



DEPARTMENT OF  
AFROAMERICAN AND  
AFRICAN STUDIES

FALL 2025

# DAAS MAGAZINE







Sean Carter Photography

# CONTENTS

Letter from the Chair  
BÉNÉDICTE BOISSERON

3

News Briefs

4

Program Highlights

5

Course Spotlights

- BLACK ECOLOGIES
- HISTORY & EVOLUTION OF HIP-HOP CULTURE

8

The Perfect Home

TEN YEARS WITH THE  
CARCERAL STATE PROJECT

10

Class of 2025  
STUDENT AWARDS

11

## CONTACT DAAS

### MAILING ADDRESS:

Haven Hall, Room 4700  
505 South State Street  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109

EMAIL: [daas-info@umich.edu](mailto:daas-info@umich.edu)

FACEBOOK: [@michigan.daas](https://www.facebook.com/michigan.daas)

LSA.UMICH.EDU/DAAS



GET DAAS EMAILS!



DONATE TO DAAS!

## CREDITS

### PHOTOGRAPHY

Isabel Berg  
Sean Carter  
Rebecca Jackson  
Elizabeth James  
LSA Advancement  
Michigan Photography

### WRITERS

Rebecca Jackson  
Meghan Wysocki

### GRAPHIC DESIGN

Rebecca Jackson

### EDITOR

Rebecca Jackson

### SEND US NEWS!

Please share your news with us for future magazine issues via our Google form: [myumi.ch/8qJzM](https://myumi.ch/8qJzM)



Scott Soderberg,  
Michigan Photography

On May 2, 2025, I watched with pride as Daniel, Diya, Ariana, Catherine, and others stepped onto the graduation stage to receive the Josievet Moss Awards, Jonathan I. Kidd Prize, and other DAAS honors. In those moments, the rich history of our department came into focus. Founded in 1970 as the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies (CAAS), this department was born of student activism, particularly the Black Action Movement.

In 2011, CAAS officially became the *Department* of Afroamerican and African Studies (DAAS). Over the years, chairs including Tiya Miles, Harold Cruse, Niara Sudarkasa, Earl Lewis, James Jackson, Frieda Ekotto, and Matthew Countryman (to name a few) helped shape the department. As I reflect on the past 50 years and consider the next 50, I pause to take in this moment.

Our graduates began their final year at Michigan in 2024, a year prophetically envisioned by Octavia Butler in *Parable of the Sower* as one of unprecedented political turmoil and environmental devastation. And yet, even in uncertain times, our students rise, uplifted by the DAAS community, by those who came before them, by those cheering them on today, and by those who will follow in their glorious footsteps. There will be more excellence; there will be more resilience.

Last academic year, we chose the theme “Black Ecologies” to connect our students, faculty, and community through instructional, research, and community-based initiatives. With support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation’s Affirming Multivocal Humanities initiative, we redesigned our DAAS-In-Action courses, hosted a Black Ecologies Symposium, and curated an immersive outdoor exhibit, “Earth Song: A Black Nature Walk,” in Nichols Arboretum. We also presented a 10-year retrospective exhibit, “Filming the Future of Detroit and Philadelphia: Protecting Our Community,” at the Hellenic Museum of Michigan. One of the highlights of the year was our annual Zora Neale Hurston Lecture with poet and scholar Evie Shockley, who inspired us with her powerful keynote address, “Be Holding the Photograph: Ekphrasis and the Survival of Black Being.” In addition, our department continued its powerful speaker series with the Africa and Diasporic Dialogues Workshops, fostering important conversations and collaborations with national and international scholars.

It was a year of new beginnings. We welcomed new colleagues:

- Professor **Alan Rice**, visiting Fulbright Scholar from the University of Central Lancashire (UK), brings research expertise on the Battle of Bamber Bridge, a Jim Crow-related, WWII-era mutiny in a small UK village.
- Dr. **Zoë Berman**, a sociocultural anthropologist studying generational trauma and memory in Rwanda, joins us from the University of Chicago as a Michigan Society Postdoctoral Fellow and assistant professor.
- Dr. **Gaëtan Thomas**, lecturer I, a historian of 20th-century medicine and science with a Franco-African focus, comes to us from the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (Paris).

