

The Black Oaks Newsletter

Volume 10, Issue 1

Spring 2015

Events Mark Black History Month

Black History Month kicked off with a special College Coffee “One Hundred Years of [formally recognizing] Black History.”

It was followed the next day, February 4th, with a Black Student Mixer and with an artistic showcase that created an environment for self-expression on February 5th entitled “Let Us Breathe.” The event focused on social justice for the Black community.

On February 6th there was a “Sisterhood Circle,” a safe space for dialogue and empowerment. Students, faculty & staff who identify as ALANAM Women (African-American, Latina, Asian, Native American or Multiracial) came together and encountered the beauty of sisterhood. Later on, on the same day, Jason Aryeh, Assistant Professor of Dance, provided the campus with a performance in Whitley Auditorium to celebrate black history.

Throughout the month there were One in Christ church services in the Numen Lumen Pavilion.

On February 9th there was a panel discussion on breaking the incarceration cycle that included the perspectives of a

College professor, children of incarcerated parents, a parole officer, a police officer and a former gang member.

February 9th and 12th marked the occasions of a Black Student Forum and a Black Voices of Elon Roundtable that included alumni voices.

There was a “Real Talk” on February 18th on “Colorism within the Black Community” and an author-of-the-month luncheon at which Dr. Damon Blake presented his research on Jamaican politics, inner city communities and mafia bosses.

February 19th included an open microphone event enti-

tled “Poet.She” at which students were able to showcase their talents.

The month concluded with a Core Curriculum Forum on African Entrepreneurship that consisted of four talks over two days, February 25th and 26th, by Dr. Heidi Frontani. Frontani discussed how Africans find innovative solutions for themselves. Such entrepreneurial, self-help initiatives are some of the markers of the continent’s peoples and their ingenuity, but seldom make the headlines, especially in the West. She also examined the flip side of such self-help initiatives, namely giving from the West, some of which is arguably harmful to Africa and Africans.

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Breaking the Cycle of Incarceration Panel Discussion
A Black History Month Event
Monday, February 9, 2015
1:00-2:30PM with Q&A

McKinnon Hall, Moseley Center
Elon University



Hear the perspectives of a college professor, children of incarcerated parents, a police officer, probation officer and more.

scholarCHIPS
FOR CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS

Sponsored by C.R.E.D.E., the Geography Program and the Ghana Periclean Scholars
www.scholarchipsfund.com

Elon Students March for Selma's 50th Anniversary

By Josephine Gardner, '17

Through Dr. Frances Ward-Johnson's GST 224 Nonviolence and Civil Rights course that explores how civil rights leaders and activists who follow the philosophy of nonviolence, I was able to travel with my classmates to Selma, Alabama to participate in the march for Selma's 50th anniversary. I had the privilege of going on the Edmund Pettus Bridge to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, the attack on African-American demonstrators seeking voting rights.

Selma symbolizes freedom for African Americans. Voting rights activists marched the state capital of Montgomery, Alabama on Bloody Sunday demanding to vote as citizens of this country. Alabama state troopers and Sheriff Jim Clark's officers met the marchers with clubs, tear gas and brutality and assaulted the demonstrators. The incidence of Bloody Sunday led to the Voting Rights Act in 1965.

Today, the Selma 50th anniversary has created a platform for other minorities who have been oppressed by the system to rise up and advocate for their rights. Social issues ranging from voting rights, gay rights, immigration laws and racial profiling. As I was walking on the bridge, I saw more than 20,000 people marching for social progress.

I saw signs advocating for Asian-American rights to women standing for equality in employment opportunity and wages. I realized that the 50th anniversary wasn't just about a black movement anymore, rather it was a march for civil and citizen rights for all.

The highlight during the trip was hearing U.S. President Barack Obama speak on social issues, which was very moving and inspirational. In 2012 I was able to vote for him, which was the direct impact of the efforts made by civil rights leaders and demonstrators during Bloody

Sunday and made me feel part of this progress.

So many different leaders made the movement in Selma possible. Unfortunately, their efforts are not always recognized beyond the figure of Dr. Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks. The class trip allowed me to meet other civil rights leaders such as John Lewis, Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton.

The march to justice will never be over if we continue to marginalize minorities. We need to always keep marching and working towards further equality and advocate for citizens in America to exercise their rights to vote.



Dr. Frances Ward-Johnson

AAASE Faculty Brief: Dr. Amy Johnson

In December, Dr. Johnson's article "Captivity among the Maroons of Jamaica in the 17th and Early 18th centuries: A Comparative Analysis" appeared in the *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*. The article explores bondage among the Maroons of Jamaica-- an under-studied topic-- and draws

comparisons to slaveholding among Native Americans in the southeastern United States and the Akan-speaking people of modern day Ghana. In May, she presented a paper on this topic at the Many Faces of Slavery: non-traditional slavery in the Atlantic World Conference in Montpellier, France. The title

of the presentation was Bondage and Freedom among the Maroons of Jamaica. Dr. Johnson discussed the nuanced and complicated distinctions between bondage and freedom, which shift over time, place, and perspective.

