

# KUUMBA

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THE ANNUAL JOURNAL OF WILLIAM & MARY AFRICANA STUDIES



## NARRATIVE OF A FIRST WORLD BLACK MAN, WRITTEN BY HIMSELF (AN EXCERPT)

### Senior Essays:

Because It's Important

Learning and Listening for a  
Better Tomorrow

My Experience Through  
Africana



**WILLIAM & MARY**  
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# KUUMBA *(creativity)*

the annual journal of William & Mary Africana Studies  
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## FROM THE DIRECTOR

**We begin and end  
with our students.**

2009, 1997, 1991. . .these are historical markers in the continuum of William & Mary, which document the origins and institutional spirit of the Program in Africana Studies. Our tactical reorganization in 2009 allowed us to become both local and global in scope. Almost twenty formal years later, our vision is expanding, but two things remain consistent. First, we remain confident in the immense value of the intellectual and cultural history of peoples of African descent, and even more so in our current sociopolitical climate. Secondly, we are resolutely committed to the holistic development of our students.

Like other Africana Studies programs and departments across the nation, the mortar of our program is formed by the ideals of community and inclusivity. Yet, the uniqueness of our program is our students. They are the bricks. We develop empowered, culturally competent, interdisciplinary scholars, artists, and global servant leaders through our teaching, research, and service and, in turn, the world benefits.

Farewell to our 2017 graduates. "You are the wildest dream of your ancestors." Go out into the world and make yourselves come true. To our present and future students, "[you] are the ones we've been waiting for." There is room for you in our intellectual circle. Join us. The impact we seek to make locally and globally begins with you.

**Artisia Green**

***Sharpe Associate Professor of Civic Renewal and  
 Entrepreneurship of Theatre and Africana Studies***

***Director, Program in Africana Studies***

# NARRATIVE OF A FIRST WORLD BLACK MAN, WRITTEN BY HIMSELF (AN EXCERPT)

by Michael L. Blakey

*As the director and the National Endowment for the Humanities Professor of Anthropology at the College's Institute of Historical Biology, Dr. Michael L. Blakey is inarguably one of William & Mary's foremost instructors. Throughout his decades-spanning career as a biological anthropologist and researcher, Dr. Blakey, prior to coming to the College, has held a number of positions at varied institutions (including Spelman College, Howard University, Universita di Roma, the Smithsonian Institutions, Columbia University, and Brown University); has published more than sixty articles in prominent publications regarding history, paleopathology, historical demography, medical psychophysiology, philosophy of science, and racism; and has been involved with high-profile research projects, including, most notably, the African Burial Ground Project in New York. To offer a deeper dive into his career, Dr. Blakey provided KUUMBA with an excerpt from an upcoming autobiographical manuscript, which details the beginning of his life, his present work, and everything else in between.*

**T**his brings me to the New York African Burial Ground. In 1990, I returned from a visiting professorship at the Universita di Roma, sponsored by my good Italian colleague, Alfredo Coppa. I began to write a book on race and racism in science and society during a sabbatical year under contract with Monthly Review, a leftist publisher. My recent wife, Cecelie Counts (who was a major anti-apartheid activist with TransAfrica), and I had just moved into our first house in Northeast, D.C. And then it hit. The oldest and largest cemetery for enslaved Africans of the 17th and late-18th centuries had been discovered during a government construction project in, of all places, New York City. A government press conference in New York produced a lead New York Times article, followed immediately by calls from Black journalists



Photo by Andrew Vo

looking for me. I had previous press in the Washington Post and elsewhere on my work on the Philadelphia and Cobb Collection human remains and, I guess, I was the one Black bioarchaeologist that journalists knew about. There were only two or three of us anyway. And I was at Howard University, which often was the first place people looked to for African-American scholarship. Right place, right time. People wanted to know if the forensic anthropologists (who specialize in human identifications for the police and courts) on the site were adequately trained for this African Burial Ground project. I went up to New York to do an assessment and they were not.

What unfolded next has been told many times, in many places and in several languages. I refer you to the first chapters of the 2,500-page volume, *The New York African Burial Ground: Unearthing the African Presence in Colonial New York Vol. 1*, available online on the National Park Service website for the U. S. National Monument. To make a long story short, I organized a very large, \$6M, multiethnic, multidisciplinary research team which took over the research of the ABG site, with the support of Black activists, city officials, and congressional power. The U.S. General Services

Administration, intent on building a 34-story office tower on the site, tried to disregard the sacred and preservation interests of African Americans. However, African Americans stopped much of the construction by the sheer force of a conscious commitment to their own dignity, using the political skill and positions at their disposal.

The archaeologists and forensic anthropologists originally contracted to excavate the 419 remains (more if they had been allowed) at the African Burial Ground site did not have the ethical sensibility, technical knowledge, or even the research facilities to adequately care for and study the large collection of remains. The colleagues I chose to take over and lead the ABG project were those whose work and character I had come to know along the way, as I approached 40 years of age. My colleagues had long track records of excellent, relevant work and, with rare and unfortunate exceptions, could commit to serving a descendant African-American community. We institutionalized a clientage model by which we acknowledged the right of a “descendant community” (a term I coined for the project and beyond) to determine the disposition of their dead in New York. We asked the descendant community (my colleagues often still remain averse to this term) to offer their own research questions and to consider our proposals for acceptance or denial of research. The power to approve research, even for a period prior to reburial, was theirs, as was the authority to choose the customary human practice of immediate reburial under the guidance of religious practitioners.

