
Introduction to the Special Issue: Africana Studies in the 21st Century and Beyond

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To introduce this Special Issue on “Africana Studies at the Graduate Level: A 21st Century Perspective” is both rewarding and daunting. It is rewarding in the sense that I am very much aware of the importance and significance of this area of knowledge; and to interact with my co-editor, Dr. Stephanie Y. Evans, faculty, and Africana Studies graduates who share a genuine passion for the subject matter can only improve one’s knowledge base and connection to the discipline/field. However, it is an equally daunting task because it demands great fortitude to deal with the myriad of perspectives and ongoing issues related to the notion of Africana Studies in the 21st Century.

Regardless of the fact that this body of knowledge continues to be contested by all and sundry, there is still something relevant, revealing, and redolent in studying and writing about peoples of African heritage, in all our obvious cultural complexities and social experiences. This is the promise of Africana Studies: to offer future generations a diverse body of knowledge that relates specifically to the culture and life of Africana peoples.

As editors, we have each made contributions, like many others, to the ongoing development of Africana Studies (see Christian 2006a; Evans 2006). Indeed this study complements what each of us has previously produced; and ultimately this study takes our creative interest in Africana Studies to another dimension. We recognize that there still lies ahead much needed reflection on the discipline/field of Africana Studies. Yet we defiantly acknowledge at the outset that this area of learning, scholarship, and activism is more than established in the university. What is required now is a refinement and renewing of the commitment to Africana Studies via administrations in universities throughout North America. Let us turn to defining what we mean by “Africana Studies” within the context of this special issue of the *Western Journal of Black Studies* (WJBS).

Defining the Discipline/field

The definition of what we call “Africana” studies is

at times related synonymously, of course not devoid of nuanced differences, with: Black Studies, African American Studies, African and African Diaspora Studies, Africology, African Centered, Afrocentric, Pan African Studies, to name some of the most common labels for the study of African heritage groups. Our focus on “Africana” rather than one of the other is due to it largely being considered in the 21st Century the most appropriate nomenclature for the discipline/field, and with it being authorized by the National Council for Black Studies. In relation to a specific operationalization of this area of study, a definition of Africana/Black Studies has been provided by Dr. Maulana Karenga, a pioneer in the discipline/field,

Black Studies is the critical and systematic study of the thought and practice of African people in their current and historical unfolding... The word African refers here to African peoples on the continent of Africa and those in the Diaspora... The term Diaspora means the dispersion or scattering of people with common origin. Thus, it is used in Black Studies to refer to Black people whose common origin is in Africa, but who have dispersed or been scattered throughout the world, i.e., in the Americas, the Caribbean and other islands of the seas, Europe and Asia (2002, p. 3).

Dr. Karenga’s definition is both expansive and macro in scope as it provides a geographical and people-centered, historical and contemporaneous approach.

Vivian Gordon provides another definition, that could be deemed similar but adds the point of developing new approaches in Africana Studies,

... [Africana] Black Studies may be defined as an analysis of the factors and conditions which have affected the economic, psychological, legal, and moral status of the African in America as well as the African in diaspora. Not only is Black Studies concerned with the culture of the Afro-American ethnic, as historically and sociologically defined by the traditional literature, it is also concerned with the development of new approaches to the study of

the Black experience and with the development of social policies which will impact positively upon the lives of Black people (Vivian Gordon cited in Anderson and Stewart 2007, p. 4).

Both definitions provided above are concerned primarily with what constitutes a specific “African experience” and social reality; therefore Africana Studies offers a stimulating intellectual practice. Definitions are usually refined as more scholarship is produced, and this can be said of all fields of knowledge. What is striking in regard to Africana Studies is in the fact that it was borne and initially defined via the 1960s Civil Rights era, in terms of its struggle to be institutionalized via social protest primarily, but not entirely, in mainstream North American universities.

With now four decades of growth and development it is a testament to the depth of intellectual strength and consistency that the discipline/field has continued to expand decade after decade. Presently there are, for example, opportunities for students to gain the BA, MA, and PhD degrees in Africana Studies.

In the 1960s-1980s it was difficult to gain such an in-depth amount of formal education in the discipline/field, but from the 1990s-2000s the scholarship and chances to do graduate work in Africana Studies has swelled. The landscape is certainly not perfect, yet there is much to consider in the glass being half-full rather than half-empty when it comes to gaining formal training in Africana Studies. I have elsewhere considered some of the key problems facing the Africana Studies (see Christian 2001, 2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2007).

