

# LHC Newsletter

## Langston Hughes Center Newsletter

Monday, January 10, 2011

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Sincerely,

Shawn Leigh Alexander  
Assistant Professor of African and African-American Studies  
Interim Director, Langston Hughes Center  
University of Kansas

### **Presidential Politics, Civil Rights, and the Road to *Brown* – Summer Seminar for Teachers**

July 24-30, 2011

University of Kansas

[http://www.gilderlehrman.org/education/seminar.php?seminar\\_id=144](http://www.gilderlehrman.org/education/seminar.php?seminar_id=144)

We are pleased to announce a special summer seminar for teachers to be held at the University of Kansas. The Langston Hughes Center and the Kansas Collection at the Kenneth Spencer Research Library are collaborating with the *Brown v. Board of Education* National Park, the Brown Foundation, and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History to hold a seminar entitled "Presidential Politics, Civil Rights, and the Road to *Brown*." This seminar will explore the road to *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* and the fight for social and political equality in the years before the modern Civil Rights Movement. Participants will learn about this struggle at the *Brown v. Board of Education* National Park Service site, one of the five locations for the plaintiffs in the Supreme Court decision, and at the Presidential Libraries of both Eisenhower and Truman, who were uniquely involved in the road to *Brown*. Moreover, the participants will learn about the struggle from a number of experts, including plaintiffs from the Supreme Court case and Jack Greenberg, the former president and direct-counsel of the NAACP Legal and Defense and Educational Fund and a member of the legal team that prepared and argued the *Brown* case. Finally, the seminar will provide educational resources and professional training to teachers interested in exploring the struggle for civil rights in America.

The seminar will be held from July 24-30, 2011 on the University of Kansas campus in Lawrence, KS.

Secondary teachers and Community College Professors interested in participating in the seminar visit <[http://www.gilderlehrman.org/education/seminar.php?seminar\\_id=144](http://www.gilderlehrman.org/education/seminar.php?seminar_id=144)> for application information.

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: February 1, 2011.**

## Upcoming Events

### *The Struggle for Freedom in Kansas*

**What: "Commemorating the Struggle for Freedom in Kansas"**

**When:** January 4 – February 6, 2011

**Where:** Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site, Topeka KS

**Cost per person:** FREE and Open to the Public

**About:** Kansas became a state on January 29, 1861. To commemorate the 150th anniversary of Kansas statehood, Topeka High School students will create an exhibit of art inspired by the theme "The Struggle for Freedom in Kansas."

When Kansas Territory opened for settlement in 1854, the concept of freedom stood front and center. Abolitionists and pro-slavery forces began clashing over the question of whether Kansas would enter the Union as a Slave State or a Free State. Episodes of violence earned the territory the nickname "Bloody Kansas." Little wonder that in 1861 Kansans chose as their state motto the Latin phrase "Ad Astra per Aspera," which means "To the stars through difficulties."

A century later, the national spotlight again shone on Kansas concerning the long struggle to provide freedom and equality to all Americans. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that "in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." The ruling became a turning point in history and helped launch the civil rights movement.

Expressing stories through art is an ancient human tradition. These young Kansas artists will continue that tradition by depicting stories of sacrifice and achievement in the struggle to provide "liberty and justice for all." Don't miss this one-of-a-kind exhibit.

For more information see <http://brownvboard.org/content/struggle-freedom-kansas-jan-4-feb-6-2011>

Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site  
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. daily  
1515 SE Monroe • Topeka, Kansas

## In The News

### *Black history catalogued at new U. of C. website*

Stefano Esposito | December 17, 2010 | *Chicago Sun-Times*

The unpublished sketches of famed African-American editorial cartoonist Chester Commodore as he struggled to get President Richard Nixon's nose and President George W.

Bush's ears just right.

A letter from President Harry S. Truman thanking Chicago Defender Publisher John Sengstacke for his advice about desegregating the United States Army.

