



# AFRICAN AMERICAN & AFRICAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER

June 2023



AAS students pose in the dept. lounge

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Hart Hall which houses the AAS Dept.

## FOLLOW THE AAS DEPT.

Click on the links below and follow us on any social media platform to learn more about AAS undergraduate programs and stay updated on emerging events, classes, and news within the department.

[Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#)

To learn more about the Designated Emphasis in African American & African Studies and to reach out to the department, [click here](#) for more contact information





**Professor Mark Jerng; Chair of the AAS Dept. at the AAS Student Graduation Celebration**

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

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Dear AAS Community,

I am delighted to share with you the UC Davis African American and African Studies Department newsletter for 2022–23. Below you will hear about the accomplishments and activities of AAS as we continue to build and enlarge learning opportunities and experiences for our undergraduate students, PhD Designated Emphasis students, and faculty and instructors alike. First, our hearts go out to families, friends, and loved ones of David

Henry Breaux and Karim Abou Najm, two members of our Davis and UC Davis community who lost their lives in Spring Quarter. The incidents shined a sharp light on the need for improved access to mental health services, compassion, and the importance of supporting each other. We will remember the joys that their lives brought and continue to bring. Second, a big thank you to Dorian Mendoza, peer advisor and AAS major-extraordinaire, for her work in writing and organizing the features below.

I am delighted that, upon looking at the future goals laid out in last year's newsletter, we accomplished all of them. We said that we would be renovating our student lounge: we did so; we now call it the "AAS Community Lounge"; and it looks fabulous. Thanks to the L&S Dean's office for infrastructure funding, to the cleaning staff, and to Kat Ampaw-Matthei, Anna Juline, Dorian, Silana Smith, and a host of undergraduate volunteers for their work in making the space a communal, welcoming, affirming environment. We said that we would start up a donation-based food pantry: it is located in the AAS Community Lounge and we have established a partnership with the Basic Needs Center to maintain it. We said that we would be offering a First Year Aggie Connection Seminar to connect new students, current students, alumni, and faculty. Our SAO, Kat Ampaw-Matthei, taught two of these seminars, one in the Fall and one in the Spring, and they have enlarged the university and professional opportunities for our students. Thanks to Kat for conceiving, organizing, and teaching these seminars, and thanks to all of the faculty, staff, and alumnae for participating and sharing their hard-fought wisdom with our students. Finally, we said that we would re-convene our student-led AAS Majors club, and we did: a huge thanks go out to undergraduate student Silana Smith for re-establishing the Majors club, continuing our efforts to build community and activities for our majors and minors.

## **MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR CONT.**

As a measure of some of these activities and opportunities, I am delighted to highlight some of the amazing research and teaching going on in AAS. We recently convened an Honors Research Symposium where four AAS undergraduate honors students (Cesar Manuel Fierro; Raelynn Requena; Erika Wallace; Gemma Weinstein) presented their work. They each delivered outstanding presentations outlining the methods, materials, and analyses of their original research. We honored two graduating PhD students who completed Designated Emphases in African American and African Studies. Mia Dawson (PhD, Geography) presented her work on “desanctifying property” and Sarah Haughn (PhD, Performance Studies) outlined her current dissertation-turned-book manuscript, tentatively titled, *Life Expectancy*. We piloted an internship program where two undergraduate students work with members of the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC). This internship was organized by Dr. Angelo Williams, a department lecturer and Chief of Staff, California State Assembly. We are continuing to work on the organization of this internship and expanding it across two quarters to make for a powerful learning experience. Faculty members Dr. Benjamin Weber and Dr. Shingirai Taodzera received a Seed Grant for International Activities for their research project titled, “Human Rights and Reparations in African & African American History: Lessons from South Africa for California.” You will hear more on faculty accomplishments below. We were delighted to honor Darryl and Lois Goss both at their annual tailgate and at an informal celebration of the student recipients of the Goss Academic Achievement Award and Gary Perkins Academic Achievement Award. Both of these awards were endowed by Darryl and Lois Goss.

One of the most time-consuming and significant activities that our faculty engaged in this year was a faculty search for a scholar and teacher of African American, African diasporic, or African studies specializing in one of four interdisciplinary areas: law; medicine; geography; science and technology studies. We are delighted that Dr. Antoine Johnson will be starting as a new faculty member in AAS in July 2024. With a PhD in the History of Health Sciences from the University of California, San Francisco, Johnson specializes in anti-black racism in medicine.

