

LHC Newsletter

Langston Hughes Center Newsletter

Wednesday, August 17, 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

Our Nation's Struggle for Freedom

What: **Our Nation's Struggle form Freedom**

When: August 1 – September 29, 2011

Where: Brown Foundation for Education Equity, Excellence and Research and *Brown v. Board of Education* National Historic Site, Topeka KS

Cost per person: FREE and Open to the Public

About:

During the months of August and September 2011, Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site is pleased to host a special locally produced art exhibition. Members of Topeka's arts community will exhibit new works created especially to commemorate the site's program series themes.

Since the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, a strong thread in the national narrative has been the story of overcoming racism, prejudice, and discrimination so that all Americans can enjoy "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Over the years, many brave individuals have stood up to change the country for the better.

This exhibition will feature artwork that communicates the struggle for freedom and salutes the people who moved the nation toward the promise of its founding—the promise of equality for

everyone.

Make plans to see this new display of local artistic expression.

For more information see <http://brownvboard.org/content/our-nations-struggle-freedom-aug-1-sept-29-2011>

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

The Other Side of Paradise

What: The Other Side of Paradise: TransNationalizing Contemporary Black Performance Poetry – Birgit M. Bauridi, University of Regensburg, Germany

When: Wednesday, August 29 @ 2:00 – 3:30 pm

Where: Bailey Hall, 301

Sponsors of this Event: Department of American Studies

About: Birgit Bauridl is Assistant Professor of American Studies at the University of Regensburg, Germany. Her research interests include transnational American Studies, performance studies, African American literature and culture, and cultures of memory. Her PhD thesis, which won the Katharina-Sailer dissertation award in 2010, will be published by Winter Verlag as *Betwixt, Between, or Beyond? Negotiating Transformations from the Liminal Sphere of Contemporary Black Performance Poetry* in 2011. She serves as assistant editor of *Amerikastudien / American Studies* (2007-2011) and was an editor of *COPAS: Current Objectives of Postgraduate American Studies* (2008-2010).

Jesse B. Semple Brownbag Series

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

When: Monday, September 12 @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.

Nawal El Saadawi (2011 Marwa Lecture)

What: *Creativity and Dissidence* – Nawal El Saadawi

When: September 14, 2011 @ 7:00 – 9:30 pm

Where: Woodruff Auditorium, Kansas Student Union, The University of Kansas

Cost per person: FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Sponsors of this Event: African & African-American Studies, Langston Hughes Center, and Kansas African Studies Center

About: Nawal El Saadawi is a world renowned writer. She is a novelist, a psychiatrist, and author of more than forty books fiction and nonfiction. She writes in Arabic and lives in Egypt. Her novels and her books on the situation of women have had a deep effect on successive generations of young women and men over the last five decades.

As a result of her literary and scientific writings she has had to face numerous difficulties and even dangers in her life. In 1972, she lost her job in the Egyptian Ministry of Health because of her book "Women and Sex" published in Arabic in Cairo (1969) and banned by the political and religious authorities, because in some chapters of the book she wrote against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and linked sexual problems to political and economic oppression. The magazine Health, which she founded and had edited for more than three years, was closed down in 1973. In September 1981 President Sadat put her in prison. She was released at the end of November 1981, two months after his assassination. She wrote her book "Memoirs" from the Women's Prison on a roll of toilette paper and an eyebrow pencil smuggled to her cell by an imprisoned young woman in the prostitutes ward. From 1988 to 1993 her name figured on death lists issued by fanatical religious political organizations.

On 15 June, 1991, the government issued a decree which closed down the Arab Women's Solidarity Association over which she presides and handed over its funds to the association called Women in Islam. Six months before this decree the government closed down the magazine Noon, published by the Arab Women's Solidarity Association. She was editor-in-chief of the magazine.

During the summer of 2001, three of her books were banned at Cairo International Book Fair. She was accused of apostasy in 2002 by a fundamentalist lawyer who raised a court case against her to be forcibly divorced from her husband, Dr. Sherif Hetata. She won the case due to Egyptian, Arab and international solidarity. On 28 January, 2007, Nawal El Saadawi and her daughter Mona Helmy, a poet and writer, were accused of apostasy and interrogated by the General Prosecutor in Cairo because of their writings to honor the name of the mother.

