Jones, the granddaughter of Louise Little, to the lecture, during which she was kind enough to share some personal family memories of her grandmother. Her presence and fond memories were well received by the audience. Finally, Dr. McDuffie’s interdisciplinary work is important not only for Black Studies scholars but also for scholars of History, Women’s Studies as well as other disciplinary backgrounds. He provides an innovative and fresh look at a topic that deserves more attention and research.
Womanist Technology With Dr. Tiffany Russell by Ramon Jenkins

As part of its E-Sankofa project, African American and African Studies (AAAS) hosted its very first zoom in video conference speaker series lecture on April 3rd. This lecture along with others will be incorporated into the e-Sankofa Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), which will be up and running for Summer Session 2015. For this speaker series AAAS decided to recruit Dr. Tiffany Simpkins Russell, Executive Director of Dover Training Institute located in Atlanta, Georgia.

Dr. Russell is an educator and womanist at Georgia State University with expertise in multiculturalism, African American Studies, and womanism. Moreover, Dr. Russell created one of the first story book apps for black children titled, *A Song for Miles*. As executive director of Dover Training Institute Dr. Russell and her staff provides customized training, continuing education, and ongoing support services to youth and adults in underserved communities.

Dr. Russell lecture, “Black Womanist Technology: Pro-Woman, Pro-Geek, and Pro-Community,” focused on womanism’s impact on technology across the African Diaspora. Dr. Russell’s envisions womanist technology as a way of incorporating more black women in the technology workforce. Dr. Russell felt womanism as a theoretical framework provided a space for women to fight all forms of oppression that class, race, and gender disrupts. Womanism and technology work together in a way that combats women’s isolation from the workforce. Womanist technology is technology reimagined, allowing girls and women to empower themselves and their community.

One way Dr. Russell used womanist technology to improve her community was through a story book application *A Song for Miles*. As
Miles. This storybook app was meant to help foster a father-and-son relationship by teaching young black boys about their heritage using black music artists such as Miles Davis and Stevie Wonder. Dr. Russell spoke about many other ways women are seeking to empower women throughout the diaspora. For example, the Pink Phone Project in Cambodia which provide women with cellphones that can allow them to receive text messages from other farmers to make sure they receive the best buck for their crop as well as report domestic violence.

This speaker series lecture was different from most speaker series that AAAS host throughout the year because it was a live-stream lecture. AAAS sent out a chat video conference link via its Twitter account @msu_aas fifteen minutes before the lecture commenced. The zoom chat room accommodated a total of 25 people, 15 people joined the chat room and 10 people from MSU-AAAS were sitting in the auditorium where the lecture was held. Judging from the raving reviews received from MSU faculty and students, this speaker series was very successful. It allowed students and scholars across various disciplines to attend a dynamic lecture by a phenomenal scholar.
Remixing Black Rhetoric, Revealing the Digital Griot: Dr Adam Banks

by Tiffany Caesar
2nd Year Ph.D. Student

Cool. Artistic. Lyrical. These words may not be what you think of immediately when you think of a scholar—but Dr. Adam Banks disrupts the notion of what a traditional scholar looks and act like by adding a blend of a new swagger with a timeless Renaissance man. According to Dr. Adam Banks,

The Black scholar and artist working for liberation must create more than just content: s/he must also work to create free spaces where Blackfolk can work together, love each other, and just be. I mean physical, virtual, and imaginative spaces. We have lived in a state of continual-forced and searching, but still continual-migration. We have to reconnect, reconstruct what is continually torn asunder.

Dr. Adam Banks is an Associate Professor of Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Media and Africana Studies at the University of Kentucky. He received his PhD in English from Penn State University in 2003.

Friday April 24, 2015, MSU and the Detroit community had the opportunity to hear the prolific speaker Dr. Adam Banks; he was our keynote speaker for our annual community day. He presented a mixtape of African American digital rhetoric drawn from his innovative book, Digital Griots: African American Rhetoric in a Multimedia Age. A review of the book mentions that,

Adam J. Banks makes his own contribution to the conversation by arguing that the writing classroom can serve as a forum for the intersection of African American storytelling traditions and digital rhetoric...

Banks believes that the DJ is a quintessential example of the digital griot; he also describes how a DJ is a high-tech storyteller. By engaging in a discussion of how African American
storytelling traditions and their digital manifestations can help scholars and teachers shape writing, rhetoric, and composition studies.Dr. Adam Banks brings you into a musical world tuned to black culture. Bank’s talk creatively linked oral, print, and digital productions together in ways that centralize African American discursive practices and re-presents them as part of a multicultural set of ideas and pedagogical commitments. The talk was held at the MSU-Detroit Center, and it was well received by the audience, as Dr. Adam Banks took us down memory lane with a Motown intro that had the crowd standing on their feet.

In describing his idea of a digital griot, he introduced the audience to the renowned DJ Lynnee Denise - an African American woman who mixes worldly sounds, old and new school, in the name of preserving and re-mixing black culture. She breaks the archetype of what it means to be a DJ, and she is quite strategic in her efforts of voluminizing the black sound. She “creates multi-dimensional and multi-sensory experiences that require audiences to apply critical thinking to how the arts can hold viable solutions to social inequality” according to her website. Simultaneously, she does “music events and public lectures that offer participants the opportunity to develop an intimate relationship with under-explored topics related to the cultural history of marginalized communities”. Dj Lynnee is the epitome of Bank’s Digital Griot combining culture, music, and technology together to create an unforgettable cadence.

I was so inspired by Dr. Adam Banks hyperintelligent lyrical performance that I was motivated to finally create my own website dedicated to one of my passions, black children stories. The name the of website is Griot Tales, and it is dedicated to African-Centered children stories from Africa and the African Diaspora. You can check it out at http://www.griottales.weebly.com. I am now embarking on my own musical journey, as I find the DJ spin in my life-and I have the provocative, yet enlightening, Dr. Adam Banks to thank for that internal discovery.
Talking Black: Undergraduate Minor Talkbacks on Race, Pop Culture, and Education

by Juan Maefield
1st Year Ph.D. Student

The African American and African Studies (AAAS) Undergraduate Minor Team is delighted to announce new and exciting courses for the Fall of 2015 and the Spring of 2016, new initiatives, new events, and numerous new student enrollees into the AAAS Undergraduate Minor! All of these advancements could not have been achieved without the diligence and determination of Undergraduate Minor Assistant and Doctoral student Kristin Rowe, who oversaw the development of two fascinating talkbacks that took place during the Spring semester, and Journalism major/AAAS Minor Kenya Abbott Jr., who moderated these two events. These two students, along with the AAAS Undergraduate Minor Team (a team of AAAS undergraduate students, graduate students, and core faculty) all helped shape the all-new African American and African Studies (AAAS) Undergraduate Minor this semester, Spring, 2015.