The descendant community chose to let us attempt to answer the questions they considered to be

valuable, which, as it turned out, engendered the most sophisticated research design and bioarchaeological reports produced to this day (prove me wrong). The people most affected by the project had a far better grasp on what was important to study (e.g. origins, transformations, quality of life, and resistance under

slavery) than my colleagues. During more than a decade of research by 30 highly distinguished PhDs and 200 technicians and students in 9 laboratories, different universities, and a public education office in the Six World Trade Center, anthropological and historical research and education stood side by side with public tours and diverse religious observances. There is no reason science, culture, and religion cannot live together as, nonetheless and all the more, very distinct things. The Office of Public Education and Interpretation and the Archaeology Laboratory in the Six World Trade Center were leveled on 9/11, yet all of the people and artifacts survived. Let that stand as a metaphor for the intense and persistent bureaucratic arrogance, White supremacist devaluation, and professional greed with which researchers and other African Americans triumphantly struggled in New York for more than a decade. The Chancellor of City College could only scoff, referring to me as “that man from Washington” when, by acclamation of York College, I was awarded an honorary Doctor of Science. The reburial ceremonies proceeded from Washington through three

cities and finally back to New York. My two shelves of press clippings end with four articles on the front page of the New York Times in the same week, twice above the fold. A prominence usually reserved for wars.

**“The descendant community chose to let us attempt to answer the questions they considered to be valuable, which, as it turned out, engendered the most sophisticated research design and bioarchaeological reports produced to this day . . . ”**

# BECAUSE IT'S IMPORTANT

By Danielle Harris '17

**M**y first in-depth encounter with African history and culture was in ninth grade in an AP World History class. As soon as my classmates and I started learning about the rich and robust history that lies within the African continent, I asked myself, "Why have I not learned about this before? This is important." I yearned to find answers, and when I arrived at William & Mary I discovered the Africana Studies Program, which was full of dedicated professors who were asking students the same questions I had been asking myself.

What I love most about Africana Studies is that it is not only a discipline of learning; it is also a discipline of activism. I have found that learning about why African history before 1492 has been seemingly erased from the Western world is as equally important as learning about African history



itself. The faculty and students in this program are fearless in asking questions that I have seen others be afraid to ask. The power exhibited in tackling issues of perpetual racism, institutional oppression, and blatant inequality has given me the confidence to speak out about such issues in communities that I am a part of.

As I enter the International Development sphere of work, I hope to use the skills and knowledge that I have learned in my Africana Studies classes to question everything. I

hope to question why things are done, how they are done, and propose ways that they can be done differently. Africana Studies has made me into a better person with a more open heart and an always critical mind. As a multiracial, White-Filipino individual, many people ask why I decided to pursue Africana Studies. I answer with definite certainty, "Because it's important."



## LEARNING AND LISTENING FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

By Francesca Maestas '17

**M**any people ask me, "Why Africana Studies? Why not Latin American Studies?" I am Latina after all, so why not study something that reflects my own personal experience? One reason why I studied Africana Studies is because there are many parallels between Africana Studies and Latin American Studies; both overlap at many points. Also, I studied Africana because I am here to listen and to learn. I spent a lot of my childhood living in South America, particularly in places like

Colombia and Costa Rica, which are some of the most diverse countries in the world. Therefore, I met many people who had so many different stories to tell. I grew up wanting to learn more about people's experiences and how they were impacted by history (hence, the reason why I am a History major as well). Through Africanas Studies, I have been able to learn about experiences external to myself. After I took Professor Robert T. Vinson's "Intro to Africana Studies" course, I knew that I wanted to learn more. Additionally, Professor Francis Tanglao-Aguas, my advisor, has taught me so much about race, including ideas that I've used to reflect on my own experiences. Through those professors, I have learned that I want to support the diversification of academia in general and I want to diversify my own academic experience as well, because that is how we can become better community members. Ultimately, I studied Africana Studies because I wanted to listen and support.



## MY EXPERIENCE THROUGH AFRICANA

By Ebi Doubeni '17

**W**hen I first came to William & Mary, I had no intention of being an Africana Studies major because, after all, I am Black and I do not need to learn about something that I live every day. However, I still took Africana courses. “African American English,” “Intro to Africana Studies,” and “Intro to the African Diaspora” were some of the first Africana Studies classes I took at William & Mary. At first, I took these classes to fulfill GER requirements or for other reasons that did not revolve around learning about Africana Studies.

Much to my surprise, by the conclusion of my freshman year I decided that I was going to major in Africana Studies. In the Africana Studies classes that I took my freshman year, I was introduced to so many things that I did not know. Those Africana Studies courses began to fill in the gaps of my education and introduced new

ways of thinking that I never considered before. Also, as I began to take more and more Africana Studies courses, I learned more about myself and my culture. In addition, through Africana courses, I gained a greater appreciation for other cultures, which pushed me to travel the world and see as much as possible: for one summer, I traveled to Trinidad to do research, which became my Honors thesis; I went to Texas to go to a conference held by the National Association of Africana American Studies; and post-graduation, I will be a Fulbright English Teacher Assistant in the Czech Republic.

Aside from educating me, the Africana Studies Program has also quickly become my home. The faculty is extremely welcoming, and I will cherish the relationships I have developed with the people in Africana Studies for a very long time.