And we are delighted to welcome two new scholars this fall:

- Dr. **Nana-Yaw Andoh**, a Ph.D. alum of U-M’s Taubman College, begins his tenure-track position as assistant professor in global Black urban studies.
- **Esther Ginestet**, DuBois-Mandela-Rodney Postdoctoral Fellow, brings research expertise across the U.S., France, Kenya, and Uganda. She is completing a dual Ph.D. at Northwestern University and Sciences Po (Paris).

Please explore this magazine to read about faculty publications and awards (including a Guggenheim Fellowship), department celebrations, and — most importantly — the incredible achievements of our students. I want to express my deepest gratitude to every member of the DAAS community: students, instructors, researchers, staff, alumni, and supporters. Thank you for making this department a vibrant, inclusive, and intellectually rich space. We look forward to another year of innovation and creativity.

Our 2025 graduates have stepped down from the podium, awards, diplomas, and certificates proudly in hand. I find myself thinking of Pecola, the young protagonist of Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, who once asked why no one likes dandelions. *Aren’t they beautiful?* And yes, indeed, they are beautiful. Bold and beautiful. No matter how many times they’re pulled up, dandelions return. *Still, they rise.*

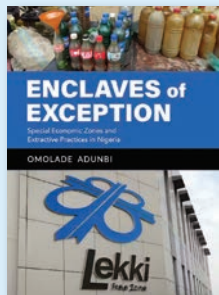
Tonight, quietly, I’ll honor our students, our past, and our future, by blowing a dandelion into the wind. I’ll watch the seeds fly away like tiny diamonds dancing in the air, my small tribute to the power of resilience. “DAAS @ 55: Resilience and Radiance” will be our guiding theme for the 2025–26 academic year.

With gratitude,

**Bénédicte Boisseron**  
Professor and Chair, DAAS  
Professor, Romance Languages and Literatures

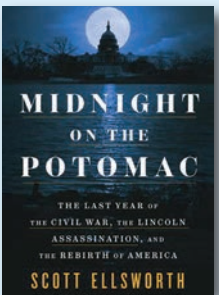
## PUBLISHED

### RECENT DAAS



OMOLADE ADUNBI  
*Enclaves of Exception: Special Economic Zones and Extractive Practices in Nigeria*  
Indiana University Press

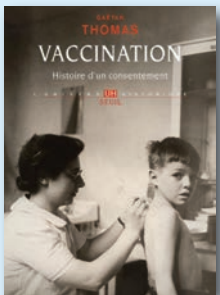
### FACULTY TITLES



SCOTT ELLSWORTH  
*Midnight on the Potomac: The Last Year of the Civil War, the Lincoln Assassination, and the Rebirth of America*  
Penguin Random House



MARTIN MURRAY  
*The Infrastructures of Security: Technologies of Risk Management in Johannesburg*  
University of Michigan Press



GAËTAN THOMAS  
*Vaccination: History of Consent*  
Éditions du Seuil





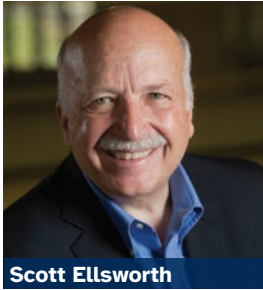
Omolade Adunbi



Gabriel Ayoola



Melba Joyce Boyd



Scott Ellsworth



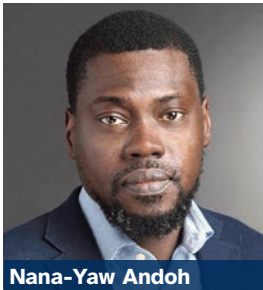
Elizabeth James



Paul Johnson



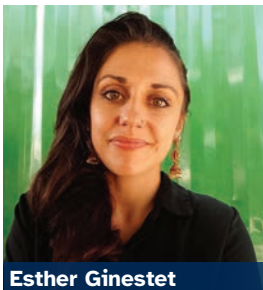
Martin Murray



Nana-Yaw Andoh



Zoë Berman



Esther Ginestet



Alan Rice



Gaëtan Thomas

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## FACULTY & STAFF

Professor **Omolade Adunbi** was awarded a Fulbright Grant for research focused on energy and climate change. Adunbi served as a Fulbright Scholar in the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

**Gabriel Ayoola**, lecturer II, was elected vice president of the African Languages Teachers Association (ALTA), a community of educators dedicated to the promotion and advancement of African languages.

