

Winter 2014

After Twenty Years, Vice Provost Lester Monts Will Return to Teaching

Long before he began working to bring more students and faculty of color to U-M as senior vice provost--a role he'll step down from--Lester Monts was breaking down racial barriers of his own. Growing up in Little Rock, Arkansas, he not only witnessed the courage of the Little Rock Nine who integrated the all-white Central High School, but followed in their footsteps and enrolled at the mostly white Arkansas Polytechnic College where he was the first black student to live in the campus dorms. Not surprisingly, there were those who tried to stop him, including a group of students who squirted lighter fluid under his door and set it afire. A painful incident, but one that Monts refused to let deter him. He graduated from Arkansas Tech in 1970.



Thanks to his early love and mastery of the trumpet, Monts majored in music education. One of nine children and the only one in his family to show an interest in music, years later he's still quick to credit his teachers--Sylvia Clay in junior high school and Leon Adams in high school--for spurring his interest and introducing him to a wide range of music, from classical to jazz. "I feel extremely lucky to have had such devoted teachers at such a young age," says Monts, "they taught me what an impact great teaching could have on young people."

"Lester Monts has been nothing short of a guardian angel to the faculty of color on campus. The majority of us would not be here were it not for him, his example, his advocacy and the Provost's Faculty Initiatives Program that he has championed throughout his tenure at U-M."

— Kelly Askew, Associate Professor of Anthropology and of Afroamerican and African studies, and Director of the African Studies Center."

Monts went on to get a master's in trumpet performance from the University of Nebraska where he specialized in music of the Baroque era. Many who know him solely as an administrator might be surprised to learn that he's an accomplished musician who has performed with a number of orchestras including the Minnesota Orchestra, Omaha Symphony, the Erie Philharmonic, the Santa Barbara Symphony and a solo performance with the Pittsburgh Symphony.

Eventually he would change focus however, turning to ethnomusicology for his Ph.D. Today, he's known as an expert on the music and cultural traditions of the Vai people of Liberia. Why ethnomusicology? "I came to realize that many of the instruments used in western music are actually

from non-western countries. Yet, no one was talking about it.

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Letter from the Chair

This year in the #BBUM campaign, members of the Black Student Union raised awareness about low enrollments of underrepresented minorities and issues of campus climate. The Department of Afroamerican and African Studies responded to the students' bold leadership by forming the DAAS Faculty and Staff Racial Climate Task Force. The purpose of this task force is multiple: 1) to evidence support for students of color on campus by listening to their concerns and their ideas for making the University of Michigan a positive learning environment for all; 2) to share information within the DAAS administrative and teaching community about issues of campus climate, and to facilitate departmental responses as necessary; 3) to maintain and strengthen lines of communication between DAAS and other campus units regarding climate and diversity; 4) to contribute to a positive educational campus community that embraces diversity and excellence in the Michigan tradition. At the end of the winter term, the BSU shared information about their successful meetings with UM administrators, demonstrating for a new generation that student activism can make a difference.

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Frieda Ekotto Named Chair of DAAS



Dr. Frieda Ekotto has been a Professor of Afroamerican and African Studies and Comparative Literature at the University of Michigan since 1994. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota. She is the recipient of numerous grants and awards, including a Ford Foundation seed grant for research and collaborative work with institutions of higher learning in Africa. She is the author of six books and numerous articles in professional journals. She has lectured throughout the United States and in Australia, Algeria, Cameroon, Cuba, Canada, England, France, Ivory Coast, Malaysia, Malta, Nigeria, Tunisia, South Africa, and Singapore, among other countries.

Dr. Ekotto has developed and taught a wide range of innovative courses on literature and law in France; literature and film in Africa, the Caribbean and Maghreb; postcolonial narratives by Francophone women and minorities; and representations of family and friendship in Francophone film and literature. Her curricular contributions have been critical to the emergence and consolidation of Francophone studies at the University of Michigan and to the teaching of race and ethnicity in the context of French-speaking cultures. Professor Ekotto is highly regarded by students and colleagues who praise her intellectual generosity and her success in motivating students to think critically.



Tiya A. Miles

Elsa Barkley Brown Collegiate Professor of African American Women's History; Chair, Afroamerican and African Studies; Professor, American Culture, History, Native American Studies, Women's Studies University of Michigan

After Twenty Years, Monts Returns to Teaching (Continued from Front Page)

It made me realize that “the west” was much more multicultural than many of my professors understood.” His reason for choosing Liberia came from closer to home. “My grandfather did missionary work in Liberia, something I’d heard about while I was growing up.” Eventually, he received a fellowship to go to Liberia where he lived in a Vai community

and by the end of his stay, he had collected more than 500 hours of songs.

It was the first of a number of trips, the most recent in 2012. “The music of the Vai is connected to every aspect of their lives. There are songs for, say, farming or for having a baby as well as entire separate genres of music for the rite of passage for when boys and girls reach puberty. It’s an extremely rich culture.”

