

THE VILLAGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE AFRICAN
& AFRICAN STUDIES ALUMNI COMMUNITY

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A MESSAGE FROM SCOTT

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Our community is growing! New partnerships and programs hold promise for the Department of African American & African Studies.

One of the Department goals is to expand partnerships between the University of Minnesota, K-12 institutions, and community organizations. Partnerships allow the Department to build on what we have achieved and to offer new opportunities for our students, staff, faculty, and alumni.

In this edition of *The Village* we'll pay our respect to the passing of historian John Hope Franklin. You will discover the Departments role with the School of Public Health and National Health Week, catch up with

alumna Rebecca Fly, and learn about Professor Brewer's course on the Intellectual History of Race. This month *the Village* will spotlight Professor August Nimtz and provide information for upcoming events.

I hope you will be encouraged to take part in making the Department of African American & African Studies stronger. As always we welcome your suggestions and ideas for suggestions that help expand our reach.

Scott Redd
Community Outreach Coordinator



JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN



Historian and civil rights advocate John Hope Franklin died Wednesday March 25 in Durham, North Carolina. He was 94. Franklin was a prolific scholar, who will be best known for his book, "From Slavery to Freedom," regarded as one of the definitive accounts of the African-American experience. He was also intensely involved in the political and social issues confronting African America, working over the years with W.E.B. Du Bois,

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Thurgood Marshall. Born and raised in an all-black community in Oklahoma, Franklin experienced humiliating incidents of discrimination growing up. He attended the historically black Fisk University in Nashville and went on to teach at Harvard, the University of Chicago, and Duke, breaking several color barriers over the course of his academic career. In 1995 Franklin was awarded the

Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor. Franklin will be greatly missed.

ALUMNI PROFILE

This month *The Village* caught up with Alumna, Rebecca Fly, class of 79.

What is your current occupation?

I am the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services at Huston-Tillotson University in Austin, TX. Huston-Tillotson is an historically Black college and the oldest post-secondary institution in Austin. It was founded by freed slaves in the late 1800's for their children. The original building is a historical landmark on campus which houses the President's office and other administrative and alumni offices. In my position, I assure that all students at HT who have disabilities and identify themselves receive their legally entitled accommodations.

How has AA & AS helped you to achieve success in your field?

I find it cosmically fitting that I should be working at an HBCU. Given that I am a White person, the first White person to graduate with a degree in Afro-American Studies (as it was called in 1979) from the University of Minnesota, it is only fitting that my career's journey takes me back to my academic roots. Little did I know when I chose my major for the last time (yes, I had majored in more than one thing prior to Afro-American

Studies), it would be the basis for my personal as well as my professional life.

Why did you choose AA & AS?

There is a short answer to this question - The Man Upstairs. I remember the moment clearly: I was sitting on the floor of the small room I rented on 4th Street right next to 35W (the duplex is still there) with the fall course bulletin in my hand. It was time for fall registration my junior year. My current major was French. I was happy with that as it fit my career goal at the time. But as I perused the bulletin beginning with the A's looking for an elective course or two, I had a clear thought that I needed to change my major and that was that. I did and never had a moment of regret or second thought. As I look back on the years between then and now, I see that AA&AS gave me the basis I needed for the life I was destined to have.

What about AA&AS inspires you?

The AA&AS department gave me a home in a huge university. Its faculty and staff were concerned and welcoming. Even if Dr. Southall (the dept chair at the time) had no idea what to do with a White Afro-American Studies major, she was still very gracious. The faculty and staff were wonderful and included me in everything. Maybe we were

learning from each other. And my experience there confirmed my belief that knowing who you are and where your ancestors came from is an important foundation that enables everyone to become the best they can be.

What is your fondest memory of AA&AS?

At the end of my junior year, the department asked me to give a speech at the graduation banquet. I did and it was published in the Spokesman Recorder. I still have a copy of it. And the experience made me realize how much I enjoy public speaking.

What do you do in your free time?

