

JANUARY - MAY 2013

The SOJOURNER TRUTH *Newsletter*

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

CULTURAL TRADITIONS OF THE BLACK DIASPORA

Family Reunions

Church Gatherings

Kwanzaa

Storytelling

H B C Us

Drumming

Cookouts

The Divine Nine

Pull Fish

Achee

FOUNDATIONS OF INSPIRATION

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

Cultural traditions are a mainstay in the lives of so many people of African descent, and they help to reinforce the strong sense of purpose we have of valuing one another within our families and communities. They embody the richness of special events and create memorable experiences that help us preserve our familial and cultural history. Simultaneously, these traditions promote distinct values that are representative of our identities. In this spring issue, we explore, with an in-depth view, the meaningful presence and influential aspects of cultural traditions, especially for young people in current times. We have, therefore, a twofold mission: to reiterate the core benefits associated with the consistency of practice and to highlight the unified empowerment embedded within specific cultural traditions. This mission is particularly relevant for many college students who may not have the resources or time to practice their traditions as they did in past times.

The enjoyment produced by our cultural traditions is meant to enhance, in part, the quality of our lives. We are reminded to fully embrace the beauty of celebration in ways that are positively uplifting and inspiring for all. Thus, generations to come should understand the necessity of continuing the practice because cultural traditions enable us to strengthen our identities with a heightened ability to fully express the best of who we are to ourselves and to other people. From this standpoint, we welcome all of you to enjoy the cultural traditions embedded in the other features linked to this major theme such as the Tenth Annual Amistad Lecture, the Center for Africana Studies 19th Annual Conference, and the core standing topic of News from the Motherland.

As with previous issues, our sincere gratitude goes to all who worked hard to make this issue possible.

Dr. Beverly A. Johnson

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READERS' COMMENTS

“Valuing Restructuring for African Countries” in the News from the Motherland section was a good read for me. The article shows how this world is built on competition, and any individual, business or country that does not have the ability to be competitive will surely get left behind. The Motherland is blessed with an abundant number of natural resources but lack the leadership to implement change. One key point I took from the article is that fundamental restructuring of the government is necessary in order for them to keep up with this fast growing world. Mr. Assado asserts that the problems and solutions have to be identified in context with the tools needed to fix them, and the most important tools that any country has is its citizenry, who are the lifeline and source of information. This was a great article and I commend the STN staff and students responsible for bringing this issue to light.

Kevin Parker, CCSU Senior, Electronics Technology Major

The article “The Value of Hard Work for CCSU Students” was very profound. It stressed the value of education and the importance of quality hard work necessary to be successful. Dr. Johnson caused me to ponder my own academic performance and to make the necessary changes to improve myself in the weakest areas. The article also puts emphasis on the fact that our ancestors sacrificed a great deal in order for us to have the opportunity to reach above and beyond what is expected of us. I enjoyed this article very much because it shows that hard work is essential in today’s highly competitive society.

Tavvia Jefferson, CCSU Freshman, Education Major

This past issue of The Sojourner Truth newsletter is a dynamic reflection of how hard work through the lens of diversity can promote equality. The key message that I took from the newsletter was that hard work is universal and is nondiscriminatory and important, regardless of a person’s race or ethnic background. Everyone, equally, can see results from working hard and can emphasize the idea that no one is better than anyone else. I am looking forward to reading the next issue of the newsletter with much excitement.

Dereck Rivera, CCSU Sophomore, Bio-Molecular Science Major

Unlike the past, when many people had choices to go to college for a specific career, many people, in present times, need to graduate from college to maintain a decent job. It is difficult to have a decent quality of life without putting in the hard work that a college education demands. The reality is that hard work has to be a priority for my peers and me, regardless of the obstacles we face. We will never be able to obtain our dreams without putting forth the effort it takes to achieve them. I really appreciate this message presented in the article “CCSU Students Engaged in Hard Work.”

Courtney M. Waldin, CCSU Freshman, Psychology Major

CULTURAL TRADITIONS OF THE BLACK DIASPORA
FOUNDATIONS OF INSPIRATION

In this time of global awareness, there is a huge amount of focus and attention paid to the present and future that the importance of the past can become marginally relevant; however, it is a necessity to balance, with some discernment, the bridges of the past that will enable us to commit purposefully to practices that hold our cultures in high esteem. Our cultural traditions are key practices that should never become irrelevant, regardless of the difficulties embedded in the process of preserving them within each generation.

Whether they shape some of our most cherish memories or inspire us to take pride in our identities, they are some of the most positive elements of our lives that strengthen our families and communities. Accordingly, they provide clarity to the values that we embrace, and they help in the fight against negative depictions about our distinct cultures that can purposefully cause us to appear one dimensional as a people. Thus, the effort and energy required to maintain our cultural traditions should be heightened in this 21st century in order to fully embrace them as the true foundations of inspiration they were designed to be for people of color.

