

# COLLEGE *of* CHARLESTON

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THE AFRICAN AMERICAN  
STUDIES PROGRAM

Fall 2014 Newsletter

## From the Director



**Conseula Francis**

### In this issue

Meet the AAST Faculty  
~page 3~

They Got To Touch My Hair  
~page 4~

Fall 2014 Events  
~page 6~

Fall 2014 Course Offerings  
~page 7~

Resources in AAST @ CofC  
~page 9~

As I write this, the country is reeling from the shooting death of 18-year old Mike Brown in Ferguson, MO. The young man was stopped for jaywalking by a white officer and subsequently shot in the back, and then again when he faced the officer with hands up in surrender. His body lay in the street for four hours. The citizens of Ferguson protested and were met by a police force armed with military-grade weapons, rubber bullets, and tear gas. For many, the images coming out of Ferguson over the last week looks far too similar to the now familiar images of Civil Rights protestors being beaten by policemen protecting segregationist policies.

This semester, the African American Studies Program at

the College of Charleston celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and also launches its brand new major. Students can focus their college careers on African American history and culture, with courses in English, theater, education, history, anthropology, sociology, urban studies, political science, women's and gender studies, music, and religious studies. Along with the Avery Research Center, the African American Studies Program is making the study of black people--our histories and communities and experiences--central to the intellectual enterprise at the College of Charleston.

And given what I am watching on television every night, what folks are posting on my Facebook feed and tweeting

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**The African American Studies Program is making the study of black people--our histories and communities and experiences--central to the intellectual enterprise at the College of Charleston.**

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from around the country, our work has never been more important than right now. The death of Mike Brown reminds us that King's struggle and Garvey's struggle and Tubman's struggle and Douglass's struggle is still alive and well: how do we achieve social justice in this multiracial/multiethnic democracy? How can we be fully human in a society that seems determined to see us as

little more than animals? The discipline of African American Studies is dedicated to producing, disseminating, and preserving knowledge, both on and off college campuses, that helps us all work toward a world where black teenagers can feel safe walking home from the store and black people do not have to take to the streets to find justice.

## Meet The Faculty



**Anthony Greene**

Dr. Anthony D. Greene is an Assistant Professor of African American Studies. Dr. Greene specializes in race-ethnic relations, cultural and ethnic identity, and Sociology of Education. He has taught and conducted research on topics that include comparative Black identity, race-ethnic relations, Sociology of sport, academic tracking, school desegregation, and student achievement among disadvantaged minorities. Dr. Greene received his B.A. in Sociology and African American Studies from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in Charlotte, NC. He also received his M.A. in Sociology from UNC Charlotte. He earned his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Miami in 2008. Dr. Greene previously held a position at UNC Charlotte in the Department of Sociology. Dr. Greene's current areas of research include social class, cultural, and ethnic identity among

Black student populations. Two recent works center around Black identity among African American and Caribbean Black populations. His most recent work investigates how the perception of discrimination impacts social psychological factors (i.e. social anxiety, depressive symptoms, self-esteem) among Black subgroups in the U.S.

Professor Mari N. Crabtree is a cultural historian who specializes in African American history after emancipation. Though her training is in history—she received her Ph.D. in History at Cornell University in 2014—she brings an interdisciplinary framework to her research and writing, which draws much of its inspiration from literary figures like James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, and Ralph Ellison. Her book manuscript, “The Devil is Watching You: Lynching and Southern Memory, 1940–1970,” unearths African American cultural responses to lynching in its aftermath by using the blues sensibility as a metaphor for understanding how black southerners remember (and forget) racial violence. This fall, she will be teaching “Introduction to African American Studies,” and in the spring, she will offer “Introduction to African American Music” and an upper-level course called “Mongrel America.” In subsequent semesters, she plans to teach courses on mass incarceration; race, violence, and memory in American history; HBO’s *The Wire*; humor and irony in African American culture; and black nationalism. During the four years between getting her A.B. in Black Studies at Amherst College and arriving at Cornell, she spent one year teaching English in Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan and three years working in New York City at a Japanese marketing firm.



**Mari Crabtree**

## From Our Students



**They Got to Touch My Hair**  
by Siera Barksdale  
AAST Major, Class of 2015

At 9:05 on the Thursday morning of November 21, 2013, I held up a small cutout from a poster board I'd created only half an hour before. I dropped my personal space walls, stepped out of my comfort zone, and took down my twisted hair to let my afro free. I stood awkwardly for a few minutes, as people stared at me when passing. They looked confused. Many stopped to read the sign. Most did a double take. Some even smiled or laughed at the controversial statement of my sign. Then, an older white woman smiled as she walked towards me. She laughed and asked if it was really okay. I told her of course it was, for today. I explained that today

was the day to ask those questions that most are afraid to ask because they seem stupid or ignorant. I said that today was the day to finally get to touch my hair, since it is not polite to just go up to me and touch it without permission. I described how an extraordinary documentary online about this black women's art exhibit in New York created an intense and necessary dialogue about race relations and diversity. I told her how I felt that dialogue needed to be brought to the College of Charleston campus. She smiled, and nodded her compliance and agreement that there was a diversity problem. And then...she touched my hair.

