

**Recovering the African American Past for the Purposes of the
Policy Present:**

The History and Evolution of Africana Cultures and Policy Studies

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Africana Cultures and Policy Studies represents a revolution in the way Africana studies is thought of and applied. It takes the scholarship of the black experience and applies a multi-dimensional policy framework, producing solutions designed to improve conditions affecting Africana communities worldwide. In terms of intellectual production, there is a direct linkage between black intellectual history and the development of what we refer to herein as Africana Cultures and Policy Studies. First, I argue that the scholarship of black intellectuals, past and present, can contribute to the successful development, evaluation, and implementation of public policy for Africana communities around the globe. Second, the area of Africana Cultures and Policy Studies is offered as a mechanism and framework whereby we can examine the work of black intellectuals as it relates to policy construction, evaluation, and application. Lastly, I seek to highlight the work of the Africana Cultures and Policy Studies Institute in spearheading this effort to link black history and cultures theory with policy praxis.

Furthermore, this essay examines the manner and method by which African American history and culture functions as the centerpiece in the development of the emerging discipline of Africana Cultures and Policy Studies. The research of various 20th century Black public intellectuals, most notably members of the Howard University “policy research nucleus,” served to provide the groundwork for a nascent connection between the study of local, national, and global black cultures and related public policies. Ironically, policymakers, national leaders and their constituencies failed to make adequate usage of the detailed analysis of challenges facing African America as pointed out by notable scholar-activists. Africana Cultures and Policy Studies (ACPS) is an interdisciplinary field of study, rooted in the historical experience of people of African descent, and centered around the work and activism of countless black leaders-incorporating movements as diverse as the New Negro Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power, and Hip Hop. Using James Scott’s notion of “infrapolitics,” and

Manning Marable's concept of "living black history," ACPS represents a cultural theory that analyzes contemporary issues impacting the black community, using as historical framework, various watershed moments in our past. In tracking the historical foundation laid by black intellectual pragmatists, ACPS underscores a direct linkage with the construction, implementation, and evaluation of policies on a local, national, and transnational/international level.

Unmistakably, the cultural research of black intellectuals has always held policy value in terms of black studies. In the formative years of what Martin Kilson calls a nascent black studies, at a time when it was known as "Negro studies," black public intellectuals contributed significant research highlighting the contours of black life and reality. Included among this listing of public intellectuals were W. E. B. Du Bois, Carter Woodson, Charles Spurgeon Johnson, Allison Davis, Horace Mann Bond, Ralph Bunche, Rayford Logan, Melville Herskovitz, E. Franklin Frazier, John Hope Franklin, Kelly Miller, and Ira de Augustine Reid. In his assessment, Kilson argued that black studies should return to the example set forth in the work of his contemporaries, reminiscent of the ability of these scholar's arguments, addressing specific conditions facing black communities. Chiding the militant philosophical posturing of some modern black studies advocates, Kilson acknowledged the "first generation cohort of black studies intellectuals," for balancing "within their persona both a progressive ideological commitment to black realities—to freeing those realities from oppressive white supremacist patterns worldwide," while "advancing their modern development" with "a non-ethnocentric or pluralistic scholarly orientation toward black realities." Kilson seemed to advance an emphasis upon the application of an accurate analysis of black realities in the service of the black community—as opposed to using black studies strictly as a polemical tool, merely functioning as an aesthetic exercise for some enamored with nationalist rhetoric and posturing (Marable *Dispatches* 172).

Offering as proper models of black studies, Kilson pointed to the Negro studies series developed by W. E. B. Du Bois at Atlanta University as well as variations initiated by colleagues at other institutions. Du Bois initiated the studies series in 1897, the same year he received a rebuff from elite institutions concerning the work of his seminal study, *The Philadelphia Negro*. Presented before the forty-second meeting of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences in Philadelphia, *The Philadelphia Negro* represented black studies perhaps at its most elemental, with its emphasis on "cooperative research." Despite his sheer optimism, Du Bois's plans for the institutionalization of this research

paradigm fell upon the deaf ears of the leading white universities of the day, the same which denied him a full-time teaching job despite his having received the first PhD in history from Harvard University in 1895. Both the substance and implications of *The Philadelphia Negro* and *The Atlanta University Studies* influenced many of the current policy research methodologies conducted by known African American think tanks including the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, TransAfrica, and the National Urban League Policy Institute (Winston 690-691). Signaling an avocation of institutional development, in his autobiography, *Dusk of Dawn*, he made a claim for the black college as an applied research center:

. . . and yet what is a Negro college but a vast college settlement for the study of a particular set of peculiarly baffling problems? What more effective or suitable agency could be found in which to focus the scientific efforts of the great universities of the North and East, than an institution situated in the very heart of these social problems, and made the center of careful historical and statistical research? Without doubt the first effective step toward the solving of the Negro question will be the endowment of the Negro college which is not merely a teaching body, but a center of sociological research, in close connection and co-operation with Harvard, Columbia, Johns Hopkins, and the University of Pennsylvania. (Du Bois 62).

Essentially, the theories and praxis of Du Bois became the model on which all black studies intellectuals patterned their work, particularly the manner in which they applied quality scholarship to address persistent needs of the larger black community.

Similarly, *The Atlanta University Studies* represented the kind of thorough, cooperative research at the heart of nascent black studies. Among the titles of the research publications of this study included “Social and physical condition of Negroes in Cities,” “The Negro in Business,” “The College-Bred Negro,” “The Negro Common School,” “The Negro Church,” “The Negro American Family,” “The Health and Physique of the Negro American,” and “Some Notes on Negro Crime, Particularly in Georgia.” Michael Winston mentions that despite garnering respect from the academic community, resources were not forthcoming from mainstream universities or philanthropic agencies. Without this critical support, Du Bois’s studies, while significant and pioneering, languished in the Jim Crow system of racial inequality. As a result, without adequate resources, black studies

intellectuals were once again denied an opportunity to effectively link theory and practice in order to promote community transformation.

In surveying the twentieth century, one discovers that black studies intellectuals have produced important applied research which paralleled significant social movements occurring in African America. Speaking to this subject, sociologist James Turner, long-time director of Cornell University's Africana Studies Research Center and creator of the concept "Africana Studies," along with Steven McGann, authored a major study that chronicled the history and evolution of Black Studies from its institutional inception to 1976. In "Black Studies as an Integral Tradition in African-American Intellectual History," Turner and McGann paralleled the evolution of black studies, as a discipline, with the development of research by black intellectuals. Much in the same manner as Winston in his examination of the evolution of the American Negro scholar, Turner and McGann provide examples of black intellectuals whose research studies marked seminal moments in black history and cultural life. Black studies, they argue, is not a recent phenomena but a continuation of an older tradition of black intellectual history.

The work of black scholars evidenced a sheer desire to impact the social, economic, and political condition of African Americans throughout the 20th century. During the period 1913-1929, what Turner and McGann, characterize as "The Foundations of Black Studies," W.E.B. Du Bois produced serious scholarship and institutional apparatuses that would undergird the development of the field itself, over the next century. Du Bois's studies of the black community in Atlanta and Philadelphia as well as Carter Woodson's founding of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now ASALH), the *Journal of Negro History* (now *Journal of African American History*), and Negro History week (now Black History month), carved out a niche for the discipline in an applied manner. In 1921, Howard University intellectuals began contributing its important Studies in History series. Black magazines and journals such as Charles Johnson's *Opportunity* and the NAACP's *Crisis*, edited by Du Bois offered a venue for the expression of vital research findings. The context of this period also evidenced a volatile, yet exciting time in Black America with a proliferation of black college rebellions, culminating with the beginnings of the New Negro Movement. Noted philosopher Alain Locke along with countless other black intellectuals including Zora Neale Hurston and Sterling Brown produced important cultural writing and work that held a significant impact on black progress (Turner and McGann 52, 53).

Living Black History Unbound

In his path-breaking study, *Living Black History: How Reimagining the African-American Past Can Remake America's Racial Future*, historian Manning Marable rightly takes to task historians and black studies scholars for constantly producing work which has no broad applicability to address concerns in the black community. While he agrees that the quality of scholarship should never be compromised, he asserts that a lack of public engagement around issues of importance through our scholarship hampers the impact and relevance of today's black scholars' work. Also, historian Benjamin Quarles speaks of a black history that goes beyond a staid existence. In *Black Mosaic: Essays in Afro-American History and Historiography*, Quarles characterizes black history and black studies as "unbound," and in possession of "diversified clientele" (Quarles, 1988).

