

SEPTEMBER—DECEMBER 2010

The SOJOURNER TRUTH *Newsletter*

A PUBLICATION OF THE CENTER FOR AFRICANA STUDIES AT CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?



WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS
FOR
CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

FEATURES IN THIS ISSUE

- Page 4.....From Absent Fathers:
Literary Implications for Sons in the College Environment
- Page 6.....Where Do We Go From Here?
What the Future Holds for CCSU Students
- Page 8.....The Seventeenth Annual CAS Conference
ICYIZERE: Rwandan Reconciliation Film Documentary
- Page 10.....News From the Motherland...
South Africans as World Cup Hosts
- Page 12.....African American Film Review
For Colored Girls

Special Note:

Due to the shift from a general to a specific Sankofa vision for the newsletter, the Editor in Chief is the primary author and intellectual sponsor of the material in this edition.

WELCOME FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS

As Co-directors of the Center for Africana Studies, we welcome this newsletter to audiences near and far. We sincerely hope readers will value *The Sojourner Truth* as a key educational platform of the Center. Since the spring semester of 2005, the newsletter has become an informative and motivational voice representing the African Diaspora, and we hope to continue our service in this manner to the Central Connecticut State University campus and the surrounding communities. In the spirit of Sojourner Truth, we support the vision of the newsletter that honors the past and present with information that speaks to our challenges, sacrifices, and successes. As we move forward with new challenge and new possibilities, we thank everyone involved with the Center and *The Sojourner Truth* for your continued support and engagement in our efforts to make this a distinctive and relevant newsletter for many years to come.

Professor Sheri-Fafunwa-Ndibe

Professor Warren Perry

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

WELCOME to the Fall 2010 issue of the Sojourner Truth newsletter. As a key standard for this issue and future ones, we embrace the African-based “Sankofa” message of honoring the past in order to move forward with clarity of vision. This issue fosters the mission statement of the Center for Africana Studies, and it is in line with the newly developed newsletter framework. Our intent is to inform and empower audiences with scholarly news. The feature article of this issue addresses the critical concerns of students of color who may face uncertainty about their futures before and after graduation; thus, it provides possible avenues of opportunity for students to contemplate as they progress forward with their academic endeavors. Three additional articles of this issue offer optimistic insights for male students who have absent fathers and also focus on the unwavering hope embedded into the countries of Rwanda and South Africa. With an aim towards the future for students and a reflective global awareness, we sincerely and respectfully offer this fall issue in efforts to maintain scholarly and communal connections in our support of one another. A special *thank you* is given to all contributors and consultants who sacrificed their time to work diligently with me in the completion of this issue.

Dr. Beverly A. Johnson

FROM ABSENT FATHERS: LITERARY IMPLICATIONS FOR SONS IN THE COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT

There are several novels by African American and African writers that create the father and son relationship as a complex and striking theme, in particular, when the focus is on the absence more than the presence of the biological father. This theme is explored, in part, to mirror the realities as well as stereotypes in the United States and the wider African Diaspora. Charles Johnson's *Middle Passage*, Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Okey's *Ndibe's Arrows of Rain* are just a few that come to mind. These novels speak to the dilemmas created by the physical absence of biological fathers, and they reveal implications for sons that can be useful for the college environment. It is worth noting that these implications, however, are conditional because they require

have an open-mind and to process of understanding father. Exploring the theme literature is beneficial for fathers because they can make critical assessments literature when introduced, actors. Beyond relating to come to a deeper realization social strains that influence

The power of a "silent reference" (absent father) should not be underestimated because this absence could make the difference between selecting the appropriate major in the college environment or remaining uncertain or directionless in the academic environment.

young men in college to be actively engaged in the the full impact of the absent of the absent father through male students with absent gain analytical skills and through the reading of possibly, to relatable char-distinct characters, they may of the set of social and non-the father's absence.

