

LHC Newsletter

Langston Hughes Center Newsletter

Tuesday, March 1, 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

Upcoming Events

The Hillsboro Story

What: "Commemorating the Struggle for Freedom in Kansas"

When: Sunday, March 6, 2011 @3:00 pm

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

Cost per person: FREE and Open to the Public (RSVP by March 4 to (785) 235-3939 or rsvp@brownfoundationks.org)

About: The Hillsboro Story, a warmhearted, hardhitting narrative, opens in Hillsboro, Ohio on July 5, 1954 when the "colored" elementary school went up in flames. The fire sparked a "school fight" led by five African American mothers that became one of the first test cases for the Brown v. Board of Education decision (May, 1954) in the North. Ms. Banyas, the playwright, was in the third grade, and the memory of those times sparked this cultural detective story – a lively weaving of spoken word, movement, monologues, and visual images, backed by an evocative original music score.

The investigation is informed by historical research, photography, and extensive interviews with key players locally and nationally whose voices form the heart of the story.

For more information see <http://brownvboard.org/content/hillsboro-story-march-6-2011>

9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. daily
1515 SE Monroe • Topeka, Kansas

Jesse B. Semple Brownbag Series

What: *Quest for Citizenship: African American and Native American Education in Kansas* - Kim Warren, University of Kansas

When: Monday, March 14 @11:30 am - 1:00 pm (11:30 -12:00 social period and brownbag lunch)

Where: Kansas Union, Alcove A (University of Kansas, Lawrence Campus)

Cost per person: FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Sponsors of this Event: Langston Hughes Center

About The Jesse B. Semple Brownbag Series: The Jesse B. Semple Brownbag, every second Monday of each academic month, is an informal forum for the African Americanist community and those who are interested in the general study of race, culture, and American society. The forum discusses activities on campus, historical and current issues related to race, and culture and social relations in America. It offers opportunities for visiting scholars, KU faculty, and KU students to present their ongoing research. Langston Hughes' character Jesse B. Semple, or Simple first appeared in the *Chicago Defender* on February 13, 1943. Semple became a voice, often in comic or satirical fashion, through which Hughes could comment on international relations, current events and the everyday concerns of the African American community.

Symposium on the Scholarship of Diversity

What: *Symposium on the Scholarship of Diversity*

When: Monday, March 14 & Tuesday, March 15
(Schedule http://www.diversity.ku.edu/docs/symposium_schedule_2011.pdf)

Where: Kansas Union (University of Kansas, Lawrence Campus)

Cost per person: FREE and OPEN TO all KU Faculty, Staff, and Graduate Students with RSVP <http://www.diversity.ku.edu/events/symposium-scholarship.shtml>

Sponsors of this Event: Office of Diversity & Equity

About: Keynote presentations by two prominent national leaders will bookend the first Spring Symposium on the Scholarship of Diversity March 14-15, 2011, on the Lawrence campus. Dr. Daryl Smith inaugurates the symposium with her presentation: "The Imperative of Diversity for Institutional Viability: Building a Capacity for a Pluralistic Society". Sheila O'Rourke will cap off the symposium, speaking at Wednesday's lunch on "Placing Diversity in the Academic Mission: Institutional Strategies at the University of California at Berkeley" In addition, several invited KU faculty scholars will facilitate breakout sessions around four general themes:

1. Mentoring – O'Rourke, UC- Berkeley;
2. Faculty Perspectives & Campus climate;
3. Diversifying the Curriculum; and
4. Policy and Institutional Change.

In addition, we are soliciting presenters for a late afternoon poster session on March 14th. This session will provide participants with an opportunity to display their research in exhibition format. Those interested in having their research considered for the Research Poster Session

should contact Fred Rodriguez at fredrod@ku.edu. The deadline for submissions is March 4th.

The Symposium on the Scholarship of Diversity aligns well with the overall strategic planning process underway on the Lawrence campus. The scholarship and research on diversity, equity and inclusion can not only focus the campus community in conversation but also lends well to our overall commitment to diversity. We welcome all faculty, staff, graduate students to attend.

Lasting Legacies

What: "***Lasting Legacies of the Civil War***" – David W. Blight, Dwight Pitcaithley, Jim Denny, and Arnold Schofield

When: Sunday, March 27 @1:00-4:30 pm

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

Cost per person: FREE and Open to the Public **with RSVP**
(RSVP by March 25 to (785) 235-3939 or rsvp@brownfoundationks.org)

About: *Commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the start of the Civil War*

Events across the country from 2011 to 2015 will commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site will kick-off Civil War Sesquicentennial observances with a symposium. Four scholars will present insights into the bitter conflict that produced "a new birth of freedom" in the country when the chains of bondage were released from four million enslaved men, women, and children.

