

YABA AMGBORALE BLAY

Florida International University
African-New World Studies Program
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EDUCATION

Ph.D. African American Studies (expected 2007)
Women's Studies Graduate Certificate (expected 2007)
Temple University, Philadelphia, PA
Cumulative Grade Point Average: 3.98

Dissertation: *Yellow Fever: Skin Bleaching and the Aesthetico-Cultural and Gendered Politics of Skin Color in Ghana* (tentative title)

Utilizing the qualitative methodological design of African-centered/African feminist phenomenological ethnography, this study seeks to discover the rationales and motivations for skin bleaching from the perspectives of Ghanaians who engage or have engaged in the practice themselves, and further elucidate the meanings they attach to the practice. Furthermore, this study seeks additional insight into the phenomenon from the perspective of members of various facets of Ghanaian society. Additionally, because such a research design will yield rich descriptions of skin bleaching as a lived experience, employing the methodology of grounded theory, I intend to generate an analytical schema, one that is grounded in the Ghanaian experience, through which to possibly understand skin bleaching as a social practice. Thus, relying upon the voices of Ghanaians themselves, this study seeks to situate skin bleaching as it occurs specifically in Ghana within the broader historical, aesthetico-cultural, and sociopolitical (traditional/colonial/neocolonial and gendered) contexts. In painting this holistic cultural portrait, the current research will provide an analysis of how skin bleaching functions not only in the lives of the individuals who practice it, but in the context of the history, culture, and society of Ghana.

Doctoral Advisory Committee:

Dr. Abu Abarry, Associate Professor of African American Studies, Temple University

Dr. Kariamuwelsh, Professor of Dance, Temple University

Dr. Patricia Melzer, Director, Women's Studies Program, Temple University

External Examiners:

Dr. Nkiru Nzegwu, Professor of Africana Studies, Binghamton University

Dr. Lewis R. Gordon, Laura H. Carnell Professor of Philosophy, Temple University

M.A. African American Studies (2004)
Concentrations: African Cultural Aesthetics, African Religions
Temple University, Philadelphia, PA
Cumulative Grade Point Average: 3.97

Study Abroad Temple in West Africa: Ghana, University of Ghana, Legon (2003)

M.Ed. Counselor Education (2000)
Concentrations: College Counseling, Human Services Counseling
University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA
Cumulative Grade Point Average: 4.0

B.A. Psychology, Cum Laude (1996)
Salisbury State University, Salisbury, MD
Cumulative Grade Point Average: 3.54

RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

African and Diasporan Aesthetics, Cultural Aesthetics/Expressions, Aesthetic Practices, Body Politics in Africana Communities, Politics of Identity, African Feminisms, Issues of Gender in Africa and the African Diaspora, The “Black” Woman Cross Culturally, African and Diasporan Spiritual Traditions, Akan Culture and Cosmology, Black (African) Psychology, Black Popular Culture, Mass Media and the African Diaspora, African Literature, African Women Writers, African-Centered Methodologies, Qualitative and Ethnographic Research Methods

ACADEMIC AWARDS

Visiting Pre-Doctoral Fellowship, African-New World Studies Program

Outgoing Director: Dr. Carole Boyce-Davies

Incoming Director: Dr. Akin Ogundiran

Florida International University, 2006- present

Graduate Fellowship, Institute for the Study of Race and Social Thought

Academic Advisor: Dr. Lewis R. Gordon

Temple University, 2006- present

Graduate Research Assistant, Career Development Services

Temple University, 2005-2006

Tuition Scholarship, The Graduate School

Temple University, 2004-2005

Distinguished Teaching Assistant Award, Awareness of Teaching & Teaching Improvement Center (ATTIC)

College of Liberal Arts, Temple University, 2003-2004

Outstanding Service Award, Department of African American Studies

Temple University, 2003

Outstanding Academic Achievement Award, Department of African American Studies

Temple University, 2003

University Fellow, The Graduate School

Temple University, 2002-2004

Outstanding Masters Graduate, Department of Counselor Education

University of New Orleans, 2000

Edgar E. Burks Memorial Award for Outstanding Student Leadership, Office of the President

University of New Orleans, 2000

Teaching Assistant, Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling and Foundations

University of New Orleans, 2000

Omicron Delta Kappa National Honor Society, 2000

Graduate Assistant, Division of Student Life

University of New Orleans, 1999-2000

Research Assistant, Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling and Foundations