Take into consideration, short story "The Ant of Self". Intelligent teenage son, Spur-

his father (Ray Bivens), yet is persuaded (due to unpredictable circumstances) to attend the Million Man March with him in Washington D.C. While this intentional setting encouraged forgiveness and atonement, a significant portion of the story examines this protagonist's efforts to understand his father while suppressing and expressing anger over his father's life choices. Although the story ends for the protagonist as unpredictably as it starts, it offers, as do the novels referenced above, an insightful view into the absence of biological fathers. This short story suggests also that male college students with absent fathers can comprehend the father's absence as triggering a process of self judgment with the objective to take a position on the core causes of the absence, rather than allowing these causes to be framed only by other family members and society.

for instance, Z.Z. Packer's This story depicts an intel-geon, who doesn't live with

One dominant way this is examined by Packer (and Morrison) is through a keen sense of personality development. Packer suggests through the father and son's brief interactions that the father's absence has as much of a direct influence on shaping his personality as a top debater in school and as a student with near perfect school attendance as does his mother's presence. This personality development is equally if not more pronounced in Morrison's *Song of Solomon* for characters Macon Dead and Guitar Bains, whose fathers' absences were the result of murder and a traumatic accident. In light of both losses, it is not a stretch of the imagination to conclude that these major characters developed personality traits from their absent fathers that strengthened them as much as personality traits that weakened them. This following implication is important to remember: *The power of a "silent reference" (absent father) should not be underestimated because this absence could make the difference between selecting the appropriate major in the college environment or remaining uncertain or directionless in the academic environment.* Consider for a moment the following example: A single mother encourages or even manipulates her son to become a lawyer and other maternal family members do the same. Regardless of these dominant influences, the son begins college, and he is not really sure what he wants to do or to become in life. He appears almost as a blank sheet. If one sees the mother's influence on her son as tangible yet unsuccessful, then the father's influence is also present (despite the physical absence) and can provide a successful avenue as a strong yet silent reference. It can be a missed opportunity for the male student to not consider his absent father's role in shaping what he may want to become in life. Yet the student must be willing to embrace the reality that the influence, seemingly invisible, has been there all along.

One of the more striking scenes in “The Ant of Self” involves the character Spurgeon’s futile attempts to reiterate to a group of adult males at the Million Man March that he is there solely to help his father sell birds. His brief comments to the men reveal his unresolved anger towards a biological father who he is rather embarrassed by and ashamed of; nevertheless, he tolerates his father as a means to understand the concept of manhood beyond what the mother can provide for him. This scene is of particular importance because it reveals an innate sense of belonging for Spurgeon. This revelation is further emphasized by the group of African American males who are unsuccessful at persuading Spurgeon to forgive his father but understand the significance of their efforts. What should not be underestimated is the protagonist’s presence at the Million Man March, and the following consequence of the son’s presence is worth noting for any male student who was not raised by his biological father: *The acceptance of his innate sense of belonging is a major precondition to academic performance.* Many male students, especially male students of color with absent fathers, are destined to do well and can far surpass any average standard of performance, yet it is possible that they can be blocked by their resistance to examine (or to embrace) a fuller sense of belonging to the absent father. Although the details or circumstances of an absence father’s life even misunderstood, the to his father was established unchangeable.

The acceptance of his innate sense of belonging is a major precondition to academic performance.

may be messy, unclear, or innate belonging for a son via an ancestral base that is

A third implication re- the protagonists’ experi- as *Things Fall Apart* and *Ar-* awareness by the sons after assess threats. This is shown

ability to use their fathers’ absences a trigger mechanism to make themselves less susceptible to risks. For example, Okonkwo’s determination to be a hard worker and a strong community leader, (in *Things Fall Apart*) is fueled by his father’s absence and the negative connotations of this absence in the community. Although he experiences major setbacks throughout the novel, he is extremely aware of the threats that may alter his family’s quality of life as well as the community’s existence. Furthermore, Adero’s retrospective qualities and his skills as a journalist trigger within him (in *Arrows of Rain*) ways to minimize societal and political threats, and these factors are key in the connections he makes with his biological father. For male students with absent fathers, these two literary works suggest that *their fathers’ absences can strengthen them to better judge how to handle challenging circumstances that might occur (whether academic or social), limiting or denying them opportunities they deserve to have in the college.*

vealed collectively through ences in select works such *rows of Rain* is the greater they’ve taken the time to by these protagonists’ abil-

The literary implications covered here are not attempts to diminish the absent father’s responsibility or accountability to his son, nor do they intend to promote a sympathetic bias towards the father. Instead, they are presented to help male college students who find difficulties coping with the issue of their father’s absence. The intent is to remind them that they can be successful academically by reading literature that speaks to this issue while understanding also what it can offer them when they are receptive enough to view the absence as a means to empower themselves. ■ B. Johnson

References:

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. New York: Fawcett, 1969.

