IN LOVING MEMORY OF DR. WINSTON VAN HORNE

This inaugural edition of The Africologist is dedicated to the late Dr. Winston Van Horne, founder of the discipline of Africology.
Greetings from the Chair

Dr. Doreatha Mbalia — Professor and Chair of the Department of Africology

With the publication of this inaugural issue of The Africologist, the Department of Africology commemorates Dr. Winston Van Horne who joined the ancestors on May 24, 2013. Of him, Dr. Patrick Bellegarde-Smith wrote the following: "Though he liked to work often in the shadow, Winston’s voice boomed and resonated far afield. His presence felt, if unseen. His vision carried beyond the confines of campus and town, reaching a global audience. He birthed a discipline, at once father and mother, but he would always say, that Africology was simultaneously the newest discipline and the oldest. He had reasons for that argument, anchored in an understanding of African cosmological truths. Now that he has retreated to a well-deserved rest, he shall continue to work in the shadow, and his presence will continue to be felt, if unseen."

Jambo! Hotep! On behalf of the faculty, students, and staff in the Department of Africology at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, I am delighted to extend our greetings to you. When the first Black Studies centers and programs were founded in 1968, one of the core concepts was the “necessity of relevance.” At that time, Dr. Nathan Hare, director of the Black Studies program at San Francisco State, stated that “a black education which is not revolutionary in the current day is both irrelevant and useless.” Now, in 2013, we recognize more than ever before the critical role that Africological doctoral studies programs play in solving the increasing problems confronting Africa and its people scattered throughout the globe.

Africology is the global study of the history, culture, present reality, and future prospects of people of primary African origin. It is interdisciplinary in scope, and umbrellas broad concentrations such as Culture and Society, Political Economy/Public Policy and such subjects as economics, psychology, sociology, literature, and history. Here at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the Department of Africology offers such courses as the following:

- The Black Family; Mass Media and Black Self-Images; The School in African-American Life; Urban Violence; The Psychological Effects of Racism; The Political Economy of Development in Sub-Saharan African Countries; Race and Inequality; Black Politics and City Government; Change in African-American Communities; The Black Woman in Africa, the Caribbean and the U.S.; Government and Politics in Latin America and the Caribbean; and Healing Traditions in the African Diaspora

It is our belief that the roots of a tree and its branches are connected. Our logo is of a tree with the roots in Africa and the branches extending outward. Our motto represents this idea: “When you study Africology, you study the world”.

In fact, our department is one of the unique ones in the academy. Whereas many Black Studies programs concentrate on ONLY African Americans or ONLY the history and culture of people of African descent, our program is global in scope in regard to African people, and Africology students, both undergraduate and graduate, study all aspects of the condition of people of African descent. Unique too is its commitment to help solve the problems unearthed by this study. Africology is not only interested in description, but also prescription. It is determined to discover solutions.

From the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Haiti to Milwaukee, problems of people of African descent are so tremendous and overwhelming that a discipline, a department such as ours is needed more today than ever before. Therefore, Africology departments have and will continue to have a decisive, critical, and beneficial role to play in regard to African people here at UWM, in the Milwaukee community and globally.

Here at UWM, our Africology professors are committed to this role. For example:

1. Dr. Nolan Kopkin, an economist who received his degree from Cornell University this past May and who has joined our faculty for Fall 2013, promises to offer public policy guidance in regard to education in urban areas such as Milwaukee. His working paper, “How the Nutritional Content of School Provided Meals Affects Student Outcomes,” studies the impact that an intervention in the nutritional quality of school lunches has on the academic and non-cognitive outcomes of elementary school students in the Buffalo Public School District.

Continued on page 3
2. Recently, Dr. Abera Gelan shared with me an occasion when he attended an Economics conference on development with the then, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Jendayi Elizabeth Frazer. After Dr. Gelan made his comments on economic policies applied to sub-Saharan African countries, she excitedly came over to say, in essence, “that’s what I’m talking about”.