Visiting Professor **Melba Joyce Boyd** was named poet laureate of Michigan by the Michigan Department of Education and the Library of Michigan. Boyd, an award-winning poet and author, will serve a two-year term, traveling to schools and libraries across the state to promote poetry and literature.

**Scott Ellsworth** was named DAAS' first teaching professor. Ellsworth, who joined the department in 2007, teaches courses on African American history, Southern literature, race and sports, and crime and justice.

Ambatana, South Quad's recently reopened Afroamerican multicultural lounge, celebrates the legacy of Black activism on campus with portraits of community members who "fought tirelessly for change and ushered in new opportunities for generations of students." Among those honored with a portrait is DAAS Program Associate **Elizabeth James**.

DAAS faculty members were recognized at U-M's Faculty Awards Celebration (fall 2024):

- Professor **Paul Johnson** received a Distinguished Faculty Achievement Award, which recognizes outstanding research and creative achievements, teaching and mentoring, and service.
- Adjunct Professor **Martin Murray** received a University Press Book Award for *The Infrastructures of Security: Technologies of Risk Management in Johannesburg*.

**Paul Johnson** was one of five U-M professors selected to join the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2025. Founded in 1780, the Academy is an honorary society and research center that brings together leading scholars and professionals across disciplines.

**Martin Murray** received a 2025 Guggenheim Fellowship for his research on the history of several Detroit neighborhoods. The Guggenheim Foundation has awarded its prestigious fellowships in support of exceptional scholarship and creative projects since 1925.

## WELCOME!

- Nana-Yaw Andoh**: assistant professor, global Black urban studies
- Zoë Berman**: assistant professor, Michigan Society Fellow
- Esther Ginestet**: DuBois-Mandela-Rodney Postdoctoral Fellow
- Alan Rice**: visiting Fulbright Scholar; professor of English and American studies, University of Central Lancashire, UK
- Gaëtan Thomas**: lecturer I

For nearly two decades, DAAS has hosted the Africa Workshop, inviting researchers around the world to share their work and engage in discussion about the African continent and diaspora. In our 2024–2025 season, we welcomed:

- Samar Al-Bulushi** (UC Irvine): "War-Making as Worldmaking: Kenya, the United States, and the Rise of 'Entangled Pacifications'"
- Zachary Levenson** (Florida International University, University of Johannesburg): "Delivery as Dispossession: Land Occupation and Eviction in the Postapartheid City"
- Kyama Mugambi** (Yale Divinity School): "Spirit, Movement, and the Religious Imagination: Decolonial Impulses in African Pentecostal Worship"
- Teddy Mattera** (South African filmmaker): Screening and discussion *Waiting for Valdez* (film)
- Benedito Machava** (Yale University): "The Road Not Taken: Decolonization and Political Imagination in Mozambique"
- Sean Jacobs** (The New School): "South Africa and the Question of the Global South"



# KWANZAA

“Another world is necessary. Another world is possible. Another world is happening.”

The words of author, activist, and Detroit Grace Lee Boggs provided the theme for our annual pre-Kwanzaa tradition of sharing and reflection. Some who joined us were continuing their own longstanding Kwanzaa traditions; others were experiencing their very first Kwanzaa.

DAAS Program Associate **Elizabeth James** spoke about



Kwanzaa's history and associated traditions while **Magdalyn Akiding**, DAAS lecturer, gave an overview of the Seven Principles and their Swahili pronunciations.

Following this reflection time, we celebrated and shared a community meal. Students, faculty, and staff filed in and out. There were reunions, introductions, and multiple generations in attendance. **Harambee!**



Scott Soderberg







GALLERYDAAS  
EXHIBITIONS

FALL: “Let the Earth Breathe,” a photographic exhibition depicting life in an oil extractive enclave (the Niger Delta) by DAAS Professor **Omolade Adunbi** and Nnimmo Bassey (pictured at right; 2024 Wallenberg medalist, architect, poet, and environmental activist). Their striking images showcased loss, perseverance, and the determination to survive. *Andrew Mascharka, Michigan Photography*





WINTER: “Devotion,” an exhibition of paintings by Detroit artist Jonathan Harris (pictured at left) and the late DAAS Professor **Jon Onye Lockard**. The two artists employ similar styles and themes in their work, in “conversation” with each other across space, time, and generations. *Leisa Thompson, Michigan Photography*





WINTER: “Reverence: Written in Silence,” a multimedia exhibition curated by DAAS student **Daniel Williams** (right photo, center). *Photos: Elizabeth James*



MLK SYMPOSIUM  
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?