Johnson, Charles. *Middle Passage*. New York: Plume, 1991.

Morrison, Toni. *Song of Solomon*. New York: Plume, 1987.

Ndibe, Okey. *Arrows of Rain*. Portsmouth (N.H.): Heinemann(ASC), 2000.

Packer, Z.Z. “The Ant of Self” *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere*. New York: Riverhead, 2004.

THE SOJOURNER TRUTH NEWSLETTER

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR CCSU STUDENTS

With the economic uncertainty that most people living in this country continue to experience as this year comes to an end, it is nearly impossible to find college students who are not in the least concerned about their future prospects post graduation. Students who are currently juniors and seniors no longer have the luxury of time to be indecisive about the immediate future. It is vital, therefore, that students at Central Connecticut State University become and remain motivated to explore several opportunities that can make a difference for them when infused with sound decision-making skills and a clear vision about the quality of life they desire on a long-term basis. Thus, the intent of this article is to acknowledge the major concerns that students have about their options in a strained economy and to balance these concerns with strategies and established pathways designed to assist them during their stay in this university setting.



Godsgift Iyeni and Yasmin Asante, Biology majors at CCSU, spend time at the Center conversing about an upcoming class project.

While some students are rethinking the decision made towards earning a degree in a particular field of study based on their market potential with a specific degree, several students are actively pondering whether to stay in this academic environment for an advanced degree or to compete with their peers and other individuals in the workforce after graduation. "I'm frustrated because it may not be a matter of what I desire to do as much as what is available for me to do," explains junior Courtney Marion. As a current Sociology major at CCSU, Courtney believes she is taking steps in the right direction to complete her degree, but she plans to become even more aware of the resources on campus that can help her plan a bright future and to minimize the impact felt of the slow economic recovery of the country. Senior Claude Bradley echoes similar views as Courtney yet with a slight shift in focus. "I know I am motivated to move to the next level of my studies and become a graduate student, but my work and academic schedule keeps me too busy to look in depth into all the campus resources that may be able to help me." Bradley's point is extremely important because he voices the concerns for many CCSU students who are overwhelmed with their daily schedules and may wait too long before taking needed action. Even the amount of debt or financial obligations incurred in order to remain in the academic environment can take a toll on students and further prevent them from taking advantage of viable resources that can lead them in clear direction. In light of these issues, it is important for students to remember that they can be proactively in tandem with university's resources that are designed to help students obtain clarity about where they are going as they proceed to journey out of university life and how they will get there.

First, this pro-action approach starts with a realistic self-analysis of the student's strengths and weaknesses. This type of self-analysis is critical because a student won't simply believe or settle for any assessment made

about his or her personality or talents due to standard tests, and it reinforces the point that no one should know the student better than the student knows himself or herself. Furthermore, making this prior self-assessment is key to gaining quality preparation when engaging with campus resource personnel such as an academic advisor or advisement professionals in the Center for Advising and Career Exploration.

Second, in accepting that we are in a competitive, global economy that will not change for a long time to come, students will benefit from deliberately adding different courses beyond their major courses, strengthening their self-marketing potential. These extra courses will, hopefully, showcase talents or skills beyond the student's major. This can make a striking difference in how one is perceived when conversing with recruiters from various corporations or school systems at the university's yearly sponsored career fairs. It also creates avenues for a plan B or plan C for students when the initial plan is no longer viable.

Third, applying a study abroad experience and/or second language courses beyond just fulfilling set require-



CCSU Students Claude Bradley, Pamela Blackmore and Edward Ubaiké prepare for upcoming exams at the Center for Africana Studies.

ments is very essential to building a student's confidence and performance. In addition, it showcases the student's ability to take risks and to be challenged out of his or her comfort zone while further stressing a sense of global awareness. This awareness may be needed for select careers that will not be based only in the United States. At the very least, it is worth considering what these experiences can bring to an internship or a Co-op program before or shortly after graduation.

