

# LHC Newsletter

## Langston Hughes Center Newsletter

Wednesday, September 1, 2010

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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

### *Voices from Slavery*

**What:** "*Voices from Slavery: The Federal Writer's Project Slave Narrative Collection*" - Norman Yetman, University of Kansas, Emeritus

**When:** Thursday, September 3 @ 6:30 pm

**Where:** Kansas City Central Library, (14 W 10th St.)

**Cost per person:** FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC with RSVP <https://www.kclibrary.org/rsvp/6427>

**Sponsors of this Event:** Kansas City Public Library, American Library Association Public Programs Office, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

**About:** Among its most noteworthy achievements, the Federal Writers' Project (FWP) conducted more than 2,000 interviews with former slaves in 17 states from 1936 to 1938. These oral histories offer first-hand accounts of slave life in the United States and personal reactions to bondage. Virtually forgotten for decades, the Slave Narrative Collection was rediscovered in the late 1960s, marking a major turning point in the historical understanding of American slavery as well as the people who endured and survived it.

This presentation offers an in-depth look at these oral histories and traces their influence in

This presentation offers an in-depth look at these oral histories and traces their influence in popular culture, from their rediscovery to the present day.

Yetman is Emeritus Chancellors Club Teaching Professor of American Studies and Sociology at the University of Kansas. His publications include *When I Was a Slave: Memoirs from the Slave Narrative Collection* as well as *Voices from Slavery: Selections from the Slave Narrative Collection* and *Majority and Minority: The Dynamics of Race and Ethnicity in American Life*.

For more information see <http://www.kclibrary.org/event/norman-yetman-voices-slavery>

## ***Inequality Seminar***

**What:** "Educational Inequality and the Science of Diversity in *Grutter*" - Derrick Darby, University of Kansas

**When:** Wednesday September 9 @ 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm

**Where:** Hall Center for the Humanities (University of Kansas, Lawrence Campus)

**Cost per person:** OPEN to Graduate Students, Faculty, and Staff of the University of Kansas

**Sponsors of this Event:** Hall Center for the Humanities

**About the Inequality Seminar:** This seminar brings together humanists and social scientists studying social inequalities in wealth, education, housing, health, and crime. In addition to investigating competing empirical explanations of these inequalities, and the historical, political, and ideological contexts that have perpetuated and sustained them, we critically discuss and assess some of the ethical, legal, and public policy prescriptions for dealing with social inequalities. By working together we aim to provide a forum to explore possibilities for fruitful collaborate research between humanists and social scientists and to stimulate and encourage such activity. The theme for Fall 2009 is Educational Inequality.

To learn more about the Hall Center's Seminar Series see <http://www.hallcenter.ku.edu/~hallcenter/research/seminars/>

To learn more about the Hall Center for the Humanities see <http://www.hallcenter.ku.edu/>

## ***Jesse B. Semple Brownbag Series***

**What:** "Forging an American Pluralism: The Mexican Revolution and American Civil Rights" - Ruben Flores, University of Kansas

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

**Where:** Kansas Union, Alcove E (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.

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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.

## In the News

### **Nuestras Historias, Nuestros Sueños: Our Stories, Our Dreams**

"An Exhibition from the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University and Student Action with Farmworkers. The Center for Documentary Studies (CDS) at Duke University created a Migrant Project that led to the founding of Student Action with Farmworkers (SAF) in 1992, establishing a new model for blending advocacy with documentary expression.

Through the collaborative project *Nuestras Historias, Nuestros Sueños/Our Stories, Our Dreams*, the CDS at Duke University and SAF collected stories about the experiences of Latino immigrants, illuminating their reasons for coming to this country and the obstacles they face once they arrive. In particular, the project focuses on farmworker families in the Carolinas and their dreams for the future; on their traditions, their educational aspirations, and their challenges as they try to pursue higher education.

As border crossings, undocumented immigration, and related labor issues continue to be debated in the national political arena, the perspectives of those who have uprooted their lives and risked their livelihoods to come to the United States are seldom heard.

This traveling exhibition developed from a project that began in 2006 and involved undergraduate students at CDS, SAF interns from across the country, faculty members, seasoned documentarians, and young people from farm worker families. The exhibit uses the documentary arts to amplify the voices of Latino youth and their families so that their stories can be heard."

For more information see <http://brownvboard.org/programs/200909ourstoriesourdreams.htm>

Free and open to public

September 19 – October 31, 2009  
Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site  
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. daily  
1515 SE Monroe • Topeka, Kansas

### **'Do the Right Thing': Still a Racial Rorschach at 20**

Viveca Greene and Chris Tinson | August 18, 2009 | *The Nation*

"Spike Lee's seminal film *Do the Right Thing* takes place over the course of twenty-four hours during the hottest day of the summer in Brooklyn's historic Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood. The story depicts simmering ethnic tensions between a group of African-Americans and the middle-aged, Italian-American patriarch of the local pizza place, "Sal's Famous Pizzeria." As the sweltering summer day draws to a close, an argument erupts between local youths of color led by "Radio" Raheem (his nickname comes from the massive boombox he is never seen without) and Sal. Pushed to the brink by Raheem's radio blasts, Sal erupts into a vitriolic rant replete with racial invective, which culminates with his smashing of Raheem's stereo. A fight breaks out and several other members of the community are drawn into the melee. Amidst ensuing mayhem, Raheem is killed by the NYPD, who strangle him with a nightstick in a scene that is eerily reminiscent of a lynching. The police officers eventually flee the scene with Raheem's remains in tow, leaving members

of the community behind to grieve and denounce the injustice of this killing and the many others that preceded it. In an act of defiance, Mookie (played by Lee himself), the pizzeria's lone black employee, hurls a trash can through the pizzeria window, leading to the fiery destruction of Sal's prized establishment."

