

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES NEWS

Director's Welcome

Greetings, interested reader!

It is my pleasure to greet you again as Director of African American Studies at UNCG. Since last spring semester, we have moved into Curry 349 and have celebrated the 30th year anniversary of our program. Yes, we have had another busy year.

In May, we said good-bye to 20 graduates, our largest class. Several of them were accepted to prominent graduate schools, such as UC-Berkeley, Rutgers, Vanderbilt, and Duke Universities and earned over \$250,000 in scholarships and assistantships to pursue graduate degrees in Women's Studies, African American Studies, and Theology. They prove the versatility of interdisciplinary African American Studies. We remain proud of their accomplishments.

On October 18 and 19, we celebrated our anniversary as part of our annual Conference on African American Culture and Experience. Over 200 people registered for the event, including presenters from universities across the country. Dr. Lenora Fulani was the keynote speaker. Read to learn more about the conference and celebration as well as the three alumni who received awards for their outstanding achievements.

We also received exciting news. First, we received a gift from Whitney "Whitty" Ransome who established a scholarship for African American Studies students. A 1967 alumna of Woman's College, Ms. Ransome has dedicated funding to support our students' professional and academic development. She has been giving to the Program for several years and we are very pleased that she has remained committed to AFS. Second, we learned of our ranking as a top 10 Black Studies Program.

We also reflect back on the two Conversations with the Community and our celebration of the 75th Year Anniversary of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. We also honor our December graduates.

Looking forward,
Tara T. Green
Tara T. Green
Associate Professor and Director
African American Studies, UNCG

AFS: Not just a Program, it's a community.



Director, Dr. Tara T. Green

"We are preparing leaders whose understanding of race, class, and gender through their historical, literary, political, and cultural studies will prepare them for success in an increasingly diverse world."





AFS SPRING 2012 CONVACTION

From Majors to Graduates: Class of Spring 2012

On Thursday, May 3, 2012, twenty AFS graduates, their families and friends, joined AFS faculty for our Spring convocation. It was the largest ceremony in the Program's history. Cameron Wynn, Class of 2008, was invited to return from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Medical School to deliver "Words of Encouragement" to the graduating seniors. Cameron recalled his experience of being one of the first two students from UNCG to study abroad in Botswana, Africa. He shared what it meant to see the first African American President of the United States sworn into office and how the people of Botswana reacted to the historical event. Following Cameron's inspiring words, AFS Ambassador Charles Chavis Jr. gave his "Reflections from a Graduating Senior" remarks. He spoke of his pride in fellow classmates and thanked AFS faculty for their work. After students were given their kente cloth stoles, the Outstanding Graduating Senior Award was given to Charles Chavis Jr. and the AFS Student of the Award was given to Valerie Whitley. AFS Ambassadors Yasmeeen Chism and Charles Chavis Jr. were recognized for their service. Outgoing president of the AFS Club, Dwayne Barnes, received recognition for helping to establish the organization. We look forward to hearing more great things about our esteemed graduates.

African American Studies Students

Student in the Spotlight



A child of the military, Katrenia Shelly has lived in Germany, Belgium, and San Francisco but calls Fayetteville, NC home. She added AFS as a second major (Political Science is first) her freshman year. Inspired by one of her courses, she wanted to learn more about the historical, sociological, and cultural impact that African Americans have had, not only in America but abroad as well.

She says that there are many things that she likes about AFS, including the camaraderie amongst AFS majors and the relationships she have built within the major as well as the diverse course selections. "I have been able to learn about historical events, the concept of black masculinity, to even the social impact of hip hop music. This has allowed me to develop my knowledge of AFS in a broader manner."

Recently, Katrenia was asked to take the lead in hosting a visiting group of potential UNCG students from her hometown of Fayetteville. "The kids were great and it touched home that I was able to be of service to them." The Director of the youth program has reported that several of them have applied to UNCG.

A graduating senior, Katrenia is applying for jobs with the federal government in Washington D.C. and also applying to graduate schools.

"I'd like to thank the entire AFS program staff for fostering an environment that nurtures, promotes diversity, and produces graduates of the highest stature."