## Africana Studies Alumnus Update



### SETH OPOKU-YEBOAH '16

After graduating from William & Mary in 2016 with a B.A. in Government and Africana Studies, Opoku-Yeboah immediately entered the realm of politics. Opoku-Yeboah worked as the Deputy Finance Director for Levar Stoney’s mayoral campaign in Richmond, Virginia. Stoney was elected in 2016, becoming the youngest mayor elected in the history of the City of Richmond. Following the campaign, Opoku-Yeboah served as the Director of Constituent Services in the Office of Lieutenant Governor Ralph Northam. Recently, Opoku-Yeboah joined Northam’s gubernatorial campaign as his special assistant. Overall, Opoku-Yeboah believes that his Africana Studies education has been useful for his post-graduation career, providing him with a historical context with which to understand the topics and dynamics he talks about with voters and policymakers.

# MAJOR QUESTIONS FOR A MINOR: NIA GIBSON '17

## WHY DID YOU MINOR IN AFRICANA STUDIES?

I minored in Africana Studies because I wanted to seek out Black academic spaces on campus. I recognized not only my interest in seeking out Black scholarship, but also the absence of Black scholarship in my non-Africana classes. By minoring in Africana Studies, I allowed race to be at the forefront of my studies, instead of having race be a subsection or a sideline topic (which is the case with classes for my History major). Through the Program, I am able to learn about material that feels directly connected to me, my experiences, and my history.

## HOW DID YOU DECIDE THAT MINORING IN AFRICANA STUDIES WAS NECESSARY FOR YOUR EDUCATION?

I decided that minoring in Africana Studies was necessary because the Program offers knowledge that is not only useful in an academic sense, but that is also useful as far as facilitating self-growth and being applicable to real life. By studying Africana Studies, I've learned more about myself and acquired a more nuanced, empowering worldview. In addition, studying Africana has changed how I see race and society, allowing me to better recognize and contextualize injustices and participate in activist movements.

## HOW DO YOU SEE YOUR MINOR IN AFRICANA STUDIES IMPACTING YOUR FUTURE?

I think Africana Studies will be important for my future because I plan on teaching in urban communities. Urban public schools are predominantly filled with students of color, and before I work in such settings it's important that I unpack and reject any internalized racial biases. By becoming a more empowered and self-assured Black woman I believe that I will not only be a better, more inspiring teacher to my students, but, more importantly, I will be a role model that they can admire. In my future classrooms, I want to transmit lessons, provide room for self-growth, and build a community like the ones I am a part of within my Africana courses at William & Mary.

## WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE MOMENT AS A STUDENT IN AFRICANA STUDIES

My favorite moments as an Africana minor have been the ones where I've connected with the people of the Africana Studies Program. Whether with students or professors, I've forged such immediate yet long-lasting, amazing relationships with the people in my Africana courses. The experience of interacting with those involved with the Africana Studies Program has been like no



other. The relationships I've made extend beyond needing someone to sit next to in class. I love that the Africana Studies Program is centered on more than academia: it is also dedicated to forming a family of students with similar backgrounds and life experiences. In addition, the discussion of pressing social issues and current events makes Africana courses feel especially relevant, engaging, and eye-opening. The input that my peers provide during class is always exceptional, and I am constantly in awe of the brilliance of the students around me.

# EXPLORING THE MANY FACES OF THE AFRICANA HOUSE WITH ALIYAH WOOTEN '18

By Amirio Freeman

A residence hall buzzing with activity. An untraditional classroom. A welcoming safe space. The halls and walls of Randolph Complex's Africana House serve many functions, making the House a location that holds a number of meanings and definitions. *KUUMBA* recently sat down with Aliyah Wooten '18, the House's 2016-2017 Program Director, to further investigate the many hats that the Africana House wears.



▲ Graduate student Travis Harris leading the Africana House's "Cookies & Convos: Debunking the Myths of Black Lives Matter" program. *Aliyah Wooten '18*

## CAN YOU SPEAK A BIT ABOUT WHAT THE AFRICANA HOUSE IS?

The Africana House is a living and learning community in the Randolph Complex. It's supposed to be a unique style of housing that's outside of the classroom. When we're learning things in the classroom it's very traditional. I think the William & Mary community realized that there needed to be a space where students could learn from each other and exchange cultural experiences. The process of learning from others and exchanging culture is distinct in the Africana House because it is a home comprised of students from Africa and the African Diaspora. We're all mixed in there. Also, the House has White students and even Asian-American students who are a part of the overall experience. In an academic sense, I would say that the Africana House is a place where we don't have to learn in traditional ways. In a personal sense, the Africana House is a place of comfort. It's a place of refuge. And it's a place where I can just be myself and learn from my peers.

## AND WHAT IS YOUR ROLE WITHIN THE HOUSE?

Currently, I serve as the Africana House's Program Director. It's a new position. The Program Director is a person outside of the Resident Assistant who puts on programs that are centered on a specific theme. This year the theme is #BlackLivesMatter, because that movement is very relevant in today's society. I prepare programs that will educate and engage the residents of the House and also the broader William & Mary community. To engage residents, I work with them to see what they

wanna do. We try to work together and put on events that involve the students and faculty on campus in non-traditional, educational ways.

