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African and African American Studies Newsletter, Winter Quarter 2004

African and African American Studies

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African and African American Winter Quarter 2005 Newsletter

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ADMINISTRATIVE SPECIALIST: NANCY BUCKHEISTER
OFFICE: 144 MILLETT HALL
TELEPHONE: 775-5532
paul.griffin@wright.edu
nancy.buckheister@wright.edu

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WRITINGS WORTHY OF CRITIQUE

Norman Kelley, *The Head Negro In Charge Syndrome: The Dead End of Black Politics* (New York: Nation Books, 2004)—tops our reading list this time. Read from the perspective of the "ivory tower" scholar who brooks no interest in non-scholarly writings, this book would certainly be denounced as seriously flawed. But read from the perspective of one who is not only a scholar but also has experiential comprehension of the African American experience, the book demands our immediate and utmost attention.

Head Negro requires our attention because it cuts to the very heart of how and why the power and leadership of the Black American community has seriously eroded since the decades of the 1960s and 1970s.

The popular position over the past three decades has been that the decline of the black civil rights movements of the 60s and 70s goes to the rise of social conservatives in the late 70s and the failure of white liberals to stay the course they had adopted alongside black Americans during the early 60s. *Head Negro* says that there is much more involved in this declension.

Breaking with traditional interpretations, Kelley first suggests that this break down must be viewed as having its foundation among the activities of the now much-celebrated leaders of the 60s—Dr. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Roy Wilkins, etc. He holds that beyond their visions and struggles for a desegregation of America's concrete institutions, these 60s activists had no real understanding of what would be required to move America to real diversity--place where skin color

indeed was irrelevant.

Turning to the present, Kelley points to Jesse Jackson, Louis Farrakhan, Al Sharpton, Russell Simmons, and Cornel West as prominent examples of the continuing absence of vision relative to real diversity. Kelley makes an important distinction here between the lack of vision among 60s leaders and these five men. He heralds King, Malcolm X, Wilkins, and others as people who were "called" to be leaders by specific black communities—Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Nation of Islam, National Urban League, etc. Not only were they "called" to be leaders, they also were able to give clear proof of their qualifications to lead.

Jackson, Farrakhan, Sharpton, Simmons, and West, on the other hand, have never been "called" by black communities to be leaders. Instead, they

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simply have done one of two things. They have either installed themselves into these leadership positions or, they have permitted the system to impose them onto and, in some cases, into the black communities from the outside.

Although it may be painful to concede, this is one of the great insights of Kelley's book. Much has been imported into black communities from the outside during the past three decades. While we must acknowledge that some of this importation has been beneficial, a lot has not.

The Head Negro cuts to the core on this matter when Kelley points to black intellectuals and says that although Mr. West (and I add his colleague Professor Henry Louis Gates) was handpicked by the establishment to be the intellectual leader of the African American community, "the man doesn't take risks" to help advance African American communities and individuals and his scholarly insight as a race leader "tends to be 1,000 miles wide and about [only] two inches deep."

Early in his writing, Kelley says that the *Head Negro Syndrome* has a subpart consisting of what he calls the "M&M Complex." The "M & M complex" is short for "Messiah & Massa" which he defines as a "mixture of psychological and political group dynamics that are played out within black culture and the broader American culture."

To some degree, all black leaders—those called and those imposed—are "Messiahs" because they have a certain charisma that makes others hail them as their leaders. While this "Messiah" complex carries dangers, it is the "Massa" complex that Kelley focuses on as most dangerous to the progress of the black communities. He casts it as such because he says that it is

represented by prominent "white men" who "are seen as sympathetic figures (a residue of white paternalism internalized by blacks), having bestowed some benefit on blacks or having displayed other than hostile interest in their situation." Kelley says that the danger here is that "unsophisticated blacks have a tendency to interpret such [sympathetic] behavior as benevolence" instead of "a political calculation . . . that has very little to do with respecting blacks as legitimate members of the body politic." As examples of prominent white men, Kelley lifts up the names of white men who history says have been most supportive of the black quest for freedom and justice—Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Bill Clinton.

According to Kelley, the "Massa" complex has another danger. It often has led some so-called black political and intellectual leaders to "prophetic accommodation with white power."

We can sympathize with persons such as the Reverend Al Sharpton who may not always understand the distinction between benevolence and racist-laden paternalism. We can even have some small bit of forgiveness for the Reverend Jesse Jackson whose morality and ethics lately have spoken loudly for themselves.

