Director’s Message
By Halifu Osumare

I took over the directorship of African American and African Studies (AAS) October 1, 2011, a little over a month and half before the infamous day of November 18 that would dub UC Davis as the “Pepper-Spray University.” In many ways this seminal event determined quite a bit of my time during these first six months of my tenure as Director. The job of Director of a program or Chair of a department already adds on an inexhaustible list of administrative duties to one’s own individual teaching, research/publishing, and university-wide service duties; but the chaos that UC Davis has been thrown into by the horrendous violation of the students’ rights who were peaceful protesting has created another layer of blogs, emails, discussions, and an endless stream of administrative meetings at every level of the university. It is an interesting time to

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John Ortiz-Hutson Retires
By Moradewun Adejunmobi, Professor and former Director, Program in African American and African Studies

At the end of the 2010-2011 school year, John Ortiz-Hutson retired from his position as Student Affairs Officer for African American and African Studies at UC Davis. He had worked at UC Davis for twenty-three years, first as a Senior Learning Skills officer at the Student Academic Success Center before moving over to African American and African Studies. The full extent of his contribution to UC Davis student and community life over these years can hardly be described in a few paragraphs.

John was a highly skilled academic adviser and mentor to students within and outside the African American and African Studies academic major. He was responsible for an extensive list of activities within and outside the African American and African Studies Program that directly impacted the lives of students. He usually took the lead in organizing the Black Fall Welcome for freshmen and transfer students. This required working closely with many departments on campus as well as a myriad of student organizations and faculty. The Fall Welcome remains one of the largest gatherings of black students at an event organized by university officials during the school year. It offers an invaluable

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Chancellor Linda P. B. Katehi and her husband, Spyros Tseregounis (both front row left), and the audience at the Third Annual Cultural Show organized by the Nigerian Students Association and the Nigerian Students Dance Group on March 16, 2012.
Faculty News

Bettina Ng’weno and the Making of a New East African University

At the moment I am in charge of setting up the programs in Social Sciences and Humanities in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), at the Aga Khan University – East Africa. Once set up Aga Khan University – East Africa will draw students from the East African Community (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda) and further afield and will have an East African perspective, although it is part of a larger network of campuses including Pakistan, Central Asia and the UK.

The planning department, of which I am part, is in Nairobi but the Faculty of Arts and Sciences will eventually be in Arusha, Tanzania, which is the headquarters of the East African Community. I am working on developing curriculum, on space planning and setting up research agendas and institutes. I am working on curriculum of some 16 degree programs and integration of these programs with sciences and arts in a core curriculum. The university will have a core curriculum that all students will follow in the first year and part of the second year.

In addition we are working on these two foundation years for the students of medicine and nursing (both undergraduate programs in East Africa) so that they will have a broader undergraduate education and not just medicine/nursing. The aims of the university are “relevance, impact, quality and access.” My interest is to build a broad innovative curriculum with an East African Perspective. This is rather unique and challenging work as most curriculum and curriculum materials are either foreign (mainly western) or national (and nationalist). A regional take is new and interesting and I am spending my time imagining East Africa. It has been super interesting, often frustrating, but never boring. I am learning so much!

See Bettina’s talk on “Afro-Columbian Citizenship Struggles” at Stockholm University on Youtube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-NptQxbqJw

Book Donation from the Pitts Family Trust

In September of 2011, AAS was given a generous donation of approximately 400 Black history and literature books by a UC Davis alumnus, Dr. Nathaniel G. Pitts, representing a $4,000 gift. Dr. Pitts received his Ph.D. in Neuroscience in the 1970s, being one of the first black graduates at UC Davis in that field of study. The books are from the collection of his late father, Dr. Raymond J. Pitts, who “collected these books over a long period of time,” and represents a gift from the Pitts Family Trust of Arlington, Virginia. African American & African Studies gratefully accepted this donation and plans to establish a checkout library system for students in our Program. Thank you very much, Dr. Nathaniel Pitts!
“Democracy is Not a Spectator Sport”
Angela Davis, Hart Hall Social Justice Teach-In Keynote Speaker

