

⌘ The Griot ⌘

Spring 2012

Wellesley College Africana Studies Department Newsletter



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Temple Price '13

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Judith Rollins,
Professor Emerita

Welcome!

This is the fourth edition of the Africana Studies newsletter, *The Griot*. This year, 2011-12, has been another productive, exciting year for the Department and our students. From a lecture by Farai Chideya (see article on page 9), to two colloquia on W.E.B. DuBois, to presentations by students on their research, to our African American Art class's trip to Philadelphia (see photos on page 10), we have had a vibrant, intellectually fulfilling year that has enhanced the life of the Department.

-Pashington Obeng, Chair



Why Africana Studies?

-Adjoa O. Boateng '14

I remember my first Africana Class: Images of Africana People in Cinema with Professor Obeng. By analyzing films such as "Sankofa" and "A Raisin in the Sun," we were able to question and explore the ways in which Africans, and those of the diaspora, have been depicted pictorially. It was not only a class about film, but also a class about identity, and the ways in which colonialism has affected said identity.

It was refreshing to take a course about Africana people, taught by a Ghanaian professor. Even in a refined liberal arts institution such as Wellesley, I found that the context within which Africa is discussed is largely in a negative light. The conversation usually begins and ends with how colonialism has stunted Africa's growth. Africa's history is everyone's history, but it is rarely explored. In the Africana Studies Department, I am able to acquire an in-depth knowledge of the continent, and break down the misconstrued history that I have been taught. I chose to become a major in Africana Studies because I love my continent and its often overlooked diversity. I love my people and the ways in which they will create a brighter future for the "dark continent."

I believe that the Department will best equip me with the tools I need to further my studies in Economic Development. I seek to learn as much as I can for, in order to contribute to Africa's bright future, I must first be educated in its rich past. All in all, I have thoroughly enjoyed the classes I have taken, and the amazing professors I have connected with in this department. I look forward to seeing the Africana Studies Department grow.



Spotlight On

Dr. Tracey Cameron

By Temple Price '13

Dr. Tracey Cameron, the Assistant Dean of Intercultural Education, Director of Harambee House, and Advisor to Students of African descent, is very familiar with the world of academia, although not the way one might think.

Dr. Cameron has spent her academic career assessing the needs of students, faculty, and administrators on and off-campus. Her Ph.D. is in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (Women's and Gender Studies cognate), and her research has focused on work-life effectiveness and integration. Dr. Cameron studies how "mid-level administrators" - people like herself - manage their work, their families, and their personal lives. She also considers the more traditional aspects in the professional lives of academics, such as tenure and promotion.

Dr. Cameron became interested in the lives of faculty while working as a graduate assistant in the Office of the Provost at Virginia Tech. There, she worked closely with the sorts of faculty members that she chose to study. Her interest was also peaked by reading and hearing the popular banter, which suggested that career women, especially those of color, have limited opportunity to get married or have children. Having completed her coursework for her Ph.D. at Virginia Tech, Dr. Cameron was working on her dissertation when she came to Wellesley last year.

Faculty members are not Dr. Cameron's only interest. She is also interested in the identity development of women and people of color, issues that are salient to many college students at Wellesley and elsewhere. Wellesley is not Dr. Cameron's first experience at a women's college. Before going to Virginia Tech, Dr. Cameron worked at Brenau University as the Assistant Director of Student Life and Leadership. Dr. Cameron finds working so closely with students both challenging and motivating.

In Wellesley students, Dr. Cameron says she has observed a sincere interest in learning that she finds particularly motivating. She has also been impressed with the history of her charge, Harambee House. "Students really had to fight [for Harambee House]," she said. "I think that is a true example of student activism at its finest. To still have the space 40 years later speaks volumes. People forget the historical significance of a space like Harambee House."

Dr. Cameron's goals include helping all students maximize their academic potential. She also would like to see students develop the sort of confidence that will complement a Wellesley College degree in the time after graduation. Dr. Cameron feels that during her own undergraduate years, she gained a great deal from being very involved in extra-curricular and campus leadership activities. This is something that she highly recommends to her current advisees.

Dr. Cameron hails from Atlanta, Georgia. She is very close to her family, which she views as a source of inspiration - especially her four nephews. In the newfound free time that she has after completing her dissertation last year, Dr. Cameron looks forward to reading for pleasure and exploring more of the Boston area. Harambee House and the Wellesley community at large are fortunate to have an advisor with the knowledge, experience, and compassion of Dr. Tracey Cameron.