**THROUGHOUT THE COURSE OF ITS HISTORY, THE AFRICANA HOUSE HAS HOSTED A NUMBER OF EVENTS, FROM DRUM CIRCLES TO TALKS WITH U.S. AMBASSADORS. WHY ARE THESE EVENTS NEEDED, ESPECIALLY AT A UNIVERSITY LIKE WILLIAM & MARY?**

I think these events are especially needed for minority students. It's easy for us to get lost in the crowd, in the sea of Whiteness. I think it's easier for us to become invisible. As made apparent with the #BlackLivesMatter movement, however, it's clear that minorities do have a voice and that we are very relevant to the conversation. So, it's important that the Africana House is very present on campus to amplify our voices. The House's programs show that we can be very vocal and that we have a presence on campus. And that our histories still resonate today. I mean, Jamestown is so close to campus. Also, the events of the Africana House make the House a location available for those looking for a safe space. However, maintaining the role of the Africana House as a safe space is difficult because I oftentimes feel like on this campus the "Black spaces"—or the "minority spaces"—are often under threat and they're not valued. They're often being targeted and threatened with being taken away, and minority students only have few spaces, like the Center for Student Diversity and the Africana House, where we can see people like us and just live.

**AS OF LATE, "SAFE SPACES" HAVE BEEN CRITIQUED AND OUTRIGHT CONDEMNED. HOWEVER, A FEW DAYS AFTER THE ELECTION OF PRESIDENT TRUMP, THE AFRICANA HOUSE TRANSFORMED ITSELF INTO A "BRAVE SPACE" THAT PROVIDED ROOM FOR STUDENTS TO VOICE THEIR THOUGHTS ON A TRUMP PRESIDENCY. FOR YOU, WHY IS THE PROJECT OF CULTIVATING SAFE SPACES LIKE THE AFRICANA HOUSE IMPORTANT?**

I think safe spaces are necessary because we need to be able to strengthen ourselves and refuel ourselves as minority students. We deal with a lot of experiences on a daily basis that our White counterparts do not deal with, and so it's nice to come to a place where there's no pressure or where you can see a familiar face. In safe

**"... we're all dealing with so many things, and we're not going to make it in this world if we don't have places where we can go to in order to feel better and feel alive and feel supported and feel uplifted."**

**-Aliya Wooten '18**

spaces there is a hierarchy of people that you know have your back, especially when things hit the fan. People like Dr. Hurte in the Center for Student Diversity, Prof. Artisia Green, the director of Africana Studies, and Prof. Iyabo Osiapem, who oversees the Africana House. I remember with our "Brave Space" event that the whole Counseling Center team was at the Africana House. Africana Studies came out with a whole team of people. All these students were there. There was support. And that was important. So, in all, safe spaces offer strength, refueling, and support, and I think those things make safe spaces important to a community. At the end of the day, we're all dealing with so many things, and we're not going to make it in this world if we don't have places where we can go to in order to feel better and feel alive and feel supported and feel uplifted.

**RELATED TO THIS DISCUSSION OF SAFE SPACES, IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT IS THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY, SUCH AS THE ONE NURTURED BY THE AFRICANA HOUSE, IN AFFECTING CHANGE?**

I'm really big on the idea that it takes a village to get things done. I don't think that anyone has gotten anywhere without relying on the people that came before them and that are in their immediate circle. So, I really am a big advocate of "the village." If we look at any major movement, like the Civil Rights Movement or the Black Panther Party, there were groups of people who wanted to uplift their communities. Regarding the Black community, specifically, when we're broken and divided is when we're most vulnerable to being manipulated. So, I'm all about community. It's important, it's vital.



## CAPE TOWN CHRONICLES

During the summer of 2016, William & Mary students travelled to Cape Town—South Africa’s vibrant capital with a tumultuous history and a rich culture—as a part of the College’s summer study-abroad program. With Leah Glenn, William & Mary associate professor of Dance and Africana Studies, and instructors from Cape Town, the students experienced classroom instruction and hands-on service learning (the students volunteered their time with middle school students in Khayelitsha, a South African township) to explore, among other items, post-Apartheid South Africa, the arts as a form of opposition to oppression, and connections between the sociocultural circumstances of Africans and African Americans. Below, *KUUMBA* asked students from the Africana Studies Program who participated in the trip to reflect on their time in South Africa.



### DELAUREN DAVIS '18

**D**uring my time in South Africa, I tutored children living in the Khayelitsha township through the Students’ Health And Welfare Centre Organisation (SHAWCO)—a service organization supported by the University of Cape Town. I also took dance lessons with Cape Town’s first interracial dance company named JazzArt. While engaging with the South African

people, the most significant thing I learned was that the realities of African-American and South African people—though existing on different continents—are similar. As an African-American woman, my ancestors’ history isn’t identical to that of those who suffered during Apartheid, but there are striking similarities. While interacting with the history of Apartheid, I

- ◀ The steps of a local Cape Town museum on South African Apartheid history. *DeLauren Davis '18*

- ◀ (Opposite page) A view of Cape Town's edge from the Cape Point lighthouse area. *Alex Yeumeni '18*

felt startled after noticing that twenty-two years of post-Apartheid South Africa felt so similar to one-hundred-plus years of post-slavery America. After observing the similarities between South Africa and the United States, I now find institutions that foster inequality to be puzzling, because they're set up with the intention to never be brought down. Systemic oppression, xenophobia, economic disparity, and internalized racism are all factors

that divide us as a people. However, even though oppression continues to affect people, especially those throughout the African Diaspora, the cultural pride of my Cape Town trip peers reminded me that Black people in the Diaspora have a shared history of resilience. With that reminder, my experience in Cape Town taught me to stay engaged and to understand that our struggles do not define us.