African American & African Studies, on February 23, 2011 was an integral part of the kick-off event of the Hart Hall Social Justice Initiative, the Social Justice Teach-In, featuring distinguished Professor Emerita Angela Davis. Halifu Osumare, as a member of the committee presided over the event as MC. She started the historic event by addressing the UC Davis November 18, 2011 pepper-spraying event and the ensuing events of increased Occupy UC Davis movement and the non-confidence/confidence vote of Chancellor Katehi all as impetus for the Teach-In. She said “Democracy is not a Spectator Sport” and that Hart Hall’s Interdisciplinary Programs, of which AAAS is a part, felt that they had to speak out from a faculty perspective. The highlight of the event was Angela Davis’s keynote address, where she challenged us to understand that “The university needs to work to resist the corporatization of its own intellectual culture.” The selected student respondents/discussants were extremely articulate and poignant in their responses and questions to Professor Davis. The students consisted of Abigail Boggs (Cultural Studies), Yadira de la Cruz & Miguel Espinoza (Chicana/o Studies), Mitchell Faust (African American & African Studies), and Chelsea Jones (Women & Gender Studies). The second half of the four-hour event was a Faculty Roundtable that consisted of Professors Angie Chabram (Chicana/o Studies), Maxine Craig (Women & Gender Studies), Bruce Haynes (African American & African Studies & Sociology), Ines Hernandez-Avila (Native American Studies), and Sunaina Maira (Asian American Studies). Issues of multiculturalism versus substantively interrogating cultural diversity and racism, as well as the campus “security state” and the corporatization of higher education were addressed.

The Hart Hall Social Justice Initiative Committee consists of Dr. Osumare, Professors Miroslava Chavez-Garcia (Chicana & Chicano Studies), Ines Hernandez-Avila (Native American Studies), Robert Irwin (Cultural Studies Grad Group), Amina Mama (Women & Gender Studies), Julie Sze (American Studies), and Nolan Zane (Asian American Studies). The mission of The Social Justice Initiative is to become an ongoing funded project that is HARCS (Humanities, Arts, and Cultural Studies Division) faculty-driven to interrogate the current UC Davis Principles of Community to further define issues of community and civility from a social justice perspective. The Social Justice Initiative is seen as a way to reveal the place of the Humanities and Social Sciences, particularly the work of Hart Hall’s Interdisciplinary Programs, in our campus’s realization of “community,” but is inclusive of all disciplines and faculty who want to participate.

Webcast Links:
- Angela Davis & Student Respondents: http://webcast.ucdavis.edu/lnd/cb6493b
- Faculty Roundtable: http://webcast.ucdavis.edu/lnd/71eb72c4
Inside the Classroom: African American Studies 181

A glimpse of a day in the classroom through the eyes of a student

By Carly June Haase, A senior majoring in history and medieval and early modern studies

African American Studies (AAS) 181 (Hip Hop in Urban America), is one of those classes that fill up every quarter. Unique, interesting and cool, AAS 181 is much more than a general education requirement.

Today, like every day, class begins with a hip hop track. Fabolous’ “Riesling and Rolling Papers” bumps through Young Hall’s large lecture hall as chatting students open laptops, iPads and other mobile devices.

As the track ends Professor Halifu Osumare sets up her laptop and begins class with a PowerPoint slide titled “Race, Authenticity and the Predicament of Rap in Urban America.”

“Let’s consider Watkins’ article ‘Black Youth and the Ironies of Capitalism,’” begins Osumare. “This text is graduate-level writing, so I don’t want you to get lost in the theory behind it. I want you to discern and deconstruct the youth culture that is all around you.”

Osumare lectures on the theory of black youth agency and hip hop empowerment seen from the perspective of how emcees use the marketplace of rap to empower themselves and the ways they use societal systems and are in turn used by those systems.

The discussion of capitalism and its relation to hip hop culture continues with a special feature of the day – select students are debating the question: has the commercial development of hip hop culture been positive or negative, and why?

Deji is the first student on deck. He begins his argument by claiming that commercialism has capitalized on an open market and has promoted a negative image. Citing popular rapper Wiz Khalifa’s music videos as examples of hip hop music promoting drinking and marijuana use, Deji questioned the values promoted in commercial hip hop.

“Are we feeding the next generation of lies?” Deji said. “Money, cars, etc.? Should we encourage political activism and caring for others, not ourselves? Should we go after record labels, and offer free music instead?”

Deji sits down to universal applause and his opponent, Milton, takes the stand.

Milton introduces his argument by pointing out the positive impact that hip hop music and culture has had on society.

“Jay-Z and Nelly, for example, created nonprofit community-based after-school programs,” Milton said. They are reaching out to kids in need and making a difference in their lives.”

Rather than focusing on how the commercial system has exploited hip hop, Milton implores his classmates to see the potential of commercial hip hop as a vehicle for societal change.

“Commercialism has been the promoter of hip hop. Our generation should be the change we want to see in the culture we love. Bridge the gap between what is real and what is portrayed.”

Professor Osumare acknowledges the strengths of both sides and returns to her discussion of Watkins’ “Black Aesthetic.”

“Black culture infiltrates the mainstream while providing some sense of an African American aesthetic,” said Osumare as students began rustling in their seats towards the end of class. “Next time we’ll discuss more about this when we discuss women and gender in hip-hop.”