Student Intern at Local Museum Tavarshia Batts

In her own words

I was interested in an internship at the International Civil Rights Center & Museum because I was considering pursuing a career as a Museum Curator. As a result, I benefitted greatly from the opportunity. My time at the museum was not in vain because I benefitted greatly from the opportunity. By the end of my internship, I had gained experience in educational program planning, fundraising, as well as special event planning. Not only did I obtain significant work experience, I left the museum knowing that I had been an asset and that I had the support of the staff for any future endeavors. My plan moving forward is to attend graduate school to expand my knowledge in African-American Studies, specifically Community Empowerment. I plan to utilize the educational program planning skills I acquired while at the museum to make a difference in as many urban communities as possible.



Conversations with the Community

African American Studies hosted two Conversations with the Community the fall semester. Its first was a discussion led by Armondo Collins, a doctoral student in the Department of English and an AFS Post-Bacclearate Certificate student, on September 11, 2012. Collins provoked his audience of students, faculty, and community members to consider the relationship between rap and religious music. His focus was on Meek Mills. The second conversation was led by Professor Omar Ali and Stephanie Orosco-Suceda on October 9. They spoke of the research they are conducting on Independents. See “College Independents Poll” article.

“Make Me Feel Good”: Oprah, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and the Pleasure Principle

On November 7 and 8, 2012, African American Studies students and faculty commemorated the 75th Year Anniversary of Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. An anthropologist and creative writer, Hurston was a Southern woman whose life and work exemplifies interdisciplinary studies through an African American lens. Under the direction and inspiration of musician, storyteller, and teacher, Logie Meachum, students read their favorite passages from the novel. Although this was a daunting task for some, they rose to the challenge. Dr. Green read her favorite passage involving Janie and Nanny’s conversation about Logan Killicks. Following the readings and a musical tribute to Eatonville by Meachum, the audience watched the film adaptation of *Their Eyes*. The event concluded the next day with a talk by Professor Carol Henderson. Joining us from the University of Delaware where she is Chair of the Black American Studies Department, Henderson spoke on the significance of sexuality in the film adaptation as compared to Hurston’s text. This event was co-sponsored by UNCG’s chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. and the Department of Anthropology.

AFS Club News

The Fall 2012 semester proved to be one of the most active semesters the African American Studies Club had since its existence. The AFS Club, as it is usually called, holds bi-weekly meetings to discuss issues of race, equality, and social justice. The AFS Club partnered with the Black Business Students Association to serve the community for Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week by collecting hygiene products and canned goods for the Greensboro Urban Ministry. The AFS Club hosted movie discussions, networking socials, and forums throughout the semester to provide an opportunity for AFS students to apply their knowledge from the classroom to the real world. The officers for the 2012 – 2013 school years are Sheria Reed – President, Shay Hicks – Vice President, and Nique Williams – Secretary. Their advisor is Michael Cauthen.

UNCG's African American Studies Program and the Anthropology Department Celebrate The 75th Year Anniversary of Zora Neale Hurston's Novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

4:00-7:00 pm Wednesday, November 7
Location: Curry Auditorium Room 225

4:00-5:00 pm Dramatic readings of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, directed by Logie Meachum. All are invited to read their favorite passages.

5:00-6:30 pm Film Viewing, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, starring Halle Berry (Additional viewing 12:30 pm Curry 331 on Nov. 8)

4:00-5:00 pm, Thursday, November 8
Location: Multicultural Resource Center, EUC
Dr. Carol E. Henderson
Chair, Black Studies at the University of Delaware and Professor of English

“Make Me Feel Good”: Oprah, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and the Pleasure Principle”

This lecture will consider Oprah Winfrey's cinematic re-interpretation of Zora Neale Hurston's 1937 novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. A revolutionary tale of self-discovery and self-fulfillment, *Their Eyes* celebrates the triumph of black womanhood in all of its splendor. Yet in Winfrey's transitory movie to bring Hurston's novel from print to film, concepts such as black love, black pain, and sexual pleasure get conceptual under the prism of the visual images of the already iconic narratives of the African American actors on the small screen. How do these cinematic narratives change the impact of Hurston's original story? How does Winfrey's adaptation reimagine the black woman's body? Her search for spiritual, emotional, and sexual pleasures? These are just a few of the questions we will explore.