Typically, cultural traditions are depicted as unifying celebratory experiences; however, the essence of many cultural traditions within the Black Diaspora is the deeper spiritual meaning that uplifts most participants. For example, the art of prayer and worship within many religions is an inherent part of cultural traditions in African based communities, and this extension is further present in holiday based traditions for African Americans, especially during Easter and Christmas. However, what is fundamentally significant about this combination of celebration and worship is the unwavering belief that our lives are interconnected by the belief in a higher power and our constant acknowledgement of this is greater than any of our problems or setbacks we face as a people on this earth. Thus, it is no coincident that our creativity in the areas of cultural gatherings, food recipes, musical talent, storytelling, and hair designs has global significance because the practicality of our creativity is formed from a spiritually-guided foundation. This foundation evokes, naturally, an authentic sense of purpose and identity that resonates with many people and cultures throughout the world.

One academic case in point developed during a recent roundtable group discussion about Alice Walker's short story "Everyday Use." After providing a brief overview of the story, the group of four members covered a critical topic or issue from Walker's piece. The members centered their views around the following collective message based on the characters' experiences: People should honor their cultural traditions in ways that are practical, creative, and meaningful, without the pressure imposed by external societal influences to create only an illusionary practice or a surface show of them. Moreover, by contrasting the main characters, Dee, Maggie and Mama, who narrates the story, the group easily identified with certain experiences of these characters, and they felt compelled to incorporate their individual experiences within the roundtable discussion. Because their experiences evoked poignant comments ranging from an acknowledgement of the pride embedded within maintaining their cultural traditions to the potential danger of losing them in these current times, they were able to fully engage the audience members by reinforcing, through an impressive skit performance, the broader necessity of being proactive in the practice and preservation of cultural traditions. This group's work had further value in helping their classmates and peers comprehend that a good portion of their academic work should be applied, tangibly, to improving the quality of their lives.

Admittedly, for many students of color who attend historically Black universities, becoming a member of a fraternity or a sorority comes with the perk of participation in numerous cultural traditions that are both academically and socially based. Two key traditions in place are the academic honors and celebrations of the select groups and the collective competition of step shows that bring together the community beyond the campus environment.

Sororities and fraternities or similar cultural groups can experience an immediate value in the preservation of cultural traditions because the members practice key rituals or traditions through the educational process that reinforce their service or affiliations with older and younger members for many years well beyond college.

When we take time to really reflect upon the roles of cultural traditions within our lives, we challenge ourselves to be more connected to our communities and families. This challenge was most effectively promoted by the late novelist Chinua Achebe who emphasized within many of his stories that the best way to determine the best and worst of specific groups was to thoroughly question and critique the practical use of the group's cultural traditions.

Our failure to do this, he suggests, can result in a digressive construct of community and/or a fractured depiction of self- identity and self- worth that is passed on to future generations. With this in mind, the development, of a three part template can be used for reaffirming the community's or family's commitment to practicing cultural

PART ONE: PURPOSE

Our cultural traditions are the following ones:

Our cultural traditions bring value to our lives for the following reasons:

Our cultural traditions should be passed on based on the following reasons:

PART TWO: PLANNING

We acknowledge elder community/family members to thoroughly teach the tradition in ways that honor and respects the past.

We specify key roles to select community/family members, considering key age ranges of participants based on each tradition.

We designate a special venue with weekly, monthly or annual dates and times per tradition.

PART THREE: PRACTICE

The atmosphere or mood throughout the practice should be and remain positive.

The observer/participant roles per tradition can be shared and enjoyed by all.

The events should be recorded for marking these special moments in time.

traditions or to initiate a process through which one can begin to practice with the intent to maintain the practice over several generations.

The erosion of stability in our rural and urban communities will continue, more than likely, to be a persistent cause of concern for many of us within this century. Especially in this time of global expansion, we owe it to ourselves to put into practice, even more than in the past, experiences that bridge collective gaps and unify us more prominently within our cultures. Fortunately, as people representing the Black Diaspora, our cultural traditions, in practice, can and should act as strategic dams in place to control external instabilities that threaten our culture and our identities while preserving our most valued memories of past and current times. ■

Johnson, B.

STUDENTS' CULTURAL TRADITIONS IN PRACTICE



Christina Carpenter

Many people perceive cultural traditions as expressive forms of rituals or repeated experiences that keep them connected to people they love while some define them as changing and dynamic processes that may only last through memories in time; thus, playing limited roles in their current lives. The perceptions of cultural traditions for students in particular are of importance to me because there are some traditions I would like to see developed more within the community with a strong mechanism of support, especially as I process my own definition of cultural traditions currently within and outside of the CCSU environment as an African American of Jamaican descent.

My fondest experiences with the cultural tradition of preparing and eating Jamaican dishes are ones that I plan to pass on to another generation. For instance, ackee and salt fish with plantains are very traditional meals throughout Jamaican culture, and they are eaten during major holidays such as Christmas and Easter. Sunday mornings in particular are the traditional days that my parents prepare these special dishes. Even the select cooking roles of my parents have special meaning to me because they help me to appreciate their efforts to keep me grounded in my culture while also providing very nutritious meals.