Though “Hip Hop in Urban America” has a distinct cool factor, Osumare hopes that it will also equip students to think critically about their own culture, and the ways in which it shapes their perspectives.

“I try to keep a global perspective when examining the historical background and cultural affects of hip hop,” Osumare said later, back in her office. “There is a distinct difference between rap music and hip hop culture.

Rap music is only one part of hip hop culture. This music has become commercialized by the music industry and in this class I try and push students to look carefully about how it is affecting them.”

“What is more, students recognize that hip hop culture is a part of their daily life, whether they choose to identify with it or not and this class is really for everyone who wants to learn more and put their popular culture in perspective.”

Osumare structures AAS 181 around key underlying influences on hip hop culture. In the class, students learn about urban sociology, gender studies, community and alternative organization, globalization, race and capitalism and commercialism, and how these forces affect the hip hop culture that is so familiar to this generation.

“My philosophy is there’s nothing I can teach you that hasn’t already been rapped about,” Osumare said. “As I tell my colleagues, we’re teaching the hip hop generation. What better way to reach out to them than through their music?”

Mr. Kayton Carter, the new Senior Learning Skills Counselor in the Program of African American and African Studies, holds a Bachelors’ degree from University of California, Berkeley, in Interdisciplinary Studies, with a minor in K-12 Education. His Masters’ degree is from Michigan State University in Higher Education Administration, with an emphasis on Student Affairs. At Michigan State University he was a Graduate Assistant with the Upward Bound Program and the Office of Minority Student Affairs.

After receiving his Masters degree he served as the Assistant Director in the Office of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA) at Kettering University (formerly General Motors Institute of Technology) in Flint, Michigan. He managed programs, coordinated student support services and assisted with recruitment and retention of the minority students. His experience in college administration, academic advising and program coordination allowed him to work extensively with students from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, and develop and implement protocols to enhance the academic performance of students at risk for academic probation.

Prior to joining UC Davis, Kayton was the Director of College Track, Oakland; a college-prep after school program designed to increase the number of bay area college-eligible high school students. He created tutorial programs that were tailored to meet the individual academic needs of two hundred students (comprising grades nine through twelve) representing over twenty-five high schools throughout Alameda County. During his tenure, the high school graduation and college acceptance percentage for his program increased from 75% to 98%.

Prior to working for College Track, he served as a District Coordinator for the Oakland Unified School District, where he managed multiple state and federal resources supporting the Comprehensive Support Services in the districts’ (35) After School Programs. Consequently, Kayton Carter’s experience (both formal classroom study and hands-on engagement) in the field of education spans K-12 administration through college administration.
The Future of East African University

By Bettina Ng’weno

I stand on the grassy hills just outside of Arusha town in Northern Tanzania. I have a stunning view of Mount Meru and the surrounding countryside in all directions. This is the site of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of the new Aga Khan University, East Africa (FAS, EA) for which last August I took a leave of absence from UC Davis to join the planning team and help set up the social sciences and humanities. It has been a challenging adventure with a steep learning curve but the joy of being home and the excitement of learning new things every day has triumphed over the many frustrations and uncertainties so far. I was attracted to the idea of being at the beginning of a new university but especially one that would shape the world from which I come, East Africa. How do we plan for an unknown future and especially an East African future? What should be our emphasis and our aim? What is essential and what is peripheral? What are issues that will last into the future and which issues are time-bound? How do we write curriculum for the future when society and culture are changing so rapidly? How do we maintain flexibility? What are the social sciences and humanities in the East African future?

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the Aga Khan University, East Africa, hopes to provide an integrated, interdisciplinary, regional undergraduate and graduate program based in the liberal arts and research traditions. In spite of the rapid expansion of university education across East Africa, this is a tall order in three ways. First, few East African universities provide a broad, well rounded education but rather the push is to produce students narrowly trained in predominantly technical areas. And secondly, even fewer universities do research – especially research driven from the concerns and contexts of East Africa. It has thus been a challenge to work out how this can be done and to convince others of the worth of such endeavors. Finally, being a regional university demands the creation of new course materials that take into account regional dynamics and processes not just national ones.

At the same time there is a clamor for just such an education. When I returned to Kenya, I realized that I knew little about the current situation of social science or the humanities in East Africa and even less about all that goes into designing a university. To deal with the first issue I held a number of regional conversations on the urgent and unique issues in the social sciences and humanities in East Africa. Many people in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda generously gave of their time and intellect to talk about what they felt was most important and what a future university should therefore do. These conversations, which continue, were stimulating and informative and helped shape the development of sixteen draft degree programs or majors in the social sciences and humanities. Not all countries had the same urgencies and East African societies were shaped by diverse histories that determine their perspectives today. Convening people in different countries allowed this diversity to be reflected in the curriculum.