Author of the Month Luncheons

African and African-American Studies (AAAS) hosts author of the month luncheons each fall and each spring term.

Our spring speakers included:

Dr. Damion Blake in February, who spoke about Jamaican politics, inner city communities and mafia bosses. Dr. Blake is a Lecturer in the Department of Political Science and Policy Studies.

March's featured author was *Dr. Olivia Choplin*, Assistant Professor of French in the Department of World Languages. Dr. Choplin spoke about...

Students *Omolayo Ojo*, *Brenda Reavis*, and *Chelsea McQueen* presented their research at the April 15th luncheon.

Their talks were also advertised as part of "African Influences Around the World" (Africa Week) events.

This academic year, AAASE has been working with Elon's Learning on Demand community. Each of the author of the month talks from September through April was video recorded and made available to the public, via the following link: <http://blogs.elon.edu/ondemand/aaase-author-of-the-month>

Our plan is to continue these recording in the coming years.

Please contact the AAASE Coordinator if you are interested in presenting your research on African and/or African-American Studies at a future luncheon.



New AAASE Faculty in Religious Studies

Professor Ariela Marcus-Sells will be joining the Elon faculty in Religious Studies in fall 2015.

Her arrival will bring new course offerings in AAASE. Including REL 376, Religion in Modern African Fiction, which will be taught T/Th 12:25-2:05.

The course description is as follows: Over the past century, African writers

have used the mediums of short stories, novels, and films, to reflect on, criticize, or promote the sweeping changes of the last century.

In the process they have integrated local forms of narrative and storytelling with genres drawn from Western literary and linguistic traditions and constructed new visions of religion, society, and literature. This class will investi-

gate these complex relationships through close readings of some of the most influential African literary productions of the twentieth century.

The course counts toward the African/ African-American Studies Minor and the Africa Concentration in International Studies.



Two AAASE Faculty Present Papers at UT-Austin Conference

In early April, two Elon faculty headed to UT-Austin to give presentations at a conference on African Development, Urban Space, and Human Rights spearheaded by UT professor Dr. Toyin Falola. Dr. Falola has been hosting the annual Africa Conference for 15 years.

Dr. Heidi Frontani, Professor

of Geography and Interim Coordinator of AAASE Chaired to panels: the first on Health Interventions and Building Medical Capacity on which she also presented her paper entitled "Excellent Aid: An Analysis of Two Charitable Foundations' Medical Philanthropy in Six Urban Areas" and a second panel on Sustainable Environmen-

tal Development.

Dr. Mussa Idris, Assistant Professor of Anthropology presented a paper on Analytical Views on Past and Present Official and Cultural Narratives of Asmara on a panel devoted to Human Rights and Citizenship.

Elon African Society Presents Africa Week

In 2010, the Ghana Class of Periclean Scholars presented "Footprints of Africa" a multi-day celebration that focused on the continent. Five years later, a number of events were offered across almost an entire week. The 2015 offerings included food, academic talks, and a cooking demonstration by a Kenyan chef Kabui. The events were well attended and a welcome addition to the cultural offerings available at Elon.

The Elon African Society Presents:
African Influences Around the World
April 13 - 18, 2015

International African Fair Mon. 13th - 5 to 7pm McKinnon Hall
Eating African Wisdom Tues. 14th - 6pm Oaks 212
AAASE Student Research Wed. 15th - 2 to 1:30pm Alamance 302B
African Innovation Thurs. 16th - 6pm Global Commons Media Room
Africa Night & After Party Sat. 18th - 6pm McKinnon Hall
South African Food ALL WEEK Lakeside

In collaboration with CREDE, the Global Education Center, LASO, & AAASE

New AAASE Course to be Offered on Black Men's Lives

Violence against black men, particularly from police in Baltimore, Ferguson and elsewhere over this academic year led to a call from Elon students for a new course to be offered on Black Men's Lives. Thanks to Dean Randy Williams who got the word out about the desire for such a course, and Dean Gabie Smith who will provide a summer stipend for a faculty

member to develop the course, the students' call is being answered and a new course called Black Men's Lives will be offered on campus beginning in the spring of 2016. The course will be offered by *Dr. Damion Blake* in Political Science and Policy Studies.

Black Men's Lives has the potential to serve as a foundational course for AAASE.

Several AAASE faculty have offered to guest speak in the new course and during our Senior Assessment gathering this spring AAASE students expressed the desire to have a course that all AAASE minors would take.

News Briefs from Our Alums

Merissa Baxter ('08) is a Ph.D. Candidate at the University of South Carolina (USC). She is involved in cancer research, with a focus on drug discovery and pharmacology. She also teaches a molecular and cellular biology lab at USC. She recently presented at a conference in Barcelona, Spain and was awarded a departmental fellowship totaling over \$15,000, to support her dissertation research. She is on track to graduate in the Spring of 2016.

Janelle Shantae Bennett ('14) is a lead teacher at Little Thinkers Daycare

Raven Nicole Bennett ('14) is based in Atlanta, Georgia. Since graduation, she has been pursuing a career in public relations and earning her Master of Arts degree in Strategic Communication from American University. Currently, Raven is employed at MSL Group, a global public relations firm.

