

Association of College & Research Libraries

Afro American Studies Librarians' Section

Newsletter

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Black Women in the Academy

On January 12, 1994 Black women academics made history. Over 2,000 women from practically every academic discipline and department in the academy - from large and small historically white and historically black institutions - converged on the campus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) for a three day conference.

The conference, **Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name, 1894-1994**, was the brainchild of two untenured faculty members at MIT, Profs. Robin Kilson and Evelyn Hammond. The impetus for this effort centered on the recent criticism surrounding the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings and the nomination of Prof. Lani Guinier. Professor Hammond

(cont'd on p. 5)

Message From the Chair

This summer, the Afro-American Studies Librarians' Section is pleased to join with the Arts and Law & Political Science Sections of ACRL in presenting Sheldon Hackney, director of the National Endowment for Humanities, who will give a keynote address on *"Binding Together a Multicultural Society: Challenges for Academic and Research Libraries."*

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AFAS Meetings (Tentative Schedule)

6/25/94

Communication & Publication Committee, 9:30 am - 11:00 am

Policy & Research Committee, 9:30-11:00 am

Executive Committee, 11:30 am - 12:30 pm

6/26/94

General Membership Mtg., 8:30 am- 11:00 pm

Indexing Project, 4:30 pm - 5:30 pm

6/27/94

Constitution & Bylaws, 8:00 - 9:00 am

Program Committee 1995, 8:00 am - 9:00 am

Membership Committee, 9:30 am-11:00 am

Nominating Committee, 9:30 am- 11:00 am

AFAS Business Meeting, Midwinter ALA

Meeting was called to order by William Welburn at 9:30 am. He turned the order of business to Gladys Smiley Bell, who conducted a workshop entitled *E-Journal, E-Newsletter? --What's That?* The workshop demonstrated online, AFAS's electronic discussion list, AFAS-L. Followed by online examples of electronic newsletters available on the Net to be used as models for the proposal that AFAS make it's newsletter available electronically. AFAS's e-newsletter would be released simultaneously with the paper version.

The e-journal proposal was withdrawn because of probable ACRL ownership. Gladys will probably produce the e-

journal as an independent project, and AFAS membership as well as the BCALA will have first opportunity to become involved as founding editors.

Those present were also shown the editing, moderating, digest, and other characteristics of electronic discussion lists. A handout about AFAS-L also was distributed.

G. Smiley Bell

Executive Board Meeting Minutes, Saturday, Feb. 5, 1994

Meeting called to order by William Welburn, Chair, at 11:45 am. Everyone introduced themselves briefly. Those present: William Welburn, Rochelle Ballard, Gladys Smiley Bell, Stanton Biddle, Michael Walker, Sylvia Curtis, Doris Clack, Mary Wrighten, Mark McManus, Cassandra Allen, Audrey Taylor, and Sandra Ready (visitor, ACRL).

1. All sections of ACRL are required to submit a five year review/ evaluation.

(cont'd next page)

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The review is to support the goals and objectives set forth by ACRL. It documents AFAS's activities. The Policy & Research Committee was charged to do this evaluation, but for some reason failed to follow through. AFAS has asked for a one-year extension to prepare and submit this report. Sandra Ready, ACRL Planning Committee representative, did not see any problem with the request, however, the decision is ACRL's. A committee was formed of volunteers to follow through on this project. So charged were: Stanton Biddle, Rochelle Ballard, William Welburn, Doris Clack, and Mary Wrighten.

2. The Chairperson for the Miami Conference Committee is Itibari Zulu. ACRL encourages sections to work with other ACRL programs. Therefore, AFAS will work with other sections, notably Political Science, on our Miami program. The keynote speaker will be Shelton Hackney, NEH. Mr. Hackney has a commitment to African American history and will focus his talk on AFAS's or African American concerns about public funding. A follow up discussion could occur within AFAS membership feeding off Hackney's speech. Itibari could arrange a panel discussion on "Information Apartheid" to provide a forum for definition and discussion.

3. Gladys Smiley Bell proposed that AFAS join in a venture with BCALA in publishing an electronic journal. After some discussion it was decided that because AFAS is a section of ACRL, any publication would have to be approved by ACRL and ownership may be relinquished to ACRL. Proposal was withdrawn.

4. Sylvia Curtis proposed that AFAS play a proactive role in lobbying for republication of significant reference works and creating more bibliographic

electronic resources in the area of African American Studies. After some discussion, the matter was tabled for later discussion. The chair called for an Executive Board meeting to follow the Membership meeting scheduled for Monday, February 7.

G. Smiley Bell

From the Chair (cont'd from p. 1)

Hackney is author of *Populism to Progressivism in Alabama* and numerous articles in American history. Before taking over the post at the NEH, he was president of the University of Pennsylvania.