These talkbacks contributed to the growing body of students interested in learning about African American and African Studies, fostered conversations between students and panelists, and created a space for talking about issues revolving around race and identity. The first event, #BLACKART: A Talkback on Black Art & Pop Culture in 2015, featured a panel of: (1) Core faculty members Dr. Tamara Butler (English), Dr. Jeff Wray (English),
and Dr. Lisa Biggs (Residential College of in the Arts & Humanities) (2) AAAS Doctoral student Michael Wilson, and (3) Undergraduate students Elvie Bongo banda (Comparative Culture & Politics), Salem Joseph (Comparative Culture & Politics), and Kinsey Clark (Interdisciplinary Studies), and was moderated by Kenya Abbott Jr. (Journalism).

These panelists engaged the audience in a stimulating conversation that centered the discussion on pop culture by asking provocative questions such as: Does Iggy Azalea walk a line between appreciation and appropriation of hip-hop? Does hip-hop owe its fans authenticity? And finally, is Nicki Minaj’s "Anaconda" sexual liberation or exploitation?

The second major event held by AAAS’ Undergraduate Minor Team this semester was called #LearningWhileBlack: A Talkback on Race and Education. This talkback featured a panel of: (1) Core faculty members Dr. April Baker-Bell (WRAC & AAAS), Dr. Terah Venzant Chambers (Education Administration), Dr. Chezare Warren (Teacher Education), (2) Doctoral students Tiffany Caesar (AAAS), AJ Rice (AAAS), and Gregory White (Educational Policy), and (3) Undergraduate students Florence Otaigbe (International Relations) and Turai Finley (Social Relations And Policy, JMC), and was moderated by Kenya Abbott Jr. (Journalism). Some of the topics included “Diversity” & Being Black at a Predominantly White Institutions, and Race in Detroit Public Schools. The overarching theme was the way in which race
influences how black African Americans are being educated in urban grade schools, but this miseducation also continues when black students reach the university. The discussion also focused on the black experience within the classroom, including speaking “improper” English, prejudiced comments by professors, and university professors’ low expectations of black student achievement.

These “talkback” events affords each person the opportunity to share his or her knowledge and experiences concerning race, white privilege, police brutality, education, and cultural appropriation. Short clips were shown to help spur the conversation, and tweets from the audience were displayed by us following the Twitter hashtags #BLACKARTatMSU and #LearningWhileBlack throughout these events. This use of technology allowed the event to be particularly interactive, and allowed for the students to share links, videos, and thoughts with one another.

We have met a lot of undergraduate students at these events, and the influx of undergraduate minor enrollees that has occurred this semester is a reflection of that. The AAAS Undergraduate Minor Team plans to host more events like these in the Fall of 2015, so be on the lookout!
Community and Global Outreach

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE
OF EVENTS AND FEATURES

Overnight stay in Detroit River Walk Hotel
April 24-25th, 2015
Round-trip transportation provided
Free meals & lodging provided

CULTURAL TOURS
Charles Wright Museum of African American History
Hitsville Motown Museum

COMMUNITY IN-SERVICE LEARNING
Paul Robeson/Malcolm X Academy, Detroit, MI
Timbuktu Academy of Science and Technology, Detroit, MI

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS
A Keynote Adam Banks:
Digital Griot: African American Rhetoric in a Multimedia Age
Faculty, Student, and Activists Panel Discussion
Round-trip transportation provided
Free meals & lodging provided

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MSU Student Support Services & Recruitment Sonya Gunnings

Undergraduate Studies College of Arts and Letters Fred Rauscher

Office of Outreach and Community Engagement:
Residential and Hospitality Services Leadership Team

Michigan State University
African American and African Studies Presents:
“I Detroit... My Detroit...”

The Digital Divide

BRIDGING

5th Annual Detroit Community Outreach and Engagement Day
April 24th - April 25th
MSU Detroit Community Center
3408 Woodward Ave, Detroit, MI 48201
5th Annual Community Day in Detroit: I-Detroit, My Detroit: An Overview

Every year, African American and African Studies organizes a Community Day in Detroit. This year marked our 5th year. Our theme, “I Detroit…My Detroit…”: Bridging The Digital Divide… AAAS is heavily vested in the praxis of community outreach and service. This year we traveled to Detroit with MSU graduate and undergraduate students to perform a digital and college access in-service to 6th, 7th and 8th graders at both the Paul Roberson, Malcolm X Academy and the Timbuktu Academy of Science and Technology. Our activities included a lecture panel featuring Dr. Adam Banks at MSU Detroit, a visit to the Motown and Charles Wright Museums, a mentoring session with a AAAS student lead mentoring program called My Brother’s Keeper and an open-to-the-community panel discussion with presenters Hsin-yi Sandy Tsai, Keesa V. Johnson, Garlin Gilchrist, Nancy Brown and Mable Fox. Our Community Day schedule of events includes community outreach, features community service, facilitates recruitment, fosters scholarship, and represents Spartan diversity - all integral components that support MSU’s mission.

On Friday April 24th at the MSU Detroit Center Dr. Banks, an Associate Professor in Writing, Rhetoric and Digital Median and Africana Studies at the University of Kentucky presented his work on *Digital Griots: African American Rhetoric in a Multimedia Age*.

Banks offered the DJ as a quintessential example of the digital griot, high-tech storyteller by engaging a discussion of how African American storytelling traditions and
their digital manifestations can help scholars and teachers shape writing, rhetoric, and composition studies. Banks’ talk creatively linked oral, print, and digital productions together in ways that centralize African American discursive practices and re-presents them as part of a multicultural set of ideas and pedagogical commitments. This event was free and open to the public.

According to Dr. Adam Banks, "The Black scholar and artist working for liberation must create more than just content: s/he must also work create free spaces where Blackfolk can work together, love each other, and just be. I mean physical, virtual, and imaginative spaces. We have lived in a state of continual--forced and searching, but still continual--migration. We have to reconnect, reconstruct what is continually torn asunder."

On Saturday April 25th at the Paul Roberson, Malcolm X Academy MSU’s African American and African Studies hosted a panel discussion entitled “Closing the Digital-Divide in Detroit. The panelists included Hsin-yi Sandy Tsai, (Ph.D. Candidate for Media & Information Studies at Michigan State University), Keesa V. Johnson (a Learning Designer for IT Services at Michigan State University), Garlin Gilchrist (Deputy Technology Director for Civic Community Engagement for the city of Detroit), Nancy Brown (Owner, Educational Visions Alliance, Inc and former education consultant), and Mable Fox. They discussed ways in which the rich historical traditions and cultural heritage of Detroit can propel Michiganders into the future. K-12 students, MSU students, parents and community members attended the panel.
An African-Centered Approach To Technology: MSU Students Visits Malcom X Paul Robeson Academy and Timbuktu Academy of Science

by Tiffany Caesar
2nd Year Doctoral Student

For Detroit Community Day, MSU students received the great opportunity to do two in-service events at African Centered Schools in Detroit: Malcom X Paul Robeson Academy and Timbuktu Academy of Science and Technology. The theme for this year’s community day was “I Detroit...My Detroit... : Bridging the Digital Divide...” Our goal was to have an engaging conversations surrounding technology with the students about the digital divide and how technology can assist students as they navigate the college system.