“With his breathtaking success and accomplishments in the arts, diversity, and undergraduate affairs, it is fair to say that the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Dr. Lester Monts, is an institution at the University of Michigan and the larger world of academia. His fingerprints are all over thriving programs in diverse units on campus and I am fortunate for the opportunity to work closely with him on the Arts Consortium Committee for the past three years. His mentorship and inspirational leadership will stay with me forever!”

—Kwasi Ampene, Associate Professor DAAS, Professor of Music and Director of the Center for World Performance Studies

After a two year leave of absence, Monts will return to teaching both in the music school and hopefully DAAS where he will have the

chance to pass on his enthusiasm and love of Vai music to students. However, he won’t be simply relaxing during his

time off. Instead he’s got several

projects already lined up including an

initiative to travel around Michigan

with several students recording the

folk and ethnic music of Michigan,

another of his interests. “There’s an

incredible diversity of folk music

traditions in this state”, he says,

“Polish, Arabic, German, Native

American, African-American.

Documenting it means it won’t get

lost. I can’t wait to get started.”



“The hard work of teaching race and social justice is front line work here at the University of Michigan . The systemic and bureaucratic challenges that the Pedagogy of Action experienced in doing this work was alleviated by one person. Dr. Lester Monts. Without him diversity and globalization would have missed the often marginalized and excluded students from such experiences. You were an oasis in the diversity desert of this university. Thank you my friend, my brother.”— Nesha Haniff ,

Faculty Member in DAAS and Womens Studies; Founder of the Pedagogy of Action

Letter from the Chair (Continued from Page 2)

In addition to being responsive on issues of campus diversity, DAAS faculty members continue to teach our students about Africa and the Diaspora in a range of creative and exciting ways. We host GalleryDAAS, an exhibit space in Haven Hall that showcases the work of prominent African and Black diasporic visual artists. We bring in literary greats such as Alice Walker, prominent scholars such as Robin D. G. Kelley, and Detroit-based community activists such as Grace Lee Boggs. We not only engage students in critical analysis of Black art, music, literature, history, culture, politics, and economics, but we also routinely take students abroad to expand their global awareness. In the spring of 2012 our faculty led student trips to Kenya, Jamaica and France with areas of emphasis as diverse as environmental sustainability and HIV/AIDS education. This year, DAAS is offering a new study abroad trip to Ghana where students traveling with Professor Elisha Renne will work collaboratively with women on an environmentally sound economic development project.

DAAS is thrilled to welcome two exciting new scholars into our department in 2014 and 2015. Historians Jonathan Wells and Heather Thompson will be joining the DAAS faculty from Temple University. Professor Wells is an accomplished scholar of the U.S. South and the Civil War. Professor Thompson is the author of the important book, *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City*. She comes to DAAS as a member of the Provost-funded cluster search in the Detroit School of Urban Studies, a concept initiated by DAAS faculty members Angela Dillard and Al Young in collaboration with colleagues in other units.

Last but not least, DAAS is most fortunate to have a new department chair who will begin in July. Professor Frieda Ekotto, a literary and film studies scholar jointly appointed in DAAS and Comparative Literature, will lead our department into the future. She will be joined in her work by a strong faculty administrative team and dedicated staff.

It has been an honor to serve in DAAS as chair for the last three years. We have a truly vibrant and socially conscious community of teachers, learners, and scholars of which we can be proud.

Sincerely yours,

Tiya Miles

Tiya Miles

Chair, Department of Afroamerican and African Studies

Supplying Salt and Light: Lorna Goodison

The DAAS Living Poets Series and Diasporic Dialogues presented internationally acclaimed poet Lorna Goodison. A professor in English Language & Literature and DAAS, Lorna was born in Jamaica and is known internationally for her poetry as well as her work of fiction and nonfiction. Her many awards include the Commonwealth Poetry Prize (Americas Region), the Musgrave Gold Medal from Jamaica, the Henry Russel Award for Exceptional Creative Work from the University of Michigan and the British Columbia National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction for *From Harvey River: A Memoir of My Mother and Her People*. Her work has been published in numerous journals and included in major anthologies and collections of contemporary poetry and she was recently awarded a Commander of the Order of Distinction from the Government of Jamaica, one of the country's most important national honors.



Internationally Acclaimed Artist Mary Sibande



South African artist Mary Sibande exhibited her work in GalleryDAAS as part of a joint venture with the Institute of Humanities, the U-M Museum of Art and the Stamps School of Art & Design. Born 1982, Sibande works in various media including painting, sculpture and photography. She was at the U-M during Fall Semester 2013 as 2013 Kidder Resident in the Arts at the Institute for the Humanities. Her exhibit in GalleryDAAS was co-sponsored by the African Studies Center.

DAAS Outreach

Wolverine Express



As part of the DAAS Community Engaged Learning (CEL) initiative, Elizabeth James, DAAS Program Manager, traveled with the

Wolverine Express, a U-M school visitation program, to Osborn High School in Detroit in October 2013 and Romulus High School in January 2014 to

talk about the importance of staying in school and attending college.

Another CEL initiative that DAAS participates in is Future U,

which provides information and exposure to students in middle school. This year, Garden City Middle School and University Prep Middle School (see above) visited the department.



