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The SOJOURNER TRUTH *Newsletter*

A PUBLICATION OF THE CENTER FOR AFRICANA STUDIES AT CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

A UNIVERSAL COMMITMENT



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
AT
CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

Message from the Editor in Chief

Welcome to our Spring 2011 issue of The Sojourner Truth newsletter. In keeping with the mission statement of the Center for Africana Studies, this issue acknowledges the accomplishments and addresses key issues relevant in the lives of people who represent the African Diaspora. Furthermore, with the underlying "Sankofa" message of understanding our progression through the past and present, this issue highlights the reflective vision we have gained in good spirits that continue to remind us of our capacity to be creative and inspiring individuals. Thus, the feature article of this issue focuses on community engagement and emphasizes the university's commitment to this endeavor. Three additional articles encompass this theme with a focus on recent programs honoring Black History Month and events that promote our global links with one another. Furthermore, our key standing topic of News from the Motherland emphasizes the current changes within select African countries with a critical focus on the challenges and opportunities that can emerge from countries in political and social transitions. As with each issue, a debt of gratitude is owed to all who have contributed or consulted with me on this issue, and I sincerely hope that the material presented will inspire and empower all who read it.

Dr. Beverly A. Johnson

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READERS' COMMENTS

Good job with the fall issue of the Sojourner Truth! It was refreshing to read the feature article, and I believe students can learn a lot from this article because they should be serious minded when making choices about their short and long term futures.

Professor Peter Kyem, Chair, Geography Dept.

Although I enjoyed reading about South Africa and the World Cup, I would like to see more African countries covered in the News from the Motherland section. The Rwandan Reconciliation Film documentary made me want to know more about the country Rwanda.

**George Richardson, Staff Personnel, Continuing Education
and Community Engagement**

The article, "From Absent Fathers: Literary Implications for Sons in the College Environment," was very eye opening. When we think of an absent father, we immediately think of all the negative effects that has on a child, especially the son. For example, statistics have shown us that most of the Black males in prison/juvenile detention centers come from single parent homes where the father wasn't present. Rarely do we think of or see the positive effects of having an absent father. This article allows us to see that it doesn't always have to turn out bad.

LaToya Johnson, CCSU Senior, Criminology Major

Reading the Sojourner Truth newsletter was informative and even more thought provoking. The article "From Absent Fathers: Literary Implications for Sons in the College Environment" touched me personally. The impact of a missing father has on a child, as the article states, can be a motivation or a hurdle. I hope those who read the article can put aside or learn to deal with any resentment and find resources to fill any possible voids.

Andrew McGill, CCSU Senior, Mathematic Major

The article "Where Do We Go From Here" was well written and the most interesting to me because of how much I could relate to some of the students' comments. I believe that a person's self image is important and to be able to market oneself, as the article stated, could be the icing on the cake to land a job against someone of the same caliber. Especially in our current economy, it would be extremely beneficial for students to look for multiple ways to improve their resume and image.

Renald ("Renny") Demosthene, CCSU Senior, Elementary Education Major

The Eighth Annual Amistad Lecture
“The Legacy of the Amistad Revolution: Lessons for the 21st Century”

On February 22nd, 2011, Associate Professor of English at Pennsylvania State University, Dr. Iyunolu Osagie, gave the Keynote Address for the “The Legacy of the Amistad Revolution: Theater, Davidson Hall, at Central Con-
Lecture, a prominent Black History welcome and introduction by the Amis-
Sogunro, Professor of Educational opening remarks of Dr. Carl Lovitt, Affairs at CCSU. After favorable greet-
of Education and Professional Studies), Perry (Co-Director –Center for Afri-
that viewed the Amistad members as Amistad Committe member, Dr. Beverly



Keynote speaker Dr. Iyunolu Osagie

Eighth Annual Amistad Lecture entitled Lessons for the 21st Century” in Torp-
necticut State University. The Amistad Month feature, began with a heartfelt
tad Committee Co-Chair, Dr. Olusegun Leadership. It was followed by the warm
Provost and Vice President of Academic ings from Dean Mitchell Sakofs, (School
and Anthropology Professor, Warren cana Studies), a moving poetry reading
“unlikely visionaries” was presented by Johnson, (Associate Professor of English).