3. In Fall 2012, I received an email from the director of a pre-school in Brandon, Florida (a city of 100,000, not far from Tampa). The director was trying to locate Dr. Erin Winkler in our department. In her email, she wrote: “Due to a concern brought to my attention from a parent of a child enrolled in my preschool, I began researching racism in 3-year-olds.” She had read Dr. Winkler’s article, “Children Are Not Colorblind: How Young Children Learn Race,” and wanted to discuss some of Dr. Winkler’s findings.

4. Praise has been showered on Dr. Anika Wilson for her recent 2013 book, Folklore, Gender and AIDS in Malawi: No Secret Under the Sun for its focus on the informal ways in which women of Malawi confront AIDS. She focuses on gossip, rumor, advice and urban legend to explore the women’s responses to the crisis. Academicians from Harvard University, Cambridge University, the University of Pennsylvania, and beyond have expressed their hope that public health officials in Malawi and in developing countries globally will heed the results of Dr. Wilson’s scholarship.

A brief visit to our website (www.uwm.edu/Dept/Africology) will reveal the depth and breadth of knowledge possessed by the faculty here in the Department of Africology, a prestigious faculty, committed to Africology because they want to be here, because they want to help remedy the injustices faced by those of African descent throughout the world. Departments of Africology have and must continue to play a vital role in the academy. For what other campus unit will have the necessary interest, knowledge, training, and commitment to solve these problems?

Ayiti Chérie: A Trip to Haiti

Charmane Perry - third year doctoral student in the Department of Africology

This summer I had the opportunity to spend four days in LaVallee de Jacmel, Haiti. Although the trip was not directly research related, visiting Haiti is always an experience of observation, reflection, and growth. The reason for the trip was to spend time with family. It is an annual, transnational experience as family members come from Ottawa, Montreal, Maryland, Boston, New York, Florida, and if you include me, Wisconsin. We go to a kompa party with live music by Kreyol La in celebration of Saint Jean. We eat plantains, drink coffee, talk for hours, tell stories, play with the neighborhood kids, cook food all day, and just enjoy one another’s presence. This summer was even more special because my Uncle Gerard retired in early June and a week later moved back home with his wife. This is significant because returning home was always a part of the plan.

Coincidentally, my research indeed focuses on practices of transnationalism, identity construction, and meanings of home among Haitians in the diaspora. So, in many ways, there is a lived experience that has led me to my research interests and my love for Haiti. The personal, lived experience is an important aspect of Africology and the work we produce. The ability to draw from personal experiences is what makes our research vibrant, critical, and relevant.

However, the academic research is just a small piece of the pie. The biggest piece is what we desire and plan to give back in order to continue to build Haiti. My cousins and I have spent the last two summers trying to develop an academic scholarship for children attending Ecole Leonce Megie (F.I.C). We have been working on a list of questions that we would like to ask the teachers so we can understand what they need and not just assume and impose. The other project is developing the library in LaVallee de Jacmel. We had the opportunity to tour the library with the librarian. He explained what the library needs such as books in Spanish, French, and English, a computer, chairs so the students can have spaces to sit down and read, as well as a more updated system for keeping records of checked out books.

The Haitian diaspora represents an important space in the current social, cultural, political, and economic development within the country. The two are intimately connected. Both spaces influence each other. These are some of the things I see when I go home. Haiti is simultaneously a painful and yet humbling space. It’s beautiful within and beyond the mountains.
“In Learning Race, Learning Place, Erin N. Winkler has pushed the literature on racial socialization in new directions by including children's perspectives and looking beyond the parent as sole socializer, and she has done so in an effective and accessible manner.”

— Roberta L. Coles, author of The Best Kept Secret: Single Black Fathers

“Learning Race, Learning Place goes beyond traditional studies of racial socialization by bringing in the geographic contexts where young people live and travel. Winkler crafts an engaging narrative about how kids both learn and create Blackness.”

