

# Honoring the Scholarship of Amos Wilson

by

guest editors

Huberta Jackson-Lowman, Ph.D.

Department of Psychology, Florida A & M University

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DeReef F. Jamison, Ph.D.

Africana Studies Program, Savannah State University

Huberta Jackson-Lowman (huberta.jacksonlowma@famu.edu) is an Associate Professor and former chair of the Psychology Department at Florida A & M University. Her research examines the effects of the intersectionality of race, gender, class, and culture on the health, mental health, and relationships of women of Afrikan ancestry and explores the use of cultural strategies, such as proverbs and rites of passage, as tools of socialization for Afrikan American youth. She has developed measures focusing on the evaluation of engendered racial myths of Black women, The Engendered Racial Myths Scale (ERMS), and a measure that examines the quality of Black female relationships from an Africentric perspective, Totem Self Scale-II. Presently, she is editing a textbook on the psychology of Black women, entitled *Afrikan American Women: Living at the Crossroads of Race, Gender, Class, and Culture* which will be published in January, 2013.

DeReef F. Jamison (dchill7@gmail.com) teaches Africana Studies at Savannah State University. His research interests are Africana intellectual history and social/political thought, the intellectual history and diasporic connections of Africana social science, the social/psychological aspects of oppression in the African diaspora and the social/political dynamics of race and racism. He has published articles in *The Journal of African American Studies*, *The Griot*, *The Journal of Pan African Studies* and *Race, Class and Gender*.

This special edition of *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, a peer-reviewed journal, focuses on the conference proceedings from the Second National Conference on African/Black Psychology. The Second National Conference on African/Black Psychology was held on the campus of Florida A & M University in Tallahassee, Florida on October 14-15, 2011 and was dedicated to the legacy of Amos Wilson and his influence and impact on the contemporary Africana world. Amos Wilson was a scholar/activist who heeded the call of Bolekaja, which means to come on down and fight. Wilson was born and spent his formative years in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Eventually, he earned degrees from Morehouse College and Fordham University. Amos Wilson worked as a social caseworker, supervising probation officer, psychological counselor, and as a training administrator in the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice. As an academic, Wilson taught at the City University of New York from 1981 to 1986 and at the College of New Rochelle from 1987 to 1995. Amos Wilson wrote several books including: *The Developmental Psychology of the Black Child*, *Awakening the Natural Genius of Black Children*, *Understanding Black Adolescent Make Violence: Its Remediation and Prevention*, *The Falsification of Afrikan Consciousness: Eurocentric History, Psychiatry and the Politics of White Supremacy*, *Black-on-Black Violence: The Psychodynamic of Black Self-Annihilation in Service of White Domination and Blueprint for Black Power: A Moral, Political and Economic Imperative for the Twenty-First Century*. His travels took him throughout the United States, to Canada and the Caribbean. Dr. Wilson's activities transcended academia into the field of business, owning and operating various enterprises in the greater New York area.

This conference honored Amos Wilson and poured intellectual libations to the tradition that he bequeathed to Africans throughout the diaspora. He centered his focus on psychological, historical and social analysis that sought to not only interpret and understand Africana realities under Western oppression, but to ultimately change them. A major emphasis at the conference was exploring how African-centered scholar/activists can continue to expand and extend the legacy of the Wilsonian tradition of socially and politically focused intellectual discourse that engages and encourages culturally based direct political action. In the spirit of Amos Wilson, the *Journal of Pan African Studies* presents selected papers from the proceedings of this historic conference that honored the intellectual contributions and community praxis of Amos Wilson. The presenters examined psychological, sociological, historical, political and economic analyses, critiques and/or applications of Amos Wilson's scholarship.

The evolution of Amos Wilson's work and the ideas and agendas expressed in them represent the type of Africana Social Theory that tells us where we need to go and explains what to expect once we achieve our goal. In following the flow of the theoretical and pragmatic currents of Wilson's radical intellectual tradition, this conference is dedicated to the legacy of Amos Wilson and his influence and impact on the contemporary Africana world. Thus, in the spirit of Amos Wilson, it attempts to challenge African-centered psychologists to continue the task of offering models of psychological functioning that demonstrate how the acquiring of cultural consciousness translates into practical solutions that impact the social, economic and political conditions confronting people of African descent.

## **The Liberatory Aspects of An African-Centered Consciousness**

One of the major themes addressed in Amos Wilson's work is the relationship between African-centered consciousness, culture, and liberation. DeReef F. Jamison's "Amos Wilson: Toward a Liberation Psychology" examines how Wilson's scholarship synthesizes previous theoretical work done in Africana liberation psychology and attempts to take these foundational pieces to form a practical agenda for liberation psychology. Jamison argues that by establishing a research agenda that was based on the lived experiences of African descent people, Wilson placed his pulse on liberation as the ultimate goal of Africana psychology.