My views of cultural traditions inspired me to interview three students in order to further understand how cultural traditions are practiced by people in other cultures. Based on the following answers to the three interview questions: What is positive about your cultural tradition that will encourage you to continue the tradition in future generations? Which valuable aspect of the tradition benefits you as a college student? Is the university supportive of your meeting people who are of the same culture? I have a broader understanding of the need for cultural traditions to be practiced in the African Diaspora. CCSU students Ali Kleiche, a sophomore majoring in Mechanical Engineering, Mamoudou Dioubate, a senior majoring in Sociology, and Tiffany McDonald, a sophomore majoring in Psychology provide a brief context for understanding the influence of cultural traditions, currently in the lives of college students.



Ali Kleiche: (Morocco)

A cultural tradition that is practiced within the communities of my Moroccan culture is the tradition of being very family oriented. Purposefully socializing with family and friends is what I would like to keep in practice for generations to come, yet I feel the struggles to do so will deepen if newer generations lose their customs and become more and more westernized. Furthermore, I have been in contact with people of the same culture more from my own networking on campus, and I haven't received any direct help from the university. I suggest that CCSU try to host multiple international activities that can bring students of the same culture and students of different nations closer than what currently exists.



Mamoudou Dioubate (Guinea)

Traditionally, we are a very spiritual culture. Because of the positive aspects of Islam, the cultural tradition of praying and religious study will definitely be practiced in the future. Moreover, we Guineans are proud of our culture, and we will not forget our native land. The Guinean students typically congregate in the Marcus White Building. I believe to some extent the university has assisted me in meeting people of my culture. As a member of the CCSU Men's soccer team, it has been easier to make friends with other African players who share my culture's traditions or similar ones; however, the university can do a better job of with promoting the interaction and socialization of Africans on campus.



Tiffany McDonald (Jamaican American)

Easter holds a very special place as a tradition in my family and community in Jamaica and in the United States. From Good Friday to Easter, a special meal is prepared without meat; the most traditional is Bun and Cheese. The popularity of this meal stems traditionally from the Hot Cross Buns and both are a mainstay of Jamaican tradition that will continue to be practiced in generations throughout the celebration of the Easter Holiday. Living in Bloomfield, CT where the Jamaican population is prevalent has enabled me to be very connected to my culture. However, on campus, there has been little to no assistance for me to connect to other Caribbean students or Caribbean faculty. I would recommend that the UCC (United Caribbean Club) have a broader range of meeting times beyond what is currently available.

These three students interviewed believe in the importance of cultural traditions and of particular note is the point that they (as I do) believe that a core familial tradition of consistent academic achievement should be more present in the communities of people representing the African Diaspora. Experiencing the rewards first hand by coming from families that reinforce education as a family priority is what many of us have in common. This would be great as a cultural tradition in practice because the many communities representing the Diaspora can go well beyond experiencing the least of what this country has to offer, based on a lack of culturally based academic traditions, and experience the best of what can be offered here with the reinforcement of culturally based practices instilled in a familial and community framework. ■

Carpenter, C.

CULTURAL, FAMILIAL, AND EDUCATIONAL VALUES
INSPIRE STUDENTS TO SUCCEED



Kentrale Evans

The African American traditions inherent within my family and culture inspire me to preserve my cultural history, to advance my education, and to empower others to succeed. Music and religion are two of the most important types of traditions within my family and community. Culturally, these traditions shape who I am and the values that represent me. As a descendent of great musicians, I use my commitment to instruments to dedicate myself with a similar passion to achieving a college degree at Central CT. State University. Because my father used musical techniques to teach my brother and me values, life concepts, and cultural norms, musical education has paved a pathway of success for me while I am embracing my journey as a young college student.

One of my favorite religious traditions that has been practiced for many generations within the African American community and is revered by my family is the New Year's "Pray In" service. Each New Year's Eve, members at the church (The Greater Emmanuel Apostolic Church in Stamford, CT) attend a service that starts at 11:00 p.m. The pastor (Rev. Bessie Hardy) guides the prayer service, and the saints meditate and reflect upon the testimonial blessings. By 11:45, prayer becomes the main focus and many members pray for a safe entrance into a new year. The prayers at this time are meant to expunge the sins from the previous year and to ask God for your desires in the upcoming year. The "Pray In" session concludes at 12:15 on New Years' morning. This cultural tradition has benefitted me greatly because it allows me to ask God to empower me to become a better person and for my successful advancements with my academic studies.

Because of my educational and cultural interests, I was curious to know if other college students blended their academic endeavors with cultural traditions or cultural values. My inquiries of Business major, Ms. Arial Elliott, Criminal Justice major, Antwan Brown, and Graphic Design major Richie Hughes reaffirmed my views about cultural identity, heritage, and education. Collectively, each student answered several questions related to their cultural heritage and their current use (as students) of select cultural traditions. Two questions in particular covered the impact of cultural traditions on their identities. The participants centered their answers upon key traditions such as music, religion, and clothes and the way these traditions have empowered them to earn a college degree.



