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Crossroads I: The New African Diasporas

University of North Carolina at Charlotte, April 14-15, 2011

Since 2002, the Africana Studies Department at UNC Charlotte has organized an annual symposium to examine a critical theme in the African Diaspora Studies. The 2011 symposium titled "Crossroads I: The New African Diasporas" will take place on April 14-15, 2011, and will focus on the post-Cold War African and Caribbean diasporic formations in the United States. Urban, cosmopolitan, and socioeconomically diverse, these populations account for about 20% of the Black population in the US. Today, they are no longer concentrated only in the traditional immigrant cities of the northeast, but are also of significant presence in the emerging global cities of the New South and the Midwest. Several studies tend to emphasize the immigrant experience and national origins of the post-1980s African and Caribbean populations with a focus on them as transient and bounded groups. Yet, the maturation of the first generation immigrants and the rootedness of the second generation as US citizens and permanent residents pose new challenges to the normative meanings of immigrants versus citizens, with implications for the ways we construct Black identities and define policy issues. Categorizing these populations as the New African Diasporas, as many recent studies have done, however calls for new conceptual, theoretical and empirical evaluations that transcend the bounded immigrant narratives.

Presenters are invited to focus on a conceptualization of the New African Diasporas as overlapping knowledge communities with overlapping memories and interests; and to explore how these communities are building social capitals that are at once transcultural and transnational, as well as rooted in the local and national spaces of the host community; in this case, the United States. Some of the questions that participants may explore are the following: What are the self understandings of the New African Diasporas as individuals and social groups in terms of identities and social classifications? How do these self understandings simultaneously blur and highlight social boundaries; as well as interrogate, subvert or align with the host community values? What challenges do these identities pose to the unfinished project of Black aspirations for full citizenship?
and empowerment in a racialized nation-state? What are the spaces of intercultural/social relations between the New African Diasporas and the historically segmented racial/ethnic subjectivities (e.g., African American, Latino, White), and what are the implications of these relations (or lack of it) for future social policies and politics? How are the New African Diasporas transforming the urban and suburbia spaces in economic, political, cultural, and social terms; and how are the material and social values of the "new home" transforming them? What are the conceptual values that the New African Diasporas, as a construct, bring to the theorizing of the broad African Diaspora subjectivities in the 21st century? What are the implications of the New African Diasporas for policy issues on race, multiculturalism, diversity, national/global security, and social justice, especially as these may affect education, health, business, and community development? What are the genres of new cultural production (e.g., literary and arts) that the members of the New African Diasporas are generating, and how do these interrogate senses of place and belonging? How can we infuse the New African Diaspora subjectivities into the pedagogy of the Black experience and Africana Studies? What are the interfaces between the New African Diaspora subjectivities and the Area Studies paradigms represented by the African, Caribbean, European, and Latin American Studies? What roles can the Digital Age technologies play in documenting, interpreting, and disseminating the New African Diasporas' experience?

Participants from different branches of the social sciences and humanities are invited to explore any of the above questions and related topics. The symposium encourages methodological and theoretical diversity, and is open to senior and junior scholars, advanced graduate students, as well as policy analysts. Interested participants should submit 250-400 word abstract and two-page vitae to africana_studies@uncc.edu by January 14, 2011. Those whose abstracts are accepted will be asked to submit a draft of their paper no later than March 31, 2011. Arrangements are being made to publish a selection of the symposium papers in a thematic volume of a journal of Africana/African Diaspora Studies. Contact Akin Ogundiran (704-687-2355; ogundiran@uncc.edu) if you have any questions. The symposium is sponsored in part by the Chancellor's Diversity Challenge Fund and the Office of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at UNC Charlotte; the African Diaspora Consortium of the Carolinas;
JOMA Arts and Consulting, LLC.; the Neighborhood Good Samaritan Center Inc.; and the Council for the Advancement of Yoruba Studies.