Although it is vital to make use of campus resources as mandatory pathways well before the senior year, stressing the need for students to move beyond the basic three R's and cover the 3 P's of Preparation, Performance, and Progression in the classroom cannot be overstated. It makes little sense for any student to expect to be hired for a position or accepted in a graduate program if the skill level is not on par with the requirements of a specific company or educational institution. Once the degrees are earned, students should not expect the degrees to simply speak for them; however, they should expect the work produced to earn their degrees to result in successful marketing of themselves. It is a huge error in judgment to believe one can start planning his or her future after graduation and expect favorable results immediately in this economic climate.

Clearly, the ultimate message this article embodies with this information is "Don't Wait!" Start early with preparing and performing academically in the college environment so that progression will be an automatic process, and the future won't hold a sense of uncertainty but real opportunities and choices. Thus, when asked the question: "Where do we go from here?" genuine answers with pride will be given. ■

THE SOJOURNER TRUTH NEWSLETTER
CENTER FOR AFRICANA STUDIES
17TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
“ICYIZERE (HOPE) RECONCILIATION AFTER THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE.”

There are rare times when the act of forgiving is simply not an option for individuals but a purpose driven necessity that promotes the healing process for the victims and victimizers. This point is made with laser clarity



Filmmaker Patrick Mureithi discusses his Rwandan Film during the 17th Annual Center for Africana Studies Conference held on his behalf.



Faculty and community members pose with filmmaker and producer Patrick Mureithi.

through the film documentary *ICYIZERE* (Hope) that highlights the Rwandan people’s ability to move forward with reconciliation workshops created after the Rwanda genocide of 1994. As the key feature of the Center for Africana Studies 17th Annual Conference, this documentary was shown by the filmmaker and producer Mr. Patrick Mureithi to a full and diverse audience in Torp Theater at Central Connecticut State University on November 12, 2010.

“This has truly been a life changing experience for me,” stated Mureithi to the audience after a warm welcome and introduction by Professor Sheri Fafunwa-Ndibe, Co-Director of the Center for Africana Studies and Dr. Zdzislaw B. Kremens, Dean of the School of Engineering and Technology. Mureithi further emphasized how making the film is in line with the university’s motto of “Starting With a Dream and Finish With a Future” due to his steadfast vision of producing this documentary over a three year period (2007-2010) that became the reality he now shares with the world. After referencing the typical challenges inherent with making a documentary, acknowledging local and regional support for this project, and sharing his initial meetings with the Rwandan people, (who were initially suspicious of outsiders), Mureithi provided a thought provoking three point assessment before showing the documentary. First, he asserted, that the “greatest malady in Africa is unresolved psychological trauma.” He explained also that his witnessing of the workshops reinforced his belief that reconciliation is possible, and he conveyed an optimistic outlook with the following statement: “The act of facing our grief can make us better human beings who can be, ultimately, ambassadors for peace.” These three points set the tone of the film that centered upon the process of reconciliation for ten victims and ten perpetrators in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide that lasted for a period of one hundred days.

One of the most striking moments at the start of the film was a collective fast-paced series of faces underscoring the fact that millions of Rwandans were, and still are, severely affected by the massive loss of life estimated to be between eight hundred thousand to one million people. The documentary provided the historical context of the genocide, at first, through an overview of European countries' divide and conquer practices on the African continent and through Belgium's explicit role in creating and implementing ethnic divides between the Rwandan people. It also highlights the Hutu's and Tutsi's internal fighting over a period of decades throughout the mid to late 20th century that resulted in the devastating genocide of 1994.

This historical background gave further clarity to the immense mourning and trauma relived through the workshop experience for participants who shared memories of murdered relatives and neighbors as well as their own escape. The profound sense of loss survivors shared was dominant in the documentary, yet this was balanced with the comments of perpetrators participating in the workshop. One featured survivor, Mama Aline, lost her husband during the genocide, and she continues to struggle with her memories of him and his absence. Select perpetrators revealed their remorse and their fears of integrating back into the Rwandan society. For instance, Jean Baptiste, a featured perpetrator, shared his feelings of being temporarily in prison and the fear he felt as he continued to rebuild his life among people who had been victimized.