These and thousands of other fascinating scraps of Chicago black history from the mid-20th Century had lingered in boxes in attics, basements and storage lockers for years. Now, thanks to a just-completed University of Chicago-led project, many of these cultural treasures are available for public viewing. On Friday at the University of Chicago's Joseph Regenstein Library, researchers unveiled a new website intended to make it easy for the public and scholars alike to locate these African-American artifacts as well as a host of others in the city from the same period in history. Many of the documents and other historical material have since been donated to the project and are now available for review in locations throughout the city.

The website is the "cutting edge portal into discovering primary source materials to study and know black Chicago's history from the 1930s to the 1970s," said Jacqueline Goldsby, a former U. of C. professor who headed up the three-year project.

Read the full article at the following link: <http://www.suntimes.com/technology/2783519-478/chicago-history-black-project-website.html>

### ***Scholars Say Chronicler of Black Life Passed for White***

Felicia R. Lee | December 26, 2010 | *NYTimes*

Renown came to Jean Toomer with his 1923 book "Cane," which mingled fiction, drama and poetry in a formally audacious effort to portray the complexity of black lives. But the racially mixed Toomer's confounding efforts to defy being stuck in conventional racial categories and his disaffiliation with black culture made him perhaps the most enigmatic writer associated with the Harlem Renaissance.

Now Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the Harvard scholar, and Rudolph P. Byrd, a professor at Emory University, say their research for a new edition of "Cane" documents that Toomer was "a Negro who decided to pass for white."

They lob this intellectual grenade in their introduction to the book, which W. W. Norton & Company is to publish next month. Their judgment is based on "an analysis of archival evidence previously overlooked by other scholars," Mr. Byrd and Mr. Gates write, including Toomer's draft registrations and his and his family's census records, which they consider alongside his writings and public statements

Read the full article at the following link: [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/27/books/27cane.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/27/books/27cane.html?_r=2)

### ***The Newly Complicated Zora Neale Hurston***

Glenda R. Carpio and Werner Sollors | January 2, 2011 | *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

Last spring began with no hint of any but the usual excitement of a new class. We were team-teaching a course on Richard Wright and Zora Neale Hurston, writers who represent opposing literary and political tendencies, intellectuals who disliked each other's work and said so in print. Wright found Hurston's prose in *Their Eyes Were Watching*

*God* (1937) cloaked in "facile sensuality" and complained that she "voluntarily continues in her novel the tradition which was forced upon the Negro in the theater, that is, the minstrel technique that makes the 'white folks' laugh." Hurston mocked Wright's collection *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938) as "a book about hatreds. Mr. Wright serves notice by his title that he speaks of people in revolt, and his stories are so grim that the Dismal Swamp of race hatred must be where they live. Not one act of understanding and sympathy comes to pass in the entire work." She was especially troubled by his language. "Since the author himself is a Negro, his dialect is a puzzling thing. One wonders how he arrived at it. Certainly he does not write by ear unless he is tone-deaf."

It was Wright, the Mississippi-born political critic of the Jim Crow South speaking from his homes in Chicago, New York, and, finally, Paris, versus Hurston, who preferred Southern rural settings in her work, most especially her beloved Eatonville, Fla., which, although she was Alabama-born, she regarded as her native home. Wright, the most popular African-American literary ancestor of the radicals of the 1960s, and Hurston, reclaimed as feminist foremother in the 1970s, yet pronounced by John H. McWhorter in 2009 as "America's favorite black conservative."

Read the full article at the following link: <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Newly-Complicated-Zora/125753>

## ***The Largest Slave Revolt in US History is Commemorated***

Littice Bacon-Blood | January 3, 2011 | *The Times-Picayune*

More than a century before the first modern-day civil rights march, there was Charles Deslondes and his make-do army of more than 200 enslaved men battling with hoes, axes and cane knives for that most basic human right: freedom.

They spoke different languages, came from various parts of the United States, Africa and Haiti, and lived miles apart on plantations along the German Coast of Louisiana. Yet after years of planning at clandestine meetings under the constant threat of immediate death, they staged a revolt on Jan. 8, 1811, that historians say is the largest uprising of enslaved people in this country.

"Slavery was very harsh and cruel, but the slaves themselves were not mindless chattel with no aspirations and no basis for humanity," said John Hankins, executive director of the New Orleans African American Museum. "This revolt demonstrates that there were people willing to make the ultimate sacrifices to better not just themselves but other people."

