Volumnes have been written since Senator Hillary Clinton and Senator Barack Obama announced their respective candidacies for the Democratic presidential nomination last year. Much of this chatter has been just that—mere prattle or noise. One does not have to look far to see that much of this noise has come from the mouths and pens of either media figures, who are more exciting than substantive, or by pseudo experts who likewise are more exciting than insightful.

Although it is clear that he rushed to be the first or among the first to publish a piece on Obama, the one exception to all this clamor is Shelby Steele’s recent book—A Bound Man: Why We are Excited About Obama and Why He Can’t Win,(Free Press, 2008).

Many know that I am no fan of Professor Steele and his eagerness to always be the first is part of why. Moreover, as a trained historian, I subscribe to the methods of historiography. Among other points, this method teaches that in order for interpreters who are not actual participants in a specific event to be able to recover and make sound evaluations of it, there must be historical distance; that is, years must have past between the time when the event first occurred and the time that the interpreter begins to study it. Put simply, I hold that it is far too early for scholars to be jumping up to make claims about the “truths” or “facts” of the Obama event. All of the information that is essential for accurate interpretation is not yet in and so no honest and fair evaluations can yet be made of his story.

(To be Continued, pg.5)
AFRICAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

AFS Summer/Fall Quarter Courses

AFS Summer Quarter Courses

COM 104 Intro to Human Communication MTWR 2:15-3:55—Jung-Soo Yi
This course surveys major concepts, theories, and research approaches in the study of human communication. The course assists students in developing requisite knowledge and skills in the development of their own communication competence.

RST 271 (WI) Regional Studies: Africa MTWR (A term) 12:20-2:00—Tracy Snipe; MTWR (B term) 12:20-2:00—Frank Equaroje
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 to world civilization. Writing intensive.

ENG 205 Afro-American Literature MTWR (A term) 2:15-3:55—Yvonne Seon

HST 490/690 Civil Rights Movement 1955-1965 MTWR (A term) 2:15-3:55—Barbara Green
Examines topics drawing from the African-American experience; may include black ideology and leadership, racial tension in urban society, and the civil rights movement.

PLS 494 Globalization MW (A term) 4:10-7:45—Chad Atkinson
Study of particular political problems of contemporary significance.

AFS Fall Quarter Courses

AFS 200 (WI) What is the African and African American Experience? TR 10:25-12:05—Paul Griffin
A historical and methodological analysis of both African histories and cultures and the history of the Diaspora struggles of persons of African descent to create a life and distinct culture among world civilizations.

AFS 401 Senior Research Project
Divided over two quarters, this course allows students to bring their study in the major to completion through major research project that focuses on one specific aspect of African or African American life.

Mary McLeod-Bethune
Moosom 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 499 Special Topics in African & African American Studies
Selected topics relevant to historical and current issues in African and African American studies. Course may be repeated for up to four credit hours.

COM 104 Introduction to Human Communication MWF 11:00-11:50—Martha Antolik
This course surveys major concepts, theories, and research approaches in the study of human communication. The course assists students in developing requisite knowledge and skills in the development of their own communication competence.

COM 432/632 Race, Class & Gender in Com MWF 8:30am-9:35am—Carol Bennett
Theoretical and pragmatic consideration of the impact of race, class, and gender on the communication process within society.

COM 457/657 Intercultural Communication TR 10:25-12:05—Mary Rucker
Study of communication in intercultural environments. Emphasis on research and theory to better understand the complexity of intercultural communication interactions.

Analysis of economic processes that influence urban economic conditions, population movements, economic problems facing metropolitan areas, and alternative problem-solving techniques.

ENG 205 Afro-American Literature TR 12:20-2:00—Sharon Jones

HST 214 African American History to 1877 MWF 12:15-1:20—Barbara Green
Survey of Black people in American society from Colonial American to Reconstruction.

HST 475/675-01 Reconstruction 1863-1877 MWF 2:45-3:30—Barbara Green
Courses offered under this number examine distinct periods in the 19th century (e.g., Civil War and reconstruction) and major topics such as slavery. Topics vary.

HST 475/675-02 The Old South MWF 11:00-12:05—Edward Haas
Courses offered under this number examine distinct periods in the 19th century (e.g., Civil War and reconstruction) and major topics such as slavery. Topics vary.

African and African American Studies Program
Wright State University
131 Allyn 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 Jr.

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AFS Fall Quarter Courses (Cont’d)

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MUS 117 Music Listening IV: Jazz TR 12:20-1:35—Ryan Tarjan
Historical survey of jazz and related styles from the late 19th century to
the present.

MUS 290 (WI) African Amer Music:Amer/Beyond TR 10:25-12:05—Brenda 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.