African Centered Education focuses on putting African descendant children needs first by including African history, culture, and social issues within the curriculum. These schools were developed in response to oppressive forces that have used education as a form of enslavement, colonialism, and or assimilative purposes at the destruction of a people’s identity. African descendant people have been teaching their children since they have arrived in America, for example, in church and secret gatherings children were being educated. However, African Centered Education became more prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s due to the ineffectiveness of desegregation and the lack of quality in education for black students. African Centered Education provides a counter-narrative to traditional educational discourses that excludes African cultural components due to structural racism and inequities that exist for most students of color in academic institutions.

Therefore on Friday April 24, we celebrated these schools that provide alternative narrative to dominant discourse. First, we
arrived at Malcom X Paul Robeson Academy where we were greeted by an assembly of students and faculty. We did a brief panel with MSU students, and allowed the students of Malcom X Paul Robeson to ask us questions concerning our college experience. Some of the questions the students asked were “What was the college process?” “What were some of the challenges you experienced in going to college?”, “How did you choose your major?” and “What classes did you take?”. Afterwards we split into several different classes, MSU students had the opportunity to have a more intimate conversations about the digital divide. The students were so thrilled with the experience that they interviewed us for their next newspaper.

Afterwards we immediately went to Timbuktu Academy of Science and Technology. This time the MSU students were a bit more organic in how they approached the activities. In my group, not only did we have a discussion on the digital divide, but we also asked the students to create a community solution using technology. Therefore, they could see how they are community change agents. The MSU students got the chance to really see the intellect and creativity of these students as they proposed websites, hashtags, and other great technologies. Teachers even fully participated and commented on their student’s great achievement. All the MSU participants were impressed and touched by their students’ knowledge and sincerity to want to use technology to change their community.
Research and Action in the New South Africa (RANSA) is going into its fourth year as an African American and African Studies (AAAS) study abroad program, traveling yearly to the Gauteng province of South Africa. The country’s historical and cultural legacies provide students the space to examine its racial, political, and economic structures and identities and explore the “‘African World’ lived-experience in practice” ⁵. As the program prepares for the trip in May 2015, it has showcased these experiences with the MSU community through its yearly film series. The series serves to recruit interested students to study abroad as well as to use film to encourage cross-cultural conversations between South African events, people, or histories and various spaces in Africa and the African Diaspora. This semester, the second series “Visualizing South Africa: Black Struggle through Film”, showcased three films: *Mama Africa*, *Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony*, and *The Life and Death of Stephen Biko*.

*Mama Africa*⁶ presents the life of “Mama Africa”, South African singer, exile, and activist Miriam Makeba. Video footage of performances, interviews, and events surrounding Mabeka’s life are used to represent her rise to this affectionate title. Her activism and dedication to Pan African unity is portrayed in footage of her relationship with leaders and presidents of a recently post-colonial Africa including Sékou Toure of Guinea and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, her travels to the United States and relationship to

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⁵ “Research and Action in the New South Africa,” [https://msu.edu/~aaas/study_abroad.html](https://msu.edu/~aaas/study_abroad.html)

activists including Harry Belafonte and Kwame Toure (formerly Stokley Carmichael), her role as a goodwill ambassador for South Africa with the United Nations, as well as various visits and stays in African countries. These activities led to her first and second exile from South Africa, her home that she would not return for 31 years.

The film reveals her dedication to these political ends, and especially the way she uses her charisma and musical talent as a tool for liberation. Makeba tells stories of the oppression facing Black South Africans using a combination of spoken word and singing, in her language Xhosa, other South African languages as well as English. These songs were broadcasted throughout the African World. For instance, visualizing a free and independent Mozambique, the song “A Luta Continua” was written by her daughter, Bongi, after Makeba told her of her travels to Mozambique as a delegate of the Republic of Guinea. Telling this to the audience, the song follows “My people, my people open your eyes and answer to the call of the drum… …Maputo, Maputo, home of the brave. Our nation will soon be as one”7. Moving between performances, interviews, and other video footage the film celebrates Makeba’s dedication her people by teaching the world about the inequalities of apartheid and the richness in South African culture.

The film, *Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony*8 reveals the ways South African music was used as means to oppose the apartheid government. Filmed less than 10 years after the end of the apartheid, the filmmakers use current interviews and conversations among many of these artists, singers, and activists who retell their contributions to the anti-apartheid struggle. Like Makeba, the use of storytelling is central to the songs that are sung. For instance, in the song “Stimela” (The Coal Train) Hugh Masekela tells the story of the train that goes from Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, the song “A Luta Continua” was written by her daughter, Bongi, after Makeba told her of her travels to Mozambique as a delegate of the Republic of Guinea. Telling this to the audience, the song follows “My people, my people open

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7 Makeba, Miriam. “A Luta Continua,” Published Dec 9, 2012, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjdC0QRI6Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjdC0QRI6Y)
Angola, and Mozambique to Johannesburg South Africa and relates the conditions of the workers and its effect on the families left behind. He says the coal train becomes a symbol of “something that took away your mother, or your father, or your loved one, because the train was really South Africa’s first tragedy”. He tells the audience he initially wanted to become part of the revolution because “the people are always dancing and singing”.

The final viewing was of a short documentary, *The Life and Death of Stephen Biko* produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in the wake of the death of Black Consciousness leader and activist, Stephen Biko. The documentary interviews people surrounding Biko, including fellow activists, family, and government officials to discuss the trajectory of his legacy as well as his detention and murder in prison and the outrage of the South African people. The documentary was followed by a graduate student roundtable with AAAS students and RANSA 2014 alumni, Tiffany Caesar and AJ Rice. The students lead a discussion that expanded on the currently legacy of Stephen Biko and making connections to global Black consciousness movements. They shared their own experiences with his speeches and writings, such as *I Write What I Like*, drawing connections between student and national modes of activism. The also shared their experiences and fieldwork in South Africa with the program in years past, by sharing how Biko’s work has impacted the their research as well and the Black Studies discipline.

Students, faculty, and members of the MSU community joined the conversation about the films’ contributions to the development of the New South Africa. The series evoked stories from the audience and conversations about the films’ connections to current social and cultural events, movements, and studies of the African world. This year a group will travel to the Gauteng and Limpopo provinces in South Africa where they be able to explore the country’s history and culture in ‘research and action’ through individual fieldwork research and service learning opportunities.

