

# Contributions in Black Studies

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## Front Matter

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Contributions in

# BLACK STUDIES

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## INTRODUCTION

It is probably safe to state that *Contributions* 8 has brought us to another plateau in our development. This is certainly the largest issue we have published thus far, and we can still accommodate a modest growth in the number of overall pages in future editions. Since last year we have increased our standing orders to educational institutions by fifty percent, and the number of unsolicited, quality manuscripts received by our office is on the rise. Again, we continue to be interested in scholarly essays, essays which focus—either within the scope and methods of one of the traditional disciplines of the Humanities or Social Sciences, or in an interdisciplinary manner—on the societies, cultures, histories, or politics of the Black World. We also accept short fiction, one-act plays, and short, self-contained passages from novels, along with analytical, critical, and historical scholarship.

In the year of the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution, this number begins with the text of a speech by Sidney Kaplan on the relation between Massachusetts blacks and Shays' rebellion. He poses two affiliated questions with regard to a letter written by Prince Hall, principal founder of the black Masonic Lodge in the U.S., to then Massachusetts Governor James Bowdoin in 1786: Why did Hall volunteer to raise a black regiment of 700 soldiers to defend Boston against a rebellious army of farmers from the western part of the state? And why was his proposal turned down? In the essay which follows, Ketu H. Katrak then explains the "politics" behind the awarding of the 1986 Nobel Prize for Literature to Wole Soyinka, and offers a biographical overview which affords considerable insight into Soyinka's artistic work. The "monstrous inconsistency" between the revolutionary ideology of the period and the existence of slavery is given close scrutiny in the probing essay of Nikola Baumgarten and George Levesque. We then arrive at presentations made by St. Clair Drake and George Shepperson at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst last spring on the subjects of the 1945 Pan-African Conference in Manchester, England, and the All African Peoples Congress held in Accra, Ghana in 1958. There one will find a considerable number of first-hand observations and conclusions that greatly heighten our knowledge and understanding of these two, historic gatherings. Rosalind Cash, whose picture graces our present cover, is the subject of an interview by Irma McClaurin-Allen. The edited result is an unimpeded account of Ms. Cash's life which also gives a great deal of insight into the conditions which black actors must endure in the film and television industries. The relation of Calvin Coolidge to Afro-Americans is a subject carefully pursued by Maceo Crenshaw Dailey, Jr., who takes issue with historians who assign a direct, causal relation between Afro-American "desertion" of the Republican Party in 1936 for the Democrats, and President Coolidge's policies towards blacks a decade earlier. The West Indian

writer Earl Lovelace, native of Tobago, whose creative works in the domains of literature and theater are becoming better known in the U.S., becomes the subject of an extensive bibliography compiled by Chezia Thompson-Cager. Then, in his bibliographic essay, John H. Bracey, Jr. observes a strong difference in approach to the subject of black women by black feminists on the one hand, black female historians on the other. He suggests that Afro-Americans must be willing to respect a wide range of opinion—whether politics of gender or the more traditional kind—and that all ideological sides within black communities must be given a fair hearing. St. Clair Drake returns with an inspirational essay on W.E.B. Du Bois, stressing not the latter's scholarly accomplishments so much as the way in which Du Bois approached life itself. Delivered twenty-odd years ago at Roosevelt University, this talk appears as fresh and *à propos* as the day it was first given. Finally, we reproduce a communiqué on the subject of the reinterment of Shirley Graham Du Bois and W.E.B. Du Bois in Accra in late August, 1986, which was witnessed by a small group of representatives from the Five College Community and the President's Office of the University of Massachusetts.

It may be of interest to the “technologically cognizant” that some 99% of the original copy for *Contributions* 8 was produced on several Macintosh PC's, a legal version of PageMaker 2.0, and a LaserWriter printer. While it is improbable that this particular number will win any awards for layout and design, neither is it likely to embarrass the race. As a *savant* once observed, hands that picked cotton can also pick desktop publishing! Hands that compose over 140 pages of copy can develop serious “mouse wrist” too.

Finally, if we may slip in a “plug” for our upcoming *Contributions* 9 in 1988, the first of a number of anticipated thematic issues: this one will be devoted to the subject of Afro-American “double consciousness,” an exploration of the dilemmas surrounding the contradictory social identities of blacks in the United States. Can you afford to miss either this or future numbers? We urge you to take out personal subscriptions, alert your librarians to the seriousness of our undertaking, and, above all, submit your most thoughtful manuscripts to us.

*Correspondence whether of a business or editorial nature should be directed to Five College Black Studies, 310 New Africa House, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003. Telephone (413)545-0980. Five College Contributions in Black Studies is published annually from Amherst, Massachusetts. Printed by the Common Wealth Press, Hadley, Massachusetts.*

*Art historians and professionals may write for our Afro-American Art History Newsletter, published bi-annually.*