For **Arial Elliott**, her African American ancestry and cultural history are empowering assets for her. More specifically, her religious beliefs strengthen her resolve to remain strong while pursuing her education. Within her religion, one of the most important services is Easter Sunday. Throughout the Easter service, there is a focus on the Christ's death, burial, and the resurrection, and this service is a powerful reminder of spiritual healing and renewal. For over thirty years, Arial's family has attended Faith Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church in Stamford, CT. Within the church, Arial knows that the members practice religion of today in very similar ways as past members, (even enslaved ancestors) who held firm to their customary beliefs. Arial believes that the membership of the church (especially her family) remains faithful to service within it because of their commitment to the cultural tradition. Because her parents have been members of the church

for over thirty years, her religious values have made her humble, respectful, and determined to accomplish a lot in life. Because she embraces her cultural traditions, she realizes the value of an education as a first step toward achieving the success she desires to have in life.



On a different note, Senior **Antwan Brown** is keenly aware of how music as a familial and cultural tradition has influenced his identity and perspectives about life. Since the age of four, Antwan has been surrounded by musicians and his biggest role model was his father Anthony Brown Sr. During the early nineties, Mr. Brown was a pioneer in Gospel Quartet music in the state of Connecticut, and he received numerous awards and accolades for his talent. Thus, Antwan was taught many musical instruments such as the drums, piano and bass guitar. Antwan merged his love of music with his educational pursuits by minoring in Music Theory with a focus on the piano. In addition, he has traveled and toured with established gospel artists such as Fred Hammond, Beverly Crawford, and

Donnie McClurkin. Although grateful for these experiences, he credits his father as the dominant influence for his musical endeavors. Furthermore, he understands that the roots of Gospel music are uniquely tied to his musical education at Central and beyond the university.



Similarly, **Richie Hughes**' native land of Ghana is core to his understanding of the familial value of education as a major family tradition. Unlike Ariel and Antwan, Richie's assertions come as much from understanding the dearth of opportunity to pursue higher learning in Ghana as much as the opportunities he has currently. In reference to cultural traditions, two that are of extreme value to Richie are the "Boubou" dress tradition and the tradition of speaking his native Ghanaian language. The Boubou/Bubu is worn by both genders for special occasions such as weddings, funerals, festivals, and prayer. The collective empowerment of Richie's traditions is embedded in a culture of respect for the elders, and this is a core part of his identity that he is determined to share with future generations.

Many students (including me) depend upon their cultural practices to stimulate success in the academic environment, and this can influence the field of study that some students pursue. Thus, there is great importance in the preservation of family and cultural traditions, especially when they can reinforce education as a framework for sharing them with future generations. ■

Evans, K.

THE SOJOURNER TRUTH NEWSLETTER
ANNUAL AMISTAD LECTURE AND BANQUET CELEBRATES TENTH ANNIVERSARY
WITH KEYNOTE SPEAKER PROFESSOR ZACK-WILLIAMS



Promoting the theme of “Contemporary Africa and the Spirit of Amistad” The Tenth Annual Amistad Lecture and Banquet was held on Tuesday, February 26th, 2013 from 4:30-7:00 in the Constitution Room of Memorial Hall at Central Connecticut State University. Dr. Alfred Babatunde Zack -Williams, Professor of Social Studies at the University of Central Lancashire in Lancashire, England, gave the keynote address to an ample and engaged audience. This tenth anniversary was of special significance for the Amistad committee members who re-honored Professor Zack-Williams with the historical distinction of being the first and tenth Keynote speaker.

In his first keynote lecture, entitled “Amistad and Education in the African Diaspora” (held on November 14, 2003), Dr. Zack-Williams encouraged young people to embrace the Amistad Spirit in order to mark their importance in the future. He focused in his lecture on a core message to men of color (mainly in the United States and in the Caribbean) to learn about “the great heritage from which they descend.” From a sociological standpoint, Dr. Zack-Williams emphasized the links between mobility and education while warning further that young people of the Diaspora who do not take advantage of educational opportunities could easily divert into a path of becoming habitually unemployable in the near future. Thus, he reasserted similarly as the scholars he referenced (such as Max Weber, Pedro Noguera, and Cornel West) that the experiences of marginality in public spaces for young men of color will yield consequences too devastating to ignore. However, one key remedy Dr. Zack-Williams offered a decade ago was to embrace the essence and spirit of the Amistad hero Sengbe Pieh. According to Professor Zack-Williams, the crisis endured by young men results from the lack of success in understanding how powerful Pieh’s legacy can be for them. Fast forward ten years later and the core message of Professor Zack-Williams offers a more global perspective of the African continent.