But it is much, much more difficult to grasp why black intellectuals, best represented by Professors West and Gates, so readily have fallen and continue to fall victim to the "Massa Complex." After all, it has been around and discussed for centuries. Even unsympathetic history books have given space to discussions of the differences between the "field hand" and the house"

The Head Negro In

Charge Syndrome is a must read for all—scholars and laity—who want a deeper understanding of why African Americans themselves are responsible for much of the leadership degeneration that has swept over black communities in the aftermath of the 1960s and early 1970s.

Since those years, a huge army of African American men and women—from politicians to intellectuals, preachers to morticians, rappers to blues singers, blue collar workers to corporate executives—have stepped up at one time or other to present themselves as the new Martin King or the new Malcolm X or the new Angela Davis.

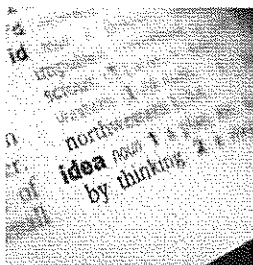
Like their 60s forebears, most of these new leaders have a huge charismatic aura surrounding them. They indeed are exciting men and women, able to arouse and capture the very hearts and souls of their audiences.

Charisma has its place but **EXCITEMENT** without **INSIGHT**, as the past four decades have painfully demonstrated, can only harm the black struggle for humanity.

The Head Negro In Charge Syndrome: The Dead End of Black Politics waits for your reading.

Professor Paul R. Griffin

FACULTY REFLECTIONS



Reshaping the College Culture: Embracing Undergraduate Scholarship

Dr. Mary L. Rucker
Assistant Professor
Department of
Communication

Reshaping the College Culture:

Embracing Undergraduate Scholarship

Much time has been spent guiding graduate students through the research process and assisting a small number of undergraduates to present at undergraduate honors conferences. However, creating a college culture that places great emphasis on undergraduate scholarship to accommodate undergraduate students, as a whole, is a feat within itself. Some schools have created undergraduate symposiums that give upper-level undergraduates the opportunity to present their research. Since most faculty members are overwhelmed with their own research agendas, among other duties, they have little time to assist a large number of undergraduates with conference level research that could yield publishable results. Undergraduate students' involvement in research beyond research methods and independent courses is a valuable experience, especially for those students interested in graduate school.

Various research questions and hypotheses have been formulated to explain the assumption that undergraduates' college experiences differ from those of graduate stu-

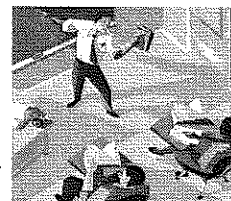
dents. Many faculty members would probably argue that unlike their graduate counterparts, undergraduate students are overlooked, neglected, unsupported, and even dismissed by faculty for doing collaborative research.

Culture is a part of our institutional lives. And what exactly is culture? There is no clear-cut definition for culture. However, many of us have learned that culture is composed of beliefs, norms, assumptions, knowledge, values, and sets of practices that are shared to form a system. Beyond this, we can say that through the college culture, we transmit beliefs and assumptions about student ability, student knowledge, and student academic performance as they matriculate through college.

Faculty members interested in reshaping the culture of their colleges can help create a learning environment that embraces undergraduate scholarship. One way this can be done is to reshape the college culture by displaying and exposing students to faculty scholarship within their own departments. Another way to reshape the college culture is to create a collaborative learning environment that includes trust, data-driven decisions, structure, and faculty acting with intent as a positive force for students. With this in mind, is it a worthwhile feat to reshape our college culture to embrace undergraduate scholarship?



BARRIERS TO STUDENTS' LEARNING



Dr. Jeanne Ballatine
Professor Department
of Sociology

Dr. Jeanne Ballatine, Wright State University Professor of Sociology, and two faculty members at University of Akron recently completed a study to learn what problems students face in the learning process. Once the data is analyzed, the findings will be presented to colleagues and administrators at Wright State University and University of Akron and across the country.

It is hoped that the findings make a difference in how universities and faculty members work with students to make learning easier. For instance, we know finances are critical for many students; book costs alone can "break the bank." Issues like this that we find especially important will be targeted for improvement and trying to find ways to help students. **Look for the findings of this survey at the beginning of winter quarter.**

AFS Winter Quarter Courses:

African and African American Studies Program

Wright State University
144 Millett Hall
(937) 775-5532

A minor brings beginning knowledge

A major offers greater understanding

Choose one **TODAY!**



Mary McLeod-Bethune



Malcolm X



Zora Neale Hurston



W.E.B. Dubois



Barbara Jordan



Martin Luther King

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction....The chain reaction of evil--hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars--must be broken, or we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation."

Martin Luther King, Jr., Strength To Love, 1963.