▲ Tutoring at SHAWCO. *DeLauren Davis '18*



**ALEX YEUMENI '18**

I almost didn't study abroad in Cape Town, South Africa. Despite having experienced time and time again in my first two years of college that stepping outside of my comfort zone is crucial to my personal growth, the idea of going on a trip led by a dance professor and attended by several dancers from William & Mary was highly daunting. In the end, I was swayed by the fact that it was the only African trip sponsored by W&M and, consequently, my only financially feasible way to get to the continent.

- ◀ Me standing by the sign that marks the top of Table Mountain. *Alex Yeumeni '18*

I initially came to the program because of my personal interest in South Africa: I'm particularly interested in the history of Apartheid and the connections I see between the history of South Africans and that of African Americans (which I study at W&M). As a Cameroonian-American immigrant, my identity is rooted in the African Diaspora, and I didn't want to leave college without taking the opportunity to return to the continent, even if I had to visit a country far away from my homeland. Looking back on it now, I cannot believe I almost robbed myself of what was an incredible month.

My trip, led by Professor Leah Glenn, was a study of the way art generally, and dance specifically, can be used as resistance in the midst of oppression; the trip also explored the connection between African and African-American dancers in the context of resistance. My peers and I took a modern dance course with Professor Glenn, a contemporary African dance class with Sifiso of the Jazzart Dance



▲ The blue wall of anti-Apartheid activists you see on the walk into Robben Island titled "Freedom Cannot Be Manacled." *Alex Yeumeni '18*



▲ Entrance to the community center in Langa township, which houses pottery-making spaces, concert spaces, artwork and more. *Alex Yeumeni '18*

- ▼ L to R: Nija Rease '18, Merci Best '17, Nadia Ross '17, Lwando Scott (our lecturer), Aliyah Wooten '18, Kayla Weldon '18, and Alex Yeumeni posing after one of our last classes with Scott at the University of Cape Town. *Alex Yeumeni '18*



- ▲ L to R: DeLauren Davis '18, Aliyah Wooten '18, Alex Yeumeni '18, Kayla Weldon '18, Nija Rease '18, Preston Neukirch '18, Nadia Ross '17, and Merci Best '17 before our last meal out as a group in Cape Town. *Alex Yeumeni '18*

Theater in Cape Town, and a class on African economic development with Lwando Scott, an incredible Sociology doctoral candidate at the University of Cape Town. This subject material aligned perfectly with understanding the continuing police brutality in the United States and also Black artistic expression as a form of defiance in the midst of chaos (a personal interest of mine). While I had no experience studying dance in the context of resistance, I was awed by the beauty I saw in both the African-American choreographers of the Civil Rights Movement era and the young dancers at Jazzart, telling story after story about everything from the playground games of the Eastern Cape in South Africa to the struggles of lynching in the American South.

Beyond dance and the arts, I also learned about myself and the enduring nature of history while in South Africa. Once, on a crisp Saturday morning, my fellow study-abroad participants and I travelled to Langa township in order to receive a tour of the township, experience

a home-cooked meal (and surprise concert), and learn more about the history of Black South Africans and their opposition to the Apartheid regime. As our tour guide took us through his neighborhood, he recounted the history of “pass laws,” which placed restrictions on where and when Black people could travel and also forced Black people to carry documentation at all times. The township was full of memorial sculptures, paintings, poetry, and plaques that commemorate the victims of racial violence in South Africa and the work of those freedom fighters who paved the way for the democracy later established in South Africa. Following the township visit, during both our class on economic development in Africa and our weekly debrief sessions, perspectives on the realities of race in and outside of the United States clashed amidst the individuals of our group. Ideological divides we all recognized innately became increasingly pronounced as we tried to reconcile our individual identities and views. Suddenly, it was no longer okay to have small talk

related to themes of race, history, and class: the reality of these topics became too powerful.

In many ways, the structural legacies of Apartheid are still in place in South Africa. The labor housing that crammed families into the cities is still standing, and the economic disparities between townships and cities are still stark. Under those conditions, as is historically consistent across Black Diasporic communities, simply living is resistance. The ability to get up each day and face the harsh history of the past with pride is powerful, and even more so when that history becomes a communal celebration through which future generations can be taught the value of storytelling and solidarity. Cape Town taught me a lot, but reminded me of even more, including that our dignity as Black people does not have to be validated by outside eyes. Instead, the recognition of our humanity begins within, and as hard as people may try, they can never extinguish that flame.

# MAJOR PERSPECTIVES: ON THE 3RD ANNUAL BLACK LIVES MATTER CONFERENCE

*From March 26, 2017 to April 2, 2017, the Williamsburg chapter of the international Black Lives Matter movement, in collaboration with William & Mary, put together its 3rd Annual Black Lives Matter Conference. Specifically aiming to educate community members and W&M students, faculty, and staff about the role of Black people in the establishment of the City of Williamsburg (under the tagline, “Built on Our Backs”), the weeklong conference included several events that called for organizing around contemporary Black social justice issues, including environmental racism, police brutality, and trans rights. Sakinaa Rock '18, an Africana Studies major and organizer of the conference, speaks below about the event and its significance.*

**T**his past March I helped organize the weeklong, completely student-run 3rd Annual Black Lives Matter Conference at William & Mary. This conference was my introduction to the world of activism outside of books, video clips, and Facebook posts. I have been a supporter of the Black Lives Matter movement since the first time I came across the phrase “Black Lives Matter” attached to a hashtag accompanying a photo of Trayvon Martin. Many millennials had their “awakening” following the creation, proliferation, and internalization of BLM: many became aware of how immensely biased and irrevocably flawed our judicial system is in regards to Black lives. With my admiration for

BLM—the movement that “woke” so many of my peers and I up—it felt great to pay it forward by being on the ground and educating, agitating, and organizing for the movement.