The program continued with the introduction of Dr. Osagie by Dr. Katherine Harris (Adjunct Professor of History), who succinctly highlighted the Keynote Speaker's biography and academic accolades.

From her expressions of gratitude for the opportunity to deliver the keynote address, to her qualitative and reflective conclusion, Dr. Osagie gave a consistent overview of the inspirational significance the Amistad Revolt and its impact, in particular, had on her native country of Sierra Leone. She initially framed her discussion by intersecting, historically, several personal, social, and political events that profoundly influenced her decision to author the book “The Amistad Revolt: Memory, Slavery, and the Politics of Identity in the United States and Sierra Leone.”

Throughout her speech, Dr. Osagie shared her feelings of empowerment gained as a result of becoming part of the collective voice of people in the United States and Africa who continue to honor the Amistad legacy. She reflected on earlier times when she was keenly inspired to explore the Amistad resistance as a result, in part, of reading the historical poetry of Robert Hayden, and she explained the importance of Hayden's decision to pay homage to the Amistad resistance in one of his most noted poem “Middle Passage.” Dr. Osagie also shared her surprise and admiration upon discovering the Sierra Leoneans' key roles in the revolt, and she questioned the dearth of knowledge that existed about the entire Amistad story in many areas of the United States as well as in her native land. This void of information led Dr. Osagie to research the Amistad members well beyond their experiences in the United States to their experiences made once they returned to Sierra Leone in 1842. She noted that many people were not aware that some Amistad members were either killed or recaptured upon their return home due to the continued illegal acts of slave traders in Sierra Leone well beyond the mid 1800s while other Amistad members were protected by the missionaries within their local areas.

Dr. Osagie also reflected upon her experiences in Sierra Leone and her discoveries of the "hero status" the leader of the Amistad revolt, Sengbe Pieh (Cinque), a Mende from Sierra Leone, had received within certain areas of the country. She also explained the impact the Amistad story had on teenagers and young adults within Sierra Leoneans who were involved in both the retelling of the Amistad story through a theatrical performance and the favorable merging of this performance to the country's political uprising (and eventual military coup) against the corrupt government in 1992. She further emphasized why many young people affected by the social and political instability within Sierra Leone at this time identified Sengbe Pieh as a symbolic hero representative of their desires and struggles in the 20th century. After highlighting select images of Sierra Leone, Dr. Osagie concluded her speech by reminding audiences that one event (such as the Amistad revolt) will continue to bridge the past and present and will continue to have profound global implications in the future.

Following the "Question and Answer" session, led by Dr. Gloria Emeagwali (Professor of History and Amistad Committee Co-Chair) that addressed select audience members' questions and concerns about recent changes politically in the United States and the current North African and Middle East uprisings as they relate to the Amistad revolt, closing remarks and an invitation to the reception banquet honoring "The Heroes of the Amistad" were given by Dr. Johnson to all in attendance. ■



Dr. Osagie honored at the 8th Annual Banquet.



The Osagies pose with Amistad committee members.



Administrators and Faculty: R. Bachoo, K. Harris, B. Johnson, G. Emeagwali, S.Osagie, I. Osagie, C. Lovitt, R. Rodriguez, S. Klinger, P. Kyem, O. Sogunro

A Universal Commitment Community Engagement at Central Connecticut State University

The campus of Central Connecticut State University displays a broad and vibrant community of administrators, faculty members, staff personnel, and students from many regions of the United States and beyond; however, there are times when the campus may appear to be quite insular as the dominant type of community-based environment that exists, specifically, for the students attending or enrolled at this university. In the past decade, this



An activity of community engagement: CONNCAS Students participate in the Challenge Course through the Dept. of Human Resources in Newington, CT.

would have been a more accurate perception of campus life for many, yet this perception in the twenty-first century is no longer viable based on recent changes within the university's agenda that showcases, more visibly, an effort to practice and a commitment to profile community engagement in rather substantial ways.