AFS 200-01 What is the African and African American Experience T,TH (12:20-2:00) 236 Oelman—Jones— A historical and methodological analysis of the Diaspora struggles of persons of African descent to create a life and distinct culture among world civilizations.

AFS 499-01 Idea of Race/Racism T, TH (2:15-3:55) 306 Oelman-Griffin— Focusing on institutional racism has provided us important insights over the years. This course builds on those insights by studying the religious ideas that have long defined and sustained concrete anti-black practices. It traces the development of these theological ideas from the Puritan era to the Civil War. And, it shows how those racist religious thoughts have virtually become a religion in and among themselves in American society.

COM 102 Essentials of Interpersonal Communication various days, various times — Introduction to intrapersonal and interpersonal communication processes as they affect communication style and competence. Emphasis on a holistic approach to communication by understanding concepts, analyzing experiences, and practicing new skills.

ENG 205-01 Afro-American Literature T, TH (4:10-5:50) 058 Rike Hall— Jones — Readings in African American literature: for example, Phyllis Wheatley to the present, nineteenth-century freedom literature, twentieth-century black novel, and the female African-American tradition. Prerequisite: ENG 102

ENG 310-01 Studies in African Literature M,W,F (2:45-3:50) 219 Allyn Hall— Sharma— Intensive study of Literature from different regions of America or reflecting the experiences of different ethnic groups. Intended to develop an understanding of race, region, and ethnicity as important both to literature and its critical appreciation.

ENG 440-01 Studies in Ethnic and Regional Literature T,TH (10:25-12:05) 401 Millett Hall-Jones - Intensive study of literature from different regions of America or reflecting the experiences of different ethnic groups. Intended to develop an understanding of race, region, and ethnicity as important both to literature and to its critical appreciation.

HST 215-01 African-American History M,W,F (12:15-1:05) 072 Rike Hall— Green— Survey of Black people in American society from colonial slave trade to the present. Reconstruction to the present.

MUS 290-01 African American Music: America and Beyond T, TH (2:15-3:55) 152 Creative Arts Center - Ellis - Survey of the development of African American music from a historical, sociological, and cultural perspective. Included will be an analysis of the genres, influences, and impact on American and world culture. of Africa to world civilization.

PLS 364-01 Contemporary African Politics M,W,F (9:45-10:50) 148 Rike Hall - Green, D. - Political processes and governmental institutions of sub-Saharan Africa; special attention to dynamics of political development and social and economic change. Comparative analysis of selected African political systems.

PLS430 American Government Seminar: Politics of Civil Rights T, TH (2:15-3:30) 132 Oelman - Riley - Selected topics related to American Political institutions and processes. Emphasis on readings, discussion, and research.

RST 271-01 Regional Studies: Africa T (6:05-9:25) - Eguaroje; TH (6:05-9:25) - Eguaroje; T, TH (8:30-10:10) - Kannan - Introduction to African environment; diversity of cultural heritages; changes due to modernization; colonialism, slavery, and independence; a brief survey of the relations of Africa to other non western regions; and the contribution of Africa

URS345-01 Public Administration TH (6:05-9:25) - 218 Fawcett Hall - Gillispie - Nature and scope of public administration; administrative law; and public interest in the administrative process.

African and African American Studies Program

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Mary McLeod-Bethune



Malcolm X



Zora Neale Hurston



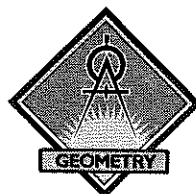
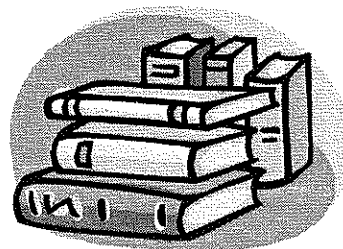
W.E.B. Dubois



Barbara Jordan

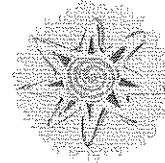
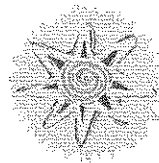
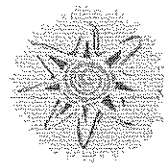


Martin Luther King



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Martin Luther King, Jr., Strength To Love, 1963.