This special issue is arguably at the heart of the development of the discipline/field. Indeed, we know that it is important in the first decade of a new millennium to acknowledge the views of both faculty and graduate students in Africana Studies. To this extent we believe that there is now a foundation to build on the dialogue herein and to expand on it via further research, conferences, and publications.

Scope of study

The aim of this research is to provide a volume that brings together both faculty and graduates in Africana Studies whom would articulate the visions and/or experiences of their respective department or program in Africana Studies. The study at the outset appeared to the editors to be appealing and unambiguous in terms of its

scope and potential. Quite simply, our ambition was to offer insight into the development of graduate studies in Africana Studies via the collective voices of PhD granting departments and/or programs in the field.

Theoretically it appeared a rather easy task to gather these varied and important voices, but in hindsight it proved more difficult in practice. Getting such a disparate group of scholars and graduates to relate to the project was a distance from being unproblematic. However, the editors both agree that this special issue is more than a worthy and timely contribution to Africana Studies. We believe it is an essential offering to the discourse of what it is to be involved in Africana Studies in the 21st Century and beyond.

In this sense we have been able to gather some of the key faculty voices, while having a group of graduate papers that may not fully correspond to the discipline, but certainly do much to represent it. There could never be a magic formula that would cover all bases perfectly. However, we are confident that the articles in this special issue speak directly to the graduate experience in Africana Studies. Without having to be pedantic, one could argue that there is a clearly identifiable road map to further research in this important area. Indeed we cannot think of a study that has endeavored to offer both faculty and graduate perspectives in Africana Studies. Most often it is the faculty point of view alone that is in the public domain. Crucially, the scope of this study is in providing a template to discuss graduate experiences in Africana Studies, with views emanating from both faculty and graduate students via their specific articles. We have “voices” from: Temple University, Yale, Michigan State, Virginia Tech, and the University of California-Berkeley.

However, it is important to note that the editors also approached faculty and students based at: U-Mass, Northwestern, Harvard, Cornell, Emory, and the University of Illinois-Champaign. Faculty and students were given at least five deadlines for papers but some failed to submit. The editors agree that the project would have been stronger had the above voices added to the discussion. Although we are pleased with the overall outcome, in regard to the “lost voices in Africana Studies,” we hope that future research will enable greater participation.

Indeed the ancient wisdom that states, “On a journey of a thousand miles, one must take the first step” is apt when considering this small contribution in the development of a broader discourse involving the scope of Africana Studies. We are confident that

further research will emerge via our “one step” in the right direction. One must consider this special issue contribution as the start for developing a dialogue that is so very important right now.

The future of Africana Studies demands thought and attention, especially with the ongoing retirement of the 1960s-1970s faculty cohorts that effectively brought Africana Studies into being. With the loss of such a group of scholar-activists the newly emerging graduates must be aware that they may not have the support for their scholarship as it was previously offered.

Terminology

Arguably, one of the pressing problems in the discipline/field is in finding concepts that all departments and programs in Africana Studies can agree as being “core to the discipline/field.” As noted above, our use of Africana Studies stems from the fact that it seems the most authoritative nomenclature that defines the essence of what it is to be a scholar in this area of knowledge production presently.

Although there are those that will probably disagree, I would use the example of a “growing consciousness” within Africana Studies that has led to this development in terminology. The problem we have fundamentally is that many scholars have vested interest in maintaining concepts that could be deemed a tad misplaced, or even archaic. If you, for example, consider “Negro Studies” being obsolete, then how should we consider the term “Black Studies”? Is there a “Black land” or a specific “Black people”? Maybe we should come to terms with the fact that being of African heritage, in all its complexity, is encapsulated far more positively in the term Africana Studies, rather than Black Studies?

For our purposes herein, we acknowledge that some terms are problematic for the 21st Century, and that there is an ongoing discussion concerning terminology. But for conceptual clarity and convenience we shall state that Africana Studies is interchangeable with Black Studies or African American Studies, or African and African Diaspora Studies (to name a few). In this sense it is important to lay emphasis on what I term a “commonality of conceptual framing” within the nomenclature of Africana Studies. However, this does not suggest that there are not divergent schools of thought, there certainly is. Yet, even the Marxist or Postmodernist Africana Studies scholar use terms like “African American Studies” or “Black Studies” interchangeably. However, often the outcome of one’s

conceptual framing in the field may well be philosophically diverse in perspective.

