

# The Black Oaks Newsletter

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## Elon Community Mourns Nelson Mandela's Passing

By Heidi Frontani, faculty

On December 5, 2013 former South African President Nelson Mandela died. President Mandela had earned a Nobel Peace Prize for dedicating his life to seeking freedom, justice, reconciliation and healing in his country. He had struggled with ill health for years.

Since 2007, Associate Professor Prudence Layne, has led an annual January term "Call of South Africa" study abroad course that compares the struggle for civil rights in the USA with the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. The class visits sites related to Mandela's life work.

Dr. Layne referred to President Mandela as a selfless man who was not enamored with the trappings of money, power or office. She told WFMY News 2 that "we all need to look for the Mandela in all of us; that resilience, that spirit of forgiveness, of reconciliation, of hope, of promise, and of really turning our tests into testimonies of hope and of peace."

It was Mandela's humility and his ability to forgive that made him a highly esteemed figure around the world. Mandela

rose to prominence in the mid-20th century as an attorney for the African National Congress (ANC). His efforts to end the apartheid system led to his arrest in 1962 on charges of conspiracy to overthrow the minority-rule government. He subsequently spent nearly three decades in prison. After his release in 1990, Mandela was elected South Africa's first black president in 1994.

In the years of majority rule that followed, President Mandela never sought retribution against his former oppressors, but opted instead to create a commission to examine human rights abuses against the Black majority.

Emma Burrell, a South African and Assistant Director of Study Abroad at Elon told Eric Townsend, Director of Elon's News Bureau that "Mandela gave me my country. He is, and has been for a very long time, the heart and soul of South Africa and a huge part of the foundation from which we've been able to function...When you go through something like apartheid, to come out the other end as positively and with as little bitterness as he did is unfathomable." "It was a remarkable gift that he gave

every single South African and everyone in the world. And it's a hard thing to think about him not being there as the physical conscience of a nation."

Students studying overseas for the fall term observed and joined vigils held in major cities around the world in memory of President Mandela. Events were held on campus in honor of his memory as well.

All the world lost a great man when Nelson Mandela passed away. He will be missed.



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## ***Professor Idris Presents Paper at African Studies Conference***

*By Vanessa Bravo, faculty*

Elon Instructor Mussa Idris presented a paper on Saturday, November 23rd, at the 56 annual meeting of the African Studies Association (ASA), in Baltimore, Maryland.

Idris' paper examines business experiences among Ethiopian and Eritrean transnational migrants in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. His research primarily draws from ethnographic and entrepreneurial case studies, conducted in the summer of 2011, to explain how Ethiopian and Eritrean migrant entrepreneurs establish food and culture-centered businesses, such as the flatbread (*Injera*) and the coffee ceremony (*Bun/a*) entrepreneurship, as well as ethnic grocery shops.

These migrant entrepreneurs are able to succeed in Adams

Morgan and the U Street Corridor, in D.C., even though they have limited business training, limited financial capital to start their business, and a background that does not promote entrepreneurship, as they typically come from subsistence agricultural economic systems. Nonetheless, their social capital, personal savings, and entrepreneurial qualities contribute to their success.

This research project stems from Idris' dissertation, titled *Entrepreneurship Among the Ethiopian and Eritrean Migrants: Ethnographic Case Studies in the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area*. It includes 20 case studies for which data was collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews and the analysis of secondary sources.

The African Studies Association is the most important

organization of its type in the United States and the world. Its annual conference attracts hundreds of researchers from Africa, the United States and beyond. This year's topic for the annual conference was "Mobility, Migration and Flows."



*Mussa Idris will receive his Ph.D. in Anthropology this December 2013 from the University of Florida.*

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## ***Taylor Branch Speaks with Elon Community***

*By Heidi Frontani, faculty*

In late September journalist and historian Taylor Branch spoke with the Elon community about democracy in the USA as part of the Baird Pulitzer Prize lecture series. Branch reminded those gath-

ered that although there was progress that was made with the Civil Rights movement that the US system of government and its democratic principles cannot be taken for granted and that continued efforts are needed to ensure that all, regardless of race,

sexual orientation, gender, beliefs, or nationality have equal rights. Mr. Branch has spent much of his career telling stories of civil rights pioneer, Dr. Martin Luther King.

