SANKOFA GRADUATE STUDENT UNION PROUDLY PRESENTS...

VOICES FROM THE VINEYARD

BLACK STRUGGLE AND THE FOUNDING OF AFRICAN AMERICAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

AN INTERVIEW AND DIALOGUE SERIES WITH THE FOUNDERS OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES (AAAS) PROGRAM AT MSU

FALL 2016- SPRING 2017
On behalf of the Sankofa Graduate Student Union, I would like to welcome you to "Voices From The Vineyard: Black Struggle and the Founding of African American and African Studies at Michigan State University." This four-part event is an intimate, inter-generational interview and dialogue series with the founders of the African American and African Studies (AAAS) Program. Given the resurgence of Black activism on and off college campuses, we have organized this series to revisit the origins of the Black Studies Movement in the United States and the institutionalization of the discipline at Michigan State University (MSU).

Our theme for the 2016-2017 school year is "The Art of Revolution: Commemorating 50 Years of Black Power." During the summer of 1966 in Greenwood, Mississippi, the newly-elected Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Stokely Carmichael (aka Kwame Ture) delivered his famous speech defining Black power as “a call to Black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community. It is a call to reject the racist institutions and values of this society.” A year later, Detroit was the site of the nation’s most explosive rebellion. At the time, Detroit was a burgeoning hotbed for radical Black activism; and, as Melba Boyd, Chair of the Department of Black Studies at Wayne State University makes clear, “the 1967 Detroit Rebellion was not a riot. A riot is a form of mob violence. A rebellion, on the other hand, is a revolt against tyranny. A rebellion is a defensive response to oppressive circumstances and/or persons committing or enforcing unjust acts or conditions in order to maintain inhumane and undemocratic conditions." Thus, the Detroit Rebellion was a significant moment in the City’s Black political history and struggle for Black Power throughout the United States.

By celebrating and critically reflecting on these events, this series examines how Black Power and Black struggle have shaped the calls for Black Studies in the Academy. We have invited Drs. Curtis Stokes, Geneva Smitherman, Bill E. Lawson, and Darlene Clark Hine to share their experiences in the Black Studies Movement and their role in establishing AAAS at MSU. They will also discuss the current state of the Black Studies discipline and its relevance today. Together, these founders have been directly involved in the development of Black Studies programs in at least five different universities nationally (including Harvard University, Columbia University, and Northwestern University) and were influential in the creation of the Midwest Consortium for Black Studies. Finally, the invaluable wisdom of the Program’s founders will provide insights useful for contemporary Black struggles across the nation, especially for Black students and Black Studies scholars.

Thank you for attending Voices From The Vineyard, and I sincerely hope that you enjoy the series.

AJ Rice
President of Sankofa Graduate Student Union
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FALL 2016 - SPRING 2017

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN & AFRICAN STUDIES (AAAS) AT MICHIGAN STATE

In the Fall Semester, 1997, Dr. Dorothy Harper-Jones (now Emerita Professor, Social Work) convened a breakfast meeting with then Provost-Lou Anna K. Simon and Drs. Gloria Randle (English), Geneva Smitherman (English), and Denise Troutman (American Thought and Language [now Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures/WRAC]). Dr. Harper-Jones had pledged to spend her consultancy year addressing an agonizing concern, expressed at the beginning of that meeting, as “Where have all our Black programs gone? There’s almost nothing left for Black students these days.” All agreed with her, and Provost Simon pledged her support for whatever endeavors these four scholars might work out. The idea of a Black/Africana/African American Studies program was at the top of their list. At that point, MSU was the only institution in the Big Ten without an African American Studies program.

Unbeknownst to that group of women scholars, another African American Studies group began forming toward the end of the academic year. Dr. Curtis Stokes returned to MSU after having spent two years as Assistant Director of African American Studies under Dr. Manning Marable, at Columbia University. Dr. Stokes was energized about the possibility of starting African American Studies at MSU and began discussing his idea with several MSU colleagues. He learned about the Harper-Jones group in separate conversations with Provost Simon and Dr. Smitherman. Thus in the Fall, 1998, the two groups merged, and Dr. Stokes invited Drs. Darlene Clark Hine (History), Bill E. Lawson (Philosophy) and Harriette P. McAdoo (Family and Child Ecology) to join the group. Under the leadership of Dr. Stokes, the group began the collective struggle and planning for a program in African American Studies.

