

The Black Oaks Newsletter

Volume 2 Issue 1

Fall 2007

Special points of interest:

- Acclaimed writer and Virginia Tech professor visits Elon to perform *Elegy*
- The Campaign for Africa gains momentum across the Elon community.
- Anita Isaacs, AIDS Activist & women's advocate, returns to campus in fall 2007.
- Apply for a 2007 AAASE Course Development Grants .

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'Elegy': Reflections on Life After the Virginia Tech. Massacre



**VT Professor & Writer
Fred D'Aguiar**
Photo: © E Hamilton-West

On Monday, September 24th, 2007, AAASE will sponsor a visit by poet, novelist, and playwright Fred D'Aguiar, who will perform his tribute to the 33 members of the Hokie nation, who lost their lives in the Virginia Tech. tragedy. Co-director of the Creative Writing program in the Department of English at Virginia Tech, D'Aguiar taught the shooter Cho Seung-Hui, and sat anxiously in his office as

gunfire erupted around him on Monday, April 16, 2007.

In addition to publishing numerous novels, poems, and plays, his reading at Elon, "Elegy: Reflections on Life after Virginia Tech," is based on his long poem (dialogue mostly), provisionally titled *Elegy*. Portions have been broadcast on the BBC World Service Radio and R4 in the United Kingdom. Other parts are scheduled to appear in *Poetry Review* (UK) and other United States publications. The poem began as an elegy for the VT dead, but then branched out into an assessment of guns, murder, the nation and its global ambitions, and D'Aguiar's life as a writer, a black male, a middle-aged parent, and a Caribbean/British subject.

Born in London in 1960 to Guyanese parents., he lived in

Guyana until he was 12, returning to England in 1972. D'Aguiar trained as a psychiatric nurse before reading African and Caribbean Studies at the University of Kent, Canterbury, graduating in 1985. D'Aguiar has held teaching appointments at Cambridge University, Amherst College, Bates College, and the University of Miami. His literary accomplishments have been and continue to be celebrated. From the publication of his first collection of poetry in 1985, *Mama Dot*, to his fourth novel *Bethany, Bethany* (2003), and his many works in between, D'Aguiar has won numerous awards, firmly solidifying his reputation as one of the finest poets and writers of his generation.

A Q & A session, along with a book signing will follow the reading/lecture in Yeager Recital Hall at 5:00 p.m. The event is open and free to the public & the Elon University community.

Join The Campaign for Africa

Across Elon's campus, individuals and groups are engaged in service projects, research, and initiatives in which Africa is the focus. In addition to the three initiatives profiled inside this issue, several other programs are underway. Periclean scholars are working to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS in Namibia and to raise awareness about

landmines in Angola. Elon's Ghana study abroad program has joined with Heifer International to launch sustainable development projects in various Ghanaian communities, and the Call of South Africa study abroad expanded its work with the Christine Revell Children's Home and other community organizations in South Africa.

Several Elon University students are opting to study abroad for extended periods and to volunteer at orphanages and other institutions in Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, and other locales. To learn more about these and other projects, visit The Campaign for Africa at www.elon.edu/aaase.



The Omicron Iota Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Returns to Elon

Elon Welcomes Back Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Following a five-year absence from Elon's campus, twenty-six women were initiated in April 2007 to Elon University's Omicron Iota chapter of Delta Sigma Theta, Inc. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority was founded on January 13, 1913 by twenty-two collegiate women at Howard University with the purpose of promoting academic excellence and public service. The first public act performed by the Delta Founders involved their participation in the Women's Suffrage March in Washington D.C., March 1913.

The Omicron Iota chapter of Delta Sigma Theta was chartered at Elon College on May 9, 1981 as the first historically African-American Greek letter organization. The women of the Omicron Iota chapter of Delta Sigma Theta brought several other firsts to Elon. In 1992, Delta Sigma Theta was the first historically African-American chapter to receive the Sorority of the Year Award, and, Mary Carroll Williamson, one of the Delta Sigma Theta charter members, was Elon's first African-American

Homecoming Queen.

The chapter will host programs throughout the year that are in line with Delta's national Five Point Thrust: economic development, educational development, physical and mental health, international awareness and involvement and political awareness and involvement. Members of Omicron Iota chapter of Delta Sigma Theta, Inc. will erect a monument in the NPHC gardens in time for Homecoming 2007. To learn more, contact sreid@elon.edu



The Adopt-A-Student Program Supports The Ekukhanyisweni Primary School in Alexandra, South Africa.