Melba Boyd Reads in DAAS Living Poets Series



Melba Boyd, Distinguished Professor and Chair of Africana Studies at Wayne State University as well as a visiting professor in DAAS, read poems from her newest

collection of poems, *Death Dance of a Butterfly*. Boyd has written 13 books and won multiple literary awards, including the 2010 Library of Michigan Notable Books Award.

Elisha Renne Interviews Damani Partridge: *Filming the Future of Detroit*, Winter Term 2014

In this DAAS mini course, we made films about the future of Detroit. It is a rare opportunity to engage Detroit simultaneously from theoretical and practical perspectives, from the perspectives of music history, social history, architectural history, cultural anthropology, literature, and film.... Participants read, write, and learn how to make films with our help, including the help of an award winning filmmaker from Berlin, Silvana Santarmaria. The premiere of the films made by the workshop students were shown on the 18th and 19th of April, first in Detroit (at 5eGallery) and then on the University of Michigan campus. They will also likely be shown as part of the “Learning from Detroit” Conference on May 30 and 31, and as part of DAAS’s “Diasporic Dialogues” next fall.



In short, this project enables participants to think about the future audio-visually. It is not about helping people per se but more about producing a collaborative vision of the future. Many of the participants are themselves from Detroit. Already, this question about who’s helping whom—a questions raised more generally in terms of “development” and economic assistance—came up when thinking in terms of “Detroit Plural,” a discussion that took place during a session sponsored by the Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies (EIHS) at the University of Michigan in early April (this year). I was amazed and impressed by the fact that the participants from our workshop were those most actively engaged in the discussion featuring University

of Michigan faculty and one graduate student writing his dissertation on Detroit.

In our project, we took participants on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays to Detroit for the workshop from 4:30-6:30pm. We met at the UM Detroit Center. The fact that we met every day was nice, because the students got to know each other more intimately and the project gained an energy and momentum that exceeded the possibilities of a normal classroom environment. It also meant that students were exposed to a new atmosphere. They could touch, hear, smell, and be in the place about which they are doing research. They worked not only with fellow students but also with young and old people from Detroit.

The participants first proposed their film topics in the form of a paragraph that they submitted to us. Based on their individual proposals, we encouraged them to work in teams. We got them to think about how their initial proposals work in relation to each other and as individual films.

The workshop was based on a model of community engagement that I learned about as a result of my research in Berlin on youth and democratization in post-World War II Germany. The central question for that research has become: If democratization has primarily meant de-Nazification in the post-War German context, what happens when unanticipated subjects (i.e., noncitizen and racialized youth) enter the spaces (youth centers and related spaces) originally meant to democratize former Hitler Youth? It is based on research that I carried out for over 27 months, first from 2009-2010 and then again from 2012 to 2013.

In Berlin, the Ballhaus Naunynstraße (Theater) has a monthly news program called the *Kiez Monatsschau* (Monthly Newshow from the Neighborhood) that is part of its *Akademie der Autodidakten* (Academy of the Autodidacts). The Monthly News Show presentation, which always results in a packed theater, teaches youth (students and young people from Berlin) how to make films on a particular topic (i.e. perspectives on “Blackness” in Berlin, Berlin responses to the Turkish Uprisings in Gezi Park, Fatherhood, etc.) that they then
(Continued on Next Page)

Interview: *Filming the Future of Detroit* (Continued from previous page)

present at the end of the month. They learn how to use the camera, how to edit, how to plan a shoot, and how to publicize. In preparation for each show, the youth are accompanied by two mentors, usually one filmmaker and one



journalist. As I participated, I was struck by the strength of a project that linked “youth” at various levels of education to those who were outside of the school or university systems. I think that this is a model that will be productive for our engagement with young people in and from Detroit.

In the end, I think it’s important to structure this project around an ongoing engagement with different

organizations. These ongoing possibilities then allow one to create an infrastructure which makes it easier to organize events and projects in the future. For example, there is a regular bus now transporting people between the UM Ann Arbor campus and the UM Detroit Center that was not operating in the past.

Unfortunately, it was not in operation when we were going to Detroit for the workshop. Nevertheless, students are excited about this possibility, and I think it is already encouraging students’ engagement with Detroit in new ways.

Silvana Santamaria is a member of the film collective and production company called Soilfilms. She studied filmmaking at the *Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg* and has also been a fellow at the *Akademie der Künste* (The Academy of Art) in Berlin. Her film, *On Sufferance*, was recently screened at the University of Michigan in April. Based on her work with young filmmakers in Berlin and Laos, Silvana Santamaria is an important member of the “Filming the Future of Detroit” project.



Students Jessica Abfalter and Jefferson H. Choi videotape DJ Psycho (Dezi Magby)

Bunker Roy Visits DAAS

Sanjit 'Bunker' Roy held a special discussion section with members of the Pedagogy of Action program run by Nesha Haniff (DAAS/WS) on March 12, 2014. Roy is an Indian social activist and founded the Barefoot College, which has trained more than 3 million people in careers including solar engineers, teachers, midwives, weavers, architects and doctors. His visit to U-M was arranged by the Penny Stamps School of Art & Design.