One memorable activity for the workshop participants shown in the documentary was the "Trust Walk". This pairing exercise required one partner to wear a blindfold and to be lead from one location to a different one by a partner who was not blindfolded. Participants reversed roles, and a discussion about how it felt to be lead by someone without the ability to see was held shortly after the exercise was completed. Not only did the exercise further emphasize the necessity of sharing feelings of helplessness, it also revealed how people may remain blind if they do not forgive and begin the process of trusting one another, despite a haunting past.

After the fifty-minute version of the documentary concluded, Mr. Mureithi gave a power point presentation that explained the historical use of propaganda, used skillfully by the Hutus, as a means to exacerbate feelings of hatred towards the Tutsis. On a more positive note, he discussed in his presentation the experiences of sharing the film in various communities in Rwanda. He believes the documentary encouraged a sense of community and promoted civic education as well. Even a showing of the documentary at the Gisenyi Central Prison, according to Mureithi, was well received. At the conclusion of his presentation, Mureithi emphasized the universal appeal that this experience provided. He believes many societies can benefit from the practice of forgiveness, and he encouraged the audience to seek help in dealing with issues that leaves them traumatized or wounded. Mureithi stated, "There is no shame in being broken; the real shame is not doing something about it."

After a brief question and answer period, Dr. Evelyn Phillips, Professor of Anthropology, gave poignant closing remarks reminding the audience to reflect on the possibility of a tragedy of this proportion happening in the 21st century and encouraged the audience to be proactive in forgiving while not taking for granted the people in their lives. Due to the importance of the issue, Dr. Phillips noted the shift in focus made with this conference from numerous presenters at previous ones to this significant documentary. Following Professor Phillips' closing remarks, Professor Fafunwa Ndibe invited audience members to lunch in Memorial Hall. The Center for African Studies 17th Annual Conference Committee members are Sheri Fafunwa-Ndibe, Warren Perry, Evelyn Newman Phillips, Segun Odesina, Toyin Ayeni, Chengiah Ragaven, Peter LeMaire, Janet Woodruff, Grace Kyeremateng, and Cherolle Brown. ■

THE SOJOURNER TRUTH NEWSLETTER NEWS FROM THE MOTHERLAND

Welcome to one of our new standard topic sections of the Sojourner Truth newsletter. This standard topic will be featured in future issues of the Sojourner Truth with the purpose of covering a broad range of topics relevant in several African countries that further impacts the broader African Diaspora. This informative section of the newsletter will be balanced with scholarly perspectives from faculty, students, staff, or community members who offer engaging and thought provoking views about the select news for this section.

For this first feature topic, we picked South Africa, the 19th FIFA World Cup host country for 2010. Their role was viewed with much anticipation, excitement, and skepticism, yet South Africans took this opportunity to heart and provided a successful backdrop to this world-wide event. They unified the African continent for stereotypes that seek to limit or ing billions of rands on the transport and security, South Africans not only they made an effective and favorable

What is especially noteworthy is ously and showcasing the uniqueness the influence of the joyful yet pierc- to earn a place in the Oxford Diction- new English words. Equally signifi- government gave notice to all that it as China and India, in hosting interna- human resource management efforts. South Africans have paved the way for take the country seriously by further diminishing the skepticism about their ability to perform and to produce results globally. Although not all was perfect at all times, especially with African team's performances, South Africans can be proud because they made history, they proved the nay-sayers wrong, and they set standards for hosting international events for other African countries and the wider African Diaspora. Much Kudos to South Africa!!! ■ Editor in Chief



Dr. Johnson and Dr. Assado take a moment to reflect on their World Cup experience in Cape Town, South Africa.

backdrop to this world-wide event. this moment in time and dismantled marginalize their capabilities. Spend- infrastructure, hotel sector, stadiums enriched the country economically, but impact on the country's image overall.

their cultural pride, expressed rigor- of South African ethnic groups. Even ing vuvuzelas was powerful enough ary of English that reflects trends in cant, is the fact that the South African is in league with other countries, such tional events with efficiency and skill in Because of this successful venture, more businesses and entrepreneurs to

NEWS FROM THE MOTHERLAND...PERSPECTIVE ONE:

When some of us, who lived through the thick and demeaning cloud of colonial days, watch and listen to what is happening to Africa and in Africa today, we immediately feel some bitter-sweet lump welling up in our throats and some quiet flowing tears running down our cheeks. We remember with sadness the trumpeted dark continent of ignorant H. Trevor Roper, and we feel proud that the prejudiced appellation with which Africa was classified as the "dark continent" has been shown a flaming red-card. Knowing that Rome was not built in a day, we

recall the time when Caesar’s Roman soldiers built a wall to separate themselves from “uncivilized” Britons.

