"WE HAVE LOST A PIONEER OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES WITH THE LOSS OF THE PROGRAMS FIRST DIRECTOR"

DR. RONALD FOREMAN
Hello and welcome to the 2014-15 African American Studies Program newsletter. This has been a bittersweet year for the program. We continue to progress and expand because currently have almost 70 majors and 20 minors, have welcomed a visiting faculty member, are searching for three new faculty members, sponsored two successful programs during the fall 2014 semester, taught 700 students this year, and carried out another successful African Americans in Paris class in March 2015. However, on a sad note, we have lost a pioneer of African American Studies with the loss of the program’s first director Dr. Ronald C. Foreman Jr. on November 11, 2014.

In this installment of the newsletter, I would like to showcase the accomplishments of our faculty. First, Dr. Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, Senior Lecturer of Religion and African American Studies, was featured in the PBS documentary “American Experience: Freedom Summer 1964. Dr. Marilyn Thomas-Houston edited another successful edition of FIRE!!!, an online journal of African American Studies. In addition, Dr. Patricia Hilliard-Nunn participated in the UN Day, the Building Bridges Race Relations Symposium, and several other activities in Gainesville.
THE GLOBAL INTERNSHIP & BOARD OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS

OPPORTUNITY CORNER

The Global Internship Program offers eight-week summer internships in Hong Kong, London, New York and Los Angeles. Places are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Internships are available in banking and finance, law, and the media. Both undergraduate and graduate students can apply via www.city-internships.com/apply.

The Graduate School at the University of Florida sponsors the Board of Education (BOE) Summer Fellowship Program each year. This year's program is scheduled for June 24 – August 7, 2015. Applications will be accepted April 1st thru May 1, 2015. Students should apply via GIMS: http://gradschool.ufl.edu/GimsPublic/OGMP/BOESummerFellowshipApp.aspx

The BOE Summer Fellowship Program is open to US citizens or permanent residents who are newly accepted into a UF doctoral program and are underrepresented in their field of study, first generation, low-income status or ethnic or cultural minority. Students receive among other things: a $3500 stipend to help with the transition to Gainesville; Four credit hours of paid coursework in their respective departments; $100 Gator Dining card for peer mentoring meetings.

UPCOMING COURSES

During the fall 2015 semester, the African American Studies Program is sponsoring several new courses including African American History, Black Lives Matter, Black Masculinity, Black Women’s Health, an online course on Black Power Movement, and a Race, Violence, and the State course. We also have a new YouTube page that has footage from the African Americans in Paris class and will feature videos of our programs, symposia, and lectures https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1Ouw7_kI2wOadwYwf-KzVA/videos.

Congsats!

Class of 2015

The students in the African American Studies Integrative Seminar II presented their research findings on Thursday April 16, 2015. Sixteen students will graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree in African American Studies and six students will earn a minor in African American Studies. We congratulate each of them.

Malissa Alinor: Sociology major and African American Studies/Business Administration Minor
Ravene Aponte: African American Studies Major and Health Disparities and Educational Studies minor
Danisha Baro: African American Studies major
Asheera Brinson: Criminology and Law major and African American Studies minor
Elijah Carter: African American Studies major
Duuna Desir: African American Studies major
Nathalie Dortonne: Journalism major and African American Studies minor
Jasmine Taylor Hayes: African American Studies major
Tatiana Jones: Sociology major and African American Studies/Family, Youth, and Community Sciences minor
Paslene Pericles: African American Studies major and Health Disparities minor
Audreya Loguerre: Journalism and African American Studies double major
Valiece Long: African American Studies major
Breana Love: African Americans Studies major
Kathy Pierre: Journalism major and African American Studies minor
Geraldine Placide: African American Studies major and Family, Youth, and Community Sciences minor
Shakira Sherwood African American Studies major
Nina Stephens: African American Studies and Criminology and Law double major
Mary Taylor: African American Studies major
Paslene Pericles: African American Studies major and Health Disparities minor
Audreya Loguerre: Journalism and African American Studies double major
Valiece Long: African American Studies major
Breana Love: African Americans Studies major
Kathy Pierre: Journalism major and African American Studies minor
Geraldine Placide: African American Studies major and Family, Youth, and Community Sciences minor
Shakira Sherwood African American Studies major
Nina Stephens: African American Studies and Criminology and Law double major
Mary Taylor: African American Studies major
Laree Thomas: English and History double major and African American Studies minor
Brianna Williams: African American Studies and Political Science double major
Sebastian Wright: English, Anthropology, and African American Studies triple major
honor a pioneer

Dr. Ronald C. Foreman Jr. was the first director of the African American Studies Program and served for 30 years until his retirement in 2000.

Professor Foreman passed away after a long illness on November 11, 2014. On February 19, 2014, the program will host a memorial service in his honor to celebrate his life and to show our appreciation for the many things he contributed to the program and to the university as a whole.