The 2011 Fannie Lou Hamer Prize Winner:

Sylvia Ilahuka's "From His Rib"

Each spring, the Africana Studies Department gives two writing prizes: The Ella Smith Elbert '88 Prize goes to a junior or senior and the Fannie Lou Hamer Prize, to a first-year or sophomore. Last spring, the Fannie Lou Hamer Prize was awarded to Sylvia Ilahuka for her paper, "From His Rib," originally written for AFR 211 Introduction to African Literature.

Focusing on three novels – *So Long A Letter* by Mariama Ba, *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangarembga, and *The Joys of Motherhood* by Buchi Emecheta - Sylvia Ilahuka explores contemporary challenges to traditional African gender relations, especially marriage customs, which all three authors clearly consider unfair to women.

In *The Joys of Motherhood*, the protagonist, Nnu Ego, is

...practically abandoned by her husband...when he left to go to work on a ship then to fight in India during the Second World War. For years Nnu was alone, raising her children singlehandedly...until her husband returned home and, shortly after, took in his deceased brother's wife, a woman much younger than Nnu.

In *Nervous Conditions*, Maiguru is

...a highly educated woman who holds a Master's degree, yet she passively serves her husband, obeying and agreeing with everything he says, his every whim.

And in *So Long a Letter* (which Ilahuka discusses most thoroughly), Ramatoulaye is

...a submissive wife [who] cannot speak her mind about certain issues, especially those pertaining to her husband's doings...After twenty-five years and twelve children...her husband Modou went and married a girl their daughter's age.

Ilahuka demonstrates how the authors give voice and agency to these women by the very telling of their stories and the textured descriptions of how they challenge the injustices they feel. She also identifies the underlying problems of gender socialization and related traditions:

[B]oys were brought up to regard themselves as superior to girls and, ultimately, as the superior partners in a marriage. A man could marry whom he wanted when he wanted and the woman couldn't say or do anything about it...The favouring of sons over daughters was and still is a result of African societal structure in which children are regarded as assets (extra manual labour for the farm and household), symbols of wealth and prosperity, and continuations of the family line. For this reason, preference is given to sons as they often grow up to provide more physical manpower and will marry and continue the family name, whereas daughters will get married and move to their husbands' clan.

Nevertheless, Ilahuka reiterates the hope of one of the protagonists, Ramatoulaye, who, despite being "torn between the ways of today and those of yore" herself, hopes "that her daughters will be able to use their minds and intellects to escape the problems of life that she herself encountered."

With insight and careful scholarship, Sylvia Ilahuka successfully explores the major themes of these three important African novels. This paper - bridging African studies, women's studies and literature - exemplifies the international and interdisciplinary character of Africana Studies.

Africana Studies Colloquium: The Common Intellectual Experience

The Africana Studies Department presents

W.E.B. DuBois

in Turn-of-the-Century Atlanta, 1897-1910

A presentation by
Lee Formwalt
Executive Director, Albany Civil Rights Institute, Albany, Georgia



This presentation is on the celebrated African American historian and sociologist W.E.B. DuBois's first visit to Atlanta. It will focus on his pathbreaking role in shaping the field of African American sociology and history at a time when African Americans were being disfranchised and lynched in record numbers. Special attention will be paid to the making of *The Souls of Black Folk*, especially in the chapters that examine Georgia's Black Belt and the creation of the NAACP.

Tuesday, February 28, 2012 | 4:15 p.m.
 Library Lecture Room | Wellesley College

Free and open to the public

For more information: stange@wellesley.edu or 781-283-2369
 Disability accommodations: jacob@wellesley.edu or 781-283-2434

Co-sponsored by Committee on Lectures and Cultural Events, Office of Intercultural Education and Political Science



Because of his many contributions to academia, two of the Department's colloquia focused on the life and works of W.E.B. DuBois. In the fall, Carolyn Roberts of Harvard University spoke on DuBois's famous book *Souls of Black Folk* and, in the Spring, Lee Formwalt, the Executive Director of the Albany Civil Rights Institute in Albany Georgia, discussed DuBois in the turn-of-the-century Atlanta. Below are some quotes of DuBois on different topics.

Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: ... How does it feel to be a problem? ... One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder... He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.

-W.E.B. DuBois, "Strivings of the Negro People", 1897



I shall forgive the South much in its final day: I shall forgive its slavery, for slavery is a world-old habit; I shall forgive its fighting for a well-lost cause... I shall forgive its so-called pride of race, the passion of its hot blood, and even its dear, old, laughable strutting and posing; but one thing I shall never forgive, neither in this world nor the world to come: its wanton and continued and persistent insulting of the black womanhood which it sought and seeks to prostitute to its lust.