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9 Masekela, Hugh. "Stimela", [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACEQO6f206c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACEQO6f206c)
10 *The Life and Death of Stephen Biko*, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MoNGCSgWQE0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MoNGCSgWQE0)
Video Sources

1. Miriam Makeba, “A Luta Continua,”
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjdC0QRI_6Y
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACEQO6f2O6c
3. The Life and Death of Stephen Biko,
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MoNGCSgWQEQ

Image Sources

1. Research and Action in the New South Africa 2014 students in front of the University of South Africa, May 2014
2. Mama Africa movie cover, 2011
3. Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony movie cover, 2002
4. Steve Biko, © South African History Online
MSU-AAAS Ventures to LA for the National Council for Black Studies (NCBS) Conference

by Ramon Jenkins
M.A. Graduate

This year 16 MSU-AAAS students were accepted, and 13 students presented at the National Council for Black Studies 39th Annual Conference in Los Angeles, California. National Council for Black Studies (NCBS) is generally considered Black/Africana Studies main (certainly not only) academic conference. The conference theme was *The Foundation and Future of Black Studies: Reaffirming Our* Emancipatory Mission & Value. The National Council for Black Studies organization has been at the forefront of developing Black/Africana Studies into a respectable discipline that speaks to the Black lived experience worldwide; while strengthening academic units and community programs devoted to addressing the political, social, cultural, and economic Black/Africana experience. For more info about the National Council for Black Studies please visit their website [here](#).

As an institutional member MSU-AAAS faculty, graduate students, and professional members are extremely pleased to have joined NCBS in its commitment to putting theory into praxis. See below a list of MSU-AAAS attendees and their research presentation categories and titles:
Thursday, March 12th

**Panel: Colonialism and Internal Colonialism after the Colony**

Student: AJ Rice
Title: Revisiting the Black Internal Colony: Racial Capitalism and Citizenship in Detroit

**Panel: African American Education Studies I**

Student: Tiffany Caesar
Title: African Centered Education across the Diaspora

Friday, March 13th

**Panel: Identity, Relationships, and Pedagogy in Black Queer Studies**

Student: Ramon Jenkins
Title: Are We Not Men?: A Comparative Study of Black Queer Identity in African Diaspora Film


Chair/Discussant: R. Kiki Edozie, PhD
Student: Kamahra Ewing
Title: Brazilian Afro-centricity Encounters Nollywood: Salvador, Afro-Bahian Audience Reception of the Film ‘Domitilla’

Student: Olaocha Nwabara
Title: New Routes to the African Diaspora: ‘Naija Bites’ and other Televised Cultural Productions by Nigerians in the United States

Student: Janelle Edwards
Title: The Cape Verdean who Emigrates Never Puts Down Roots: Slavery, Colonialism, and Trans-Nationalism in Shaping Cape Verdean Identity

Student: Michael Wilson
Title: Performing Diaspora: Spatial Interventions and Reclaiming Identity within the Art of Jeannette Ehlers
Panel: Africological and Critical Approaches to Popular Culture Studies

Student: Tamika Keene
Title: Black-ish: Acculturation-ist Rhetoric in Black Popular Culture

Panel: College Fraternalism and African Americas

Student: David Walton
Title: Freedom Yes, Apartheid No!: Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. and the American Anti-Apartheid Movement

Panel: Global Africana Women’s Studies

Student: Kimberly Ross
Title: Traditional Terrain: The Struggle over Women’s Land Rights in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Panel: New Africana Language Studies

Student: Blessing Shingi Mavima
Title: Bigger by the Dozens: A Study of Battle Rap as a Function of African American Linguistic Culture

Saturday, March 14th

Panel: Globally Situated Education: International Challenges and Africana Studies

Student: Tiffany Caesar
Title: African Centered Education across the Diaspora

Panel: Past, Present, and Future Challenges of African Men and Women

Student: Kristin Rowe
Title: ‘Young, Upwardly Mobile Women’: Global Identity and Female Subjectivity in Contemporary Nigeria

Student: Rik Stevenson
Title: Shipwrecks, Slavery, and Racial Identity Formation
Panel: Shifting Relations: Afro-Caribbean Negotiations of Culture and Identity

Student: Janelle Edwards
Title: Worthy Daughters of the Soil: Benevolence and the American West Indian Ladies Aid Society, 1915 – 1936
Mitvots and Miscegenation: The Alabamian Jewish Peddler

by Tanya G. Walker
Michigan State University Graduate Student,
Community Artist

Author Bio:

Tanya is enrolled in her fifth semester at Michigan State University in Graduate Studies. She is a former performing member of The International Women Cantor Network and lyrical Scholar in Sacred Jazz Arts from 2012 to 2014. She finished Art College in the areas of Urban and Art Administration at the University of Cincinnati 1983, and a graduate degree in Education in 1984. She was awarded a certification degree in creative writing in 1999. She finished terms of commissions and delegations after Ohio State University State Commission Studies in Diversity and Education from 1986 -1993.

What inspires my Beaded Kavanah arts to create this Alabamian Jewish Peddler? Ancestry. “Emet Ha Torah” are the Hebrew words for the Truth of the Torah, or the Old Testaments of Mosaic Laws. In the Year 1785, an Indian agent native to the Hebrew immigrations intermarried with a Muskogean Creek women. They created children and lives near the Alabama River and migrated between 13 Native American counties in Alabama. His named was Abraham Mordecai born in 1755 to a family of Jewish merchants. In 1785 Mordecai negotiated medicinal plants, furs, and other items for European goods. He created the first cotton gin for product exchanges’ near the Old Federal Road regions of my childhood creek bed wells in Cotton Valley Alabama. This former
Native American province remains mineral rich and protected by former generations of my Hebrew, Native American, Afro-German, Afro-Indian forefathers provincial laws. Jewish Patriarchs such as Julius Rosenwald, Henry Lehman, Mayer Lehman and Emmanuel Lehman, shared the progress of this cotton gin with provincial fathers as provincial neighboring plantations. Jewish Merchants such as Lyon and Barnett commuting on the former Federal Roads between Georgia and Alabama with wagon Rabbi leading pauses for field led prayers, Afro-Indian morning chants, and Negro Spiritual choruses.

As a research scholar and studio artist with collegiate studies and tenured commissioned in Ohioan Jewish Wards, I find stubborn discriminatory misunderstandings about skin pigments and reversed affirmative action stability, to impoverish persons of the African Diaspora or African Hebrew ancestry native to the Deep Southern miscegenation of the United States. By recreating Missing Hebrews and African Diaspora hardships within caste systems and historical series of generational coloring codes throughout our American and World Histories, I can project and expose the truth of our American declarations of life. The critical values of life, liberty, equity, happiness and the native rights of human laws to food, shelter, water, family respites, bonding, promote new freedoms from religious or racial tortures challenging greater affirmative actions that ease poverty levels among persecuted ethnic groups.

Jewish Historians such as Eric Goldstein and Joshua Rothman contribute excellent arguments and archival sources related to miscegenation and prices of “whiteness” that compromise or strengthen human rights and racial equity initiatives. The British rulings in 1667 created slave laws for children born to a female with mixed African, African, or Afro-Indian skin pigments and foot lines at the ankle area or ball of the foot. By the first year of the civil war, it is estimated by Ira Berlin that the initial 500,000 slave imports multiplied to a mixed populations of both freed Negro caste and those enslaved to 4.5 million in this year of 1860. In this area of Alabama, stockades and Native American mixes of Afro-Indian, migrated with the Trail of Tears, or suffered regional stockades.