To put it another way, terminology can actually mean the same thing, but have a different philosophical outcome. This is certainly confusing for the neophyte scholar in the discipline/field. Until we can conceptually agree on what terminology we employ to “speak within” the confines of Africana Studies, then this issue will continue to be prevalent in the areas of scholarship and teaching.

The “messy” reality of terminology in Africana Studies should not deter us in the quest for a more refined and conceptually “tight” discipline. Indeed there is not a field of knowledge that has not grappled with its terminology, why should we expect anything different from Africana Studies? What is required then is continued discussion and consistent deliberation over conceptual framing of the discourse. If we consider such as part and parcel of what it is to exist in Africana Studies then it should be incumbent upon every scholar to provide an epistemological definitional road map to her thinking on any given and/or relevant Africana Studies research project.

Methodology

This study is at bottom, “exploratory” and does not seek to define the discipline/field in a dogmatic sense. Indeed our intention as editors fundamentally is to provide a platform to hear varied perspectives that emanate from Africana graduate studies in the first decade of the 21st Century. We have achieved this major objective to some extent, but not to our initial aspiration.

As mentioned earlier, we had hoped to gain insight from *all* those institutions that grant the PhD, or are aspiring to do so, in Africana Studies. In tandem with this our aim was to have “voices” from graduates representing all the schools. In reality, we have come close to our original goal but not fully achieved what we had desired at the outset of this research.

The “bulk” of our research data was collected via a faculty panel named, “The State and Future of the PhD in Black Studies: Six Institutional Perspectives” held at the September 2006 Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) annual meeting in Atlanta. We then organized two panels for graduate perspectives for the March 2007 National Council for Black Studies (NCBS) annual meeting held in San Diego. The panels were focused on the theme, “Graduate Student Perspectives in Africana/Black Stud-

ies: Curricula Development & Philosophical Grounding in the Discipline/Field.”

With both the faculty and graduate panels, held at two major Africana Studies conferences, being successful the editors gleaned enough data to develop this special issue with the support of the President of the National Council for Black Studies, Dr. Charles Jones, and the editor of the *Western Journal of Black Studies*, Dr. E. Lincoln James. Indeed so enthusiastic was the response from the NCBS participants the editors were then determined to complete this project in a timely fashion.

Our questions to those whom have participated were basic: Can you speak to your experience of the discipline/field from the perspective of your institution? Could you let us know how you see Africana Studies developing in the future at the graduate level? Can you give us some insight into the development of your particular program? For the graduates, we wanted to hear about their experiences and how they viewed the discipline/field at the graduate level presently and in the future. Overall, we are pleased with the manifold outcome of the articles. Collectively we believe that they do “represent” the discipline/field. Moreover, these collections of essays provide an excellent foundation for further exploration.

On a broader view of methodology in Africana Studies, it is important to note that scholars and graduates based at predominately “white” institutions face the dilemma of either focusing on the traditional ways of epistemology in the social sciences and humanities, or going into the “choppy waters” of conceptual innovation. Too often, in terms of one’s methodological perspective, there is a pressure to stick with the “old ways” of doing things in order to survive in the given institution.

One such problem in Africana Studies is in forging the tangible links with the specific and/or broader Africana community located within the proximity of the university where the Africana scholar/graduate resides. Dr. Maulana Karenga speaks to this issue via the African American experience,

... the priority focus on African Americans makes the praxis dimension of Africana Studies immediate, readily recognizable, and easier to implement. The original call by [Nathan] Hare to “bring the campus to the community and the community to the campus” finds its practical expression in the African American community. Both the campus and the community, then, become contested areas,

centers of conflict and resolution in the ongoing project of intellectual and political emancipation (1988, p 406).

Too often the scholar and graduate student in Africana studies finds traditional methodological approach unresponsive to her fully being able to be intellectually expressive within a liberation paradigm. To put it another way, it is difficult to convince those embedded in the traditional disciplines that research connected to the African American experience, for example, is vital to the core element of being an Africana Studies scholar. Research in Africana Studies is more than “intellectual posturing” and/or sitting in the “ivory tower” due to its origins and development (Karenga 2002; Marable 2000).

Moreover, notions of “objective” or “detached” research do not sit well within Africana Studies. This is why many graduate students will be faced with the pressure of developing a research agenda within an institutional framework that does not fully support the mission of linking the “community to the campus and the campus to the community.” Methodologically this can prove an epistemological nightmare for the graduate in Africana Studies endeavoring to develop her scholarship within the confines of a predominately white institution that may not support such an approach to knowledge.

