Thus, when the children of Odudua gather together, those chosen to bring good into the world are called human beings or the chosen ones. (Odu Ifa, Yoruba Sacred Text, Odu 78:1)

What does it mean to be human? While it certainly seems to entail consideration of all of our flaws and fallacies, from a cultural world view grounded in the wisdom tradition of African deep thought it has meant across time, geography, and ethnic groups, to be a living sun (Bantu), one with the Creative Life Force/Source. As such, to be human is to be an intrinsically worthy spiritual being having a human experience.
## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Join the AAAS CEC Coalition for Racial Justice and Cultural Equity</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Studies: Defining a Discipline</td>
<td>4-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberating Minds &amp; Liberating Societies</td>
<td>7-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africana/Black Studies Perspectives on Racial Justice and Cultural Equity in Critical Research and Scholarship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017 Global Brain Health and Performance Summit</td>
<td>9-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Research and Understanding Humanity: Where is morality?</td>
<td>10-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAAS CEC Op-Eds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No Justice, No Peace”: Pop Culture and U.S. Race Relations</td>
<td>12-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin’s Unfinished Thoughts</td>
<td>14-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Semester 2017 Programming</td>
<td>16-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAAS CEC on the Move</td>
<td>21-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upcoming Programs</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AAAS CEC Builds Coalition for Racial Justice and Cultural Equity

As we move toward the third year of our AAAS CEC initiative, *Cultural Enrichment and Enhancement of Individual and Collective Health and Sustainable Well Being*, we have learned and accomplished a great deal. Emerging from concerns voiced by the over 1,500 community participants we served the first year, our emphasis this year has been on *Social Policies, Practices, Justice, and Responsibility* seen as key challenges to our citizens. Often finding that social policies and practices that may have been intended to be helpful have had a deleterious effect on the lives of the recipients, one strategy we implemented with support from an United Way Neighborhood Partnership grant was the Urban Digital Citizen Initiative designed to facilitate communication between community members and those representing them in government and social services.

The aim has been to educate and increase a sense of agency by encouraging citizens to utilize digital strategies and organization for standing up, speaking up, and speaking out for themselves, their families and communities. With this and other undertakings around these issues, going forward our focus has been further refined. With increased awareness that now more than ever the need for racial justice and mandate for cultural equity have to be addressed if we are ever to achieve anything close to health or sustainable well-being, be it individually or collectively. Thus our aim in 2017-2018 is to build a Coalition for Racial Justice and Cultural Equity among all social justice workers, students, scholars, researchers, community leaders, and others who seek join others in being the change we are intending to create toward a just, sacred, sustainable world.

While this pathway to Ubuntu (the divine essence of being human) may not be easy, requiring critical self-examination and difficult conversations, the broadening our ordinary frame of reference, the enhancement of our capacity to empathize and appreciate the experiences of others, we will create the safe space needed for ‘telling it like it is’, unconditional positive regard, and the support needed for the growth and resilience required to take humankind to the next level. We continue to make the call for all to join us in building the coalition to bring forth the best of humankind so that we might witness racial justice and experience cultural equity for the greater good of the whole.

For more information email our office associate at aaascec@osu.edu or hunt.670@osu.edu
Black Studies or the Study of Black People 50 Years Later

Judson L. Jeffries, PhD and Linda James Myers, PhD

The Department of Black Studies at The Ohio State University, like many departments throughout the country, is the proud product of the 1960’s Black freedom movement. Now known as the Department of African American and African Studies, it was originally established as an academic division in October 1969. It achieved formal department status in 1972 and has, despite what some may think, enjoyed a reputation as one of the strongest Black Studies Departments in the nation. What has been learned over the past 50 years since the struggle was waged for its creation?

There are several challenges that have faced the development of this comparatively young discipline that are unique to and inseparable from the socio-historical context from which it emerged. Key among them is the distinction between Black Studies and the study of Black people.

From its inception the answer to this question regarding the nature of the discipline, which is inherently interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, if not trans-disciplinary and comparative in nature, has been central to its survival and growth. Black Studies denotes the creation of space within the western academy for the production of a body of knowledge offering its own unique perspectives, analyses and critiques, supported by the scholarly endeavors of a community of intellectuals devoted to establishing a legacy of academic excellence while fostering a sense of social responsibility.

Like other fields of study, Black Studies was to be supported and sustained by the premiere journals in the field, leading professional organizations and conferences, and an ever growing body of cutting edge scholarship. As William E. Nelson Jr., the first chairperson of OSU’s Department of Black Studies, so aptly put it, “Africology must give us a prism through which we can correctly interpret the world around us. It must give us the capacity not simply to ask different questions, but the right questions, and to test the truth of the answers we receive on the basis of realities emanating uniquely from the African experience.” To what degree this thinking resonates with some of this generation of academics who believe themselves to be Black Studies scholars is not entirely clear There are many ap-
parently who believe that Black Studies is merely the study of Black people. If that were so people such as Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Charles Murray would qualify as Black Studies scholars, as would some of the most highly regarded intellectuals of the enlightenment period whose study of Blacks prompted them to conclude that Africa had no history and thus contributed nothing to civilization. What needs to be made clear is that the study of Black people simply reflects the subject matter of focus and can be undertaken within any discipline. There is no commitment to the development of Black Studies as a discipline or to the betterment of Black lives. Ironically, in such cases, emphasis is often placed on mainstream journals, and the very professional associations and conferences that have historically not only marginalized the Black experience, but played an integral role in consigning Black people to an inferior place in world history.

