

LHC Newsletter

Langston Hughes Center Newsletter

Monday, April 4, 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 Battle of Black Jack

What: "The Battle of Black Jack – Traveling Exhibit"

When: April 1-29, 2011

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

Cost per person: FREE and Open to the Public

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

The Battle of Black Jack is considered by many to have been the first fight of the Civil War. Most certainly, it contributed to the name of "Bleeding Kansas." On June 2, 1856, the abolitionist John Brown led his free-state militia, with co-commander Samuel Shore, in attacking the camp of a pro-slavery force led by Henry Clay Pate. This clash was the first pitched battle between pro-slavery and anti-slavery groups. Pate, thinking he was outnumbered and possibly surrounded, eventually surrendered to Brown.

The exhibit opens with an exploration into the lives of John Brown and Henry Clay Pate as well as the men who fought beside them. It explores the territory surrounding the battlefield and its use as part of the Santa Fe Trail and the return of one of the battle's veterans, Robert Hall Pearson, to farm the area.

The Black Jack Battlefield Trust created the exhibit in the fall of 2009 to mark the 150th anniversary of John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry.

For more information see <http://brownvboard.org/content/battle-black-jack-april-1-29-2011>

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

Jesse B. Semple Brownbag Series

What: *The Cambridge Companion to African American Literature* – Maryemma Graham, University of Kansas

When: Monday, April 11 @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.

African American Lives

What: *African American Lives: Genealogy, Genetics, and Black History* – Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Harvard University

When: Thursday, April 14, 7:30-9:00 pm

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

Cost per person: FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Sponsors of this Event: Hall Center for the Humanities

About: One of *Time* magazine's "25 Most Influential Americans", Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. is the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and Director of the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University. In 2006, he wrote and produced the PBS documentary called "African American Lives," the first documentary series to employ genealogy and science to provide an understanding of African American history. In 2007, a follow-up one-hour documentary, "Oprah's Roots: An African American Lives Special," aired on PBS, further examining the genealogical and genetic heritage of Oprah Winfrey, who had been featured in the original documentary. He is most recently the author of *Finding Oprah's Roots, Finding Your Own* (2007), a meditation on genetics, genealogy, and race.

Dr. Gates is the author of several works of literary criticism, including *Figures in Black: Words, Signs and the "Racial" Self* (1987), and *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (1988), winner of the American Book Award in 1989. In 2002, Dr. Gates authenticated and published *The Bondwoman's Narrative* by Hannah Crafts, dating

from the early 1850s and now considered one of the first novels written by an African American woman. He is currently completing a book on race and writing in the eighteenth century, entitled "Black Letters and the Enlightenment." An influential cultural critic, Dr. Gates' publications include a 1994 cover story for *Time* magazine, numerous articles for *The New Yorker*, and in September 2004, a biweekly guest column in *The New York Times*. He is also the Editor-in-Chief of the Oxford African American Studies Center, the first comprehensive scholarly online resource in the field of African American Studies and Africana Studies. His other recent books are *America Behind the Color Line: Dialogues with African Americans*, *African American Lives* (2004), co-edited with Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, and *The Annotated Uncle Tom's Cabin* (2006), edited with Hollis Robbins.

Dr. Gates earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in English literature from Clare College at the University of Cambridge, and his B.A. *summa cum laude* in History from Yale University. Before joining the faculty of Harvard in 1991, he taught at Yale, Cornell, and Duke. His honors and grants include a MacArthur Foundation "genius grant" (1981), a National Humanities Medal (1998), election to the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1999), and the Jay B. Hubbell Award for Lifetime Achievement in American Literary Studies from the Modern Language Association (2006). He has received 44 honorary degrees, from institutions including the University of Pennsylvania, Dartmouth College, and Harvard University, among others. He serves on the boards of the New York Public Library, the Whitney Museum, Lincoln Center Theater, Jazz at Lincoln Center, the Aspen Institute, the Brookings Institution, the Studio Museum of Harlem, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford.