I struggled to learn more about East Africa, education in East Africa and about universities more generally to catch up with everyone else I was working with. I came to be working in the planning of classroom, office, dormitory, lab, studio and recreational spaces as well. One of the sad failings of East African universities has been their inability to keep up with population growth and the demand for increased student intake. Thus, as the number of students going to university has rapidly increased over the last twenty years in East Africa, the facilities have not increased proportionally. As a result many more students than fit the classrooms or labs are required to use them. The process of planning space has been particularly challenging and interesting for me because space planning is the moment when pedagogical ideas and theory hit the ground and pedagogy is first challenged. Can we actually maintain this pedagogy with so many students? What is the minimum? What is the maximum? What is a critical mass for any one major, or department? How do

“"The excitement of this job is in the possibilities and the fact that no condition is permanent. This can be stressful as well, but if approached as opportunity rather than chaos it is an interesting challenge.”

– Bettina Ng’weno

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For over twenty-three years, John Ortiz-Hutson dedicated his time, effort and support to the UC Davis campus, faculty, staff and most of all, the students. John's is one of the most ubiquitous names on campus – and there are hundreds who flood the grounds of UC Davis; however, when anyone mentions the name in any connection to student affairs and minority students, people are quick to know they are most likely referencing the long standing African American and African studies Student Coordinator – no last name needed! After years of dedicated service, John announced his retirement in June 2011. In an effort to equal his style, subtle dignity and suave nature, it was only befitting that his retirement celebration reflect such an extraordinary gentleman.

On November 28, 2011, a full crowd of family, friends, colleagues and many others who have been touched by John's presence converged at the Mondavi Performing Arts Center to share in John's retirement and celebrate his transition into a new journey in life. As the ceremony began, Lia Shepard, the Mistress of Ceremonies, reminded us that the evening would be a “classy affair” to celebrate a “classy person.” Griselda Castro, Associate Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs, opened up the line of reflections with a personal account of how John had been a vigilant champion of pushing for more support and events to help minority students excel in the University. Vice Chancellor Castro jokingly gave call to John's unflinching and non-bashful drive to ask for funding to create new projects and activities for students to gain more avenues for cultural and self-exploration.

Next, Associate Professor and Director of African American and African Studies, Halifu Osumare, gave a brief and intimate account of John's biography and contributions to the UC Davis campus. Commenting on his start as a senior learning skills officer and eventual transition to the student affairs officer, Dr. Osumare’s voice was touched with respect and admiration for John’s uncanny ability to relate to students concerns and navigate the red-tape politics of the academy with a distinct coolness.

As the evening progressed, the space was big enough for standing room only! Many people came to give their best and take part in the various reflections and warm sentiments of John’s impact. In the vein of keeping it a classy affair, Karlos Carter of the Early Academic Outreach Program spoke with passion of his short time knowing John and how his guidance is reflected in the students he advises willingness to push themselves and take pride in their culture. The night's entertainment was a musical selection of jazz and funk fusion performed by flutist Kimberly Jackson who transfixed the crowd gliding through the seats and tables – head nodding and feet tapping were in full affect.

John Ortiz-Hutson’s Retirement Reception
By Michell Faust

East African University
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you build in flexibility into facilities? But the possibilities are also endless.

The excitement of this job is in the possibilities and the fact that no condition is permanent. This can be stressful as well, but if approached as opportunity rather than chaos it is an interesting challenge. East African societies are rapidly changing. Almost blindingly fast. How we document, analyze, manage and understand this change will determine our future possibilities and societies. What fun to be in this space for now.

Professor Ng’weno of the Program in African American and African Studies is on leave from UC Davis. She is currently in charge of setting up the programs in Social Sciences and Humanities in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), at the Aga Khan University- East Africa.
Black History Month

AAAS Activities for 2012 Black History Month

February 7  Lecturer and Documentary Film: Tuskegee Airman George W. Porter of the Sacramento Chapter of the Original Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. Student Community Center (in conjunction with ASS 100)
See: http://webcast.ucdavis.edu/llnd/616b4d2f


February 27  Lecture: Ben Karp, Ph.D. Candidate, Yale University; “Imperial Japanese Antiracism and Philo-Semitism.” Student Community Center.

Robert and Marilyn Woods Host AAAS Faculty and UC Davis Alumni

African American and African Studies Program faculty, and the alumni and friends of UC Davis were hosted on Friday, May 13, 2011 by Robert and Marilyn Woods in their home in Sacramento. The faculty from the African American & African Studies Program shared the wonderful accomplishments and vital research of the department, faculty and students with the alumni at the event.