— Mary Pattillo, author of Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril among the Black Middle Class

In an American society both increasingly diverse and increasingly segregated, the signals children receive about race are more confusing than ever. In this context, how do children negotiate and make meaning of multiple and conflicting messages to develop their own ideas about race?

LEARNING RACE, LEARNING PLACE: Shaping Racial Identities and Ideas in African American Childhoods (paper $27.95, 978-0-8135-5429-7, November 2012), by Erin N. Winkler, engages this question using in-depth interviews with an economically diverse group of African American children and their mothers.

Through these rich narratives, Winkler seeks to reorient the way we look at how children develop their ideas about race through the introduction of a new framework—comprehensive racial learning—that shows the importance of considering this process from children’s points of view and listening to their interpretations of their experiences, which are often quite different from what the adults around them expect or intend. At the children’s prompting, Winkler examines the roles of multiple actors and influences, including gender, skin tone, colorblind rhetoric, peers, family, media, school, and, especially, place. She brings to the fore the complex and understudied power of place, positing that while children’s racial identities and experiences are shaped by a national construction of race, they are also specific to a particular place that exerts both direct and indirect influence on their racial identities and ideas.

About the author:

ERIN N. WINKLER is an associate professor of Africology at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.

A VOLUME IN THE RUTGERS SERIES IN CHILDHOOD STUDIES

Edited by Myra Bluebond-Langner

LEARNING RACE, LEARNING PLACE

Shaping Racial Identities and Ideas in African American Childhoods

Erin N. Winkler

Paper $27.95 | ISBN 978-0-8135-5429-7
Cloth $72.00 | ISBN 978-0-8135-5430-3 | 230 pages | 6 x 9
ebook available

Publication Date: November 2012

Please email requests for review copies and be sure to include the title, author, ISBN number, as well as the address of the person to whom the book should be sent.
Navigating Graduate School: Lessons Learned as an Intern at the Smithsonian

Cami Thomas - third year doctoral student in the Department of Africology

Anastacia Scott is a 3rd year doctoral student in the Department of Africology. Originally from New Orleans, Louisiana, Ms. Scott’s research interest is post-racialism and museum studies. This summer she had the privilege of working as an intern to Curator Dr. Diana N’Diaye on the project “The Will to Adorn: African American Diversity, Style and Identity” at the Smithsonian Institute Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (CFCH).

As a graduate student, the pressure to build your curriculum vitae can be stressful. Finding the right experiences to guide you through academia can seem like swimming in murky water. I asked Ms. Scott about how she attained her internship, about her experience as an intern, and about the lessons she learned.

CT: Finding the right internship can be a difficult task for graduate students. Can you walk us through the process of finding and securing this position?

AS: I was notified of this opportunity through a friend of mine. When I first joined the Department of Africology, I immediately researched job opportunities because I was coming from the field of Sociology and was not aware of the opportunities in Africology. However, when a friend of mine with a B.A. in the field informed me of internship opportunities at various organizations, I immediately began my search. The Smithsonian Institute’s website was very informative in who they were targeting for internship opportunities and for what purpose. So, I identified several museums and centers to contact for potential projects to intern with. After several conversations with intern coordinators and curators, I narrowed down several internships and proceeded with the applications.

CT: Can you walk us through a typical work day? What did you find exciting about your work and what can be challenging?

AS: The Center is unique to the Smithsonian because it is not object oriented as traditional museums. The Center focuses on people and relationships. A typical work day is never the same; rather, the Center has certain periods and deadlines to meet at various stages of its annual Folklife Festival as well as facilitating collaborative efforts with various individuals and organizations to promote future events and relationships. For example, at the beginning of the internship, a typical day was centered on getting to know the mission of the Center, the scope of the “Will To Adorn” program and the CFCH staff. Thereafter, the focus was on preparing for the Folklife Festival by contacting participants to confirm their arrival dates and clarifying any questions they would have about their role at the festival.

