2012-2013
Annual Newsletter

The Program in African & African American Studies
Stanford University
AAAS Directors

Past Directors, Professor John Rickford & Professor Michele Elam. Outgoing Director Professor Arnetha F. Ball. Incoming Director Professor H. Samy Alim

AAAS Advisory Board

Faculty, friends, alumni, affiliates, and students welcome to the Program in African & African American Studies (AAAS) 2013 Newsletter! Within this publication you will find information on some of our exciting 2012-2013 AAAS events.

I write to let you know that my term will be ending as director of AAAS at the end of the summer. I loved working with the students, faculty and staff in my capacity as director of the program. This has been three very rewarding years serving the AAAS community. None of this would have been possible without the support and advice we have received from our Faculty Advisory Board and our fantastic staff. It has been a great pleasure working with AAAS associate director Dr. Cheryl Brown, AAAS student services coordinator Mr. Massa Wells, and many others who supported the program. We are very fortunate to have such a supportive group on campus and one could not ask for a better group of people to work with.

The good news for me is that the new director, H. Samy Alim and I have agreed that we will work together to continue the Diaspora Research Fellows Initiative and an academically-based technology engagement event for students during the 2014 school year.

Many thanks to all of you for your support over these years. I look forward to further work together in the future.
The State of Black America 150 years after the Emancipation Proclamation

Given the significance of the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, AAAS chose to assemble a group of scholars to discuss the State of Black America for our 2013 St. Clair Drake Memorial Panel. A few Stanford University professors spoke on the panel, including: AAAS director Arnetha F. Ball, Law School professor and author of “Is Marriage for White people”, Ralph Richard Banks, and History professor Allyson Hobbs. They were joined by UC Berkeley’s chair of Africana Studies Na’ilah Nasir, and renown African American Studies scholar, UCLA Professor Robbin Kelley. Tavis Smiley returned to Stanford’s campus to moderate the panel. The panelists covered a variety of very important issues that affect the progress of the African American community and America at large. Some topics included education, job development and attainment, crime, the punitive system, and the need for continued dialogue about race and persisting disparities and inequalities.

We were happy to open the dialogue to attendees who asked very provocative questions about the state of Black Americans and the ways in which we all can help make all communities more aware, engaged and accountable for the future for all Americans. In addition, our students had the opportunity to have dinner with the panelists and some of their graduate students. One of those students, Jessica Reed, (a AAAS major) shares some highlights about the event on the next page. To listen to the panel discussion visit: http://www.tavissmileyradio.com/the-tavis-smiley-show-after-the-emancipation-proclamation-150-years-later/
The State of Black America: An Event of Continued Consciousness
By Jessica Reed '15

Every year, the St. Clair Drake Memorial Lecture calls for celebration, honest critique, and progress. It reaffirms the necessity of having a program in African and African American Studies at Stanford and every institution of higher education. In recent years, Mae Jamison and Angela Davis have spoken to audiences filled with Stanford students, faculty, and guests from the greater Bay Area community. On April 18, 2013, conversation continued with a panel discussion, entitled “The State of Black America 150 Years After the Emancipation Proclamation: Honoring the Past, Defining the Future.”

Tavis Smiley, as the moderator, challenged the panelists to answer questions about Black America, both macroscopically and microscopically—the state of the Black family being pivotal. I was pleased that Smiley created space to include the audience in this very important dialogue about the issues that impact the Black community.

This particular conversation unwittingly occurred during a historical year. On July 13, George Zimmerman was found not guilty of all charges against Trayvon Martin. Immediately after the verdict was announced, the reality of “liberty and justice for all” felt more intangible and unimaginable to Black America. So long as the Black community struggles to heal and defy stereotypes, especially the criminalization of Black males, the St. Clair Drake Memorial Lecture is a paramount event of consciousness. Yet, this annual lecture should be one of many sites of conversation. Conversations, paired with action, must take place in schools, prisons, workplaces, churches, and cities across America—from Detroit to Newtown.
Race & Technology

AAAS extended our Race Forward Initiative to include this year’s theme “Race & Technology.” Given that Stanford’s campus is in the heart of Silicon Valley and that it offers world renown programs in science and engineering we felt it was important to discuss the need for increased diversity in tech industries and to demonstrate the important role African & African American Studies plays in highlighting pivotal 21st century issues to faculty, students, staff, and the surrounding Stanford community.