Co-sponsored by Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
A member of Zeta Phi Beta, Hurston was a celebrated novelist and anthropologist.

Contact aha@uncg.edu or call 336-334-5567 for more information.



Free and open to the public.



23rd Annual Conference on African America Culture and Experience



“New Approaches to Black Leadership in the African Diaspora” was the theme of the 2012 Conference on African American Culture and Experience hosted by the African American Studies Program at UNCG. It was a momentous event that also included a celebration of AFS’s 30 years at UNCG and the 10th Year Anniversary of the major.

Scholars from near and far joined with AFS students and alumni to present papers on Black leadership from the perspectives of education, politics, religious studies, Afrocentricity, and gender studies. Mayor Pro-Temp Yvonne Johnson, Vice-President of Guilford County School Board Amos Quick III, as well as UNCG’s Chancellor Linda Brady, and Timothy Johnston, the Dean of Arts and Sciences, greeted them at the luncheon.

Our history reflects the work of Black leadership in academia. The Black Studies Program began in 1982 as a minor that students could design by taking courses that included studies of Black people. In 1986, the Black Studies committee developed its own courses and restructured the program’s minor. They would continue to expand the curriculum by developing several experiential courses, such as Afro-American Art History, which is still regularly offered. Feeling that the name, Black Studies Program, was outdated and did not accurately reflect the Program’s aims, Angela Rhone, the Program’s Director, submitted paperwork to change the name to African American Studies in 1992.

It is fair to say that the African American Studies program’s curriculum expanded under Dr. Rhone’s leadership. Dr. Woods was responsible for bringing more attention to the program by sponsoring various cultural programs and submitting paperwork for the degree in 2002.

AFS’s current director is the first to have a tenured appointment with the Program. With support from the Dean, she worked with Women’s and Gender Studies to hire Sarah Cervenak, a scholar of Performance Studies. The program received a third line that resulted in the hire of Dr. Omar Ali, an African American historian and scholar of the African Presence in the Indian Ocean. Dr. Ali became the first AFS faculty to undergo the tenure process. In the past five years, the Program has received over \$72,000 in grants, planned gifts, and donor funds. This includes a \$40,000 gift from a Woman’s College alumna, Whitney Ransome, to establish a scholarship, which will be available to students in 2013. AFS acquired the distinction of being ranked in the top ten of Black Studies programs/departments in the nation, according to the latest data published by Academic Analytics (2010-2011).

The banquet highlighted its history and acknowledged the work of its alumni. Robert Randolph received the Outstanding Educator’s Award for the work he has done to develop undergraduate and graduate courses for AFS. Novelist and poet, Ashanti White received the Outstanding Publications Award. Andrea Jenkins, recently appointed to the University’s Alumni Board, received the Outstanding Alumni Award. Dr. Lenora Fulani, known for her historic run for President and now the co-founder of a non-profit educational organization, All-Stars, was the keynote speaker. She spoke of her work and importance of uplifting the community. Over 200 people registered for the conference.

We look forward to many more years of success at UNCG!

Highlight of the 23rd Annual Conference on African American Culture and Experience and 30th year Anniversary



AFS Core & Affiliated Faculty News

Dr. Omar H. Ali (core) made appearances on CNN as well as NPR, CBS News, and Fox affiliates in North Carolina, where he discussed the black electorate and the rising tide of independent voters. He also gave over a dozen public lectures or conference papers in his three areas of research: independent politics in the U.S., Islam and the African Diaspora in the Indian Ocean World, and Afro-Latin America.

Dr. Frank Woods (core) essay, "Painting and Passing: Robert S. Duncanson's Dilemma of Racial Identity" was accepted in the *International Review of African American Art*. Dr. Woods has also lectured at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art on "From the Thankful Poor to Daniel and the Lion's Den: Henry O. Tanner's Emerging Religiosity on Canvas." In the Spring, the Pennsylvania invited him to participate in an all day event reserved for Tanner Scholars. Dr. Woods also had an essay, "Blade: Vampire Hunter, "Tragic Mulatto" and Diminished 'Son of Shaft,'" published in *The Journal of Black Masculinity*.