Although space does not permit here, we recognize that methodological perspectives within Africana Studies need further consideration. How do we, for example, marry the “old” with the “new” if they are incompatible in philosophy? This is only one of many imponderable questions encountered in Africana Studies research circles. It is difficult to negotiate between the old and the new as the foundation of the former was based largely on the notion of superiority, or hegemony, over all other forms of knowledge. The new represents a counter-hegemonic form of knowing and comprehending African experiences in the world. This is a core feature in the dilemma faced by the Africana Studies scholar and graduate in predominately white institutions of learning in the 21st Century.

Faculty Contributions

Although, I have touched on some of the issues above, we are fortunate to have contributions from key scholars in Africana Studies that expand on the core issues effecting the development of the discipline/field. Dr. Molefi Asante, the man whom created the first PhD in African

American Studies in 1987 at Temple University, examines graduate studies and the prospects for the future. In relation to the development of Africana Studies over the last two decades, Dr Asante in his article contends, "No traditional discipline, such as anthropology, history, sociology, or literature, has been the same since the revolution that brought African American Studies doctoral programs into existence." This is a powerful statement, and it is factual but rarely considered in mainstream circles. Dr. Asante offers an approach that serves the Africana Studies scholar in being conceptually independent from the often inevitability of Eurocentric canons and traditions in scholarship.

Dr. Ama Mazama of Temple University takes up the issue of "naming and defining" within Africana Studies, and how this is important at this stage in its development to name the collective study of African related phenomena as Africology. Therefore it is important to map out its discipline boundaries and create a paradigm that does not rely on traditional Eurocentric epistemology. Whether it be Afrocentric, African Centered, or Africological, the discipline ought to develop its own and unique intellectual paradigm.

Dr. Denise Troutman provides an important account in the development of Michigan State University's PhD program, which was established in 2002. This program draws its faculty from varying traditional disciplines to make up what could be deemed a "hybridized" interdisciplinarity of perspective. This program could be viewed as antithetical to the approach by Dr. Asante and Dr. Mazama, and it shows how complex it is to establish a doctoral program that has "uniform elements" in the design. Again, this emphasizes the earlier point of "same nomenclature" but "different philosophical grounding."

Yet, as a discipline/field we need to consider why in fact there is such leeway in developing a PhD program in Africana Studies in a seemingly ad hoc fashion? Or is it due to who has the power to control the outcome of the PhD program? These questions are part of an ongoing discussion, what we should do now is seriously ask ourselves as scholars and graduates in Africana Studies: What makes our discipline/field different from, for example: Anthropology, Sociology, Political Science, Communications, History, or Geography? If it is just a simple focus on African phenomena without a unique epistemological base to define the uniqueness then what is it that makes Africana Studies unique?

Dr. Ula Taylor, Chair of African American Studies at the University of California-Berkeley also provides a useful historical overview of the department. Dr. Taylor

makes the point that the emphasis on her department is "African Diaspora Studies" within the context of intellectual traditions of activism. Although there is no determining philosophy beyond intellectual activism, there is an important insight into how the department grew out of the social protest of the 1960s.

It is fitting that Terry Kershaw, a pioneering scholar in Africana Studies, particularly in methodological issues, has the "last word" in terms of faculty contributions. His article focuses on the "production of future scholars" in the discipline/field. He provides useful statistical data regarding what journals are most often employed by Africana Studies scholars. This alone gives credence to the breadth of knowledge in Africana Studies. Dr. Kershaw also puts great emphasis on there being a sense of ownership in terms of the research output relating to the commitment to social justice. After all, this is how Africana Studies developed in the 1960s. A commitment to social justice is at the heart of what this knowledge is concerned about. Future scholars need to be aware of how the notion of social justice permeates within the philosophy and practice of Africana Studies (see Gordon 2006, p. 593).

The reader will no doubt find the contributions by the faculty to be both stimulating and thought-provoking. To be sure, they collectively relate to both the origins and future development of the discipline/field. At this time and place we cannot state whether or not Africana Studies will be a fully fledged and autonomous discipline. Hence Africana Studies still meander between the discipline and/or field dichotomy. Nevertheless, there is a blurring between what it is to be either an autonomous discipline or a field of knowledge.