In his 2013 lecture, entitled “Contemporary Africa and the Spirit of Amistad” Dr. Zack-Williams expands on his definitions of the Amistad’s spirit with major characteristics such as the following ones: a spirit of resistance



Reward recipient and Keynote Speaker, Professor Zack-Williams and Provost Carl Lovitt at the Amistad Tenth Anniversary Lecture and Banquet

political and social policies hindered or stagnated growth and development throughout the continent during 1980-2000. On a more optimistic note, Dr. Zack-Williams lecture stressed, with caution, the potential for positive changes locally and globally with the emergence of China and other BRIC nations investing within the continent. Critical analysis of these relationships, he believes, is necessary to avoid “dependency and further neocolonialism.” He asserted in the conclusion of his lecture that the lessons from the Diaspora of past and current times could be a vital force in the work of “nation building and renewal.”

In recognition of Dr. Zack-Williams’ return, the Artists Collective Ensemble of Hartford, CT were featured for the first time at this annual event. They created a lively atmosphere with their musical prelude and selections throughout the night. As in previous lectures, Amistad Co-chair and Professor of Educational Leadership, Olusegun Sogunro, provided a reflective introduction of the Amistad’s significance, and this introduction was followed by a welcoming address by CCSU President, Jack Miller and opening remarks of Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, Carl Lovitt. Prior to the Keynote Address, heartfelt greetings were offered by Dr. Richard Bachoo, Chief Administrative Officer and Mr. Steven Klinger, Executive Director, Center

for Public Policy and Social Research. Their greetings were followed by an original poetry reading from Dr. Beverly A. Johnson, English Professor and Amistad Committee member. Her poem entitled “Nature’s Protective Hands” highlighted the role of nature as a guiding force for the African Amistad members in their time of despair and triumph. Professor of History and Co-Chair of the Amistad Committee, Gloria Emeagwali, introduced the Keynote Speaker, noting his vast work and accomplishments. After a very detailed keynote address, History Professor, Dr. Katherine Harris, led a brief question and answer session, and Mr. William Fothergill (Counseling and Wellness) presented the Keynote Speaker’s Award after dinner was served. The event concluded on an upbeat note with closing remarks by Dr. Emeagwali and a musical closing by the Artists Collective Ensemble. ■

to oppression, a determination to fight for freedom and human rights, a spirit of self-reliance, as well as a spirit of togetherness and solidarity (Harambee) in addition to a quest for knowledge beyond the status quo. These criteria for embracing the Amistad spirit in current times are provided with the intent to “wrench African communities in the New World, in Europe and the Continent itself, away from political and economic oppression and exploitation...” Professor Zack-Williams believes that this spirit engages dialogue that supports a platform for “societies of truly free people.”

Moving beyond the “Age of Afro- Pessimism,” and “Changing Realities of Africa” two subtitles of his lecture, Dr. Zack-Williams critiques both African leaders and the Western governments whose economic,



Amistad Committee members pose with Keynote Speaker: L to R: Johnson, B., Zack-Williams, A., Harris, K., Emeagwali, G., and Sogunro, O.

TALKING ABOUT FREEDOM
 “FROM EMANCIPATION TO THE PRESENT”



Dr. Chinekwu Obidoa discusses powerpoint presentation with audience.

In the Constitution Room of Memorial Hall at CCSU, the Nineteenth Annual Conference of the Center for Africana Studies took place on March 7th 2013. The conference presenters of professors and scholars set the stage for informative engagement about a range of critical issues that impact different regions within the United States, Caribbean, and Africa. Divided in a morning and an afternoon session, the annual conference covered two major speakers per session. A generous welcome was expressed on behalf of the Center for Africana Studies by Professor of Anthropology and Co- Director of (CAS) Warren Perry. Amiable remarks followed by Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, Carl Lovitt and by Chief Administrative Officer, Richard Bachoo.

The first speaker, Dr. Chinekwu Obidoa, (Institute for Community Research, Hartford, CT) gave an informative power point based presentation entitled “The Impact of Globalization on Youth Sexual Risk in Nigeria.” Dr. Chinekwu’s major purpose was to bring awareness to the audience about the severe impact of globalization in the country of Nigeria

by exposing the deep inequalities that affect the lives of so many people within the country and surrounding regions on the continent of Africa. More specifically, her lecture covered the impact of globalization on youth sexual behavior and HIV/AIDS risk, especially for young girls and young adult females within select Nigerian communities.

Using various critical approaches derived from areas such as Anthropology, Sociology, Public Health, Dr. Chinekwu presented the problems, concerns and complex solutions in coping with the impact of global popular culture on youth sexual behaviors. She promoted a need for a new model of teaching that re-examines the way the young people are taught by educators, family, and community leaders so that the interventions made on their behalf can save lives and enhance their quality of life. Dr. Chinekwu also stressed the need for young Nigerians to practice safe rather than destructive sexual behaviors that are prohibiting them from making sound choices and decisions because, for many, their poor choices of today will severely impact their lives as adults.

Following Dr. Chinekwu’s presentation, Dr. Daniel O. Sayers (Department of Anthropology, American University) presented a historically based lecture that focused on the last two centuries of maroons within the Great Dismal Swamp of North Carolina and Virginia. His lecture, “Centuries of Deliberate Liberation: Great Dismal Swamp Maroons, their Communities and their Material World, 1660-1860” comprised of collective illustrations of permanent self-extrication from the circumstances and experiences of enslavement by these distinct communities. By deconstructing the ways that they lived their lives, Dr. Sayers highlighted the significance of their experiences as rooted in the “Liberationist” revolution.