When the festival commenced everything was non-stop for ten days. The entire office relocated to the National Mall and instead of going into the office we reported to the site of the festival and it was pure organized chaos. The festival was the height of the internship as I worked closely with the experts in the field and fellow interns to produce a smooth running festival site for the “Will To Adorn” program. I worked the hardest I have ever worked under the hot sun and humidity of summertime DC and I loved every minute of it. A typical day on the festival site started at 9:00 a.m. with meetings. Then there was site set up and welcoming of participants at 10:00 a.m. The site opened to the public from 11:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. I was performing various tasks behind-the-scenes to keep the site running smoothly. From 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., I helped close down the site. After the festival, I spent the remainder of the internship at the office drafting and sending off thank-you letters to participants, staff and presenters with the program curator, staff and interns.

CT: What are some lessons or skills you might not have expected to learn from this experience that you will be able to use in your graduate career?

AS: I did not expect to learn more about personhood and professionalism and how to balance it all. Surprisingly, the staff at CFCH was extraordinarily humble. All of the staff members were amazingly accomplished from the receptionist to the director and yet they were all super down-to-earth, approachable and present. One workshop in particular focused on “Dreams and Fears: Graduate School” which invited staff and interns to have a conversation about graduate school that ended up being a conversation about life in general and I left with the lesson that we all have to fight to balance out the personal, the professional and the practical. I learned to remain humble at each stage of my life and things will all fall into place and to embrace serendipity. Being humble will enable me to appreciate the small things, value people and relationships and the good seeds I sow into the world will repay me with guidance and purpose.
Winston Van Horne, Professor of Africology, passed away on Friday, May 24, 2013, at 11:25 a.m. His son, Max, was holding his hand at the time, and they were listening to Harry Belafonte's song, "Jamaica Farewell."

Dr. Van Horne was born in Jamaica and came to UWM in 1978, where he served magnanimously until his death. Some of his contributions include navigating the Afro-American Studies Program to the Department of Africology; chairing the Department of Africology three times and being credited with creating the word Africology; serving as principal author of the Ph.D. program in Africology; serving on the faculty senate since 1980 (being absent for only required lapses); and directing the UW System Institute on Race and Ethnicity for ten years. In recognition of his immense contribution and at the request of the Department of Africology, the UWM Faculty Senate unanimously voted in favor of naming a classroom on his behalf on December 13, 2012. On Friday, April 26, 2013, UWM officially re-named Mitchell Hall, Room 206, the Winston Van Horne Seminar Room. View the videotape of the [Winston Van Horne Seminar Room dedication](#).

In commemorating Dr. Van Horne, Dr. Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, one of his colleagues wrote the following: "Though he liked to work often in the shadow, Winston’s voice boomed and resonated far afield – his presence felt, if unseen. His vision carried beyond the confines of campus and town, reaching a global audience. He birthed a discipline, at once father and mother, but he would always say that Africology was simultaneously the newest discipline and the oldest. He had reasons for that argument, anchored in an understanding of African cosmological truths. Now that he has retreated to a well-deserved rest, he shall continue to work in the shadow, and his presence will continue to be felt, if unseen."
Interviewer: Charmane Perry, third year doctoral student in the Department of Africology  
Interviewee: Dr. Anika Wilson, Associate Professor of Africology  

CP: Please tell us about your first book Folklore, Gender and AIDS in Malawi: No Secret Under the Sun and what motivated you to document and share these women's narratives.

AW: The research question that intrigued me in graduate school had to do with “AIDS in Africa,” one of the most sensationalized tragedies of our time. “AIDS in Africa” was as much a media sensation as it was a disease afflicting populations. A prevailing theory being offered by the western media was that men in Africa were helping to spread the disease through their cultural backwardness—through their practices of sexually assaulting young virgins as a “cure” to AIDS. You have to admit, it’s a catchy theme being too horrific to forget and being so much in line with what people were inclined by centuries of brainwashing in the West to think about Africa and African men. Backwards, sexually aggressive, and steeped in tradition—these are the ways people of Africa have been too often portrayed. For my part I had to question these assumptions and ask what were the stories that were being told within affected communities.