*Andrew Mascharka*

As part of U-M’s annual Martin Luther King Jr. Symposium, DAAS partnered with the Department of History, Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies, and Wallace House Center for Journalists to host a panel discussion at UMMA’s Helmut Stern Auditorium on Wednesday, Jan. 29. Professors **Angela Dillard** and **Stephen Ward** were joined by Jelani Cobb for a conversation titled “Where Do We Go From Here?: Perspectives on Race, Democracy, and Justice” and framed by the themes explored in King’s own 1967 book *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*.

Jelani Cobb is dean of the Columbia School of Journalism, a staff writer for *The New Yorker*, and a political commentator for MSNBC. With Wallace House Director Lynette Clemetson moderating, the group discussed African American political history and the potential future of movements for racial justice and democratic change in the wake of the new presidential administration.

ZORA NEALE HURSTON  
LECTURE OF THE HUMANITIES



*Andrew Mascharka*

DAAS’ 2025 Zora Neale Hurston Lecture of the Humanities took place on Tuesday, April 15 at the Michigan League. The department welcomed Professor Evie Shockley for a lecture titled “Be Holding the Photograph: Ekphrasis and the Survival of Black Being.” Shockley is the Zora Neale Hurston Distinguished Professor of English and director of creative writing and Writers House at Rutgers University.

Shockley’s talk highlighted her research on the subject of “Black Graphics,” or the strategies employed by Black poets and other artists during the recent period characterized by the dominance of “colorblindness” ideology. In a series of short, interlinked essays, Shockley illustrated how Black cultural production responded to sociopolitical conditions from 1990 to 2015, and how colorblindness led to a “profound negation and erasure” of Black culture. Colorblindness “worked,” Shockley emphasized, because it gave cover to authority figures: When race was noticed without proper address or acknowledgment, the opportunity was lost to disrupt the operational system.

Shockley has authored several books and six collections of poetry. Among her earlier works, *the new black* received the 2012 Hurston/ Wright Legacy Award. *semiautomatic* received the same award in 2018 and was a finalist for both the *Los Angeles Times* Book Review Prize and the Pulitzer Prize. Following Shockley’s talk and Q&A, students, staff, and faculty enjoyed refreshments and the opportunity to connect.

AFRICAN LANGUAGES DAY



*Leisa Thompson*



Students enrolled in Swahili and Yoruba language courses through DAAS and the African Studies Center deliver cultural presentations and performances at African Languages Day (aka “Africa Day”) each year. Africa Day 2025 took place at Trotter Multicultural Center on Friday, March 28.



EARTH SONG

Bénédicte Boisseron’s “Black Ecologies” Course Explores Race and Nature

By Rebecca Jackson, DAAS Communications Coordinator

DAAS-In-Action courses require students to collaborate on a project using the knowledge and skills they acquire in class. For “Black Ecologies: Race and Nature” (AAS 498), taught by DAAS Professor and Department Chair **Bénédicte Boisseron**, that project was an immersive outdoor exhibition in Nichols Arboretum called “Earth Song: A Black Nature Walk.” The name comes from the Langston Hughes poem, and the concept from poet and MIT Professor Joshua Bennett’s own 2022 exhibition at the New York Botanical Garden, which featured Black poetry and performances in the natural surroundings.

Boisseron and her students sought to recreate a similar experience in the Arb, selecting environmentally themed poetry by Black writers to be engraved on wooden panels and displayed throughout the Arb’s walking trails.

The first year Boisseron taught the course, students created podcasts for their collaborative project. And while that generated interesting discussion, the second time around, she decided that a course on the environment should get everyone outdoors.

“That was my vision: to incorporate the inside and the outside,” said Boisseron, who specializes in the study of Black ecology. “The way that we met outside and in the woods just



felt like a different experience between them and me. It was a way of bonding.”

“Black Ecologies” interweaves past and present as it does indoors and outdoors: Students trace the relationship between African Americans and nature through history, exploring how the environment could be both friend and foe to runaway slaves and during the Jim Crow era. They also consider contemporary issues of curation, grappling with the legacies of historical figures who contributed significantly to their fields of study while also perpetuating racism and violence.