Pledge Your Support for The Adopt-A-Student Program

The Call of South Africa Adopt-A-Student Program is one of several service projects that form a part of Elon University's study abroad course now in its second year. The program pairs a child at the Ekukhanyisweni Primary School in Alexandra, South Africa, with a sponsor in the United States who agrees to help fund a child's education for one year. Although the new facility opened in January 2007, the

twenty-five teachers there do their best to work amidst the severe overcrowding in their classrooms, with each often serving more than forty students. As one can imagine, resources are strained and it is a challenge to meet the overwhelming needs of the more than 1000 students who call the school home and truly make this a "place of light."

Each pledge will be used to

support the education of a deserving student. It takes US \$40 to help send a child to the Ekukhanyisweni Primary School for one whole year! That's approximately Rand 280. The price includes the R100 school fees for the year, the school sports uniform (t-shirt, jeans, and white sneakers) of R40, school supplies and a regular school uniform. Visit www.elon.edu/aaase for more details or send your pledge to



***Charles Irons
Assistant Professor
History***

Dr. Charles Irons Bridges A Gap in Slavery's History

Federal census takers in the nineteenth century walked from door to door once every ten years, carefully recording the inhabitants of every town and hamlet. Before emancipation in 1865, they kept two separate lists, one for free and one for enslaved inhabitants. In a particularly clear example of slavery's inhumanity, these census takers treated enslaved persons just as they did cattle or horses. They recorded their age, skin color, and the

name of their "owner"—but they did not even record bondmen's names. As a part of a larger project on the history of Alamance County in the Civil War era for which he received a CATL Scholars Grant, assistant professor of history Charles Irons is trying to recover lost details about the lives of enslaved men and women in the area surrounding Elon University. Students in his course on North American slavery tried to work back-

wards from the Census of 1870 to identify persons enslaved in 1860. For example, a woman who appeared in 1870 as Matilda Sellars, a 50-year old black domestic servant, was probably the unnamed 40-year old black female slave of Thomas Sellars in 1860. "Many of our matches at this point are very speculative," Irons explained, "but we're all learning a great deal by trying to put these pieces together." Email ciron@elon.edu for more info

AAASE Minor Katie Meyer Fights for Uganda's Children



In 2006-2007, she was only a first-year student, but that did not temper Katie Meyer's desire to impact the Elon University community. She set about

chartering Elon's chapter of Invisible Children, a global humanitarian organization working to bring aid to the communities of Northern Uganda and to spread awareness within the United States about the violent 20-year-long civil war that has plagued Northern Uganda. The organization has the dual objective of creating lasting change in both Northern Uganda and in American youth culture. The organization believes that tragedies like that of Northern Uganda are not simply issues of African injustice but of Ameri-

can indifference as well.

This organization is very much geared towards empowering the youth. On April 28th, 2007, 36 Elon students joined hundreds of others from across the nation, in Washington, DC as part of several "Displace Me" events "designed to put pressure on Congress and the UN to act!" For more information and to become involved in the Elon chapter of Invisible Children, contact Katie Meyer at kmeyer3@elon.edu or visit www.invisiblechildren.com



Elon Students & Faculty at the Displace Me event in Washington, DC

AAASE Joins the Elon University End-Slavery-Now Coalition

The End-Slavery-Now Coalition was formed in 2007 to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the end of the Transatlantic slave trade. Recognizing, however, that human trafficking remains a vibrant industry throughout the world, the Coalition expanded its focus to examine the many dimensions of slavery and its lingering effects. The Coalition organizes various campus groups and individuals committed to furthering discussion,

promoting understanding, gathering resources, raising awareness, bringing media and experts to campus, and supporting action to end global slavery. Over the next 18 months, the group will (co)sponsor and coordinate campus-wide efforts to streamline anti-slavery resources available for use by the Elon University community. Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to support the Coalition by considering how to incorporate the issue into

their daily and long-term activities. Coalition members represent: Amnesty International, General Studies, African/African-American Studies, Cultural Programs, the Multicultural Center, the Kernodle Center for Service Learning, Non-Violence Studies, Philosophy, Religious Studies, Student Activities, and the Truitt Center for Religious Life.