Read the full article at the following link: [http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2011/01/the\\_largest\\_slave\\_revolt\\_in\\_us.html](http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2011/01/the_largest_slave_revolt_in_us.html)

## ***The New Jim Crow***

Michelle Alexander | January 7, 2011 | *The American Prospect*

The first time I encountered the idea that our criminal-justice system functions much like a racial caste system, I dismissed the notion. It was more than 10 years ago in Oakland when I was rushing to catch the bus and spotted a bright orange sign stapled to a telephone pole. It screamed in large, bold print: "The Drug War is the New Jim Crow." I scanned the text of the flyer and then muttered something like, "Yeah, the criminal-justice system is racist in many ways, but making such an absurd comparison doesn't help. People will just think you're crazy." I then hopped on the bus and headed to my new job as director of the Racial Justice Project for the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California.

What a difference a decade makes. After years of working on issues of racial profiling, police brutality, and drug-law enforcement in poor communities of color as well as working

with former inmates struggling to "re-enter" a society that never seemed to have much use for them, I began to suspect that I was wrong about the criminal-justice system. It was not just another institution infected with racial bias but a different beast entirely. The activists who posted the sign on the telephone pole were not crazy, nor were the smattering of lawyers and advocates around the country who were beginning to connect the dots between our current system of mass incarceration and earlier forms of racial control. Quite belatedly, I came to see that mass incarceration in the United States has, in fact, emerged as a comprehensive and well-disguised system of racialized social control that functions in a manner strikingly similar to Jim Crow.

Read the full article at the following link: [http://prospect.org/cs/articles?article=the\\_new\\_jim\\_crow](http://prospect.org/cs/articles?article=the_new_jim_crow)

## General Information

### Langston Hughes Visiting Professorship – University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas

Since 1977, this visiting professorship has attracted prominent or emerging ethnic minority scholars to KU – from a broad range of disciplines and academic departments/schools. This one-semester appointment provides the recipient a stipend appropriate to the candidate's rank, a small travel allowance, and a furnished apartment near the KU campus. The recipient will teach two courses during the semester of their appointment and deliver a campus-wide symposium on a topic or issue related to their discipline.

To find out more about the Visiting Professorship visit KU's Diversity and Equity site: [www.diversity.ku.edu](http://www.diversity.ku.edu) <<http://www.diversity.ku.edu>>

### Call For Papers – "Hope & Healing: Black, White, and Native American"

Tulsa, OK  
June 1-3, 2011

The John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation (the "JHF Center") cordially invites you to submit a session proposal for its second annual *Reconciliation in America* national symposium, "Hope & Healing: Black, White, and Native American." The 2011 symposium will explore current academic research and community projects that address the general theme of reconciliation in America, but it will also broaden the scope of the discussion of reconciliation beyond black and white. Oklahoma, once "Indian Territory," has a rich history attributable, primarily, to the interrelationships between and among Native Americans, African-Americans, and European Americans. This unique Oklahoma history will provide a backdrop for the exploration of how these groups have interacted in America throughout the centuries.

The JHF Center seeks to transform society's divisions into social harmony through the serious study and work of reconciliation. Consistent with that mission, the symposium will highlight the study of historic events around which reconciliation is needed and offer insights into "best practices" that foster hope and healing.

By convening scholars and practitioners, the JHF Center hopes to promote a dialogue among those who work to bridge societal divides. Symposium sessions will fall into two categories:

- o **Current Research in race relations and reconciliation.** Important scholarly work continues to emerge on the historical implications of race in America. The symposium, intentionally scheduled near the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the devastating 1921 Tulsa Race Riot (May 31-June 1, 1921), will include papers reflecting the latest research on race in America, its historic and lingering effects on society, and the power of and potential for reconciliation.
- o **Focus on Progress in race relations and reconciliation.** Community reports on national and international racial reconciliation offer us hope. These sessions will address the always-relevant question: Where do we go from here? Tulsa's new John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park and the various projects initiated by the JHF Center constitute part of Tulsa's journey to that progressive

various projects initiated by the JHF Center constitute part of Tulsa's answer to that provocative question. Tulsa has begun to acknowledge its own tragedy and take steps to repair the deep divisions left in its wake. This symposium will encourage sharing community narratives about grassroots reconciliation projects that make a difference.