In spite of their knowledge of the history of development, Western Europeans convinced themselves that “nothing good, but slavery came from Africa.” This view was strongly confirmed by Mr. Roper who said that the only thing to learn from Africa was “the history of Europeans in Africa; the rest was darkness.” Thank God that he and those who believed him have been proven wrong many times, even though they have also, many times, refused to see the truth. The quiet revolution that has been taking place all over Africa has attracted very little if any approving attention. When I was growing up, I did not see a motor vehicle until I was ten years old. The road to town was more or less a wide footpath. Today, the story is very different, and so it is all over the continent. The Africa of 2010 is *not* the Africa of the 1940s and 1950s. There can be no better example to illustrate this fact than the success of the FIFA World Cup competition in South Africa. That country left the West with

their jaws dropping in amazement, and Africa proud of herself. Do we have problems within the continent? Yes, we do, just as other continents. The problems may not be identical, and their weight on the continent may be heavy. But as one of the most popular adages of Africa puts it: The head of the elephant is as heavy on the head of the elephant as the head of the ant is on the ant.



The Cape Town Stadium in Cape Town, South Africa from afar.

amazement, and Africa have problems within do, just as other continents. The problems may not be identical, and their weight on the continent may be heavy. But as one of the most popular adages of Africa puts it: The head of the elephant is as heavy on the head of the elephant as the head of the ant is on the ant.

■ Andrew Moemeka

PERSPECTIVE TWO: The location of this year’s World Cup was subject to criticism and fear especially with the news of theft, xenophobia, and potential diseases reported about South Africa in recent news. Nevertheless, South Africa played hostess to the best of her capabilities, showing the warmth of hospitality and friendliness of the people, in spite of the exorbitant rates of accommodation and food, among other items. But who can blame a country for wanting to cash in on such a celebrated event? The eyes of the world were on South Africa.

Most stadia where key games were held were packed to capacity, and tickets rates naturally high. World attention was given to the vuvuzelas that either caused headaches or motivated the players to score more goals. The games would definitely have been a much different atmosphere without them. Loyal fans and general viewers had to set aside their alliances because many of the players in the European soccer league dispersed to play for their home countries; this cements the fact that it is a team effort that brings success to a team rather than individual capabilities.

The enthusiasm of the people and the friendliness, the atmosphere, all proved that Africa is well on her way to a higher level of development, and through this, the entire continent made new friends and opened up exciting new prospects in every realm. ■ Pamela Blackmore

THE SOJOURNER TRUTH NEWSLETTER FOR COLORED GIRLS (A FILM REVIEW)

The first time a film adaptation of an award winning play comes to light, movie critics are eager to pounce, and they make no exceptions with Tyler Perry's "For Colored Girls" which is based on Ntozake Shange's 1975 play *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*. Whether Perry succeeds or not as the writer and producer of Shange's original work will be discussed probably for years to come; however, the potential for what it can do for audiences, especially African American and African Disapora audiences, should not be overlooked. First, it can spark in-depth conversations about male and female relationships' evolvement and complexities in the 21st century through a comparison and contrast analysis of the seventies' time period. Although striking disconnections between males and females characters were predictably illuminated for many viewers of Perry's film, the impact of (re) defined roles for women and men is worth examining beyond opinion-based rhetoric. Furthermore, the film also reminds us that the strong assertions of our beliefs, emotions, and desires no longer frame us within a stereotypical image that is beyond our control, unless, of course, we choose this. An African American male filmmaker who has an invested interest in exploring the value and worth of different African American female voices with notable actresses seem to suggest, at least, that progress can be made beyond gender restrictive practices. It suggests also that African American women dictate more how progress will be defined for themselves.

