A Black Alumnus Speaks
by Halifu Osumare

"I took every African American Studies course I could." So pronounces Robert LaMont Woods, better known as Bobby Woods, an alumnus of UC Davis. He is talking about Merritt College in Oakland, one of the hotbeds of Black Studies in the early 70s. By the time he got to Davis in 1974, he was well educated in the history, culture, and politics of African America that always informed his approach to his upper division experience at Davis, first in Physiology and then finishing in 1976 with his bachelors degree in Psychology.

Bobby Woods is a man who is turned on to life-long learning, having chosen to leave his downward spiraling street life to go back to school during the revolutionary 60s and 70s. The Black Studies oriented Merritt College in Oakland (then on Grove St. near 59th in North Oakland and subsequently moved to the East Oakland Hills near 34th Avenue), was a Mecca for students hungry for black history and culture. Woods studied political science courses that focused on the sociology of African Americans through dialectical materialism with Melvin Newton, brother to Huey Newton of the Black Panther Party. Bobby subsequently ran and became the Vice President of the Associated Students of Merritt College under the Black Panther Party ticket. Eventually he participated in the Transfer Program between Merritt and UC Berkeley. However, he found black students at UCB during that period not engaging in the kind of education-oriented student life he was then looking for at age twenty-five. "I am a negotiator, not a true militant," Woods says of that period of continued on page 7

Designated Emphasis in AAAS Approved!
by Milmon Harrison

The Graduate Division has approved our proposal to institute a graduate-level Designated Emphasis program, effective Fall 2007. The product of many years and much concerted effort on the part of many people, the Designated Emphasis in African American and African Studies (DEAAS) will provide doctoral students in Anthropology, Cultural Studies, English, French, History, Sociology, and various other disciplines with training in African American and African Studies. The Designated Emphasis will serve the growing number of graduate students identifying African American and/or African Studies subject matter as the focus of their dissertations. The program will allow students to have their work in AAAS formally recognized on their doctoral diplomas with the notation: "Ph.D. in X, with a Designated Emphasis in African American & African Studies." This official recognition is expected to make those graduates more
"Repetition with critical difference is an important concept in African drumming," Halifu Osumare explains, "it's circulatory rhythm creates continuity and continual reinvention... this reinvention, this re-formation of sound is critical as it is the underlying basis for understanding the aesthetics of culture... don't you see its all about continuity, as well as change." So expounds the newest faculty member of African American and African Studies. This theory informs not only her research, but her life as well.

Born in Texas, but raised in San Francisco California, Professor of African American Studies Halifu Osumare began her academic career as a protégé of the late Katherine Dunham. Receiving a Bachelors and Masters from San Francisco State, Osumare's early academic career focused in large part on dance and theater. After receiving her BA in Dance and Theater Arts, Osumare would go on to found her own center for dance and black culture in Oakland California, called Everybody's Creative Arts Center, later renamed CitiCentre Dance Theatre. In this capacity she not only served as an artist, but also as a teacher, administrator, and activist. She has been noted, in particular, for her collaboration with poet/playwright, Ntozake Shange, as well as her choreographic works for San Francisco's American Conservative Theater in the 80s. Simultaneously teaching part time at Stanford University for the Committee of Black Performing Arts and the Stanford Dance Division and running her dance center in Oakland, Osumare returned to San Francisco State where she received her Masters in Dance Ethnology. Remembering that her father once told her, "Girl, you can do whatever you big enough to do," Osumare went on to get her Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Hawaii in Manoa in her 40s.

Currently a recently tenured Associate Professor in Davis' African American & African Studies Program, Osumare's interest are still in the realm of performing arts; however her emphasis is now on all areas of African American performance, especially hip-hop. Explaining the significance of hip-hop in our high tech, high def, neo-global information age, Osumare states, "Hip-hop is like Jazz of the 1920s, insomuch as it has come to symbolize an aesthetic that has the capabilities of bridging generational, racial, gender, and cultural gaps." Like the African drum, Osumare explains that "deejaying and studio producing use rhythmic patterns that are circular and repetitive, yet new and invigorating with every new loop that's constructed...it is this new snippet of sound, this new unexpected formation of music that makes hip-hop fresh and viable." In her recently published book The Africanist Aesthetic in Global Hip-Hop: Power Moves, Osumare explores this theme of continuity and renewal and makes an acute argument that the socio-political currency of hip-hop is its global appeal, as well as its Africanist roots. Her text is required reading in her AAS 181 course, Hip-Hop in Urban America.

