Welcome to Diaspora, the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies’ electronic newsletter. We are all connected to AAADS in one way or another, yet we are spread far and wide throughout the university, the community, and even farther afield. We are the AAADS Diaspora.

Events and News of Note

• AAADS celebrated the graduating classes of 2014 and presented annual awards on May 2nd in the Grand Hall of the Neal-Marshall Black Cultural Center. Undergraduate student Leighton Johnson won three awards: the Joe Russell Leadership Award, the A. B. Assensoh Undergraduate Research Award, and the Outstanding Academic Honors Award. The Assensoh Award also went to Kendra Morris, Marquez R. Carlisle, and Joshua Cobbin. Cobbin won the award for Outstanding Academic Honors as well. The William Wiggins Award for Outstanding Associate Instructor of Record went to MA/MFA student Nandi Comer, and Caralee Jones received the Wiggins Outstanding Associate Instructor of Discussion Section Award. The Phyllis Klotman Award for Outstanding Thesis was presented to Roberta Radovich, and Monica Black and Carl Darnell won the Winona Fletcher Outstanding Leadership Award. Herman C. Hudson Pioneer Awards went to Maria Hamilton Abegunde, Nandi Comer, and Ife-Chudeni Oputa. Breon Tyler received the Medal of Honor for Service. The William H. and Janice Wiggins Faculty and Staff Service Award went to Folklore and Ethnomusicology Professor Mellonee Burnim and Groups Associate Director and Advisor
Roger Gildersleeve. AAADS congratulates these award recipients for their hard work, leadership, and dedication to academic excellence.

• On April 17th, Maria Eliza Hamilton Abegunde defended her dissertation, for which her research committee gave her a unanimous “pass with distinction.” As the first student to complete the doctoral degree in AAADS, Abegunde is to be congratulated; this is truly a milestone for her and the department. Abegunde will graduate May 2014.

• Nandi Comer and Ife-Chudeni Oputa, the first two graduates of the dual MA/MFA in African American and African Diaspora Studies and Creative Writing, presented their thesis readings, “When the Body Gives: Poetry from
Tapping Out and Rummage” on April 22, 2014 in the Bridgwater Lounge of the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center. The event represented a culmination of the graduate work of these two published poets, and another milestone and honor for AAADS. The dual MA/MFA in African American and African Diaspora Studies and Creative Writing at IU is the only one of its kind in the country.

- Ciara Miller had her third-year thesis reading on April 18 in the Grand Hall of the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center. Ciara is a member of the second cohort of MA/MFA in AAADS and Creative Writing.
- On March 30, Nandi Comer hosted the “Last Sunday Poetry Reading and Open Mic” with the Writers Guild at the Bloomington Convention Center. The event included guest readers Abegunde from AAADS and Patsy Rahn of the IU Art Museum.
- The IU Soul Revue held an amazing Spring Concert Saturday, May 3 at the Ruth N. Halls Theater. Congratulations to Tyron Cooper and his multi-talented Revue.
• Professor John Stanfield presented "Looking Back 40 Years From Undergrad School to Senior Professoriate Phases: Making an Enriching Academic Career Sustainable" on April 14th to AAADS faculty and graduate students.

• On February 26th, Kenneth Ware, composer of AADC dance piece “Death in Harlem,” Iris Rosa, AADC director, Professor Fred McElroy, and doctoral student Katie Dieter lead a panel discussion, “‘Death in Harlem:’ A Collaboration of Artistic Expression of Langston Hughes’s Timeless Poem” at the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center.

• AAADS co-sponsored a number of events on campus, including the April 2014 IU religious studies’ annual graduate student conference, “Mediating Religion: Modes of Communication in Religious Contexts,” with keynote speaker Dr. Lerone A. Martin. AAADS also co-sponsored the “State of Hate and Extremism in the U.S.” workshop, hosted in April by the Indiana University Student Association to educate students on poverty and hate crimes in the United States, and in early March, the “2nd César E. Chávez Undergraduate Research Symposium in Latino Studies” with keynote address by Solimar Otero on “Borderlands and Crossroads: Transnational Connections in Afrolatina/o Spiritualities.” Also in early March, AAADS co-sponsored “Taifa Mziki and the International Vocal Ensemble Shared Performance.” Singing in multiple languages, Taifa Mziki, an all-male a capella choir from Kenya, together with the IU International Vocal Ensemble, performed songs arranged by Taifa Mziki’s director Dr. Wilson Shitandi and IU’s director, Katherine Strand.
• The **Black Graduate Student Association** had their 2nd annual Black Market Friday event in the Bridgwater Lounge of the Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center on February 28th, the last day of black history month. The event commemorated the Black Market that once sat on the corner of Kirkwood and Dunn and served as a main source for Black students and faculty to purchase ethnic goods.