Please send your session proposal by **January 31, 2011**, to Hannibal B. Johnson, Esq., Chair, National Advisory Committee, John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation, Inc., 131 North Greenwood Avenue, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 74120, or via e-mail to [hjohnsonok@aol.com](mailto:hjohnsonok@aol.com)

## **Call For Papers – ASWAD "AFRICAN LIBERATION AND BLACK POWER: THE CHALLENGES OF DIASPORIC ENCOUNTERS ACROSS TIME, SPACE, AND IMAGINATION"**

**Pittsburgh, PA**

**November 3-6, 2011**

In 1954, novelist and intellectual Richard Wright published *Black Power*, a provocative book in which Wright offered his reflections on his travels to the Gold Coast as it was in the process of becoming the independent nation of Ghana. The term "Black Power" that Wright used to signify the possibilities of freedom and development for Africans, as well as Pan-African cultural connections, would become a familiar notion to people of African descent around the world, who identified with its potent message for liberation and cultural revitalization. In so doing, Wright opened a new chapter in the long history of political and intellectual dialogue across the African Diaspora—one that revealed both the convergences and ruptures between people of African descent on the continent and in Diaspora.

For its sixth biennial conference, to be held in Pittsburgh, ASWAD explores the theme "African Liberation and Black Power: The Challenges of Diasporic Encounters Across Time, Space and Imagination." This conference intends to appreciate the Diasporic dimensions and articulations of Black Power, with special emphasis on Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Asia by tracing the genealogies of the concept and challenging localized limitations of Black Power scholarship.

Though the term "Black Power" is most frequently associated with the political and cultural movement of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, the drive to valorize blackness and Africanity/Africanité was broadly shared throughout Africa and the African Diaspora. Black Power was a transnational phenomenon; in addition to the U.S., organizations, activists, artists, and politicians in Canada, Trinidad, Guyana, Jamaica, Bermuda, UK, South Africa, Zaire, and elsewhere explicitly identified themselves as adhering to Black Power. Each of these local movements responded in unique ways, but remained in dialogue with peoples of African descent and other peoples seeking creative responses to oppressive regimes. At the same time, 1970s black feminist organizations such as the Combahee River Collective (USA) and the Southall Black Sisters (UK), as well as writers such as Claudia Jones, Audre Lorde and Bessie Head, openly contested the masculinist, heteronormative tendencies within Black Power. Indeed, Diasporic feminists often imagined freedom in far more expansive political and aesthetic terms than their male counterparts.

In exploring Black Power as a global phenomenon, ASWAD encourages the submission of papers that interrogate the elements that define Black Power, its multiple locations, and articulations, its gendered and sexual contours, the transnational connections that informed and nurtured it as well as global and local cultural and political projects that revitalize it in the twenty-first century. In addition, we seek to identify the antecedents of Black Power, and historicize it within the trajectories of African and African Diasporic literature, culture, media, philosophy, politics, and the academy itself, as well as its relationship to health and environmental issues. The cultural and ideological foundations of Black Power had deep roots in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries and, as such, ASWAD encourages papers that excavate the origins of the cultural, intellectual, and political expressions that gave birth to the liberation struggles of the 20th century. All geographic areas will be represented, including Africa, the Americas, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia. Paper and panel proposals that incorporate women, gender, and sexuality as categories of analysis are encouraged.

Please send a two-page abstract (for either a single presentation or a panel) and a one-page CV (or multiple one-page CV's) by **MARCH 15, 2011**. They can be sent prior to

submitting the registration fee, and are to be sent electronically via email attachment to: [aswad2011@osu.edu](mailto:aswad2011@osu.edu)

For more information see [http://www.aswadiaspora.org/ASWAD\\_2011\\_CFP\\_01.html#registration](http://www.aswadiaspora.org/ASWAD_2011_CFP_01.html#registration)

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