It is significant that AFAS would be involved in bringing Hackney to ALA. During his tenure at the University of Pennsylvania, black studies was reinvigorated at that institution as it related more closely to the intellectual growth of Philadelphia's historic African American community. Equally as important, he wrestled with questions of racism at Penn, expressing deep concerns for what appeared to be a collision course between cultural diversity and free speech. In his last years at Penn, Hackney struggled between the 1st and 14th Amendments of the Constitution and eventually took a position that placed him in opposition to the viewpoints of many conservative students, faculty and alumni.

Since moving to the NEH, Hackney has already stepped into controversy. First, and consistent with his support for African American scholarship, Hackney named African American poet laureate Gwendolyn Brooks as Jefferson Lecturer, thereby breaking with traditions. Second,

he called for a national debate on the meaning of being American given the diversity of cultures and historical understanding of race, gender, and ethnic identity. Hackney's willingness to join us in Miami is a clear indication of his interest in bringing our professional community into the discussion. The Hackney address, which will take place on Saturday June 26th from 2-4pm, will also include a panel of reactors who will mull over his message from the perspectives of African American Studies, the arts, and law and public policy.

In addition, AFAS has been asked to join the Anthropology and Sociology Section in another important program on Sunday morning June 27th. The program will focus on Caribbean cultures in Miami and will feature Guillermo Grenier and Alex Stepick III, editors of *Miami Now!: Immigration, Ethnicity and Social Change* published in 1992 by the University Press of Florida.

I believe that both programs will complement one another as we plan for the future relationship between library and information studies and African American Studies. And, there is no better cultural site than Miami.

William Welburn
Chair, AFAS

African American Shape Note Historical Archive

The Afro-American Studies Dept. at the U. of Mississippi is working on a project to preserve the history of "African-American Shape Note Music" in Mississippi. The project aims to preserve the music through production of a

documentary film, a written history and the establishment of an archival collection.

The archive collection will include film footage and audio recordings of singers performing the music in their local churches, interviews, shape note singers memorabilia, and scholarly research and writings. Currently, the collection has shape note songbooks, convention programs and minutes, and various related items donated by singers and supporters.

Project staff have requested assistance in locating sources of material on African American and White shape note and gospel quartet movements, and gospel singers influenced by the shape note musical traditions. Contact Chiquita Willis (601) 232-5977.

Technology & the African American Experience

Technology has been a major force for social change over the last century in American life. African Americans have taken part in that change as inventors, workers, consumers, and political leaders. This conference explores the underlying themes of that participation across a wide range of technological areas.

The workshop, which will be held in Washington, DC, at Howard University, May 20-22, is intended to bring together those who are doing research on the topic, would like to do research, or would like to encourage research on the topic. Formal presentations of research are encouraged, but not necessary. Presentation of work in progress or simply ideas for what should be done are also appropriate contributions. Contact Taft Broome (202) 328-7634.

(Black Women, cont'd from p. 1)

commented that "black women have come in for a large share of this criticism in the form of both open and coded discourse generated by the Hill/Thomas hearings of 1991, and political discourse produced by electoral campaigns over the course of 1992, largely centered in the issue of welfare reform and 'family values.' These events have generated the most intense public consideration of the character and morality witnessed since the 1980s.

African American women in the academy place themselves squarely in the center of these debates in 1992 with the formation of the organization, *African American Women in Defense of Ourselves*.

Presenters and participants, some as far away as the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa, came to discuss a myriad of issues including: pedagogy in undergraduate education in the field of black women's studies, black feminist theory, homophobia and heterosexism in academe, and race and gender politics in the academic culture. Several roundtable discussions drew standing room only audiences. Decidedly, "The Political (Re) Awakening of Black Women: What's Feminism Got to Do with It?" and "Black Lesbians in Academe" focused on two of the hottest debates thrashed out at the conference. Workshops such as, "Going to Graduate School: How, What, When, Why, Where, Who," "Black Women and the Power of Information (using electronic information networks)" and "Finding Research Funding for Black Women's Research" offered practical information for partici-pants.

The three keynote speakers, Professor Lani Guinier, U. of Pennsylvania Law School, Dr. Johnetta Cole, President of Spelman College, and Prof. Angela Davis, U. of California, Santa Cruz, brought their

own brand of inspiration to the proceedings. Professor Guinier captivated the audience by drawing from her personal experiences. She implored black women in academe not to speak from anger, but to understand that "we are women with a gift, not a grievance." Dr. Cole drew thunderous applause when she reminded the black professorate to go beyond the classroom to extend "black women in academe" to the infinitesimal number of black women who serve as presidents of 'majority' and 'minority' institutions cleaning bathrooms in dormitories and cooking food for campus dining halls." Her resounding declaration -- "And so, if I know my name, I know that in the academy, like in America, the sister is caught between the rock of racism and the hard place of sexism," echoed throughout the hall. In closing she appealed to the participants to consider the "diversity among us as well as the shared experiences that bind us one to another." Professor Davis closed the conference calling for coalitions with the understanding that all is not well at home for Black women either. "We can no longer assume that there is one monolithic force against which we position ourselves in order to defend our name. We have to defend our names in those places we consider home as well." She cautioned that "we cannot afford to commit ourselves so fervently to defending our name that we end up being poised against our Asian, Latina, Pacific Island and Native American sisters."