Manning Marable's notion of "living black history" serves as an instructive foundation from which to explicate the meaning and value of Africana cultures. Marable offers that Malcolm X and Frantz Fanon understood the power of history to challenge white supremacist structures and, in the process, enhance the condition of black and poor people worldwide. Much of this power lay in the mental shift needed to reorient the thinking of a people towards recognizing new ways of looking at the world. Marable offers a challenging perspective of what the exact role of African American Studies should be:

African American Studies as an interdisciplinary field of scholarship is increasingly disengaged with the pressing problems of the urban poor. Today's elitist discourse of liberal multiculturalism speaks the safe language of symbolic representation, but rarely of resistance. Our scholarship must be rigorous and objective, but if it lacks vision or is not informed in its substructure by passionate collective memory, how meaningful can it be to the one million African Americans who are currently incarcerated in the nation's correctional Facilities? (Marable *Living Black History* 58)

The current state of black studies finds itself enamored more with linguistic virtuosity rather than community transformation. Black history, as its academic progeny, black studies, exhibits a cold shoulder to policy studies-in many ways disengaging as Marable contends. A disconnection results as scholars develop quality research that has no applicability beyond very narrow circles within the ivory or ebony tower. Contrast that with policymakers, politicians, and

social service professionals who continue to underutilize the scholarship of black academics and public intellectuals, preferring to consult with high-brow Washington, DC think tanks, themselves out of touch with the daily realities of grassroots communities of African descent. Black studies intellectuals must realize that individual and collective transformation occurs most effectively by actively participating in policy construction, evaluation, and implementation. It is one thing to debate the contours of social struggle in a safe classroom or executive suite and it is quite another to connect that study with the development of a strategy on how to improve social conditions for the least of these in our society and world. This is where Africana Cultures and Policy Studies can serve as the missing link between Africana Studies and the policy world.

Speaking to the process of developing black leadership, Marable argues for the development of organic intellectuals whom he defines as “women and men who comprehend the challenges that confront their people and who devise practical solutions that challenge their collective situation” (*Living Black History* 56-57). As will be addressed later in this essay, this is precisely what members of the Africana Cultures and Policy Studies Institute seek to initiate as we advance the development of Africana Cultures and Policy Studies.

As a prime representative of black leadership, black public intellectuals have a responsibility to orient their research work in a manner that systematically links the study of culture with policy analysis. Comparatively, James Jennings asserted that the theory and pedagogy of black studies should emphasize the centrality of community service and civic involvement. Referencing the historical theory of Manning Marable, Jennings argued that for black studies to live up to its characterization as a “descriptive, critical, and prescriptive,” discipline, it had to incorporate these twin elements. “Attention to the pedagogy of community service on the part of scholars in black studies,” Jennings advanced, “is important for the growth of this field of intellectual inquiry as well as for its growing impact on the analysis of political and economic issues facing black communities and US urban society.” By highlighting the inseparable relationship between theory and practice, black studies intellectuals enhance understanding of continuity and change in global black life. Historically, Jennings argues that, within the field of black studies, community service has occupied a central role. In analyzing the linkage between theory and practice in the discipline, he defines community service as constitutive of praxis. A central tenet of black studies advocates has been an emphasis of scholarship informed by social struggles of people of African descent (Marable *Dispatches* 177).

Historically, the issue of scholarly and policy advocacy finds a parallel with the work contributed by the public intellectuals at Howard University, dating from the early-to-mid part of the twentieth century. It begs the question historian John Hope Franklin raised as to whether the black scholar can appropriate their work for means of advocacy. Franklin argued against propagating polemics for the sake of sound scholarship but he also mentioned that thorough research could have applicability with respect to addressing matters of public policy. I agree with Franklin on this and add one caveat: that policy can be broadly construed to incorporate that which the marginalized construct from their specific social location. In “The Historian and the Public Policy,” renowned historian John Hope Franklin examined the role of scholarship in the service of solving many of society’s most perplexing problems. He advocated the following: But one must attempt to distinguish between the historian’s role, on the one hand, in supporting causes or offering explanations *after the fact* and, on the other, of trying to assist in the search for solutions to difficult problems in the arena of public policy (311). Franklin characterized the utilization of scholarship for the blatant support of causes as “essentially partisan and defensive,” while the function of offering explanations represented a process that demonstrated the manner by which “historical events can provide some basis for change.” Franklin’s argument offered a necessary discussion concerning the role of the historian in the construction of public policy (311, 312).