In this sense, I would refer the reader to a number of recently published works that attest to a discipline of Africana Studies actually being "here" in the intellectual-sense. It is only thwarted by university administrations that do not fully support fully autonomous units; and do little to promote intellectual independence for Africana Studies (see, Christian 2004, 2006a, 2007; Asante & Karenga 2006; Asante & Mazama 2005; Anderson & Stewart 2007; Conyers 1997, 2003; Gordon & Gordon 2006; Hudson-Weems 2007; Marable 2000, 2005; Mazama 2003; Okafor 2006, 2007). These cited works above are certainly not "uniform" in philosophical grounding, but they do speak to the notion of there being a "discipline" with various schools of thought.

Graduate Contributions

At the outset of this project the editors were in full agreement that the voices of graduate students in Africana Studies had to be heard. Too often there is little scope for graduate students to offer their insights in written form via refereed journal outlets. The fact that this generation, more than ever before, will inherit a great amount of responsibility toward developing the future of Africana Studies as a discipline, there had to be given an opportunity for them to, in a real sense, speak for themselves.

Due to the importance of the graduate involvement in this project the editors asked each participant to address how they had experienced Africana Studies and/or how they viewed the future of it in the university. This gave ample room for both diversity and freedom of expression.

Kefentse Chike interestingly compares his graduate experiences at two universities: Temple University and Michigan State University. Mary Philips tackles what she considered “the major problems and debates in Black Studies” that can do harm to its growth and development. Shana Redmond focuses primarily on the issue of “Activism and Academia” and the complex issues that exist for the scholar in Africana Studies endeavoring to maneuver or operate between the two. Finally, a joint article by Efua Akoma and Lawrence Johnson focuses on the future and how Africana Studies has a link from undergraduate to graduate learning that should emphasize the connection to the broader Africana/Black communities. The objective is empowerment and sustaining positive Black community engagement via the learning experience offered in Africana Studies.

Overall, we feel that the selected contributions from graduate students (we did not have room for all of those that were submitted) give a realistic insight into key dimensions of what is both experienced and hoped for as a student in Africana Studies. As scholars in the discipline/field we would be amiss to ignore these thoughtful perspectives that provide administrators an opportunity to develop strategies to improve the graduate experience in Africana Studies.

However, there are some pressing problems that need to be addressed in relation to developing greater support for those graduate students hoping to remain in the discipline as teachers or professors. Too often we have found there to be a distinct lack of opportunities to develop one’s career *within* the discipline/field. This is a difficult issue to consider at the early stage of the twenty-first century as more and more graduates in

Africana Studies are beginning to emerge. There are certainly avenues to explore that could be both beneficial to both the university and the Africana Studies scholar. However, without the necessary support from university administrations there will continue to be a thwarting of the best and brightest minds in Africana Studies (for a short list of tangible support, from university administrations, that could be adopted now for Africana Studies see Christian 2006b, p. 715).

The Joint Appointment and Africana Studies Problematic

In my previous writings on the subject of Africana Studies and its growth and development I have neglected an important aspect of an increasingly problematic situation faced by scholars in Africana Studies. Arguably, this is a major problem faced by those graduate students who have made the significant decision to focus one’s career on getting qualified *solely* in Africana Studies- to the MA or PhD level- is in the fact that most often the only meaningful professional appointments available on the market tend to be within the “joint appointment” context.

Although there is still not enough “hard evidence” of problems faced by Africana Studies scholars on the job market, we now can speak of an “anecdotal phenomena” when it comes to our experiences in academia on a broader scale (Christian 2006b, pp. 708-713). This reality, however, is not confined to a Black/White schema. Graduates coming onto the job market face difficulties in both perception of their knowledge base, and how to be assessed for tenure via traditional departments when it comes to promotion via joint appointment.

As Nell Irvin Painter reminds us, regarding the experience of Africana Studies faculty of color in the US university system, it is more complex than merely ignorant White administrators,

Taken together, a multitude of anecdotes reveals the existence of phenomena- phenomena, not just chance occurrences. The first belies the existence of color-coded allies and enemies. Evidence from across the nation shows that both support and problems for black faculty and black studies can come from people of all racial and ethnic identities (Nell Irvin Painter cited in Christian 2006b, p. 709).

In gaining employment, the problematic situation in adopting the “right” philosophy and practice, which

will be faced by graduates of Africana Studies in the 21st century, demands our attention. How is one to be both in the traditional, for example, Anthropology department and Africana Studies program, having been educated within the context of Africana Studies?

To be sure, if the solely Africana Studies candidate for a joint appointment cannot *clearly* identify with a traditional department it is unlikely that she will be hired. However, the same cannot be said if the tables are turned, and it is the Anthropologist whom has been educated primarily within the epistemological framework of the discipline. If this Anthropologist happens to have studied “African ethnic groups in Senegal” then he will comfortably be hired as a joint appointee in Anthropology and Africana Studies. This scenario is common in predominately White universities. It is highly problematic and it puts the graduate in Africana Studies at a distinct disadvantage in the job market.

