



Introduction to the Inaugural Issue: Africana Studies at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions

In the whole history of higher education in the United States, there is nothing to equal the dramatic emergence of Black Studies.

~Robert H. Brisbane

From Armstead L. Robinson's *Black Studies in the University: A Symposium* to Delores Aldridge's, *Out of the Revolution: The Development of Africana Studies*, scholars have undoubtedly documented the histories of Africana Studies (Black Studies/African American Studies/ African Diaspora Studies) units, curricula, student activism, and public discourse. These academic conversations about the discipline have helped define disciplinary boundaries, methods, methodologies, pedagogies, theories, philosophies, and approaches. However, much of this work has centered on historically white colleges and universities (HWCUs) with significantly less research on the discipline of Africana Studies at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), predominantly Black institutions (BPIs)¹, Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), emerging Hispanic serving institutions (eHSIs), and Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs). Jelani M. Favors' *Shelter in a Time of Storm: How Black Colleges Fostered Generations of Leadership and Activism*, Martha Biondi's *Black Revolution on Campus*, Joshua Myers' *We Are Worth Fighting For: A History of the Howard University Student Protest of 1989*, and Abdul Alkalimat's *The History of Black Studies* are exceptions and brilliant contributions to this neglected narrative. Collectively, their work demonstrates that Africana Studies at Howard University,

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South Carolina State University, Claflin University, Morehouse College, Baruch College, and California State University, Northridge, for example, also have radical institutional histories, transformative curricula, and dynamic students and faculty that remain understudied. These spaces offer unique institutional histories of the discipline often forcing scholars to shift temporal boundaries to include a more diverse set of historical actors.

The origins of Africana Studies as an academic discipline must be centered within the HBCU intellectual tradition. This tradition begins prior to the 1960s Black Power era and what Ibram X. Kendi discusses as the Black Campus Movement.² This momentum set in motion the demand for, and creation of, departments, programs, and centers at HWCUs and HBCUs. But this social justice mission has always been central to many faculty and students at HBCUs prior to the 1960s.³ Indeed, most historically Black colleges and universities were established after Reconstruction, during the onset of the twentieth century, and mostly in the southern states. The initial purpose of these intuitions was to provide primary and secondary education for Africans in America as they grappled with defining what it meant to reside in an industrializing, segregated, violent, and racist nation. Eventually becoming institutions for higher education, HBCUs were spaces of radical education that sought to transform the social and economic conditions of Africana people who were subject to cultural, physical, and spiritual terrorism.

Scholars have well documented the innumerable contributions of intellectual activists who taught at HBCUs and whose scholarship sought to transform the life chances of Africana people during the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth century. The intellectual labor of Howard University faculty, Alexander Crummell and Carter G. Woodson; Atlanta University professor, W.E.B. Du Bois; St. Augustine College professor, Anna Julia Cooper; and Lincoln University's Horace Mann Bond, to name just a few of our ancestors, are indeed exemplars.⁴ Their objectives for producing scholarship and teaching would, therefore, set the template for what would become the social justice mission for HBCU students, and many faculty, who were reinvigorated during the Civil Rights and Black Power eras. These students fought to bring about the radicalization of their HBCU campuses, and the creation of Africana Studies units at these institutions. Therefore, the purpose of this inaugural issue is to document the complex origins, histories, developments, transformations, faculty, curricula, funding, and futures of Africana Studies departments,

programs, centers, and other units at HBCUs, PBIs, eHSIs, HSIs, and other institutions serving marginalized communities.

This issue begins with new discussions about the origins, institutionalization, and radical developments of Africana Studies. Discipline architect, Abdul Alkalimat, provides a compelling narrative about his foundational role in the creation of the Peoples College at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, while a young faculty member at the institution, during the Black Power era. Influenced by the community-centered objectives of sociologist Charles Johnson's Peoples College, created at Fisk University in 1937, Alkalimat's Peoples College was more than just an academic research and publishing community for Fisk students interested in developing Africana Studies courses on campus. It was an educational resource for Nashville's Africana communities, and a social justice organization that was instrumental in creating coalitions among Nashville students and community organizers to support workers' unionization efforts, challenge police brutality, and support African liberation struggles on the continent. This article recounts the history of what can be considered the original mission of the discipline of Africana Studies.

Documenting the origins and institutionalization of Africana Studies at Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) is essential for understanding the discipline in the twenty-first century because of the changing student demographics at certain HWCUs. Many of the first Africana Studies units in the nation emerged on campuses that were once HWCUs but are now HSIs. This is especially the case for many institutions in California. Aimee Glocke and James Henry's "Black Studies in Brown Spaces: The Benefits and Challenges of Teaching Black Studies at a Hispanic Serving Institution in Southern California," is a case study describing the origin of Africana Studies at California State University, Northridge (CSUN). Glocke and James begin by defining the origins of HSIs and emerging Hispanic serving institutions in California, unpacking the unique student demographics within the California State University system, and revealing how changing student demographics at CSUN continue to shape the significance of the discipline. Using autoethnographic methods, the authors conclude with an exploration of the fundamental question: what are the experiences of faculty who teach Africana Studies at a Hispanic serving institution?