Black scholars have created quasi as well as actual policy research institutes as mechanisms with which to address issues of policy concern through their scholarship. Historian Michael Winston referenced a “policy research nucleus” operating at Howard University whereby scholars the likes of Frazier, Bunche, Abram Harris, Charles Thompson, and Charles Wesley thoroughly examined critical areas of black life during watershed moments in the nation’s history. E. Franklin Frazier’s studies of black youth, the black family, and the black church were among the major works that held significant policy import. Ralph Bunche’s studies of black political organizations mark important studies that portend of characteristics of major groups. Similarly, the labor studies of Abram Harris and Charles Wesley profile the challenges and triumphs of black workers in crucial periods in American life. The work of Charles H. Thompson, through the *Journal of Negro Education*, offered a consistent set of critical interpretations investigating the character and impact of racial segregation in education and society. Lastly, the interdisciplinary work of Thompson, Kenneth Clark, John Hope Franklin, Rayford Logan, and other colleagues, along with the Howard’s legal team headed by Charles H. Houston, Thurgood Marshall, and James Nabrit, worked to dismantle racial segregation in the courts (Winston 696-699).

Due to the inherent politics surrounding the professionalization of African American and Africana Studies over the past twenty or so years, much of the initial mission of the discipline to connect theory with practice has been decidedly lost—traded in for tenure promotions, publish or perish perils, and wealth aspirations associated with acquiring academic celebrity status. While some may argue that such an occurrence indicates the “integration” of African American Studies into the mainstream, many veteran and emerging scholar-activists see a disturbing trend and consequence of this questionable merger. African American Studies, did not originate to coddle the academy but to challenge it and admonish it to be aware of the needs of adjacent communities and peoples. Also, due to the increasing closeness of the world’s peoples, brought on by intensive globalization, it is apparent that those in the ebony and ivory towers cannot choose to remain neutral. Globally, cultural conflicts abound. Relatedly, poverty and suffering have reached drastic levels. Knowledge must be used in the service of society and for the purposes of promoting dynamic societal change. Looking at the condition of people of African descent, globally, conditions bespeak of what our scholarship has to say that can address the problems we face in the 21st century and beyond.

Reassessing the Meaning of Culture, Policy, and Black History

From the outset, it is important to define what we mean by the terms “cultures” and “policy.” Culture refers to the substance of a people’s history and tradition that distinguishes it from other groups—among these are religion, music, food, etc. On the other hand, policy can be defined as laws and customs, instituted from either the top-down or bottom-up. In regards to Africana communities and oppressed peoples, much of policy talk is imposed upon these communities while the more transformative policies emanate from the bottom-up or grassroots. Here the work of cultural anthropologist James Scott as well as applications of his work serves to ground a significant aspect of the reinterpretation of cultural policy. In constructing ACPS, James Scott’s notion of “infrapolitics,” heavily conditions our understanding of the manner by which oppressed communities can construct and respond to policy matters—even as they experience the underside of life. The fact that any group can construct a culture that is “political” is a profound shift from how many traditionally come to understand politics or policy for that matter. Concerning the infrapolitical nature of what he terms “hidden transcripts,” Scott writes:

So long as we confine our conception of the political to activity that is openly declared we are driven to conclude

that subordinate groups essentially lack a political life or that what political life they do have is restricted to those exceptional moments of popular expression. To do so is to miss the immense political terrain that lies between quiescence and revolt and that, for better or worse, is the political environment of subject classes. It is to focus on the visible coastline of politics and miss the continent that lies beyond. (199)

Oftentimes the political or what qualifies as policy filters from elites down to the rest of society, especially the underclass. Using Scott's definition of "hidden transcripts" or "infrapolitics," one can surmise that policy can be constructed using everyday culture that is constructed in a myriad of ways. Culture, in all of its complexity, becomes the source of policy engagement and development for those who lack significant power to win elected office or amass great wealth in order to function as influential lobbyists. Even more acute is the challenge located in transforming historic problems such as racism, poverty, and inequality, into solvable public policies. All of society should view public policy from the vantage point of what theologian Howard Thurman called the "disinherited."