The wonderful evening was planned by the AAAS Program along with Darryl and Lois Goss to celebrate the Program and kick off Black Family Week at UC Davis.
John Ortiz-Hutson continued from page 1

opportunity for reaching students with tools that will shape their intellectual and other experiences on campus.

John likewise oversaw and coordinated the Black History Month activities for the campus. In this respect, he made admirable use of his contacts within the black performing and artistic community from Sacramento to the Bay Area. In 2007, for example, the Black History Month activities included a lecture and exhibition by a Bay area artist as well as a reading of poetry by a former Poet Laureate of California.

He coordinated all the outreach activities involving the African American and African studies program, making sure that we are represented in every forum where students might be present seeking information. He trained upperclassmen on a phone outreach project to prospective UC Davis students. He helped create a dialogue script, trained students in phone etiquette, in making appropriate referrals and in problem solving. John received and fielded numerous parent and prospective student follow-up phone calls resulting from this initiative. He also coordinated the distribution of an outreach letter on behalf of the African and African American Studies Director to graduating high school seniors who were accepted to UC Davis in collaboration with Undergraduate Admissions. He maintained ongoing communication and meetings with parents and prospective students by phone, in-person, and through e-mail.

Throughout his time at Davis, John worked to connect with students and to ease their entry into the intellectual life of the campus from their freshman year. He excelled in developing innovative strategies and approaches to increasing the persistence and graduation rates among African American students as well as in expanding the leadership pool among each cohort of students. One of his most important contributions was to initiate and manage a series of freshmen seminars annually that introduced African American students as well as in expanding the academic and cultural opportunities at Davis. The Academic Theme Program initially located at Adler Hall and now at Linda Alexander Hall continues to provide a setting for some of these seminars and enabled John to reach students in the dorms who might not otherwise register for these freshmen seminars.

John made valuable contributions to advancing the University’s goal of developing a diverse pool of students who would pursue graduate and professional opportunities. He expanded the graduate and professional school pipeline by identifying students eligible for pre-graduate and professional development programs and then, assisting them in their applications to such programs as the McNair’s Scholars Program (pre-doctoral readiness program) and MURALS, LEADS, among others. He assisted numerous students in this process by providing solid academic advising, writing letters of recommendation, and helping them with their statement of purpose.

Arguably, John’s most important contribution to minority student life on campus was in the area of advising. John was frequently the first staff/faculty member that many black students at the UC Davis campus develop a real connection with. He remained our most important contact person with the black student community on campus, and the one staff/faculty person that black students were most likely to turn to in times of crisis. He encouraged students to explore possibilities that they might not have looked at, kept them from dropping out, got them off probation, and made sure that they graduated. He would personally contact professors, work out a graduation plan, and walk a student through all the steps that had to be followed for the students to leave Davis in the expected time-frame with a degree in hand.

We could not have experienced such a remarkable increase in the number of students who major, double major and minor in African American studies at Davis without his support. John’s enthusiasm and encouragement generated a lot of advertisement for our classes. His contribution to minority student recruitment and retention at UC Davis was immense.

John was a recipient of many awards that I cannot recall here including the 2006 Diversity and Principles of Community Achievement Team Award in “Special Recognition of Outstanding and Distinguished Service in Commitment to Fostering Inclusiveness and Diversity,” and in 2007, the African American and African Staff award for Outstanding Contributions to the Student Community.

At this time and as we extend a welcome to Mr. Kayton Carter who takes up John’s former position, we wish John a restful and fulfilling retirement. We will miss his smile, his readiness to help, and his enduring concern for all students struggling to fit in and to excel at UC Davis.
be Director because I not only have to do the “regular stuff” but also try to represent the African American and African perspective within the discussion, which, of course, I can never wholly do. I have done my best to represent my own considered perspectives on these times as being an opportunity to further the agenda of Ethnic Studies specifically, and the Humanities in general, as a fulcrum to deconstruct and reshape the public discourse on the neo-liberal corporatizing of the public university.

For AAS, these times since Fall 2011 have been challenging also because many of our faculty members are not physically present. Milmon Harrison is on sabbatical, Christine Acham is on medical leave, and Bettina Ng’weno is on leave for two years in her native Kenya helping to create a new humanities and social science program for Aga Khan University – East Africa (see story on page 6). This leaves Professors Adejunmobi, Adebanwi, and myself to anchor the delivery of our curriculum. I thank several lecturers in our Program who have helped to fill-in the teaching gaps: long-term lecturers, Drs. Elizabeth Mukibi and Laila Kiburi; and newly minted Ph.D. Andrea Smith-Moore, who got her doctorate in Cultural Studies in June 2011. Andrea has been with AAS for many years as a Teaching Assistant, and now “graduates” into the lectureship category. With their capable help, our curriculum continues to be implemented as continue our search for a seventh faculty member for AAAS.