University of New Orleans, 1999

Chi Sigma Iota International Honor Society, 1999

Outstanding African-American Graduate, Office of Minority Affairs

Salisbury State University, 1996

Psi Chi Honor Society, 1996

Outstanding African-American Scholar, Office of Minority Affairs
Salisbury State University, 1994-1996

National Dean's List, 1994

PUBLICATIONS

Articles

(with Kaila Adia Story) "Editorial: 'Engendering' the Diaspora." Special Edition of *Journal of Pan African Studies* (March 2007). Forthcoming

Book Chapters

"Pretty Color 'n Good Hair: Creole Women of New Orleans and the Politics of Identity." In R. Spellers & K. Moffitt (Eds.) *Blackberries and Redbones: Critical Articulations of Black Hair/Body Politics in Africana Communities*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press. Forthcoming

Edited Publications

(co-editor with Kaila Adia Story) Special Edition of *Journal of Pan African Studies*: "'Engendering' the Diaspora: Gender, Culture, Race and Identity in the Contemporary African World." (March 2007). All articles peer-reviewed.

Reference Book Entries

"Abosom," "Aadae," "Adinkra Symbols," "Akan," "Asamando," "Asase Yaa," "Color Symbolism," "Nyame," and "Sunsum"

In M.K. Asante and A. Mazama (Eds.) *Encyclopedia of African Religions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Forthcoming

"Cromanti" and "Obeah"

In C.B. Davies and B. M'Bow (Eds.) *The African Diaspora, A Historical Encyclopedia*. SantaBarbara, CA.: ABC-CLIO, Inc. Forthcoming

"Akan," "Creole/Criollo," "Cudjoe," and "Khoisan"

In N.M. Searcy (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of Africa and the Americas*. Santa Barabara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc. Forthcoming

MEDIA INTERVIEWS

Rogers, I. (June 19, 2006). More Ghanaians Equate Beauty With Looking White. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* [online version]. Available at http://www.diverseeducation.com/artman/publish/article_6004.shtml

PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Administrative

Academic Advisor, Philadelphia Freedom Schools
Communities in Schools of Philadelphia, 2006

Tutor Coordinator/Counselor, Office of Student Support Services
University of New Orleans, 2000-2002

Dean of Students, New Orleans Summerbridge
Benjamin Franklin Magnet High School, 2000

Teaching

Visiting Pre-Doctoral Fellow, African - New World Studies Program

Florida International University, 2006-07

AFA 2000: African Worlds - Introduction (1 section)

AFA 4931: "Engendering" the African Diaspora (1 section; cross listed with Women's Studies)

Adjunct Faculty, Department of African American Studies

Temple University, 2004-05

AAS 378: West African Aesthetics (Temple in West Africa: Ghana)

AAS 151: Mass Media and the Black Community (2 sections)

AAS 052: Introduction to African Aesthetics (3 sections)

Teaching Assistant, Department of African American Studies

Temple University, 2004-05

AAS 044: The Black Church

AAS 150: Blacks in Cinema

Instructor, Young Scholars Program

Temple University, College of Education, 2004-2005

AAS 098: Introduction to Social Science Research Methods (2 sections)

Instructor/Workshop Facilitator, Ronald McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program

Temple University, Russell Conwell Educational Services Center, 2004

Research Methods Seminar

Faculty Assistant, Temple in West Africa: Ghana

Department of African American Studies and the Office of International Programs

Temple University, 2003- 2005

AAS 052/667: African Aesthetics

AAS 378: African Civilizations

Instructional Assistant, Department of African American Studies

Temple University, 2003-2004

AAS 155: Introduction to Research Methods

Instructor, Division of Academic Affairs

University of New Orleans, 2000-2002

ACOR 1001: Study Skills (2 sections)

ACOR 1006: Career Exploration (2 sections)

UNIV 1001: University Success (2 sections)

Assistantships/Internships/Externships

Graduate Extern, Career Development Services

Division of Student Affairs

Temple University, 2005-06

Academic Intern, Department of African American Studies

Temple University, 2003-04

Graduate Assistant, Office of Multicultural Affairs

Division of Student Life

University of New Orleans, 1999-00

Counselor Intern, University of New Orleans Counseling Services

University of New Orleans, 1999-00

Counselor Intern, Student Athlete Support Services
 Division of Student Life
 University of New Orleans, 1999-00

Graduate Assistant, Division of Student Life
 University of New Orleans, 1998-99

ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2000 Producer/Host. New Orleans Access Television, New Orleans, LA
 1996-98 Social Worker. Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Delaware. Dover, DE

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Florida International University African - New World Studies Program

2007 **AFA 4931: “Engendering” the African Diaspora (cross-listed with Women’s Studies)**

Course Description: This course seeks to challenge the very conceptualizations of gender used to define, describe, and/or categorize African-descended women and men. From multiple- and interdisciplinary perspectives, issues reflective of the intersections of gender, race, and identity will be examined within the sociopolitical contexts of history and culture. Furthermore, rather than lay sole blame upon Western processes for the current state of gender affairs in Africa and throughout the Diaspora, we will simultaneously turn our lens inward and examine those cultural practices and processes specific to African/Diasporan societies that serve to construct gender disparate identities and experiences. Ultimately, this course will offer a revolutionary and culturally-centered analysis of the gender dynamics of African/Diasporan societies.

