

DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER SPRING 2019



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES



Letter from the Chair, Dr. Simone Drake

The first semester of the 2018–2019 academic year in the Department of African American and African Studies was eventful. We kicked off autumn semester with a welcome back for students, faculty, and staff. We were happy to socialize with friends from across campus and even from within University Hall. I also kicked off my first semester as department chair. As a graduate alumna of AAAS, I am thrilled to have the opportunity to lead the department into its next 50 years at Ohio State. Our faculty and students have been busy inside and outside of the classroom, teaching innovative classes, presenting their research, receiving grants, engaging the local community, and launching a new study abroad to Zambia. On the curricular side, we designed some new courses on race, medicine, and science; race and sports; and race and law — be sure to check these out in 2019! We invite you to learn more about what our department has been doing lately. Do not forget to follow us on social media!













Photos from the Welcome Back event at the beginning of autumn 2018



Introduction: New Academic Program Coordinator, Dr. Jerrell Beckham

From 2006 to 2017, I was an assistant professor at Denison University in the

Department of Education and the Center for Black Studies where I taught courses like the Introduction to Black Studies, the History of Black Education in America, and the Black American Legal Struggle for Educational Equality. While at Denison University, I also successfully advised numerous students, mentored a Posse Scholar cohort, and served on a number of committees, including the Multicultural Scholarship Committee. Then in the spring of 2018 through the start of 2019, I taught Trigonometry at Capital University as an adjunct professor in the Department of Mathematics, Computer Science, and Physics. Today I am the program coordinator for the Department of African American and African Studies (AAAS) at The Ohio State University.

When I interact with the students who are a part of AAAS or who may someday desire to be a part of the department (or not), I want them to understand there is a reason why AAAS is here. This department is here because their forbearers demanded it. Black students and sympathetic persons throughout the Ohio State community risked their livelihood to bring this department into fruition. Like all people, many of these students also desired a place where people genuinely cared about them, where individuals believed in their high intellectual capacity without question, and where they could learn about themselves and their contribution specifically as people of African ancestry. These students wanted spaces to freely voice their concerns and support the type of inclusive community and world that everyone needs. As the program coordinator of AAAS at The Ohio State University, I believe in the mission of the university and the department. Moreover, I believe in those past students' dreams of a better education - and not just for themselves, they actually expanded freedom and educational opportunity for us all. Today I have a great deal of confidence in the aspirations and hopes of this generation of students too.

Dr. Valerie Lee Receives the 2018 Francis Andrew March Award

The Association of Departments of English has awarded former interim AAAS Chair, Dr. Valerie Lee the 2018 Francis Andrew March Award. Dr. Lee was honored for this award at the 2019 MLA Annual Convention's awards ceremony in Chicago on January 5. This



esteemed award is presented every year in order to recognize and honor distinguished service to the profession of English at the postsecondary level. As a former member and past president of the ADE's Executive Committee, Lee exemplifies dedication and commitment to the field of English. She continues to work tirelessly in her pursuit of opening doors for underrepresented people.

First PhD Graduate: The Future is Now...

Liseli Fitzpatrick made history as the first student to graduate from the PhD program in the Department of African American and African Studies (AAAS). Since graduating from the doctoral program, she has secured a position as a visiting lecturer at Wellesley College. When asked about her experience thus far, she shared:



"My experience at Wellesley College has been rewarding and affirming in so many ways. Almost instantaneously, I was able to forge family and community ties both within and outside of the Africana Studies Department, which is extremely important to me and what I do. My passion for Africana Studies and empowering pedagogical practices is constantly re-ignited by students, who are enthused and eager to learn and exchange ideas in their earnest and energetic quest to unlearn existing stereotypes and uproot systems of injustice. As such, every morning I wake up stimulated and encouraged by their unfettered enthusiasm and engagement. Fundamentally, Wellesley College not only has a rich history of some of the most brilliant and successful alumnae but is also rated as one of the most beautiful campuses on the learning landscape. Personally, there is something absolutely magical, alluring, and nurturing about being immersed in an environment that abounds with nature."

Fitzpatrick is a firm believer in the idea that **the future is now** — a projection of the present. Thus, she believes that she is actively living her future goals, which "consist of sharing, steering, inspiring, and encouraging desirous and wandering minds with compassion, truth, and wisdom in the creation of a more just, harmonious, and inclusive world." Furthermore, she recognizes professorship as an ongoing service and commitment. For students in the field of AAAS, she recommends that students pursue it, and pursue it passionately.