While such scholarly contributions to knowledge are not without some value, they do not support the mission nor contribute to the growth and sustainability of the discipline for which students and others fought 50 years ago. The demands and sacrifices of Black students whose protests culminated in 1968 forced the creation of space for a body of knowledge in the western academy theretofore excluded must be honored. We would have to ask how would those who were arrested, went to jail, or were expelled from school and thus lost the opportunity to complete their own education regard the fruits of their labor a half century later.

Black Studies is not merely the study of Black people, rather it is holistically inclusive of all humankind, as the discipline is framed by its approach to subject matter. According to the website, the primary mission of the AAAS department is to emphasize research and teaching about the Black experience in the United States, Africa and throughout the African Diaspora, and, encourage students and others to assess various strategies for advancing human progress through the examination of the global struggle for Black freedom. Thus, the department is oriented to provide an intellectual home for the exploration, critical examination, analysis, and interpretation of the experiences, traditions, and dynamics of people of African descent in the United States, Africa and its diaspora. As it goes forward, we must continue to ask the right questions, addressing historical, cultural, sociological, political, psychological, legal, economic, and other factors that affect humanity through an inimitable lens.
Linda James Myers, PhD, is a Professor at The Ohio State University and currently serves as Director of the African American and African Studies Community Extension Center. She is an internationally recognized scholar/researcher, a past president of the Association of Black Psychologists, and has served as an Associate Editor of both the Journal of Black Studies and the Journal of Black Psychology.

Judson L. Jeffries, PhD, is a Professor at The Ohio State University in the Department of African American and African Studies, widely recognized for his contributions to the field of Black Studies. He currently serves as Co-editor of Spectrum: A Journal on Black Men.

This article is the first in a series leading up to the 50th Anniversary of the demonstrations that led to the creation of the Department of African American and African Studies at The Ohio State University.
Liberating Minds &
Liberating Societies:
Racial Justice and Cultural Equity

On the AAAS department course offerings flyer for Autumn, 2017, you will find Angela Davis being quoted, “We have to talk about liberating minds, as well as liberating society.” This statement is so very true, but where do we begin when speaking of liberating minds, there are so many things we must take into consideration. We will begin our exploration on the pathways to Ubuntu with examining the consequences of racial injustice and cultural inequity. In other words, the liberation of our minds that we seek is from the mental (and spiritual) bondage of racial injustice and cultural inequity. More specifically, we will begin our freeing with the strategy put forward by another scholar/activist from almost a century ago, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, who informed us, “The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them.”

However in this age of “alternate facts”, the light of truth often becomes very difficult to come by. The question we should be asking ourselves is how in the world as a nation did we get here to this fact-less place where we are told the truth is arbitrary, undeterminable, and no one cares about it anyway. To some of us this place is not at all unfamiliar. Its path can be readily traced to this nation’s beginnings. Remember, the ‘founding fathers’ used this fact-less strategy to justify the enslavement of African people as chattel without any human rights whatsoever. This travesty was committed under their claim of creating a ‘democracy’ committed to freedom and justice for all. The long, arduous, and complex history of young Africans captured, kidnapped and trafficked to the Americas as chattel to build this nation’s wealth still haunts this nation today. It is this long history of atrocities and racial injustice upon which this nation has been built, a strategy readily identifiable today and not different from that instituted at this country’s inception.

Past President and ‘Founding Father’ Thomas Jefferson played a central role in the social construction of race and propagation of the ‘fact-less’ idea of the inferiority of Black people, as less than human. The system of institutionalizing racial injustice that still persists today was created to justify and offset the claim that this nation was a democracy with freedom and justice for all. Herein we see an early example of national leadership shaping the interpretation of what is truth or not true. Unfortunately, it also illustrates the intractability of an idea promoted to fulfill an agenda of materialistic greed and control, while masking exploitive, dehumanizing, shameless behavior.

While this strategy of necessity tapped quite successfully into the subjective nature of reality, it also had to avoid undercutting the myth of objective reality requisite for cultural inequity. This myth is enjoyed by those privileged for so long by being the cultural group dominant in shaping the society’s prevailing world view, values, moral and ethical standards. Despite reality’s subjective nature, perpetuating the myth of objectivity sets the stage for cultural imperialism, allowing a western cultural reality to affirm and confirm by social consensus that only a certain set of ideas can be true. We must liberate our minds in order for society to be liberated.