Finally, an enormous congratulations to our graduating seniors. We convened a Departmental Graduation send-off for our fifteen graduating seniors, some of whom came back to UC Davis after long absences to finish their degrees. Best of luck on your exciting new adventures after college and please know that you will always find support from AAS as you continue your journey!

I’ll end again with a glimpse forward. We are looking to expand our course offerings in the areas of medicine and health sciences. We are also looking to develop and renew study abroad programs. Those are two major goals of ours as we continue to enhance undergraduate, graduate student, and faculty experiences. We have those as well as other projects in the works. We will continue to move forward in the spirit of learning, joy, and compassion. With gratitude,

Mark Jerng, Department Chair

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# STUDENT RESOURCES

The AAS department has offered a variety of resources for its students including a food pantry put together by donations and in collaboration with the Basic Needs Center on campus. The AAS Food Pantry also contains everyday essentials such as wipes, tissue, diapers, cleaning supplies, and school supplies such as blue books and scantrons. In addition to this resource, the department also renovated its community lounge, providing a safe and brave space for students to study, hang out, and interact with their peers.



The AAS Dept. Lounge



## ADVISORS



The AAS department advisors play a vital role in supporting students academic and personal development while at UC Davis. Our Student Affairs Officer, Kat Ampaw-Matthei, provides guidance, mentorship, and valuable insights to students navigating their educational journey. One of her key responsibilities is to help students with curriculum planning, ensuring that they meet graduation requirements while exploring various areas of interest within African American and African

Studies. She also assists students in mapping out their academic goals, identifying research opportunities, and connecting them with relevant resources and faculty members. Furthermore, our peer advisor, Dorian Mendoza, has firsthand knowledge and experiences that make her a relatable and accessible resource for her peers. She offers valuable insights into professors, class dynamics, and academic strategies, helping students make informed decisions about their educational paths. Our peer advisor also serves as a mentor, offering advice and support on various aspects of student life, such as time management, study skills, and balancing commitments.



# EVENTS

Throughout the 2022-2023 school year, the AAS department and the AAS Majors Club have hosted fun and interactive events for the students and faculty. Recreational student events hold great significance in the African American and African Studies Department as they provide spaces for our AAS students to engage in leisure activities that promote social bonding, relaxation, and overall well-being.



Students at the AAS Majors Club Student Mixer



AAS Faculty and Campus Colleagues at the inaugural 2023 AAS Open House

These events offer a respite from rigorous academic pursuits and serve as a means of fostering a sense of community and camaraderie among AAS students and between students and faculty within the department. These events such as the inaugural AAS Dept. Open House and the AAS Majors Club mixers allow students to unwind, have fun, and build lasting friendships

By recognizing the importance of leisure and recreational activities, the African American and African Studies department creates a supportive and well-rounded environment for students to thrive academically, emotionally, and socially. This contributes to a more holistic and enriching educational experience.



Students at the AAS Majors Club Earth Day Mixer

AAS | UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS

# STUDENT SUPPORT SEMINAR

During the 2022-2023 school year, the AAS Dept. offered student support classes geared toward preparing Aggies for their future with an AAS degree. The AAS First-Year Aggie Connection (FYAC) Seminar, offered in Fall 2022, allowed students to connect with alumni and faculty members in the department, exposing them to career paths taken by those with an AAS degree. AAS 198, offered during Spring 2023, was a course designed to encourage students to think about what careers they want to explore after college and the steps that they will have to take to do so. With these student support classes, the AAS Dept. has been able to help students discover their interests and how they can pursue them after leaving the UC Davis campus. **Special thanks to AAS Alumni Geoffrey Johnson, Darryl and Lois Goss, Thresa Davis, Dr. Ethan Caldwell, Veronica Mitchell, Sade Johnson, and Sadalia King** for speaking to our students in Fall 2022 about your career journey.

**AAS FYAC SEMINAR**  
**DREAMING UP NEW WORLDS IN COMMUNITY WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES**

How does centering the experiences, knowledges, and life-worlds of African American, African diasporic, and African peoples provide a powerful lens for reimagining global issues and dreaming new worlds into existence? Come join this FYAC seminar with the African American and African Studies Department to learn more!

During weekly meetings, students will engage with alumni and faculty members in the department to learn about their career and academic journey, the significant work of scholars, activists, thinkers, and workers that inspire them, and the details of their current and past career or research projects. Students will build community by engaging in topics, including: global issues such as migration, human rights, housing, global and domestic incarceration, and resource extraction.