First Annual Community Engaged Learning Symposium

By Elizabeth James

On October 4, 2013, DAAS held its first Community Engaged Learning (CEL) Symposium. Organized by DAAS CEL Director Stephen Ward, with help from Zakiyah Sayyed and Elizabeth James, more than 50 people participated in the event which included spoken word performances by Dominique Matthews, Will See and Tawana Petty from Detroit. Guests also engaged in sessions on the history of community engaged learning in DAAS, an open dialogue about students experiences in CEL programs, perspectives on community activism and engagement, and a closing roundup titled, "Where do we go from here? Exploring community partnerships." The program was followed by reception which offered an opportunity for participants to talk further about forging alliances between the department and community. Participating organizations included the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality/Peace Zones for Life, East Michigan Environmental Action Council (EMEAC), The Wellness Advocates of Detroit, Racquet-Up Detroit, The Brown Dance Project, The Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership, and the DAAS community Engaged Learning Program.

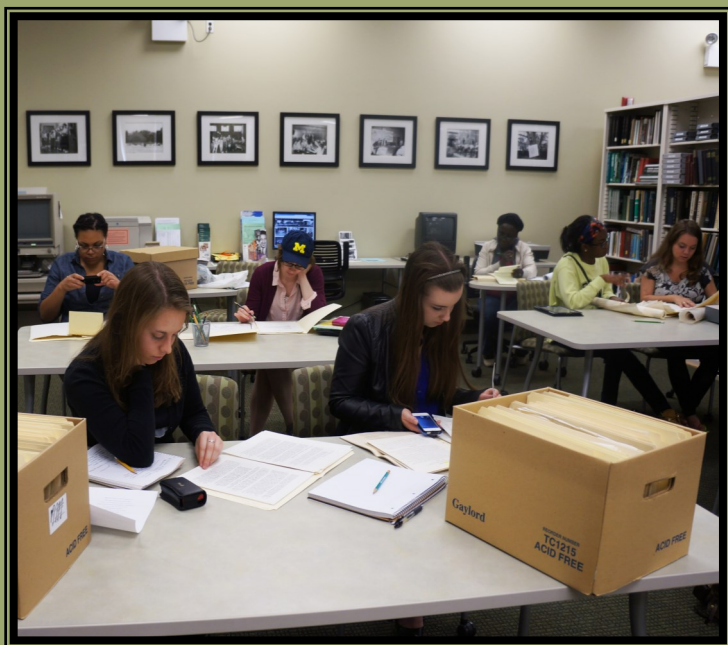


Kwanzaa at DAAS



DAAS held its annual pre-Kwanzaa celebration on December 13, 2013. More than 100 people joined the celebration which included a remembrance of Nelson "Madiba" Mandela who passed on December 5th as well as a karamu (feast) and a raffle with prizes.





Students Visit MSU Archives

On Saturday, 12 April, nine University of Michigan students went to the Michigan State University Archives in order to examine the document collection of Professor Emeritus John M. Hunter, a medical geographer who carried out research in northeastern Ghana, mainly in the 1960-1980s. Students found primary documents in his papers of the surveys he carried out in Nangodi, Ghana, where they will be conducting research on women's involvement in small-scale gold mining, women's health, and neem tree products. This DAAS-sponsored trip enabled students to examine these materials and maps which will be useful for follow-up research in Nangodi this summer. The trip to the archives is in preparation for a Ghana Study Abroad Trip that will take place from 15 May-14 June 2014.



Harris Wofford Visits DAAS

MLK and Kennedy adviser, former Pennsylvania Senator and Peace Corps co-founder, Harris Wofford visited DAAS for a discussion on April 1, as part of the "India in the World" theme semester 2014.

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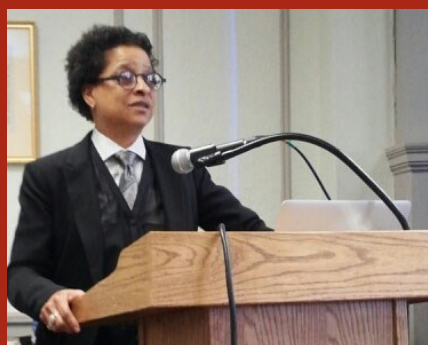
First Annual Sticky Note Art Competition



More than 50

students entered the GalleryDAAS First Annual Sticky Note Art Competition. The competition was held from January 22nd to February 7th with a reception on February 13th to announce the winners. The three winners were graduate student Emile Moacdieh (right), undergraduate Ellen Cope (left) and undergraduate Angelika Kurthren.

Sharon Holland Gives Zora Neale Hurston Lecture



On March 13th DAAS held its annual Zora Neale Hurston Lecture. This year's speaker was Sharon P. Holland,

professor at the Department of American Studies at UNC- Chapel Hill. The title of her lecture was "Blackness and the Human/Animal Distinction." The event was cosponsored by the Department of English.