Understandably, the core benefits of significant engagement with the community are worthy of attention for several reasons, and these reasons far outweigh the temporary challenges or setbacks that may surface throughout

any initial processes. For instance, some key benefits include yet are not limited to a broader and clearer understanding of the university's function as a community partner which extends the credibility of the university for many community members. Second, the community will have more valid evidence of tangible support from the university that reiterates the message that their concerns are worthwhile, and their views will not only be considered but visibly incorporated within decisions-making processes relevant for the community and university. Furthermore, the access to diverse ways of learning for students can expand significantly through student involvement and learning-based interactions with the community through short-term and long-term community engaged projects. Since more courses devoted to community engagement will be taught at Central in upcoming semesters, it remains to be seen whether part of the university's curriculum will become complimentary to or the new drive force behind various campus organizations that are committed currently to sponsoring numerous community oriented activities and events.



African drummer, Bruce Sharpe, captivates the audience with Nigerian rhythms at the 2011 International Festival in Alumni Hall at CCSU.

One of the most visible signs of community engagement is in the Office of Continuing Education and Community Engagement (CE/CE) located at Central on the first floor of E. Willard Hall. Although the designation within the title was made over two years ago, the title change from Continuing Education and the Enrollment Center to Continuing Education and Community Engagement underscores the dedication to place policy and practice in tandem in order to create and facilitate worthwhile endeavors for many people within and outside of the university's sphere. According to Associate Director Richard Cheney of Continuing Education and Community Engagement, CE/CE

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provides several opportunities for non-traditional as well as traditional students. From access to vocational training and certification in a specific vocation to career building internships and classes that will more than likely help students stay in demand for at least in the next three decades, (including but not limited to opportunities in health care, law enforcement, and real estate), Cheney believes the level of community engagement on the campus is moving in a favorable direction. He makes this assessment based on the "top down" approach the university administrators have embraced, the commitment of faculty and staff who recognizes the importance of educating students about community engagement, and the links made by CE/CE with various academic centers and campus organizations. He explains that although more work needs to be done, is it essential to promote "mutually beneficial relationships through long term arrangements that continue to reflect the university's commitment in partnering with the community."

Another prominent sign of the university's commitment in this area is the success achieved by applying for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's Community Engagement classification, which earned Central Connecticut State University a Community Engagement designation. Evidence which strongly supported the university's entitlement to this distinction included descriptive examples of structural practices of community engagement that were directly in line with the university's mission. In addition, proof of cultural leadership practices and key resources devoted to community engagement were also required. In 2010, the university was one of 115 colleges and universities selected to receive this distinctive classification, and it is linked with nearly 200 other universities that earned the designation in 2006 and 2008. "We had a significant amount of support from President Jack Miller and Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Carl R. Lovitt. They are both huge proponents of community engagement," Cheney pointed out in a recent interview. He praised the collaborative effort shown by the task force (funded by Provost Lovitt) which consisted of administrators, faculty members, and staff who worked diligently to complete the application process in order for the university to earn the community engagement classification by the Carnegie Foundation.

Cheney's views are supported, in part, by community member and leader Paulette Fox, Executive Director of OIC, Opportunities Industrialization Center of New Britain, Inc. For instance, Fox believes the university should be a major part of the community, "especially as it relates to youth and employment opportunities." She believes that it is a necessity for the university to be a major resource for educational advancement and career development, and she offers her views on the areas of progress witnessed over the past years within the local community of New Britain, Connecticut. However, with her special insights as a community representative, Fox promotes ways to continue this progress that can be beneficial to both the university and the community.

She asserts, "I believe President Miller and other people are very concerned about the community, and in the past few years, I have seen representation from CCSU on several task forces. However, I would love to see the university be a part of the Board of Education meetings or have an area in the high school or in the community where the campus programs and accomplishments could be highlighted." Equally significant for Ms. Fox is the need for

CCSU students to be connected to all local agencies through their majors, if possible, as well as more quality time invested in community engagement by the university's professors. She also encourages the continuation of the great work that has been done by many students; however, Fox further emphasizes that there is a need for various community members to be involved in the university's planning sessions, and this involvement should be a major part of the university's strategic plan.