The conference organizers have already begun planning for a second conference to be held at Spelman College in Atlanta, GA in 1997.

D. Curry

Executive Board Meeting, Monday, Feb. 7, 1994

Meeting was called to order at 12:30 pm. Those present: Schrombery, Mary Wrihten, Doris Clack, Marcellus Turner, William Welburn, Gladys Smiley Bell, Mark McManus, Stanton Biddle, Sylvia Curtis, Harry Murphy, and Dorothy Washington.

1. Minutes from the June 1993 meeting were approved as presented.

2. Committee Reports: (AFAS Chair William Welburn requests that all committee chairs present written reports in advance and be limited to one page or less.)

Miami Program Committee. AFAS' program budget of \$3,300 was approved by ACRL. See "Message from the Chair," p. 1.

Michael Walker reported that a committee has been formed for a program during ACRL's Pittsburgh conference and Birdie Weir will chair.

2nd Annual Meeting of African American Librarians: Gladys Smiley Bell submitted a proposal to BCALA for a program to be presented at the conference. It was accepted, and entitled "Internet Resources for African American Studies." This action was approved by AFAS at the June 1993 meeting in New Orleans.

Nominating Committee's slate was completed and forwarded to ACRL. The committee was commended for coping with three different deadlines.

3. Sylvia Curtis' proposal on getting out of print reference sources updated and made available in

electronic format (i.e., cd-rom) was forwarded to the Policy and Research Committee for a recommendation on how to proceed.

4. In the February 1994 issue of *CRL News*, there is an article entitled

"Indiana Builds Three African American Special Collections" by AFAS member Grace Jackson-Brown. It provides an excellent overview of important resources at Indiana U. in African American Studies.

G. Smiley Bell

ALA Minority Fellowship

Applications are being accepted for the 1994-1995 American Library Association Minority Fellowship Program. The program is designed to: 1) provide a participatory opportunity for underrepresented ethnic librarians to: Gain an understanding of ALA's structure and operations, how policy is formulated and implemented, and association management; 2) Improve the upward mobility and wider representation of underrepresented ethnic librarians, make ALA better known, more visible and accessible to librarians of diverse backgrounds and multiethnic caucuses; and 3) Contribute to ALA in its vision, commitment and goal toward the multicultural profession.

The 1994-95 stipend for the ALA Minority Fellow is \$30,000 plus medical, dental, life, and disability insurance and relocation assistance to Chicago. To obtain more information or to receive application materials, contact: Office for Library Outreach Services (800) 545-2433, ext. 4294. The postmarked deadline for applications is April 15, 1994.

AFAS Committee Chairs

Nominating Committee - Mark McManus

Membership Committee - Diana Brice
312/747-6922

Program Committee - Itibari M. Zulu
209/278-7673

Constitution & Bylaws Committee - Michael Walker
804/367-1103

Publication Committee - Thomas Weissinger
607/255-5229

Policy & Research Committee - Rodney Lee
516/378-0222

New Black Studies Database

The University of Missouri-St. Louis' African-American Collection gopher includes:

1. Black Studies Gophers on the Internet
2. Internet Resource Guide 'Black/African Development' (McGee)
3. Western Historical Manuscripts-Black Studies-St. Louis Focus
4. Black Experience in America / Norman Coombs, 1972, 1993
5. Emancipation Proclamation (1863)
6. Fugitive Slave Act (1850)
7. Joys of Being Negro (1906) / Edward E. Wilson
8. Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

9. Negro National Anthem (1900) / James Weldon Johnson
10. Slave Consultant's Narrative (1712)
11. Somalia Army Area Handbook 1993
12. Up From Slavery / Booker T. Washington

You can reach it by gopher at host: UMSLVMA.UMSL.EDU. Path=1/Library/ Subjects/BlackStudies.

Racial & Ethnic Diversity in Academic Libraries

Haworth Press has announced the publication date for this volume. It is available this spring as no. 45/46 of *The Reference Librarian*. David Cohen says of it: "The first collaborative effort to deal with multiculturalism in academia across the reference desk as we approach the year 2000.... The useful techniques and attractive strategies presented here will provide the incentive for fellow professionals in academic libraries around the country to go and do likewise in their own institutions."



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