

THE VILLAGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE AFRICAN
& AFRICAN STUDIES ALUMNI COMMUNITY

NOVEMBER 2008

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A MESSAGE FROM SCOTT

Dear Alumnus/a and Friends

Welcome to the latest edition of our electronic newsletter *The VILLAGE*. The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you connected with the Department of African American & African Studies (AA & AS), with each other, and to celebrate our achievements.

In today's volatile climate, access to AA & AS faculty, staff, and alumni can be of great assistance and I encourage you to make use of this network.

There are a number of ways for you to stay connected with the Department such as sending us updated information on you or on events you would like published to The Village or actively participate through Department supported events. The events

calendar is an excellent source to keep track of department sponsored or supported events.

In this edition of *THE VILLAGE*, you'll find articles about our partnership with the Minnesota Spokesman Recorder, meet alumna Jacinda Adams, catch up with faculty member Njeri Githire, learn of Professor Alexs Pate interesting course offering and more.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the *THE VILLAGE* and I wish you success in the coming year.

Scott Redd



HOT OFF THE PRESS

The *Minnesota Spokesman Recorder (MSR)*, one of the most respected newspapers in the state, has agreed to partner with the Department of African American & African Studies. The Department understands the news media is one of the most important ways of keeping our community informed. Therefore it was essential for the Department to partner with *MSR*, the voice of the community for 75

years.

Be sure to look for *Afro Views from the University of Minnesota's Department of African American & African Studies in the MSR*. AA&AS faculty will contribute monthly articles to the *MSR* under this column heading.

As part of the partnership, staff reporter, Charles Hallman will also join the Department's Community Advisory Council;

a think-tank that provide a source of thoughts, ideas, and opinions from the community perspective.

"The new alliance reinforces the Department's strong commitment and desire to be an integral part of the community," Dr. Walt Jacobs, Chair of AA&AS.



ALUMNI PROFILE

This month *The Village* caught up with Jacinda Adams, AA & AS MINOR

What is your current occupation?

Director of Marketing United Way of Metropolitan Chicago.

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

The program has helped me personally as well as professionally. In marketing you have to understand a variety of cultures if you want to successfully market to them. I have used what I learned in AA & AS to help others understand our rich African American culture and the buying power we possess and it has

helped me stay on top of my game.

Why did you choose AA & AS?

I minored in AA&AS only because dual majors were discouraged at the time. However, I chose this field because there are so many aspects to African American and African Studies; there is no way, even as an African American woman, that I could claim to know all there is to know about African American and African Studies.

What about AA&AS inspires you?

How could you not be inspired learning about your own culture?

What is your fondest memory

of AA&AS?

The relationships that were built with classmates. The emotional debates that sometimes occurred during and after classes.

What do you do in your free time?

Completing my Masters, being a mother to my daughter and learning Chicago since we moved here recently.

Jacinda Adams

COURSE SPOTLIGHT AFRO 3112 IN THE HEART OF THE BEAT: THE POETRY OF RAP

In The Heart of the Beat: The Poetry of Rap is a class in which students engage with rap as a literature. We examine and explore the words, the poetry of this dynamic art form. I believe that there is immense skill involved in creating rap/poetry that is both meaningful and structurally advanced. These poets are not often given credit in the world of poetry and art for what they do. In this course, rappers are looked at as contemporary poets.

The course is designed to increase the understanding of contemporary African American poetry as expressed by popular culture contributors. Students will be asked to analyze and evaluate some of the poems that are used in the music of rap in the context of African American literature, American culture and aesthetics in general. Students will be exposed to 3-5 texts and will keep journals on each book.

Alexs Pate



What I do can't be determined by the desires of my readership. It is the outcome of a deep reflection, a meditation on culture, on life as we know it now, our society, and then an attempt to take us somewhere.

Alexs Pate

OBAMA CAN BE OUR NEHEMIAH, NOT OUR MOSES

The following is an excerpt from the Minnesota Spokesman Recorder by Walt Jacobs

Many people of color are very excited about the prospect of an African American man occupying the highest office in the land. Even my soon-to-be 93 year-old African American grandfather – a life-long Republican – is energized by Senator Barack Obama's candidacy. Before Senator Obama claimed the Democratic nomination in St. Paul on June 3, 2008, many of us thought that we wouldn't see such a night in our lifetime.

After all, only 45 years ago we were not only barred from running for public office, we were routinely turned away from the polls. Now some believe that a President Obama can be a Moses figure who leads us to a Promised Land. Our optimism is high.

We still have much work to do, however, to turn that optimism into reality. Hip Hop historian, journalist, and activist Davey D notes that while wearing an Obama t-shirt or watching the "Yes We Can!" video is great, it won't matter much if we don't go to the polls to vote, and show up in large numbers. You may have heard about "the Bradley Effect," the explanation for a discrepancy between voter opinion polls and election outcomes in contests between an African American and a White candidate. Tom

Bradley was the long-time African American mayor of Los Angeles who lost the 1982 California governor's race despite being ahead in many voter polls. The Bradley Effect refers to the tendency of some voters to vote for the White candidate despite telling pollsters that they are undecided or likely to vote for the African American candidate. So even though Senator Obama might be leading by a large margin in the polls on November 3, we need to be out in force on November 4.