To address these questions one has to move beyond “Africa” to research in highly affected regions. The whole of the continent is not equally stricken by AIDS. When an opportunity arose to conduct research in Malawi, I jumped at the chance and interviewed married women, a group commonly described by the media--both in the U.S. and in Malawi--as vulnerable to contracting HIV from their husbands.

One of the first things you learn from talking to these women is that they are not sitting around quietly, stoically enduring but using every resource at their disposal to protect not just their physical health but also to hold their families together and eke out a living in an exceptionally impoverished nation. These are stories beyond the headlines and wisdom beyond the academy.

CP: Can you give us an example of a typical narrative told by Malawi women and the symbolism within the story?

AW: Women in Malawi tell many types of stories and this book merely takes a few “types” or genres and focuses attention on them. Some of the stories are really quite mundane while others are sensational. Each chapter deals with a different type—for example chapter one presents the more mundane advice seeking. For example, many of the young women we spoke to said that if their husbands found girlfriends they were advised to tell them that he was putting the family in danger and refer him to his elders. The infidelities themselves were revealed in gossip. There is no great symbolism or mystery here to unravel. Some women were told they should come back to their birth village so they could get love potions to affect their husbands’ behaviors. Cautionary tales about these love potions warned that if your husband loved you too much he would become like a woman, doing women's chores rather than leaving the house to earn a living. Local knowledge was very important in dealing with HIV/AIDS fears. When women could not endure any longer some actually fought the objects of their husbands’ affection either physically or by trying to socially isolate them. Such stories were common but poignant. The last part of my book really goes beyond these more intimate tales to look at fantastical urban legends that focus on women's vulnerabilities.

CP: In your book, you discuss Mgoneko (stories of night sorcerers) and Mphusti (a new STD alleged to be more dangerous than HIV/AIDS). Can you explain the relationship between these stories and rumors and the attempt to control women’s sexuality and mobility as a way to combat "outside" influence? Is this a state-sanctioned response or community response to dealing with Malawi women’s, I assume, increasing independence?

AW: Mgoneko tales are stories about men who use magic to sleep with women at night. These stories have many variations ranging from the phenomena of sex dreams and sleep paralysis to stories about women who are physically assaulted wherein magic was believed to be involved. The other urban legend I tackle is Mphusti, believed to be a new type of sexually transmitted disease. These rumors are really about pervasive fears and anxieties. Mgoneko rumors mark the bedroom as a dangerous territory for young women coming of age and also for married women. They are a subtle call for greater attention to women’s domestic vulnerability. More specifically, they are a call for men to make the sexual assault of women their problem—to suggest that domestic violence and sexual assault is not a private matter but a public concern, a community concern. This idea goes along with recent state-sponsored agenda to improve women’s positions in Malawian society.

Continued on page 8
Mphutsi rumors reveal both fears about women’s vulnerability but also about women’s culpability. These rumors recall an earlier period in the AIDS epidemic when prostitutes were seen by some as the most to blame in the spread of HIV. I wouldn’t say the stories are meant to stop women from having sexual freedom—that would be far too literal a spin on the stories. I’m far more comfortable saying they illustrate a reanimation of fear about women’s sexual freedom. The state doesn’t support these rumors and indeed the health department reputed the rumors of mphutsi in order to dampen possible panic over the alleged disease.

CP: In what way, if any, do the Malawi women's narratives represent a larger international discourse on women's rights?

AW: One question that plagues human rights efforts is how to “domesticate” so-called “universal” human rights standards. In my most recent research I pay very close attention to this question and I find that people are quite creative in finding ways of engaging human rights law and discourses. There are, for example, local ways to define what “violence” is that are constantly evolving. One man who presides over an NGO funded and government sponsored committee to stop domestic violence told us a story in 2008 about a woman who brought a complaint that her husband was bringing a second wife to the family. The committee said she must learn to deal well with this 2nd wife because their culture supports polygamy. Five years later this same man—who has seen many more disputes since that time—tells me that it seems like polygamy is a kind of violence—that is to say that often neglect and strife arises in these unions. In addition, there is a strong belief amongst Malawians that when rights are being defined that “responsibilities” should not be neglected.