Dr. Tiyi Morris on her first Inside-Out Prison Exchange Course

This spring, I began teaching my first Inside-Out Prison Exchange Course (I-O) at Franklin Medical Center Correctional Facility (FMC) in Columbus. The course, Social (In)Justice and the Black Experience, focuses on historical and contemporary social justice movements led by African Americans and enrolls Ohio State (outside) students from the Newark and Columbus campuses and men incarcerated at FMC (inside students). The class meets once a week for approximately three hours to discuss social and political activism in the 20th and 21st centuries as well as the ways in which contemporary issues of racial, gender, class, and other forms of oppression are impacting Black communities.

Inside-Out is an international program aimed at dismantling the divisions between those behind the walls and those outside by creating a transformative educational experience in which both groups come together to engage in a college-level learning experience. Inside students have the same academic requirements as the outside students and are also earning three credit hours with successful completion of the course. From its beginning in 1997, with one course being offered through Temple University at Graterford Prison, I-O courses are currently offered in 47 states and 11 countries. I-O courses have been offered at more than 200 correctional facilities; 10 in the state of Ohio.

The unique opportunity afforded by this atypical classroom not only serves the mission of the discipline of black studies by connecting the community to the campus and actualizing a philosophy of education as the practice of freedom, but it also provides the students, both inside and outside, a space to engage in intellectual and analytical discussions about contemporary social issues that are relevant to their lives. In traversing the boundaries of the prison walls, both groups of students are able to move beyond the stereotypes that typically define them.

The work of Inside-Out is also fundamentally connected to the work of black studies given the disproportionate numbers of people of color who are ensnared in our criminal justice system. Although my course content did not focus primarily on criminal justice, learning more about incarceration and seeing how this (in)justice system impacts the lives of people that society sees as disposable — people of color and/or poor people — was an additional benefit for the outside students. Ultimately, this class is a way to connect theory and practice, to engage in the community work that makes our intellectual endeavors relevant to the larger black community and society as a whole.

As we are approaching the end of the semester, I can attest to the transformational nature of the experience. For me, the class has underscored the importance of making the knowledge we produce in the academy accessible to the masses. I am privileged to have the opportunity to assist in the intellectual development of those behind the wall. Both inside and outside students have grown tremendously, not only in terms of the knowledge they have gained, but also in their perspectives on social justice and the roles they see themselves playing in creating a just and equitable society. These students are now part of the more than 35,000 students who have participated in Inside-Out courses throughout the world and are empowered to work for social justice.

> Dr. Tiyi M. Morris, associate professor of African American and African Studies, completed the President's and Provost's Leadership Institute (PPLI) last fall. The primary goals of PPLI "are to create a pool of potential leaders from groups that traditionally have been underrepresented in key leadership roles and to develop leaders who can create a culture that is supportive of all faculty members." Dr. Morris is the second AAAS faculty member to complete the Institute.

> Dr. Morris also was a presenter at the 2018 National Women's Studies Association Conference, where she discussed Robyn Spencer's *The Revolution Has Come: Black Power, Gender, and the Black Panther Party in Oakland*, focusing specifically on the role black women played in sustaining the party and the impact of women's experiences.



AFAMAST 4326: Race and Medicine

In the fall of 2018, AAAS postdoctoral fellow Eric Herschthal co-taught the AFAMAST 4326: Race and Medicine course along with Dr. Quinn Capers IV, a cardiologist at the Wexner Medical Center and associate dean for admissions in the College of Medicine. Herschthal and Capers developed an interdisciplinary course that ultimately attracted students from many areas of study. The differences among the instructors, students and visiting faculty allowed for rich discussions and unique opportunities to learn. The course addressed racial health disparities in the United States by examining the ways in which black and white Americans undergo stark differences in health care treatment. Additionally, the course explored the historical background and root causes and discussed potential solutions moving forward. The course challenged students to consider the role they might play in dismantling racial health disparities. Herschthal and Capers have plans of offering the course again in fall 2019. Be on the lookout!

Dr. Simone Drake was selected as Building Healthcare Collective Fellow for 2019–2020

The BHC Project was founded by researchers from Michigan State University and The Ohio State University and is funded by the Humanities Without Walls initiative. The goal of the project is to emphasize humanities expertise in care by creating an infrastructure where healthcare professionals, humanities researchers, community partners, and activists can work together to solve key problems facing the U.S. healthcare system. Those selected to be fellows join small, interdisciplinary research teams. Each team focuses on a theme they choose (e.g., "care," "community safety," "mobile health technologies") and will kick-off the partnership at the Building Healthcare Collectives symposium at Michigan State University on April 11–13, 2019.

Dr. Drake also conducted a gallery talk at the Wexner Center for the Arts on the Mickalene Thomas exhibit *I Can't See You Without Me* through the varied lenses of patronage, the concept of the muse, and the visual and sonic forms of funk music. She also curated a playlist for the exhibit.