Programmatically, AAS had several changes that deserve noting. I am appreciative of Professors Amina Mama, Director of Women & Gender Studies, and Associate Professor of Sociology Bruce Haynes for officially joining the AAS Program Committee to aid us in steering our programmatic ship through difficult waters. I want to also thank Professor Emeritus Karl Zender for his valiant aid as Interim Director from Summer 2011 through the beginning of Fall 2011. It could not have been easy entering from the “outside” and steering our program ship, but he did a respectful and superlative job.

We congratulate Professor Wale Adebanwi for crossing the big hurdle from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor with tenure. His three-pronged research agenda of the political role of the media and intellectuals in Africa, Nigeria’s elite cultural politics and the ethno-nationalist struggles within post-colonial formations, and Africa’s political economy and the dynamics of citizenship, with 32 publications, the Dean of HARCS said that he had one of the strongest dossiers that went through the many levels of administrative evaluations during this school year. We congratulate him on his scholarly achievements and accomplishment of tenure.

They say challenges make the (wo)man, and I hope that I am standing up to these demanding times adequately. I know that I have to use everything that I have ever learned: from my arts administrative work running a community dance center in Oakland in the 80s; creating and implementing a statewide arts initiative that had me organizing non-profits in three cities in the 90s; as well as getting my Ph.D. late and learning the complex world of academia in the 2000s. The Program in African American and African Studies has come a long way on this campus, and we have established ourselves as an integral component of the Interdisciplinary Programs in Hart Hall and the HARCS division of Letters and Science. We will continue to survive and thrive if I have anything to say about it.
Ortiz-Hutson’s Retirement

I was excited when I took the stage along with UC Davis alumni, Guy Ollison, to share our respective stories of how John always managed to look at students as not just people who needed to work out their schedules but as individuals, emerging scholars and people who truly matter. We regaled the crowd with memorable lines. John is famous for such as “If this were my college, I would require everyone to learn something about their culture before they graduate” and “Never be afraid to ask for what you want. You have to be assertive.” I couldn’t help but make a whimsical quip that John should remember those words if he finds me calling at two o’clock in the morning seeking his advice.

What would become the emotional apex of the evening came about when the floor was opened to anyone who wished to share some brief remarks about John and what he had meant to them. The microphone was adorned by former and current students, staff, friends and a host of family members. Each person spoke of the unique and exuberant person that John is. Amongst the many words spoken, common threads of John’s selflessness, open-mindedness, and laid back yet regal demeanor were woven throughout the collective comments. Springs of laughter and clapping rang through the room as one person after the next took the chance to share a little story about their experience of knowing John... Dr. Osumare referred to John as a ‘silent warrior’ who stood as a strong symbol in the fight for social justice, student retention and recruitment, mentorship and guidance.

Finally, John took center stage and as the audience watched, he did something quite peculiar, although well within his character. Instead of taking the time to speak namely about himself, his accomplishments and what he will miss, John spent the majority of his speech thanking those around him and sharing his gratitude for being in his life. From expressing his deepest love for his longtime partner, Asa, to giving his warmest adoration to his mother who looked upon him proudly and to the countless others who spoke and have been involved in his life and time at UC Davis, John offered a somber yet ardent, “Thank you all.”

As one of the many students who have had the pleasure of getting to know John over the years, I was proud to stand in a room full of so many people who had been touched by such an impactful, smart, motivated and kind person. John Ortiz-Hutson may be retiring from UC Davis, but that parting evening revealed, he left with him a legacy of excellence and a commitment towards community building.

We will miss you John. We wish you the best in the many adventures you have ahead of you.
Halifu Osumare: 2011-2012

April 10-13, 2012  University of São Paulo, Brazil – Invited Speaker at the Young Cultures International Symposium. Global Hip-Hop Research

February 23, 2012  Primary Organizer of The Social Justice Teach-In, featuring Angela Davis; Facilitator, Faculty Roundtable, ARC Pavilion, UC Davis campus.


July 20-22, 2011  Humanities Scholar, Institute for Dunham Technique Certification annual Certification Workshop

Moradewun Adejunmobi: 2011-2012

Professor Adejunmobi was invited to participate in the annual Schomburg Mellon Summer Institute in New York in June-July 2011 alongside distinguished faculty from several other universities. The annual Summer Institute is intended to encourage minority students and others with an interest in African-American and African Diasporan Studies to pursue graduate studies in the humanities. Professor Adejunmobi lectured the students drawn from across the New England area and HBCUs around the country on West African popular culture.