Award Winning Artist Ed West



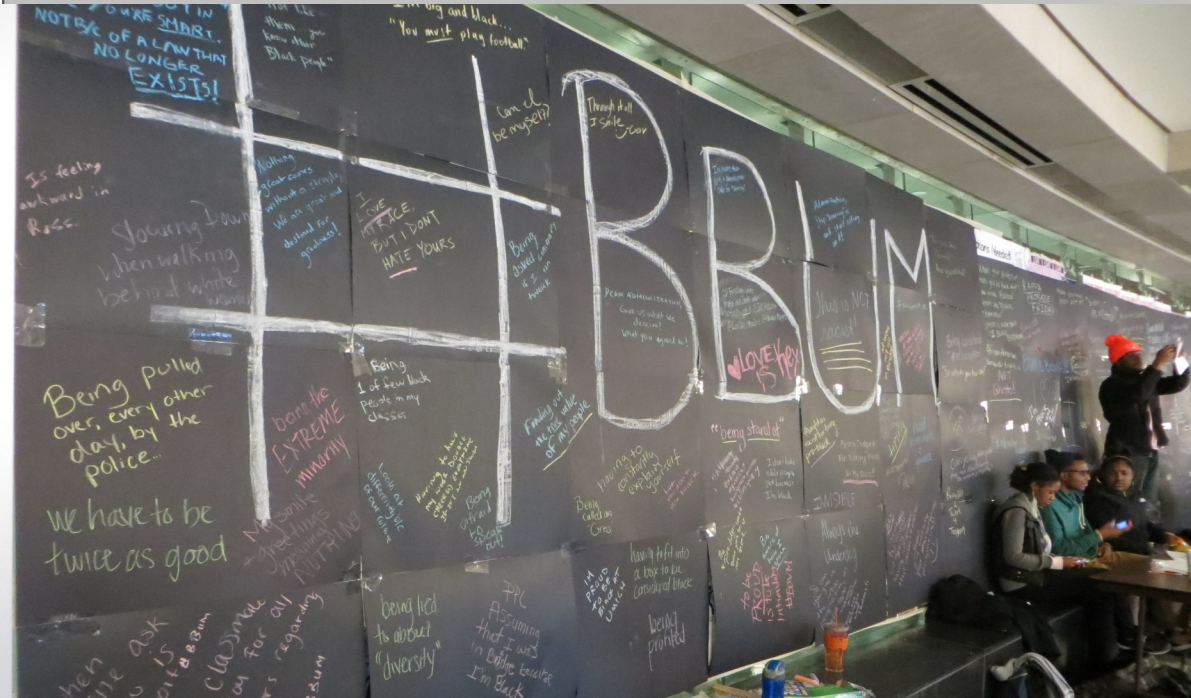
So Called, a photography series by award-winning artist and U-M professor Edward West is currently exhibited in GalleryDAAS. A transnational project about multi-ethnic identities in three locations: Honolulu, Hawaii, Havana, Cuba and Cape Town, South Africa, the series includes photographic portraits of individuals drawn from these communities and focuses on the issue of race, specifically the mixing of races and its social complexities. A practicing artist for more than 30 years, Edward West's

creative work includes photography, collage, and installation. His exhibitions include installations at the Smithsonian Institution, the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Rose Art Museum in Boston, the Honolulu Academy of Arts, the Corcoran Gallery of American Art, and the University of Michigan Museum of Art.



#BBUM

It was one of the top-trending hashtags on Twitter. Being Black at the University of Michigan, or #BBUM, was an awareness campaign initiated by the Black Student Union on Twitter that galvanized U-M students and started a national conversation about diversity on college campuses.





Internationally Acclaimed Artist Carmen Souza Visits U-M Campus

Considered one of the foremost emerging artists in the realm of world music/jazz, Carmen Souza traveled to the U-M with three other musicians as a quartet where she gave a concert at The Ark in Ann Arbor, led a workshop on the practice of jazz fusion with African roots music (particularly from the Cape Verde Islands), and visited the gateway course for DAAS, AAS 111, "Intro to Africa and its Diaspora." Carmen Souza is part of a vanguard of young Cape Verdean artists on the islands and in the diaspora (particularly in Europe), according to the program's organizer, DAAS Professor Fernando Arenas. Carmen Souza is following the path laid out by the mother of Cape Verdean music, the late Cesária Évora, one of the best selling African female artists of all times. "Souza along with other younger artists are taking Cape Verdean roots music to new territories by combining the islands' astonishingly rich traditions with modern sounds from a variety of sources including jazz, Afro-pop, Brazilian, and Caribbean," says Arenas. The Carmen Souza Artist Residency Program was co-sponsored by: the Center for World Performance Studies, the African Studies Center, the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies, the International Institute, the Institute for the Humanities, the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, and the Department of Linguistics.

Professor Fernando Arenas Brings Lusophone Artists to U-M

Fernando Arenas is a professor of Lusophone African, Brazilian, and Portuguese Studies with an emphasis on literature, film, and popular music, which he studies through an interdisciplinary and theoretical prism centering on the dyad of post-colonialism and globalization. He received his PhD at the University of California, Berkeley in 1994. He taught for 16 years in the Department of Spanish & Portuguese Studies at the University of Minnesota.