For more information see <http://www.hallcenter.ku.edu/~hallcenter/cgi-bin/index.php/calendar/event/dr-henry-louis-gates-jr-african-american-lives-genealogy-genetics-and-black-history>

African and African American Studies - Reflection and Visualization

What: "40 Years: Reflection and Visualization – Symposium and Celebration"

When: Thursday, April 28 @12:00-8:30 pm

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

Cost per person: FREE and Open to the Public

About: The African & African-American Studies Department at the University of Kansas is one of a select few academic departments throughout the country that was organized in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As part of a year long celebration of the anniversary, the Langston Hughes Center, the Kansas African Studies Center, and AAAS teamed up to create a successful Seminar Series in the Fall semester to stimulate an interdisciplinary dialogue concerning, the practice, the state, the history, and the future of African and African-American Studies in the academy and beyond. As a culmination of that series the Department is holding a one day symposium on April 28th, which will include four panels – one of former Africana Studies students, one of former chairs of the department, one of current KU faculty members from within Department and beyond who work in the interdisciplinary field of AAAS, and finally a panel of faculty members and former students who fought for the creation of the Department.

For more information see <http://afs.ku.edu/documents/Celebrating40Years.pdf>

In The News

Project HPW Introduces New Blog

Project HBW Introduces New Blog

Kenton Rambsy | February 22, 2011 | *HBW Blog*

"The Project on the History of Black Writing (HBW) [at the University of Kansas] has been in the forefront of research and inclusion efforts in higher education for twenty-five years. Founded in 1983 at the University of Mississippi, Oxford, HBW has over 900 novels in its collection published by African American authors since William Wells Browns *Clotel; or, the President's Daughter* (1853). The ultimate goal of the project is to collect every novel ever published by an African American writer.

This blog serves to extend the efforts of HBW by identifying and highlighting topics related to African American and American literature that various audiences might find interesting. The blog also seeks to shed new light on the holdings in HBW's novel collection and stimulate more conversations about what we can learn by studying a large number of black artistic compositions produced over 150 years.

Early on, we will focus on black literary history, contemporary developments in the production of black writing, digital humanities, and literary scholarship that pertains to African American writers.

For now, we will publish new entries on Tuesdays and Thursdays"

To view and read the blog go to the following link: <http://projecthbw.blogspot.com>

Does African American Literature Exist?

Kenneth W. Warren | February 24, 2011 | *The Chronicle*

I'd like to make a claim that runs counter to much of literary scholarship. Historically speaking, the collective enterprise we call African-American or black literature is of recent vintage—in fact, it's just a little more than a century old. Further, it has already come to an end. And the latter is a fact we should neither regret nor lament.

African-American literature was the literature of a distinct historical period, namely, the era of constitutionally sanctioned segregation known as Jim Crow. Punctuated by state constitutional amendments that disfranchised black Americans throughout much of the South, legitimated by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1896 with the infamous "separate but equal" ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, and stumbling into decline in the 1950s, 60s, and early 70s, Jim Crow and the fight against it gave rise to—and shaped—African-American literary practice as we have come to know it. Like it or not, African-American literature was a Jim Crow phenomenon, which is to say, speaking from the standpoint of a post-Jim Crow world, African-American literature is history. While one can (and students of American literature certainly should) write *about* African-American literature as an object of study, one can no longer *write* African-American literature, any more than one can currently write Elizabethan literature.

Read the full article at the following link: <http://chronicle.com/article/Does-African-American/126483>

See a discussion on the subject between Kenneth Warren and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. at the following link: <http://chronicle.com/article/Live-Chat-The-End-of/126492>

Many U.S. Blacks Moving to South, Reversing Trend

Sabrina Tavernise and Robert Gebeloff | March 24, 2011 | *NY Times*

The percentage of the nation's black population living in the South has hit its highest point in half a century, according to census data released Thursday, as younger and more educated black residents move out of declining cities in the Northeast and Midwest in search of better opportunities.

The share of black population growth that has occurred in the South over the past decade — the highest since 1910, before the Great Migration of blacks to the North — has upended some long-held assumptions.

Both Michigan and Illinois, whose cities have rich black cultural traditions, showed an overall loss of blacks for the first time, said William Frey, the chief demographer at the Brookings Institute.