The theme for this year’s conference was “Built on Our Backs,” to emphasize the barbaric history of this nation and, more specifically, W&M in relation to the lives of free and enslaved Black people. The primary goals of the conference were to “Educate, Agitate, and Organize.” Throughout the weeklong conference, myself and my fellow organizers achieved those objectives. We began our conference with the galvanizing speaker, activist, and scholar Rosa Clemente. We continued our goals by hosting a variety of events, such as an interactive paint activity that centered

around debunking myths about BLM, a screening of a documentary about a Black trans activist who has dedicated their life to fighting for the rights of trans women, and panels about systematic racism across political parties and also environmental racism. We organized a march and released a list of demands that seek to diversify this institution and hold W&M accountable for the campus’ continued lack of diversity. Finally, we hosted a vigil to mourn and commemorate Black lives lost at the hands of state-sanctioned violence. The culmination of the weeklong conference represented students’ dedication to educating, agitating, and organizing for the betterment of the William & Mary community and society as a whole.



▲ (L to R) Sakinaa Rock '18 and Amirio Freeman '17 at the conference’s march. *Lex Varya*



▲ (L to R) Amirio Freeman '17 and Sakinaa Rock '18 at the conference’s march. *Lex Varya*

# AFRICANA SCRAPBOOK: "BIRTH OF A NATION" SCREENING & COLLOQUIUM

On February 3, 2017, the Africana Studies Program organized its "Birth of a Nation": Screening and Colloquium" event, which was prepared to encourage critical dialogue regarding the cultural and historical significance of the figure Nat Turner. Sponsored with generous support from the Center for Student Diversity, the Film and Media Studies Program, the Lyon G. Tyler Department of History, the Sharpe Community Studies Program, the Dean for Educational Policy, the African Cultural Society, the Students of the Caribbean Association, and the Black Student Organization of William & Mary, the public day-long event started with a Brown Bag luncheon and lecture on "Nat Turner's Bones: Reclaiming an American Rebel" by William & Mary alumna Kelley Deetz. Later that evening, the Nate Parker-directed film, "The Birth of a Nation," was screened alongside a discussion of the film and the legacy of Nat Turner featuring Deetz (research associate at the James River Institute for Archaeology and historical advisor for "Birth of a Nation"), Dr. Robert T. Vinson (William & Mary historian), Dr. Suzette Spencer (William & Mary historian), Dr. Leslie Alexander (historian at Ohio University and author of the article, "Birth of a Nation is an Epic Fail"), Elder Khalif Khalifa (facilitator of the Nat Turner Trail Tour in Southhampton County, Virginia), and James Padilioni, Jr. (Ph.D. candidate in William & Mary's American Studies graduate program).

Below, Kelley Deetz reflects on the event for KUUMBA.

The Africana Studies program changed my life. It was an incredible honor to return as an alumna and to share my work. As an undergraduate, I dedicated my life to the study of early African-American history, and my involvement with exploring the history of Nat Turner stemmed from my time at the College. Nat Turner is one of the most controversial people in American history. He is deemed a hero by some and a villain by others. His revolt sparked the fire for what became the Civil War, and his place in history needs reconsideration. The film, "The Birth of a Nation," brings Turner to life as a man, who was pushed to fight. By bringing Turner to life, the

film humanizes him in a way that lends more clarity to the past and to his role in history. The film alone is a work of art; but coupled with intellectual discourse, the events and speakers helped render Turner's legacy in ways that just the film or a lecture could not.

Turner's legacy is complicated. His rebellion sped up the Civil War, which accelerated the abolishment of slavery, which is inarguably positive. However, the ways in which Turner's actions are remembered by the majority of Americans feed into negative stereotypes about hyper-violent Black men. This stereotype is so embedded into the collective conscious of the majority of Americans, law enforcement



1. Dr. Kelley Deetz presenting her "Nat Turner's Bones: Reclaiming an American Rebel" lecture.
2. Patrons at the Brown Bag Luncheon.
3. Pre-screening panelist Dr. Bill Wiggins speaking at the Brown Bag Luncheon.



included, that it has led to countless murders of innocent Black men. The Black Lives Matter movement is combatting this legacy through education and activism, but Black freedom fighters who chose and continue to choose activism over passivity are never deemed equal to their white counterparts. Nat Turner was a Black revolutionary thinker and soldier, and his spirit resides in the continual fight for racial equality. This leads us back to the question, “Who is Nat Turner?” He is an example of Black struggle and resistance, something that we still see in 2017, albeit in different forms.