• On March 13th, AAADS graduate students and faculty hosted a farewell party for **Yunika Jackson** to commemorate her more than ten years in the department as administrative secretary. Best of luck, Yunika, in your future career. You are missed!

• In February and March, Professor **Valerie Grim** held meetings with the graduate students to discuss writing dissertation proposals, grants and fellowships, and preparing for the academic job search.

**Ongoing and Upcoming Events**

• Professor **Maisha Wester** organized a series of **brown bag talks** in the department, which met select Wednesdays from noon-1PM. In February, **Abegunde** presented “Mother I need your blackness now’: Worshipping Iemanja/ Yemanja in Itaparica, Bahia,” **Phoebe Wolfskill** presented "Whiteness, Blackness, and the Classical Body in the Work of Emma Amos” in March, and in April, **Marsha Horsley** finished out the brown bag series for the semester with a bang with, ”“Everybody Knows, I’m A MuthaF*@kin’ Monster”: Freakishness & The Black Female Body in Music Videos." We look forward to more brown bag talks in the fall.
The department will welcome a new and exciting group of M.A. students this August.

Faculty

On April 12th, the African American Dance Company (AADC) held its 40th spring concert celebration, which commemorated Professor Iris Rosa’s 40 remarkable years as AADC director. Tributes came in from around the world, including remarks from IU’s president Michael McRobbie and IU alum Tavis Smiley (who received a minor in Afro-American Studies). Both provided tremendous tributes. In addition, Iris was given four different proclamations declaring April 12th as Iris Rosa day. These were given by the Governor of Indiana, Mike Pence, as well as by the mayors of Bloomington, Indianapolis, and East Chicago, Indiana. An earlier luncheon was a grand event and attended by Dean Larry Singell and colleagues in English (Steve Watt) and Theatre, Drama, and Contemporary Dance (Jonathan Michaels and Liz Shea), James Wimbush, Vice President of DEMA, and many others. Many diaspora communities (representing Ghana, Jamaica, Nigeria, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Caribbean) performed at the three-hour luncheon as well as the IU Soul Revue and Choral Ensemble. The 40th concert on Saturday night showcased the students’ collaborations and an original commissioned piece by Kenneth Ware called “Death in Harlem.” The event marked yet another milestone for Professor Rosa and AAADS.
• Dr. **Raymond Wise** led the African American Choral Ensemble concert on April 5th. Among the many new and exciting developments within the ensemble is the diversity of the choir. The campus was able to see how integrated the choir has become and also how fast African American spiritual and gospel music is growing among students from international communities in Asia and Africa. Among the many highlights was the premier of a Ghanaian folksong arranged by Dr. Wise, which has been accepted for publication. **Nana Amoah** and the African American Choral Ensemble helped to co-produce the new arrangement. Dr. Wise made his debut at Carnegie Hall in early April.

![Nana Amoah performing at the African American Choral Ensemble, April 9th](image)

• In March, the Soul Revue, directed by Dr. **Tyron Cooper**, conducted workshops throughout Memphis, Tennessee with students from the Stax Music Academy, Overton High School, LeMoyne-Owen College, and the University of Memphis. Tyron has also been nominated for an Emmy as a composer/arranger for the PBS documentary “Undefeated: The Roger Brown Story-Music Soundtrack.”

• Dr. **Tyron Cooper** and Prof. **Marietta Simpson** were featured on PBS’s “The Art of Matter,” Episode 211, on April 15 with their moving performance of Billie Holiday’s “Strange Fruit.”