In 2004, Professor Marilyn Thomas-Houston, while directing the program, instituted the annual Foreman lecture series. Each year, a prominent scholar of African American Studies gives a public lecture of his or her research in the discipline. On February 19, 2005, Dr. Paula McClain, professor of political science and public policy and Dean of The Graduate School and Vice Provost for Graduate Education at Duke University, presented her research, “Black and Hispanic Socioeconomic and Political Competition” for the Foreman lecture. On the day before, Dr. Patricia Hilliard-Nunn of the African American Studies Program organized a beautiful Memorial Service so that his family, friends, and former students could celebrate Professor Foreman’s life and legacy. We are extremely grateful for his hard work and dedication and look forward to honoring him next semester and in the years to come.

DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE CONT.

Our students have also been selected for prestigious summer internships and have won academic scholarships. African American Studies major, Paslene Pericles, interned for a Global Health Initiative Program in Ghana, West Africa during the summer of 2014. Paslene also recently was accepted into a post baccalaureate biomedical science program and is waiting to hear from several medical schools. Also during the summer Mary S. Taylor, a major, interned with the Disney World Internship Program and Rejerio Burton, an African American Studies minor, interned with the Georgia Democratic Party. La’Tiarra Calloway, also a minor, has been selected for the 2015 Tallahassee Legislative Internship Program and Jasmine Taylor Hayes, a major, has been selected as a Junior Fellow in the Political Science department.

Three of our graduate student instructors, Vincent Adejumo, Ishante LaToya Hunter, and Kevin Jenkins, will be earning their doctorates in the spring and summer of 2015. Vincent teaches our online Introduction to African American Studies course. LaToya taught the intro course on campus during the summer 2014 session as well as the Black Political Thought course last semester. Finally, Kevin has taught both the Mentoring At-Risk Youth and Race, Law, and Health courses for the program. We congratulate each of them and appreciate their hard work.

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FREEDOM SUMMER FILM & PANEL

In September 2014, the African American Studies Program sponsored a showing of the “American Experience: Freedom Summer 1964” PBS documentary that featured Professor Zoharah Simmons.

The program also allowed Professor Simmons to discuss her experiences during Freedom Summer on a panel that also included Dr. Paul Ortiz (Director of the Samuel C. Proctor Oral History Program), and three student panelists (Sarah Blanc, Justin Dunnavant, and Amanda Nelson). Each discussed the significance of Freedom Summer for American civil rights and history. The program was co-sponsored by the Department of Religion and the Samuel C. Proctor Oral History Program.


PASSING THE TORCH

In October 2014, the program sponsored its third annual Passing the Torch Career and Internship Fair. Representatives from the Bob Graham Center for Public Service (Dr. Sheila Dickison), Teach for America (African American Studies Major Taylor Hayes) provided information to the audience. In addition, our work study student,

Political Science and Journalism major and African American Studies minor Nathalie Dortonne, gave an excellent power point presentation about her internships with the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation and the Tallahassee Legislative Semester Internship Program.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

PASLENE PERICLES

I am currently a senior at the University of Florida. I became a Licensed Practical Nurse at the age of 18 and have been working as a nurse ever since. I have worked a research assistant for Dr. Carolyn Tucker’s Health Psychology team until I began my own research on health disparities. I have spent the duration of my college career in leadership positions such as the NAACP Community Health Director, 2nd Vice President of the NAACP, and an intern for Pink Wish Foundation in Gainesville. I am currently the Historian for Sickle Cell Warriors, Community Service Director for Nu Alpha Lambda, and Public Relations Director for Poets Inc. I am a mentor at Lincoln Middle School and have served as a volunteer at A. Quinn Jones in Gainesville since my freshman year.

I chose Black studies as my major after I realized that I was solely interested in classes that dealt with race while in the Sociology major. Since my freshman year, I learned about the disparities in healthcare faced by African Americans. This awareness fueled my passion for combating health disparities. I realized that I could blend my interests in the African diaspora with my passion for medicine because of the dire need for further research breakthroughs, knowledge, and understanding of the relationship between African Americans and healthcare. My long term goals are to become a Hematologist and find a cure for Sickle Cell. My older sister died of Sickle Cell Anemia. My younger sister has the same disease, while I have the Sickle Cell Trait. I refuse to lose my younger sister to the same disease. I understand how it feels to have a family member with a chronic disease and how it can steal away the beauty of life. With this resiliency, I will work tirelessly to find a cure.
Professor Evan Hart is serving as a visiting assistant professor of African American Studies this year. She earned a doctorate in history from the University of Cincinnati in 2012 and wrote a dissertation entitled Building a More Inclusive Women’s Health Movement: Byllye Avery and the Development of the National Black Women’s Health Project, 1981-1990. Professor Hart has been teaching the Key Issues in African American/Black Atlantic Thought course and the Research Methods in African American History course. This summer she will teach an online version of the Key Issues course and will teach a Black Women’s Health class during the fall 2015 semester. Welcome Evan!