A firm believer in active learning, Osumare's teaching philosophy also engages in her twin themes of continuity and renewal. "My basic philosophy on education is that it has to be made relevant to people's contemporary lives." To accomplish this, Osumare treats her students to "Living History" skits, in which she enacts the lives of important figures in African American history complete with costume and vernacular. An example is her portrayal of the famous 1851 speech by Sojourner Truth, "And Ain't I A Woman?" in her AAS 015 course, Introduction to African American Humanities. Combined with an integrated curriculum that utilizes both historical and current events, Osumare's living history skits provide her students with an experiential context for under-

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Cultural Preservation in the Caribbean

by Alia Wasi

Who would have ever thought that I could produce, film, and edit my own documentary? I certainly did not. However, with the help of the African and African American study abroad program, I was able to experience a once in a lifetime opportunity on the Caribbean islands of Trinidad and Tobago. In the summer of 2006, I enrolled in AAS 168, the documentary filmmaking class in Trinidad and Tobago not knowing what to expect. I left the United States for the first time and arrived in a country that greeted me with open arms. I quickly picked up on the kindness of the people all over the island and felt right at home.

The students were split into four groups to produce separate documentaries on cultural and social issues present in the African Diaspora of Trinidad and Tobago. We chose our topics, which included the local World Cup football team, women in art, teen pregnancy and the Tobago Heritage Festival and ventured off throughout the country to learn more about the culture and history. During this time we all realized the beauty of islander pride in T&T.

The first day my group was given camera equipment, we took to the streets of the country's capital, Port of Spain, to shoot what it was like on an average day in Trinidad. Asking random people on the street if we could film them was a dead giveaway that we were certainly tourists. Nonetheless, we found amazing, helpful, and kind people in the city whose commentary provided an insight into their rich culture that was indeed a mystery and very foreign to an American girl like myself.

Although we were worked hard on our documentaries, we also took in what amenities the islands had to offer. The first weekend we set off to Maracas Beach to experience the Caribbean Sea. I had never seen such a beautiful sight of exotic green palm trees, soft colored sands, sunny blue skies, and the large body of blue and green water. This amazing sight was worth all of the hard work we put in throughout the week and it only got better as time progressed. A trip to Trinidad's sister island, Tobago to attend the Tobago Heritage Festival was a part of our program and the oceanic island sights and cultural events including a reenactment of a traditional wedding and the crab and goat races, were plentiful there as well.

Traveling around the two islands, gave me the chance to cultivate friendships with other students who also attended the program. Our group of 18 students developed a familial bond and we helped each other when possible with our films and took in as much of the culture together. In Tobago, we took a snorkeling field trip to Angel Reef in the body of water that merges the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. This was a priceless experience to see the beautiful reefs and exotic fishes.

By the end of the trip everyone was sad to say goodbye. This experience has taught me how to adapt to new
people, different environments, a variety of cultures, and has changed my outlook on life forever. I had no idea that I would have had the opportunity to experience all of these things, while simultaneously earning units towards my major and graduation. The trip has empowered me to know that I could travel alone to a third world country and survive without several of the luxuries from home that are taken for granted. Being an African American, it was beautiful to travel to a country where the African Diaspora is prevalent and experience what it is like to be African in the Caribbean. In general, the trip has opened my eyes with respects to academia and the art of documentary making, and with respects to cultural practices in the Caribbean islands.

I really feel thankful that I took advantage of the opportunity given to me by the African and African American Studies Program and the UCD Summer Abroad Program to study in the Caribbean islands of Trinidad and Tobago.
**AFRICAN AMERICAN & AFRICAN STUDIES**

**Black History Month • 2007**

**Milton Bowens, Exhibition**
"Blood on the Fields," A Lasting Impression of an American Story (a poetic look at plantation life and slavery and its role in inner cities and ghettos across America today)

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**James Wheatley**
President, Celebration Arts Theater Lecture on
"Statements After an Arrest Under the Immorality Act" by South African playwright – Athol Fugard

**Halifu Osumare**
Book reading from: *The Africanist Aesthetic in Global Hip Hop: Power Moves*

**Christine Acham**
Trinidad and Tobago Film Series: highlighting the independent student film productions from the 2006 Summer Abroad trip to Trinidad and Tobago

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Memories of Slavery: Creating Citizens in Haiti and Mauritius.

**Riche Richardson**
Book reading from: *Black Masculinity and the U.S. South: From Uncle Tom to Gangsta* (The New Southern Studies)

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AAS Faculty in the News

Several AAS Faculty members have been involved with projects that were picked up by various media. Here are just a few of the ways in which AAS faculty are distinguishing themselves.