A few months ago, I was trolling online when I found a Huffington Post article about an art exhibit in New York featuring black women. The documentary was called *You Can Touch My Hair*. This title for me, as a natural haired black woman, was enticing. I've had many white friends and white strangers come up to me and ask me about my hair. Many simply touch, without permission. Once a friend of mine petted my hair like a dog. Another older white woman grabbed a hand full of my hair at CVS on the corner of George St and St. Phillip St. I've had some experience with people treating me like an object of fascination because of my natural hair. So, I was curious what the women of the video were doing.

As I watched the video, I immediately thought of Sarah Bartmann. Black women being put on display for Whites to "ooh" and "ah" at was not something to encourage. I did not want the people who participated in the exhibit to mistakenly give Whites the permission to just go up to Black women and start touching their hair. Having a sign saying 'You Can Touch My Hair' could give some Whites the impression that invading the personal space of black women is okay. But the video showed people having real conversations about sensitive subjects, across racial lines. And then I realized this needs to happen at the College of Charleston.

I invited many to volunteer with me in the YCTMH event, but many did not show. Something happened to them between the times they were so excited and eager a week prior to that morning. Many of them were scared now. Many did not show up. In the morning shifts, I had help from classmates Alexis Walters and T'Najah Ferrell. They held signs with me and talked to anyone

with questions. The morning was a very productive time. But then they had to leave and I was left standing with a sign for hours, alone.

While I was standing alone, the most interesting participants came up to me. The majority of people who asked questions were older white females, then older white males. I got more questions from staff and faculty of the College than students. The faculty was very respectful and intrigued and excited to have this race barrier down, even for a morning. But the students were a bit different. The students, from what I gathered, seemed to think they were now above asking questions about race. The white participants proceeded to count off the black friends they've had in their lifetime and explain how they felt no need to touch my hair or ask questions. They didn't need to ask anything because they either did not care or felt like they already knew enough. There was a white male student who even proceeded to say that he never thought to ask a black woman if he could touch her hair because black women love him and he loves black women. He then decided to tell me that he would not ask me because he thought I was cool because of my polka dot leggings.

More students were confused as to why I decided to hold up a sign in the first place. They were oblivious to the fact that black hair is a "thing." They did not know the stories black women have about whites and black hair. This was especially true for the white males. Hair is definitely a conversation women have between races. But it was interesting that black men knew about the fascination of black hair, white women knew about the fascination of black hair, white male faculty and staff knew about the fascination and mystery, but white male students were clueless. I could dissect this a million ways. I could say that the older generations have questions and find black hair fascinating because race was a bigger deal before. And women find fascination in black hair types because black hair has a tendency to have more variety. But white male students are attempting to live in a colorblind society and taking full advantage of their privilege by not taking notice of something staring them in the face.

After talking with many of these students, they believe that as long as they know a black person, they don't have to care about racism or race relations. They listen to Jay Z, Kanye West, and Lil' Wayne so they can't be racist or care about race relations. Even here, at the College of Charleston where the hipsters live, we have this type of white male population. I'm not saying that all white males have to care about race. I'm definitely not saying white males should treat people differently based on race. But I am saying it is dangerous to ignore this diversity and assume that race doesn't matter anymore.

I do believe that Thursday morning was a success. Many students discussed the demonstration in their classrooms and with faculty in their offices. I am glad that one white female student who sat at her 'Malendars for Sale' booth and stared at me for two hours before finally coming up to me, got to touch my hair. I loved the fact that half of my volunteers that morning were people who saw the sign and decided to hold one up and let others touch their hair. I am proud of the dialogue that began on that day. But it was not enough. Now that this campus has gotten a taste, I want to do it again. This time, I'll have more participation since black women will not be as scared now that they've seen how it is done. Hopefully next time white students with different hair types will feel comfortable standing beside me in the event. I'm not done trying to have an effective dialogue on diversity on this campus, not by a long shot.

## Fall 2014 Events

### **LECTURE--"Black Students and Black Studies: A Founding History, 1966-1970"**

**September 23 ~ 6pm ~ Wells Fargo Auditorium**

Ibram X. Kendi, a professor of Africana Studies at the University of Albany and Brown University, kicks off the new African American Studies major with a lecture on the black campus movement that gave rise to the discipline of Black Studies. Between 1965 and 1972, African American students at upwards of a thousand historically black and white American colleges and universities organized, demanded, and protested for Black Studies, progressive Black universities, new faces, new ideas--in short, a truly diverse system of higher education relevant to the Black community. Taking inspiration from the Black Power Movement, Black students drew support from many quarters--including White, Latino, Chicano, Asian American, and Native American students--and disrupted and challenged institutions in nearly every state. By the end, black students had thoroughly reshaped the face of the academy.