## ***AAAS Faculty and Staff receive NEH Grant***

*By Heidi Frontani, faculty*

Three members of the African and African-American Studies (AAAS) faculty and staff, have been awarded a “Bridging Cultures” grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The work they are conducting with the grant will serve to mark the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King’s March on Washington and the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation.

An NEH initiative entitled “Created Equal: America’s Civil Rights Struggle” that is supported by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History supports the grant that encourages communities to discuss US civil rights history using documen-

tery films.

The award includes a film set, and a \$1,200 programming stipend for scholarly presentations and to screen four documentary films. The four films are: “Freedom Riders” which won an Emmy in 2012, “Slavery by Another Name” and 2013-Emmy nominated “The Abolitionists” and “The Loving Story.”

Belk librarian Jamane Yeager, led the grant initiative. She worked with Dr. Prudence Layne, Associate Professor of English and coordinator for African and African-American Studies and Dr. Frances Ward-Johnson, Associate Professor in the School of Communications. Dr. Ward-Johnson teaches a General Studies course on a

topic related to the grant, “Disarming Injustice: civic life.

Congratulations to Yeager, Layne and Ward-Johnson!



Left to right: Grant recipients Jamane Yeager, Dr. Prudence Layne, and Dr. Frances Ward-Johnson

## ***Crystal Anderson Speaks on WUNC’s “The State of Things”***

*By Heidi Frontani, faculty*

On September 10th, Associate Professor of English Crystal Anderson was a featured guest on WUNC 91.5’s popular noontime program “The State of Things.” Dr. Anderson spoke with host Frank Stasio about her new book “Beyond the Chinese Connection: Contemporary Afro-Asian Cultural Production.” The show was broadcast live from downtown Greensboro, N.C.

Dr. Anderson spoke about

the convergence of African-American and Asian pop culture. Examples were drawn from film (the “Rush Hour” series, “The Matrix” Trilogy, and Bruce Lee films such as “Enter the Dragon” and “The Chinese Connection”) and music (including popular performers like Psy).

Dr. Anderson joined Elon in 2008. Beyond the Chinese Connection was published over the summer by the University of Mississippi Press.



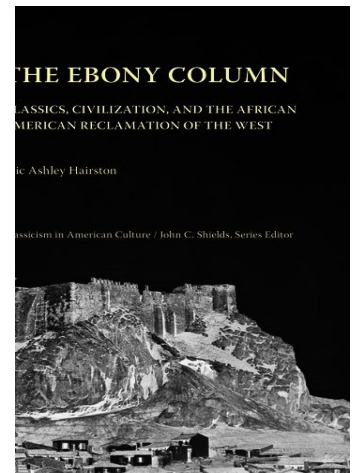


## Dr. Hairston's "The Ebony Column"

By Heidi Frontani, faculty

In *The Ebony Column: Classics, Civilization, and the African American Reclamation of the West* Dr. Ashley Hairston explores the influence of the classics on four African-American writers: Phillis Wheatley, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. DuBois and Anna Julia Cooper. In his book Hairston argues that most scholarship on the in-

fluence of antiquity on writers has focused on white authors and that his work helps to fill a gap in the literature. *The Ebony Column* is a volume in the University of Tennessee Press's new Classicism in American Culture series.



## Ferrier Discusses "News Deserts" and the 2012 Elections

By Heidi Frontani, faculty

Dr. Michelle Ferrier, Associate Professor in Communications presented at the National Conference on Media Reform (NCMR) in Denver and the Broadcast Education Association (BEA) conference in Las Vegas in April. At

NCMR, Dr. Ferrier presented as part of the panel "Cities Without News: Fighting Information Inequality in America's News Deserts". Her presentation focused on the results of her analysis of North Carolina newspapers using a geographic information systems (GIS) ap-

proach. On campus, also in April, Dr. Ferrier used GIS to share data about the 2012 elections. At BEA, Ferrier discussed the ownership of hyper-local online news sites.

## University of Maryland President Hrabowski III Speaks

By Heidi Frontani, faculty

Elon hosted Freeman Hrabowski III, a national expert on promoting diversity in higher education. Hrabowski encourages collaborative projects in the classroom and for community service that bring together students from diverse backgrounds. Hrabowski noted that many people do not have much experience with people from different backgrounds, but that such experience will be im-

portant for graduates in an ever changing world.