Dr. Ryan Skinner receives grant from the Migration, Mobility, and Immobility Discovery Theme project

Dr. Ryan Skinner, associate professor of AAAS and Music and director of AAAS undergraduate studies, received a grant from the Migration, Mobility, and Immobility Discovery Theme project funded by the Global Arts and Humanities Discovery Theme to bring actor/activist Josette Bushell-Mingo to Ohio State for a weeklong residency, including a public performance, lecture, and classroom visits. Dr. Skinner also had his research and voice featured on the nationally syndicated public radio program Afropop Worldwide this past October; the full text can be read <u>here</u>. The program, "A Visit to Afro-Sweden," explores a vital music culture cultivated by a varied cohort of Swedes with roots in Africa and its diaspora. This music culture, and the broad art world of which it is a part, is the focus of Skinner's current book project, titled *The Dialectics of Diaspora: Remembering and Renaissance in Afro-Sweden*.

Kimberly Spears-McNatt named Ohio State's first African American female chief of police

AAAS alumna Kimberly Spears-McNatt was named the university's first African American female chief of police. Officer Spears-McNatt believes that the department of AAAS played a significant role in shaping the officer she is today. She is grateful for faculty such as Dr. William Shipley for nurturing her love for novels focused on the experiences of African Americans. Operating in a police division that focuses on the importance of diversity and inclusion, Spears-McNatt says that having a minor in African American and African Studies provides her with the knowledge, insight and well-rounded education she needed, and these foundations continue to influence her approach to policing through an ethics of respect and appreciation for everyone's culture and history.





Sarah Van Beurden spends sabbatical at the University of Ghent

Sarah Van Beurden is spending her sabbatical year as a visiting scholar at the University of Ghent in Belgium. She has been an active participant in the recent debates around the restitution of African art and co-authored an open letter on the subject, which appeared in the two main Belgian newspapers. She delivered the keynote lecture at a recent conference on museums and restitution that took place in Kinshasa (DR Congo), gave a talk at the Museum of Lubumbashi in DR Congo, and presented at a conference in Johannesburg, South Africa. She has been interviewed for numerous pieces on the renovation of the Africa museum in Belgium, published by *National Public Radio, Wall Street Journal* and *Guardian*, among others and she appears in the new documentary *Totems et Tabous* on the subject of Western museums and colonial *"collecting."* Her new research on Zairian modernism was published in *Radical History Review.* Thanks to a Mershon Institute Research Grant she was able to complete a research trip to DR Congo this fall, and she hopes to return in the spring.



AAAS major, Chris Newman, will be entering the Duke University Divinity School in the fall with a focus on the history and development of early Christianity in and throughout North Africa. His focus will examine how Africa shaped Christian theology, including the many North and East African theologians who constructed concepts of Christianity. Moreover, he also plans to dedicate a significant amount of his research on the philosophy of the revolutionary Jesus (his senior thesis paper is a rather detailed 120+ page work on the topic). He plans to superimpose a black Jesus with black followers, who created a black religion organized and orchestrated by black theologians, philosophers, and religious leaders. His aim for this is to a) adjust the narrative of Christianity's early history to show that the religion was founded in Africa, and b) to scrub the misleading concept that had it not been for "benevolent YT (he finds that he no longer wish to address whites as "white") European missionaries," Africans would have been left as nothing but a dark, pagan land.





Kelly Jo Fulkerson-Dikuua

Kelly Jo presented a paper at the American Studies Association (ASA) and at the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) in November 2018. The ASA paper is titled "From Norplant to Jadelle: Racialized Birth Control and Forced Sterilization in the United States and Southern Africa, 1970s– present" and the NWSA paper is called "Forming a Chosen "Other:" The Erotic, Female Friendship and alternate Kinships in *Sula* and *Tangerine*." Eric Herschthal and Simone Drake received an Arts and Humanities Large Grant for their project entitled "Beyond Data: Centering Black Mother's Voices on Pregnancy and Childbirth"

This project collects digital narratives of black women's experiences from conception to one-year postpartum in order to move black women's voices from kitchen tables to those of medical and social service providers. The project will link these contemporary stories to historical narratives and creative poetry and prose of black women in child-birth dating back to the era of slavery. Collectively, these narratives will show how the arts and humanities can engage with issues related to black women's experiences during pregnancy and childbirth. Ultimately, this digital project works toward humanizing black women's pregnancy experiences and creating a space to consider those experiences beyond empirical and clinical data.