Soon after the publication of Scott's work, a number of significant black scholar-activists and public intellectuals began to incorporate his theories into their work examining various aspects of black culture. Robin Kelley, in his analysis of 1940s black working class youth culture, makes use of infrapolitics to speak of the manner by which cultures of young black men interject their desire for social change by employing everyday acts of resistance and survival. Writing history from below, Kelley demonstrates how these everyday acts inform organized political movements—be they local or at some point national. Based on the utility of hidden transcripts, he calls for a redefinition of politics:

Too often politics is defined by how people participate rather than why; by traditional definition the question of what is political hinges on whether or not groups are involved in elections, political parties, or grass-roots social movements. Yet the how seems far less important than the why, since so many of the so-called real political institutions have not always proved effective for, or even accessible to, oppressed people . . . I am rejecting the tendency to dichotomize people's lives, to assume that clear-cut 'political' motivations exist separately from

issues of economic well-being, safety, pleasure, cultural expression, sexuality, freedom of mobility, and other facets of daily life. Politics is not separate from lived experience or the imaginary world of what is possible; to the contrary, politics is about these things. Politics comprises the many battles to roll back constraints and exercise some power over, or create some space within, the institutions and social relationships that dominate our lives. (Kelley 1994 9-11)

Kelley's interpretation of Scott's theory, provides a seminal conceptual brick for the ideological and pragmatic house Africana Cultures and Policy Studies attempts to inhabit. Similarly, as Kelley, Tricia Rose examines Scott's theory of "hidden transcripts" in light of everyday black popular culture—this time through the prism of the hip hop. In her assessment, Rose offers the following:

Rap music is, in many ways, a hidden transcript. Among other things it uses cloaked speech and disguised cultural codes to comment on and challenge aspects of current power inequalities. Not all rap transcripts directly critique all forms of domination; nonetheless, a large and significant element in rap's discursive territory is engaged in symbolic and ideological warfare with institutions and groups that symbolically, and materially oppress African Americans. In this way, rap music is a contemporary stage for the theater of the powerless . . . (Rose 100-101)

What Kelley and Rose have in common is the ability to effectively connect marginalized black urban cultural creativity to the idea of social change through what is experienced as personally political. In their seminal work, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, feminist intellectuals Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell-Scott, and Barbara Smith, advance the idea that the "personal is political." In keeping with this point, the everyday acts of people possess a personal character but are no less political as Kelley asserts (Hull, Bell-Scott, and Smith).

ACPS operates from the initial standpoint of multi-axial approach to cultural analysis as we construct public policy. At the center of this paradigm is the presence of black intellectuals and the utility of their scholarship. For far too often, the reality and work of black intellectuals, even among black folk, has been sorely ignored and underutilized. Seminal studies of black culture, reaching

as far back as W. E. B. Du Bois's important work, *The Philadelphia Negro*, James Baldwin's prophetic manifesto, *The Fire Next Time*, or Angela Davis's *Women, Race, and Class*, have provided little or no fodder for the development of sound policies that benefit the various global communities of Africana descent. Most of the social change that has become translated into policy change for African Americans has found its inception within some aspect of black culture. The most notable example, of course, would be the civil rights movement, as aspects of black religious, artistic, and intellectual culture combined to foment one of the world's most incisive and transformative social movements to date. In the aftermath of much of that change was the construction and passage of two very important governmental policies, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Similarly, tactics and strategies such as sit-ins, non-violent direct action, marches, and the like became common practice for global peoples struggling to live out their humanity against oppression.

Despite the relevance of their research and cultural work, many of these and other scholar-activists were denied serious consideration by policymakers and national leaders who in turn, failed to recognize the utility of their detailed analysis of the problems plaguing black America, the nation at large, and the world. Of course, one of the most glaring examples that comes to mind is the underutilization of "the black cabinet" during the 1930s. Brilliant scholars, legal minds and political thinkers including Mary McLeod Bethune, Robert Weaver, Eugene Kinckle Jones, Ambrose Caliver, and William Hastie, among others offered the first tangible opportunity for African Americans, since the days of Reconstruction, to centrally impact national policy matters. This shadow group of "black advisers," contributed to many progressive policy changes during the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, but failed to make monumental changes for black America due to obvious political obstacles, supported by the institutionalized nature of Jim Crow segregation.