On a similar note, Ms. Cherolle Brown, a senior majoring in psychology at CCSU, would like to see more local community organizations invited to campus functions. Although she recognizes the Center for Africana Studies' tutoring and mentoring services and the Center for International Education's cultural events as three strong examples of community engagement within the campus environment, she believes the university should play a key role in promoting more community awareness towards walks for relevant causes such as the prevention of breast cancer or the prevention of suicide.

Overall, the views reflective of a community leader and a CCSU senior will continue to be significant for many campus representatives such as Cheney as the discussion of community engagement expands toward more tangible assessments, especially within the community. It is also worthy to note that currently on campus, the new Community Engagement Minor offering along with the availability of community engagement grants, and faculty workshop/s recently announced are sound indicators of a universal commitment to expanding the scope of community engagement that is intended to last for many years to come. ■ Johnson, B.

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Black History Month Features: Targeting Race and Gender

On February 17, 2011, Guest Lecturer, Dr. Shayla Nunnally, presented a detailed lecture entitled "Being Black in America: How Black Americans Learn about Blackness and How it Matters" to a sizable audience in Torp Theatre, at Central Connecticut State University. Nunnally focused her presentation mainly on the distinction of generational views and the implications that can be made about race in today's context for this country.

Nunnally opened the lecture discussion with questions such as the following: Who is considered Black, and what does it actually mean to be Black in the United States? The result of these questions included possibilities such as the one drop rule, people's skin tone or color, and those who experience living as Black people in Black communities. Another key point of interest was the shaping of identities (historically and



Black History Month Guest Lecturer: Dr. Shayla Nunnally

symbolically) linked to the "double consciousness" experience as a result of slavery and segregation laws. Nunnally's qualitative information highlighted socio-economic disparities based on a legacy of discrimination leveled at African Americans as well as Native Americans. This legacy, she stressed, influenced (internally and externally) the development of racial attitudes among Black people, trust issues in society, and varying public opinions pertaining to race and identity. Using dependent variables including (but not limited to) family, church, and friends, Nunnally explored the generational gap with research data framed, in part, through internet surveys, census records, and select interviews. She provided relevant cross generational differences in attitudes and beliefs as far back as World War II and the Pre-Civil Rights generations to the Civil Rights and Post Civil Rights generations.

One notable distinction elaborated upon was the 2004 NAACP speech given by Bill Cosby. Cosby, the first African American to star in a weekly television drama, has continued to share his views as an advocate for the education of young people, especially people of color. Nunnally pointed out that Cosby's speech, given on the 50th anniversary of Brown vs. the Board of Education, blatantly marked the familial and educational disconnection between the Pre-Civil Rights and Post Civil Rights generations. Since she underscored parents as a major source of racial socialization, it was fitting that Nunnally acknowledged Cosby's belief of bad parenting as a main cause for the breakdown of Black progression. She referenced brief passages of Cosby's speech that suggested the prior vision for empowerment is no longer being adhered to present day.

The Value of Sharing Life Experiences: Women in Business Panel at CCSU

Subsequently, Nunnally shared her thoughts about the politicization of race, especially in today's time, and the need for the increased socio-economic status of Black Americans as a racial group. Before concluding her lecture, Nunnally reflected upon the role of race in the lives of young people, and she stressed that the correlation between politics and race should not be underestimated. She believes that it is important to devote time to learn more about race in order to fully understand major issues within the country. This is of particular importance for people who are committed to Black people's socioeconomic advancement. This lecture was co-sponsored by the Department of Philosophy, Department of Political Science, and the Peace Studies Programs. ■



Chief Administrative Officer, Richard Bachoo, gives remarks at the Women in Business Panel in Founders Hall at CCSU.

the role of race in the lives of young people, and she stressed that the correlation between politics and race should not be underestimated. She believes that it is important to devote time to learn more about race in order to fully understand major issues within the country. This is of particular importance for people who are committed to Black people's socioeconomic advancement. This lecture was co-sponsored by the Department of Philosophy, Department of Political Science, and the Peace Studies Programs.

of the 2011 Black History Month program, an enlightening panel discussion "A Life's Journey" was held