Beyond the idea of being simply entertained by movies, many people desire to have a meaningful experience or a sense of connectedness through observations of realistic portrayals based, preferably, about relevant subject matter. Perry's effectiveness in capturing this desire is justifiably debatable; however, this should not overshadow the importance of the key themes (such as self-identity, self esteem, emotional scars, and romantic love) *For Color Girls* brings forth in these current times. Even for the many viewers who believe the main purpose of this movie does not extend beyond informing us of the obvious challenges and situations faced mainly by women of color, they may find it appropriate that the movie's existence offers an even larger purpose. This purpose is assessing critically the Black aesthetics in the 21st century within our own lives and communities, in part, through the dominant images we see reflected in film. This assessment, individually and collectively, is vital because it can make a difference in determining whether there are more films similar to *For Colored Girls* produced or films that sharply contrast it in the future.

A CCSU SENIOR'S REVIEW PERSPECTIVE:

After hearing so much about the film *For Color Girls* I knew I had to see it. As a young Black woman in America, there are many stereotypes that I try to break away from, and I wanted *For Colored Girls* to be a movie that showed the public the many sides of Black women. The issues covered in the film are issues that can be found with all types of women. Right now there are a few hot topics concerning Black women, and they have been stirring up for some time now. For example, there is the support for Black women wearing their natural hair. All over the internet, one can find videos, tutorials, and products that help Black women maintain natural and healthy hair and hairstyles.

With topics such as this one prominent in the Black community, I thought Perry’s movie would go deeper into how there are many different types of Black women because not all of us are the same. Some of us choose to have natural hair and some don’t. Some of us date Black men and others don’t. By going deeper, the audience would see that Black women vary, and that we are not *ALL* angry women who have abortions, date abusive men, and put children in danger. Asian women and Caucasian women, for example, are just as capable of experiencing such life changing occurrences.

Throughout my four years in college at Central Connecticut State University, I have met many strong Black women who empower me, and I wish these women or women like them were referenced in the media as a positive balance to negative images we more often see portrayed about women of color, especially Black women. I wanted to walk out of the theatre proud to be a Black woman rather than worried that we are all doomed. Therefore, there was nothing new and enlightening that I haven’t already watched, read or heard about. ■

Ramatou Sangare

SPIRITUALITY FOR MEN SYMPOSIUM

THE MAN ENOUGH SUPPORT INITIATIVE

Special recognition goes to the members of The Man Enough Support Initiative for holding symposium that focused on the collective and individual spiritual needs of men. Held on November 18th 2010, in Founders Hall at Central Connecticut State University, the meeting’s primary agenda was to examine if this need was being fully responded to by various faith communities. Sharing their unique yet relevant perspectives were the following select guest speakers: Mr. Bill Williams, a Zen Buddhist Master; Mr. Arthur Miller, Deacon and Director of the Office of Black Catholic Ministers; Elder Jacob Wallace, Pastor of the House of God Church in Middletown, CT. and Mr. Steve Wilson, Manager of the Counseling Center at Hartford Job Corp Academy. Collectively, each speaker delivered poignant yet optimistic messages, with heartfelt sincerity, about the necessity for spirituality to serve as a bridge to guide men safely thorough the daily challenges they will encounter.

“Are we meeting the spiritual needs of men?” was the central question each speaker voiced his assessments about. Mr. Williams framed his comments around the concept of forgiveness, and he asked the audience to keep an open mind in regards to understanding and forgiving people who inflict harm to others.

Mr. Wilson stressed the need to have clarity of purpose in life, and he emphasized the belief that a person’s spirituality can serve as a means to role model him or her to his or her intended destiny. More specifically, he asserted that the spiritual needs of men were being met in some ways; however, much more work is required by all. Mr. Miller focused on his involvement with troubled youth and teenagers who may be on “the road to nowhere,” and may miss the point that God is right in front of them. Although he gave voice to the hopelessness that many young teens experience, he stressed consistently the need for people to actively seek spiritual guidance in existing locations where their needs can be addressed. In a similar fashion, Elder Wallace asked the

(Cont. on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)

S P I R I T U A L I T Y F O R M E N S Y M P O S I U M
T H E M A N E N O U G H S U P P O R T I N I T I A T I V E

audience to listen for God and to devote as much time to God as the relationships we cherish. At least three male audience members responded that they appreciated the speakers for providing encouraging messages. They asked questions that allowed select speakers to further promote spirituality as a positive, empowering force in the lives of men. This program of the Counseling and Wellness Center was held with the support of the Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc., and funded by the Office of Diversity and Equity's Diversity Grant. ■