CP: Is there anything else you would like to mention about your book?

AW: Yes, buy it please.

What’s the Value of Black Life?: A History of Trayvon Martin and Derek Williams

Charmane Perry - third year doctoral student in the Department of Africology

In the days, weeks, and months succeeding the George Zimmerman verdict, the black community is again reminded that racism, sexism, and class exploitation are still some of the most critical issues plaguing the United States. Trayvon Martin forces the black community, communities of color as well as underserved communities to contemplate who is valued and worthy of protection and justice in this country. It reaffirms the belief that black men are still considered a threat, a problem, and a burden. Nationally and internationally, many people are able to personally identify with Trayvon's death. Right here in Milwaukee, the black community is trying to reconcile the July 2011 death of Derek Williams and the failure to bring charges against the Milwaukee police officers who carelessly let him die while in their custody.

It is impossible to understand the death of Trayvon Martin and Derek Williams as well as the lack of a conviction against Zimmerman, Jason Bleichwehl, Richard Ticcioni, and Jeffrey Cline without a critical understanding of history. A historical lens is needed to make sense of this injustice and in order to understand how the two are deeply related to each other, i.e. the loss of a black life and the presumed innocence of the murderer. Since the Reconstruction Era, the black community has been under attack. The fear of black freedom produced hatred so deep that we were left with strange fruit hanging from many poplar trees. We no longer smell the scent of burning flesh. Instead, we hear bombs and sirens thudding in the background while watching the streets become painted with red. We hear mothers and children cry as their children and fathers head to the penitentiary or the morgue. And eventually we watch the guilty smirk as they walk free.
On July 20, I went to the Milwaukee court house for the national protest to bring federal civil charges against Zimmerman and to repeal the “Stand Your Ground” law. It was a mixed crowd as anyone showing solidarity with the Martin family came out. There were countless parents, siblings, grandparents, and friends who suffered their own similar loss. The death of black men is a tragedy that has become way too familiar. And so Trayvon and Derek follow a long trail of the wrongfully murdered. Trayvon and Derek are Emmett Till. They are James Chaney, Michael Griffith, the Central Park Five, Amadou Diallo, Sean Bell, and Oscar Grant. They are the many who did not make it to national news but still received the same injustice.

At the end of the protest, we all gathered hands as we said a prayer. It just so happened that I only held hands with one person, and it was a little black boy. As I held his hand firmly, I contemplated the world he will face. This is a society in which a young black man wearing a hoodie or listening to hip hop is immediately racialized without his ever speaking a word. This is a society where young black men are wrongfully murdered, but the news still aims to demonize and destroy their character. They become the guilty because they are a threat, a problem, and a burden. Before I let his hand go, I squeezed it a few times in an effort to transfer my energy and love, thinking of Sybrina Fulton’s empowering statement, “Today it was my son. Tomorrow it may be yours.”

From December 2007 to June 2009, the official period of The Great Recession, the national unemployment rate rose from 4.6% to 9.5% for the US civilian population. Long after the trough of the Recession is past, the unemployment rate continues to be 7.4% (July 2013), a level that is lower than the peak rate of 10% attained in November 2009, but considerably higher than the pre-recession levels. Over the past six years, the unemployment rate among African-Americans, the community that was hit the hardest in the recent recession, rose from 9% to 16.8% (March 2010) and then fell to 13%. While job losses are not unique to this recession, the rate of job recovery has been remarkably slower as is evident from the fact that the economy is still more than 6 million jobs behind the pre-recession levels. This anemic recovery is symptomatic of deeper, structural changes occurring in the US labor market, changes that can have highly unequal consequences across communities.