Wed, 4:00-5:30 pm  
 Hart Hall 2215

**Lower Division CRN:**  
 AAS 099-20011

**Upper Division CRN:**  
 AAS 198-20041

For more information, please email Katherine Ampaw-Matthei, Student Affairs Officer-kampaw@ucdavis.edu

African American African Studies

Fall 2022



Guest speaker and AAS alumni Sadalia King meeting with our students, Fall 2022



Guest speakers and esteemed AAS donors and alumni Darryl and Lois Goss meeting with our students, Fall 2022

## INSTRUCTOR SUPPORT

The instructor responsible for spearheading these student support seminars was the AAS Department's Student Affairs Officer Katherine "Kat" Ampaw-Matthei. She has a BA in Gender Studies from UCLA and a Master's in Education from USC. Katherine taught the Fall 2022 AAS FYAC on her own, however, she co-developed the Spring 2023 AAS 198 class and co-taught the course with Pamela Pretell, Student Affairs Officer of both Gender, Sexuality, and Women Studies (GSW) and American Studies (AMS). Katherine developed these courses because she understood and empathized with students when it came to the stresses and anxieties of being a student, navigating the post-graduation journey, and being Black in today's world. While Katherine had people who invested in her as a first-generation college student she hoped that with these seminar courses, she was doing the same for our AAS students. Overall, she wants all our students to succeed and be prepared once they leave not only our department but UC Davis.

African American African Studies

GOALS EDUCATION  
 VALUES CAREER VISION  
 INTERESTS SKILLS

**AAS 198** **SPRING 2023**

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: PREPARING FOR CAREERS AND POST-GRADUATION PATHWAYS

K. AMPAW-MATTHEI  
 P. PRETELL

This course is designed to increase awareness of career exploration and development, including post-graduation pathways.

HART HALL 2215  
 T-4:00PM-5:00PM  
 4 Units

CRN: 30044



# AAS 198 CLASS PRESENTATIONS

The following photos show some of our AAS 198 students during Spring 2023 presenting their final projects. We had a total of 30 students in the class! These projects were meant to allow students to display their academic journeys as well as their aspirations following the completion of their undergraduate degrees.



AAS 198 Student; Malik Vega-Tatum



AAS 198 Student; Ayanna Toliver



AAS 198 Student; Sundae Thompson



AAS 198 Student; Nissi Domnwachukwu

## AAS DEPARTMENT'S FIRST ANNUAL HONORS RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

The African American and African Studies (AAS) Department is delighted to share the success of the First Annual African American and African Studies (AAS) Honors Research Symposium, a remarkable event that celebrated the importance of research in AAS. This event provided a platform for undergraduate researchers to share their chosen topics of focus, the research methods they used, their findings, and any implications their findings might have. Research in AAS contributes to the advancement of academic

scholarship and interdisciplinary studies. The symposium proved to be an enriching experience that served as a testament to the commitment and passion of our department in fostering knowledge and empowering undergraduate voices. The success of the First Annual AAS Honors Research Symposium was a testament to the dedication, hard work, and intellectual curiosity of all the participants. As we reflect on this significant milestone, we extend our gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of the symposium. Let us continue to embrace the power of research, and celebrate the richness of continuously emerging research in the field of African American and African Studies.



Honors Research Symposium Participants



## AAS DEPARTMENT'S FIRST ANNUAL HONORS RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

AAS honor student Erika Wallace presented on “The Health of Incarcerated People As a Call for Abolition” my study draws wisdom from incarcerated people themselves. Combining my family’s experiences with the work of other black studies scholars, it is my goal to expand how we perceive incarceration and work towards the development of a just society we all deserve.



AAS honor student Raelynn Requena presented on the Black Students and Adultification Bias: Examining Disproportionate Punishment in American K-12 Schools. Raelynn's research focused on the phenomenon that Black children are viewed as older than they are and whether this effects rates of punishment in schools.

AAS honor student Cesar Manuel presented on the lack of Black and Latino men at the University of California, Davis, and their experiences in higher education.



AAS honor student Genna Weinstein presented on The Price of Control: Foreign Aid, Dependency, and Neo-colonialism. Genna's research looks at the intersections between foreign aid from the United States to Kenya's healthcare sector, particularly towards HIV/AIDS funding. It also examines how this relationship creates a cycle of dependency and contributes to a neo-colonialistic expression of power from the United States to Kenya.





# STUDENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The department recognizes the African American & African Studies Class of 2023 for all their hard work and great accomplishments during their time at UC Davis.

## Graduated Seniors

Tatianna Chrishon	Raelynn Requena
Alfredo Corrales Sanchez	Marrisa Smith
Chanel Da Rocha	Silana Smith
Jhaunee Diggs	Faith Vaughn
Tatiana Frazier	Malik Vega-Tatum
DeVonna Myers Gentry	Erika Wallace
Alice Johnson	Genevieve Weinstein



Darryl and Lois Goss, AAS Alumni and Donors of the Goss Academic Achievement Award and Gary Perkins Academic Achievement Award pictured here with recipients Dorian Mendoza and Raelynn Requena

## Message to the Donors

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the donors for their generous contributions towards scholarships for current students. Your support has allowed us to provide financial assistance to deserving students. Your investment in their education is a testament to your commitment to ensuring that future generations have access to the resources they need to achieve their goals.

# STUDENT AWARDS

## **Outstanding Performance in the Department**

Erika Wallace

## **Department Citation for Academic Excellence**

Raelynn Requena

Genevieve Weinstein

## **Goss Academic Achievements Award**

Raelynn Requena

## **Gary Perkins Academic Achievement Award**

Dorian Mendoza

## **AAS Capitol Internship Program Awardees**

Sundae Thompson, Beimnet Lesanework



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Silana Smith (She/Her)

Silana is from Stockton, CA and recently graduated from UC Davis in Spring 2023 with a B.A. in African American & African Studies and a minor in Education. She pursued AAS because she felt underrepresented while attending Franklin High School. She has valued the AAS Department as a place akin to home where the faculty look like her, value her identity, are community-oriented, and contribute greatly to the success of their students. She specifically recalls the work done by her AAS advisor, Katherine Ampaw-Matthei, and how Katherine constantly went above and beyond to help her acquire the necessary resources for her success. The AAS Department would like to acknowledge all she has done to give back to her peers and the department as a whole. Throughout the school year, she balanced her school work and her responsibilities as a co-chair for the AAS Majors Club. She and a peer revived the AAS Majors Club in hopes of connecting their peers to the department and to each other. Silana was also very active as an undergraduate volunteer when it came to assisting with projects within the department such as the creation of flyers for events, the creation of posters, and the renovation of the AAS community lounge. With this spotlight, we would like to both thank Silana Smith for her efforts as an AAS Student and congratulate her on the completion of her degree. We wish her luck in all of her future endeavors and we are excited to see her continue her pursue her ambitions!



# AFRICAN AMERICAN & AFRICAN STUDIES 2023 DEPARTMENT GRADUATION



AAS Graduation; Dept. Chair Dr. Mark Jerng Opening Remarks

This year's department graduation in Hart Hall celebrated the hard work and accomplishments of the graduating class of 2023. Honoring both the graduating students and the achievements of the faculty, the celebration commemorated the end of a challenging but remarkable year for the department.



AAS Graduation; Graduates Group Photo



AAS Graduation; Graduate Kielana Bryant and Dept. SAO, Kat Ampaw-Matthei

# GRADUATING DE STUDENTS

The AAS department proudly recognizes its Designated Emphasis students



## **BIO**

Dr. Mia Karisa Dawson is a community organizer and scholar of human geography. She is an alumnus of the Geography Graduate Group at UC Davis, with a designated emphasis in African American studies, and is a 2023 recipient of the UCLA Chancellor's postdoctoral fellowship. Her scholarly work approaches geographies of race, property, and policing as they intersect and structure urban space, going on to explore abolitionist practices of direct action, mutual aid, and autonomy that challenge these structures and offer sustainable, life-affirming alternatives.

Mia also works with the UC Davis Violence Prevention Research Program. In this capacity, she collaborates on the development of community-based violence interruption programs and alternative first response systems. As a community organizer, she has led and participated in initiatives against police terror and incarceration in her city with groups including Black Lives Matter and Decarcerate Sacramento. Mia's work has been published in journals including *EPD: Society and Space*, *Frontiers in Public Health*, and *Water Alternatives*.

## **BIO**

Sarah R. Haughn graduated from UC Davis with a PhD in Performance Studies and designated emphases in African American Studies and Studies in Practice and Performance. She currently teaches in the English department at Iowa State University. Her research interests include poetics, performance, social reproduction, gender studies, and black critical theory. Her current book project, tentatively titled *Life Expectancy*, poses a general critique of creativity via analyses of the antiblack gestational violence of poesis.