Dr. Sayers takes a moment to reflect before answering an audience member’s question.

Overall, he believes that their resolve to function as a separate yet collective people, with success, throughout these historical periods is very relevant to our understanding of “Diasporic” revolution and can serve us well now and in many years to come.

Dr. Sayers’ lecture concluded the morning sessions which lasted for approximately three hours. With Professor of Anthropology, Evelyn N. Phillips as moderator, the morning sessions concluded with a brief question and answer session per lecture and insightful discussion about both lectures before the one hour luncheon buffet.

The afternoon sessions, moderated by Mr. William Fothergill, (Counselor and Director of the Man Enough Support Initiative) started with remarks by Anthropology Professor and Director of International and Area Studies Program, David Kideckel. The initial session, entitled “Resistance, Redefinition, and Reconnection: The African and Native American Cultural Heritage of the St. David’s Islanders of Bermuda,” was presented by Anthropology professor and Director of the North American Indian Studies Program at the University of Central Florida, Dr. Rosalyn Howard.

Based on her ethno-historical African Diaspora studies, Dr. Howard has centered some her research distinctly on Native-African populations in the Bahamas and Bermuda. Dr. Howard discussed the cultural heritage between members of the Pequot tribal nations and the St. David’s Islanders of Bermuda. She emphasized the, “Reconnection,” that is a biennial Bermudian-U.S. Native American ceremony and further discussed the value of the Islanders preserving their ceremony with their long lost relatives. Historically, members of the Connecticut Pequot tribal nation’s visit to Bermuda (over forty years ago) influenced the St. David Islanders to further examine their Native American heritage. Dr. Howard reinforced the message that the strong and distinct heritage that stems from British enslavement of Native North Americans and African people on the island has evolved into a unique and proud Bermudian culture.

The final presentation of the CAS 19th Annual Conference was delivered by Professor of Communication, Olga Davis representing the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication at Arizona State University. Her presentation was entitled “Freedom Ain’t Nothin’ but a Word: Crafting Discourse of Freedom Through Lived Experience of Black Women.” With research that is centered upon Black women discourse and identity, Professor Davis used narrative as a means of exploring empowerment, awareness, and cultural change within the African Diaspora.

Professor Davis structured her core perspectives through the subtle lenses of lived experiences of African American females’ past and current images. Providing, thus, a means to revise the discourse of freedom as an urgent and needed response throughout select moments in time, Dr. Davis explored the wisdom, understanding and “mean-making efforts” that shed insight into Black women’s ideas and definitions of the old racism of past years and the current racism in present times.

This final lecture of the conference was followed by a brief discussion and closing remarks provided by Professor Phillips. In addition to the Center for Africana Studies, the sponsors of this conference included the School of Engineering and Technology, Offices of Administrative Affairs and Diversity, and the Departments of Political Science and Anthropology plus International and Areas Studies as well as the Archaeology Laboratory for African and African Diaspora Studies. ■



Dr. Olga Davis pours libation during her presentation at the 19th Annual CAS Conference.

NEWS FROM THE MOTHERLAND

PATTERNS OF PROGRESS: CONSISTENCIES OR DISCREPANCIES

With a slight difference from recent issues, this core standing topic features the two specific countries of Liberia and Kenya. In each nation covered, there is the potential for long term consistency of development that can impact the lives of more than a select few. Whether the information presented here is indicative of tangible opportunities for African people or questionable practices that provide the illusion of change will be revealed in time; however, the necessity to address major concerns, as headlines of the continent unfold, is a reality that should not be taken lightly by the African Diaspora.

LIBERIA'S JOHNSON-SIRLEAF PARADIGM SHIFT

Since 2006, when Africa first democratically elected female Head of State, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, a Harvard-trained economist took office, Liberia has enjoyed relative economic and social progress. The poverty legacy of Civil War on this West African nation, which is rich in gold, diamonds, iron ore and recently discovered reserves of oil, was then so severe that the United Nations could not even assess it in its annual development. Johnson-Sirleaf understood that Liberia economic success comes only with the strengthening of government institutions, so she steadily and successfully introduced policies that would fight corruptions, enforce accountability and reward performance. Her personal engagement for gender equality, social justice and Women rights in Liberia led to international recognition and her win of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011, jointly with a country fellow citizen, Leymah Gbowee.

When "Mama Sirleaf" (a term of endearment by her fellow citizens in Liberia) ran for a second term in 2011, she was re-elected by 90.7%. With the second term came the discovery of vast deposits of oil in Liberia and the paradigm shift in Johnson-Sirleaf's politics: Results from recent internal and external audits paint a picture of a Liberia government routinely ignoring its own laws in a rush to hand out natural resources to a few selected. The audits also underline the importance of independent oversight of how natural resources deals are made.