The film, “Birth of a Nation,” and the event put on by Africana Studies were a reminder of the generations who fought back against systemic oppression. Historical figures come and go in popular culture. There are moments when certain stories strike sensitive nerves, and this is indeed one of those. Nate Parker started his film before the Black Lives Matter movement solidified, but the timing of the release of his film was nothing short of divine. It is in times like these when we need historical perspectives, heroes, and a sober understanding of where we have been, where we are, and where we need to go as a nation, as a culture, and as a society.



4. Students (L to R) DeLauren Davis '18 and Sakinaa Rock '18 at the post-screening Chat & Chew.
5. Pre-screening panelist Leslie Alexander (L) speaking with a patron at the post-screening Chat & Chew.
6. Professor Robert Trent Vinson speaking at the pre-screening panel.
7. Professor Suzette Spencer (R) speaking with students.
8. Graduate student and pre-screening panelist James Padilioni, Jr.

*Photos courtesy Christine Fulgham '17*

# AFRICANA STUDIES @ WILLIAM & MARY



▲ Homecoming 2015 celebration at the Africana House.

## MISSION AND STRUCTURE

Africana Studies is an interdisciplinary major that explores the scholarship on the history and cultural traditions, and the political and economic circumstances which together define over 1.2 billion people of African descent. Students take a common set of core courses, and may select one of three tracks in which to concentrate:

**African American Studies**

**African Studies**

**African-Diaspora Studies**

The central mission of the program is to prepare students for lifelong learning, graduate study in various fields, and careers in private and public organizations worldwide. Africana studies seeks to develop a habit of thinking that is inter-disciplinarily analytical and a habit of heart that is cross-culturally empathetic. Embracing more than the centrality of race, it is designed to apply a comparative lens to the study of imperial, national, ethnic, linguistic, and religious currents and intersections in Africa, and its far-flung Diaspora in North America, the Caribbean Basin, Latin America, the Middle East, South Asia, and Western Europe.

## STUDENT ACTIVITIES AND RESEARCH

Students are supported by over thirty affiliated faculty. Majors are expected to engage in research in various forms, including independent study, Honors, and structured internships. Majors and Minors are encouraged to combine their scholarly study with service learning, study away in the U.S., and study abroad, especially in Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America. The program is a lead sponsor of the William & Mary summer program in Cape Town, South Africa. In the near future, we hope to add summer programs in the Caribbean and Brazil. The student-run African Cultural Society, Black Studies Club, and Africana House are open to all members of the William & Mary community.

## CAREERS AND GRADUATE STUDY

Students with a major in Africana Studies (or its predecessors, African Studies and Black Studies) have attended graduate programs in various disciplines and professions. Several alumni have joined the public sector at all levels, while others work for a variety of private employers. Many served as Peace Corps volunteers or joined a variety of non-profit organizations in the U.S. The analytical skills and broad perspectives acquired in life-long learning or to prepare for myriad occupational opportunities.

# SUPPORT AFRICANA STUDIES

## *Ways to Contribute*

Your contribution to the Africana Studies Program will help our faculty members provide the best learning experience to our students.

- The **Africana Studies program fund (2965)** will enable the faculty to focus on designing, implementing and branding marquee programs (like a major symposium or distinguished lecture series) that would raise the program's visibility, assist with recruiting students and faculty, and further engage students across W&M.
- The **Jacquelyn Y. McLendon Prize in Africana Studies (3754)** honors Professor McLendon for her leadership and innovative administration that paved the way for ethnic studies at W&M. Donations to this fund will go to honor students of Africana Studies that demonstrate academic and leadership excellence as well as dedication to the program.

To make a donation online, visit [www.wm.edu/as/africanastudies/support](http://www.wm.edu/as/africanastudies/support).

To contribute by mail, make your check payable to The College of William & Mary Foundation. Please be sure to enter either Africana Studies (2965) or the Jacquelyn McLendon Prize (3754) in your check's memo area and mail your contribution to: **William & Mary, P.O. Box 1693, Williamsburg, VA 23187-1693.**

## CURRICULUM: MAJOR AND MINOR

### *Disciplines Studied:*

Anthropology  
Art and Art History  
Economics  
English  
Government  
History  
Modern Languages and Literatures  
Music  
Philosophy  
Religious Studies  
Sociology  
Theatre, Speech, and Dance

### *Distinguishing Features:*

Foreign Languages  
Research Methods  
Core and capstone  
Interdisciplinary  
Globally comparative  
Melds the Local with the Diasporic  
Study away  
Study abroad  
Internships  
Community Engagement

## ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

### *Your News and Contact Information*

For your convenience, we have provided an online form ([www.wm.edu/as/africanastudies/alumni/sendusyournews](http://www.wm.edu/as/africanastudies/alumni/sendusyournews)) for your news and contact information. As always, we look forward to your visit to campus.

### *Alumni Career Connections*

One of the most helpful and popular resources provided by the Office of Career Services is Alumni Career Connections—a searchable database of alumni who have volunteered to support students and fellow alumni by sharing information about their career field, internships and job search strategies

## CONTACT

### *Program Director:*

**Artisia Green**

*Sharpe Associate Professor  
of Civic Renewal and  
Entrepreneurship of Theatre and  
Africana Studies*

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757-221-2616

### *Website:*

[www.wm.edu/africanastudies](http://www.wm.edu/africanastudies)

- ▶ Africana majors and minors join Professors Pinson and Green in the opening acquaintance lunch.