### **BOOK DISCUSSION ~ September 18 ~ 6:15 ~ John L. Dart Library, 1067 King Street**

Join us for a discussion of Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross*

### **ARTIST'S TALK--Hip Hop Producer DJ 9th Wonder**

**October 6 ~ 6pm ~ Wells Fargo Auditorium**

Born Patrick Denard Douthit in Winston-Salem, NC, 9th Wonder is a Grammy Award Winning Producer, DJ, College Lecturer, and Social Activist. Since his introduction to hip-hop in 1982, 9th has been immersed in the music and culture of the art form, while gaining experience in music theory throughout middle and high school. 9th attended North Carolina Central University, where he decided to pursue a career in music. He has produced music for Jay-Z, Destiny's Child, Mary J. Blige, Erykah Badu, David Banner, and Aaron McGruder's *Boondocks* television show. He is the president, founder and CEO of It's a Wonderful World Music Group, which focuses on catering to the 28 to 40 year old demographic of hip-hop music lovers. 9th believes in the preservation of Black Music throughout all its divisions (jazz, gospel, funk, soul, afrobeat, hip-hop), and its connections to music ethnology and the African diaspora. 9th was recently appointed the National Ambassador For Hip-Hop Relations and Culture for the NAACP by Ben Jealous, President of The NAACP, where he leads a board of PhD's, Hip-Hop Artists, and Juris Doctorates.

### **BOOK DISCUSSION ~ November 20 ~ 6:15 ~ John L. Dart Library, 1067 King Street**

Join us for a discussion of Octavia Butler's *Dawn*

### **AVERY RESEARCH CENTER**

The Avery Research Center hosts a wide variety of lectures, brown bag discussions, art exhibits, and other programs exploring African American history and culture. A calendar of Avery's programs can be found at <http://avery.cofc.edu/programs/>.

For more information on these events or the African American Studies Program, contact Dr. Conseula Francis at [francisc@cofc.edu](mailto:francisc@cofc.edu) or 953-7738.

# Fall 2014 Course Offerings

**AAST 200**  
**Ajani Ofunniyin**  
**Mari Crabtree**

**Introduction to African American Studies**  
**MWF 10:00-10:50**  
**TR 10:50-12:05**  
**TR 1:40-2:55**

This course is an introduction to the field of African American Studies. Interdisciplinary in nature, African American Studies embraces history and literature, the arts and material culture, as well as sociological, political, economic, public policy, and philosophical perspectives on the experiences of people of African descent in the United States. Students in the course can expect an overview of the history of the field, as well as an introduction to key ideas, thinkers, and questions in the field.

**AAST 250**  
**Anthony Greene**

**Readings in African American Social Science Research**  
**TR 9:25-10:40**

In this course students will analyze African American life and culture using the tools of social science in order to understand and explain the functioning of power in society, the creation and maintenance of oppression, the formation of individual and community identities, and resistance.

**AAST 300**  
**Vincent Spicer**

**Psychology of Prejudice and Discrimination**  
**TR 10:50-12:05**

This course explores the influences that shape prejudice and discrimination.

**AAST 300**  
**Ajani Ofunniyin**

**Documenting, Interpreting & Preserving Gullah Culture**  
**M 4:00-6:45**

In this course students will learn about Gullah cuisine and spiritual practices, visit Gullah communities and landmarks, meet local Gullah residents, artists, community leaders, and entrepreneurs. Students will also conduct archival research, and participate in genealogy and oral history workshops.

**AAST 305**  
**Julie Dash**

## Making the Documentary

### T 4:00-6:45

Julie Dash will conduct a one semester class in film production that focuses on the screenwriter/director's relationship with the production designer/art department, and director of photography during pre-production and location production processes.

## ATTENTION: SENIOR CITIZENS

*South Carolina residents who are over 60 years old are eligible to enroll in regular College of Charleston courses on a space-available basis for a fee of \$25 for the semester. Permission of the instructor is required for African American Studies courses. Call 843.953.5620 for details.*

## Fall 2014 Course Offerings

### **AAST 330                                      Black Images in the Media**

**Anthony Greene                              TR 10:50-12:05**

In this course, students will critically examine the representations of African Americans in major forms of mass media, including newspapers, television and film. The course will review the historical development of the archetype images and trace their progression up to the contemporary portrayals.