Given the success of the lecture series we hosted for our previous themes “Race & the Environment” and “Race and Education” we thought it was important to do the same for this year’s theme “Race & Technology”. We were aware of students’ desire to address the ways race potentially effects a number of issues, i.e. getting funded, building a team, getting a job, etc. This series allowed students and community members to learn from and meet scholars, industry leaders, successful entrepreneurs, and funders. We were very happy to collaborate with Stanford’s largest IDP, Science, Technology, and Society (STS) to bring a couple top scholars from MIT and University of Illinois to campus to share their research. In addition, we recruited talent among local entrepreneurs, alums, and faculty teaching on campus. Each week students were able to learn more about how they can participate in careers related to technology. The highlight of the course was for our students to meet and learn from people of color who have been very successful in the Valley. Students like Shola Oyedele felt validated in this course in ways we believe will impact her future. Please read Oyedele’s reflections on the following page.

“Before this course, technology was an industry I still wasn’t sure I in.”

-Shola Oyedele ‘14, AAAS minor
Continuing the Discussion:  
A Look at the Intersection of Race & Technology  
By Shola Oyedele ’13

Last spring, the Program in African and African American Studies offered “Race & Technology”, a weekly lecture series introducing underrepresented groups to important issues related to the world of technology. As an aspiring developer and AAAS minor, the Race & Technology course seemed like a no brainer for me.

During the course, I listened to the insightful words of entrepreneurs and venture capitalists like Steve Blank, Wayne Sutton and Charles Hudson. I networked with CEOs like Kimberly Bryant and gained great mentors like Tracy Gray. I left with a greater understanding of entrepreneurship and renewed passion in technology. By attending “Race & Technology”, I not only realized what I wanted to do, but I gained the tools to do it.

Diversity doesn’t just help individuals like myself; it helps the community. Research suggests that diverse, gender-balanced teams create better products. Furthermore, without diversified talent in technology, we build and contribute to products that don’t accurately represent the consumer base that uses them. When we ignore diversity we risk alienating a powerful and creative workforce, hindering the very innovation and diversity of thought Silicon Valley so desperately pursues.

Before this course, I still wasn’t sure I belonged in technology as an industry. Hearing from those who looked like me, with a yearning to contribute to the world in the same way I had, gave me the confidence to persist in technology. Fortunately, “Race & Technology” preceded my participation in the CODE2040 Fellowship Program, giving me the confidence, the tools, the resources and more to leverage CODE2040 in a way I would never have been able to on my own.

Innovation stems from curiosity. It gives you the drive to solve a problem that you see in the world. Given the opportunity to highlight the problems and innovative opportunities to consider them, I conclude that the simple diversification of Silicon Valley would be a game changer. As a technical powerhouse and industry leader, Stanford holds the power to drive this change, to empower their students and equip their communities with the talent necessary for grand scale impact.
Diaspora Fellows Research Program

In 2011, under the direction of Professor Arnetha Ball, The Program in African and African American Studies (AAAS) sought to revitalize St. Clair Drakes’ original mission and vision of exploring the ideas, culture, and knowledge of Africans and African Americans throughout the Diaspora. In an effort to achieve this goal, AAAS developed a Diaspora Research Fellows Program. Through an integrated sequence of courses, workshops, and advising, students engaged in research training. The Research Fellows also participated in field site visits to locations where they plan to explore similarities and differences across local and national contexts. Collectively, these activities provide an enriched research training experience for all interested Stanford University students as well as a unique opportunity for AAAS Research Fellows to receive research training, plan a research proposal, and conduct a comparative research study of African and African American populations both inside and outside the United States while receiving mentoring and support from Stanford university faculty. This summer two students, Jessica Anderson and Kareem Alston, who studied in Cape Town this Winter were selected to be Diaspora Research Fellows and received funding to conduct their research over the summer. Alston, writes about his experience as a Diaspora Research Fellow below.

Words from Diaspora Research Fellow Kareem Alston ’14

My experience in Stanford’s Cape Town program was pretty amazing. The program has an emphasis on community-based research, which gives students an opportunity to learn about the Cape Town environment in a very unique way. On top of that, my quarter had an unprecedented amount of humanities student: a majority AAAS, CSRE, American Studies, and Urban Studies majors, which made our focus as a collective student group more directed toward getting to know people who were from South Africa. I made so many friends and connections during the program I had no doubt that when I returned to Cape Town this summer I would have people to reconnect with.