They won the case in 2008. Their efforts led to a new law of the child in Egypt in 2008, giving children born outside marriage the right to carry the name of the mother. Also FGM is banned in Egypt by this law in 2008. Nawal El Saadawi was writing and fighting against FGM for more than fifty years.

For more information see: <http://www.nawalsaadawi.net/>

About the Marwa Africana Lecture Series (MALS) was established in 2003 through a generous donation by Dr. Mohamed Buba Marwa, a Nigerian businessman, politician, and philanthropist, and the current Nigerian ambassador to South Africa. MALS brings in a leader annually to address matters related to Africa and/or the African Diaspora. Previous lecturers have been Amiri Baraka (2009), Martin Bernal (2008), Molefi K. Asante (2005), and Ali Mazrui (2004).

For more information call African and African-American Studies at 785-864-3054 or e-mail us at afs@ku.edu

In The News

Revisiting Race-Neutral Politics

William J. Wilson | April 1, 2011 | *The American Prospect*

In 1990, sociologist William Julius Wilson wrote a provocative article for *The American Prospect*, "Race-Neutral Politics and the Democratic Coalition," arguing that Democrats should de-emphasize race-specific policies like affirmative action in favor of race-neutral policies that disproportionately serve minorities (who are disproportionately poor) as a strategy of expanding the Democratic base. The article was a flash point in a then-roiling debate not only about identity politics within the Democratic Party but about the country's willingness to continue activist policies to achieve racial equity. Twenty-one years later, the Prospect has invited Wilson, currently a professor of sociology and social policy at Harvard University, to reflect on how his views—and the country—have evolved.

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

The 10 Most Segregated Urban Areas in America

Daniel Denvir | *Salon*

View the maps at the following link: http://www.salon.com/news/politics/war_room/2011/03/29/most_segregated_cities/slideshow.html

The Continuing Imperative of Black Studies

Sundiata Cha-Jua | April 1, 2011 | Voxunion

We were joined this morning by [Dr. Sundiata Cha-Jua](#) for a discussion of the continuing imperative of Black Studies. Cha-Jua is an Associate Professor of African American Studies and History at the University of Illinois and current president of the [National Council for Black Studies](#). We discussed the societal impact of Black Studies and what are some of the often misrepresented aspects of those studies' trajectories and breadth of politics. We discussed the devolving Black political economy and other elements of history also often misrepresented. Cha-Jua added some insight into the Black farmer's struggle and it being the largest movement in this country's Black history and even read beyond the initial verse of the U.S. national anthem to discover its particular reference to slavery to consider what that might mean in 2011. We also began the show with a brief reference to [Amiri Baraka's](#) apparent (albeit late) shift in interpretation of the [Barack Obama](#) and heard some music from the poet [Heru](#) and [Maimouna Youssef](#) on the danger of genetically modified foods.

Listen to the whole interview at the link: <http://www.voxunion.com/?p=3605>

Anatol Explores Harry Potter, Twilight Phenomena in new books

June 6, 2011 | *The Oread*

When the final Harry Potter movie is released next month, it will answer a lot of questions about Voldemort, the group of youngsters that came up together at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and the world they inhabit.

Giselle Liza Anatol has already brought together a whole new set of questions about the larger impact and meaning of the ultra-popular book and movie series in her book, "Reading Harry Potter Again: New Critical Essays."

Anatol, associate professor of English, edited the book, which includes essays from writers from the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom that explore how race, religion, morality, gender and class are represented in and the sociocultural impact of author J.K. Rowling's series. The book is Anatol's second on the topic. "Reading Harry Potter" collected critical essays on the first four books in the Potter franchise.