### **AAST 366                                      Race-Ethnic Relations**

**Anthony Greene                              M 4:00-6:45**

In this course, students will critically examine contemporary domestic and global issues of race and ethnicity. Students explore concepts, theoretical perspectives, and research on patterns of cooperation and conflict between different racial and ethnic groups. Sources of prejudice, discrimination, power relations and stratification are discussed and applied.

### **ENGL 313                                      Survey of African American Literature**

**Conseula Francis                              MWF 10:00-10:50**

In this course we will study African American literature from its origins in the American colonial period, to the contemporary work of writers like Kiese Lymon and Elizabeth Alexander. We will consider how the authors covered attempt to *narrate blackness*. What story do they attempt to tell about black people? What aesthetic choices do authors make in their attempts to define and redefine blackness? What happens when they do not participate in this project at all?

### **THTR 316                                      African American Theater**

**Joy Vandervort-Cobb                              TR 12:15-1:30**

The study of the role, scope, and significance of African American theatre in modern society through the reading of representative plays and examination of individuals and organizations that have fostered the development and growth in the field.

### **HIST 216                                      African American History to 1865**

**MWF 9:00-9:50**

Beginning with the African background, this course surveys the experience of African Americans from the colonial era through the Civil War. Particular attention will be devoted to the Atlantic slave trade, the North American slave experience, free blacks, abolitionism and the social and political implications of the Civil War as these affected black people.

### **HIST 211                                      American Urban History**

**George Hopkins                              MW 2:00-3:15**

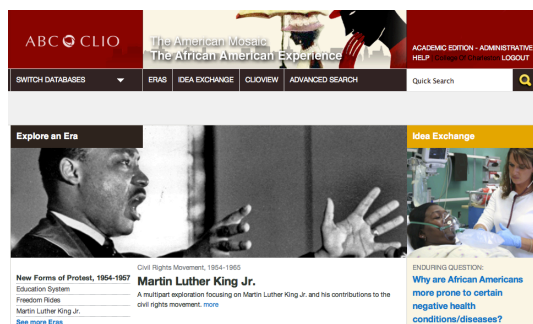
A survey of urban development from colonial times to the present. This course examines urbanization as a city-building process and its impact on American social, political and economic life.

### **ANTH 323                                      African American Society & Culture**

**Patricia Williams-Lessane                              TR 9:25-10:40**

A survey of African American society and culture beginning with the African homeland and ending with an exploration of contemporary issues facing New World African communities.

## Resources in AAST @ CofC



*The African American Experience* is a database in The American Mosaic series of databases created by ABC-CLIO, an information services company. The database is a searchable, full-text, online encyclopedia of historical and current information, scholarly essays on contemporary issues, primary sources, and current and historical statistics. Students and faculty can access *The American Experience* through the library's web site on the [Article Databases](#) page and the [African American Studies research guide](#).

The main content in *The African American Experience* is organized into 14 historical eras beginning with "Africa and the Atlantic, 500-1500" and continuing through "New Millennium, 2001-present." Each era is further subdivided into shorter time periods and topics of historical significance. Each subdivision contains an overview of the period; encyclopedic articles highlighting the people and events that define the time period; primary source documents; media and visuals; and (sometimes) a glossary of terms. The articles include citations of books and articles for further reading relevant to the subjects covered. Users can browse the database by era or conduct keyword searches. There is a quick search feature and an advanced search interface. Users can print or email documents from the database, and each item comes with exportable citations in MLA, APA, and Chicago citation styles.

Another interesting portion of the database is the Idea Exchange feature. Here users can read essays authored by scholars on a wide range of important questions of today such as "How do African Americans, American Indians, and Latinos challenge racism differently?" and "What are the enduring factors that have led to a persistent overrepresentation of African Americans in crime and incarceration rates?" Each essay is thoughtfully composed and well-documented with footnotes and references and is followed by biographical information about the author.

Moreover, *The African American Experience* is also a source of statistical information. The CLIOView portion of the database allows users to find and compare state and national stats concerning a number of measures including African American population, employment, education, income, marriage, poverty, voting and voter registration, health insurance coverage, and military service. Users can choose to make bar graphs, line graphs, and pie charts based on the statistics found.

For more information about *The American Experience* database, contact Steven Profit, reference librarian, at [profits@cofc.edu](mailto:profits@cofc.edu).

Fall 2014

## Where Are You Now?

Let Us Know What You're Up To

For 20 years the African American Studies Program at the College of Charleston has educated students in African American history and culture. We would love to hear what those students are up to now. Let us know about the exciting professional and personal milestones you've reached since leaving the College. You can email Dr. Francis with the details at [francisc@cofc.edu](mailto:francisc@cofc.edu).



**not just in february**

### African American Studies

College of Charleston  
66 George Street  
Charleston, SC 29424

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