As a continuation of the 2011 Black History Month program, an enlightening panel discussion "A Life's Journey" was held

in Founders' Hall at Central Connecticut State University on February 24, 2011 from early morning until the noon hour. Four prominent women of color were featured on this panel: Ms. Gwendolyn Smith Iloani, President, CEO and CIO of Smith, Whiley, & Company; Ms. Aneka Young, President and CEO of six McDonald restaurants in the Greater Hartford Area; Ms. Jamy Hall, Director of Global Service Business Office at Ford Motor Company, and Ms. Josie L. Wright, Senior Sales Consultant at Bayer Healthcare. These businesswomen provided the attentive audience members professional and personal insights into their career experiences that inevitably shaped some of their core beliefs and values, yet the information shared had even more value to the audience than any surface assessment may yield.

Whether explaining how to balance their personal lives with the demands and the expectations of their careers or demonstrating with anecdotal evidence the unavoidable sacrifices that comes with key leadership roles, the women collectively expressed ways to become trailblazers within the 21st century. They emphasized this, in part, by conveying that their "no excuses" approach to success in the business world has enabled them to maintain their positions of power with a measure of their own vision and style. Showcasing the abilities to work hard and to adapt to change were equally important messages stressed by the panelists. In addition, they were unified in emphasizing that one must remember that there is no one recipe for success. These were some of the more dominant messages worth examining with deeper insight, especially for students of color who do not typically see several women of color presenters in the same venue regularly, and who may feel inspired by the high level of success these women represent.

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This process of examination is very important because it can make the difference between taking real substance from the panel discussion and applying the information in tangible ways or leaving with a sense of disinterest or disconnection to the information presented. This type of disconnection can devalue the quality of time spent at a function such as this. One way to begin this process of examination can be through asking and answering critical questions that can ultimately be a productive process that is replicated.

Consider the following questions: What is the real value of listening to four successful women of color discuss their life's journeys? Are they filling a particular void for students or other audience members related to career or life strategies? Do they offer a viable platform for success? The aspect of deconstructing what is heard from individual



Women in Business Panelists: Ms. Aneka Young, Ms. Jamy Hall, Ms. Josie L. Wright, and Ms. Gwendolyn Smith Iloani

members can be extremely helpful, even before assessing the common views shared by the group. For instance, panel member Aneka Young reflected on the relevance of accountability by referencing her past goals that moved her life in a more positive direction beyond her humble beginnings and made her become "a better person," while Jamy Hall stressed the importance of young people being patience with their dreams rather than believing that they can simply become "overnight millionaires." After assessing these points in the fuller context in which they were given, audience members (especially students) can then ask the following questions: Is my environment shaping my values and beliefs in ways I agree or disagree with? Am I being too impatience or am I realistic about the amount of time it will take me to achieve my goals? Do I need to rethink how my personality is in aligned with

corporate America or the business world in general? It is important to remember that the panelists indirectly offered these questions above through their individual stories, yet the audience should take time and assess the parts of their messages that can work for them and can be applied to their lives or vice-versa.

When investment expert, Gwendolyn Smith Iloani, shared aspects of her life story revealing her ability to merge knowledge with passion for her work, she was suggesting that this could be a possible course of action to take to gain a sense of empowerment, especially in the business world. While highlighting the fact that performance related skills are mandatory in the business realm, both Smith Iloani and Josie Wright emphasized the necessity to be adaptive and creative in order to produce expected results, regardless of the amount of work being done. They prompted women with high career goals, in particular, to question the type of career advancement desired, considering that the top positions in business are still generally held by men, and they suggested the following questions that should be answered, especially, by female students interested in a demanding business career: Am I willing to utilize social networking, for instance, as a method to counter or absorb the social isolation that can be felt in leadership positions? What type of sacrifices am I willing to make in order to adapt effectively to major changes in my career? What unique attributes do I have that will give me a competitive advantage? Answering these questions is a way to determine whether there was value added for select audience members. Thus, the panel's core contribution to all in attendance was not to assume or to give the illusion that their careers and life stories could be replicated. Instead, they seem to encourage everyone to examine (or reexamine) the environments, the skills, and the personalities needed to structure effective strategies for his or her own success. This should be done with high standards, of course, so that one's own authenticity will be an admired quality reflected in the high performance given and the earned success that follows. The Center for Africana Studies, The Department of Administrative Affairs, The School of Business, and the School of Engineering and Technology were the sponsors of this event. ■