For an on-campus case study, they visited the Hatcher Gallery Exhibit Room, home to an eight-volume folio edition of John James Audubon’s *Birds of America*. Hatcher did an admirable job, in Boisseron’s estimation, of reckoning with Audubon’s

controversial personal legacy and of recognizing the contributions of Black and Indigenous persons to his work. For Boisseron, who grew up in Paris and the French Caribbean, living in the U.S. has added a new layer of perspective on these issues.

“When I think of America, I think of open space, the city, the wild, and all the colonial ideas of ‘conquering the space,’” she said. “It was very different for me to come to America and to feel the land soaking with that history. When you think about land and soil, it’s very much interrelated with the history of Indigenous people and African Americans in a way that it’s not in France.”

Boisseron organized U-M’s first Black Ecologies Symposium in fall 2024, inviting prominent scholars in the field. While the participants had read each other’s work, many met in person for the first time at the symposium. Boisseron likened the experience to an anecdote from Harvard Professor Henry Louis Gates, who, as a young journalist, went to interview James Baldwin in the south of France and ended up at a dinner table with both Baldwin and his dinner guest: Josephine Baker.

“It was his dream table!” exclaimed Boisseron. “When I presented that panel, I said the same thing: if I had a dream table today, [it] would be those people. I was very lucky to have them all in one room.”

When it comes to the future of the course, Boisseron hopes the Black Nature Walk will become a traveling exhibition at campuses across the country and perhaps even worldwide. As for her students, she hopes they are inspired to reignite their connection with the natural world. Most agreed they felt that connection more strongly as children and that it had dimmed with age.

“At the beginning of the semester,” Boisseron recalled, “we talked about *Wild*, the movie and book about this woman who was trying to find herself and went to the Pacific Crest Trail. [The students] found it ridiculous, but after a few weeks — I’m not saying that they would want to do something that extreme! — but the contact with nature, it’s something that they felt more connected with.”



**Professor Boisseron’s Recommended Reading/Listening:**

- 🎧 *Wild Girls* by **Tiya Miles** (former DAAS department chair)
- 🎧 *Salvage the Bones* by **Jesmyn Ward** (U-M MFA alum)
- 🎧 *Black to Nature* podcast series
- 🎧 The writings of Malcolm Ferdinand
- 🎧 Bentley Historical Library papers on the history of the Arb



SCHOOL OF HIP-HOP

Stephen Ward’s “History and Evolution of Hip-Hop Culture” Caps Enrollment at 200

By Meghan Wysocki, DAAS Editorial Assistant

In **Stephen Ward’s** class, “The History and Evolution of Hip-Hop Culture” (AAS 254), listening to music is not only encouraged, it’s required. Ward, an Arthur F. Thurnau Professor and associate professor with DAAS and the Residential College, says he would have a DJ in class every day if he could.

About 10 years ago, incentivized by the department to teach a larger course, Ward decided on the topic of hip-hop after noticing how much students enjoyed his use of music to teach content in other classes. While not his direct research area, Ward’s background in African American history and

social movements informed the class discussions and course material. DJ or no DJ, music took center stage.

“Students engage with the music not just by listening, but through a range of readings, films, and other material to nuance their listening,” Ward explained.

The class grew from a small lecture to one that now caps enrollment at 200, with students ranging from seasoned hip-hop fans to newbies. Ward focuses on the history and evolution of hip-hop, which he views as relational but not identical concepts. The course examines the genre’s birth and rebirth: the context from which it came and how it changed over time from its emergence in the early 1970s to the present day.


“In my class, I focus on the ‘three C’s’ of the early ’90s: commercialization, controversy, and consciousness,” Ward said. “We also work through music using three major tropes: the practice of self-reference, claims to authenticity, and the importance of place.”

These through-lines help Ward connect with his students, even as the subject matter of contemporary hip-hop constantly changes. He was able to reach an even broader audience by consulting on an educational exhibition at GalleryDAAS last fall. “Hip-Hop @ 50” celebrated the genre’s 50th anniversary with a visual exploration of its history and influences.