The next step became preparing and ensuring that when/if I got funding from UAR to do a summer research project in Cape Town, I would be ready to execute the project to the best of my abilities. I found no better opportunity to do so than taking Arnetha Ball’s course, “Community-based Research As A tool For Social Action.” I found out pretty early in the quarter that UAR was going to fund my trip back to South Africa, so I wasn’t sure how much I would get out of taking another research course. However, the class forced me to turn the preliminary experiences I had in Cape Town involving collecting data and forming hypothesis into tangible assignments and tools for future use. I have to admit, the whole task of taking a research proposal and making it into an actual field research project was a bit daunting at first. However, Dr. Ball couldn’t have prepared me better, to the point that, in her class, I reached some important conclusions from my research that I hadn’t anticipated reaching at all. Thanks to Dr. Ball, I now feel more prepared than I ever thought I would be and appreciate the preparation and additional funding I received as a Diaspora Research Fellow.
I’m glad I took Introduction to AAAS

By Foluke Nunn ‘16

Taking Introduction to African American Studies my first quarter at Stanford was one of the best choices I could’ve made coming straight out of high school. Not only was the class incredibly empowering after years of being taught a one-sided, simple version of history, but it really drove home the importance of programs like AAAS. During the first half of the course we focused on major developments in African American history, and the last few weeks were dedicated to the modern impact of race on the African American experience. “Are we post-racial?” was one of the questions that guided the course, and the answer wasn’t just “no,” but “far from it.” Our discussions about race and its relationship to areas such as crime, education, and language emphasized just how deeply the roots of racism and oppression run in this country. The class (and the major) is valuable because it is important to know how to navigate a society in which almost every aspect is linked to issues of race.

For both majors and non-majors, the class provides a good foundation on which to build a better understanding of how systems work both within and outside of the “Stanford bubble.”

Foluke received the 2013 Santa Annan Freshmen award.
Why I majored in AAAS

By Garry Mitchell ‘13

I distinctly remember feeling so under valued in high school as a black male. Any credit I received came with some sort of caveat: I was smart because I “acted” white or because I “wasn’t fully black,” whatever that means. I was reflecting the other day and, while I am ashamed to say it, I realized that I came to Stanford legitimately believing that, generally speaking on the whole, Black people were not as intelligent.

I chose to be an AAAS major because I recognized that there was so much that I did not know about my own people. When I looked at the fact that black people have been on American soil over 400 years, yet our society strategically has left us to struggle beneath many immigrant groups both white and of color, it infuriated me. We built this country, yet we were never able to call it our own. Once I became a major I was able to learn more than I could have ever fathomed about our people. And while I joined the major for the knowledge, I stayed because of the faculty and staff. I was supported beyond belief. I did not realize until my senior year how essential this support was.

When I began writing my honors thesis, it became clear to me how special the AAAS program was. The faculty and staff were always available not only to aid me with the logistics of my work, but to also push my research. I was able to turn in a project that I was proud of by the conclusion of the year because of all the support, guidance, and challenge that I received from AAAS.

Lastly, the AAAS graduation was the highlight of my experience in AAAS. Not a day goes by that my parents do not bring up how touching and personal the ceremony was and how it “100%” made graduation weekend for them. There was no other way that I would have wanted to spend and commemorate my four years at Stanford.

AAAS provided me with a home. It provided me with a voice. It provided me with the tools necessary to go out into the world and make my desired impact. As a beginning teacher, I have put my degree to work in more conversations than I care to admit.
Each one teach one: 
Teaching Student Initiated Courses

By Milton Achelpohl '13

The last class of my undergraduate Stanford career ended at 5:47pm Wednesday June 5th, and unlike many of my peers, I was the one teaching it. Although a small detail that easily gets lost in the sprint toward graduation that seems to mark that period in my life, ending my undergraduate career teaching was extremely important to me. The two Student Initiated Courses I had the privilege of teaching through the Program in African and African Americans Studies were truly life changing and had a tangible impact on the peers I had the privilege to instruct.