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NEWS FROM THE MOTHERLAND

*W*elcome to our second version of this standard topic section of the Sojourner Truth Newsletter. Although this version could cover a broad range of various topics about the African Continent, we decided to use this second version to highlight issues surrounding the recent uprisings impacting the African continent in Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, and Libya. The short and long term futures of these countries remain uncertain, yet the people's willingness to act against oppressive regimes inspires a determination to start anew on a better and balanced path toward living with a broader range of opportunities they deserve to have. In light of the theme of community engagement that this spring issue features, two community members of the African Diaspora offer their perspectives below.

Editor in Chief

News From The Motherland... PERSPECTIVE ONE:

The Northern Africa Revolution: What's Next?

It has now been over two months since the notorious corrupt leaders in Tunisia and Egypt, Presidents Ben Ali and Mubarak, have been chased away from power. In the meantime Kaddafi from Libya is exposed to somewhat even a greater pressure to leave power, while the King Hussein in Morocco seems to have caught the message, that people will no longer wait for so much needed political reforms and that they are not ready to give up without a fight.

Astonishingly, the part of the continent further down the Sahara, there are many cases where the political situation appears to be far less promising, when considering the news in the western media. Taking also under consideration the relative economic wealth the northerners enjoy, the situation remains somewhat calm and manageable for the local leadership, still. The message from the north, "you must openly look for a confrontation with the political elite in order to change the system from within" has apparently reached no fertile soil. Why is that?

A profound reflection on the peoples' history of sub-Sahara Africa reveals that there is not even a single decade in their ancient history that they were not necessarily directly or indirectly involved in one or another conflicting circumstance. That perspective teaches us that Africans in general are well familiarized with conducting (successful) revolutions. Brutal colonization period of the continent follows after a period of conflicting home-grown kingdoms, which ended with the foundation of today's state republics. The proclamation of independence from colonial powers starting over fifty years ago was done in an unthinkable unfavorable time period of cold war. The subsequent choice was either to be in favor of or against one of the two blocks of power at that time. This triggered civil wars that last until the middle of the nineties, with the end of the Cold War era. All of this was revolution in action.

Ever since, it appears that the subsistence economic agenda has been a higher priority than the political agendas for many leaders in the continent- a profound change from the revolution mindset. While it is clear by any outsider

that one cannot go without the other, it has been obvious to many Africans, that based on the hierarchy of needs, there is an immediate and nearly constant desire to re-build devastated home-grown social networks caused by war conflicts, climate change, or forced migration (which temporarily) still ranks top. By promoting this as a near African trait, the visibility to the agenda of the political elite in the respective countries has been lost. However, one thing is certain: The number of Africans who are successfully passing that level of survival in the hierarchy of needs to the level of sustainability is significantly growing and with it the critical political visibility which will soon come and take over the agenda of the day. The experience from the northerners shall be deemed to be fecund.

Meque Terceiro

PERSPECTIVE TWO: Facebook Revolution ?

One terminology that surfaced up in the western print media in the last four weeks or so, to describe the political upheaval in the North African countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Morocco and managed to spread quickly across the globe is "Facebook Revolution." While one may find the terminology "Facebook Revolution" being associated to Africa flattering from a technical standpoint, the word Facebook actually symbolizes the ultimate arrival of Africa in the computer age. However, historical records should make one pause and think about the real motivations behind these choice words.

Let's recapitulate briefly the status quo: It is common knowledge that historically western media has tendentiously paid little to no service to an African cause for empowerment. In the Western media the today's Africa picture is still in many ways frightening monolithic. Africa is perceived to be the center of world political chaos and despair, where diseases, economic digression, political violence, and hunger are typically on the plate day by day. A continent that is in permanent need for (western) help as it lacks self-empowerment. Obviously this all, we know so well, is not the pure reality.

What could then possibly justify the acceptance of the Western media in adopting the terminology Facebook in association with Africa?

The simple answer is the (relative) success of the revolution itself.

