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African Liberation and Black Power: The Challenges of Diasporic Encounters Across Time, Space, and Imagination

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**African Liberation and Black Power:
The Challenges of Diasporic Encounters
Across Time, Space, and Imagination**

**6th Biennial Conference of the Association for
the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora
University of Pittsburgh, November 3-6, 2011**



In 1954, novelist and intellectual Richard Wright published *Black Power*, a provocative book in which Wright offered his reflections on his travels to the Gold Coast as it was in the process of becoming the independent nation of Ghana. The term "Black Power" that Wright used to signify the possibilities of freedom and development for Africans, as well as Pan-African cultural connections, would become a familiar notion to people of African descent around the world, who identified with its potent message for liberation and cultural revitalization. In so doing, Wright opened a new chapter in the long history of political and intellectual dialogue across the African Diaspora—one that revealed both the convergences and ruptures between people of African descent on the continent and in Diaspora.

For its sixth biennial conference, to be held in Pittsburgh, ASWAD explores the theme "African Liberation and Black Power: The Challenges of Diasporic Encounters Across Time, Space and Imagination." This conference intends to appreciate the Diasporic dimensions and articulations of Black Power, with special emphasis on Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Asia by tracing the genealogies of the concept and challenging localized limitations of Black Power scholarship.

Though the term "Black Power" is most frequently associated with the political and cultural movement of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, the drive to valorize blackness and Africanness/Africanité was broadly shared throughout Africa and the African Diaspora. Black Power was a transnational phenomenon; in addition to the U.S., organizations, activists, artists, and politicians in Canada, Trinidad, Guyana, Jamaica, Bermuda, UK, South Africa, Zaire, and elsewhere explicitly identified themselves as adhering to Black Power. Each of these local movements responded in unique ways, but remained in dialogue with peoples of African descent and other peoples seeking creative responses to oppressive regimes. At the same time, 1970s black feminist

organizations such as the Combahee River Collective (USA) and the Southall Black Sisters (UK), as well as writers such as Claudia Jones, Audre Lorde and Bessie Head, openly contested the masculinist, heteronormative tendencies within Black Power. Indeed, Diasporic feminists often imagined freedom in far more expansive political and aesthetic terms than their male counterparts.

In exploring Black Power as a global phenomenon, ASWAD encourages the submission of papers that interrogate the elements that define Black Power, its multiple locations, and articulations, its gendered and sexual contours, the transnational connections that informed and nurtured it as well as global and local cultural and political projects that revitalize it in the twenty-first century. In addition, we seek to identify the antecedents of Black Power, and historicize it within the trajectories of African and African Diasporic literature, culture, media, philosophy, politics, and the academy itself, as well as its relationship to health and environmental issues. The cultural and ideological foundations of Black Power had deep roots in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries and, as such, ASWAD encourages papers that excavate the origins of the cultural, intellectual, and political expressions that gave birth to the liberation struggles of the 20th century. All geographic areas will be represented, including Africa, the Americas, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia. Paper and panel proposals that incorporate women, gender, and sexuality as categories of analysis are encouraged.

The University of Pittsburgh is hosting the conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Please send a two-page abstract (for either a single presentation or a panel) and a one-page CV (or multiple one-page CV's) by March 15, 2011. They can be sent prior to submitting the registration fee, and are to be sent electronically via email attachment to: aswad2011@osu.edu. Other queries (but not abstracts; please send all abstracts to same email address) can be addressed to: Leslie M. Alexander, Conference Co-Chair, Associate Professor, 371 Dulles Hall, 230 West 17th Avenue, Department of History, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43210. We intend to post papers on our website, and some may be selected for publication. If you do not wish your paper to appear in either format, please clearly indicate such. Completed materials should be submitted in publishable form prior to the first week in October, 2011.