When the group was ready to present their undergraduate African American Studies program to Provost Simon, Dr. Stokes arranged a meeting and selected four of his colleagues to accompany him. The great historian, Dr. Darlene Clark Hine, has eloquently recreated that historical moment:

….A group of African American faculty met with Lou Anna Simon to pitch a carefully orchestrated, well-rehearsed proposal for the creation of a bachelor’s degree program in African American Studies. She listened attentively, asked good questions, and gave every indication that the meeting was progressing well. At the end of our presentation, Provost Simon looked around the table and said, “You have set your aspirations too low. You should be asking for support to establish a Ph.D. degree program in African American Studies. Let’s have another meeting when you have that proposal ready.” We were stunned.
Provost Simon continued urging us to assess who we were, to look at ourselves and articulate the full depth of our dreams and desires. She said, here we have Darlene Clark Hine, John A. Hannah Professor of History, Geneva Smitherman, University Distinguished Professor in English, Distinguished Professor Harriette P. McAdoo in Family and Child Ecology, Bill Lawson, Professor of Philosophy, and our Chair, Associate Professor in James Madison College, Curtis Stokes who remains the coordinator of the great series of Race in the 21st Century conferences. Collectively, we had published over forty books. Simon declared, “You are among the best scholars in the academy fully prepared to train the next generation of scholars in this area.”

Now that is leadership!...My colleagues and I left the meeting inspired and affirmed.

(Excerpted from “Women in Higher Education Administration,” delivered by Dr. Darlene Clark Hine, at the inauguration of Dr. Lou Anna K. Simon as the twentieth president of Michigan State University, on February 11, 2005)

Moved by Simon’s bold challenge, the planning group expanded and began crafting the plan for a doctorate in African American and African Studies. Members of this now-larger planning group (continuing under Dr. Stokes's leadership), were Drs. Steven Gold (Sociology), Kenneth Harrow (English), Darlene Clark Hine, Dorothy Harper-Jones, Bill E. Lawson, Harriette P. McAdoo, Gloria Randle, Gloria Stephens Smith (Educational Psychology), Geneva Smitherman, Carl Taylor (Family and Child Ecology), and Denise Troutman. (In 1999, Dr. Randle was stricken with a debilitating illness and left MSU on disability. Dr. Harper-Jones retired.)

In the Fall Semester, 2002, the doctoral program in African American and African Studies (which has come to be known as AAAS) was established, with Dr. Curtis Stokes as Founding Director. Subsequent AAAS leadership was provided by Dr. Gloria Smith (formerly Director of Urban Education, MSU College of Education); Dr. John McClendon (former African American Studies Program Director, Bates College); Dr. Geneva Smitherman (former Center for Black Studies Director and Associate Dean of Liberal Arts, Wayne State University); Dr. Rita Kiki Edozie (former Deputy Director of African Studies, Columbia University and Director of the Career Training Center, Middlesex College, New Jersey); Dr. Glenn Chambers (Current Director of AAAS).
Dr. Curtis Stokes served as the founding director of the African American and African Studies Program from 2002-2005, and is the founder of the Race in the 21st Century Conference series, which has continued at Michigan State University for over 15 years. His research and teaching areas are Black politics in the United States and Michigan, as well as Marxist and radical political thought. Working with Dr. Manning Marable, Dr. Stokes served as the Assistant Director of the Institute for Research in African-American Studies at Columbia University from 1995-1997. His publication record spans almost half a century, targeting a diverse array of audiences, writing for scholarly journals, newspapers, and publishing a series of review essays and six books, including *The Evolution of Trotsky’s Theory of Revolution* (1982), *The State of Black Michigan*, 1967-2007 (with Drs. Joe T. Darden and Richard W. Thomas, 2007), *Race and Human Rights* (2009) and most recently the award-winning *Malcolm X’s Michigan Worldview: An Exemplar for Contemporary Black Studies* (with Dr. Rita Kiki Edozie, 2015). Dr. Stokes has been the recipient of numerous awards, serving as CoDirector of a Ford Foundation Grant, and receiving two MSU AllUniversity Excellence in Diversity Awards in 1992 and 2001, as well as a State of Michigan Teaching Excellence Award in 1991.
Dr. Geneva Smitherman is a pioneering scholar-activist in Black Studies and Sociolinguistics. She received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees with concentrations in English and Latin from Wayne State University (1960; 1962) and her Ph.D. in English from the University of Michigan (1969). She began her academic career as a nineteen-year-old high school teacher of English and Latin in the Detroit Public Schools (DPS). Dr. Smitherman was a member of the first faculty in “Afro-American Studies” at Harvard University, and she helped found Black Studies programs at Wayne State University and Michigan State University. Affectionately known by her students as “Dr. G,” she has received several awards for her Sociolinguistics research, which challenges myths about African American Language and advocates language rights of all marginalized communities. She came to MSU as a professor of English in 1989 after Black student activists demanded more Black faculty on campus. In 1990, Dr. G founded “My Brother’s Keeper,” a male mentoring program in partnership with DPS’s Malcolm X Academy. She has authored and edited or co-edited 15 books and monographs and over 100 articles, essays, and published opinion pieces. Her latest book is Articulate While Black: Barack Obama, Language and Race in the U.S. (with Dr. H. S. Alim).

