Hidden History:
The Blacks In Boston Conferences

By Nathaniel Tolbert

February is Black History Month. A time to celebrate the wonders of black culture. The month is a tribute to the strength of black people, their ingenuity, their creativity, their intelligence and their contributions to American society. Black History Month is also the ideal period to illuminate some of the lesser known African-American pioneers in this country. The African-American community’s contribution to the cultural landscape can be found everywhere, even in regions one would not readily associate with black culture. While Boston is not necessarily the first place one thinks of when referencing black epicenters it is, in fact, full of rich black historical events and has been the home to many of the Diaspora’s historical leaders. Both Malcolm X and Minister Louis Farrakhan spent their formative years in Boston; and iconic singer and cultural pioneer Roland Hayes studied music at the Boston conservatory. The Blacks in Boston Conference is another over-looked piece of black history in the New England area. It is also a testament to the ingenuity of the Black community.

The Blacks in Boston Conference was a series created by the former Boston College Black Studies department director Amanda V Houston. These conferences ran intermittently from 1983 to 2000. The initial conference began as an illumination of the Black Contribution to the Boston metropolitan area, but eventually evolved into a forum for topics that were Continued on page 2

2010 - 2011 Works In Progress Lecture Series: Becoming South Africa’s Black Jews

by Ashley Woods

During the 2009-2010 academic year, the African and African Diaspora Studies Program began its first Dissertation Fellowship which invites scholars working in any discipline in the Humanities or Social Sciences with projects focusing on any topic within African and/or African Diaspora Studies. The 2009-2010 recipient was Noah Tamarkin, a doctoral candidate in Anthropology and Feminist Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Tamarkin’s dissertation (Lost) Tribes to Citizens: Lemba ‘Black Jews’ Engage the South African State, traces the efforts of Lemba people to position themselves as Diasporic Jews and Indigenous Africans as they struggle with their public histories and their day to day circumstances to find a viable place in their worlds. This semester, Tamarkin teaches the course “South African Struggles, South African Lives: Culture, Belonging, and Politics.” This course examine various struggles for independence, livelihoods, rights and justice before, during and after Apartheid, while considering the role of struggle within South Africa.

continued on page 2
Voices of the Diaspora

Becoming South Africa’s

continued from page 1

Tamarkin is a wonderful asset to the African and African Diaspora Studies Program, which is why we are so excited to have him present in our Works in Progress Lecture Series. The Works in Progress Lecture Series showcases the research and writing of AADS core and affiliate faculty. Tamarkin will be presenting a lecture on “Becoming South Africa’s Black Jews: Familiarizing Lember Difference.” This lecture is open and free to the public and will be taking place on February 22nd at 12pm in the AADS office, Lyons Hall 301, with lunch provided.

For more information on the

Works in Progress Lecture Series and for upcoming events, please visit our website at www.bc.edu/aads or email Cat McAteer at mcateerm@bc.edu •

Know Your History

continued from page 1

applicable to the African Diaspora regardless of region. Topics discussed during the series ranged from “The Struggle for Equal Education” to the “Caribbean Heritage of the Diaspora.” An unprecedented event for the time, the initial conferences helped shine light on black academia. The Blacks in Boston Conference was also a platform for many prominent names in black history including Ruth Batson, John Hope Franklin, Mary Barry and legendary writer of the book Roots, Alex Haley. Under the careful tutelage of Amanda V. Houston, initially, and the continued work of her protégé Dr. Sandra Sandiford Young and the dedicated staff at Boston College, the conferences served as a rare venue to bring together a collection of black academics and historical figures. That this wonderful series was initiated and located right here at Boston College, a school that has a black studies program, but not a dedicated Black Studies Department, it is a significant accomplishment.

It goes without saying that the Blacks in Boston conferences were an example of the power and possibilities of black people when a project is done with effort and cooperation. So the next time you walk to Hillside or wait to get on the Commonwealth Avenue bus remember that right in Conte Forum, on this quite little campus, some of the greatest minds of the African Diaspora came together to discuss issues, solve problems, and celebrate each other—a tradition that should be continued. •
Voices of the Diaspora

Word Around the Community

Each month Voices will include articles of note pertaining to the African and African Diaspora. Feel free to submit any articles that pique your interest to aads@bc.edu.

African American-Owned Businesses on the Rise
Reported by ABC News’ Arlette Saenz:

The number of black-owned businesses in the U.S. increased by 60.5% to 1.9 million between 2002 and 2007, more than triple the national rate according to U.S. Census data released Tuesday. The number of businesses across the country increased by 18% in the same amount of time.