And Atlanta, for the first time, has replaced Chicago as the metro area with the largest number of African-Americans after New York. About 17 percent of blacks who moved to the South in the past decade left New York State, far more than from any other state, the census data show.

At the same time, blacks have begun leaving cities for more affluent suburbs in large numbers, much like generations of whites before them.

Read the full article at the following link: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/25/us/25south.html?_r=1&hp

African-American Literature Lives On, Even as Black Politics Expire

Gene Andrew Jarrett | March 27, 2011 | *The Chronicle*

To any serious reader, regardless of political affiliation, Barack Obama's *Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance* is a remarkable example of African-American literature, thanks to its aesthetic quality and political themes of race. Published in 1995, the memoir comprises three sections of genealogy and geography. The first spans about 20 years of Obama's early life, when he lives in Hawaii and goes on to Occidental College and Columbia University; the second covers a three-year period in his 20s as a Chicago community organizer; and the third deals with the brief period just before his entrance to Harvard Law School, when he fatefully follows the steps of his father back to Kenya.

One can't underestimate the continuing story of his autobiography. As Obama put it in the prologue to his next book, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* (2006), "I am a prisoner of my own biography: I can't help but view the American experience through the lens of a black man of mixed heritage, forever mindful of how generations of people who looked like me were subjugated and stigmatized, and the subtle and not so subtle ways that race and class continue to shape our lives."

In the years since the first book's release, eminent writers and critics alike have lauded the literariness of Obama, *Dreams From My Father*, or both. In a 2008 interview with *The Nation*, the Nobel laureate Toni Morrison remarked that "I was amazed because he writes so well. Really well, with really nice big, strong, artful sentences. But equally important was his reflection." Also that year, an article in *The New York Times* quotes Arnold Rampersad, a celebrated biographer of African-American writers, noting that the "book is so literary, ... so full of clever tricks—inventions for literary effect—that I was taken aback, even astonished." Equally important, the memoir documents Obama's readings of such canonical African-American writers as Frank Marshall Davis, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and Ralph Ellison.

It has traces, according to the nonfiction author David Samuels, of Ellison's classic 1952 novel, *Invisible Man*. *Dreams From My Father* helped lay the groundwork for the narrative of racial reconciliation in Obama's multiple successful campaigns for electoral office in the United States.

Read the full article at the following link: <http://chronicle.com/article/African-American-Literature/126867/>

Urban League Report Finds Growing Racial Disparities

Krissah Thompson | March 31, 2011 | *Washington Post*

The income and home ownership gap between minorities and whites continued to grow last year as African Americans and Hispanics lost more ground to the nation's stagnant economy, the National Urban League said in a new report released Thursday.

The findings — which track with other reports this year — come in the civil rights organization's annual "State of Black America" book. It evaluates and analyzes government data, public polls and other metrics in an attempt to measure equality on a range of issues.

"This recession has caused an exacerbation of the already large wealth gap in this country," said Urban League President Marc Morial. "Candidly, these are very difficult and tough times."

Morial and his group are in Washington this week for the Urban League's annual legislative conference, where the group will lobby against budget cuts proposed by both the White House and House Republicans. Morial called proposed cuts to Head Start, Meals on Wheels and other social programs "mean spirited and reckless."

Both House Republicans and members of the Obama administration have said budget cuts are necessary to lower the nation's ballooning deficit — and politicians from both parties want to trim social programs.

Read the full article at the following link: http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/urban-league-report-finds-growing-racial-disparities/2011/03/31/AFqcbeAC_story.html

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 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 **MAY 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.

American Studies – Special Issue Aaron Douglas and the Harlem Renaissance

Special Issue of *American Studies*, which developed from the internationally recognized conference and exhibit, Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist <<http://www.aarondouglas.ku.edu/>>.

The issue includes: William J. Harris, Gerald Early, Robert G. O'Meally, Terry Adkins, Farah Jasmine Griffin, David Krasner, Amy Kirschke, Richard J. Powell, Stephanie Fox Knappe, and Cheryl R. Ragar

For the full TOC see: <https://journals.ku.edu/index.php/amerstud/issue/view/316>

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