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR SPRING 2011

Central Connecticut State University (New Britain, CT) will celebrate International Mother Language Day (February 22) with various events. From February 22 to March 4, 2011, the "Endangered Alphabets" exhibition by Tim Brookes will be on display in the Elihu Burritt library. Mr. Brookes will give a talk in the special collection room at 2 pm on February 22. On February 25, 2011, a workshop celebrating "Mother Language Day" will be held in Torp Theatre at CCSU from 12:30 pm. This all-afternoon event will feature four talks on endangered languages by the following speakers: Dr. Douglas H. Whalen (Endangered Language Fund), Ms. Stephanie Fielding (Mohegan Tribe), Dr. Brad Montgomery-Anderson (Northeastern State University, Oklahoma), Dr. Akinbiyi Akinlabi (Rutgers University) and Dr. Bruce Connell (York University, Canada). There will also be a screening of a short film about endangered languages. This event is free and open to the public. For more information, please contact Dr. Seunghun Lee (seunghunlee@ccsu.edu).

SNEAK PREVIEW: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT K-12 STUDENTS' WORKS TOPOLOGY OF PLACE



Vanessa Butler & k-12 students: Naylor School



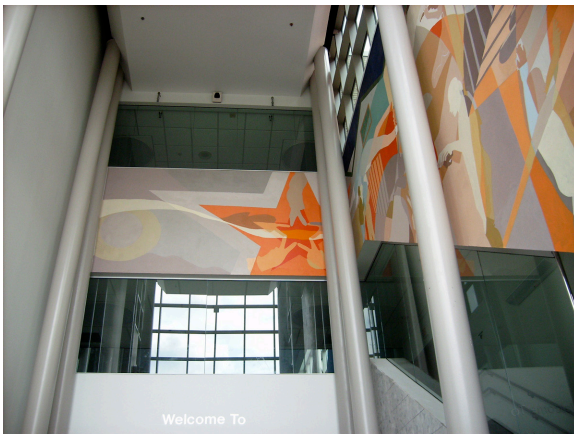
National Art Education Association Mural:
Baltimore: Photo by Jerry Butler



Noah Webster Mural: Photo by Vanessa Butler



Naylor Mural: Photo by Jerry Butler



Welcome To



40th Anniversary of Kent State &
Jackson State event Mural



Research Art: Photo by Jerry Butler

THE SOJOURNER TRUTH NEWSLETTER

EXECUTIVE BOARD

CO-DIRECTORS

SHERI FAFUNWA-NDIBE
WARREN PERRY

EDITOR IN CHIEF

BEVERLY A. JOHNSON

KEY CONTRIBUTORS:

ANDREW MOEMEKA
PAMELA BLACKMORE
RAMATOU SANGARE
BEVERLY JOHNSON

KEY CONSULTANTS:

MONTEZ JOHNSON
CLIFFORD MOORE
WILLIAM FOTHERGILL
CLAUDE BRADLEY
OLUSEGUN SOGUNRO
EVELYN PHILLIPS

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

JERRY BUTLER

PHOTOGRAPHER

BOB WESSMAN

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING CCSU STUDENT SUPPORTERS:

OLUFUNKE ADEBAYO
SAMIRA ALLI
YASMIN ASANTE
CHEROLLE BROWN
GODSGIFT IYENI
GRACE KYEREMATENG
EDWARD UBAIKE

Spring 2011-

Please Remember the Events!

The Annual Amistad Lecture and Banquet- Feb. 22

“Mother Language Day” Workshop –Feb. 25

The Center for Africana Studies Annual Banquet- May 7

Select Study Abroad Places and Dates

Johannesburg and Cape Town, South Africa- January 2-17 Winter Session

Montego Bay, Jamaica 8-17

Winter Session

Mona, Jamaica March 17-27

Spring 2011

Rio de Janeiro,

Belo Horizonte, and Ouro Preto, Brazil March 18 –27

Spring 2011

The Sojourner Truth Newsletter
A Publication of the Center for Africana Studies
at Central Connecticut State University