RESEARCH INITIATIVES

Florida International University African - New World Studies Program

2006-07 **Special Graduate Seminar: Nyansapo - Applying Shared Knowledge to Practical Ends**

Seminar Description: This graduate seminar is designed to support African-New World Studies masters students as they develop their theses prospectuses and begin to conduct and write their thesis research. Founded on the Adinkra symbol, Nyansapo, “wisdom knot,” which conveys that a wise person has the capacity to choose the best means to attain a goal; and that being wise implies broad knowledge, learning and experiences, and the ability to apply such faculties to practical ends, students approach the culmination of their African-New World Studies graduate studies through collective engagement of their research topics, receiving feedback and support from their colleagues and peers.

Temple University Department of African American Studies

2005 **Special Department Seminar: Dissertation Proposal Design (Summer I 2005)**
Special Department Seminar: Seminar in Africana Research (Fall 2005)

Seminar Description: This two semester course series is designed to assist doctoral students in the development of a dissertation proposal as well as edited iterations of dissertation chapters. Given the interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary nature of African American Studies, students will be exposed to a broad range of methodological perspectives and research designs through lectures delivered by University faculty. Over the course of the semester, students will: a) learn the format and components of the dissertation proposal, b) receive a broad survey of qualitative and quantitative research designs, c) review dissertations relevant to their research topics and/or methodological perspective/design, d) solidify their research projects and formulate a proposed table of contents, and e) provide and receive support from a community of their peers.

RESEARCH

Temple University

- 2005 “Ahoofe Kasa: Beauty and the Sexual/Gendered Politics of Skin Bleaching among Ghanaian Women. SOC 850: Sexuality and Gender, Dr. Julia Ericksen.
- 2004 “Performing Venus: The Historical Legacy of Black Female Commodification.” DANCE 351: African Dance I, taught by Dr. Kariamuw Welsh, Temple University.
- “Where are all the Yoruba “Women?” A Critical Discussion of Oyeronke Oyewumi’s *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*.” AAS 440: Contemporary African Philosophical Thought, Dr. Lewis Gordon, Temple University.
- “Africanisms: V.Y. Mudimbe and the Archaeology of Knowledge,” AAS 540: African American Socio-Political Thought, taught by Dr. Anthony Montiero, Temple University.
- “Nsaka Sunsum: An Overview of the Akan Cosmology.” AAS 442: African Religions, taught by Dr. Ama Mazama, Temple University.
- 2003 “Kum Apem A, Apem Beba: Akan Cultural Foundations of Jamaican Maroon Resistance.” AAS 455: Caribbean Culture and Politics, taught by Dr. Kenneth Dossar, Temple University.
- “When Black Ain’t Beautiful: The Case of Color Misorientation and Popular Ghanaian Culture.” Temple in West Africa: Ghana / AAS 790: Independent Study, supervised by Dr. Abu Abarry.
- “Ayie: Akan Funeral Rites.” AAS 466: African Aesthetics, taught by Dr. Abu Abarry, Temple University
- “Pretty Cullah ‘n Good Heyar: Color Misorientation and Creole Women of New Orleans,” AAS 645: Seminar in the African American Woman, taught by Dr. Ella Forbes, Temple University.
- 2002 (with Kaila A. Story & Danielle M. Wallace) “Miss Right: African American Adolescent Males’ Perceptions of Female Attractiveness.” AAS 402: Research Methods in African American Studies & AAS 505: Ethnographic Methods, taught by Dr. Sonja Peterson-Lewis, Temple University.
- 2002 “The More Things Change, The More They Stay the Same: Locating Ama Ata Aidoo’s *Changes*,” AAS 460: African Literature, taught by Dr. Abu Abarry

University of New Orleans

- 1999 “Sisters Defining Sisters: African American Culture and its effect on the incidence of therapy among African-American Women.” Qualifying Paper in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Counselor Education, University of New Orleans.