All human beings have a cultural world view with its own patterns of interpreting reality and designs for living grounded in the experiences, exposures, and meanings each has made and passed on. It is the absence of cultural equity that privileges some cultural world views, often to the exclusion and dismissal of others. This pattern is particularly prevalent and readily seen when accompanied by the racial injustice perpetrated against people acknowledging African descent. Absent cultural beliefs valuing social justice and equitable human rights for all human beings, respect for nature’s ecosystems, and high regard for the health and sustainable well-being of all, materialistic greed, control and power over others will likely prevail.

When we become critically self-reflective and consciously self-aware enough to recognize the biases shaping our perceptions, we can use reason illuminated by careful study and observation to discern or
discover the truth of matters. However, very few of us do that, more of us have been taught or socially engineered not to do so. Most, the prevailing majority, have not only been encouraged accept what they are told without questioning, they do so outside of conscious awareness.

We can make certain valid observations in the world, if we are mindful, and critically self-aware. We do not want to become so immersed in our own subjectivity that we undermine all of reality in order to claim that the truth is anything we want it to be at the time. Without moral grounding and ethical anchors space for the fact-less will always be created and enough people believe it. It is quite accurately observed that not enough people have been supported and rewarded for thinking critically or deeply, nor for thinking for themselves. Thus, the stage has been set for that which we see has happened for centuries and continues to happen. The way out of this morass of a factless/truthless present is the path of increased self-knowledge, critical inquiry, and the fearless practice of having an open mind and telling it like it is. One must shine the light of truth on everything in order to free one’s minds.

The current state of affairs raises serious questions with which society and the nation must grapple. While the forces driving the current situation may be the product of many complex factors so intertwined that they are very difficult to ferret out, we must work to liberate our minds. We owe it to ourselves and future generations to try to account for what has happened and make sense of what is happening. In the end we may have to thank the forces creating the present circumstances for bringing to new light the many hidden elements and dynamics needed for a deeper understanding of what it takes to make America great.
Much has been abuzz on the OSU campus and at research institutions across the country around the importance of multi and interdisciplinary research and collaboration. This impetus has been increased awareness that answers to the most serious questions facing humanity will most likely be answered with the coming together of our best minds. However, often overlooked in these multi and interdisciplinary collaborations are the contributions that could be made by may be explained in part by examination of the forces of racial injustice and cultural inequity. Not uncommon in the western academy, as the university does reflect the society in microcosm, are these biases, often unconscious though they may be.

The message was not lost at the 2017 Global Brain Health and Performance Summit exploring the latest discoveries and innovations linking brain health to performance, recovery, healing, and wellness which took place at the end of April. Hosted by The Ohio State University and the Stanley D. and Joan H. Ross Center for Brain Health and Performance, the program featured experts across disciplines and fields of endeavor to decode the mysteries of the human brain for the benefit of humanity. Dr. Ali R. Rezai, Director of the Ross Center for Brain Health and Performance and The Ohio State Neurological Institute, also Associate Dean of Neuroscience, spearheaded the second annual event of its kind. The Summit sought to inform, inspire, and serve as a catalyst for future collaborations and breakthroughs.

Having such an intention created the opportunity for engaging alternate cultural world views non-dominant in mainstream western society that can enhance scientific endeavors and outcomes. Indeed Dr. Depak Chopra, described as an integrative medicine pioneer, spoke about more than the mind, body, spirit connection, he expanded the conversation to be inclusive of the nature and role of consciousness and the cosmos. A practitioner of Ayurvedic medicine, Chopra drew upon and offered yoga and mindfulness as practices that could be used overcome the “illusion of separate self” and enhance movement toward a more holistic and integrative way of being. Such a trend toward increased interest in, respect for, and appreciation of world views embracing assumptions very different from those prevailing in the west will contribute to cultural equity. As this shift progresses, the expectation would be that Africana/Black Studies scholarship converging with the heights of western scientific knowledge, so-called eastern philosophies, and the wisdom tradition of African deep thought, would also be explored. As lived tradition it exposes humanity to yet another dimension, an optimal cultural world view if highest value is placed on creating a just, sacred, sustainable world.

The 2017 Global Brain Health and Performance Summit offered a host of other exceptional researchers addressing a range of topics from the opioid addiction crisis to nutrition, exercise, and sleep, among others. The opioid addiction crisis in particular offers a unique opportunity to illustrate the need for a Coalition for Racial Justice and Cultural Equity. Decades ago, Harvard law professor, Lani Guinier, wrote about the miner’s canary as a metaphor for the role Black Americans have played historically in US society, warning that whatever happens to them first will eventually impact the larger White American communities. When lower income Black communities in particular were infused with the designer drug crack cocaine, the societal response was a war on drugs treating those addicted as criminals and fueling mass incarceration through harsh penalties, mandatory sentencing, and three strikes laws. Although the current U.S. Attorney General is rolling the nation back to those draconian days of horror because opioid addiction...
has become so prevalent in White communities, the
general societal sentiment and view being propagated
is that of addiction as a brain disease, not a character
flaw or weakness.