Andie Diemer ('10) is the senior associate photo editor at Martha Stewart Living + Martha Stewart Weddings, where she produces photo shoots for both magazines. She currently lives in Brooklyn, NY with her boyfriend and two kitties.

Eryn Gorang ('14) is serving as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant at Makupula High School in South Africa. Previously she worked at the University of Utah's Office of Public Affairs and at United Way of Alamance County.

Sarah Brady Harris ('14) is the President of Heart for People. She has also worked for America Reads and Save the Children. She is based in Baltimore.

Tyrice Andrew Johnson ('13) graduated with a degree in Public Administration. He is a sales consultant at Oracle

Brooke Kassner ('12) went on to pursue an M.A. in Global Affairs, Conflict & Security Analysis focusing on conflict mitigation and risk assessment. She now works for an International NGO that works with global media development in conflict / high-risk zones as the Security Coordinator. Her work in recent months has taken her to the Ukraine and South Sudan. In these places, she has helped to conduct trainings on journalist security in conflict zones and worked on security mitigation for journalists operating in rural areas and in Internally Displaced Persons camps. She is based in Washington, DC.

Daniel Koehler ('12) received one of a handful of inaugural Fulbright-National Geographic Digital Storytelling Fellowships to spend nine months in Botswana making a documentary film about cultural change among the San. Please join the journey by following his blog for National Geographic: <http://voices.nationalgeographic.com/author/dkoehler/>

Courtney Latta ('09) obtained her Master's in Public Health from UNC in the area of maternal and child health. She lives in the triangle and works for a Head Start program as a Health Nutrition Specialist.

Brittany Moore ('12) started a new job in December 2014 working with an international women's reproductive rights group in the triangle. She loves it so far and finds it so exciting to be able to use her degree and work in a field she truly cares about!

Jacob Henry Selzer ('13) works at ICM Partners, one of the world's largest talent and literary agencies

AAASE Seniors Win Prestigious Awards

Yasmine Arrington ('15) a double major in History and Strategic Communications and an Elon College Fellow received a Samuel Huntington Public Service Award to grow ScholarCHIPS, a nonprofit she founded to help the children of incarcerated parents pay for college.. The award comes with a \$15,000 stipend. Yasmine plans to use the award to recruit career-oriented adult mentors for ScholarCHIPS students, increase programming and outreach and secure additional financial commitments from individual donors and foundations.

Omolayo Ojo ('15) an international studies major and Honors Fellow, was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to teach English in France for one year. Ojo will work at Lycée Jacques Brel, a school with a considerable North African immigrant population in the town of La Courneuve just north of the French capital. Ojo's Honors and Lumen research at Elon focused on African immigrant communities.

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Mission Statement



AAASE

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.



Congratulations Graduating Seniors!

Seniors met over pizza, sodas, and snacks to discuss program assessment.

Pictured to the left are seniors Chris Mench, Yasmine Arrington and Omolayo Ojo. Ojo was recognized with AAASE's Outstanding Senior Award at the program's Senior Banquet on May 5, 2015.

The Coordinator's Corner

I am pleased to have had the opportunity to serve as Interim Coordinator for the 2014-15 year.

During this academic year our Author of the Month talks were video recorded and made available to the public through Elon's Learning On Demand: <http://blogs.elon.edu/ondemand/aaase-author-of-the-month/>

AAASE was approached by Latin American Studies, which hopes to enact its own Author of the Month speaker series based on ours, the program received funding from the University of Wisconsin's African Studies Center to support my travel to the Association of African Studies Programs conference in Washington DC and our students were recognized nationally for their accomplishments (see article on page 5).

Several students declared an AAASE minor, AAASE

alum Raven Bennett ('14) continued her relationship with AAASE post-graduation by maintaining the program's Facebook page, and AAASE received Dean's funds to create a new course on Black Men's Lives (see story on page 4).

In November, AAASE faculty, *Dr. Brian Digre* gave a talk on campus on the Ebola crisis in West Africa and worked with students across three groups to raise over \$800 to support Doctors without Borders' work to control the disease in the region. In response to the Ebola crisis he did not offer his usual January term Ghana abroad course in 2015, but worked with AAASE faculty *Dr. Mussa Idris* to create a new study abroad offering in Ethiopia and Tanzania.

Dr. Frances Ward-Johnson led a group of students to Selma (see story on page 2), AAASE faculty and staff



Dr. Heidi Frontani,
Interim AAASE Coordinator

engaged in assessment of our program with seniors, and I worked with the CREDE and our student worker on Black History Month assessment.

We also had AAASE faculty and an AAASE alum collaborate on a new blog called African Development Successes: africandevopmentsuccesses.wordpress.com, that went live in late October 2014. The blog led to my being invited to be a regular contributor to Africa.com in their Social Enterprise and Philanthropy section. My first post will appear in early June.

It has been a wonderful year.

-Heidi Frontani