PRESENTATIONS

Invited Presentations

- 2006 “Rhyming to Massa’s Beats and Shaking Massa’s Ass”: Gender Performance as a Measure of Hip Hop ‘Civilization’,” *KRS-One and the Temple of Hip Hop Present: “I am Hip Hop” Preservation Tour Lecture, “Art of Civilization Building,”* Miami, FL
- “Yellow Fever By Way of Introduction: Skin Bleaching in Ghana,” *Faculty Works-in-Progress Lecture Series*, African-New World Studies Program, Florida International University, Miami, FL
- “Hairstory,” University Housing, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA

“Yellow Fever: Skin Bleaching and the Aesthetic Violence in Ghana.” Organization of African Students (OAS), Temple University, Philadelphia, PA

“The Color Complex.” *Finer Womanhood Week*, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., Eta Chapter, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.

2005 (with Kaila A. Story) “Performing Venus: The Historical Legacy of Black Female Commodification.” *Women of Color Organization Presents: Talking Back: Challenging Images of Women of Color in the Media*, The New School for Social Research, New York, NY.

(with Kaila A. Story) “Performing Venus: The Historical Legacy of Black Female Commodification.” *Fall 2005 Conversations Lecture Series*, Institute for Research in African American Studies at Columbia University, New York, NY.

2003 (panel discussant) “Research in Africana Studies: Questions, Directions, Suggestions, and Prospects.” *Temple University Department of African American Studies Graduate Student Union Annual Spring Conference*, “*Call to Duty: Continuing the Mission of African American Studies.*” Philadelphia, PA.

Invited Lectures

2005 “Akan Cosmology.” AAS 052: Introduction to African Aesthetics, Department of African American Studies, Temple University.

“The Politics of Skin Tone and Hair Texture among African Diasporan Communities.” AAS 205: The Black Woman, Department of African American Studies, Temple University.

“When Black Ain’t Beautiful: Issues Skin Color in the African Diaspora – Complex or Psychological Disorder?” AAS R348: Dimensions of Racism, Department of African American Studies, Temple University.

2004 “Expressions of Black Female Diasporic Identity in the United States.” AAS 205: The Black Woman, Department of African American Studies, Temple University.

“An Introduction to African Aesthetics.” AAS W051: Introduction to African American Studies, Department of African American Studies, Temple University.

“Black Psychology and the Research Process: Keeping the Baby but Throwing out the Bath Water.” AAS 118: The Psychology of the Black Experience, Department of African American Studies, Temple University.

2002 “When Black Ain’t Beautiful: Issues of Skin Color Politics in African Diasporan Communities.” AAS R348: Dimensions of Racism, Department of African American Studies, Temple University.

“Recognizing your own Prejudices.” AAS R348: Dimensions of Racism, Department of African American Studies, Temple University.

Conference Papers and Presentations

2007 “Looking to the ‘Light’ of Whiteness: An African-Centered Analysis of Skin Bleaching in Ghana,” *National Council for Black Studies Annual Conference*, San Diego, CA

2006 “Kojobesea anaa Nkonim?: Engaging Questions of Gender, Sexuality, and Spirituality within the incidence of Skin Bleaching among Ghanaian Men,” *Temple University Department of African American Studies Graduate Student Union Annual Spring Conference*, “*Africana Studies as a Vehicle for Maintaining African Agency: Continuing the Work of our Ancestors.*” Philadelphia, PA