Constitutive of the racism in American culture at the time, no black scholar, female or male, was seriously considered to author the definitive study of race relations to date. The Carnegie Corporation, a major U.S. philanthropy, decided to sponsor a comprehensive study of race in the nation. Although many brilliant scholars, many a part of Howard University's "policy research nucleus," contributed impressive research to the study, the authorship of such a pivotal work of potential policy impact was given to Swedish social scientist, Gunnar Myrdal. Published in 1944, *An American Dilemma*, represented for the American public a vital mid-century assessment of the role of racism in delimiting African American equality and progress. The justification for not selecting an African

American scholar as the primary researcher amounted to the strong belief that no scholar could be found who could be dispassionate enough to conduct and write an “objective study” of race in America. Despite this obvious snub, members of Howard’s “policy research nucleus” contributed important research in the period prior to the Myrdal study and in the years following.

Africana Cultures and Policy Studies in Action

Africana Cultures and Policy Studies is an interdisciplinary field of study rooted in the historical experience of people of African descent, and centered around the scholarship and activism of countless black leaders incorporating movements as diverse as the New Negro Movement, the civil rights movement, black power, feminist and womanist movements, and hip hop. Properly applied, ACPS can make use of any Africana studies scholarship and effectively connect theory and praxis so as to effect real change in the lives and communities of Africana peoples. In this sense, praxis is not a narrowly-defined and one-sided romantic view of activism. Rather, praxis acquires a definition that affords Africana peoples the ability to define the policy process as well as impact it via intellectual activism, as well as by way of cultural and policy advocacy. The methodology of Africana Cultures and Policy Studies works to achieve such a mechanism that effectively links theory with practice—resulting in societal transformation at all levels of society. All in all, these constitutive elements function as complementary rather than in competition to one another.

Africana Cultures and Policy Studies asserts that the development, analysis, and application of policies originate within the context of culture, and in concert with the dynamic nature of cultural change. Africana Cultures and Policy Studies seeks to gain insight from the leadership of numerous black men and women intellectual pragmatists. Manning Marable’s *Black Leadership* evidences much wisdom that can assist us in our day as to how to develop an effective leadership cadre. The work of Ula Taylor in examining the life of Amy Jacques Garvey provides detailed knowledge of the manner by which we can accurately examine the impact of black women on the development of social movement ideology. Black feminist scholars’ in-depth discussion of black women’s cultures and experiences have joined with womanist scholars to point the way to measuring the contributions of black women to freedom movements in America and around the world. John D’ Emilio’s rich biography as well as Devon Carbado and Donald Weise’s important edited collection of civil rights policy strategist Bayard Rustin offer useful material with which to project a model leadership paradigm from the life and times of an important civil rights activist.

ACPS seeks to navigate the evident binaries of black cultural phenomena. Theologian James Cone denotes that there is oftentimes more complexity among social categories of integration and nationalism than what may appear. The same can be said for other cultural phenomena of black America, including approaches involving public and private education, political philosophy, and health care. Often seen in tension, Peniel Joseph advances the notion that the civil rights movement and black power movement really functioned as parallel pieces of the same struggle, involving many of the same historical actors and events. In the aftermath of the civil rights movement's crescendo moment, the black power movement emerged to assert a more defiant cultural affirmation of a people—a movement birthed in the crucible of civil rights. Studies examining intra-communal complexities around the relationships among black leaders and institutions can assist in providing mechanisms to evaluate and strengthen the development and sustainability of African inter-generational leadership transfer (Cone 1-17; Joseph).

As Dr. James H. Evans asserts with regard to black theology, one's social location determines the lens or perspective with which one sees the world (Evans, 1992). The understanding of policy is no different. As a thorough understanding of culture is undertaken, that understanding can be applied in a process that leads to a more accurate analysis of what is needed, in a particular situation, to discover invaluable solutions to the most pressing socio-cultural ills of our day. Furthermore, policies are developed as policymakers, scholars, and constituencies are brought together in conversation, cooperation, and interaction. Comparatively, most of the world's peoples survive due in part to a parallel relationship between homelands and diasporas. The same is true of constructive public policy development. As oppressed peoples take inventory of the value and utility of their cultural power, they begin to understand the manner by which they can use their cultural products (including scholarship, experiences, songs, voices, etc.) to advance causes important to their families, thus facilitating the occurrence of real and lasting change. To effect policy development, communities must mobilize into constituencies savvy enough to understand the issues, compile all of the complex data, understand the impact, communicate those findings in an organized way to people without access to that material, and collectively and democratically devise next steps and solutions to alleviate the challenges in question.