-W.E.B. DuBois, 1920

The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea.

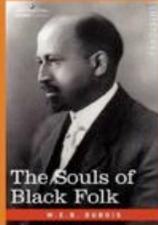
-W.E.B. DuBois, 1903

AFRICANA STUDIES
 COLLOQUIUM FALL 2011

Featuring
 Carolyn Roberts of
 Harvard University

Monday, November 14th
 4:15 pm
 Harambee House

All are welcome!
 Attendance is mandatory for Africana
 Majors and Minors



Common Text: *The Souls of Black Folk* by W.E.B. DuBois

Questions: stange@wellesley.edu or stange.2@wellesley.edu Disabilities: peiris@wellesley.edu

Up Close and Personal with Professor Nikki Greene

By Alexandria Barnes '12

From Newark via Philadelphia to Wellesley, Professor Nikki Greene brings a sense of freshness to the Africana Studies Department. Professor Greene is currently Wellesley College's Newhouse Mellon Post Doctorate Fellow in Art History and Africana Studies. This position gives her an opportunity to focus on her research while teaching at Wellesley.

Professor Greene developed her love of art fairly young. Growing up in Newark, the local museum served as a free and fun activity for her family. The museum had a small petting zoo, a planetarium and jazz concerts in its courtyard. Seeing all of these together in one space was where she initially saw how everything could coexist.

However, Professor Greene did not fully develop her ideas on this connection between art and music until she was in college. She would not have studied art history if it were not for her studies in Spain during her junior year of high school. In Barcelona she took her first art history class and realized that it is possible to be an art historian. She fell in love with art because she was able to live in a city where she could talk about Picasso and see his work, or talk about Gaudi and see his architecture on the way home.

As an undergraduate at Wesleyan University, Dr. Greene clearly made the connection between art in the form of music and on paper. She took this new appreciation of music and began to sing. Before coming to Wellesley, Dr. Greene sang and played in a steel band at Wesleyan. She used to perform in weddings and funerals for her church. Even though she currently is not singing, she feels that the classroom is now her performance space.

As many of you may have noticed, Dr. Greene rocks a short, auburn Afro. She recently did the "big chop" in order to transition from permed to natural hair. She has had many hairstyles throughout her life and had been considering going natural for years.

While she was pregnant with her first child, she was very in tune with natural things - yoga, food, natural birth - and there was a disconnect between her natural lifestyle and using chemicals on her hair. By her mid 20s she had decided to cut her hair, but waited until she arrived at Wellesley. Coming to Wellesley was a perfect time for the change because she was changing everything. She joined her mother who had always worn a short Afro and has always said, "It's just hair."



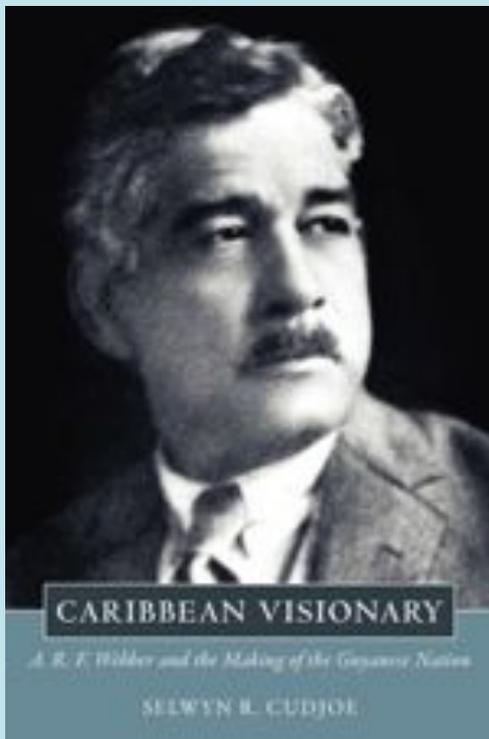
Before coming to Wellesley, Dr. Greene was an adjunct professor at a number of colleges in the Philadelphia area. While she enjoyed the teaching, being an adjunct professor was so time consuming that she did not have the time to develop her own research. She now appreciates the ability to focus on her research and writing, give time to her family and also teach.

At the Newhouse Center, she will work on her book project, entitled *The Rhythm of Glue, Grease and Grime: Indexicality in the Works of Romare Bearden, David Hammons, and Renee Stout*. The book shows how all three artists use physical, sometimes metonymic, indexical references in order to lessen the negative impact of stereotypes of African Americans.