Nathan A. Murray will earn his Master of Fine Arts degree in May 2015 with an emphasis in ceramic sculpture. He has taught courses in Ceramics for Non-Majors and Ceramics in 3D to undergraduate students while pursuing his graduate degree. Recently, some of Nathan’s sculptures were on display at UF. In the sculptures his work represents the violence against African American men by the police. In addition, children watch this violence helplessly without awareness that it will affect their future. Nathan audited Dr. Austin’s African American Politics class during the fall 2014 semester so that he could gain more knowledge of racial profiling, mass incarceration, and the politics of policing. In addition, he completed an independent study under her supervision this semester. If you would like to see more of Nathan’s work, see his website http://www.nathanamurray.com/ and his facebook
Former Director Dr. Marilyn Thomas-Houston who will retire at the end of the spring semester after 14 years of service to the African American Studies Program at UF. We thank Dr. Thomas-Houston for her hard work and dedication to the program and to the university over the years and wish her well as she enters retirement. African American Studies research assistant and instructor, Vincent Adejumo, recently interviewed her about her humble beginnings, her journey to the University of Florida, and her reflections for the future of the African American Studies discipline at large and at UF.

How did your background and past accomplishments play a part in becoming a tenured Professor in the Anthropology Department and African American Studies program at the University of Florida?
“From the beginning, I was a nontraditional student. I had several careers before pursuing higher education degrees. I was a professional performer for most of my life. That is not what people expected me to do initially. I actually had scholarship to integrate the University of Iowa coming out of High School. That was scary to me, but I always wanted to have a career in entertainment from the time of elementary school. So that is what I pursued to the dismay of my teachers and loved ones. But when my kids were getting older, I started to think about the fact that I have three sons and how really important for them as males to have an education. I started thinking about get one myself. And it so happened that my second marriage that I married someone who lived in Dallas. So I let go of my performing career to devote myself to the new marriage. And at the time I didn't know that he was from Mississippi, and he wanted to go back home. I did fine things to do in Dallas given my Arts background. But going to Mississippi was a whole new ballgame. People their behaved differently than what I was accustomed to. But my husband’s sister was attending the University of Mississippi or “Ole Miss” as it’s called. She used to get me to do a lot of research for her and she encouraged me to go to school. My children also would come onto campus because they too were into entertainment. I brought them along in entertainment just as I was in it. So finally between my sisters-in-law saying that I should go on and enroll and meeting the directors of the play, I decided to enroll. I was still reluctant due to being out of high school for 18 years, but I went on and enrolled but I did something safe by enrolling in theater since I knew theatre.”

Thomas-Houston eventually earned a Master’s degree from the University of Mississippi at Oxford and a doctorate from New York University.

What attracted you to the University of Florida to further your research and do all of the other things that a tenured professor is responsible for?

“Darryl Michael Scott. He said to me that this is a new University of Florida. The African American Studies program has languished for thirty years but now they promised me that they were going to build this program. And the African American studies program at the university where I was at the time was also languishing. And so I came to UF because I believe in the African American Studies program and believe it’s a program that everyone should take courses in not just black people. When I was at the University of Mississippi I had very few black students. Most of the students I taught were white. And even at the University of South Carolina they were mostly white students. So it’s amazing here at UF that are classes are mostly African American. Not that we shouldn’t have that, but to me Black Studies much like Anthropology is interpreting the black experience across cultural, social, and racial lines. People need to understand this. So when Darryl Scott said they were going to develop this program that is why I came.”

What role will African American Studies play in the changing dynamics of higher education today?

I am a member of a consortium called E-black studies. That is where I think we need to go right now in black studies. We need to take advantage of the technology available. There are many ways that we can take advantage of the technology. Every discipline that is out here has its own databases and things from which it worked. Where students can study and create research projects. They can go to that database and find the materials that they need. And right now we don’t really have that. There are some scattered things around where people are working individually. But we need a database on mass amounts of information regarding the black experience. Not like JSTOR because its more article based, I’m talking about the raw data. We need raw data. Abdul Akalimat started several projects that some of the institutions in Illinois and Massachusetts contributed for example, information on the black churches. Before there’s no institutional memory left about the histories. Right now one of the most important developments that use technology is network analysis. If we had the information about all of the black churches, who was where, when, how, and what was the philosophy, we could develop an understanding about the real role, not the supposed role of the black church in the civil rights movement or the black church that hold black communities together, we would actually have data that people could examine see and understand.
AFRICAN AMERICANS IN PARIS

During the 2015 spring break in March, Dr. Austin accompanied 18 students to Paris for the African Americans in Paris class. The students watched online lectures, read materials, completed papers and an exam before traveling to France. While there, they listened to lectures and visited several historic sites of significance to African American ex-patriates who fled the U.S. and lived in France to escape American discrimination and injustices. The students visited the suburban home of the late entertainer Josephine Baker, Versailles Palace, the Assemblee' Nationale (Parliament of Paris), and the Louvre Museum. They also took a cruise of the River Seine and visited the Eiffel Tower as well as several of the cities' neighborhoods such as Montmarte and Goutte D’Or. Many visited Madrid, Spain, London, England, or Bruges, Belgium on their free day. The course will be offered every year during spring break. For more information, visit our website, YouTube page, or contact Dr. Austin at polssdw@ufl.edu.