Tara T. Green (core) has made presentations on activist and writer Alice Dunbar-Nelson at the Afro-American Historical Society Conference (October) and the South Atlantic Modern Language Association Conference (November). Her article, "Not Just Paul's Wife" was recently published by the *Langston Hughes Review*.



Henry O. Tanner

George Dimock (affiliate) recently completed an article for *Exposure* (Spring 2013), the biannual journal of the Society for Photographic Education. Titled "'The Negro As He Really Is': W. E. B. Du Bois and Arthur Radclyffe Dugmore," the essay explores the problematic relationship between the photographic illustrations by a pioneering white nature photographer and an early text by Du Bois that later became part of *The Souls of Black Folk*.

Cerise L. Glenn (affiliate) has published the article "What they see as acceptable:" A cultural theoretical analysis of Black male students at a Predominantly White Institution in the *Howard Journal of Communications*. She has also published three book chapters including *Stepping in and stepping out: Examining the way anticipatory career socialization impacts identity negotiation of African-American women in academia* in *Presumed incompetent: The intersections of race and class for women in academia*.

In June, **William D. Hart** (affiliate) was elected president of the Institute for American Religious and Philosophical Thought. He has also published five articles and book chapters, including "Dead Black Man, Just Walking," in *Pursing Trayvon Martin: Contexts and Contemporary Manifestations of Racial Dynamics*, (editors.) George Yancy and Janine Jones; "Jesus, Whiteness, and the Disinherited," in *Christology and Whiteness: What Would Jesus Do?*; "Naturalizing Christian Ethics: A Critique of Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*," *Journal of Religious Ethics*. (2012); "Racing and E-racing Pragmatism." *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy*; "What is Theory? Remarks on Scott Davis's *Believing and Acting*." *Soundings: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Humanities*.

Research News

College Independents Poll 2012

Dr. Omar Ali directed a two-month statewide poll of college independents sponsored by UNCG's Office of Research and Economic Development. Dr. Ali worked with AFS major Stephanie Orosco and AFS alumna Brittany Rodman; along with North Carolina A&T student volunteer Mariah Hunt, from September through October. The team polled 1,246 students at sixteen colleges across the state, including at a range of public and private colleges, HBCUs, and community colleges. The pioneering poll is the first university study in the nation targeting independents, currently comprising 40% of the electorate. In North Carolina, two out of three new voters are registering as "unaffiliated." Dr. Ali appeared on NPR's "The State of Things" (WUNC 91.5 FM) for a full hour in November discussing the poll as part of growing interest on the role of independents in the American political system and their demand for a post-partisan America. The results and analysis of the poll will be released in the Spring as part of an official launch.

Photo:(left to right) Mariah Hunt, Stephanie Orosco, and Dr. Ali.



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We hope that you will support our Program by making a tax-deductible donation. Your gift to AFS allows us to build our scholarship fund to support students in need or provide funding for our students to study abroad and/or attend conferences.

To support AFS, please send your donation to Advancement Services 1100 W. Market Street P.O. Box 26170 Greensboro, NC 27402 clearly marked for UNCG African American Studies Enrichment Fund or give on-line at http://www.uncg.edu/education/studentsfirst/give_now.html. If you have questions, do not hesitate to contact us. No donation is too large or too small!

Can't give money, how about your time?

We are expanding our internship program. If you own a business, especially a law office or a non-profit, that serves a significant number of African Americans and are interested in sharing your professional expertise with AFS majors, please contact Dr. Tara T. Green at afs@uncg.edu or 336-334-5507.

AFS's Mission

The African American Studies Program (AFS) advances the university's commitment to diverse perspectives and inclusive learning environments through course offerings, programming, and community involvement. It fosters interdisciplinary study for undergraduate and post-baccalaureate students by examining how people of African descent have shaped our world. As a program located in a city with a history of Black sociopolitical movements, we provide a forum to engage the complexities of Black life across African Diasporas.

Visit: www.uncg.edu/afs

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