During the same period, 2007-2011, the median income of all households has decreased by 9%. The median household income for Blacks, $32,000, is much lower than the median household income for Whites, $52,000. The percentage of Blacks in poverty had increased from 24.5 to 27.9. In thirty states across the nation, the poverty rate for the African-American community is higher than 25%. If one includes the households living above, but close to the poverty line, the rates are much higher. The deepening of poverty among the low-income households and the erosion of income and wealth from the middle-income households are parts of the story of sharply rising income inequality as measured by the enormous increase in the share of income going to the top brackets. This piece will focus on highlighting the changes happening in the labor markets and their role in explaining the observed trends in inequality in general and along racial lines in particular.

The first phenomenon that has characterized the US labor-market over the past two decades is job polarization: while high-skill, high-paying occupations and low-skill, low-paying occupations have witnessed an expansion in job opportunities, middle-skill, medium-paying occupations have contracted significantly. Employment opportunities and earnings in high-education occupations (professional, technical, and managerial) on one hand, and in low-education occupations (food service, personal care, and protective service) on the other, are rising, but the converse is true for some white-collar occupations (clerical, administrative, and sales) and most blue-collar occupations (production, craft and operative).
The second challenging fact of the US labor market is an increased demand for high-skilled workers. Since early 1980s, the rate of educational attainment has failed to keep up with the rising demand for high-skilled workers and this insufficient supply has led to a sharp rise in wage-based inequality.

While these trends had emerged long before the Great Recession hit, the latter has served to amplify their unequal consequences. Employment losses during the recession have been far more severe in middle-skilled white- and blue-collar jobs than in either high-skilled jobs or in low-skill service occupations. Explanations advanced for employment polarization focus on either the reasons causing an increase in employers’ demand for skilled labor or the changes in the supply of skilled labor engendered through changes in educational attainment and/or workers’ labor market participation. Some of the ‘demand’-side factors are: (i) technological change (advent of workplace computerization, automation of routine tasks), access to cheap international labor and offshoring (made possible through advancements in information technology) which affect job opportunities and skill demands, (ii) changes in US labor market institutions affecting wage setting, including deunionization and decline of real value of the federal minimum wage. The ‘supply’-side factors are: (i) a slowdown in the rate of four-year college degree attainment among young males, and (ii) shifts in gender and racial composition of the workforce.

Focusing on the supply-side factors we begin by noting that starting around 1983, there was a deceleration in the relative supply of college graduates vs. high-school diploma holders. This is surprising because the ‘college-premium’, defined as the increase in earnings for four-year degree holders versus high-school diploma holders, has continued to rise steadily. College completion rates start decelerating around 1974, perhaps responding to a falling college premium on wage, but even when the premium increases, college completion rates do not rebound. This causes an insufficient supply of high-skilled workers, thereby sharply raising the wages received by college graduates. Among African-American males, the college completion rate is 16% and among females it is 22%. Given that skill demands of the economy have continued to increase, as reflected in the rising wages of the highly educated, one explanation of the stagnated median income of the African-American households is the reduced supply of skilled labor from that community. Examining the ‘college-premium’ closely reveals that most of the increases in earnings accrue to those with post-baccalaureate degrees, thus requiring a potential employee to invest in as much as eighteen years of schooling. Such prolonged investment in skill acquisition would require the employee to forego immediate income from (low-skill) jobs, a scenario that might not be an option for a low-income household. Secondly, a significant majority of African-American students, even when they attend college, are not prepared well enough to undertake serious skill acquisition in technologically challenging fields of engineering, finance, management and medicine. Finally, institutional factors like labor-market discrimination and occupational segregation discourage young African Americans from aspiring to challenging careers in high-skill sectors.