For more information, contact Jeff Stein at jsein@elon.edu



*"27 million
slaves exist today
across the globe;
80% are female.
50% are
children."*

Elon's 2010 Periclean Class's Kpoeta Campaign in Ghana

During the 2006-07 academic year, Elon hosted Fulbright Scholar Dr. Francis Amedahe of Ghana, a Professor of Education from Kpoeta, a cluster of three small villages and several hamlets near the Ghana-Togo border. Kpoeta is located seven miles from a small health clinic, but for much of the year the unpaved road between Kpoeta and the clinic becomes impassible and people literally carry the injured and sick for miles on a chair or stretcher

for the entire distance when no vehicles are available. The results are often tragic with many dying before they reach a health facility. Having their own clinic will provide for villagers' health needs year round. Ghana's Government has promised Kpoeta a government-paid nurse if the village constructs the five-room building. Approximately \$10,000 needs to be raised for construction and another \$3,000 will be needed for furniture

and basic medical supplies. The people of Kpoeta will provide the labor and have already built a foundation for the health center using their own resources. To help, please make checks out to Elon University, Periclean Scholars, Class of 2010, c/o Heidi G. Frontani, Elon University, Campus Box 2335, Elon, NC 27244. Write Kpoeta Campaign in the memo portion of your check. For more info phone (336) 278-6462 or email glac@elon.edu



The Dirt Road leading from Kpoeta, Ghana

A Profile in Courage: Anita Iyambo Isaacs Tells Her Story



For two weeks beginning in late November through December, for a second time, the Elon community will welcome AIDS activist and women's advocate, Anita Isaacs, Regional Coordinator of the YMCA in Namibia, Africa. Isaacs is also the regional director of Lironga Eparu, an organization that helps people "live positively" with their HIV status." In 2006, Isaacs' story was told in You Wake Me Up, the third of a four-part documentary series created by the Project Pericles class of 2006. She learnt in 1999 that she was HIV-positive when she became seriously ill. Her husband left her, but her five children stood by her and gave her the courage to fight the disease. On November 30th, 2002, Isaacs went public about her HIV status. Her visit to Elon later in the fall semester will mark the fifth anniversary of that decision, one that has brought her international recognition, including the "Women Leading Change" Award from the YWCA for her work to support women's rights and freedoms at every level and to battle the discrimination and stigmas that HIV & AIDS-infected persons face. Following is an excerpt of the acceptance speech Isaacs delivered at the International Women's Summit, Opening Ceremony on July 5th, 2007 where she was presented with the award. No introduction does her justice, so read her story in her own words . . .

My name is Anita Isaacs. I am far from the rural areas in the northern part of Namibia. I've been living with HIV and AIDS for 15 years now. I struggle with AIDS related illnesses for four years before and have been on ARV's for five years now. After facing stigma and discrimination and going through a violent relationship, I was left with no option but to declare my HIV status public in order to liberate myself and other women in my community.

With the assistance from the regional governor, who provided me with an office, I formed a support group of people living with HIV and AIDS in my region. Those groups grow in numbers. At this moment, there is more than 51 support groups in four regions in Namibia. At first, we thought that we could fight stigma alone. But realized that stigma was not the only challenge facing us. We also needed financial support, food, shelter for some of our members, better treatment and care, and we needed to stop the worst of it all, which was violence in our homes, in our family. Alcohol, drugs in our cultural background was one of the contributing factors.

I realized that the way I was treated was a calling, to save and help others. I therefore decided to resign from my government job and join the dynamic team of the YWCA of Namibia, as a coordinator on the project on violence against women and children and at the same time, I continue to work with my support groups.

Our projects aim was to create a training center on violence and HIV and AIDS, and to create awareness on violence and HIV. The Namibian government has put in place laws that protect women, such as the Combating Rape Act that was passed in 2000, and the combating Domestic Violence Act, which was passed in 2003.

But these laws are non-existent to us who are women. As a result, women suffer in silence. We at the YWCA sensitize women, men and children on these laws with the assistance from our partners. We have a [inaudible] system with our partners, and work closely with policy makers, who in return listen to us and respond to our calls when in need.

Our way has been easy with the assistance from our government. Working with government has brought mutual respect and understanding [inaudible] a severe society in government. It is therefore vital that government work with us, because we are the people on the ground; we feel the pain, and we are in the situation before they implement laws that don't work for women and girls. It is only [through] this partnership that true change can happen.

Last, but not least, I'm calling upon women of the world, especially African women, to stand up and fight against violence and the spread of HIV and AIDS. Let us not be bound by our cultures, which can be changed, but only we have the power to change our lives and our cultures.