Dr. David Blight, Dr. Dwight Pitcaithley, Jim Denny, and Arnold Schofield will each speak about a different aspect of the war. Collectively, the four speakers will present a national picture of the war as a turning point in history, examine the war's many relevant legacies, and shed light on the regional war that raged along the Missouri and Kansas border in the 1850s and 1860s. Audience members can listen to presentations, ask questions, interact with Civil War scholars and enthusiasts, as well as purchase books and have them signed by the visiting authors. The symposium will be free and open to the public.

For more information see <http://brownvboard.org/content/lasting-legacies-civil-war-march-27-2011>

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

Read-A-Thon Honors Distinguished Author (Toni Morrison)

Shauna Blackmon | February 17, 2011 | *Kansan*

It has been years since Giselle Anatol has stayed up for over 24 hours. Today, however, she is finishing the last few hours of an all-nighter to celebrate the legacy of Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winning author, Toni Morrison.

In honor of Morrison's 80th birthday today, Anatol, associate professor, with the help of the English department, organized a 24-hour read-a-thon of Morrison's work in Anschutz Library.

The reading started yesterday at noon with Morrison's novel, *The Bluest Eyes*, which is known to be her most famous work. Anatol said the readings ended at noon today with a volunteer

reading Morrison's poetry and children's books.

Read the full article at the following link: <http://www.kansan.com/news/2011/feb/17/readathon-honors/?news>

And more at the following links: <http://www.infozine.com/news/stories/op/storiesView/sid/46341/>

<http://www.oread.ku.edu/~oread/2011/february/21/stories/readathon.shtml>

Civil rights-era cold cases put back in the spotlight

Krissah Thompson | February 19, 2011 | *Washington Post*

Some cases of racial violence during the civil rights era are recorded in history books and burned into the nation's memory. The 1964 death of Frank Morris is not one of them.

Morris, a black man who owned a successful shoe repair shop in Ferriday, La., was wounded and later died after his store was set afire in the middle of the night. According to FBI documents, Morris was targeted by the Ku Klux Klan.

Now, decades later, a break in his case has attracted the attention of law enforcement officials and a dogged newspaper editor. Mr. Bunch, 58, is charged with creating an institution that embodies the story of black life in America.

Read the full article at the following link: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/18/AR2011021804343.html>

Orindatus Simon Bolivar Wall

A hero of African-American history whose story is forgotten because his descendants decided they were white.

Daniel J. Sharfstein | February 22, 2011 | *Slate*

His very name hovered on the line between slavery and freedom: Orindatus Simon Bolivar Wall. Orindatus was a slave's name, through and through. It had a Latinate grandiosity that many masters favored for their chattel when Wall was born on a North Carolina plantation in the 1820s, the son of his owner and a slave woman. All his life, people got the name wrong. They called him Oliver. They called him Odatis. Eventually, he went by his initials: O.S.B. Wall. As much as Orindatus signaled slavery, his middle names suggested the opposite: Simon Bolivar, the great liberator of Latin America, a man who had decreed freedom for slaves and led a popular movement he described as "closer to a blend of Africa and America than an emanation from Europe." Perhaps this was Wall's father's attempt at irony, an ultimate affirmation of his mastery. But perhaps the name represented other ideas and aspirations that Stephen Wall harbored for his son. In 1838, he freed O.S.B. Wall and sent him to southern Ohio, to be raised and educated by Quaker abolitionists. His mother stayed behind.

Read the full article at the following link: <http://www.slate.com/id/2285549/>

Backward Mobility

Kai Wright | February 23, 2011 | *The American Prospect*

If Barack Obama embodies the American dream of equal opportunity, Velma Hart represents the midnight wake-up call bearing bad news. In September, the Army veteran and successful executive interrupted Obama's "recovery summer" road show by announcing, in a CNBC town hall meeting with the president, that she was broken. "I'm exhausted of defending you," she told the president. "I have been told that I voted for a man who said he's going to change things in a meaningful way for the middle class. I am one of those people, and I'm waiting sir. I'm waiting."

Hart is hardly the only worn-out American, as the midterms proved. But her moment in the political spotlight was striking because she is exactly the everywoman the president's remarkable personal narrative evokes: a middle-class black person who has worked hard and shared in the benefits of American prosperity, race be damned. Hart took a fabled road through military service to the middle class. She owned a house. She enrolled her kids in private school. She had a white-collar job. And by Thanksgiving, she'd been laid off. "She got bit by the same snake that has bit a lot of people," her former boss told *The Washington Post* last November. "It was a move to cut our bottom line."

Read the full article at the following link: http://prospect.org/cs/articles?article=backwards_mobility

Home is Where the Hatred Is: A Conversation with Isabel Wilkerson

Tolu Olorundra | February 23, 2011 | *Black Agenda Report*

Men lynched, castrated, and burned alive for using their tongues as weapons—against a terror state that told them each day they counted less than human. Women hanging from trees, their fingers severed and stored in jars as souvenir, throngs of ecstatic worshippers cheering, commemorating a weekly ritual—the women probably talked back in a way that suggested they forgot their place in the society they were born into. Angry mobs banging down doors in the dark night, searching out a young man accused of stealing turkeys—if found, a tree needs watering.