Each of the presenters for this section of the program
spoke passionately about their topics including the
need to develop real compassion for those addicted,
chronic stress and ACES as important factors lead-
ing to addiction, loss of safety and purpose among
those addicted, as well as immediate brain changes
resulting from addiction. I could only think of the
excessively large numbers of Black men and women
in prisons today because they did not receive such
understanding and support due to racial injustice.

At the same time what we have learned from the
Black community about building resilience, toxic
mindsets and how to change them, and identifying
and combatting the upstream social determinants of
addictive behavior holistically, seem to be lessons
from which all might be able to benefit. That is, if we
are able expand our own mindsets to begin to over-
come the deeply ingrained limits imposed by racial
injustice and cultural inequity. Dr. William Martin II,
Dean of the School of Public Health, Dr. John Cam-
po, Chair of the Department of Psychiatry and Be-
havioral Health, and Dr. Ali R. Rezal, Director of the
Center for Brain Health and Performance and Associ-
ate Dean of Neuroscience, each pledged commitment
to collaborative efforts to solve the challenges with
which we are confronted around solving the current
crisis. Africana/Black Studies scholar/researchers at
the AAAS CEC reach out and remain eager to join
such efforts, ready to contribute the effective holistic
and integrative strategies we have learned over the
decades from the margins to the greater good of the
whole.

Academic Research and
Understanding Humanity:
Where is morality?

The recent Emeritus Academy lecture (5/3/17) at The
Ohio State University (OSU) Faculty Club entitled,
“The Power of Humanizing and Dehumanizing the
Other”, highlighted the work of Professor of Psychol-
ogy Emeritus Dan Christie, OSU-Newark. His focus
was on how tackling this theoretical framework oper-
ates in explaining terrorism, genocide, and structural
violence amongst disparate groups of people.
Understanding the intricate workings of human social
interaction has a long and rich history within psy-
chological research. Western social psychological
framing of social interactions, such as racism and
prejudice, uses a theoretical framework that suggests
many of our attitudes relating to social interaction are
automatic (non-conscious) and based on a schema
of “us”—people, objects, etc. similar to you—and
“other”—people, objects different (and therefore not
as worthy) from you.

Dr. Christie’s psychosocial overview classified two
types of violence in the process of dehumanization:
episodic and structural. Episodic violence was closely
linked to genocide: periods of time whereby groups
are engaged in “ethnic” cleansing, wholesale slaugh-
ter or other methods of extermination of humans, but
which can and usually does end. Colonization, on
the other hand, is described as structural violence— a
process whereby violence against a group is codified
and legitimized by the state through social policies
and practices, legal and policing mechanisms. Dr.
Christie acknowledged that dehumanization underlies
structural violence using chattel enslavement in the
United States (and other colonization examples) as
an example—consider the quote below from Thomas
Jefferson, Notes from Virginia, concerning enslaved
Africans and Native Americans:

To our reproach it must be said, that though for a cen-
tury and a half we have had under our eyes the races of
black and of red men, they have never yet been viewed
by us as subjects of natural history. I advance it therefore
as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a
Dr. Christie primarily highlighted and summarized research linking the process of dehumanization to episodic violence. The studies were lab based experiments or surveys and examined diverse topics such as Milgram’s obedience studies, Bandura’s severe punishment studies, using images below the level of awareness to see how quickly individuals match ape faces with Black or White faces, and use of language (more or less animal based) to describe a person convicted of capital crime (Goff and colleagues). He further noted a smaller area of research whereby a link between moral disengagement and event related dehumanization occurs. Dr. Christie interpreted the literature as demonstrating groups considered “other”: immigrants, Mexicans, Arabs, and Blacks are often described in non-human or less than human terms. The framing, and Dr. Christie’s interest, suggests that by somehow preempting the dehumanization process you can affect peacemaking and peace building outcomes (lecture referred to conflict resolution scholarly work).

The issue of moral engagement/disengagement most piqued my interest and I asked a question about the converse, “if moral disengagement is induced in the face of dehumanization, does moral engagement predict the ability to see the humanity in all?” While the question was seen as an interesting one, the response suggested limited scholarly literature in this area. I did a quick scan of the relative literature to see if I could fashion a strategy to answer my own question. I found that moral disengagement is treated as a series of mechanistic self-regulatory activities that can be activated or deactivated based on a particular set of circumstances (Bandura, 1990). One example Bandura uses refers to terrorism whereby violence becomes morally sanctioned because someone (e.g., military personnel) can be activated to view the killing as just and righteous. In regards to dehumanization, Bandura (1990) writes, “Self-sanctions against cruel conduct can be disengaged or blunted by divesting people of human qualities…they are portrayed as mindless “savages”, “gooks”, “satanic fiends” or other despicable wretches.”