Black-owned businesses, which are defined by the government as firms with African-American owners holding a 51% or larger stake in the business, raked in $137 billion in sales and receipts and made up 7.1% of businesses nationwide in 2007, compared to 5.2% in 2002.

But while the number of black-owned businesses surged, many of these businesses remain small.

The states with the most black-owned businesses in 2007 were New York (204,032), Georgia (183,874) and Florida (181,437) making up 10.6, 9.6, and 9.4 percent respectively of black-owned businesses nationwide. Read the rest of this article at abcnews.com

Number of blacks in elected office on the rise
by Ray Finger

Changing attitudes and the elimination of obstacles to running for public office in the past quarter-century have resulted in the election of more blacks in the United States.

Even so, parity has not yet been reached comparing the percentage of blacks in the U.S. population to representation in Washington, D.C., and elsewhere, observers say.

In February 1970, only 715 blacks throughout the United States held elected office at the city and county level, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In a little more than two decades, that total rose to 5,456. Read the rest of this article at star-gazette.com

Elder black Americans say younger generation detached from their history
by Scott Johnson

Queen Thurston remembers her 1940s childhood in West Oakland with fondness, and a little nostalgia. She'd come "home right after school, do her homework, then head out with a dozen or more friends and roller skate all over the neighborhood until it got dark, and sometimes later. Read the rest at mercurynews.com

Culture on Campus

Boston College has a rich tradition of cultural clubs pertaining to the Diaspora. Culture on Campus’ goal is to make students aware of said clubs’ events. This month’s section focuses on Black History month oriented events

Jan 31st · “I Am History” Opening Ceremony Dinner
Location & Time: Murray Function Room Yawkey Center @ 6pm

Feb 2nd · Beyond the Skin: Multi Racial Lunch Panel
Location & Time: Height Room Lower @ 12 pm

Feb 3rd · AHANA Alumni Council Reception & Women’s Basketball Game
Location & Time: Shea Function Room, Conte Forum & 5pm

Feb 8th · Black History Month Panel Series: “Get Ur Freak On” & “Every Trifiling Black Man and Bitter Black Woman for themselves”
Location & Time: Vandy Cabaret Room @ 6pm

Feb 15th · Award Banquet of the MLK, Jr. Memorial Committee
Location & Time: Welch Dining Room (Lyons basement aka The Rat) @ 5:30-8pm
RSVP: hardyme@bc.edu

Feb 17th · Newton Movie Night: “The Ernest Green Story”
Location & Time: Newton Campus: Hardy Cushing Lounge @ 7pm

Feb 18th · “Not Forgotten” MCF Gospel Showcase
Location & Time: Robsham Theater @ 6pm

Feb 19th · African Students Organization Presents: Lovers Lounge
Location & Time: Cabaret Room @ 5-7

Feb 22nd · AADS: Works in Progress Lecture Series
Location & Time: Lyons

Hall 301 @ 12pm

Feb 22nd · Career Services Presents: I Am History: I Am TODAY!!
Location & Time: Heights - room @ 6pm

Feb 24th · BHM Closing Ceremony
Location & Time: Robsham Theater @ 6pm

Feb 25th · Annual AHANA Leadership Council Ball
Location & Time: Fairmont Copley
Bus Loading @ 9pm in Eagles Nest

3 of 4

AUG 2011
Black History Month Issue
http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/schools/cas_sites/aads/pe...
From the Editor’s Desk - The Real Meaning of Black History Month

Black History Month is more than just a History Lesson in February; a quick reflection on Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech. Black History is a proud celebration of our accomplishments, from the stereotypical athletes and entertainers to the underappreciated politicians, entrepreneurs and activists. Black History Month is a time to illuminate our lesser known black pioneers. It’s a time for the young to value the old and the old to embrace the young. It’s a time to leave negativity and self-deprecating talk behind, whether it’s everyday dialogue or the work of the black intellectual. Black History Month is a time to celebrate not only our past, but our present and our future.

- Nathaniel Tolbert

Portraits from the Diaspora

A look at the life and times of members of the African Diaspora.

2011 Medal of Freedom Award Ceremony

Congressmen John Lewis (D) GA, civil rights pioneer, with President Barack Obama

Award Winning Poet, Author and civil rights activist Maya Angelou

NBA Hall of Famer and civil rights activist Bill Russell

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