Patriarchal lead marriage, common-law or chaste concubine childbirth relationships in rural provinces were important on the Rabbi circuits in the deeper south. These monogamous commitments were oppositional to this legalized sexual violence for slave breeding. Jewish Peddlers and merchants deviated from the Alabama caste systems to create and support the
necessary resources for effective alliances creating the colored schools of Julius Rosenwald and Booker T. Washington. My installation art research and collaborative piano studies seek to validate the merger of these cultural and ethnic histories in song and studio arts. My current research involves the historical links of the Vichy Government slave laborer, and darker SHOAH events, or what is known as Holocaust events and combat artists. My sketches and Hebrew Claystone Armature designs are inspired by the histories of black French Tirailleurs, African-American combat units, Ravensbruck testimony, the testimonial collections of Mary Constanza, the Afro-German arts of Josef Nassy, or Afro-French Johnny Williams.

Therefore, as a seventh generation daughter, niece, granddaughter, cousin, mother, scholar, musician, artist, and aunt of a unique ancestry of Sephardic Hebrews, Afro-Germans, and Afro-Indians, my sculpted beaded arts persists to incorporate and document the truthful equities and great deeds [mitzvot] to those whom misunderstand or stigmatize the brilliance and beauty of interracial cultures. Installation arts and performance arenas that demonstrate and trigger contemporary affirmative actions based on these racially punitive histories our outcomes on college campus and faculty orientations for NEW challenges that emerge to equity initiatives.

With the support of collaborative and inter-disciplinary faculty in piano and music theory, Studio Arts, African American & African Studies, and Jewish Studies, beyond my initial collegiate degrees and tenured commissions as a community and research artist in Ohioan Jewish Wards, these Michigan State department chairs and Professor Jim Lawton and Laura Cloud in Sculpture have encouraged my new series of studio art sketchbook profiles with this titles, “War Childs: The Human Spirit Triumphs” and “Darker SHOAH: Mischlinge, Mischehe, and Metis Voices”.
Student Success

Getting my hood, for my hood.

- Future
Dr. Sherrae M. Hayes
“An Experience Worthwhile” The Journey of Newly Minted PhD. Dr Sherrae Hayes

By Kenya Abbot Jr.
Graduating Undergraduate Minor

Dr. Sherrae Hayes, a proud native of Cleveland, Ohio is a recent PhD graduate from Michigan State University’s African American and African Studies (AAAS) program. Dr. Hayes applied to Michigan State University through the Institute for Recruitment of Teachers (IRT). IRT operates as an advocate for minority students trying to get into different graduate programs across the country. After visiting multiple universities, Dr. Hayes became most attached to MSU’s program and what they had to offer not just for AAAS, but for her sub-discipline of Urban Education; MSU being one of the top education programs in the nation. Dr. Hayes attended Tennessee State University and graduated with a Bachelors of Art in Communications and received her masters from New York University in Africana Studies. As a PhD candidate, Dr. Hayes has experienced numerous challenges, but has remained focused and steadfast in her endeavors. Throughout her participation in black studies, she has developed the understanding that there are different breeds of these types of programs throughout the country. Coming from New York University, it was a much different model from that which Michigan State University’s program offered. Dr. Hayes believes that the African American and African Studies program at MSU stands on the “traditional” necessary definition of black studies,
which focuses on both academic excellence and social responsibility versus the post-modern model of some black studies programs, such as New York University.

With the African American and African Studies program at MSU, Dr. Hayes has gained more experience in community development. She believes that her opportunities through AAAS as well as affiliations with numerous groups and organizations such as Black Graduate Student Association and Black Student Alliance have shaped her experience as well. Dr Hayes firmly believes when there are multiple facets available to create community, this contributes to how students are applying themselves and even their discipline. It becomes all the more worthwhile and allows students to develop a necessary, parallel community experience while navigating their academic journey. Dr Hayes acknowledges that both the university and African American and African Studies program have offered her a unique partnership in bridging the gap between her African American and African Studies discipline and her sub-discipline, Urban Education, which many PhD programs for black studies often do not provide. Through this program, Dr Hayes has been involved in the college of education. Her research and studies focuses on how black youth use fashion and style as a way of communicating their identity. Through this, she studies critical literacy under the realm of urban education through the lens of black studies.

Dr. Hayes has invested in youth participatory action research. With this opportunity, her students developed their own dress code for school, which has become the first and youngest team of students to produce their own policy in an urban environment. Finishing up her doctoral degree in only four years, Dr Hayes would pass on two pieces of advice to incoming students. First, pursue steps on the academic timeline concurrently, not consecutively; use coursework to prepare for comp exams, comp exams to write the literature review for the dissertation proposal, the dissertation proposal to help with the first draft of the dissertation, etc. Finally, she firmly believes in the notion that no one student is an “island”. The community of students developed
from undergraduate all the way to graduate programs has an integral impact on a student’s success.
Someone to Tell the Story: M.A Graduate Kathryn Mara’s Exploration of the Rwandan Genocide in Black/Africana Studies

by Emilie Diouf
Ph.D. Candidate

For Spring M.A Graduate Kathryn Mara, African American and African Studies has served as an excellent platform from which to engage her research which broadly speaking, include the study of African literature in the context of trauma, memory, and genocide. As such her M.A Thesis, "Someone to Tell the Story: Literature, Genocide, and the Commodification of Trauma in Post-Conflict Rwanda," investigates the manner in which genocide is experienced without the author necessarily experiencing The Genocide. Most of all, she interrogates the ethics of representing an experience that may not be one’s own.

After obtaining a Bachelors of Arts with Full Honors, including the World Language Requirement in December 2012 from Northern Michigan University, Kathryn Mara began coursework toward a M.A in African American and African studies with a specialization in English at Michigan State University in 2013. While at MSU AAAS, she also participated in an intensive language course in Kinyarwanda at Boston University, as well as a travel seminar to Rwanda and Ethiopia, entitled “Memorials, Museums, National and International Memory and Memorialization,” through Rutgers University’s Center for the Study of Genocide and Human Rights. Although, she is taking a brief pause before continuing on in the pursuit of a PhD in a relevant topic, Ms. Mara’s eyes are on East Africa, and ideally she would like to locate employment there, but she is also considering a few exciting opportunities stateside as well.
When I asked her about her experience as AAAS graduate student, Ms. Mara replies that it was an enriching one, certainly not in the way she expected, but no less significant. Admittedly, her time at AAAS represented her first experience as a minority-racially, at least- and though this period was ultimately temporary and self-imposed, it was a necessarily disruptive experience that has forced her to interrogate her own positionality within the discipline—that is, how her lack of "felt intuition" or inability to experience the phenomenon she studies impacts her capability to speak about it with any sense of authority.