- 2005 (with Kaila A. Story, M.A. & Danielle M. Wallace, M.A.) “Performing Venus: The Historical Legacy of Black Female Body Commodification.” *Temple University Department of African American Studies Graduate Student Union Annual Spring Conference, “Moving the Discipline Forward: Providing African-Centered Research in the Climate of Global White Supremacy.”* Philadelphia, PA
- (with Alex Rose, Taraun Tice & Meagan Voss) “From the Depths of our Souls: An African-Centered Approach to Teaching Aesthetics.” *Temple University Department of African American Studies Graduate Student Union Annual Spring Conference, “Moving the Discipline Forward: Providing African-Centered Research in the Climate of Global White Supremacy.”* Philadelphia, PA
- (with Kaila A. Story, M.A.) “Performing Venus: The Historical Legacy of Black Female Body Commodification.” *The Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture National Conference, “Feminism and Hip Hop,”* University of Chicago
- 2004 “When Black Ain’t Beautiful: Issues of Skin Color in the African Diaspora – Complex or Psychological Disorder?” *National Council for Black Studies Annual Conference*, Atlanta, GA
- “Yellow Fever: The Aesthetic Practices of African Women.” *First Annual Women’s History Month Conference, “Sisters Defining Sisters: Redefining our Issues - Effecting Change.”* Department of African American Studies, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.
- 2003 “Ayie: Akan Funeral Rites.” *Temple University Department of African American Studies Graduate Student Union Annual Spring Conference, “Voices of the Next Generation of African American Scholars: Reaching Back Into Tradition.”* Philadelphia, PA.
- (with Sonja Peterson-Lewis, Ph.D., Kaila A. Story, M.A. & Danielle M. Wallace, M.A.) Color Coded Casting: The Aesthetic Presentation of African American Women in 1980s Situation Comedies.” *Temple University Annual Women’s Studies Conference*, Philadelphia, PA.
- (with Kilolo Moyo, M.A., Patrick Spearman, Ph.D. & Nyne Sydnor, M.A.) “African Centered Pedagogy.” *Schomburg Center for Black Culture Annual Conference, “State of Black Studies: Theory, Methodology, & Pedagogy,”* Harlem, NY.
- 1999 (with Theodore Remley, Ph.D.) “Counselor Perception of Clients with Physical Disabilities and its Effect on the Counseling Relationship.” *Louisiana Counseling Association Conference*, New Orleans, LA
- 1996 (with Steven Collier & Colleen Spilecki) “Is Narcissism a Turn-Off? A Study of First Impressions.” *Fulton School of Liberal Arts Annual Undergraduate Research Conference*, Salisbury State University, Salisbury, MD

CONFERENCE ORGANIZING

- 2004 First Annual Women’s History Month Conference, “*Sisters Defining Sisters: Redefining our Issues Effecting Change.*” Department of African American Studies, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA
- 2003 Temple University Department of African American Studies Graduate Student Union Annual Spring Conference, “*Voices of the Next Generation of African American Scholars: Reaching Back to Tradition.*” Philadelphia, PA.

SERVICE TO PROFESSION

- 2007 Guest Editor (with Kaila Adia Story), *Journal of Pan African Studies (JPAS)*, Special Edition: “‘Engendering’ the Diaspora’: Gender, Culture, Race and Identity in the Contemporary African World” (March)

UNIVERSITY SERVICE

- 2005-06 Faculty Advisor, Organization of African Students (OAS), Temple University
Student Life Committee, Division of Student Affairs, Temple University
- 2003-04 Executive Board Member. Temple University Department of African American Studies' Graduate Student Union (GSU)
- 2002-04 Program Coordinator. Department of African American Studies, Temple University
- 2000-02 Diversity Advisory Council. Office of Multicultural Affairs, University of New Orleans Leanne Knot Violence Against Women Project. The Women's Center, University of New Orleans
- 1999-2002 Program Coordinator. "Sisters Defining Sisters: A Discussion Group for African-American Women." The Women's Center, University of New Orleans

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- Member, National Council of Black Studies (NCBS)
Member, Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD)
Member, Association of African Women Scholars (AAWS)

REFERENCES

Confidential dossier available through Interfolio and will be sent under separate cover.

The following individuals have written letters of recommendation on my behalf:

Dr. Nathaniel Norment Jr., Department Chair
Department of African American Studies
Temple University
810 Gladfelter Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19122
(215) 204-5073
nnorme01@temple.edu

Dr. Abu Shardow Abarry, Graduate Chair & Associate Professor
Department of African American Studies
Director, Temple in West Africa: Ghana Study Abroad Program
810 Gladfelter Hall
Temple University
Philadelphia, PA 19122
(215) 204- 8496
aabarry@temple.edu

Dr. Sonja Peterson-Lewis, Undergraduate Chair & Associate Professor
Department of African American Studies
Temple University
810 Gladfelter Hall
Temple University
Philadelphia, PA 19122
(215) 204-1996
speter01@temple.edu

Dr. Kariamuwelsh, Department Chair & Professor
Boyer School of Music and Dance
1700 Broad Street Rm 303D
Temple University
Philadelphia PA 19122
(215) 204-6286
kariamuwelsh@temple.edu

Dr. Patricia Melzer, Director
Women's Studies Program
Temple University
811 Anderson Hall
1114 West Berks Street
Philadelphia, PA 19122
(215) 204-6954
pmelzer@temple.edu

Dr. Lewis R. Gordon, Laura H. Carnell Professor of Philosophy
Director, Institute for the Study of Race and Social Thought
Temple University
6th Floor Anderson Hall
1114 West Berks Mall
Philadelphia, PA 19122
(215) 204-8290
gordonl@temple.edu