Professor Adejunmobi will participate in a roundtable on African cultural production and intellectual property rights in the 21st century at the annual meeting of the African Literature Association in Dallas, Texas in April 2012 – alongside Professor Ng’weno. Past presidents of the African Literature Association and the current president of the ALA will also take part in the discussion.

Wale Adebanwi: 2011-2012


Adebanwi and Ebenezer Obadare (Sociology, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS) in conjunction with the Governor of Ekiti State, Nigeria, Dr. Kayode Fayemi, convened a Conference on “Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: Critical Reinterpretations” on September 10, 2011 in Lagos, Nigeria. The conference was organized to critically re-appraise the acclaimed book, Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic, by Prof. Richard Joseph of the Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, published 25 years ago.

Adebanwi was invited to the Experts Meeting on the Issues Papers for the African Governance Report (III) on Elections in Africa which was held at Pretoria, South Africa, on 23-25 May 2011. The meeting was convened by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in conjunction with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

Behavior in the Marketplace: My One Year in Ghana

By Sarah Nagel

Roofs of thin patched rusted tin, of deep reddish-brown, matching the color of the sand and dirt bellow. Chipped cement slabs compliment the old corroded wooden beams that comprise the support for the endless metal rooftops. Some eyes wide with fascination, some squinting against the glare of the sun, and some completely blank on expressionless faces. Whether the distant observer or the avid participant, all contributed to the scene. Bunches of people gathering around the newcomers; yelling, waving, showing, begging, all eager to catch the attention of these new people for them to give, to buy or to share. The newcomers, with overwhelmed looks on their faces, do everything in their power to avoid the gathering people. Using evasive body language they steer clear of eye contact, walk quickly, and show no signs of acknowledgement that other beings are speaking in their direction or even there at all.

August 2. The EAP group had arrived only 8 days prior to the scene and every time the group was put into a market atmosphere, behavior would adjust accordingly. In the 7 days we had been in Ghana the group had already progressed from showing polite interest, to smiles and nods, to quick glances, to complete avoidance.

I hadn't even noticed how changed I had been until I went to Accra to go shopping for some produce at the market with a few students. Sellers were yelling and pulling every which way to get our attention: from simply calling out, to moving the product less than a foot in front of my face, to grabbing my arm. I acted as aloof as possible and worked hard to avoid all eye contact, maneuvering in a way that denied any awareness of other's presence. I had behaved in the manner I just described the EAP group behaving on August 2nd at the craft villages, as I'm sure I was also a part of, yet had not been conscious of it yet. Sincerely bothered by our behavior, it was then the matter really came to full view; it was then I begun to analyze and pick apart the phenomenon. I asked myself ‘why’? How had we all transformed so quickly? How had this progression of conduct occurred in such a short period of time? In order to unravel the delicate reasoning behind our behavior, I had to take several significant aspects into consideration.

History, geography, our context, globalization, the constant and raising flow of tourism, cultural standards and norms, and psychology all play large roles in our shifts of attitudes and behavior.

History and geography are significant factors when cultural standards, practices, views, and norms are concerned. As Eugenel L. Mendoza reminds us trade has historically been fostered by West Africa's diverse eco-zones and specialization. From rainforest to savanna to Sahel to Sahara, communities emerged offering goods that were often conditioned by the environment in which they lived (i.e. the material available, continued on page 14
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the soil type, the weather...). This, among other factors related to neglected development, provides the backdrop for why even today (excluding the rare big shopping malls) the average purchases in Ghana are often those where prices aren't marked, labeled or fixed.

In addition, our context also contributes greatly to the scene. Just as in any society, our own environment and culture form our ideologies and behavioral patterns. As Americans, we are accustomed to a different market structure than Ghanaians. For the most part, we are familiar with large corporate supermarkets (Wal-Mart, Target, Albertsons, Safeway, Rite-aid...) where the prices are advertised in newspapers, magazines, and even in television commercials. We enter the store knowing the price, picking up the items, and going about our way without having to talk to a sales representative. Even at the checkout stand, there is generally barely any human interaction apart from the polite gesture of saying “Hello, how are you?” In fact, in many supermarkets, there is now a self check out option where customers can just scan the items into the system and pay for themselves without having to interact with anyone at all.

As such, it would be aggravating and impractical to have to ask for the price of every item one was interested in purchasing. The system in which we have grown to understand is structured very differently from that which we were exposed to in Ghana. Therefore, automatically frustration is produced because all of a sudden everything you were socialized to know about behavior associated with purchasing is no longer valid.