There is a lot to say about my experiences teaching the courses “We Are Never Too Radical” in the Fall and “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness” the following Spring, but at the core of both classes were a commitment to the stories in the room. As I explained on day one of each course, I lacked tenure, or at that point even a college diploma and so the class depended fully on the commitment of the scholars in the room. They did not disappoint.

In the fall, we pushed each week to challenge and complicate the histories, narratives and definitions that are often accepted as universal or true. We wrestled with questions of the construction of “Black,” challenged the monolithic rendering of “Africa” and sought to find in our own narratives room to be the change we wished to see through our words, our actions and the narratives we led.

In the spring, we began the first day of class by defining, refining and complicating our notions of whiteness and race. Throughout the ten weeks, we, as a collective, worked to more fully understand the dynamics of power and privilege tied to whiteness, searching for ways to discuss and engage these ideas while maintaining an awareness of their intersectional(ities). We were fortunate mid-quarter sit down with the author of our central text, Professor George Lipsitz, who pushed our boundaries and further expounded upon the depth and magnitude of the issues at hand.

The two classes, supported and promoted my AAAS and its staff, defined by Senior Year in ways that are still not yet fully realized. Through the opportunity, I was able to challenge myself, deepen my understanding of my own passions and take the risk of learning with no strings attached.
Celebrating the Class of 2013

*Bachelor of Arts*
Milton Achelpohl, with Honors, B.A. in African & African American Studies & Political Science
Laurel Frazier, B.A. in African & African American Studies & Political Science
Marjani Hing-Glover, B.A. African & African American Studies
Garry S. Mitchell Jr., with Honors, B.A. in African & African American Studies

*Minor*
Torie Bates, B.A. in Psychology, with a minor in AAAS
Shola Oyedele, B.S. in Science, Technology & Society with a minor in AAAS
Jamarcus Purley, B.A. in English, with a minor in AAAS
Trinity Thompson, with Honors, B.A. English and CSRE with a minor in AAAS

*Honors & Senior Theses*

**Milton Achelpohl** "The Defining Significance of Race: On the Potential of South African Anti-Racism in a United States Context"

**Laurel Frazier** “The Elephants in the Room: The Racial and Political Enigma of Black Republicans from Colin Powell to Clarence Thomas”

**Marjani Hing-Glover** “Home: An Analysis of the 11 O’clock Number From The Wiz”

AAAS Awards and Honors

The Academic Achievement & Service Award
Laurel Fraizer

James L. Gibbs Jr. Award for Superior Academic Performance
Milton Achelpohl

Kennell Jackson Research Award
Milton Achelpohl & Katie Rosman

Trustee Leadership Award
Garry Mitchel & Brenda Mutuma

The Shanta Annan Memorial Award
Foluke Nunn

AAAS Administrative Associate, Massa Wells received the “Staff Mentor of the Year” award at the Black Community Service Center’s award ceremony this spring. Several students nominated Massa, praising his mentorship and support. Massa joined our staff in 2011 and has already begun to contribute greatly to our office and community. He also played a critical role in the development of our Spring “Race and Technology” lecture series.
AAAS major Jessica Anderson received the Truman Fellowship

By Jessica Anderson ’14

This year I was named a 2013 Harry S. Truman Scholar and the Student Speaker for the 2013-14 Freshman Convocation. Both are opportunities that I could have never foreseen three years ago, and both are successes that would not have been possible without the support of the Program in African and African American Studies.

Three years ago, I had very limited expectations for myself and for what this university could offer me. I found myself frustrated at the university for its lack of an undergraduate Education major or bustling academic track for vocal performers interested in genres other than classical music. I feared that my passions would be neglected, and sought unconventional ways of building a relationship with the academy. What I discovered was a home in AAAS, characterized by its intellectual vitality, encouragement, and multiple opportunities.

After taking several AAAS courses on both education and art, I found myself studying in DC and South Africa through the Bing Stanford in Washington and Cape Town programs. Enthralled by the sounds, sites, and stark circumstances I found in both places, I made a lifelong commitment to both education reform and music, and I found multiple ways to begin this pledge. I applied for the Truman Scholarship, pulling upon my course history through AAAS, teaching experiences in Cape Town, and multiple other education endeavors. I also auditioned to speak for Freshman Convocation and talk about the very limitations that I gave myself and my art form during my Freshman year. Through this journey I have learned so much about myself and my future and am so thankful for the support AAAS has provided.
AAAS 2013 newsletter highlights a few of our programs from the 2012-13 year. Unfortunately this Newsletter does not contain the space to give appropriate attention to all the events AAAS sponsored and co-sponsored this year. However, the following section can at least list the names of several (although not all) events that were not highlighted in our Newsletter.