To conclude, as the economy evolves in the foreseeable future, the labor market is headed towards a greater degree of polarization and income inequality. The rich are going to get richer and the poor will struggle to survive. Anticipating these trajectories, the African-American community needs to engage in discussing and implementing policy responses that might be relevant to countering the negative effects of these trends. Of foremost importance is the requirement to improve K-12 education that so many Black students are receiving, so that they grow up to be better equipped to contribute to the skill intensive high-paying occupations. Along with improving school level education, programs are needed for training, continual learning, retraining, and mobility to boost skill levels of middle-aged and elderly employees to help them transition to occupations with expanding employment and earnings opportunities. Without a concerted effort to address the issues delineated above, the job market polarization will ensure a highly unequal society with minimal social mobility.
Remembering Dr. Winston Van Horne: Reflections from a Future Africologist

Charmaine Lang - third year doctoral student in the Department of Africology

When I agreed to write a brief piece in reminiscence of Dr. Winston Van Horne I had little insight into how complex this assignment would be. After all, Dr. Van Horne was a complex man. He was encouraging and demanding in and out of the classroom. He believed in his students. He not only expected the best of you...he also brought it out of you.

This is what I knew of him before I took his class in the spring of 2011. Once I was actually seated before him in the course (which would be the last course he taught), his complexity intensified. Here was a professor who treated his graduate students as his colleagues. He prepared them to carry the Department of Africology at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) to new heights by taking the lead on growing the field he helped cultivate, and developing the department he assisted in creating.

Not only was Dr. Van Horne integral in the success of the department, but also he was central in campus wide and community projects. He spent a great deal of time serving the campus by sitting on various committees and he served the Milwaukee community through helping to define the Community Brainstorming Conference, which is in its twenty-seventh year. His work and service connected the department to the campus and the community. He was an exemplary model of what is expected of folks who belong to the world of academe, particularly Africology. He was also candid in sharing with me a different perspective not often conveyed by professors to students.

At the end of most of our conversations, Dr. Van Horne would end with “The university will bleed you dry if you let it.” I was both appreciative and surprised by his candid statement. Some Africology scholars, most notably Maulana Karenga, have pushed the idea that the focus of Africology students must be a commitment to scholarship and community activism. Academic institutions and departments hold this same belief for their faculty. It shows up in the expectation for teaching, research and service for faculty. What I thought was a pleasurable career for Dr. Van Horne seemed to conflict with what he was clearly expressing as an awareness of the bloodthirsty nature of academic life. “The university will bleed you dry if you let it.”

However, Dr. Van Horne’s understanding of how the academic world operated did not divert his attention away from his mentoring students or from working indefatigably to make things better for those who would inherit the work he started. This is what I remember him by: his complexity. His ability to navigate between the demands of working in both the academic world and the real world (that life outside of academia), without letting either bleed him dry.

I miss Dr. Van Horne. I miss his crisp walk down the corridor as he was coming and going from class, to his office or to water his plants. I miss the brief, yet encouraging, words of advice he gave me as he could see the discouragement and fear of a student preparing to take her comprehensive exams. And I miss the time he spent giving me tidbits on how to survive in this academic jungle as I struggle to become a scholar-activist.

Dr. Van Horne, since the first time I took his class to the last time I saw him, continues to serve as my example of how to exist within the walls of the academy. And every time I see a picture of him, eyes piercing and focused, I hear him say “don’t let them bleed you dry.”
The mission of the Department of Africology is the inquiry into the cultures, societies, and political economies of peoples of African origin and descent. Africology as a discipline encompasses Africa and the African diaspora and researches societies across the globe. In research and teaching, the Department of Africology draws together knowledge of these communities and societies that spans generations and spatial divides in order to gain insights, to examine continuities and breaks, and to critique and generate theories.

Out of our mission comes a commitment to pedagogy and the development of critical thinking and new scholarship. Through our undergraduate courses, the major and the minor, we educate students in the best traditions of liberal arts within our disciplinary framework.

The department's faculty command a range of expertise in areas of political economy, international studies, English, political inquiry, psychological and sociological inquiry, history, and folklore. Faculty members are engaged in innovative research, producing knowledge in many realms: comparative studies of women, black societies in the Americas and Africa, African and African-derived religions, folklore, family and marriage practices, economic and financial issues in underdeveloped areas, racial socialization, literary history and oral traditions, and class, ethnicity, nationalism and Pan-Africanism.