With this literature, it would seem your actions drive your morality and not vice versa. However, this perspective comes from a particular cultural frame of reference. Indicating, your values and beliefs are transitional and arbitrarily applied based on internal decision making processes by each individual for each set of social circumstances. If this is true, then moral engagement as envisioned would not even occur, let alone, actually shift a person’s perception to see the humanity of all. I came away with more questions than answers, but I believe the process of humanizing and dehumanizing others is not primarily situationally driven, but instead represents a complex system of social engagement. Critical self-reflection is needed to further exploration and expansion of our understanding of human thought and behavior. Such powerful research could unlock the potential to address the episodic and structural violence epitomizing racism and prejudice to effectively find peace in society.
“No Justice, No Peace”: Pop Culture and U.S. Race Relations

Michelle Anderson, PhD

Art and popular culture signal both an entrenchment in the status quo and symbolize the societal deep structure. The commemoration of two historical events: the 1992 Los Angeles rebellion and the 1967 Detroit rebellion shine a spotlight on racial injustice within society. The release of the documentary LA 92 on April 28, 2017 commemorating the 25th anniversary of the 1992 Rodney King beating and subsequent Los Angeles rebellion and the scheduled August 4, 2017 release of the crime drama Detroit, set against the backdrop of the 1967 Detroit rebellion, supply fodder to continue the examination of U.S. race relations.

LA 92 uses archival media footage and interviews to create a montage of images with very little narration allowing the story to unfold. It offers the audience a chance to draw its own largely uninterrupted interpretation, although clearly the audience is being primed by the opening scenes. It begins with footage from police communication during the 1965 Watts riots. It is described by journalists, in the footage, as “the most widespread, most destructive racial violence in U.S. American history.” The police chief at the time, William Parker, is quoted as calling rebels, “monkeys in a zoo” and then shown saying essentially, “no one and nothing is to blame but the people [engaged in the riots] themselves”. This is juxtaposed with Black residents and community leaders in Watts describing the history of strained police and black community relationships, citing, “law and order is responsible for rounding up many people in the South and now.” The segments ends with a journalistic summation that if something isn’t done about the “sickness in the cities” it may only become worse in the future.

This sequencing documents the existence of two separate realities where law and order (status quo) reacts to say there is nothing wrong in society and Black citizens saying there is a historical dismissal, disregard and disdain for acknowledgment of the humanity, dignity and beliefs of those non-immigrant Africans in the United States. These two separate realities exemplify the racial imbalance within U.S. society; underlying this racial injustice is cultural inequity. Cultural inequity exists because of the privileging of the dominant Western (Eurocentric) worldview and belief that worldviews stemming from differing ethnic/cultural groups do not warrant respect, equality or even acknowledgment. The film, through the archival unfolding of the Rodney King beating by the LAPD and case, underscores the complex issues of immigration, police brutality and everyday life for all citizens using Los Angeles as the backdrop.

In contrast, Detroit, is a historically fictionalized account of the what is known as the Algiers Motel incident, where the details surrounding the death of three black men at the hands of the police during the Detroit rebellion remain largely unknown. The movie draws heavily from the 1968 publication of the true crime book, The Algiers Motel Incident, John Haggerty. This film seems to use a hyper-focus on one incident to spread outward in its examination of interracial relationships, strained community-police relations and the intersection of race and urban spaces. Using teasers/trailers as guides, I hope and anticipate the lead black guard (Melvin Dismukes, portrayed by John Boyega) offers the subtle spiritual and moral anchor needed to represent the deep structure of non-Western culture. The trailers display him as an individual attempting to keep things calm during the heated tensions and police interrogation of the individuals at the Algiers Motel. If not, the film may offer a continued glimpse (without deep questioning) of tense U.S. race relations.

Both films reflect continued societal racial injustice and cultural inequity with a desire to accommodate
within the Western worldview, a “blameless” or “objective” view of the historical legacy of chattel enslavement on its descendants. Only art and popular culture portrayals that truly confront this history and its current consequences, as well as question important distinctions between cultural world views can move us to increased cultural equity.

References/Links:
https://tribecafilm.com/filmguide/la-92-2017


Michelle Anderson, PhD, is currently the Program Manager at the African American and African Studies Community Extension Center. She is a clinical psychologist and researcher, with experience in criminal justice, education and community health and wellness.
Baldwin’s Unfinished Thoughts

Vaughn Hunt, B.A.

Raoul Peck’s “I Am Not Your Negro” offers insights into Baldwin’s unfinished literary work “Remember This House”, previously inaccessible. Here, Baldwin recognizes perhaps the single most dangerous perception in America: perpetuating the myth of racial equality in the falsities of historic repetitions of racially biased socio economic and political policies and practices extending from slavery and continuing currently. As Baldwin points out, white people have become monsters in their conquest of black bodies, and in response, black people have been forced to learn about them out of necessity. And while this knowing is empirical, most strikingly it is experientially based in survival. Unsurprisingly, white people have not felt that same urge to learn (about those they have dehumanized or harmed), nor faced dire consequences. Easily recognized, their relationship with blackness is sourced in “irrational fear”, which stimulates a cycle of hatred of blacks by whites. In response, black people have learned to direct their hatred not at white people, but the white supremacist system, the same trap set by the mechanism of fear. It’s unavoidable when you live in a nation that has yet to acknowledge its most damning failures.