• Professor **Carolyn Calloway-Thomas**’s piece, “Mary Ann Shadd Cary: A Crusader for Cultural, Economic and Political Rights” appears as a resource on the Women and Social Movements (WASM) website, a contribution to the Black Suffragists database. On March 28, Professor Calloway-Thomas delivered the keynote speech at the “Translating Culture, Negotiating Difference: Religion, Law, and Business” conference at Saint Louis
University, and will deliver the keynote speech at the upcoming Pacific Asian Communication Association convention, which will be held in Bandung in Indonesia, June 24-28.

• Professor **Jakobi Williams** continues to travel the country to give invited talks on his research on the Chicago Black Panther Party and the original Rainbow Coalition. He gave lectures at DePauw University (the MLK Day Lecture), the US National Archives, DePaul University, Wright State University (he was the keynote speaker for their Symposium on Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality), the University of South Alabama (the keynote speaker for the Commemoration of MLK’s Assassination), Georgia State University, UCLA, and at the Esowon Bookstore in Los Angeles. At IU, Professor Williams held an invited roundtable talk “From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago: Where does Civil Rights end and Black Power begin?” at the Poynter Center for The Study of Ethics and American Institutions. Professor Williams also organized and led a panel discussion “The Original Rainbow Coalition: The Black Panther Party, Young Lords, and Young Patriots” in which he brought in some of the major figures from these organizations including Hank “Poison” Gaddis (ILBPP), Lynn French (ILBPP), Jose “Cha Cha” Jimenez (Young Lords), and Hy Thurman (Young Patriots).

• Professor **Jacinda Townsend** (English/AAADS) has received many positive reviews for her novel *Saint Monkey* (W. W. Norton, 2014), including a piece by Ayana Mathis in the April 18th *New York Times’* Sunday Book Review.

• In March, Professor **John Stanfield** presented his research in Rio and Botswana.
• Professor Phoebe Wolfskill gave an invited talk on caricature and stereotype in the work of Archibald Motley, Jr. at a symposium based on the traveling exhibition “Archibald Motley: Jazz Age Modernist” at Duke University’s Nasher Gallery.

Graduate Students

• Maria Hamilton Abegunde was chosen to participate in a NEH summer institute, "Black Aesthetics and African Centered Cultural Expressions: Sacred Systems in the Nexus Between Cultural Studies, Religion, and Philosophy," which will be held at Emory University. She also has been invited to contribute to a forthcoming edited volume on “Doulas and the Birthing Body.” Her poem “Prime Directive #1” was published in Toe Good Poetry, Volume 4 (March 2014).

• Ciara Miller’s poem, "War Stories" was featured in Toe Good Poetry, Volume 4. Ciara has been also accepted into Callaloo's poetry workshop in Barbados in May 2014, and she will be participating later in the summer in a service and engagement project in Tanzania. Her work will be part of a larger program called GIVE, which provides the opportunity for her to receive academic credit. In Tanzania, Ciara will teach and work on sustainable development projects geared toward providing safe water for citizens of the country. Ciara won the College of Arts and Science’s travel grant as well as a travel grant from the College of Arts and Humanities Institute. She also won the Graduate and Professional Student Organization’s “Outstanding Graduate Student” award for community involvement.
• Ph.D. candidate **Marsha Horsley** has been selected to participate in the Course Development Institute (CDI) this June. The CDI, co-sponsored by the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning and Instructional Consulting at the Kelley School of Business, guides participants through the beginning phases of developing a new course or transforming an existing course. Marsha’s involvement with the CDI indicates her strong commitment to teaching, and importantly she will represent the department at this institute.

**Alumni News**

• **Carol Edge**, MA’03, was a finalist for the Gover Prize for very short fiction and creative nonfiction. Her story appears in *Best New Writing* (Hopewell Publications, 2014). While enjoying retirement, she is active in several Bloomington writers’ groups.

*All faculty, graduate students, undergraduate students, staff, alumni, and friends of the department are invited to send your comments, suggestions, and information on your activities and interests to Phoebe Wolfskill pwolfski@indiana.edu. Digital photos may be accepted if appropriate.*

*Diaspora is published bimonthly through the fall and spring semesters. Following the contours of the academic calendar, the usual schedule of issues is August/September, November/December, February/March, and April/May.*