Read the whole review at the following link: <http://www.oread.ku.edu/~oread/2011/june/6/stories/potter.shtml>

Darcus Howe on the Unrest in Britain

August 10, 2011 | *Democracy Now!*

Part One:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jevc5M3T0k4&feature=related>

Part Two:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RtotfCwhGis&feature=related>

Why Hollywood Keeps Whitewashing the Past

Matt Zoller Seitz | August 10, 2011 | *Solan*

[EDITOR'S NOTE: This piece contains spoilers; read at your own risk.]

American historical films are forever refighting old wars, congratulating themselves for being on the right side, and encouraging viewers to pat themselves on the back for being on the right side, too. They view the war from the general's tent up on a distant hill and imagine that they're right in the thick of it. That's how Paul Haggis' "Crash" swept the Oscars in 2006 -- by serving up a contemporary story of Los Angelenos who said and did brazenly racist things in public constantly, as if it were 1967 and everyone was wearing love beads, Afros and hard hats. The characters seemed crude and primitive, lacking in self-awareness, unenlightened; this made them easy to label, judge and dismiss. A variation on this strategy has enabled another race drama, "The Help," to become an instant hit, a likely Oscar contender, and yet another reminder that when mainstream cinema depicts discrimination, it tends to ask the same two questions: "How did this affect white people?" and "Aren't you glad you're not bigoted like the creeps in this movie?"

Based on the 2009 novel by Kathryn Stockett, and endorsed by Oprah Winfrey and Tyler Perry, this civil rights-era movie about a young Caucasian writer telling the harsh but true stories of African-American domestics appears to grant the stories of its white and black characters equal weight. It even gives the voice-over narration to one of the maids, Aibileen Clark (Viola Davis). But the pretense of dramatic equality collapses if you look at what's actually happening on-screen, and what got marginalized or omitted.

Read the whole review at the following link: http://www.salon.com/entertainment/movies/feature/2011/08/12/why_hollywood_keeps_white_washing_the_past/index.html

No Thanks Kathryn Stockett, I don't want to be "The Help"

Joyce Ladner | August 10, 2011 | *The Lander Report*

I was a maid in high school. I cleaned white peoples houses on Saturdays and after school. I cleaned, washed and ironed clothes and waxed the kitchen floor for \$3.00 and twenty cents, the latter being for bus fare. I came from a family of nine children so this was the only way I could make spending money. There were no fast food places like McDonald's during the fifties for had they existed I would have had a part-time job at one of them to get spending money.

There is nothing glorious about cleaning up after dirty people and nothing like being exploited by people who don't give a damn about you. I have written about this in my memoir that I am almost finished writing. Maids are invisible and their lives are invisible to their white employers. When I was fourteen, I quit a job when the white girl who was my age DEMANDED that I wash her blood stained underwear from her menstrual period. When her mother came home from work she told her that I refused to do so and her Mother lit into me saying I thought I was too good to wash these clothes. Before I left that day I made sure that the pancakes Jo Lee demanded that I make for her included dirty dishwasher instead of water or milk, and I fried them with the ring of grease around their nasty kitchen sink instead of lard. Jo Lee praised me for making what she described as the best pancakes she'd ever eaten.

As I stood there and watched her eat, I felt vindicated because I had gotten her back in the only way I felt I could. Had I verbally lashed out at her in a tit for tat her mother could have had me arrested for being uppity or she could have done so on some trumped up charges. It was not inconceivable that her mother could have had some mean men torch our home. I never took pride in what I did but as I held back my salty tears that Saturday morning I couldn't think of any other way to fight back for being called a Nigger and being told that I "had" to wash her soiled underwear. "Who do you think you are?" she had demanded. "You think you too good to wash my clothes? You're just a Nigger!" she shouted. My regret that day was that I couldn't tell her that I had fed her dirty dishwasher and grease from the sink.

Read the whole review at the following link: <http://theladnerreportblog.blogspot.com/2011/08/no-thanks-kathryn-stockett-i-dont-want.html>

General Information

**Call For Papers – Association of Black Culture Centers (ABCC) - Going Back to Our Future: The Importance of Black Culture
Dayton, OH
October 27-30, 2011**

Deadline September 1, 2011

For more information see http://www.abcc.net/call_for_papers

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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