**AAAS Diaspora Tables:** Discussions offer an opportunity for critical discussion of various topics relevant to the African Diaspora, which are presented in dialectic forums with faculty, graduate student, and undergraduates. This year’s Diaspora Tables included the following:

10/9/12 Little Girls: A Short Story Novella  
Presenter: Elton Loud, Author

10/23/12 Mobile Africa  
Presenter: Jess Auerbach (Co-Sponsored with CAS & ICA)

1/15/13 Django Unchained?  
Presenter: PhD candidate Isaiah Wooden

1/29/13 Scandal at the Intersections  
Presenter: PhD candidate Isaiah Wooden

2/12/13 Decoding Beyonce  
Presenter: Joan Morgan (Co-Sponsored with IDA & CSRE)

2/26/12 Why is Black History Important?  
Presenter: Dr. Cheryl Brown

**Other Sponsored & Co-Sponsored Events:**

10/29/12 Presidential Election 2012 #DoYouKnowTheIssues  
(Co Sponsored with BCSC, NNACP, BGSA, VPGE, BSU)

11/9/12 Film Screening: “Nairobi Half Life: Have we decided to be the way we are”?  
(Co Sponsored with CAS)

(Co Sponsored with The Claymen Institute and Vice Provost for Faculty Development & Diversity)

3/1/13 Cultural Show (Co-Sponsored with Stanford African Students Association)

5/4/13 BlackFest 2013 (Co-Sponsored with Black Community Services Center)
Celebrating the AAAS Directorship of Professor Arnetha F. Ball

By Professor John Rickford

Congratulations to Arnetha Ball, Professor of Education, who is stepping down as Director of AAAS after three years at the helm.

She follows in the fine tradition of Sylvia Wynter and Michele Elam, the only previous female directors of the program since it was founded in 1969.

I was at the final AAAS diploma awards ceremony at which she presided in June, and was blown away by the moving testimonies parents gave about the impact of the AAAS program on their sons' and daughters' intellectual development and Stanford experience.

I would like to highlight a few of the outstanding programs AAAS put on under her tenure.

**St. Clair Drake Memorial Lectures:**

2011: Dr. Mae Jemison ('77) American physician and NASA astronaut, first black woman to travel in space when she went into orbit aboard the *Space Shuttle Endeavour*

2012: Dr. Angela Davis “School to Prison Pipeline”

2013: A panel discussion “The State of Black America 150 Years After the Emancipation Proclamation: Honoring the Past, Defining the Future” moderated by Tavis Smiley

**Race Forward: Dr. Ball added two new themes**

2011-12 Race and Education. Co-facilitated a lecture series with over sixty students enrolled

2012-13 Race and Technology. Co-sponsored lecture series with Science Technology & Society (STS), with over fifty students enrolled

**Diaspora Research Fellows Program:** Dr. Ball traveled to Cape Town, South Africa to build a stronger relationship between AAAS and Stanford’s Cape Town study abroad program. The following year a significant number of AAAS students were accepted in the program. Dr. Ball also taught a community based research course to train students to do comparative research. Two students received Diaspora Research Fellowships to support their summer research projects.

On behalf of AAAS faculty, students, and staff we would like to thank Dr. Ball for her service to AAAS. It has been wonderful working with her. Her energy and enthusiasm as director of AAAS have been infectious. Her passion allowed AAAS to increase our majors and minors, develop stronger partnerships with community organizations and African American Studies programs at other universities. The AAAS faculty, students and staff greatly appreciate her service to the program and want to thank her for her dedication and leadership over the past three years.
The Program in African and African American Studies

Arnetha F. Ball, Ph.D.
AAAS Director
Professor, Stanford Graduate School of Education
Past-President, American Educational Research Association
Co-Director, Center for Race, Ethnicity, and Language (CREAL)
World Educational Research Association, US Representative

Cheryl A. Brown, Ph.D.
AAAS Associate Director

Massa Wells
AAAS Student Services Coordinator
& Administrative Associate

For More Information Visit:

AAAS Website
http://www.stanford.edu/dept/AAAS/

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