Yet, the need for acknowledgement of wrong doing is dismissed by a further failure Baldwin can’t overlook in the American mindset: its virtues. Specifically, the virtue of sincerity which allows someone to admit their actions, but dismiss them as mere indiscretions, despite their repercussions. According to Baldwin, such malevolent behavior indicates a virtue of immaturity, a clear sign any apology, if even issued, would lack the full weight of responsibility for enslavement and any other racial transgressions. Given their prevalent cultural world view that may be the most that is attainable are unattainable. The history of America is the history of Black people, and by extension all people who have been oppressed in this nation. We gloss over this fact and separate our histories to avoid these self-evident truths. To paraphrase Baldwin, progress is relative, but human rights are not. The narrative of American history tends to suggest otherwise, but such are its “virtues”.

The contradiction of our values play out in a history of hypocrisy dominated by the concept of whiteness as ideal. To this ideal, many are conditioned to associate whiteness with being human and being black as not. “I Am Not Your Negro” is aptly named because “negro” in certain languages is a color and is not a person. The term “Negro” was created by white people to describe a race of people in bondage who were deemed property, whom they falsely tried to strip of their humanity. We underestimate the power of language because it also operates on the level of subconscious, and we can become so quickly acclimated to incorporate words, that we do not pause to consider their meaning. Framing or cultural world view is vital in conditioning minds and from this we build associations, create or apply stereotypes, biases (explicit and implicit), and generate a framework for our interactions. Whereas challenging a presentation or framing of words forces us to look at these associations and rethink our cognitions, often
we do not engage in this space of deconstructing and reconstructing thought. Our challenge then is to overcome differences in values informed by our cultural world view and its conceptual system and end a history of marginalization and othering through challenging our perceptions. “I Am Not Your Negro” begs the question, “Well then, who are you?” The only answer is: inalienably human.

Vaughn Hunt is currently the Office Associate at the African American and African Studies Community Extension Center. He is a writer who focuses on issues of race and representation.
Urban G.E.M.S.

The AAAS CEC has been very happy to welcome Associate Professor Deanna Wilkinson and her community engaged research to 905 Mount Vernon Avenue.

AAAS CEC is always eager to collaborate with scholar/researchers across the University to bring the fruits of their labor and important work to communities that could so greatly benefit from them. That is why a few months ago the AAAS CEC was thrilled to become the site of an Urban G.E.M.S. program mini garden for whom Dr. Deanna Wilkinson, Associate Professor, School of Education is the Principal Investigator. Dr. Linda James Myers, Professor and CEC Director and Professor Wilkerson collectively strategized to bring this important work to the AAAS CEC, as the educational program not only offers community participants training in horticulture, but also entrepreneurship. In addition it clearly supports the AAAS CEC’s mission and current initiative of enriching and encouraging sustainable health and well-being in the Columbus community. For more information: http://urbangems.ehe.osu.edu

Programming Spring Semester 2017

Look at what we have been up to and you may have been missing! Please take a look and join us going forward!
Construction Skills Training Interviews
As part of a series of events promoting workforce development on the Pointdexter Redevelopment Project, NRT and Associates in concert with the AAAS CEC has undertaken Interviews for Skills Training Placement for low income or unemployed individuals from the community. Those showing an interest in jumpstarting their careers in the construction trade in the Columbus area registered in advance for the interview by completing a pre-interview questionnaire online. Interviews were scheduled from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM on January 14th at the AAAS Community Extension Center. Due to their tremendous success, additional screenings and training in other trades are being planned for the future.

Urban Digital Citizen Initiative
The Urban Digital Citizen Initiative training series began on February 15th this year. This project was partially supported by a United Way Neighborhood Partnership Grant. The goal was to engage and train local residents in utilizing digital literacy to increase their voice, sense of agency and empowerment to influence social policies and practices that are in concert with their political awareness and agenda. The participants were encouraged and supported in starting social justice groups. In addition, they were coached in sharing opinions with elected officials and policy makers, as well as creating a critical mass ensure their voice is heard. The initiative drew heavily from a curriculum for engaging policymakers. The culmination of the trainings was a summit held on April 19th, 2017 where the principles of the initiative were re-emphasized and attendees participated in anonymous opinion surveys that allowed them to view collective perspectives on various important issues. A great time was had by all with the opportunity for following up on the efforts of participants. The initiative will continue by creating a repository of digitized educational materials at the AAAS CEC.

My Life, My Love, My Legacy
The AAAS CEC’s special Black History Month event was a presentation by nationally known journalist and speaker, Dr. Barbara Reynolds. Dr. Reynolds had recently published My Life, My Love, My Legacy, a posthumously written memoir as told to her by Ms. Coretta Scott King. The book had received wonderful reviews in the New York Times and other outlets. Dr. Reynolds engaged in a lively interview/discussion centered on the book detailing Mrs. King’s triumphs and challenges as shared with Dr. Reynolds. The informed, insightful discussion of the life of Coretta Scott King was invaluable to those in the audience who still revere the sacrifices made by the wife and family of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Tax Time Clinic:
This year the AAAS CEC with the assistance of The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law students, who so graciously served as tax preparers, continued its status as a host site for the VITA Tax Time. The program, whereby individuals received qualified tax preparation at no cost, is sponsored by United Way. Well over 100 people attended the clinic which ran every Friday evening and Saturday morning through March 4, 2017.