DAAS Sponsors First Lusophone Film Festival at U-M

The Lusophone Film Festival showcased the contemporary cinema of the Portuguese-speaking world. It was the first of its kind in Ann Arbor and at the University of Michigan. The festival featured recent critically acclaimed films from Brazil, Portugal, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and Angola, that have limited or no presence in the commercial film circuit. With the exception of veterans Flora Gomes from Guinea-Bissau and Licínio Azevedo from Brazil/Mozambique, the filmmakers are emerging directors. "All of the directors share a commitment towards the cinematic representation of social, cultural, and historical issues that are critical to their respective nations," says the festival organizer, Fernando Arenas, a professor in DAAS. The festival was co-sponsored by: the Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies Brazil Initiative, the African Studies Center, the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies, the International Institute, the Institute for the Humanities, the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, the Sheldon Cohn Fund of the Department of Screen Arts and Cultures, and the Center for European Studies.

Internationally Acclaimed Photographer Zanele Muholi Visits DAAS

Photographer and self-described “visual activist” Zanele Muholi visited DAAS on March 19, 2014 as part of the Africa Workshop. Muholi sees her work as a lifetime endeavor aimed at redefining the face of Africa both within and outside the continent, and as a means of fighting violence against LGBTI people. Born in 1972 in South Africa, she lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Africa Workshop series is co-sponsored by the African Studies Center.



Professor Frieda Ekotto with Visiting Artist Zanele Muholi

Peterson Awarded Melville J. Herskovits Award

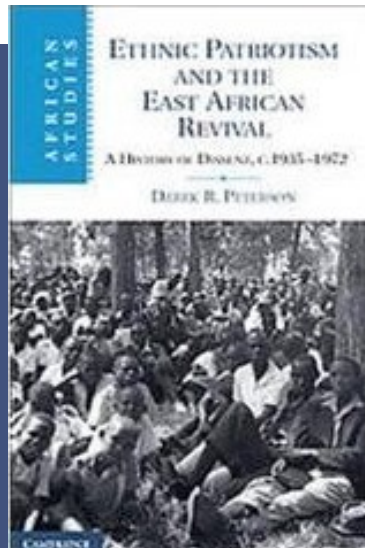
Derek Peterson's book, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: A History of Dissent*, was awarded the 2013 Melville J. Herskovits Award of the African Studies Association. The prize is given for the best book in African studies. Derek Peterson is a professor in DAAS and History.

Digital Media and the Global South

This conference, which took place on April 3rd and 4th at Michigan State University and on Saturday, April 5th at UM, sought to address the questions of digital media and the global south in the form of both scholarship and art, bringing together a range of film scholars who work on Africa, Latin American and Caribbean, and South Asian cinemas. Digital media has changed the everyday lives of millions of people, yet the focus on recent technological developments tends to emphasize the lives of those in first-world nations. But what about the impacts of new technology across the digital divide? How has digital media, mobile technologies, and new cinematic forms of representation changed the production and experience of art, economy, and culture in the global south? Focusing on contemporary developments in digital media, and especially film and the arts, this symposium explored the creative and tactical integration of digital media and new technologies through diverse topics such as new African cinema, media creation and distribution in South East Asia and South America, and cinemas that engage a minoritarian viewpoint regardless of its geopolitical origins. The purposes of the symposium, thus, was to rewrite the conception of the “world” in the term “world cinema,” which has generally given a nod to the global south, or co-opted southern differences into the main “waves” of



globalization’s purveyance of the aesthetics of the new. If the new has come on the heels of digital media technologies, its voices and accents are now appearing within southern spheres of culture. The conference, co-sponsored by the African Studies Center, provided an opportunity to view the work of some of the filmmakers and analyze the meaning of that work within a southern global perspective.



Staff and Faculty Awards



Wayne High Receives LSA Staff Spotlight Award

Wayne High, DAAS Key Administrator, has won the winter 2014 Staff Spotlight Award. The Award recognizes and celebrates achievements and contributions staff make to the successful operation of the college. Staff members are showcased three times each year. This is an opportunity to acknowledge the dedication and exemplary performance of individuals and work groups that deserve special recognition.



Elizabeth James Receives Harold R. Johnson Diversity Award

DAAS Staff Member Elizabeth James has been awarded the Harold R. Johnson Diversity Service Award. Named in honor of Dean Emeritus of the School of Social Work, this award was established in 1996. It recognizes contributions to the development of a culturally and ethnically diverse campus community. Says DAAS Chair Tiya Miles, "As a member of the Provost's special committee on diversity issues, a key member of the DAAS racial climate task force and a long-time adviser to the BSU, the award is well deserved".



Nesha Haniff and Nyambura Mpesha Nominated for Golden Apple

Nesha Haniff, faculty member in DAAS and Women Studies and Nyambura Mpesha, faculty member in DAAS, were both nominated for the Golden Apple Award, the only student nominated award that recognizes outstanding university teaching. In 2010, 2011, and 2012, Scott Ellsworth was also nominated for this award by his students. Congratulations to Professors Haniff, Mpesha and Ellsworth for receiving this recognition and appreciation from their students.