Accordingly, Kathryn Mara intends to continue to question and challenge her place and space in Black studies, because it helps to analyze her effectiveness and, more importantly, her ability to sympathize/empathize with her subject matter.

Ms. Mara’s experience has certainly impacted her research, insofar as her own unstable or necessarily changing position within the discipline has forced her to interrogate the manner in which authorship impacts the development of the story or, more appropriately, stories. The question itself—that is, how narratives addressing the same subject matter are assigned different sets of value-can be applied to any number of African phenomenon, making her research ideal to place in communication with other African trauma narratives. To the extent that she challenges the "value" of others' voices, however, she admits she must actively challenge her own.

Indeed, my problem, or better phrased my perceived limitation, has become centered within my research, as I believe acknowledging my own self-doubt will better position me to address effectively such looming topics as the Rwandan Genocide. Indeed, this general framing of the topic has encouraged me to be humble and further recognize that I may never be an authority on the topic(s) I
hope to address. This is an inevitability that I accept, as I believe the extent to which I have engaged with Africa thus far is already a privilege, and perhaps "getting it" is acknowledging that I will never fully understand it.

More concretely AAAS has served as an excellent platform from which to engage her scholarly endeavors. Since enrolling, she has presented papers at four conferences, including the annual meeting(s) of the African Studies Association and the International Network of Genocide Scholars, the latter of which took her to Cape Town, South Africa. Within AAAS itself, her reports have appeared in "The Emerging Black Studies Scholar," and within the discipline more broadly, her film review was published in the "African Studies Review." Additionally, she was granted with the opportunity to work in an academic setting, first as a research assistant, organizing AAAS' study abroad program, "Research and Action in the New South Africa," and then as a teaching assistant within the Center for Integrative Studies in Social Science. Working alongside AAAS, as well as the African Studies Center, she helped to organize a variety of panel discussions, film series, and conferences on campus. As part of her coursework, however, she completed an internship at the Sexual Assault Program, which enabled me to serve as graduate student advisor to their theater troupe "Every Two Minutes," perform in their annual production of "The Vagina Monologues," and volunteer as an advocate in their Sexual Assault Crisis Intervention Team. Although she is happy to say that the receipt of numerous accolades has recognized her work, she is most proud of the friends and colleagues she has made and worked alongside.

Kathryn Mara has two pieces of advice to incoming graduate students, one more concrete, the other more abstract:

1. Apply! Apply for scholarships! For fellowships! For grants! Apply for pre-docs! For post-docs! For internships! Apply for conferences! For travel seminars! For professional development opportunities. You will be much happier doing so and receiving it than not and...not.
2. Try to be understanding and consider "the other's" perspective. Insofar as Black Studies is a discipline founded under the premise that one perspective is not being considered in the wider discourse, do not make the mistake of eliminating or devaluing another.
From Kinshasa, DRC to Warren MI, Graduating Minor France Elvie Banda’s Experiences

by Kristin Rowe
2nd Year Master’s Student

As a leader in the African Student Leadership Association, a major in Comparative Cultural and Politics, and a student and employee of African American and African Studies, for graduating senior France-Elvie Banda the personal is often political, and identity is critical. Budding scholar France-Elvie notes that her exemplary work on identity, race, sexuality, and culture has been greatly influenced by her choice to complete an academic specialization (now a Minor) in African American and African Studies (AAAS).

France-Elvie Banda is originally from Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), but has since resided with her family in Warren, Michigan. She attends Michigan State University, with a major in Comparative Cultures and Politics at James Madison College. She also specializes in African American and African Studies, and is a Spring 2015 graduate. “I have an interest in examining identity and that is usually what my research is centered on,” Banda states, “I also spend much of my free time discussing identity as well—race, sexuality, culture, etc...” For Banda, AAAS provides a space to explore these issues in more depth, and in ways that engender critical thinking. She notes that AAAS 300, “Survey in Africana Studies,” was her favorite AAAS course in particular for these reasons.

“It really challenged me with new material and developed my critical thinking,” Banda says of the course, offered during both fall and summer semesters. “Coming out of that course, I believe I came out a better writer. It was challenging but at the same time enjoyable,” Banda notes. Banda states that she would recommend AAAS 300, particularly for students who are “...Interested in
developing a deeper and more critical understanding of the
development of the black body/black identity from a Diasporic
perspective.” In addition to AAAS 300, France-Elvie Banda cites
AAAS’s annual Research and African in the New South Africa
(RANSA) trip as another influential AAAS-related space.

AAAS’s RANSA study abroad trip to South Africa takes
place annually from mid-May to mid-June. For Banda, this trip
complicated her understandings of race, colonialism, and the
concept of “home.” She states, “This program was a truly
enriching experience on all fronts. It gave me a chance to go back
to the continent and experience a sense of ‘coming home’ and
allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of colonialism and its
trajectory on the continent.” Banda also notes that she was deeply
impacted on the trip by 1) formal and informal lectures at the
University of South Africa (UNISA), and 2) her time interning at
the Archie Mafeje Research Institute.

In the near future, France-Elvie would like to pursue a
Master’s degree. She wants to expand the research she began in
AAAS 300, by researching African immigrants in East Asia.
Ultimately, Banda maintains that AAAS has enhanced the ways
she thinks about society, culture, movement, identity and diaspora.
She notes, “AAAS has enabled me to cement my academic focus
on the African Diaspora and carve out a unique space for myself in
examining the movements and socio-cultural transitions of African
immigrants.”
Black Woman Scholar - Student – Activist, Graduating Minor Kenya Abbott Jr Discusses her Experience

by Emilie Diouf
Ph.D. Candidate

From Metro Detroit (Oak Park), Journalism major and spring 2015 graduate Kenya Abbott Jr. chose African American and African Studies as a minor because she wanted an education that mirrored her interests and experiences as a black woman, scholar, and student activist. As such, Abbott Jr. asserts that becoming involved in AAAS was one of her greatest experiences. Through AAAS she has gained mentorship from graduate students as well as exposure and relationships with faculty and staff. Having the opportunity to meet numerous people and organize events through AAAS has also helped her to understand the world around her a little more.

When I asked Ms. Abbott Jr. about the challenges she faced as a black student activist, she replied that some of them are related to the idea that her experiences are not reflective with the majority whom are her peers, classmates and sometimes professors. She believes that as a black student leader, she often has to fill those spaces where she is not the majority, and often she becomes the face for her community. “It becomes a task in getting the university and those around you that may not look like you to understand your experience. “

As for career goals, Ms. Abbott Jr. is currently looking for work. She will be taking a year off from school prepping for GRE and/or LSAT and to be back in school to get her masters and possibly pursue a PhD.
Speaking Truth to Power: The Spring Report of the (E) Sanfoka Graduate Student Union at AAAS

by Janelle Edwards
2nd year PhD student

The mere imparting of information is not education.
- Carter G. Woodson

Congratulations on completing another year! It has been a busy year! The 2014-2015 Sankofa Graduate Student Union executive board has concentrated our efforts to providing quality Professional Development Workshops based on student feedback and requests. In addition, this year we’ve worked to further strengthen the spaces that AAAS students utilize to advocate for our program and issues of social justice in our communities.