303 INTERNATIONAL CENTER
7:00PM
Dr. Bill E. Lawson has a long and distinguished career in Black Studies and Philosophy. A U.S. Army veteran, who served from 1967-1969 in the Vietnam War, Dr. Lawson's research has focused on the limits of American democracy, making significant contributions to the fields of African American philosophy and social and political philosophy. Dr. Lawson received his bachelor’s degree in Philosophy from the University of North Carolina (UNC)-Chapel Hill in 1975. He would continue at UNC-Chapel Hill to complete his master’s and Ph.D. degrees in Philosophy in 1977 and 1981, respectively. Dr. Lawson is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Alain Locke Excellence Award, the Richard Wilson African American Administrator Award, and the Outstanding Faculty Award from MSU’s Black Student Alliance in 1999. He has taught at Spelman College, Montclair State College, West Virginia University, Macalester College, University of Delaware, Michigan State University, and most recently the University of Memphis. He has edited, co-edited, or authored six books and over 50 articles, essays, and other publications. From 2011-2012, Dr. Lawson was a Fulbright Fellow at the University of Liverpool in the United Kingdom, and was asked to testify before a U.S. Congressional Subcommittee on the issue of Welfare Reform. Dr. Lawson retired in 2016.

303 INTERNATIONAL CENTER
7:00PM
FRIDAY, MARCH 3, 2017: DR. DARLENE CLARK HINE
VISITING HANNAH DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF HISTORY

Dr. Darlene Clark Hine is an internationally-renowned American historian, who has recently rejoined Michigan State University as a Visiting Hannah Distinguished Professor in the Department of History. Dr. Hine served as Hannah Distinguished Professor of American History at MSU from 1987 to 2004, during which time she helped to establish the African American and African Studies Program and the Comparative Black History Program. From 2004 to 2016, Dr. Hine was the Board of Trustees Professor of African American Studies and Professor of History at Northwestern University, where she helped launch the Department of African American Studies’ Ph.D. Program in 2006. In addition to her time at Northwestern University and Michigan State University, Dr. Hine was also active in the development of Black Studies at Purdue University and South Carolina State College. She has a long and impressive list of awards, including the 2013 National Humanities Medal presented to her by President Barack Obama, and she is a leading voice in the study of the African American experience as well as a trailblazer in the field of Black women’s history. Dr. Hine served as the President of the Organization of American Historians (OAH) from 2001-2002, and President of the Southern Historical Association (SHA) from 2002-2003. She is the author, editor, or co-editor of 25 books, and she has published over 80 book chapters, articles, monographs, and other works.

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- sankofamsu.wordpress.com
- @msusankofa

The Sankofa Graduate Student Union is an organization comprised of African American and African Studies (AAAS) graduate and undergraduate students. It serves as a conduit for leadership, academic excellence, and social activism for students in the AAAS Program at Michigan State University as well as the Black community more broadly.