Oliver Courtney, a campaigner with Global Witness asserts: "If the Liberian government is serious about turning the page on the past and using natural resources to improve the lives of its citizens rather than enrich the corrupt, following laws and prosecuting government officials and companies who violate them... should be Liberia's no. 1 priority... this could make or break the country's future."

With Johnson-Sirleaf in the driver-seat, we could hardly anticipate this coming. Apparently, Liberia is now presenting the typical symptoms of an African nation cursed by the vast of its natural resources: The Nobel Peace Prize Winner, the last hope of many Liberians, must quickly take strong action to prove the contrary.

The line that separates "Heroes" from "Zeros" remains thin in the continent.

KENYA'S KENYATTA: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Last month presidential elections in Kenya were apparently no different from the past ones: The family and ethnic backgrounds of the two leading candidates were routinely well established. It must be a Kikuyu, in person of Uhuru Kenyatta, supported by KANU, the party of the late founder of the nation, Jomo Kenyatta. On the other hand, it must be a Luo, personified by Raila Odinga, representing ODM, a relevant political group in Kenya. While the Kikuyu have been in the political driver-seat for decades, the Luo never conceded. When Kibaki, a Kikuyu, was declared winner of the 2007 elections, a Luo driven deadly post-election, violence emerged. An international negotiated government of national unity guaranteed Odinga a position as Prime Minister in a Kibaki administration.

While the majority of these Kenyan political leaders portray themselves on the surface as antagonistic alternatives for leading Kenya through the future, in reality, they have astonishingly a common modus operandi: A lethal sense of belonging.

continued on page 18

“I DON’T INTEND TO GET BACK NO FURTHER THAN THEY KNOCK ME:” AFRICAN AMERICAN ACHIEVEMENT IN ST. PETERSBURG IN THE SUNSHINE OF CHANGE

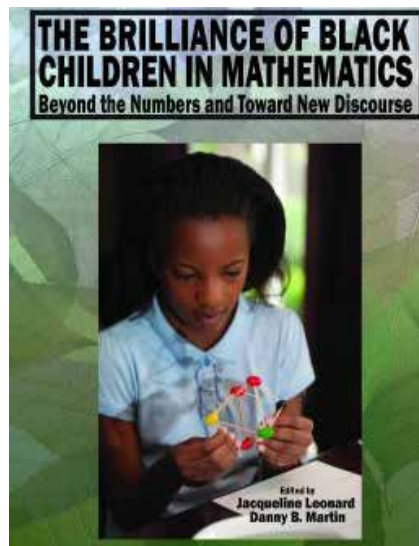
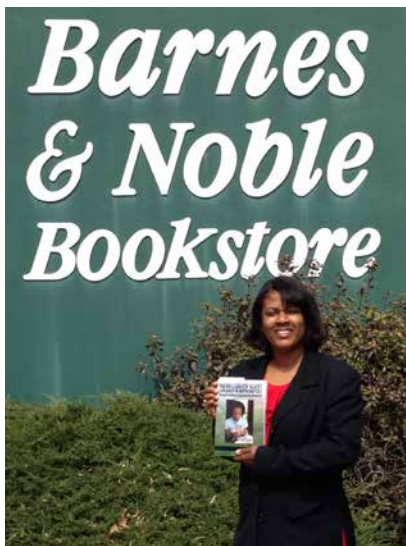


On April 24th, Dr. Evelyn Phillips, Professor of Anthropology and Co-Director of the Center for Africana Studies, presented her ongoing research on St. Petersburg, Florida’s African American community and their resistance against social and political oppression. The lecture focused on how the inter-generational community built and supported educational institutions despite being undermined by local and state governments. Dr. Phillips has interviewed many St. Petersburg residents of all ages to demonstrate the continuity of culture and values through the generations, and the emphasis on education as “social capital,” by which African Americans resist marginalization.

Through documentary research and extensive oral history, Dr. Phillips traced the history of Gibbs High School, which was founded in 1927 as the first Black high school in St. Petersburg. Through high educational standards and dedication, Gibbs’s students, faculty, alumni, and community supporters built cultural capital for its graduates, despite lack of support and outright barriers created by the school system. Gibbs High School has survived through the era of segregation, the transition era of integration, and to the present condition of de facto re-segregation. A resurgence of community support is creating revitalization, but the problems of structural violence in St. Petersburg are still pervasive.

Dr. Phillips is continuing her research and compiling further oral histories of St. Petersburg’s African American community. We look forward to ongoing discussions of this important and timely subject. ■

Woodruff, J.



PROFESSOR SHELLY JONES FEATURES BOOK CHAPTER

We congratulate Dr. Shelly Jones whose recent chapter publication is within the book “The Brilliance of Black Children in Mathematics: Beyond the Numbers and Toward New Discourse.” Edited by Dr. Jacqueline Leonard and Dr. Danny Martin, the book is a compilation of leading research that explores mathematical experiences including measurements and challenges for achievement in various contexts. Professor Jones co-authored a chapter along with Dr. Lou E. Matthews and Yolanda A. Parker. With a focus on teacher empowerment, the chapter analyzes ways teachers can create

mathematical tasks intended to challenge students to reflect upon themselves, their communities, and their world. Professor Jones remarked,

“It was an honor to be invited to be included as a co-author of this book in the company of leading scholars and educators. I am very proud of our chapter because it adds to the literature of culturally relevant teaching as the first work to advance a framework to assist teachers in building culturally relevant cognitively demanding mathematics tasks.”