Robin Means-Coleman Receives UROP Outstanding Mentor Award

Robin Means Coleman, associate professor in DAAS and Communications, is one of only six UROP sponsors to receive the UROP Outstanding Mentor Award. The award recognizes contributions to the mentorship and development of future young scholars and researchers. It was presented at an Award Ceremony on Wednesday, April 23, 2014.

Engaging Modernity: Asante in the Twenty-First Century

Engaging Modernity
**Asante
in the
Twenty-First
Century**
Kwasi Ampene
Nana Kwadwo Nyantakyi III

Kwasi Ampene, Associate Professor in DAAS, Professor of Music and Director of the Center for World Performance Studies, has a new book titled *Engaging Modernity: Asante in the Twenty-First Century*. The book was launched on April 26, 2014 by His Majesty, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II (the Asante King), as part of the 2014 Adaekese (Grand Adaye festival) in Kumase, Ghana.

The book is a comprehensive study of the tangible and intangible heritage of regalia which reference over three hundred years of Asante history and culture. The book aims to produce a definitive history, one that will correct recurring inaccuracies and errors in both the oral and written history of the Asante King's royal regalia. The object types in the book include carved and gold-leafed swords with cast gold ornaments on their sheaths, a variety of music ensembles, verbal art forms, an impressive array of politically and religiously charged gold adorned wooden chairs and stools as well as a wide variety of other visual objects. All the regalia in the book represent potent proverbs and/or dramatic narratives and recall historical events that continue to define and sustain Asante identity in the world.



DAAS Administration

Tiya Miles, Chair
Elisha Renne, Associate Chair
Frieda Ekotto, Associate Chair of African Studies
Megan Sweeney, Director of Undergraduate Studies
Executive Committee: Kwasi Ampene, Karyn Lacy, Stephen Ward.

Newsletter

V. Robin Grice, Editor
Garrett Sawyer, Designer
Contributors: Elizabeth James, Elisha Renne, Shaquan Smith

Staff and Faculty Awards

Frieda Ekotto Awarded Nicolás Guillén Award for Philosophical Literature

Frieda Ekotto, a professor in DAAS and Comparative Literature, won the Nicolás Guillén Award for Philosophical Literature from the Caribbean Philosophical Association. Professor Ekotto received this award because of her contributions as a novelist, a theorist of race, sexuality, and criminality, along with her writings on existential themes emerging in the work of Lorraine Hansberry, Jean Genet, and struggles for human dignity, which stands among the best of the age. According to Jane Anna Gordon, “Professor Ekotto exemplifies the transnational commitments of the Caribbean Philosophical Association as well as our commitments across multiple genres and disciplinary approaches. Professor Ekotto works brilliantly on women’s sexualities in the African context instead of through those imposed on it.”



Megan Sweeney Awarded Arthur F. Thurnau Professorship

Megan Sweeney, associate professor in DAAS and English and Director of DAAS Undergraduate Studies, has been awarded an Arthur F. Thurnau Professorship. The Thurnau Professorships are named after Arthur F. Thurnau, a student at the University of Michigan from 1902 to 1904, and are supported by the Thurnau Charitable Trust that was established through his will. Mr. Thurnau wished to return to the University something of the value he gained from being an undergraduate on this campus. In that spirit and in his memory, the Thurnau Professorships recognize and reward faculty for outstanding contributions to undergraduate education. This program is designed to honor those tenured faculty whose commitment to and investment in undergraduate teaching has had a demonstrable impact on the



intellectual development and lives of their students. The exceptional students coming to the University of Michigan challenge us to create a rich and diverse learning environment in which our very best faculty are an integral part of the undergraduate educational experience. The Thurnau Professorships help to recognize and reward outstanding faculty who devote their attention to this important endeavor. Five tenured faculty members are designated annually as Thurnau Professors and hold this title for the remainder of their careers at U-M. They receive a \$20,000 grant to support activities that will enhance their teaching (e.g., travel, books, equipment, GSA support).

New Book

Dorceta Taylor: Toxic Communities

DAAS Faculty Associate Dorceta Taylor has a new book titled, *Toxic Communities*. Drawing on an array of historical and contemporary



case studies from across the country, Taylor explores controversies over racially-motivated decisions in zoning laws,

eminent domain, government regulation (or lack thereof), and urban renewal. She provides a comprehensive overview of the debate over whether or not there is a link between environmental transgressions and discrimination, drawing a clear picture of the state of the environmental justice field today and where it is going. In doing so, she introduces new concepts and theories for understanding environmental racism that will be essential for environmental justice scholars. A fascinating landmark study, *Toxic Communities* greatly contributes to the study of race, the environment, and space in the contemporary United States.