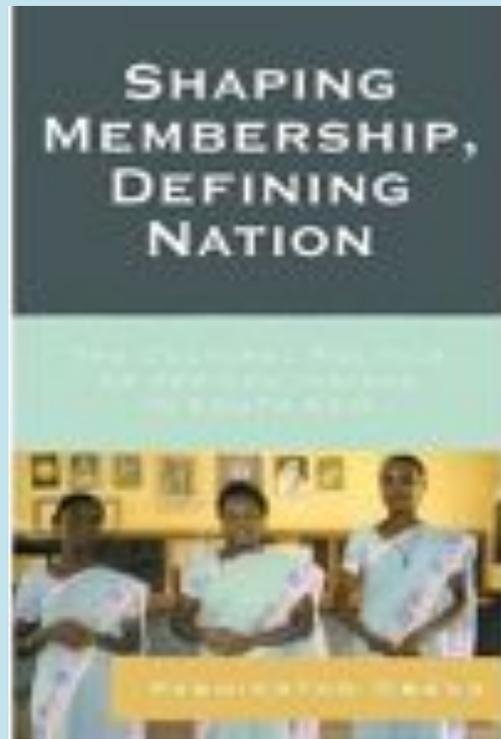
Another area of interest to Dr. Greene is new forms of information exchange. She has become an avid blogger and tweeter. On her blog, she wrote a response to a controversial article in the *Washington Post* called, "If I Were a Poor Black Kid." Her response received over 700 views, while her dissertation, by contrast, has been read by only four people. This demonstrated to her the power of social media to get information disseminated. Dr. Greene's twitter is at @nikkigphd and her blog is <http://nikkigphd.com/>

Because of the presence of Dr. Nikki Greene, Africana Studies is pleased to be able to offer such courses as "African Art and the Diaspora" and "The Body: Race, Gender and Identity in Modern and Contemporary Art." We welcome Dr. Greene as part of the continuing strengthening of the Department.

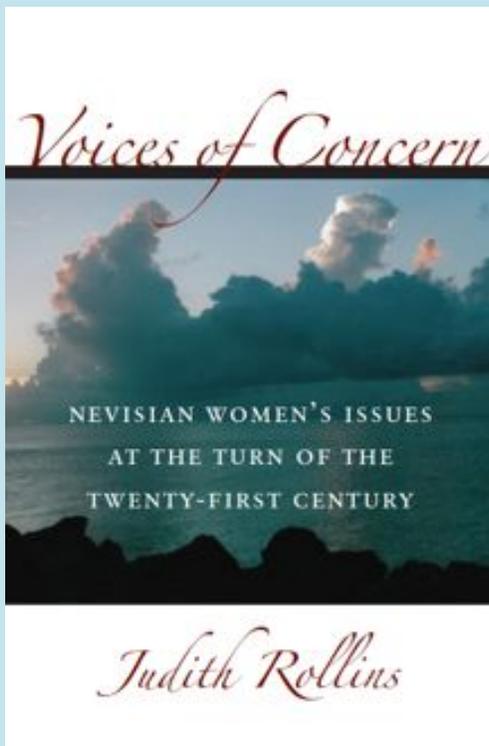
Recent Faculty Publications



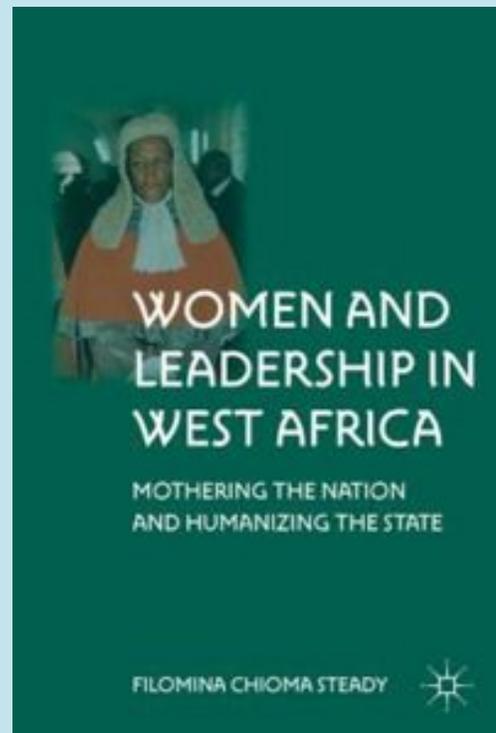
Dr. Selwyn Cudjoe
*A.R.F. Webber and the Making of the
Guyanese Nation*