PLS 428/628 (WI) Contemp Afr-Amer Problems TR 4:10-5:50—Tracy Snipe
The critical pedagogy of this course allows for an in-depth exploration of
many problematic issues that assail African Americans from outside and
within the black community itself. Several possible explanations and so-
lutions will be addressed.

SOC 442/642 Race and Ethnicity MWF 12:15-1:20—TBA
Study of intergroup, racial, and ethnic group relations including the proc-
esses and consequences of conflict, prejudice, and discrimination.

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FACULTY REFLECTIONS

"Perspectives on African and African American Studies at Wright State University"

-Dr. Lynette Jones, Associate Professor, English Department, Wright State University

During my five years as a professor at Wright State University, I have taught many courses that connect with African American culture. Two of the courses that I regularly teach, which connect with African and African American Studies, include English 205 (Introduction to Afro-American Literature) and AFS 200 (What is the African and African American Experience?).

Both courses offer students an opportunity to learn more about the contributions that individuals from the African Diaspora have made to American culture.

In English 205, I focus on the African American written and oral tradition from the 1700s to the present. In the course, several time periods are covered, including the colonial period, the antebellum period, the Reconstruction period, the Harlem Renaissance, the Protests Movement, and the Neo-realism period.

Students read poetry and prose from a variety of writers including Phillis Wheatley, Harriet Jacobs, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Lorraine Hansberry, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Sonia Sanchez, Nikki Giovanni, Randall Kenan, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison.

The depth and breadth of the course provides students with important information about the social, economic, and historical aspects which shape this very important literary tradition.

By being exposed to the diversity of African American voices, students can see the different perspectives writers bring to the journey from slavery to freedom in the context of American history.

The texts continue to be very relevant to the students' lives and experiences. I also incorporate film into the class by showing the film version of Their Eyes Were Watching God, which was based on Zora Neale Hurston's novel Their Eyes Were Watching God.

This year, I encouraged students to watch the film version out of class of Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun, which premiered on ABC television during winter quarter 2008.

In AFS 200, students learn about African and African American culture. The course includes a survey of North Africa and West Africa as well as an analysis of the experience of black people in the United States from the colonial period up to present times.

The class also includes guest lecturers from Wright State University who speak on their expertise. Guest lecturers this quarter included Dr. Marjorie Baker, Dr. Marlese Durr, and Dr. Paul Griffin.

Students very much enjoy the opportunity to hear informative lectures from Wright State University faculty as it relates to the African and African American experience. This quarter, I required students to engage in research projects in which they researched the lives of African and African American individuals and their contributions to history.

Both English 205 and AFS 200 represent courses which Wright State University students have the opportunity to take as a means of expanding their knowledge.

These and many other vital and important courses at Wright State University illustrate the numerous opportunities at this institution for contributing to and celebrating the diversity of this country and the world at large.
This said, I still would encourage all to read Steele’s study, for, he traces out Barack’s biography and shows how his life experiences influence his quest to be the first Black president of America. Shelby then presents some thoughtful reasons why he is certain that Mr. Obama will not be able to move into the White House. In sum, Steele concludes that as we move closer to the Democratic convention in June, 2008 many men and women will put aside the excitement surrounding Obama’s campaign and conclude that a Black man in the White House is something that should not yet be.

From the looks of things at this very moment, it seems like Professor Steele’s conclusion is heading toward being false. Here I place stress on as of this very moment!

But be that as it shall be, I must say that if we consider Mr. Steele’s belief in the light of events from the distant historical past, then his conclusion just might turn out as he is projecting. It is too bad that Shelby didn’t wait long enough before writing his book to have been able to include discussion of those events in his argument.

Steele’s neglect, then, is the task I will engage. So let me take us back to the distant past and see if there are any old historical markers that flow through the Obama campaign today.

Let us begin with the dawn of 1964. At that time America sat waiting for Congress to act on passage of the Civil Rights Bill that was supposed to finally bring equality to African Americans in the marketplace. Just before the vote was to be taken a small group of female congresswomen led by Cath- erine Dean May, Republican, Washington State and Martha Griffiths, Democrat, Michigan suddenly burst forward on the floor of Congress (they indeed were out of order according to procedure) and demanded that the word SEX be added to Title VII of the Civil Rights Bill.

The argument they presented to their overwhelmingly white male colleagues was that: “If you don’t add sex to this bill, [then] you are going to have white men in one bracket, you are going to try to take colored men and women and give them equal employment rights, and down at the bottom of the list is going to be a white woman with no rights at all.” (Congressional Records, 110, pt. 2, 88th Cong., 2d sess. January 30- February 10, 1964): p. 2579.

All should certainly know that the word SEX was in fact added to the Civil Rights Bill. And, from then on, white women have been the largest group of beneficiaries of Affirmative Action. This, despite ubiquitous but unsubstantiated contentions that Blacks are.