Dr. Judson Jeffries is the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and the Editor of Spectrum: A Journal on Black Men, which is housed in the Department of African American and African Studies. As DGS, he hosts monthly meetings with graduate students as a way of fostering good relations and discussing upcoming academic opportunities. He was recently named the faculty advisor for the Golden Key International Honor Society. Last year his book The Black Panther Party in a City Near You (2018) was published. This is the third volume in Dr. Jeffries's long-range effort to paint a more complete portrait of the most widely known organization to emerge from the 1960s Black Power Movement.



Dr. Linda J. Myers co-authored the article "Optimal Theory's Contributions to Understanding and Surmounting Global Challenges to Humanity" (2018). The article discusses challenges to and the triumphs of the production of psychological knowledge pertinent to human health and sustainable wellbeing. She also was invited to present at various conferences, including the International Black Women's Congress 34th Annual Conference and the 126th Convention of the American Psychological Association, where she presented "Addressing Health Disparities as Ethical Practice." Her continued dedication to the field of psychology earned her the 2018 African/Black Psychology Legacy Award.



Dr. Kwaku Korang is the editor of Research in African Literatures, a journal managed and housed in AAAS. Research in African Literatures is the global flagship journal of African literary studies. AAAS is proud to announce that Research in African Literatures has reached a milestone in 2019: its 50th year of continuous publication. Since the summer of 2018, Dr. Korang and Professor Adélékè Adéeko (English) have been organizing the 45th annual conference of the African Literature Association (ALA). The conference will be held on May 15–18 in Columbus, Ohio. ALA is the largest - and only - professional association of scholars of African literatures and cultures. The annual meeting draws an average of 400 presentations with speakers from across the globe.

Work Study Students



Alexander Allison

Major: Political Science (World Politics) Minor: Business Hometown: Honestly a toss-up... Pittsburgh/Columbus should suffice Hobbies: Reading, working out, nature walks, and watching horror movies



Terriana Jaynes Major: Psychology Hometown: Toledo, OH Hobbies: Cheerleading, Tennis, & Dance

Deidre Hamlar named associate director of African American and African Studies Community Extension Center

The Department of African American and African Studies (AAAS) has appointed Deidre Hamlar associate director of Ohio State's African American and African Studies Community Extension Center.

A native of the Near East Side of Columbus, Hamlar is a lawyer, business administrator and independent curator. Since 1995, she has worked nationally with schools, nonprofits, and large and small businesses to help them meet organizational, equity and diversity goals, including seven years as director of diversity for the Columbus Academy.

"The associate directorship is truly a dream appointment," says Hamlar, "I am looking forward to working with the university and the community and stretching the possibilities of the center as far and wide as they can reach."

Notes Simone Drake, Hazel C. Youngberg Trustees Distinguished Professor and chair of AAAS, "I am excited to have the opportunity to collaborate with Deidre and learn from her extensive experience in community engagement, program development and the nonprofit realm." Drake, who also serves as director of the Community Extension Center, continues, "I met her a number of years ago when we both were consulting on educational grant writing for a local nonprofit, and I immediately admired her collaborative spirit and commitment to social justice. I look forward to the new academic year and the wide array of events and programs we have planned and are continuing to develop for the African American and African Studies Community Extension Center."

Hamlar spearheaded a yearlong committee process to a successful proposal to the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority to repurpose two remaining Poindexter Village buildings as a cultural center and to develop a museum-quality exhibition highlighting the culture and legacy of the community. In addition, Hamlar coled a study for AAAS to determine the feasibility of expanding the footprint of the Community Extension Center.

"Four years ago, I did not imagine I'd return to my roots and be in a position to make a positive impact through The Ohio State University as envisioned in that report," Hamlar said.



Hamlar holds a BA in sociology from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a JD from Howard University Law School. She began her early practice of law with the National Labor Relations Board in Boston and Washington, D.C., and most recently served as contract program counsel for the Legal Services Corporation in Washington D.C. She is a member of the Jefferson Avenue Center Board and a founding member of Matriots Ohio. Her passion for art led her to Minneapolis, California, and back home again, where she now cocurates a major exhibition of Aminah Robinson's works opening in 2020 at the Columbus Museum of Art.

About the Community Extension Center (CEC)

The CEC catalyzes outreach and engagement opportunities for AAAS, the College of Arts and Sciences and Ohio State as a whole. Located on the Near East Side in a community whose residents are predominantly of African ancestry, the center is uniquely positioned as a part of Ohio State's land-grant mission to fulfill the legal and moral obligations to educate and enhance the quality of life for Ohioans and to address the most pressing issues confronting the citizens of Ohio.

First opened in 1972 on Ohio Avenue, the CEC moved to 905 Mount Vernon Ave. in 1985 after the Ohio General Assembly allocated state capital improvement funds to build the current center. Over its 47-year history, the center has offered targeted programming for the Ohio State and greater Columbus community — including lectures, courses and scholarly conversations.