Hang onto your rosary beads
Close your eyes to watch me die

6 million Black Americans in the South had seen enough to know Death had their names written in blood; so starting World War I a great migration began—many, like Nicodemus, creeping through the night to elude the paranoid suspicions of their vengeful captors. They slipped onto freight trains, crammed into cars, and dragged their feet for long walks from a place more hell than home, unsure of the future but desperate in conviction. And with heads pressed forward, never looking back—at a ghastly past that had made migration compulsory—they fled the South for the North, commencing a sprawling relocation that slashed in half the South's Black population within six decades.

Isabel Wilkerson, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and Boston University professor, documents this heretofore unengaged history in her grand new text, [The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration](#), a dexterous and detailed look into what became of a movement—told through the trails of three central characters—without which Motown might have never found meaning and Jazz might have never found new notes, relegating John Coltrane, Thelonious Monk, and Louis Armstrong to obscure footnotes in the book of time. Recently I had the chance to speak with Wilkerson on the scope of her research, ongoing migration in the 21st century, and the unique literary approach used to tell this great story until now never told.

Read the full article at the following link: <http://blackagendareport.com/content/home-where-hatred-conversation-isabel-wilkerson>

Greenwood, Okla.: The Legacy of the Tulsa Race Riot

Monée Fields-White | February 24, 2011 | *The Root*

J.B. Stradford, the son of a freed Kentucky slave, rose to prominence in Oklahoma during the early 1900s as one of the key developers of the all-black Tulsa enclave Greenwood. A lawyer and businessman, Stradford owned the 65-room hotel that sat right in the heart of the thriving community that would later become known as "the Black Wall Street."

But in a single day, all of that would change. On May 31, 1921, the arrest of a young black man on a questionable charge of assaulting a young white woman touched off the deadliest race riot in U.S. history. Whites charged through the community in retaliation, leaving an estimated 300 people dead, another 10,000 black residents homeless and 35 city blocks in ruin.

Read the full story at the following link: <http://www.theroot.com/views/legacy-greenwood>

General Information

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 Africinity/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

readily, 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

For more information see http://www.aswadiaspora.org/ASWAD_2011_CFP_01.html#registration

**Call For Papers – ASALH 96th Annual Conference
Richmond, VA
October 5-9, 2011**

The Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) is soliciting papers and panels for its upcoming 96th Annual Convention. This year's conference theme is: "African Americans and the U.S. Civil War." Although the program committee welcomes papers and panels on any aspect of African and African American history and culture, special preference will be given to submissions directly related to this year's theme.

Using a wide variety of disciplines, this year's conference seeks to explore many aspects of African American involvement in the Civil War, 1861-1865. Important topics include: African Americans and the abolitionist movement; African American women and life on the homefront during the war years; African American participation in the military; and African American life and politics during the Reconstruction Era, 1865-1877. Recent popular and scholarly debates over causes of the Civil War will also be explored.

In 1861 as the United States stood at the brink of civil war, people of African descent, both slave and free, waited with a watchful eye. They understood that a war between the Union military and the Confederacy might bring about the "day of jubilee" and the destruction of slavery. When the Confederate troops fired upon Fort Sumter on 12 April 1861 and hostilities began, President Abraham Lincoln maintained that the paramount cause was to preserve the Union, not to end the practice of slavery. Frederick Douglass, the most prominent African American leader, declared that regardless of Union intentions, the war would bring an end to the South's "peculiar institution."

Over the next four years, the four million people of African descent in the United States sought to prove Frederick Douglass right. Free and enslaved African Americans rallied around the Union flag and the cause of freedom. From the cotton and tobacco fields of the South to the small towns and big cities of the North, nearly 200,000 black men joined the Grand Army of the Republic and took up arms to destroy slavery and the Confederacy. The ASALH convention theme for 2011 honors the role of people of African descent in ending slavery and preserving the Union.

Given the recent political and academic debates about the legacy of the Civil War, papers and panels offering interdisciplinary analyses and perspectives of the continuing legacy of the Civil War in American and African American life are particularly welcome.

Deadline for Submission of Panel and Paper Proposals: 30 April 2011. All proposals must be submitted electronically to ASALH through the All Academic online system at <http://www.asalh.org/callforpapers.html>.

Proposals should include title of the paper or panel, author(s) and affiliation(s), an abstract of paper or panel of 200-250 words, and all contact information. Only panel proposal submitters will receive complimentary audio/visual equipment on a first come first serve basis.

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Contact Information:

Langston Hughes Center
1440 Jayhawk Boulevard
Room 9 Bailey Hall
Lawrence, KS 66045-7574, USA
Phone: (785)864-5044
Fax: (785)864-5330

Interim Director:
Shawn Leigh Alexander
Assistant Professor of African & African American Studies
lhcaas@ku.edu

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