When the continent is misleadingly described as a continent with no prospect, this is done in many ways deliberately by disdaining the basics of stony ground investigative journalism. The perverted goal is to achieve a pure manipulative landscape in service of political agendas of ex-colonial masters and their peers. In that landscape a (relative) success story, the political upheaval, enrooted and initiated in Africa would conflict with the characteristics of a continent that lack self-empowerment. In the opinion of the Western media, the revolution success can only be possible with Western involvement. It finds its masters in the west. So, to connate the revolution as the "Facebook" revolution that would be a self-evident western attempt to deny the (northern) Africans the originality of their own uprising by assuming that the apparent success of the revolution is conditioned to the efficiency of western machinery "Facebook". This is just another western propaganda not really in service of Africa. ■

C. M. Phiri

International Festival: “The World Within Your Reach”

*A*lumni Hall located in the Student Center of Central Connecticut State University was transformed into a bazaar setting that captured the familiar atmosphere of cultural celebration on Sunday, April 3rd, 2011, during the afternoon hours. From the captivating stage performances representing different cultures from around the world to the welcoming vendors and savory samples of international cuisine, the International Festival rightfully provided for those in attendance a broad display of global community engagement through the theme of “The World Within Your Reach.” The dance performances, major highlights of this 24th Annual International Festival, promoted traditional aesthetics that illuminated the pride felt by each performer. In addition, the festival’s “Parade of Nations” segment gave students and community members the opportunity to project a strong sense of heritage by briefly honoring their countries with a display of their native clothes and jewelry.



The Asian Performing Arts Group dances with poise and grace at the 24th Annual International Festival.

Some rather memorable performances included but were not limited to the African Drums performance by Nigerian Bruce Sharpe, the Desert Moon Dancers from the Middle East, the Alpenland Tanzer from Germany, and the Desi Khelayiyas from India. The festival provided opportunities for all to experience the warmth expressed by cultures from afar and near while being inspired to gain more knowledge about diverse people and areas beyond what this

venue offered in a few hours. For instance, those in attendance could learn more about the Polish community's history in New Britain, Connecticut or be inspired to take drumming lessons demonstrating Nigerian-based rhythms as a result of this experience. With the cultural sharing that took place between several countries (such as Japan, India, Nigeria, Poland and Italy), this festival can be perceived as a big cultural diversity party, celebrating the one world we all have. This year's International festival was sponsored by the Center for International Education, Student Affairs, Administrative Affairs, Student Activities and Leadership Development, Sodexo, and the Central American Italian Student Organization. ■

Grace Kyeremateng and Pamela Blackmore



In their vibrant pink and green, the VSEI group (Volunteer in Services to Education in India) demonstrates intricate cultural moves at the 2011 International Festival.

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International Mother Language Day

*W*ith an intimate group of audience members gathered in Torp Theatre, organizers Dr. Seunghun Lee, Dr. Douglas H. Whalen, and Kevin Hughes presented Central Connecticut State University's first International Mother Language Day on February 25, 2011. This event featured several presenters who expressed different ways of understanding the significance of native languages as the core basis of our shared thoughts and expressed emotions from universal standpoints. The presenters also imprinted the messages that languages are worth preserving, and we cannot afford to lose languages, especially those categorized as minority languages or ones that are nearly extinct based on the limited number of speakers who have (by choice or by force) switched to speaking a majority based language more prominent in their local environments. Overall, the appreciation for language as an indelible part of our identities was at the heart of the presenters' messages, and the essence of this message through film and words made for a memorable event. After a heartfelt welcome by Seunghun Lee and opening remarks



From left to right: Dr. Seunghun Lee, Dr. Brad Montgomery-Anderson, Mrs. Stephanie Fielding, Dr. Douglas H. Whalen, Dr. Akinbiyi Akinlabi, Mrs. Iris Brooks, Mr. Jon H. Davis

by Dean Susan Peace (Arts and Sciences), Douglas H. Whalen, President of the Endangered Language Fund, gave a thought-provoking discussion titled "Endangered Languages" that underlined his purpose-driven mission to save languages indirectly as a way of saving ourselves as a human race. His lecture was followed by Linguist and Mohegan tribe member Stephanie Fielding. Fielding gave a historical backdrop of the Mohegan language by referencing her discovery through an ancestral diary that she used to eventually catalog some 1200 dictionary-based words (currently) in the Mohegan language. Although she acknowledged that it is difficult to teach for some, she strongly believes her efforts to teach and to archive the language will be instrumental to the perseverance of it through generations.