Professor Jones also participated in the book’s official release at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics in Denver, Colorado on April 17th, 2013. ■

THE SOJOURNER TRUTH NEWSLETTER
CULTURAL TRADITION IN PLAY



**AMISTAD
COMMITTEE
CELEBRATES 10TH
ANNIVERSARY.**



CULTURAL TRADITIONS IN PRACTICE



**CCSU STUDENTS AND
COMMUNITY MEMBERS
DISPLAY TRADITIONS.**

News from the Motherland

The family and ethnicity business come first, then the party, and last the people of Kenya. That explains why important reforms, notoriously the Land reform, have never been pushed until the latest consequences.

There is a good reason to believe, this time things will change for better in Kenya: Uhuru Kenyatta the so-elected president of Kenya is an indictee by the International court in Hague, due to his role in 2007 post-election violence. He surprisingly made a decision to face his case in the court rather than just ignoring it. That bears chance for people of Kenya. For Kenyatta to restore his dignity, he will have to make a strong case of somebody who cares about his people. That implies a change of political modus operandi. Consequently, the people of Kenya would benefit.

The President knows well, he is now living in a glasshouse.

The world is watching and judging. ■

Assado, C.M.T.

MEN ENOUGH SUPPORT INITIATIVE

Some students and faculty may have heard of the Men Enough Support Initiative while others may have not. Frequently, students and faculty members will see the brothers of The Men Enough Support Initiative, commonly referred to as Man Enough or M.E.S.I, walking around campus dressed sharp as a razor with their blue and silver “Man Enough” ties. Other times, one will notice a brother dressed like the average college student (jeans and a t-shirt) but proudly wearing his Man Enough dog tag that has written on it the five virtues of a Man Enough Brother. However, it is important that the university know about our existence and our purpose as an organized group. Thus, one point is for certain: members of Men Enough Support Initiative are brothers of distinction.

“Men Enough” has done numerous projects to help improve the college experience of the young men across the campus. For instance, M.E.S.I puts on annual events such as The Men’s Health Forum that addresses the health issues which are causing high mortality rates in men than they should cause. The Men’s Health Forum has had guest speakers such as State Representative Brandon McGee, U.S Senator Chris Murphy, and State Comptroller Kevin Lembo. Furthermore, every spring M.E.S.I acknowledges an underappreciated person or staff on campus, and this is known as Men Enough Appreciation Day. Also, “Men Enough” awards five young men with the Men Enough Citation Award who display the five M.E.S.I virtues. These are just a few of the many activities M.E.S.I has done and will continue to build on.

M.E.S.I is a support group that provides a safe and comfortable arena for men to discuss their issues and pressures that they deal with on a college campus. It is a place where individuals can come and learn from each other while growing academically, mentally, and professionally. The organization is not a fraternity, but we are fraternal building group. The brothers of The Men Enough Support Initiative practice the following five virtues: Wisdom, Integrity, Spirituality, Humility, and Brotherhood. For anyone who feels that he lives by these five virtues, I (as the Chairman of the M.E.S.I. Organizing and Steering Committee) invite you to a meeting. Throughout the semester, we meet every Monday night in Vance Academic building in room 105. ■

Celestin, A.

Central Connecticut State University, Dept. of Geography, Center for Africana Studies and Center for International Education are proud to present...

Ghana

THE PLACE TO BE IN SUMMER 2013



C o u r s e s T a u g h t A b r o a d

This program will introduce participants to all facets of Ghanaian history and culture, including the country's economy, politics and performing arts. The curriculum includes a workshop by the Ghana Dance Ensemble, lectures by faculty from the University of Cape Coast, Kakum canopy walk and visits to cultural and historical sites including the Elmina and Cape Coast Castles. The expected date for the program is **July 8- July 23, 2013**.

YOU CAN EARN CREDITS IN:

- International Studies 360:
International Studies through Travel 3 or 6 credits
- International Studies 590:
Field Studies Abroad 3 or 6 credits
- Geography 459: Field Studies in Regional Geography 3 or 6 credits
- Geography 559: Advanced Field Studs. In Geography 3 or 6 credits.

It is anticipated that the cost of the program (exclusive of airfare, tuition, health insurance and the required vaccination) is approximately \$2,695 per person for students registering for at least three credits; and \$2,995 for those not registering for credit.. The cost include hotel accommodation, two meals daily, ground transportation and entrance fees to scheduled activities. A limited number of \$500 scholarships are available on a competitive basis to matriculated students at CIE, CCSU.

Deadline: Please contact Dr. Peter A. Kyem for deadline extension dates. Forms may be obtained at CIE, CCSU or via <http://www.ccsu.edu/page.cfm?p=15291>

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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