Since I have moved to Austin, TX, I have been remodeling my house. That means lots and lots of painting among other things. I enjoy carpentry (I built houses with my brother back in my undergrad days), gardening, and reading. I am also in the midst of a career change. As some of you know, I was a Minneapolis Public School Social Worker before moving 1200 miles south. After two years in higher education, I find I really miss K-12 public education and so am making the career change. Since social workers in schools are scarce here, I am becoming a Special Education teacher to help facilitate the move. I have found out that the older

I get, the more flexible I become. Just think, a voluntary career change at 51!



Rebecca Fly
Class of 79

TEAMING UP TO CREATE CHANGE

Through an IDEA grant provided by the Office for Equity & Diversity; the Department of African American & African Studies collaborated with the University of Minnesota's School of Public Health to create public service announcements focusing on public health in communities of color. With a three-fold goal: (1) to engage high school students from communities of color in the creation and production of video messages about a public health

topic that affects their community, (2) to provide student mentors from the University in the development of public messages, (3) to make available a forum at the University where participants can express their ideas about health disparities to diverse audiences. The partnership proved to be a perfect match given both departments efforts in addressing how racial disparities exist in the way our health care system deals with people of color.

The department was able to recruit thirty students of color to participate. Students work will be highlighted on Saturday April 11th at 1:30 in the Mayo Memorial Auditorium as a part of National Public Health Week. For more information on this event and National Public Health Week go to www.SPH.UMN.EDU/FILMFEST09 Please be sure to come out and support this worthy cause.

COURSE SPOTLIGHT - AFRO 8202 SEMINAR: INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF RACE

Race has little reality in the biological sense, yet its power to influence our lives and our self-understanding is enormous. This course explores the shifting and contested meanings of race, from the European 'Age of Conquest' onward. The course also contains a significant sociological analysis of the 'racial' notion. Starting from the proposition that race is not a stable or fixed category of social thought and being, our primary task will be to ascertain how West-

ern ideas and sociological practice about race have changed, and why these changes have occurred. We will explore the large social processes and discourses developing and shaping the concept of race, particularly how various groups, e.g., native peoples of the Americas, Africans, and Europeans became racialized via enslavement, trade, colonialism and capitalism. In this course Professor Brewer will explore, the various justifications (religious, legal, philosophical,

'scientific') for notions of racial inferiority and racial superiority. Professor Brewer will spend some time analyzing how what it means to be 'white' has been historically contingent on being non-Black or Indian, we will also explore the subjectivities of racialized and oppressed peoples, especially their critiques of racism and domination

FILM FESTIVAL
National Public Health Week
APRIL 6-11, 2009

MONDAY - SHORT FILMS
Public health takes center stage in a variety of short films showcased on opening night. Plus, winners of the "It's Global" Public Service Announcement contest will be screened.

TUESDAY - FLOW
Can anyone really own water?
This award-winning documentary explores that question and more as it examines the world's water crisis.

WEDNESDAY - WAR DANCE
Children in a refugee camp in the war-torn country of Uganda find music and dance provide a solace for their souls as they compete in a national music contest.

THURSDAY - KING CORN
This entertaining and insightful documentary features two friends, one acre of corn and the subsidized crop that drives our fast food nation.

FRIDAY - SEX ED FILMS
See topics through the eyes and cultures.
See vintage sex ed shorts from around the world. Find out what Minnesotans think about sexual health.

SATURDAY - FAMILY FUN FILM DAY
Come work for cool credits! Bring your camera for pictures with Goldy Gopher Day for the fun, post-film library tour featuring books from one of the world's great children's literature research collections.
Co-presented by Deb Ostwood and Isabelle Vander children's site curator for the Children's Library Foundation of Hennepin County and the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Film Festival.
See the "It's Global" Public Service Announcement in his beginning with the youth category at 1:30 p.m. and adults at 3 p.m.