In the future, Ward envisions his class offering more space for students to present and perform. They currently have an opportunity to do that during the final week of the class, called “Victory Lap” (after the 2018 Nipsey Hussle album), but Ward hopes to expand it further. In addition, he would like a more consistent, robust guest speaker presence. And maybe, just maybe, a full-time DJ.



Photos: LSA Advancement




**Related Reading/Viewing from Professor Ward’s Class:**

*Rubble Kings* documentary, directed by Shan Nicholson (2015)

*Somebody Scream!: Rap Music’s Rise to Prominence in the Aftermath of Black Power* by Marcus Reeves

*Dilla Time: The Life and Afterlife of J Dilla, the Hip-Hop Producer Who Reinvented Rhythm* by Dan Charnas

**GalleryDAAS’ “Hip-Hop @ 50” exhibition playlist, curated by Professor Ward** ➡





“THE PERFECT HOME”

DAAS and the Carceral State Project a Decade Later

By Meghan Wysocki

In the decade since its founding, the Carceral State Project (CSP) has involved research teams of over 300 faculty, staff, students, and community members. Co-run by professors **Heather Ann Thompson** (DAAS and history) and Matt Lassiter (history) and supported by a multimillion-dollar grant, CSP is a interdisciplinary collaboration that documents and challenges processes of carceral control such as criminalization, policing, and immigrant detention. But it wasn’t always so big.

When Thompson, a historian and Detroit native, joined the U-M faculty in 2015, she was already focused on confinement and criminalization. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of her work, she was searching for a place that would support her investigation into mass incarceration from the perspective of those most impacted. DAAS was “the perfect home.”

“I wanted to create this massive study into how [mass incarceration] happened, what it meant for people ensnared in it, and what it meant for Michigan and the nation,” Thompson said. “In particular, I wanted to bring it to DAAS. This is the kind of project you need to come at from an interdisciplinary perspective, and DAAS’ work is inherently interdisciplinary.”

Thompson and Lassiter were particularly interested in the period post-1972, when the U.S. began incarcerating more people than any other country in the world. Disproportionately, those incarcerated were Black and Brown people. DAAS was critical to their efforts, not just in the recognition of and research into this phenomenon, but also to envisioning the future: how mass incarceration is dismantled and how solutions are created to deal with intersectional issues of poverty, mental illness, and social harm.



Professors **Heather Ann Thompson** (left) and Matthew Lassiter (right), co-founders of the Carceral State Project.

“The crisis of mass incarceration is also, fundamentally, a crisis of racism,” Thompson said. “It is a crisis of the incredible overpolicing, overcriminalization, and overconfinement of people of African descent. Working toward and imagining alternatives are what bring us [on the CSP team] together.”

Advocacy grounds CSP’s research. One of Thompson’s classes investigated the North Lake Correctional Facility in

Baldwin, Michigan, which recently reopened as the largest Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facility in the Midwest. Before it reopened, students examined the prison from the perspective of those formerly incarcerated there, learning about the facility’s history of hunger strikes and rebellions.

One of Thompson’s students liases with parents whose son died by suicide in solitary confinement at Oakland County Jail while suffering from mental illness. Her goal is to create a set of story maps on conditions inside the jail, with particular attention to this family’s story. The hope is that these story maps can be shown to those with the power to make a difference. And CSP is determined to make a difference where it can, too.

“The Carceral State Project allowed us to be really insistent that we actually admit formerly incarcerated people into our graduate program,” Thompson said. “We’ve also fought the University’s repeated attempts to make people disclose their criminal backgrounds, either to apply to college or to apply to work here.”

CSP received a boost of financial support from the University-led Humanities Collaboratory, enabling the project’s expansion to include eight faculty members who led 150 undergraduate and graduate students on research projects. By 2022, CSP had produced a considerable record of public scholarship: five website exhibitions, 41 digital publications, 17 news articles, six policy reports, and 31 firsthand accounts by incarcerated people. The project’s big break came that same year, when the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA) awarded the team a \$2 million grant for a new research node titled *Confronting the Carceral State: Criminalization, Confinement, and Control* (CCC). CCC bolstered investigations into topics like confinement conditions, deadly force, police transparency, and immigrant justice. The CCC’s Reckoning Project, led by DAAS and Political Science Professor **Christian Davenport**, compiled a national database of police misconduct. LSA’s grant also enabled the team to welcome a new project coordinator, **Katie Pieper**, and postdoctoral fellow, **Stephen Cassidy Jones**, as core staff members.