**JOIN US IN CELEBRATING THE
EXPERIENCE OF THE AFRICAN AND
AFRICAN AMERICAN
COMMUNITY!**

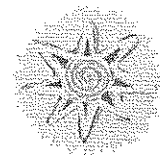
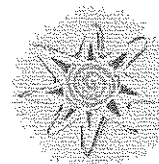
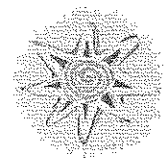
Announcing the newly formed

**African and African
American Studies Club**

For more information, reply to

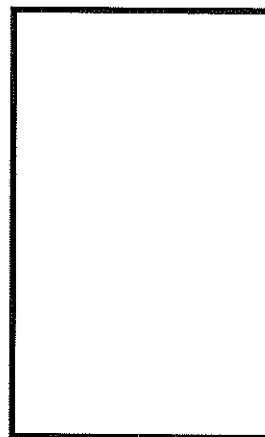
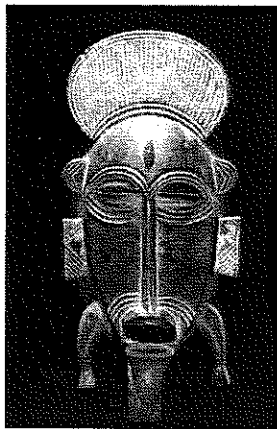
ife.shafeek@wright.edu

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BOLINGA BLACK CULTURAL RESOURCES CENTER

Design a New Logo Contest



**Winner will receive a
\$75.00 book stipend
Towards books**

Deadline November 11th (WSU Students only)

For more information contact Nancy Buckheister 775-5645

**FACULTY PARTICIPATING IN THE
AFRICAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM**

- **Dr. Marjorie Baker**
Associate Professor, Social Work
270 Millett Hall - x3431
marjorie.baker@wright.edu
- **Dr. Jeanne Ballantine**
Professor, Sociology
270 Millett Hall - x2442
jeanne.ballantine@wright.edu
- **Dr. Joseph Coleman**
Associate Professor, MIS
212Q Rike Hall - x2648
joseph.coleman@wright.edu
- **Dr. Marlese Durr**
Associate Professor, Sociology;
Director, Women's Studies
270 Millett Hall - x 2275
marlese.durr@wright.edu
- **Dr. Brenda Ellis**
Associate Professor and Director of Paul
Laurence Dunbar Chorale
M347 Creative Arts Center - x2072
brenda.ellis@wright.edu
- **Dr. Barbara Green**
Associate Professor, History
370 Millett Hall - x3636
barbara.green@wright.edu
- **Dr. December Green**
Associate Professor, Political Science;
Director, International Studies
325 Millett Hall - x 4817
december.green@wright.edu
- **Dr. Paul Griffin**
Director, African and African
American Studies; Professor, Religion
144 Millett Hall - x5532
paul.griffin@wright.edu
- **Dr. Lillie Howard**
Vice President for Curriculum and Instruc-
tion, Dean of University College and
Professor, English
240 University Hall - x2097
lillie.howard@wright.edu
- **Dr. Sharon Jones**
Assistant Professor, English
481 Millett Hall - x3397
sharon.jones@wright.edu
- **Dr. Carol Nathanson**
Associate Professor, Art History
A335 Creative Arts Center - x2896
carol.nathanson@wright.edu
- **Dr. Randall Paul**
Associate Professor, Music;
Coordinator of Woodwinds & Music
Department Scholarships
M244 Creative Arts Center - x2508
randall.paul@wright.edu
- **Dr. Mary Rucker**
Assistant Professor, Communications
425 Millett Hall - x 2631
mary.rucker@wright.edu
- **Dr. Alpana Sharma**
Associate Professor, English
457 Millett Hall - x2070
alpana.sharma@wright.edu
- **Dr. Tracy Snipe**
Associate Professor, Political Science
325 Millett Hall - x3767
tracy.snipe@wright.edu
- **Dr. Jennifer Subban**
Assistant Professor, Urban Affairs
225 Millett Hall - x 3650
jennifer.subban@wright.edu

VISITING SCHOLARS

- **Judge Adele Riley**
Visiting Professor, AFS/Political Science
143 Millett Hall - x5571
adele.riley@wright.edu
- **Mr. William Gillispie**
Visiting Instructor, AFS/Urban Affairs
225 Millett Hall - x2941

African and African American
Studies Program
144 Millett Hall
3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy
Dayton, OH 45435

Phone: 937-775-5532
Fax: 937-775-5563

Email: paul.griffin@wright.edu
nancy.buckheister@wright.edu

UPCOMING EVENTS

Bolinga Black Cultural Resources Center

Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration

Friday, January 14, 2005, Apollo Room (Student Union Multipurpose Room), 12-2

Black History Month Celebration

Black Arts Day

February 3, 2005, Millett Hall Atrium, 5:30-8

Aaron McGruder

February 8, 2005, Apollo Room (Student Union Multipurpose Room), 6-8

African and African American Studies

AFS Conferences

Role of Public Administration in Social Change

April 13, 2005

In the Aftermath of the 1965 Voting Rights Legislation

May 12, 2005