This year’s Professional Development Workshops have been extremely successful. Our September workshop, “Publishing as Graduate Students”, was hosted by Dr. Pero Dagbovie. Students walked away with key tips to consider, including the importance of publishing as an early career scholar. Dr. Terrion L. Williamson, later, hosted a workshop called “Funding Graduate Studies.” Dr. Williamson provided guidelines for submitting a successful application and a list of upcoming fellowships and grants for graduate students of all levels and specializations. In the Spring semester, Dr. Rita Kiki Edozie and Dr. Tamara Butler offered a pedagogical approach to incorporating our interdisciplinary focus into our teaching methods and philosophies. In his workshop, “Creating Stand Alone Courses,” Dr. Muhammad Khalifa had a candid discussion with AAAS and the MSU family about preparing for the job market and the transition from graduate school to early career professional. These workshops edified AAAS student academic success through developing our grant writing, publications, and diverse teaching methods. We are eternally grateful to our core faculty members who truly believe in our capacity and success as graduate student scholars.

This year has also demonstrated the emotional resilience of AAAS students. Embodying the NCBS mission of “Academic
Excellence and Social Responsibility,” we looked closely at the recent miscarriages of justice as teachable moments for the MSU community. In this environment of open hostility, AAAS undergraduate and graduate students stepped up within subsequent protests, town hall meetings, and open forums. As scholars of international Black experiences, it is our duty to speak truth to power in our experiences at MSU and society more broadly. From our experiences, we speak to the hurt of our communities and seek to offer spaces of solace and healing through education and advocacy of justice. Likewise, through Sankofa and the Committee for Institutional Support, we continue to act as supporters for AAAS students and institutional advocacy. AAAS students supported initiatives by the undergraduate minor team to create collaborative spaces. Additionally, Sankofa was part of the “Black Leaders Building Bridges: The Inter-Generational Conversation” where we met with Black faculty, staff, and undergraduate students to dedicate ourselves to cross-generational discourse and increased participation on all levels in MSU and Greater Lansing’s Black community. Our actions, declaring Black Lives Matter, have made room for increased activism across our community.

We are pleased to honor and celebrate the TEN graduates of AAAS’ PhD, MA, and Undergraduate Specialization: Doctoral Sherrae Hayes, Brittany O’Neal; Masters Kathryn Mara, Aron Patton, Kristin Rowe, Ramon Jenkins, Sitou Akibode; Undergraduate Frances Elvie Banda, Kenya Abbott, and Rachael Tate. For those graduating, thank you for being role models for student success. You stand in the gap for us all.

This was a great year filled with academic enrichment and social engagement. Sankofa looks forward to continuing these programs, traditions, and providing spaces for graduate students to feel like part of the AAAS and MSU family.

Janelle M. Edwards
President, 2014-2015
Sankofa Graduate Student Union
Faculty Spotlight

Black Faculty in the Academy
Narratives for Negotiating Identity and Achieving Career Success
Edited by: Fred A. Bommer III, Arthea L. Quinby, Frank L. Hult, Perla A. Robinson, Rosa M. Berde, Robin L. Hughes
Professors Edozie and Stokes’ *Malcolm X’s Michigan Worldview* (Michigan State University Press, 2015) is on the Shelves!

by France-Elvie Banda
Graduating Senior, AAAS Minor and James Madison College, Comparative Cultures and Politics

MSU AAAS director and professor, Dr. R. Kiki Edozie and core faculty member, Dr. Curtis Stokes have published a first book in name of African American and African Studies. In its preface, the sixteen chapter edited volume, *Malcolm X's Michigan Worldview: An Exemplar for Contemporary Black Studies*, states that the book is dedicated to African American and African Studies students who will themselves carry on the "Malcolm X exemplar" to expand and deepen the study of Black people throughout the world. Contributors to the book are nationwide Black Studies scholars, Herb Boyd, Sheila Radford-Leigh, Carl Taylor, Zain Abdullah, Abdul Alkalimat, Geneva Smitherman, Ibram Kendi, Charles Ferrell, Ollie Johnson, Errol Henderson, and many others.

MSU Press describes the book as a provocative debate about Malcolm X's legacy. Edozie and Stokes’ book emerged after the publication of Manning Marable’s 2011 biography and raised critical questions about the revolutionary Black Nationalist’s importance to American and world affairs: What was Malcolm’s association with the Nation of Islam? How should we interpret Malcolm’s discourses? Was Malcolm antifeminist? What is Malcolm’s legacy in contemporary public affairs? How do
Malcolm’s early childhood experiences in Michigan shape and inform his worldview? Was Malcolm trending toward socialism during his final year?

Malcolm X’s Michigan Worldview responds to these questions by presenting Malcolm’s subject as an iconography used to deepen understanding of African descendent peoples’ experiences through advanced research and disciplinary study.

The book is a Black studies reader that uses the biography of Malcolm X both to interrogate key aspects of the Black world experience and to contribute to the intellectual expansion of the discipline. The book presents Malcolm as a Black subject who represents, symbolizes, and associates meaning with the Black/Africana studies discipline. Through a range of multidisciplinary prisms and themes including discourse, race, culture, religion, gender, politics, and community, this rich volume elicits insights about the Malcolm iconography that contribute to the continuous formulation, deepening, and strengthening of the Black studies discipline.
African American Language Community Immersion: Spotlight on Dr April Baker-Bell

A native Michigander and graduate of MSU’s department of Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures, it appears that teaching at MSU was always in the stars for Dr. April Baker-Bell. Only just coming to the end of her first year on faculty, Dr. Baker Bell continues to distinguish herself through her work in the classroom and beyond.

While her home department is the Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures (WRAC), Dr. Baker Bell serves as core faculty in AAAS, in addition to being part of the faculty leading up the English education program designed to assist urban communities around MSU.

Her passion for language, and specifically within African American communities, goes back a long way. Before starting her graduate studies in WRAC, she explains, she was teaching high school English in Detroit, and had stints at local community colleges and universities as well. During her time there, she noticed how many of her students would communicate in African American language, and yet were subject to a systemic push to have them communicate in the dominant language. Given her training and experiences, she found this culture to be problematic.

She began to research on this issue further, and was especially concerned with the gap between existent research and what was actually happening in these urban classrooms. Thus when the opportunity for graduate school at MSU arose, she relished the opportunity to further investigate the topic, particularly working with Dr. Smitherman. “In my work, I try to think about African American language at the intersection of literacy and
pedagogy,” she explains, “particularly getting back into those classroom spaces and working with teachers to address linguistic and cultural diversity.”

