

Africology at 30: Success in Our Lifetime

JOURNALS
**BLACK
STUDIES**

NOVEMBER 2018
Volume 49
Number 6



journals.sagepub.com/home/jbs
ISSN: 0021-9347

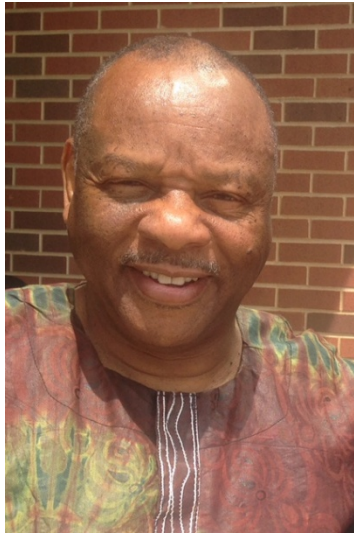
We should never overlook progressive success in academe and elsewhere, but especially in academe, since most of us are in the academy, or are at least products of the academy, despite its Eurocentric and often anti-African posture.

One success story has been the birth and growth of the first PhD program in the Department of African American Studies at Temple University under the main direction of Dr. Molefi Kete Asante, one of the most prolific African scholars and intellectuals alive today.

In September 2018 the *Journal of Black Studies* (vol.49, no.6) produced a special edition to celebrate and assess 30 years of doctoral studies in African American studies with two editorials and four articles.



In an introduction editorial Dr. Ama Mazama (Professor and Director of the Graduate Programs of the Department of Africology and African American Studies, Temple University) states that it is only fitting the *Journal of Black Studies* should mark the occasion with a special issue dedicated to examining and reflecting on the watershed development and goes on to outline how Molefi Kete Asante with the support of a few colleagues and members of the Black community initiated the process which resulted in the creation of the first doctoral program at Temple University, and how Asante understood that the institutionalization of Black Studies at the highest level, that of the PhD, would require epistemological demarcation from European disciplines in order to establish Black Studies' institutional turf and boundaries—in other words, for Black Studies to be able to justify its existence and need to grow within the meta-paradigm of Afrocentricity calling for intellectual decolonization through a debunking of the spurious notions of “universalism” and “objectivity” accompanied with a radical epistemological reorientation, with Africa no longer lying at the periphery of European consciousness but occupying a central place as agent of its own history.



Next, Dr. Molefi Kete Asante, the founder of the first PhD program and professor and chair of the Department of Africology and African American Studies at Temple University, founding editor of the *Journal of Black Studies*, President of the Molefi Kete Asante Institute for Afrocentric Studies, and advisory board member of *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies* provides a personal account of the aims, objectives, and the challenges he and his principal colleagues faced in the creation of the program to recount the political and campus cultural climate that helped to facilitate the pursuit, as the article centers on the pursuit of discipline despite the ever-present attempts to divert the theoretical and methodological direction of the department. Hence, he concludes that graduation of more than 180 doctorates has established the presence of Africology and African American Studies in the Academy as a dominant player in discipline development at the

graduate level.



Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, a professor of History and International Relations and the director of the Antiracist Research and Policy Center at American University (he won the 2016 National Book Award for nonfiction for his book titled *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*; author of *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972*. He earned his doctorate in African American Studies in 2010 from Temple University), weighs in, stating that in 1988, when Asante founded the world's first Black doctoral studies program at Temple University, it was an expression that Black Studies departments

should be raising Black Studies scholars, just as other disciplines were raising their own scholars, as Asante maintained that the existing disciplines, which had historically trained scholars studying Black life, were racist and Eurocentric. Hence, the author states that the founding of Black doctoral studies was a profoundly antiracist idea.



Next, Dr. Patricia Reid-Merritt, distinguished professor of Social Work and Africana Studies at Stockton University (Galloway, NJ) and author of *Righteous Self Determination: The Black Social Work Movement in America*, argues that since its inception in 1988, the doctoral program at Temple has attracted and produced world-class scholars in the discipline of Africology, and that it is important that we examine the impact of the 30-year history of the establishment of the first PhD program in Black Studies in the nation, as the article also offers a preliminary assessment of the far-reaching impact of Temple's academic leadership in establishing a fundamental base for innovative scholarship and the maturing of the discipline of Africology.



The legendary Dr. Maulana Karenga, the creator of the holiday Kwanzaa, professor and chair of the Department of Africana Studies at California State University, Long Beach, author of *Introduction to Black Studies*, *Maat*, *The Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: A Study in Classical African Ethics* and other books, outlines how (1) the founding of the first PhD program in Black Studies at Temple University under the leadership of Molefi Kete Asante is a major, defining, and transformative achievement in the advancement of the discipline and in the discipline's continuous initiatives and struggles to expand intellectual and institutional space for a truly multicultural, global, and quality education beyond the existing dominant mono-cultural Eurocentric paradigm and practice; and (2) its significance lies in the Afrocentric culturally grounded, agency-focused, and transformative discourse and practice the program has engendered beyond the academy, and the seminal contribution it has made to grounding and cultivating generations of activist intellectuals and scholars who play and will continue to play generative and transformative roles in the academy, their communities, and their societies in this country and in the world. Hence, the governing interest of the essay is to critically assess the transformative significance of this historic achievement, beginning with an introduction to the issue and an examination of the socio-historical and intellectual context out of which this achievement emerged and grounded itself; the essay, then, discusses some salient factors that define its transformative significance and concludes with a discussion of sustaining and expanding that achievement in the context of sustaining and advancing the Black Studies project, while maintaining the discipline's founding emancipatory and transformative mission.



In the concluding essay, Dr. Ama Mazama explains that as Temple University's Department of Africology celebrates the 30th anniversary of its doctoral program, it is necessary to examine closely the vision and actions of the person, Molefi Kete Asante, who brought the doctoral program into existence, and thus, she states that his contributions to African American Studies have been both substantial and institutional, and by all accounts, quite significant. Dr. Mazama is co-editor of the *Encyclopedia of Black Studies*, the *Encyclopedia of African Religion*, and editor of *The Afrocentric Paradigm*.

The Department of Africology and African American Studies at Temple, which offers a BA, minor, MA and PhD, attracts and produces world-class scholars and has more African American students than any other university in the Northeast according to its website as they “constantly seek to expand links with the local, national and international African community” with a focus on the “trans-generational, transcontinental and interdisciplinary” as they “encourage their our students to take advantage of opportunities to engage in service learning, internships and study abroad” with “courses and programs that are Afrocentric, meaning they explore academic topics from the standpoint of African agency.”

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