Hrabowski has many accolades. He is the author of *Beating the Odds: Raising Academically Successful African American Males* (1998), and *Overcoming the Odds: Raising Academically Successful African American Young Women* (2001); he was invited by President Obama to Chair the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for African Americans. Hrabowski also chaired the Na-

tional Academies' committee that produced the report, Expanding Underrepresented Minority Participation: America's Science and Technology Talent at the Crossroads in 2011 and was the recipient of the Carnegie Corporation's New York Academic Leadership Award (which comes with a \$500,000 prize). *Time Magazine* voted Freeman Hrabowski one of the 100 Most Influential People in the World in 2012.



## ***Ghana Class of Periclean Scholars still Going Strong 3.5 Years Post Graduation***

By Heidi Frontani, faculty

Several Periclean Scholars who were founding or lateral entry members of the Ghana Class report engaging in 'Periclean' fields (health, education, service, sustainability) of work or study years after graduating from Elon. The following represent activities and achievements from this calendar year:

OLIVIA ACKERMAN ('10): graduated from Yale's School of Nursing in May, has passed her boards, and secured a job as a pediatric nurse practitioner at Children's National Medical Center in DC in the department of Allergy and Immunology.

YASMINE ARRINGTON ('15) was featured for her giving in an online publication devoted to news about Black philanthropists and Black Philanthropy Month and received a \$10,000 award from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation in recognition of her outstanding community service in leading ScholarCHIPS. Yasmine will use the funds to help pay for her study abroad in Ghana over WT '14. She also was awarded the Iris Holt McEwen Community Service Award.

DAN BAQUET ('13) is working with a physician associated with the Johns Hopkins Medical School and the University of Maryland Medical School in an inner-city pediatric practice at Mercy Hospital.

KRISSY LEBEAU ('10) graduated from the University College London with a Master's Degree in Global Health.

MICA MCCULLOUGH ('10) graduated from Lipscomb University in Tennessee with a Master's in Sustainable Practice.

JOHN MCGREEVY ('10) graduated with a Masters in Anthropology from Colorado State University. His focus of study was sustainable forest use in Haiti.

MEGAN PRILUTSKI ('10) is studying at Drexel University College of Medicine to become a medical doctor.

KRISTINE SILVESTRI ('10) is on a Rotary Scholarship working on a Master's in Global Health at the University of Edinburgh. She interned with the World Health Organization's Global Malaria Programme and Malaria Policy Advisory Committee in Geneva, Switzerland for three months starting August 1st and was featured on the cover and pages 26-27 of the *Edinburgh Evening News* on Friday March 1st. The story was entitled: "Malaria Survivor Living with Effects Four Years On."

FRANK STIEFEL ('13): Is working as a Community Organizer for Camden Churches Organized for People in his home state of New Jersey. Frank is engaged in grassroots organizing to address issues of violence and mass incarceration.

KATIE STRICKLAND ('10) started work in World Vision's microfinance division.

LAUREN TAYLOR ('10): Began a midwifery program at Yale University.

SARAH VAVRECK ('10) is a school counselor in NC. She was invited to be the maid of honor at a wedding in Ghana.

### The Ghana class has three main projects

- 1) The construction of a Health Center and two blocks of housing for staff in Kpoeta, Ghana (PHOTOS BELOW).
- 2) A kindergarten that is under construction in Sokode, Ghana.
- 3) A brand new domestic initiative to grant US students with high need scholarships via the NGO ScholarCHIPS

The on-campus members met on their own for the entire 2013 calendar year because faculty mentor Dr. Heidi Frontani was out of the country on sabbatical in the spring and teaching in London in the fall.



Health Center on Opening Day in January 2009



Inside the Health Center



First block of Staff Housing

## Mission Statement



The mission of the program is to promote the production and dissemination of knowledge about African and African-descended peoples through advocacy, learning, research, scholarship, service and teaching.

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## Guest *Black Oaks* Newsletter Writer Reflects on 2013

It is a sign of the robust nature of our program in African and African-American Studies that I have been brought on as a guest writer for this issue. With so many AAAS sponsored or co-sponsored speakers, lunches, banquets, fundraisers and other events taking place, there is simply too much for the Coordinator to undertake on her own.

We have an active agenda lined up for 2014 including six 'author-of-the-month' luncheons.

Thanks to all who have supported our events and to Dr. Vanessa Bravo for her contribution to this issue of *Black Oaks*.

We look forward to seeing you at AAAS events next year.

Dr. Heidi Frontani,  
Guest *Black Oaks* Newsletter  
Writer