In addition, the construction of racial connotations plays a towering role in setting the scene. Putting it straightforwardly, an “Obruni” is perceived as rich. Due to a combination of history, reality, and media this socially-constructed stereotype has served as the basis for even more attention at the market place, and as a result, contributed to the acceleration of our progression in behavior. Moreover, the rise in and extent of tourism has led to a large industry of catering just that. In the marketplace setting, people see an “Obruni” face and immediately see ‘tourist who is rich and can afford buying my product’. Therefore, they want to get your attention and show you their merchandise, and are often determined to apply much pressure for their product to be sold. To avoid being urged to buy something, we had learned that looking should be avoided because it provides ground for interest in the product, and once you are interested the seller has reason to think you want to purchase their product and will insist you do so. Therefore, connotations with our identity mixed with the extent of tourism contributed to the exponential change in our interactions at the marketplace.

With that said, however, I would also like to examine another possibility or aspect of the phenomenon: Psychology. Considering our context and our established standards of what it means to be poor, we have been socialized to associate living conditions, attire, and hygiene, for instance, with certain levels of economic status. Bringing that with us, according to our constructed background we should be perceiving those at the marketplace (especially those at the various places we visited on August 2nd) as incredibly poor. In reaction to seeing this we should develop empathy for those in that situation. However, being over exposed to this setting we have either developed a numbness to seeing (according to our cultural context) poor people, or have blocked ourselves from seeing it as poor and have decided to remain in a state of denial. As generally life is, I’m sure the answer is a combination of both rather than one or the other. In addition, by avoiding eye contact, we are distancing ourselves from feeling obligated to respond to others’ poverty. Regardless, some sort of psychological transformation has definitely occurred and had a share in the development of our actions.

Both the process of desensitization and the process of understanding are being examined. Our behavior reflects both a method of coping with over exposure (not to mention cultural shock) and a method of repression and denial; all also while our progression highlights our developing adaptation to cultural norms.

At the time, I thought to myself, what do I do from here? How should I act and behave in the marketplace? How should I view the sellers? Should I remain in a state of...
The Chancellor’s “African” Dance Steps!

Music, Dance and Panache at UC Davis Nigerian Cultural Show

The highlight of this year’s Annual Nigerian Cultural Show, the third in the series, was Chancellor Linda Katehi showing some “African” dance steps when she was invited to the stage at the close of a splendid play by Nigerian students. The show, a collaboration between the Nigerian Students Association and Nigerian Student Dance Group, was held at Geidt Hall on March 16, 2012.

The Chancellor and her husband, Professor Spyros Tseregounis, must have enjoyed the night as they both enthusiastically joined the Nigerian students on the stage as they danced to a popular Nigerian music.

This year’s show displays the struggle of Nigerian-Americans at school and at home. In the storyline written by Nnennaya Amuchie, the main character, Ifeani, exhibits the challenges of balancing the cultural expectations of his Nigerian parents and the contemporary dynamics of peer pressure in the American context, with the duality of his natal and adopted cultures. This balancing act is not made easier by the expectations arising from his love life, his academic and basketball careers and the stress of attending a prestigious university, Stanford.

The play was directed by Joanne Okolo, Amarachi Obiwuru and David Amadi. The cast included Steven Anyanwu, David Amadi, Galvin Emesibe, Afeez Bello, Cecilia Ajoku, Amarachi Obiwuru, Nnedy Obiwuru, Pamela Nonga, Laura Chilaka, Desiree Bell, Ndidi E. Rgeonuigwe, Valerie Aduba, Gabriel Sanchez and Victoria.

Says the organizers of the event, “[We] felt that the best way to educate others on Nigerian culture is through the arts – like our ancestors did with storytelling. The Nigerian culture show encompasses dance, acting, music, fashion, and food all in one. The show is both educational and entertaining.” The show is also used to raise funds and acquire books for schools in Africa.

Amarachi Obiwuru/Nigerian Students Dance Group

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empathy? Should I ignore my own cultural context and adopt a new one? Should my perception change, or even yet, can it change? After weighing the reasons behind the situation at hand, I came to a few conclusions. First, I will never be able to separate myself from my cultural context. Regardless of my new surroundings I will always carry my own perspective shaped by my experiences and socialization. However, I have also found that this can, and is always changing. As I became exposed to new ideas, new perspectives, my own began to shift. Understanding others doesn’t quite mean a complete transformation of one’s self, but rather, over time, it means a new level of awareness and more importantly, respect.

Sarah Nagel (nee Schefres), spent one year in Ghana on the Education Abroad Program (EAP) in 2010. She now lives with her husband in Australia.
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