Davey D reminds us that we also need to educate ourselves and others about important issues in our communities, and work together for social change. After eight years of constant noise about the government being the source of our problems, the Obama campaign has awakened many to the possibility that our elected officials can generate solutions to problems, with our help. Every person can make a difference. So pass on the informational email you receive. Well, the legitimate email anyway. Encourage friends and family to visit websites that check out as reputable. Read publications like the *Spokesman-Recorder* and *American Legacy Magazine*. Hold intergenerational discussions where those from diverse backgrounds can learn from one another.

2009 marks the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the Department of African American & African Studies at the University of Minnesota. In January of 1969 African American students occupied the main administration building until several demands were met. We are scheduling a series of events that are designed to help African American communities hold discussions where we can investigate connections between the past, present, and tomorrow.

Professor Rose Brewer has organized a November 7, 2008 Youth Conference to kick off the events. At this Youth Conference some of the activists present at the 1969 Morrill Hall Takeover action will engage high school and college students in an intense discussion about social change strategies for the 21st century. That will be followed by a November 12, 2008 discussion by faculty on events surrounding the January 15, 1969 occupation. On January 23, 2009 we will host a conference and Gala dinner to honor the pioneering activists, and chart a path for the future. Professor Brewer will discuss the November events in a column that will appear in next month's *Spokesman-Recorder*. For updates on all of our 40th Anniversary events, visit <http://www.afroam.umn.edu/anniversary.html>

So we need to educate ourselves, get out to vote on November 4, 2008, and then work with those in office after Inauguration Day 2009. If Senator Obama becomes President Obama we must also resist the temptation to view him as a Moses who has a black and white pre-scripted way to lead us out of the enforced wilderness of the Bush years. My U. of M. colleague Harry Boyte has written that "the President can call the nation to enter into a new covenant with substance and seriousness: a common agreement to work together to address our problems." Like the Old Testament prophet sent to Jerusalem by the King of Persia in 446 B.C. to lead the Jews in the rebuilding of their capital following captivity in Babylon, President Obama can work with a vast range of people to dive into the unforeseeable gray areas where we collectively tackle the many challenges our community and our country face. If Senator Obama wins the election, then we must embrace him as our Nehemiah, not our Moses.



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT NJERI GITHIRE

Publications

- *"The Semiotics of (Not)-Eating: Fasting, Anorexia, & Hunger Strike in Ananda Devi's Le voile de Draupadi":* Githire, Njeri R, 2009.
- *"Horizons Adrift: Women in Exile, at Home and Abroad in Gisèle Pineau's Works."* Githire, Njeri R, Research in African Literatures 36.1, Author, (Spring 2005): 74-90.
- *"Gisèle Pineau: Causerie à Penn State," Women in French Studies 9.* Githire, Njeri R, (with C. Makward), Author, 2001.

Research Activities

- Consuming Passions: Consumption, Encounter and Gender in Caribbean and Indian Ocean Women's Writings: Book project examines the use of metaphors of assimilation and incorporation (ingestion, regurgitation, etc) by Caribbean and Indian Ocean women writers in the construction and performance of subjectivities that unfold in tangent to a dominant culture, 2004 - 2009
- "Voices From Ex/isle: Caribbean and Indian Ocean Women Writers Break Geographical Confines.": Book Project

Specialties

- Literatures of the African Diaspora
- Literatures of Immigration and Racial Formation in the African Diasporic Sphere
- Women's writing
- Feminist Theory
- Postcolonial Theory and Criticism
- Francophone studies
- African Cinema

Educational Background

- Ph.D.: Comparative Literature & Women's Studies, The Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA, 2004.
- Doctoral Study: Francophone African Literatures, Centre International d'Études Francophones (CIEF)/Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne, Paris, France, 1999-.
- D.E.A (Diplôme d'Études Approfondies): Francophone African Literatures, Université de Paris XII—Val de Marne, Créteil, France, 1999.

- Maîtrise ès lettres: Stylistics & Translation, Université de Paris III—Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris, France, 1997. Licence ès lettres: Foreign Languages & Literatures (English, French, Portuguese), Université de Nantes, Nantes, France, 1993.

Courses Taught

- GLOS 5900 - "Immigrant Dreams & Contemporary African Diasporic Literatures"
- Afro 3601 - Introduction to African Literature
- Afro 3592W - Introduction to Black Women Writers in the United States



UPCOMING EVENTS

The Black Nativity

11/28/2008 - 12/28/2008

Wednesday through Sunday

Location: Penumbra Theatre

Cost: \$10 - \$38

Contact: (651) 224-3180

boxoffice@penumbratheatre.org

This contemporary gospel musical celebrates the bonds of family, the power of faith, and the strength of tradition, showcasing the best jazz and gospel singers of the Twin Cities and the stirring choreography of TU Dance.

www.penumbratheatre.orgCommunity Advisory Council

12/18/2008

1:30PM-3:00PM

Location:

808 Social Science Building
267 19th Ave South
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Contact:

Scott Redd

red0002@umn.edu

(612)624-0556

The Community Advisory Council (CAC) is designed to stimulate communication between community members and the University of Minnesota's Department of African American and African Studies department .

A Visit with Santa

12/20/2008

11:00 AM-3:00PM

Location:

Gary Sudduth Center
2100 Plymouth Ave, Mpls

Cost: Free

Contact:

Lucretia Sudduth Wood

lsudduthwood@mul.org

The 14th Annual "A Visit with Santa", will bring together children ages infant to 12 years and families in an atmosphere of holiday spirit and fun. Children will receive a free photo with Santa and a small gift .

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

YES WE CAN!

Barrack Obama