During her first year, Dr. Baker Bell has taught Eng 302 (Introduction to English Language) designed for pre-service teachers and with an emphasis on African American Language. Currently, she is teaching AAAS 891, an African American language course requiring the students to immerse themselves and do pilot research studies in communities with African American language speakers.

Outside of the classroom, Dr. Baker Bell co-advises an undergraduate student organization, National Student Activist Party (NSAP). She has also organized several events on campus, including the first ever African American Read-in held this past February. Hosted by AAAS, the event was born of an initiative by the National Council for Teachers of English- of which she is member- to have national African American Read-ins focusing on Black writers in various communities around the country. In addition, she is also working with a team to host a Teach-in to be held on August 29th 2015 which will be focusing on the responsibility of teachers in the wake of racial violence.

Going forward, Dr. Baker Bell says she wants to build more in-depth connections with the communities her work centers around, which would include a community-wide critical language awareness program in Detroit. As a newer member of the AAAS community, Dr. Baker Bell is excited to be part of the family, and looks forward to getting to know the program and everyone who makes it be!
Blacks have remained endowed with self-resolve and resistance. This combination of attributes that Blacks have shown in their personal and collective existence – what we call the ‘coolness’ – stems from a powerful influence known as *ashe* (De La Cancela, 1994; Bascom, 1969). Ashe (pronounced ash-heh) is a Yoruba term… related to character. Someone who has *ashe* has the power to make things happen despite the odds…

*ashe* can be a source of inner strength… a form of resistance against oppression… Giving up your Blackness means that you give up what helped us to survive… (Ransaw, 2013, 8-9).

The ‘mini opus’ of Dr. Theodore Ransaw’s text, *The Art of Being Cool* (2013) – prescribes a health-wise methodology and illuminating clarity into the complex layers of Black masculinity. Claiming that masculinity is a pursuit, he asserts in tune with bell hooks, we must understand how patriarchy is also destructive to men. Under the dehumanizing effects and delusions of patriarchy, our sense of ‘who we are’ [Black men, et. al.] - has often created an unhealthy contradiction – to who we are ‘supposed or alleged’ - to be’!
Dr. Ted is an accomplished ‘piano man’ and martial arts-talent. I pushed to find out how skill sets developed in music and martial arts can be transferred to the rigorous job-demands of the Black PhD, instead he opts to ground this interview in the lessons learned in his text on the “The Black Cool”.

Ransaw emphasizes an awareness of the relationship between race, fear and economics in *The Art of Being Cool* (2013), for deciphering the cultural pathology present in the current ‘troubled encounter’ with white law enforcement and Black males (2013).

_Thou shalt hate the Nigger with all thy heart, _
_& with all they soul, & with all they mind, _

This credo became a “new First Commandment” for the anti-abolitionist movement in post-civil war America according to Ransaw. I can’t help but think - how this corruption of white supremacy unto ‘the sacred’ has traveled the contemporary pavement – which leads to Ferguson.

In many ways lynching represents sacrificial purification of the lynchers who… offer the [Black] victim’s body as payment to preserve their way of life (Ransaw, 2013, 7).

My anticipation struggles after this brief reading, in the tradition of the Black scholarship that has threaded these intellectual grounds, he resembles the family of James Cone, William R. Jones and Roy V. Morrison, “this is the dreaded truth of the ‘cross and the lynching tree” – I exclaim loudly! What was supposed to be a ‘simple interview’ with Dr. Ransaw has turned into a series of enlightening debates. In my own analysis, I have again come to the conclusion that Black people must be offered on the altar of white supremacy’s long-evil faces.

Ransaw connects this ‘first commandment’ to the economic jealousy of whites, which prompted the culture of lynching. It goes
without saying that there is a shared African American zeitgeist – that Michael Brown, Oscar Grant, Freddie Gray, Renisha McBride, Walter Scott, Anthony Anderson, Freddie Gray, among others – constitute the ongoing sanctioning and law enforcement’s participation in the ‘lynching of Black America’.

The “Black Cool” – then comes out of the nature of Black resilience and the traumatic consequences of slavery and its legacies (Ransaw, 2013). What we see displayed in the stoic-mask of Black people is a response to these dreadful spaces. The Black Cool represents a mechanism and philosophy we use to survive and navigate the jagged edges of this obvious oppression and dehumanization.

Dr. Ted’s role at AAAS is to provide advising, community outreach, fundraising, grant writing, and teaching. Ransaw credits DuBoisian dialectics on double-consciousness and Freire’s framework on the “pedagogy of the oppressed” as some of his major influences. He has taken on a tedious, yet doable terrain of funding research and program development. I have faith in him.

There is a Black tradition of educational excellence and Black educators that graces the “wall of fame” in Dr. Ransaw’s office. Like Ransaw, the notion of “being educated”, relegated to a “white thang – or actin’ white” is as foreign to me as the moons of Jupiter.

I tell him in our discussion, that… yes I drank the Carter G. Woodson, Mary McCloud-Bethune and George Washington Carver Kool-Aid, my teachers gave me! I wanted to be all of them! He has brought this same genealogy of educational heritage and intellectual capital as an asset to his ‘new job’ – at AAAS.

Terrorism directed toward Americans of African descent is one of the reasons for Black depression (Ransaw, 2013, 8).

His AAAS maiden voyage comes in the midst of an - ‘ensuing heaviness’. The contested spaces of Rojas’ and CLR James’ references of “confrontational spaces” – frequently associated with the plight of Black Studies’ institutional lives and reincarnations – has engulfed us all.

Like Cinque of the Amistad Revolt, I had to ‘call forth’- my ancestors this weekend… I had to call forth the resilience of Black
Power, the resilience of the Black Cool… the resilience of the Emerging Black Scholar, because this overlapping – depression – had tried to break me down!

But, I have seen the ‘Black magic’ along with the Black Cool in Dr. Ransaw—like his forbears and academic influences – ‘makin it happen’ – against odds and with very little institutional support. In this tradition of Black Magic, Black Achievement and Black Cool, there are long tracks in this corridor, the deep impression of footprints are highly recognizable of our ‘fearless AAAS leader’, Dr. R. Kiki Edozie.

Dr. Ransaw and I share a love for The Black Panther, a Marvel Comics character of African descent. T’Challa, The Black Panther – represents Marvel’s primordial venture into ‘Afro-futurism’ and breaking down white male-privilege in the comic/graphic novel industry. Dr. Ransaw’s ‘pet project’, into the Black Panther icon advances much of the discursive political and social relevance of the character. He takes it a step further, by locating and identifying the Afrocentric legacy in the Black Panther’s epic, which he credits via the talents of Eric Jerome Dickey and Reginald Hudlin. Marvel Entertainment will launch its first Black superhero character, The Black Panther on film in 2017, with Chadwick (‘Jackie Robinson and James Brown’) Boseman in the title role.


For me, it’s a no brainer, ‘The Black Panther’ represents that same tradition of the ‘Black Cool’ – facing down the odds and performing ‘Black Magic’!
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