Read the full article at the following link: [http://www.thenation.com/doc/20090831/greene\\_tinson/single](http://www.thenation.com/doc/20090831/greene_tinson/single)

### ***The Assault on the Black Middle Class***

Kai Wright | August 4, 2009 | *The American Prospect*

"When my mom describes it all now--10 months after she walked away from her house of 14 years--she sounds sort of crazy to me. I make her explain again and again, because the depth of her denial about the situation she faced is hard for me to understand. But that's the thing about losing stuff. Whether it's your keys or your life savings, it's tough getting to that moment when you realize something's gone for good.

My mother, Carolyn White, and her husband, Earl, spent the first eight months of 2008 haggling with Countrywide Financial (now acquired by Bank of America), trying and failing to get their sub-prime loan modified into something they could pay. She and Earl, like so many other casualties of the sub-prime disaster, had refinanced their home to take out equity. Then the rate exploded, increasing their monthly payment by hundreds of dollars."

Read the full article at the following link: [http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=the\\_assault\\_on\\_the\\_black\\_middle\\_class](http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=the_assault_on_the_black_middle_class)

### ***Why We Need a Human Rights Commission***

Mary Frances Berry | June 4, 2009 | *The Root*

"When political leaders face urgent problems and a polarized public, a commission that honestly gathers facts and encourages a consensus is needed. Yet at a time when Americans are struggling to address torture, hate crimes, marriage inequality, police misconduct and racial profiling, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is either silent or on the wrong side of every major human rights issue."

Read the full article at the following link: <http://www.theroot.com/views/why-we-need-human-rights-commission>

### ***The First Black Prez***

Martin Johnson | August 26, 2009 | *The Root*

"For hard-core jazz fans, Barack Obama is the second African-American president. Tenor saxophonist Lester Young was the first. He didn't win 365 electoral votes, but he won the vote of Billie Holiday, who nicknamed him The President aka Prez.

Young introduced a dynamic new approach to the saxophone; his playing had a leaner tone and a cooler approach, and it influenced countless other greats who have played the instrument including Sonny Rollins, Dexter Gordon, Wardell Gray and Stan Getz. But his influence didn't stop with instrumentalists. His approach to songs influenced Holiday (whom he nicknamed Lady Day) as well as Frank Sinatra, and his style can be heard in just about every singer of classic American song that those two legends have influenced—in other words nearly everyone."

Read the full article at the following link: <http://www.theroot.com/views/first-black-prez>

## **General Information**

ASALH 94th Annual Conference – "The Quest for Black Citizenship in the Americas"

**ASALH 94th Annual Conference - The Quest for Black Citizenship in the Americas  
Cincinnati, OH  
September 30 - October 4, 2009**

The Association for the Study of African American Life and History is soliciting papers for its 94th Annual Conference. The conference theme, "The Quest for Black Citizenship in the Americas," foregrounds various concepts of citizenship. A century ago, an interracial group of Americans joined together and formed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Two generations after emancipation, a tide of racism had betrayed the promise of first-class citizenship for African Americans, which reflected an ongoing struggle for civil rights throughout the Americas.

For more information about the Conference visit: <http://www.asalh.org/94thconvention.html>

**Affirmative Action: Requiem or Renaissance  
Washburn University, Topeka, KS  
September 22 - September 23, 2009**

"September 23, 2009, marks the 40th anniversary of the implementation of the first federal affirmative action employment program to have defined, quantifiable, enforceable goals. This plan was formulated and executed in the presidential administration of Richard M. Nixon. The man most visibly and outspokenly associated with what was known as the *Philadelphia Plan*, the first federal employment regulation to require the achievement of specific numeric hiring goals on federal contracts with a value of \$500,000 or more, was Washburn University graduate and at the time, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Labor, Arthur Fletcher (BA, Washburn, '50). Long identified as the "Father of Affirmative Action," Fletcher had a long career in public service as a Republican partisan. His final public service role was to serve as a revitalizing force for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights where he served as chairman during the administration of President George Herbert Walker Bush. To commemorate the anniversary of the *Philadelphia Plan* and to assess the impact of Affirmative Action 40 years on. Arthur Fletcher's alma mater, Washburn University, announces a conference on Affirmative Action September 22-23, 2009."

For more information and schedule of events, see <http://www.washburn.edu/ao/affirmative-action/>

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