The second half of the program began with a film by Iris Brooks and Jon H. Davis entitled "Languages Lost and Found: Speaking and Whistling the Mamma Tongue." Their film focused on languages from around the world that are in danger of extinction. Though Iris and Jon professed not to be linguists, they documented something that interested them which tied in with the Mother Language day. This documentation enabled them to come across a whistling language used in Greece: Silbo Gomero. The people of Greece use this language for communication across the vast rocky hills and treacherous terrain that would otherwise make communication difficult. The language had almost been wiped out, but a group of teachers revived it by teaching Silbo Gomero to the children in their towns as part of the curriculum. This simple act has revived the language so much that it is used in restaurants by waiters to relay orders to the kitchen staff and by teenagers who use it to leave their parents messages on cell phones.

After the film, Brad Montgomery-Anderson talked about the different Mayan languages that he and his team have documented throughout the past few summers. He outlined the differences and the similarities between the different Mayan languages across a specific area. He also explained a little of the grammar and the usage of the language. He showed some pictures from his most recent trip and gave a snippet or two of funny stories to accompany the images.

Following Brad Montgomery-Anderson came Akinbiyi Akinlabi, who spoke about two endangered Nigerian languages—Defaka and Nkoro—and the work he has been doing to preserve them. By doing the research, Dr. Akinlabi discovered that Nkoro was the more prominent language, while Defaka was endangered. This endangerment happened because the women who spoke Defaka dropped their language and took Nkoro as their primary language once they were married to men of a different tribe. Any children in the family would then also be forbidden to speak Defaka. In fact, the children disliked Defaka because their status was higher for speaking Nkoro. The schools in the region were also phasing out Defaka because there were more schools open that teach in Nkoro than Defaka. Although one entire family was found to still use the language at home, the language's survival seems very unlikely, according to Akinlabi.

Following Dr. Akinlabi's lecture and a brief question and answer session, the Mother Language Day event came to an end, and all those who attended were shown to another room for refreshments. Within that time period, a group was taken to the Elihu Burritt Library to take a look at the Endangered Languages and Endangered Alphabets exhibit that was set up there. Support for this event was given by the following: Endangered Language Fund, The Latin American, Latino and Caribbean Center, Center for Africana Studies, International Studies Program, Center for International Education, Anthropology, English, Modern Languages Depts., Diversity Grant, and the Dean's Office of Arts and Science. ■

Molly Virello

Achievement First Bridgeport Academy Fifth Graders:

Experiencing Campus Life at Central Connecticut State University

On Wednesday, April 6th, 2011 the Center for Africana Studies and the Archaeology Laboratory for African & African Diaspora Studies hosted ninety young scholars from the fifth grade at Achievement First Bridgeport Academy Middle School, for a day of education, entertainment, and an introduction to campus life. Student workers from the Africana Center, including Olufunke Adebayo, Claude Bradley, Cherolle Brown, Grace Kyeremateng, and Ahj Meeks, along with CCSU alumna Laura Jensen, led the excited youngsters through a day of fun and education on campus.

Achievement First Bridgeport Academy belongs to a network of public charter schools that focus on college preparation from the earliest grades, and 98% of the students are Black and/or Latino. Achievement First students excel in the Connecticut Mastery Tests, realizing 74.2% mastery in a district that averages 36.9% mastery. The school focuses strongly on a culture of respect and personal responsibility (qualities which will promote success at the college level as well as in middle school) contributing to a successful and enjoyable day on the CCSU campus. Our thanks to everyone who contributed to making this visit a success. ■

THE SOJOURNER TRUTH NEWSLETTER

Dr. Warren Perry welcomes the Achievement First Bridgeport Academy Fifth Graders to CCSU. These young students demonstrated their enthusiasm for learning when they explored the campus sites and interacted with CCSU students.



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THE SOJOURNER TRUTH NEWSLETTER

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