Rise Sister Rise
The CEC is continuing its very fruitful collaboration with Rise Sister Rise hosting monthly, as well as additional special program meetings. The organization, which seeks to empower young urban African American girls, offers community-based programs and activities to promote and honor resiliency, self-determination, and the opportunity to broaden their sphere of experiences. Rise Sister Rise offers amazing programing, including a Black Girls Think Tank. For more information about the Rise Sister Rise project, please visit the website: www.risesisterrise.net
President Drake’s Jazz Music Evolution

The CEC was honored to host OSU President, Dr. Michael V. Drake, for a community lecture/discussion focused on the history of jazz and other art forms as they relate to the social movements of the time. On March 1st, 2017, President Drake was engaged and passionate in his delivery, interweaving personal stories and his relationship to the music in the context of a broader history. The audience had the opportunity to ask questions and comment on the presentation. We are eager to have President Drake back next year for a remix or to discuss any a topic of his choosing. As a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame board member, we are certain he will continue to have much to share.

Understanding and Working with the Somali Community: A Cultural Diversity Workshop

Jibril Mohamed, PhD candidate at The Ohio State University and Lecturer in the Department of African American and African Studies, instructed and fostered discussions about Somali culture and community in two workshops held March 22, 2017 and April 20, 2017. One workshop reached out specifically to non-profit leaders in the community and the other attracted students from Ohio University.
On April 8th the Transnational Black Citizenship Discovery Theme Project partnered with the CEC and brought professors Cawo Abdi from the University of Minnesota (sociology) and Catherine Besteman from Colby College (anthropology) to discuss the complex issues facing the Somali community. This was the second half of a two day event, starting on April 7th, hosted by the Transnational Black Citizenship Project lead by Dr. Simone Drake, Associate Professor in the AAAS Department at The Ohio State University.

Sister Conversations

Dr. Tiyi Morris, Associate Professor, Department of African American and African Studies, OSU-Newark collaborated with the CEC to host a conversation for women of color, led by women of color discussing the importance of reproductive freedom in Ohio. Encouraging an increased sense of agency in the movement, panelists and participants in the event discussed how women of color can increase their presence and voice in progressive mainstream organizations including organizations such as NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio, Women Have Options Ohio, and Planned Parenthood.
Ubuntu Emancipation Circles Launch Kickoff

April 25, 2017 was the launch of three new Emotional Emancipation Circles (EEC) in the Columbus community. A fourth EEC comprised of participants from the OSU campus have had 2 initial meetings and are gearing up for a monthly regularly scheduled date to be determined. The circles are safe spaces for black people to work together to heal from the trauma and impact of racial injustice and inequity, overturning and overcoming root causes of the devaluing of Black lives across the United States and around the world. Participants in the EECs will become better equipped to achieve and sustain emotional emancipation and an increased positive sense of self and agency. Facilitators of the circles were trained in 2016 and have continued to meet monthly and discuss their programming for 2017. The circles will run throughout the course of the year based on each circles’ participants and their facilitators’ discretion. It is not too late to join a EEC. The contact information for each circle facilitator is listed below. Circle One lead by Jill and Avery Frost will hold their first meeting on Saturday, June 3 at 10am. You will need to join that circle if you are interested in it prior to the first meeting, after which that EEC will be closed. Circle Two will be led by Cynthia Price and is scheduled to meet on Tuesday May 16 at 6pm. Circle Three will be led by Cassandra Holloway and Charla Sheppard and is scheduled to meet on Saturday May 13 at 6:30pm. All meetings are slated to last 2 hours and all circles will eventually become closed groups once capacity is reached. If you do not have the opportunity to join one this time, there will be more circles in the future.

Contact information for each circle is as follows:

Circle One: Saturday June 3, 2017 at 10am, Jill and Avery Frost, (E) jillkfrost@gmail.com; (P) (614) 256-2573 or (614) 636-0742 (text option).

Circle Two: Tuesday May 16, 2017 at 6pm, Cynthia Price, (E) ckp@communicationpractice.com, Columbus Public Library-Main Branch, 96 S Grant Ave, Columbus, OH

Circle Three: Saturday May 13, 2017 at 6:30pm, Cassandra Holloway and Charla Sheppard, (E) 9cholloway@gmail.com; (P) (614) 294-9229, Zawadi Books, 1500 Mt Vernon Ave, Columbus, OH

Circle Four: Date to be determined OSU campus wide initiative, Joni Acuff and Michelle Anderson, (E) acuff.12@osu.edu or anderson.1043@osu.edu
AAAS CEC on the Move

Special recognition goes to Dr. Michelle Anderson, AAAS CEC Program Manager, whose devotion and commitment to service as the only full time employee we had at the CEC Spring Semester, 2017, not only made it possible to for us to complete an amazing schedule of programming, fulfill regular office maintenance and responsibilities, but do so under the challenges of helping to facilitate building renovations. Way to go Dr. Anderson, certainly would not have made it without your going the extra mile! Your efforts are acknowledged and appreciated.