Make plans to attend the
5th Annual National Public Health Week Film Festival
Films begin at 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.
Films and festivities begin at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday.
FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Mayo Memorial Auditorium
650 Delaware St., SE, University of Minnesota, Salt Bank Center
FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO WWW.SPH.UMN.EDU/FILMFEST09

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT AUGUST H. NIMTZ JR

SPECIALITIES

- African politics
- Comparative politics
- Ethnic politics
- Marxism
- Political development
- Urban politics
- Politics of the transition to socialism
- Political economy

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

- Ph.D.: Political Science, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 1973.

PUBLICATIONS

- *Islam and Politics in east Africa: The Sufi Order in Tanzania*. 2009
- *Marx Tocqueville and Race in America: The "Absolute Democracy" or "Defiled Republic"*, 2003
- *Marx and Engels, The Unsung Heroes of the Democratic Breakthrough*, 1999
- *Marxism: An Interpretive Essay*, 1993.



"My own greatest reward as a teacher is to run into students some years later who not only remember the content of one of my courses, but even more importantly, acknowledge...that what they learned is now helping them to explain the world in which they live."

COURSES TAUGHT

- Pol 4478 - Contemporary Politics in Africa and the Colonial Legacy
- Pol 5478 - Contemporary Politics in Africa and the Colonial Legacy
- Pol 8633 - Comparative Socio-political Change

AWARDS

- College of Liberal Arts Teaching Award, 1991
- Horace T. Morse-University of Alumni Association Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education, 2001 - 2002

Growing up in a family with a cumulative record of more than a century of teaching, becoming a professor seemed a natural fit for August Nimitz. In his nearly 30-year tenure at the University, he has gained a reputation as a committed teacher who brings out the best in his students. The result has been courses that have been hugely popular, filling up quickly and consistently year after year.

Nimitz is known for bringing passion and a sense of purpose to his classes. He inspires students to become active citizens and encourages them to understand their education as part of a lifelong process of critically engaging with the world around them. "I often run into students who realized, after taking one of his classes, that they have the power to not just criticize the injustices of the world, but actually to do something productive to change their reality," says a colleague.

One of Nimitz's students writes, "He was able to show me that activism and scholarship are not antithetical, but complementary. Since then we have spent many evenings discussing my academic work, politics, and even personal matters. Through his words and actions, August inspired me to become a public scholar. And he is the reason why I am about to earn a master's in public policy and a law degree this semester and start a Ph.D. program this fall."

UPCOMING EVENTS

[Cuba and the Atlantic World: Celebrating 400 years of Espejo de paciencia](#)

4/3/2009 Friday

1:00PM-4:00PM

Location: 426 Folwell Hall
University of Minnesota

Cost: Free

An event on the cultural production and transatlantic relations between Cuba, Africa, and Spain

[Family Fun Film Day](#)

4/11/2009 Saturday

10:30PM-3:00PM

Location: Mayo memorial Auditorium

Cost: Free

Contact: Nichole Axtman

(612) 626-9303

Sponsored by the School of Public Health. Watch public service announcements created by local students focusing on Public Health.

[Our Future Prosperity: Preparing Minnesota Students to be Leaders in Math & Science](#)

4/22/2009

11:30 AM –1:15PM

Location:
Minneapolis Convention Center

Cost: \$35.00

Dr. Jemison, the first woman of color to travel into space, will deliver an inspiring keynote address on preparing Minnesota students to be leaders in math and science.

The Department of African American & African Studies plays an important role in the University's rich liberal arts tradition. The department's beginnings in the Morrill Hall takeover of 1969 by students demanding change demonstrate that the academy—and society—often move forward by challenging traditional boundaries and practices.

Today, the department offers students opportunities to explore American cultural diversity and the wide diversity of the African continent. An undergraduate major in African American & African Studies provides students with a systematic and comprehensive understanding of the cultural and historical experiences of African American & African peoples from a multidisciplinary perspective including history, political science, sociology, psychology, literature, music, and art. Courses and faculty are drawn from the department as well as from other units of the University.

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I want to be out there on the firing line, helping, directing or doing something to try to make this a better world, a better place to live,"

John Hope Franklin

Driven to DiscoverSM