Dr. Pashington Obeng
*Shaping Membership, Defining Nation: The
Cultural Politics of African Indians in South
Asia*



Dr. Judith Rollins
*Voices of Concern: Nevisian
Women's Issues at the Turn of the
Twenty-First Century*



Dr. Filomina Chioma Steady
*Women and Leadership in West
Africa: Mothering the Nation and
Humanizing the State*

In order to celebrate the work of the Department's students, three seniors presented their Senior Theses to the Department at the Spring Colloquium. The presentations were:

The Rise of Julius Malema

By Samantha Crowell

Advisor: Pashington Obeng

Pink, Puff and Pompadour: The Life of Mrs. Ruth Botsio

By: Merene Botsio

Advisor: Selwyn Cudjoe

African Unification and Economic Integration: An Analysis of Historical Challenges and Current Opportunities

By: Samantha Malambo

Advisor: Selwyn Cudjoe



The artist Radcliffe Bailey's exhibition, "Memory as Medicine," is currently on display at the Davis Museum. His pieces make connections between his personal history, the Africana diaspora and much more. Here is his piece titled "Roots That Never Die." The cover of the newsletter features his painting, "Winged."

FARAI CHIDEYA

By Temple Price '13

On Wednesday, October 5, 2011, journalist Farai Chideya gave the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Lecture. The award-winning author and multimedia specialist spoke on "The Color of the Future: Race, Ethnicity and Our Role in Shaping the New America."



Farai Chideya (standing, fourth from left) with students and faculty

Over the course of her twenty-year career, Chideya has gained a wealth of experience in multiple media arenas. For almost three years she hosted "News and Notes" on National Public Radio. She has also served as a host for the Oxygen network, a political analyst for CNN, and a reporter for ABC news. The Harvard University graduate has written four books. Her three nonfiction works are *Trust: Reaching the 100 Million Missing Voters*, *The Color of Our Future*, and *Don't Believe the Hype: Fighting Cultural Misinformation About African Americans*. Her novel, *Kiss the Sky*, was released in May 2009.

During the 2010-2011 school year, Chideya was a "Leader in Residence" at the Colin Powell Center for Policy Studies at the City College of New York. This spring, she will serve as a fellow at Harvard's Institute of Politics. A regular contributor to New York Public Radio, Chideya also presents lectures on college campuses around the country and blogs at Farai.com.

There is no better than adversity. Every defect, every heartbreak, every loss contains its own seed, its own lesson on how to improve your performance the next time.

--Malcolm X

Philadelphia 2012

Professor Nikki Greene escorted the students in her African American Art course to Philadelphia to attend a symposium on *Faith, Identity, and History: Representations of Christianity in Modern and Contemporary African American Art*



Students viewing Henry Ossa Tanner's painting "Annunciation"



At the Philadelphia Museum of Fine Arts



Enjoying lunch!



Professor Greene on a panel at the The Association of Scholars of Christianity in the History of Art Symposium



Taking a break from an architectural tour of Philadelphia

Notes from Abroad

Kamilah Welch '12

I studied abroad spring semester of my junior year with CIEE in Cape Town, South Africa. While there I took classes at the University of Cape Town, volunteered weekly at two prisons for incarcerated youth and spent time exploring the country. I lived in a local dorm named Liesbeeck Gardens (LBG) which housed over 800 students who were mostly Black South Africans and Zimbabweans. I am thankful for the opportunity to live in LBG because it was there that I made some of my strongest friendships with locals and was able to see the degree of segregation on campus (i.e., the only whites in the dorm were the 30 Americans from my program). Though the classes were not rigorous in comparison to Wellesley, I learned so much from the friends I made, people I met and the places I visited. I also did three homestays, two in townships and one in a rural



Kamilah Welch taking a break from her studies to enjoy the beach

community, and cherish the time I spent with my host families. I absolutely loved the vibrant mix of cultures within South Africa, but also appreciated the opportunity to witness and engage with some of the pressing issues prevalent there, especially in terms of continued racial inequalities. I would recommend South Africa to any and everyone.

Thanks!

Because I am a graduating senior, this is the final edition of *The Griot* that I will work on. The past few year of working for the Africana Studies Department have really been a great experience and I am happy to have had a chance to work under such great people like the professors in this department. I truly have learned a lot and am looking forward to using those skills in my future endeavors. I hope that you enjoyed the articles in this year's edition of *The Griot*.

-Alexandria Barnes '12



Have a great summer!

Africana Studies
Wellesley College