Because of the historic and cultural severing of much of the African Diaspora from the African continent, the full weight of that relationship has never been fully actualized to benefit its global populace. Also, due to the inability to sustain

and ground a relevant pan-African movement into the 21st century, much of the concerns of the peoples of Africa and the African Diaspora go unheeded and virtually ignored in legislative bodies such as the United Nations and the World Bank. Much of academic scholarship has been politicized, geared favorably toward elites and keepers of the status quo, so much so that the people whom the research targets, receive no impact from scholarship that is supposed to benefit their condition.

Anthropologist St. Clair Drake gives a case in point. A prominent black public intellectual and scholar-activist, Drake, in an 1984 essay, "Black Studies: A Global Perspective," cautioned against remaining oblivious to the functional and political nature of scholarship, pointing to the nature by which the discipline of African Studies, once known interchangeably as Black Studies. Developed by the U.S. State Department as a Cold War tool to monitor the actions of African leaders, suspected of Communist influences, African Studies failed to develop the institutional mandate to effectively address constituent problems of neo-colonial and post-colonial Africa. As an example of ACPS in action, William G. Martin and Michael O. West's important reconceptualization of the discipline, *Out of One, Many Africas: Reconstructing the Study and Meaning of Africa* (1999), argues against the white-dominated control of African Studies, evidencing a disciplinary movement toward greater participation by scholars of African descent. As a consequence of such a veiled approach to scholarship, the contributors note that the critical examination of issues such as colonialism, rampant militarism, and continuing underdevelopment received insignificant attention. Without the clear and critical examination of these important historical and contemporary phenomena, African Studies and its scholars have been rendered ill-effective in contributing, as a discipline to related policy issues playing out on the ground. Certainly not alone, the same criticism can be levied against the disciplines of African American Studies, Africana Studies, Whiteness Studies, and countless other interdisciplinary areas.

ACPS examines the historical and evolutionary impact of many contemporary issues, such as Hurricane Katrina, affirmative action, the criminal justice system, poverty and urban underdevelopment, decline of cultural activism, religious mediocrity, the prosperity gospel craze, and the resegregation of public schools in a manner that uses scholarship to provide key background for the development of real policy prescriptions that seek earnest resolution to these long-standing challenges. Other than filling symposium space, what has African American Studies contributed to the resolution of the conditions brought on by these incredible challenges of our day? Many contemporary issues, such as

school integration and global poverty, remain seemingly irresolvable even to the point of evidencing an awkward public tolerance for their perpetual state of insolvability.

Theoretical material for Africana Cultures and Policy Studies focuses specifically on policy issues or represents studies that have cultural and/or policy value for communities or peoples of African descent or leadership personages or groups. For example, James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* provides a method by which race relations can be addressed using a model of cultural empathy and role reversal.

The methodology of Africana Cultures and Policy Studies seeks to examine the comparative engagement and synthesis of cultural analysis with policy analysis. Furthermore, it purposefully seeks to offer critical recommendations and/or praxis models based on particular Africana Studies scholarship. This methodology synthesizes traditional disciplines that study the Africana experience into an interdisciplinary canon of study that has practical and policy application. ACPS is evolutionary in that it is not a fixed theory but one that will certainly develop complementary methods over time.

Top-down ACPS attempts to frame the particular cultural and/or policy analysis from the perspectives of Africana and mainstream elites, leadership, and those possessing levels of power. Scholarship contributing to this analysis showcases groups who either desire maintenance of the status quo or shift in policy, depending on the group they are compared with. Studies of the Congressional Black Caucus, black legislators, or mainstream political leaders can function as material for such an approach to ACPS.

Bottom-up ACPS frames "infrapolitical" cultures analysis and/or policy analysis from the standpoint of Africana grassroots and marginalized communities and constituencies. Black British theologian, Anthony Reddie, provides a case in point of this type as he examines the historical development of black theology in Britain *vis-à-vis* its Black American influences. In particular, Reddie references the work of the black theologian, James H. Evans Jr. In addition to being noted for his writings on African American systematic theology in the American context, Evans's contribution to outlining a framework by which the white-dominated Church of England could incorporate a liberationist black theology has also been instructive. In a seminal essay for a "Theology and Racism" series pamphlet entitled, "Inheritors Together," Reddie argues that Evans calls for the Church to "develop and articulate a 'bottom-up' black theology of liberation for the British context." This call admonishes the Church of England to adhere to its historic mandate to take in consideration the specific condition of blacks in Britain so as

to ensure complete freedom and equality for these disinherited members of the society. This example of “bottom-up” ACPS can be applied to a national context or a transnational one. Either way, its utility is located in the manner by which the application of a relevant black theology to the church context provides a viable solution to problems of race relations within the church and the larger society (Reddie 24-25; Wilkinson, Evans, and Wilkinson, 54-71).