What Our Students Are Doing

Tyrell Collier Named a Student of the Year

Tyrell Collier, a DAAS Major, has been named a Student of the Year by the Michigan Daily. Of the 43,710 students on this campus, only twelve students were selected. According to the Daily, the students who were chosen were multi-dimensional, passionate and have inspired others to be better listeners, informers and students of the world — not simply of the classroom. Collier, an artist and photographer, was chosen for his role as president of the Black Student Union (BSU) as well as Enspired, an arts organization. Collier's role as the BSU speaker included the national attention BSU gained during the #BBUM campaign, a Twitter hashtag where students shared the experiences of "Being Black at the University of Michigan." The campaign lead to interviews with the Huffington Post, the New York Times and other major media outlets by Collier and other BSU officers. The list of demands given to the University included a much needed renovation of Trotter House, a multicultural center, which were recently approved by the University. A senior, Collier says he has full confidence in BSU and the Black community at large as they continue to advance Black opportunity at the University after he graduates.



Undergrad Spotlight: Shaquan Smith

Being Part of the Solution *by Shaquan Smith*

With the goal of giving back and creating a more eco-friendly environment, I volunteered with Students Today, Leaders Forever (STLF) during the 2014 spring break. STLF was truly a life changing experience for me. My group, also known as the "Maize Bus", consisted of thirty-one students (seventeen from the University of Michigan and fourteen from Michigan State) led by our amazing core group leaders Billy Cedar, Scott Briggs, Ashwin Ramanujam, and Sam Naples. While traveling for nine days with the "Maize Bus", I volunteered in six cities throughout the south including Louisville, KY, Nashville, TN, Asheville, NC, Charleston, SC, Savannah, GA and Atlanta, GA.



Each day was full of excitement and curiosity. Whether it was clearing an infested river, planting trees or spending time helping out the elderly, each service allowed me to appreciate the simple things in life and realize that helping others can sometimes be better than helping yourself. I truly had a great time on this trip and got a chance to meet some amazing people along the way. It was such a rewarding experience that I can't wait to participate again next year.

Students Research Growth of a Movement *By Elizabeth James*

How do you report about history making events as they are occurring before your eyes? Phaedra Wainaina and Emphani Aldridge, two graduating seniors with double majors in Afroamerican and African Studies and Political Science decided one way was to embark on a joint independent study with Associate Professor Stephen Ward to examine Black action movements on campuses following the recent #BBUM campaign. Emphani's initial intent was to examine whether predominantly White institutions such as U-M fulfilled their educational purpose for minority students. Phaedra was intrigued by the formation of Black Studies departments due to student activism. Eventually, the two decided to mobilize their forces and look at how Black Studies departments like U-M and other campuses such as UCLA, evolved and how these schools continued to grapple with racial tension.

Stephen Ward said, "One of the reasons this project was so important is that the students took seriously what it means to research a topic of great meaning for their own intellectual trajectory and to the broader communities to which Black Studies speaks." Both students received funding from DAAS and other sources to travel to California to interview the student activists at UCLA and the Interim Director of the UCLA African American Interdepartmental Program Robin Kelley, a former CAAS Professor. Phaedra stated, "I wanted to understand the experience of my counterparts. I thought the best available option was to utilize an independent study course to track the progression of these issues."



New DAAS Faculty

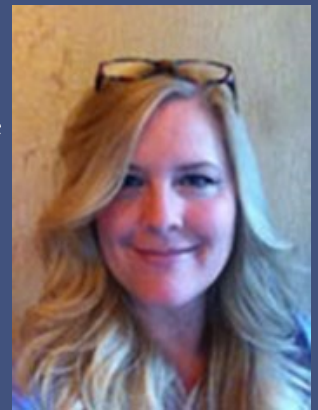
Aliyah Khan

Assistant Professor Aliyah Khan joined DAAS and the English Department in Fall Semester 2013. She received her Ph.D. in Literature and Feminist Studies in 2012 from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and her M.F.A. in Fiction Writing in 2006 from Hunter College, City University of New York. Aliyah was awarded the UC President's Dissertation Fellowship for her dissertation entitled "Calling the Magician: The Metamorphic Indo-Caribbean." Her areas of specialization are postcolonial Caribbean literature and the contemporary literature of the Muslim and Islamic worlds. Aliyah is a native of Guyana and New York.



Heather Ann Thompson

Heather Ann Thompson will be joining DAAS in Fall 2014. Currently a professor in the History Department at Temple University, she is writing the first comprehensive history of the Attica Prison Rebellion of 1971 and its legacy for Pantheon Books. To recover this story Thompson has immersed herself in legal, state, federal, prison, and personal records related to the Attica uprising and its aftermath (some never-before-seen) located in archives, governmental institutions, and various individual collections around the country and the world. With these varied and rich resources she seeks to recapture the full, dramatic, gripping, multi-faceted, and complex story that was Attica, and hopes to underscore for readers everywhere this event's historical as well as contemporary importance.



Jonathan Daniel Wells

Jon Wells will be joining DAAS in Fall 2014. A historian, he received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan and studies America in the nineteenth century. His first book, *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class, 1800-1861* (UNC Press, 2004), explored the emerging class consciousness of commercial and professional southerners. He has edited or co-edited five other books and is working on a textbook covering the Civil War era. He has published articles in *The Journal of Southern History* and *American Nineteenth-Century History* and has recently completed a book manuscript on black and white women journalists and editors in the nineteenth-century South. He has begun research and writing for a book on the post-Civil War southern middle class.



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