But let us move the hands of time forward almost exactly 44 years after the addition of Sex to the Civil Rights Bill. Here we want to listen in on the voice of Geraldine Ferraro—a former Congresswoman and 1984 vice presidential candidate along side of Senator Walter Mondale.

On March 7, 2008 Mrs. Ferraro spoke and wrote about why Senator Obama’s campaign has been so successful thus far. She railed that his success is simply “because he is black, If Obama was a white man he would not be in this position.... And, if he was a woman (of any color) he would not be in this position.”

Although not all the words are the same, the affinity between what Ferraro declares on March 7, 2008 and what Congresswomen Martha Griffiths and others brazenly announced about America’s hierarchical chain of command 44 years earlier is clear.

As I pointed out in my book—Seeds of Racism in the Soul of America— in the nature of things American, African Americans must always be at the “bottom of the well” as my good friend Professor Derrick Bell so aptly defines it.

But historians should not rush to judgment simply on the basis of Ferraro’s connection with the distant past. This is only one example. Can we find yet another example of this kind of sympathetic relationship with America’s racist past? Although it is not quite as close a relationship and although it is more sophisticated, yes we can. Here it is.

Shortly after President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in November, 1963, Malcolm X spoke about his murder and said, “The chickens have come home to roost.” Almost exactly 40 years later to the day, 2003, the Reverend Jeremiah Wright preached from his pulpit about 911 and declared that “America’s chickens have come home to roost.”

Individuals from all across America have taken sides on whether Wright and Malcolm are radicals and lunatics or whether they were simply expressing a view that is commonplace in the Black American experience. This debate has gone on ever since Malcolm uttered his words in 1963 and will continue to attract differing opinions.
Director's Corner (Con't)

What I want to draw our attention to in the midst of all this debate is what some are asking Barack Obama to do today and what many asked the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to do in 1963 as it related to Malcolm's rhetoric. That common request was: "Denounce him."

Here is the racism. But it is not in the requests for Martin to denounce Malcolm and for Obama to denounce Wright. No, it is in the fact that from slavery to the present some in America have attempted to purposefully divide Black America by telling, indeed, directing African Americans about which Blacks to accept and which Blacks to reject.

During slavery, slave-masters would demand that their slaves interact with only those slaves that they approved. This approach soon turned into the infamous "field negro" versus "house negro" practice.

Dr. King never "denounced" Malcolm and Malcolm never denounced King. Although they often disagreed concerning strategies and rhetoric, they never permitted their disagreement to cause them to reject each other. They both understood the history of racism in this country, especially its divide and conquer tactic.

From an analytical point of view, here is the problem with Mr. Obama's denunciations of the Reverend Wright and also Louis Farrakhan.

In their debate here in Ohio, Hillary demanded that Barack "denounce and reject" Farrakhan. He did. By doing the same thing with Reverend Wright, even though no single person made this request of him, Barack of the history of racism in this country.

Over a year ago, before he was to announce his candidacy, some of Obama's close advisors instructed him to denounce the Reverend Wright as a radical and separate from him immediately. On the very eve of the February 2007 day when he was getting ready to go to Springfield, Illinois--President Abraham Lincoln's hometown--to participate in a program where he would announce that he would be running for the Democratic presidential nomination, Obama abruptly advised Reverend Wright that he was removing him from giving the prayer during that program because of the "fear" of some of his advisors.

"During slavery, slave-masters would demand that their slaves interact with only those slaves that they approved."

It is too early for historians to begin analyzing Barack Obama and his candidacy for the Democratic nomination. Yet, it is not too early for historians to search for any historical markers that will help cast light on why he has dismissed, "rejected and denounced" two important African American figures.

As both a historian and a member of the African American community, I am not aware of any other Black leader in America's history ever abandoning another Black leader because of encouragement from the outside.

The most notable exceptions here and the practice that would come the closest to this matter would be the "house negroes" who at the beck and call of their white masters, would eagerly give up their Black brothers and sisters. Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, quickly stand out as examples of leaders who were "denounced and rejected" by perfidious individuals seeking to become somebody.

Will historians some distance from now write and draw parallels between Mr. Barack Obama and Mr. Tiger Woods who made it very clear some years ago that he is not truly Black? Although it would be wrong and certainly a historical problem to place such a stigma on Senator Obama at this moment, the distant past of bad ideas of race and racism seem to have found a kind of residence in far too many of his actions thus far for whatever reasons.
Black Heritage: Brain Quest

1. George R. Carruthers won a NASA award for his work on a highly sensitive recording device. Was it used on the moon or on Mars?

2. Name the abolitionist and early feminist whose “Ain’t I a Woman” speech silenced hecklers at the National Women’s Suffrage Convention.

3. Did the “Tuskegee Experiment” train African American pilots for combat in World War II or the Korean war?

4. What popular stringed instrument was brought to America by slaves in the 17th century?

Answers: 1. moon 2. aerometer 3. world war II 4. the banjo
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