

Introduction

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With more than seven hundred degree granting institutions in the field of Africana Studies in the United States (according to a 2010 survey), a major Website a national organization, and a number of journals dedicated to the field, Africana Studies is an established feature of academic and intellectual life. These developments have had both subtle and significant implications for the division of labor in the U.S. academy as well as for the state of knowledge itself; they have therefore had an impact upon the growing community of Africana Studies scholars in Europe as well. When Gülriz Büken, the President of the American Studies Association of Turkey, proposed a Special Edition of the *JAST* dedicated to contemporary African American Studies, at the 2006 conference of the National Association for Ethnic Studies in Istanbul, the editors welcomed the opportunity to share recent developments in the field with our colleagues. While we make no claims for a comprehensive survey, we think that the following essays offer a rich sampling of contemporary scholarship.

Abdul Alkalimat's report notes the existence of several distinct research foci that have defined research on Africana Studies, ranging from "theoretical/ideological models" to "eBlack Studies Research." The first three essays in this volume offer striking examples of some of the different paradigms presently at work in contemporary Africana Studies. In its emphasis upon *Africalogy* as the term of choice and its attention to historical struggles between Africans and Europeans in the United States over the education of people of African descent, Clyde C. Robertson and Ahati N.N. Toure's "New Directions in Africana Studies/ Africalogy: Bridging the Gap Between Liberal Arts and Utilitarianism" proposes a "theoretical/ideological" interpretation of the past and present challenges facing Africana Studies. Tunde Adeleke's "Interrogating the Problematic of Race, Ethnicity and Identity in African American Studies" offers an analysis of three interpretive frameworks that came to dominate the development of African American Studies programs during the early stages of their development. His essay is noteworthy for the critical eye he casts upon *Afrocentricity* as well as for his call for a "transformative perspective." Zachery Williams's "Recovering

the African American Past for the Purpose of the Policy Present: The History and Evolution of Africana Cultures and Policy Studies” explores the intersection between historical and cultural studies of African American life and public policy. His analysis of the work of twentieth century black public intellectuals adds depth and perspective to contemporary uses of the term and buttresses his appeal for the development of Africana Cultures and Public Policy as an interdisciplinary field of study.

While often sharp debates about definitions and paradigms for Africana Studies continue to define one dimension of the field, Africana Studies scholarship flourishes within and across many disciplines. Tanfer Emin Tunç’s essay “Crossing *The Black Atlantic*: Jon Sensbach, Paul Gilroy, and the Historiography of Colonial Black America” skillfully links the “unfinished business” of excavating the black presence in colonial American history with the provocative and controversial insights of post-colonial theorist Paul Gilroy. Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness*, Tunç argues, may be theoretically problematic, but his analysis has considerably complicated notions of double-consciousness, nationality, ethnicity, and racial authenticity—key terms in Africana Studies discourses. John J. Munro and Ian Rocksborough-Smith’s “Reframing Black Internationalism and Civil Rights during the Cold War” make the argument for a theoretical framework that “...convenes a discussion between Black internationalism, communism and anticommunism, Black Studies, the new diplomatic history, and international American Studies.” Both of these essays demonstrate the ways in which the intellectual concerns of Africana Studies, particularly in its transnational and global concerns, are generating new and illuminating scholarly paradigms for historical analysis.

Similarly, literary and cultural studies have flourished within Africana Studies scholarship. Michelle Simms-Burton’s essay “Writing Nation: Giovanni, Sanchez, and Lorde and the Black Arts Movement” provides a critical view of the Black Arts Movement—one of the seminal forces that helped to shape and define the early stages of the modern black studies movement—and its impact upon three significant black women writers. Her essay also reflects the ways in which the concerns of black women scholars have challenged, shaped and re-defined contemporary Africana Studies scholarship. Jodi VanDerHorn-Gibson’s “Adapting Ambiguous America; or per-Forming a More Perfect Union of Caridad in the Plays of Caridad Svecch and Suzan-Lori Parks” demonstrates how the concern with issues of race—so central to the intellectual concerns of

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Africana Studies—has become a central focus of “American” Studies as well, providing a basis for fruitful conversations among these fields.

The appendices offer important empirical information about the present state of Africana Studies in the United States. We thank Abdul Alkalimat and Fabio Rojas for their permission to reprint them.

This special issue of the *JAST* roughly coincides with many forty-year celebrations of Africana Studies programs and departments in the United States. We hope it conveys the energy, dynamics and diversity of the field in the early 21st century.