Further details on Isaacs' Elon visit, which is being coordinated by Project Pericles, will be available later in the semester; contact Dr. Tom Arcaro at arcaro@elon.edu, call (336) 278-6442, or visit the Project Pericles website at http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/special_programs/project_pericles. For more information on how you help join the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa, please visit "The Campaign for Africa" on the AAASE website.



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Call for Proposals 2007

Guidelines & Instructions

The African/African-American Studies program invites proposals from all full-time faculty for new courses that focus on African, African-American, or Caribbean experiences from specific disciplinary perspectives. Priority consideration will be given to courses emerging from schools, departments, and programs not traditionally represented in African/African-American Studies here at Elon. Faculty in the Schools of Business and Communications, and those in Fine Arts, Philosophy, Foreign Languages, Religious Studies, Human Services, Psychology, and the sciences are especially encouraged to apply. However, all proposals will be considered and evaluated by the selection committee.

***Successful applications will:**

- include a description of the course, the course objectives, a discussion of the kinds of students who would benefit from the course, and suggest a timeline for teaching the course during the next two academic years, 2008-2010;
- demonstrate how the proposed course relates to the faculty member's scholarly, pedagogical, and or research interests
- follow the Committee's directions and suggestions; and
- bear evidence of careful editing and preparation;
- *If this information is known, applicants may suggest other Elon faculty members in the same program, department, or discipline, who are qualified to teach the course.

In submitting the application, faculty must commit to teaching the course for two consecutive years, with the approval of their department chair and the dean of their school, and must participate in a series of four course development workshops sponsored by the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning and the African/African-American Studies program. The successful applicants will be awarded a stipend of \$1000 each at the end of Spring 2008 for successfully developing the course and fulfilling the requirements of the award.

The deadline for proposals is 5:00 p.m. on Friday, December 7th, 2007. Please submit one original, hard-copy of the application and accompanying materials to the AAASE Program Coordinator, Dr. Prudence Layne, 2338 Campus Box, or deliver to Alamanace 305D. Notifications will be made by Friday, December 21st, 2007.

Conditions of Eligibility

Faculty must be full-time in order to meet the two-year teaching commitment.

To learn more about the African/African-American Studies Course Development Initiative, to download and application, and to see descriptions of previous grant recipients, please visit the program website at www.elon.edu/aaase.

African/African-American Studies at Elon University — Mission Statement

African/African American
Studies
Elon University
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The mission of the program is to provide imaginative and productive spaces that foster excellence, nurture the scholarly and cultural pursuits of our students and faculty, bring global exposure to the program, and expose a wider cross-section of the Elon University community to the histories, societies, politics, languages, cultures, and economies of Black people within the United States, Africa, and throughout the world. In addition to its principle aim of stimulating teaching, research, scholarship, and service, the program will also serve as a national and international forum for individuals and organizations with an interest in and concern for Blacks at home and abroad.

Visit our website:
www.elon.edu/aaase



The Coordinator's Corner

If anyone asked me to sum up my first year as the program coordinator, "AAASE Continues to Gain Momentum!", would be the headline on the marquis. As one faculty member stated, "The program seemed to go from zero to sixty in five seconds flat." I don't particularly follow NASCAR, but the analogy seems particularly appropriate. Now, however, is not the time to slam on the brakes. This year we have shifted into a new gear, building on last year's progress by harnessing the energy and talents of Elon's amazing students, whose growing interests and commitment to Africa and in learning about her diaspora fuels our commitment to seeing African/African-American Studies become one of the strongest and best aca-

demic and cultural programs Elon has to offer.

As part of our mission to become "a national and international forum for individuals and organizations with an interest in and concern for Blacks at home and abroad," *The Black Oaks E-Journal* promises to deliver on this promise by showcasing the scholarship of undergraduates in the United States and around the globe. Now in its infancy, the journal will be largely student-run, -driven, and -focused. As several of the articles in this edition of our newsletter suggest, Elon students and faculty are engaged in exciting projects. We are also planning for World AIDS Day on December 1st, and collaborating with local, national, and international groups on other projects.

Finally, we prepare to celebrate our students' achievements next spring as we bid farewell to more than 20 of our minors, the largest graduating class in our program's history. We are all confident in the knowledge that the program has prepared them well in articulating some of the issues, challenges, and the contributions Blacks have made to the world. All these and many more projects are underway. Hold on to your seats folks; it's going to be an exciting ride!



**AAASE Program
Coordinator
Dr. Prudence Layne**