Moradewun Adejumobi
The summer 2006 edition of *Maisonneuve* magazine from Toronto Canada published an article titled “Nigeria’s Manic Movie Machine is ready for its Close-Up,” which included quotations from an interview the author had with Professor Adejunmobi. The same article has been reprinted by an online magazine, *The UTNE Reader*, with the title ‘Hooked on Nollywood’ in their February 2007 edition.

Milmon Harrison
Associate professor Milmon Harrison’s book, “Righteous Riches: The Word of Faith Movement in Contemporary African American Religion” (Oxford), was included in *Choice Magazine*’s January 2007 annual list of “outstanding academic titles” for 2006. The book has also been cited and Dr. Harrison quoted in articles appearing in *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

Halifu Osumare
Professor Halifu Osumare appeared on UCTV in a series of airings in January 2007 called “Arts Education in America.” This is a documentary of the panel discussion with the famed author on the inequalities in American education, Jonathan Kozol that was held at the Modavi Center in October 2006. Professor Osumare’s analysis and comments were featured in the *San Francisco Chronicle* in an article called “Black Dance Rainbow,” commemorating the Black Choreographers Festival 2007 - Here and Now that happened in Oakland and San Francisco, February 9-24, 2007. Dr. Osumare was the founder of the predecessor dance festival in the late 80s and 90s called Black Choreographers Moving Toward the 21st Century. As such, her comments about the significance of black choreographers’ works and issues, such as ‘what is black dance,’ were central to contextualizing the annual festival.

Professor Halifu Osumare  continued from page 2

Future research goals for Professor Osumare include a continued analysis of African American performance in the realm of hip-hop, with an emphasis on how the internet has influenced the proliferation and re-formation of this aesthetic form. She is also interested doing hip-hop ethnographies of the youth scenes in key West African urban areas, such as Lagos, Accra, and Dakar. Whatever she does, it will be informed by her belief in the circularity of African-based culture that emphasizes change with critical difference in the context of inherited tradition.
his life where he was caught between East Bay street drug life and college militancy.

His inroad into UC Davis came when, as a Peer Advisor at Merritt, an administrator asked him in 1974 to substitute for the President of the College at a Luncheon at UC Davis. It was Alice Huffman, current President of the California State NAACP and then the EOP Admissions Officer at Davis, who asked him had he considered Davis, and immediately gave him an application. Woods reminisces: “Two weeks later Huffman called me and asked if I was ready to transfer to UC Davis. I was glad to get out of the Bay Area.” His student leadership record, along with academic achievements in African American Studies, held him in good stead because he was immediately recruited to be the Chairman of UJIMA, the Black Students Union.

Although Davis was to be a fresh start, Woods was not immune from racial profiling when he got to the campus. “I got stopped the first day at Davis.” A campus policeman started following him for no reason, and gave him a speeding ticket for going 30 miles an hour in a 25-mile hour zone. More than that, he said the police made a regular habit of parking outside his apartment and shining patrol car lights in his window. He assesses his Davis experience in the mid-70s: “When I got to Davis, there were only 180 black students on campus, so you really stood out even more so than now. The African American & African Studies Program at Davis was like a club house, and the black community on campus had one spot in Memorial Union, where you always knew you could find each other.”

When asked what was unique about his UC Davis experience, he did not hesitate: “exposure to the outside.” By “outside” he means the opportunity to learn about the white mainstream and how it works. Having gotten an MBA from Golden Gate University after Davis, Woods worked for the State of California for 28 years and retired as an Investment Officer from the California State Teachers’ Retirement System. He is currently a mortgage loan consultant for Summit Funding. In giving back to the community that made him, Bobby offers a community-based workshop series called the “Fundamentals of Money Management”. It is a program for young people on how to manage their financing. He is scheduled also to give presentations in the AAS Freshman Seminar on these fundamentals. When reflecting on his undergraduate experience at Davis in relation to current black students, he began to politely preach, “It is important to get what everyone has to teach you; become a sponge and suck up all the knowledge you can from everyone. UC Davis taught me analytical thinking – how to take something apart and put it back together. Black students can learn a lot about how the [white] world works. I love Davis. It taught me how to walk in a room with total confidence and not be intimidated.” All of this was said in a matter-of-fact way that spoke of the coping mechanisms that previous generations of black male undergrads had to understand and utilize, and is still applicable to the current generation.

Bobby Woods, as a UC Davis alumnus, is a self-motivated black man who came of age in the crucial 60s, accessing the best that those fervent days of radicalism had to offer, but not limiting himself to those tenets. He still fights the good fight through teaching young people how to negotiate the opportunities and pitfalls of capitalism and to come out winners.