# PURSuing A MAJOR IN AFRICANA STUDIES

36 CREDITS NEEDED TO GRADUATE

## COMMON CORE (MINIMUM 12 CREDITS)

### 1. Major Gateway (3 credits)

- AFST 150: Introduction to Africana Studies OR
- AFST 205: Introduction to Africana Studies

### 2. Methods (3 credits)

- AFST 399 Research Methods in Africana Studies

### 3. Coll 400 Senior Capstone (3 credits)

- AFST 495/496 Honors OR
- AFST 499 Senior Project in Africana Studies

### 4. Language (3 credits)

- AFST 250 African American English OR
- AFST 251 Caribbean Languages OR
- One course beyond the 202-level OR
- 202-level proficiency in 2 languages OR
- Off-campus study
- AFST 458 Caribbean Archaeology

## ELECTIVES (MINIMUM 18 CREDITS, SELECTED WITH FACULTY ADVISOR)

1. Students are required to complete at least 18 credits through recognized AFST courses in the social sciences and arts & humanities within their chosen area of concentration.
2. Students must take at least one three-credit course in one field if they are more inclined to take the majority of their electives in another. For instance, a student more interested in the arts & humanities must take at least one three-credit course in the social sciences in order to complete the degree.
3. Students are also strongly encouraged to take one elective in a concentration outside of their own.
4. The program publishes recognized and accepted electives for each of the concentrations in the online catalog of the university.
5. Other courses may also be credited towards the electives after approval by the major advisor and program director.
6. Courses credited towards the major and concentration core may not be credited as electives. There is no double crediting within the Africana Studies major.



## CONCENTRATION (MINIMUM 6 CREDITS)

### AFRICAN STUDIES

#### 1. Concentration Gateway (3 credits)

- AFST 302 Introduction to African Studies

#### 2. 400 level Seminar (3 credits)

- AFST 406 Advanced African Studies Topics OR
- AFST 426 The Rise and Fall of Apartheid OR
- AFST 427 History of Modern South Africa

### AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

#### 1. Concentration Gateway (3 credits)

- AFST 303 Introduction to African American Studies

#### 2. 400 level Seminar (3 credits)

- AFST 406 Advanced African American Studies Topics OR
- AFST 414 Major African American Women Writers OR
- AFST 417 Harlem in Vogue OR
- AFST 425 Blacks in American Society

### AFRICAN DIASPORA STUDIES

#### 1. Concentration Gateway (3 credits)

- AFST 304 Intro to African Diaspora OR
- AFST 305 African Diaspora Since 1808

#### 2. 400 level Seminar (3 credits)

- AFST 406 Advanced African Diaspora Studies Topics OR
- AFST 418 Anthropological Reflections of the African Diaspora OR

## MINOR IN AFRICANA STUDIES (MINIMUM 21 CREDITS)

*The list of electives under all three concentrations remains the same.*

### 1. Major Gateway (3 credits)

- AFST 150: Introduction to Africana Studies OR
- AFST 205: Introduction to Africana Studies

### 2. Methods (3 credits)

- AFST 399: Research Methods in Africana Studies

### 3. Concentration (3 credits)

- AFST 302: Introduction to African Studies OR
- AFST 303: Introduction to African American Studies OR

- AFST 304: Intro to African Diaspora OR
- AFST 305: African Diaspora Since 1808

### 4. Electives (12 credits)

- Students are required to complete at least 12 credits through recognized AFST courses in the social sciences and arts & humanities within their chosen area of concentration.
- Courses fulfilling the student's major cannot be counted toward the minor.
- Major electives policies #2-6 also apply to the minor.

# 2016-2017 AFRICANA EVENTS

September 23, 2016

The Mande String Trio from Mali

September 26, 2016

Infomajors Open House

October 14, 2016

2016 Boswell Lecture

"The Beekeeper: Performing Black Southern Women Who Love Women"

E. Patrick Johnson, *Carlos Montezuma Professor, Department of Performance Studies and African American Studies, Northwestern University*

October 21, 2016

11th Annual IREP Africa Weekend

October 26, 2016

Biannual Chat & Chew

October 28, 2016

Ball for a CauZe

Xi Lambda Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.

November 3, 2016

Dominican Bachata: Exploring Embodied Memories and Oral Histories

Adam Taub, *documentary filmmaker*

November 4, 2016

"The Roots of Ourselves & Our Food: Q&A with Michael Twitty"

Michael Twitty, *food writer, independent scholar, culinary historian, historical interpreter*

November 29, 2016

Archaeologies of Slavery & Memory in the Diaspora

January 27, 2017

Building a Vocal Community: The Power of Song in a Community

Dr. Ysaye M. Barnwell, *performer*

February 3, 2017

"Birth of a Nation": Screening and Colloquium

March 3, 2017

"African Philosophy Reconsidered: Africa, Religion, Race, & Philosophy"

Prof. Oludamini Ogunnaike, *William & Mary Religious Studies*

March 15, 2017

African Jamaican Disruptions and Routes to Freedom

Erna Brodber, *Jamaican activist, sociologist, historian, novelist*

Catherine John-Camara, *Associate Professor in English, University of Oklahoma*

March 22, 2017

Biannual Chat & Chew

April 4, 2017

Human Computers: A Moment in History

April 7, 2017

Africana Senior Research Symposium

A special  
**"thank you"**  
to our supporters  
who make funding  
of these events  
possible.



# AFRICANA STUDIES

@ WILLIAM & MARY



▲ A group of organizers at the 3rd Annual Black Lives Matter Conference march. *Lex Varya*