Africana Studies and its Praxis Mission

Manning Marable (2005) promotes the need for a “New Black Renaissance” whereby Africana Studies (he uses African American Studies) needs to be shaped to fit the realities of dealing with the intersectionalities of “race,” class, and gender, migration, globalization, and hybrid identities. A self-confessed “progressive social democrat” in the mold of W.E.B. Du Bois, Marable’s embedded elitism is somewhat contradictory to what he suggests he stands for. For example, he uses up a page of his introductory essay bemoaning how the Ivy League schools in the US have been slow to hire people of color, particularly African Americans, via the period of Africana Studies institutional expansion- 1960s-1990s (Marable 2005, p. xi). In essence, he offers a top-down analysis of racialized exclusion in the elite academic world. This analysis, for a progressive social democratic expert, in “class” terms is way off base. One should always start with the masses, and work upwards if comprehending a class examination of bourgeois institutions, surely?

To be frank, I am disillusioned with many of the so-called “Black Left” thinkers in Africana Studies. Many of them hold positions in Ivy League schools and have the audacity to pontificate on how Africana Studies should and should not be taught, and conducted, and practiced. Again, scholars like Marable attempt to “shape” Africana Studies to fit the agenda of a specific school of thought that is full of contradiction if one takes a look deeply at the writings. The problem for gradu-

ates in Africana Studies is that many of these “Black Lefties” hold positions of power within departments and programs. They have no interest in developing a discipline that has any sense of autonomy. One must have read Marx, Gramsci, Foucault, Mao, Lenin and others to gain kudos among the Black leftists. If one cites, for example: Asante, Karenga, Diop, Hudson-Weems, Mazama, Conyers, Christian, or other progressive Africana Studies theorists in a job application or presentation it can often lead to being excluded from employment opportunities. This is an anecdotal fact, right out of Nell Irvin Painter’s “anecdotal phenomena” paradigm. Yet it is rarely discussed as a topic within mainstream academic journals. Those of us closely connected to Africana Studies know this anecdotal as a given reality, or impediment in the discipline/field.

Crucially, the graduate in Africana Studies who has followed the path of intellectual independence, that is in not kow-towing to Eurocentric canons, and has endeavored to develop a critical theory related to Africana thought and practice, will suffer tremendous rejection on the job market- so be warned. Unfortunately, as related above, most often all that is on offer is a “joint appointment” and this can be difficult to juggle if one wants to develop as an Africana Studies theorist of knowledge, and be an advocate for Africana communities. It can be a heavy price to pay when one focuses her career solely on Africana Studies as a discipline due to the widespread discrimination that exists in the university system.

Conclusion

There is nothing more important for the editors of this special issue than to stimulate further discussion and debate surrounding the articles presented herein. It will be most gratifying to know that we have created a stir in the field via this publication. After all, this is what we set out to do! We want dialogue and honest discussion surrounding the future of graduate education in Africana Studies.

This should involve both faculty and graduate perspectives on how best to develop its future scholars. We are confident the articles presented in this special issue will be an important start in the process of finding positive ways to allow “a thousand flowers to bloom” in Africana Studies. There is a long way to go before we can be assured that a scholar in Africana Studies, who endeavors to seek new ways of viewing the world outside traditional Eurocentric canons, will be treated with professional respect and dignity. Yet we are confident

that if the themes and perspectives in this special issue are reflected upon by administrators without prejudice there will be an improvement for existing faculty, and graduates students- the emerging and future scholars in the discipline.

Specifically for the graduate student in Africana Studies, it would be wise to sift through the manifold literature that abounds in what deem “intellectually independent forms of Africana Studies” regarding theory and methodology (see Anderson & Stewart 2007; Asante & Karenga 2006; Conyers 1997, 2003; Gordon

and Gordon 2006; Mazama 2003). Indeed it is one of major fallacies in the academy and beyond that suggests Africana Studies scholars have not developed theories and philosophy for a unique and vibrant discipline.

Crucially, as editors we would like to express are thanks to the scholars whom contributed articles; and to E. Lincoln James for supporting our effort to have this special issue published. We would also like to thank the board and members of the National Council for Black Studies. Finally, any failings found in this special issue fall at the feet of the editors- *a luta continua*.

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