In "An Alumna's Work: The Women's Research and Resource Center and Africana Studies at Spelman College," Stefanie M. Schuster documents Beverly Guy-Sheftall's pioneering establishment of Africana (Women's) Studies at Spelman College in Atlanta,

Georgia. Referencing an abundance of archival materials, Schuster explains Guy-Sheftall's role in the creation of the Women's Research and Resource Center (WRRC) at Spelman in 1981, the first of its kind established at an HBCU. Guy-Sheftall's WRRC, since its inception, has offered a curriculum centered on the experiences of Africana girls and women, which reflects the student demographics at this liberal arts HBCU for women, and challenges the college's curricula that is often exclusionary. This research is significant, according to Schuster, because the work of the WRRC validates the role of Africana/Black Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies as a necessary development in the discipline of Africana Studies.

Kimberly F. Monroe and Joshua K. Wright, in "Black Mood: The Emergence of Africana Studies at Trinity Washington University," describe the long struggle to bring about an Africana Studies program to this all women's institution. Founded as a catholic HWCU in Washington, D.C., Trinity University is an example of a university that becomes not only a HSI, but a predominantly Black institution. This shift in demographics is gradual, but African/Black students who are enrolled at the institution during the Black Power era used the student newspaper to call for a relevant education and the creation of Africana Studies. However, the fruition of these efforts is fully realized when Monroe and Wright establish the minor in the discipline over fifty years later. This institutional report captures this decades long struggle.

"(Re)establishing the Bachelor of Science Degree in Africana Studies at Tennessee State University" is the second institutional report. The authors, Andrea Ringer and Sekhmet Maat, place the complex remerging of the Africana Studies undergraduate major at Tennessee State University within the context of faculty's consistent engagement with student's educational needs. While the reformulation of the bachelor's degree was initiated by the current university administration, Africana Studies faculty and students have already been *doing* the work of the discipline on campus; within local communities; internationally; through minor course offerings; campus programming; and study abroad initiatives. This report highlights these activities and the restructuring of the major at one of the only HBCUs that, at one time, was home to a free standing and autonomous degree granting department of Africana Studies.

To close out the issue, *Siyabonana* has included several interviews and book reviews. Included within this issue is an inspiring interview with African-centered scholar, Mario Beatty, where he discusses his motivations for dedicating his life to teaching Africana

Studies at historically Black institutions. In doing so, Beatty concludes with a proposal for the future of Africana Studies at HBCUs. The second interview is with Karin Stanford who has written about Africana political thought for decades while teaching in the Department of Africana Studies at CSUN since 2003. Within her interview, Stanford describes her training at Howard University; her experiences as an Africana woman teaching in the discipline at a HSI; the political context of her ascendancy to leadership; and the challenges of laboring in the California State University system. In Robert Greene's review, he eloquently describes the significance of Joshu Myers, *We Are Worth Fighting For: A History of the Howard University Student Protest of 1989*, while Jimmy Butts provides a compassionate assessment of Abdul Alkalimat's *The History of Black Studies* where he intentionally highlights the robust intellectual tradition at HBCUs as the foundation for what becomes the discipline in the future.

We hope this edition sufficiently illuminates and documents the historical development of Africana Studies departments, programs, centers, and other units at HBCUs, BPIs, eHSIs, and HSIs within the academy, consequently disrupting the dissemination of inaccurate interpretations that distort its history and undermine its purpose. The scholars who contributed to this edition provide documentation, analysis, and interpretation that surpass past misrepresentations of the discipline. We know that more authoritative and comprehensive histories of Black Studies departments are lacking. This edition ascribes to help close this deficiency and encourage further research in this area.

Medase!

Co-Editors

Notes

¹There is a distinction between HBCUs and PBIs. The former, according to the U.S. Department of Education, are institutions established before the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The original goal of these institutions was to educate Africana people as mentioned supra. However, an institution that is designated a PBI has an enrollment of at least forty percent Africana students and half the student population must be low income or first-generation college students. While HBCUs and PBIs currently serve similar communities, for most PBIs, high enrollment of Africana students began after 1964 and/or the education of Africana people might not have been central to the original mission and purpose of these institutions; “What is an HBCU?,” White House Initiative on Advancing Education Equity, Excellent, and Economic Opportunity through Historically Black College and Universities, U.S. Department of Education, last modified June 10, 2022, <https://sites.ed.gov/whhbcu/2022-hbcu-scholar-cohort/>.

² Ibram H. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstruction of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

³ Jelani M. Favors, *Shelter in a Time of Storm: How Black Colleges Fostered Generations of Leadership and Activism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

⁴ “Studies of Black Families,” Finding a Way: The Black Family’s Struggle for Education at the Atlanta University Center, <https://digitalexhibits.auctr.edu/exhibits/show/finding-a-way/studies-of-black-families> (accessed November 2, 2020); W E Burghardt Du Bois, “Strivings of the Negro People,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, August 1897, 194; Pero Gaglo Dagbovie, “Making Black History Practical and Popular: Carter G. Woodson, the Proto Black Studies Movement and the Struggle for Black Liberation,” *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 27, no. 4 (2003): 378-381.