A 2025 symposium, held at the Trotter Multicultural Center in March, offered attendees an opportunity to explore the historical context of and current struggles against criminalization, surveillance, and incarceration, and to hear directly from formerly incarcerated people, grassroots leaders, and legislators. The symposium also showcased CSP’s partnerships with community organizations such as the Michigan Center for Youth Justice and Safe & Just Michigan.

“The symposium was a nice summary of what we’ve been able to do through DAAS,” Thompson said. “I can’t stress enough that DAAS is essential as the home for this broader inquiry. DAAS is committed to understanding racial justice, and the criminal justice system is ground zero for that.”

Thompson encourages students and anyone interested in CSP involvement to reach out via email or take a class offered by CSP faculty members. CSP also hosts several public events each year. For more information, visit [sites.lsa.umich.edu/dcc-project](https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/dcc-project).



Leisa Thompson

There is no graduation quite like a DAAS graduation. From the procession of the graduates to “Celebration” by Kool & The Gang, to the embroidered graduate sashes (“aso oke”) from Ibadan, Nigeria, to the show-stopping performance by the Detroit Academy of Arts and Sciences children’s choir, DAAS commencement vibes are uplifting and convivial, culminating in a catered community luncheon in the U-M Museum of Modern Art courtyard.

At the 2025 ceremony, faculty and staff members delivered a stirring multilingual rendition of the Maya Angelou poem “Still I Rise.” French, Kahe, Patois, Portuguese, Spanish, Swahili, Telugu, and Yoruba were some of the languages represented by department members. DAAS also recognized outstanding student achievements with the presentation of annual department awards:

- **Josievet Moss Student Award**, awarded to seniors who contribute significantly to DAAS’ educational and

community-building mission: **Diya Mitchell** and **Daniel Williams**.

- **Josievet Moss Rising Star Award**, awarded to students in a DAAS first-year seminar program who exemplify the spirit of Black studies scholar-activism: **Rhian Stewart**.
- **Wangari Maathai Essay Competition prize**: awarded to the best original essay (from one undergraduate and one graduate student) on any topic in African American, Caribbean, and/or African studies: **Holden Hughes** and **Catherine Martz**.
- **Dr. Jonathan I. Kidd Senior Prize**: awarded to a senior (DAAS major or minor) whose project, capstone, or thesis involves serious engagement with a significant intellectual, social, political, or practical problem related to the African diaspora and the educational mission of DAAS: **Ariana Kertsman**.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2025!



MAJORS

Norielis Botello Cruz  
Ariana Kertsman  
Shakirah Nakawooya Lieffers  
Ryan Noble  
Nia Grace Gandaho Paton  
Jahad Richard  
Chidimma Jessica Udegbonam  
D’Angelo Watson

MINORS

Lauren Burnside  
Sydney Conley  
Jordan Jones  
Sophia Lane  
Peyton Martin  
Diya Mitchell  
Rayne Walkowicz  
Leslie Washington

GRADUATE CERTIFICATE RECIPIENTS

African Studies: Annie Birkeland  
African American and Diasporic Studies: Gabrielle Kubi





Department of Afroamerican  
and African Studies (DAAS)  
Haven Hall, Room 4700  
505 South State Street  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109

NONPROFIT  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
ANN ARBOR, MI  
PERMIT NO. 144

# 2025-2026 DAAS EVENTS SAVE THE DATES!



EVENTS  
CALENDAR



DECEMBER 12

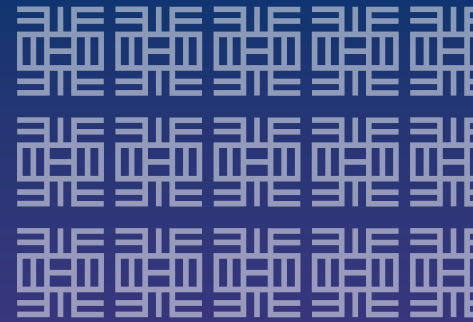
KWANZAA CELEBRATION

MAY 1

DAAS GRADUATION

MONTHLY

FACULTY FORUMS



SEND US YOUR NEWS  
FOR FUTURE MAGAZINES

DONATE  
TO DAAS



[myumi.ch/8qJzM](https://myumi.ch/8qJzM)