As a graduate student of the DE in AAS she had the chance to take courses in methods and special topics, as well as to receive mentorship from Professor Moradewun Adejunmobi who was a member of her dissertation committee. She is also very grateful for the students and professors she had the opportunity to learn from over the seven years she worked as a teaching assistant for AAS courses--including Introduction to African Studies, Introduction to African American Culture and Society, Survey of Ethnicity in the US, and Hip Hop in Urban America among others.



# FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS & UPDATES

The Department of African American and African Studies is singularly proud of its hardworking and accomplished faculty, whose achievements, publications, and other recognitions are acknowledged with special congratulations this year.



Dr. Taodzera at the UCDC's Change The World Through Research Program Event

- AAS faculty member **Dr. Benjamin Weber** completed his first book, *American Purgatory: Prison Imperialism and the Rise of Mass Incarceration* (The New Press, 2023). It is available to pre-order online and will be in bookstores this fall. We hope to see you at the Book Release party at the Manetti Shrem Museum on Sunday, October 15, 2023, where he will be in conversation with visual artist Ayo Scott, who did the artwork for the book, and longtime activist Jalil Muntaqim, whose story is featured in the book.
- **Dr. Weber** will be taking over from **Dr. Bettina Ng'weno** as chair of our Designated Emphasis (DE) this fall. He has some very big shoes to fill.
- **Dr. Shingirai Taodzera** and **Dr. Benjamin Weber** will be developing a new course on Human Rights in African and African American Studies, taught on a rotating basis by various Department faculty, and designing an eventual study abroad in South Africa.
- Next year, **Dr. Taodzera and Dr. Weber** will be coordinating a year-long "First Fridays" speaker series on "New Directions in African American and African Studies" on the first Friday of each month in Hart Hall 3201, 12-2 pm (2023-2024). Mark your calendar, stay tuned for the exciting line-up, and we hope to see you there!
- **Dr. Weber** and his collaborators at the California Coalition for Women Prisoners, a Bay Area grassroots nonprofit, published a piece about their Open Letters prison correspondence program in the latest issue of [Radical History Review](#), sharing the process and writing that came out of the project. They are at work on a special issue of the prison newsletter, *The Fire Inside*, which will circulate to thousands of people inside prisons along with families, friends, and advocates on the outside.

## FACULTY AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

- **Dr. Shingirai Taodzera and Dr. Benjamin Weber** won a Global Studies seed grant for their new comparative project on histories of human rights and reparations activism
- **Dr. Shingirai Taodzera** received a DHI Collaboration Grant

## FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Dr. Taodzera** will be traveling to a one-day workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa in September on the topic of the inclusion of indigenous Kingdoms in the governance of oil and minerals. The workshop will bring together academics, policymakers, and representatives from the Bafokeng and Bunyoro kingdoms.
- **Dr. Weber, Dr. Shingirai Taodzera, and AAS DE graduate Dr. Génesis Lara** (UC Irvine) recently presented on "Histories of Human Rights and Reparations Activism" at the UC Davis Human Rights Symposium and the annual Caribbean Studies Association Conference, together with Dominique Williams (UC History Project), Anthony Green (Bishop O'Dowd High School, Oakland), and V.P. Franklin (Distinguished Professor Emeritus, UC Riverside).
- **Dr. Taodzera** participated in the UCDC's Change The World Through Research Program, which involved orienting professors selected from across different UC campuses to share their research in a way that appeals to a broader audience and impacts public policy.



Dr. Taodzera at the UCDC's Change The World Through Research Program Event

- In April 2023, **Dr. Adejunmobi** delivered one of the Franke Lectures in the Humanities at Yale University. The title of my lecture was: "On the Margins of (World) Cinema: New Style Seriality in African Media."
- **Dr. Adejunmobi** recently guest edited a special issue of the African Studies Review, which is the flagship journal of the African Studies Association. The forum or special issue was titled "Africa/Pleasure."



Cover of African Studies Review

- **Dr. Taodzera** published a co-authored paper written with a colleague from Wellesley College titled: "Zimbabwean civil society survival in the post-coup environment: a political settlements analysis"
- **Dr. Weber** and his spouse welcomed their second child, baby Tallulah Delphine into the world in January -- congratulations to their growing family!