The other good news is that in April we were able to hire an Office Associate, Mr. Vaughn Hunt. Vaughn has stepped forward in the most delightful way and we are so happy to have him on board. Welcome Vaughn! The Office Associate positon is essential to the functioning of the building and our programs! We are so excited to have Vaughn on board with his dynamic skill set and abilities to help us moving forward with the vision of the CEC. Vaughn is a recent Ohio State University graduate where he majored in English. In addition to completing rigorous academic requirements, he spent his time working in the Columbus community as a site leader for Buckeye Civic Engagement Connection (BCEC), connected to The Ohio State University’s Department of Social Change. During his undergraduate career, he ran an after school program at Hamilton STEM Elementary School focusing on mentoring, tutoring, and STEM activities for students in 2nd- 4th grade. He also was involved in programming for students K-12, worked with incarcerated youth as part of Buckeye REACH, facilitated educational trainings to increase student engagement in the Columbus community, and produced promotional media for the department. Outside of the department, Vaughn was involved with TEDxOhioStateUniversity as part of the community engagement committee and served as a writer and editor at a magazine on campus called BE, writing about issues of race and representation.

Vaughn is currently assisting with the coordination of our anticipated Autumn programming and hopes to continue his writing and contributed an opinion piece for this publication.
More good news is that Ms. Dorothy Thigpen has come on board as an AARP volunteer. Another great addition to our CEC! We are very pleased to have her join us! The AAAS CEC began hosting American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Senior Community Service Employment Plan (SCSEP) volunteer Dorothy Thigpen on April 11, 2017. She spent the past twenty plus years in New York working on independent films and video. Dorothy is a proud native of Columbus Ohio, where she received an Associate Degree in Communication and Business Management from Columbus State. She nurtured her media career right here in Columbus, working at ACTV 21 cable access and with the National Black Programming Consortium. In New York, Dorothy was formerly the Director of Production Assistance at Women Make Movies. She then became the Executive Director of Third World Newsreel (TWN), an alternative media arts organization, focusing on social justice media education, production and distribution. In addition to her arts administration, she has worked in various capacities of film and television production, as a Producer, Technical Director, and a cameraperson in the Middle East and throughout the U.S. on independent documentaries. Dorothy feels the ancestors have blessed her with the opportunity to work with Dr. Myers, Dr. Anderson and Mr. Vaughn Hunt at the African American and African Studies Community Extension Center (AAAS CEC).

If you enjoyed the report, and want more information on the center or how you can be more involved, please email us (aaascec@osu.edu) to join our listserv and learn more about upcoming events not currently listed on our calendar or call 614-292-3922.
# CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

## June 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>EVENT TITLE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6/5/2017 - 6/8/2017</td>
<td>10:00am-2:00pm</td>
<td>Summer Youth Employment Program Work Readiness Training in partnership with Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services (ETSS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/12/2017 – 6/15/2017</td>
<td>11:00am-1:00pm</td>
<td>Ubuntu EEC Facilitator Training Circle (CLOSED GROUP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/13/2017</td>
<td>2:00pm-4:30pm</td>
<td>Tuesday Matinee, <em>Fences</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>6/22/2017</td>
<td>6:00pm-8:00pm</td>
<td>Construction Skills Training Graduation Poindexter Redevelopment Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/23/2017 and 6/30/2017</td>
<td>10:00am-2:00pm</td>
<td>Summer Youth Employment Program Leadership Training in partnership with ETSS</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/27/2017</td>
<td>3:00pm-7:00pm</td>
<td>Workforce Interviews Poindexter Redevelopment Project</td>
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## July 2017

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<th>DATE</th>
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<tr>
<td>7/7/17, 7/14/2017, 7/28/2017</td>
<td>10:00am-2:00pm</td>
<td>Summer Youth Employment Program Leadership Training in partnership with ETSS</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/10/2017 – 7/14/2017</td>
<td>8:00am-4:00pm</td>
<td>Columbus Urban League Tech Corps Camp Collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/11/2017</td>
<td>2:00pm-4:30pm</td>
<td>Tuesday Matinee, <em>Get Out</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>7/29/2017</td>
<td>1:00pm-5:00pm</td>
<td>Queen Mother Moore Celebration of Black Women with Tawi Village</td>
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## August 2017

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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
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<tr>
<td>8/5/2017</td>
<td>9:30am-12:00pm</td>
<td>“Rise Sister Rise” Collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/8/2017</td>
<td>2:00pm-4:30pm</td>
<td>Tuesday Matinee, <em>Moonlight</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>8/19/2017</td>
<td>2:00pm-5:00pm</td>
<td>Marcus Garvey Self-Determination Celebration with Tawi Village</td>
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