Top-down/Bottom-up ACPS combines both elite and grassroots persons and communities in a comparative analysis of the manner by which each influences the other, producing some complex result. The goal of such a study is to ascertain comparisons and contrasts which can help understand a challenge and pose relevant solutions to reverse negative trends, thereby transforming conditions and people. Ronald W. Walters' *White Nationalism, Black Interests: Conservative Public Policy and the Black Community* (2003), cleverly examines the relationship among the rise of the neo-conservative movement and current attempts to undermine black and multi-ethnic equality through racially hostile public policies.

The praxis of Africana Cultures and Policy Studies evidences as one of three ends: 1) Development of a cultures and policy report which provides recommendations for local, state, national, and/or international policy intervention. Such recommendations include commentary on evaluation, implementation, and application methods. 2) Development of an institutional mechanism that pragmatically addresses, either immediately or long-term, the particular challenge or problem faced by the group in question. For instance, the urban CommUniversity functions as the embodiment of a definite ACPS praxis result, utilizing studies concentrating on African American adult and community education. In this sense, the work of black intellectuals, Alain Locke and Sterling Brown, pedagogies of Myles Horton and Paulo Freire, as well as CommUniversity curriculums of the 1960s and 1970s, enable the public to gain insight into the manner by which black public intellectuals have used their scholarship and expertise to promote life-long learning heavily grounded in the Africana experience.

Many examples abound distilling the manner by which Africana Studies can inform contemporary Africana policy change. For instance, comparing and contrasting Kelly Miller's Negro Sanhedrin movement with Minister Louis Farrakhan's recent Millions More Movement can yield a proper reassessment of the efficacy of mass group mobilization for modern organizations struggling with sustainability issues. Further, an investigation into the parallels and divergencies existing between the National Negro Congress and the Gary Political Convention offer a number of lessons for the Black Radical Congress insofar as attempts to

develop viable grassroots political advocacy organizations. The urban history studies of Cleveland, Milwaukee, Chicago, and other cities can offer much material for revamping the urban blight, poverty, violence, and inequality that still exists for African Americans in many of the nation's major inner cities. These pioneering studies can be utilized to develop intra-community as well as city-wide social programs that can reverse the negative and reoccurring patterns of poverty, crime, underemployment, poor education, and the like. In each of these instances, we allow the present to learn from the past and thereby inform the method of engagement through a specific policy analysis.

The Africana Cultures and Policy Studies Institute

The Africana Cultures and Policy Studies Institute (ACPSI) is a progressive think tank which was created to facilitate the development and public discussion of the area of Africana Cultures and Policy Studies. Our main mission is to connect the scholarly construction of ACPS and bring it into conversation with the global public's needs and interests. Our philosophy adheres to the belief that black public intellectuals and black studies scholars must engage the larger black global community around issues that matter to those living in the communities in question. We do not impose an imperialistic top-down analysis upon communities of color. Rather, we seek to understand multi-textual problems and work to match our intellectual resources with the interests and agendas fomented by everyday people.

ACPSI believes that the construction, evaluation and application of policy is not limited to elites and those with technical training. Imbibing the original mission of Africana studies, we believe that scholarship and experience are intertwined, resulting in substantial social change on every level of society for those marginalized. Furthermore, the assertion of ACPS signals the new day for Africana Studies scholars (African Studies, African American Studies, Pan-African Studies, etc.) to reassess the role of their research as well as their relationship to the larger community and society. Africana Studies must take the lead in providing adequate solutions to the problems plaguing the world—especially the global black world. We believe that the scholarship of countless black women and men intellectuals, activists, educators, theologians, leaders, etc. provides useful lessons whereby knowledge taken from these works can be transformed into new and improved social organizations, institutions, strategies, and models directing all of black life. In this regard, Africana Cultures and Policy Studies stands to change the way Africana Studies functions in the 21st century global world.

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