In "African Cultural Consciousness and the Development of African People: Reflections on Amos Wilson's African-Centered Consciousness and the New World Order" Reginald Hopkins expounds and elaborates on Amos Wilson's thesis that our cultural personalities are the result of having undergone certain psycho-historical experiences. Hopkins outlines how particular historical encounters between Africans and Europeans have impacted the ebb and flow of African-centered consciousness. By examining the processes involved in creating a Eurocentric consciousness and analyzing the rise and fall of African civilizations relative to cultural consciousness, Hopkins argues that African liberation can only be achieved and sustained through institutionalized cultural practices and economic productivity grounded in the African-centered paradigm.

## **Re-Mixing Blueprint for Black Power**

"Blueprint for Black Power: A Moral, Political and Economic Imperative for the Twenty-First Century" is Amos Wilson's magnum opus that provides a detailed analysis and plan that operationalizes what Black power should encompass. Wilson's concept of power includes the various components that entail the acquisition of psychological, social, economic and political power. The two papers presented in this section take different yet similar slants on Wilson's approach to Black power. T. Owens Moore's "A Blueprint for Black Power Analysis of the Buffoonery of Black Conservatives" is a polemical and provocative essay that delves deeply into Wilson's critique of the Black conservative movement. Moore appropriates Wilson's understanding of this movement and gives a contemporary critique of how Black conservative thinking functions in a manner that facilitates and advances White power while limiting and/or extinguishing Black power. Moore's focus on Black conservatives contextualizes their ideological orientations within the current trend of de-emphasizing race during the Obama era. It is a timely and important reminder about the importance of defining and developing a Black agenda that works in the best interest of Black people.

In “Caveat of an Obnoxious Slave: Blueprint for Decolonizing Black Power From the Intellectual Governors of White Supremacy”, Quito Swan elaborates and extends Wilson’s Black power logic. Wilson argues that an African American/Caribbean/Pan African bloc is imperative for the development and delivery of Black power in the United States and the world in order to counter White and Asian power networks. Swan highlights and emphasizes the importance of understanding the connections and contributions of Black power scholar/activists throughout the entire African diaspora and not just the United States. Drawing on the rich and robust intellectual, spiritual and political history of the African diaspora, Swan offers an overview of the collective Black radical tradition that dared to imagine and implement the concept of Black power. The second important component of Swan’s article is the call for Black Power Studies to be freed from the conceptual incarceration and intellectual colonization that mandates that Black power be studied strictly within the confines of the ivory and sometimes ebony towers of academia. Swan takes the position that Wilson’s “Blueprint” serves as a conceptual road map that guides African descent people in their struggle to decolonize the study of Black power and create an emancipatory model of Africana empowerment.

### **Wilsonian Applications: From Theory to Practice**

The work of Amos Wilson has been applied in urban educational and community settings across the country to facilitate the empowerment and liberation of the minds of African people. This section considers two of these applications. In the opening article, Tomiko Shine builds on Wilson’s thesis that the creation of the *Black criminal* is a political necessity that maintains and perpetuates white supremacy. Shine’s “The Lens of Blackness: An Anthro-Political Perspective” utilizes Wilsonian theory and ethnographic methods to explore the consciousness of African American males living in the prison system. While Malcolm X is perhaps the best known example of a person obtaining knowledge of their cultural self while in prison, there are other lesser known examples of this transformation process. Shine’s study documents how this process occurred for a group of African American males, who in spite of their incarceration were able to transcend the physical constraints and begin the journey toward developing a critical African-centered consciousness.

Kamm Howard provides a model of how Dr. Wilson’s work on Black child development is being applied and extended to facilitate tapping into the genius of Black children at the Amos Wilson Institute in Chicago. Building on Dr. Wilson’s emphasis on certain “seminal factors” as keys to releasing the natural genius of Black children, the Amos Wilson Institute augments Wilson’s concepts by stressing the importance of Black children recognizing the purpose of their education. Utilizing a timeline which traces the contributions and experiences of Afrikan people back to ancient times up to modernity and provides an historical context for understanding the contemporary conditions faced by Afrikan people, Black youth are able to appreciate the brevity of the 500 year period of oppression and visualize the reascension of African people. A student code of discipline serves as a daily ritual that assists children in being able to manifest their natural genius.

## **Former Presidents of The Association of Black Psychologists (Abpsi) Reflect on the Life and Work of Amos Wilson**

Dana Dennard's "Reflections on Pedagogical Approaches to Utilizing Amos Wilson's The Falsification of African Consciousness in Community Psychology Classes" discusses the relevance of "The Falsification of African Consciousness" and explains how the text is used to facilitate a better comprehension of the principles of community psychology among students. He demonstrates how he applies the three major themes articulated by Amos Wilson in "The Falsification of African Consciousness" by: (1) addressing how history is taught to create consciousness, (2) understanding the practice and function of Eurocentric political dogmatism in society and academia, and (3) engaging the necessity of people of African descent to develop an African-centered psychology to generate an understanding of the need for and role of power in genuine problem solving. Dennard argues that through studying Amos Wilson students begin to understand the importance of re-creating history in the image and interest of their community and they learn that the vocation of the Black scholar/activist should be to establish means of promoting the telling of an African-centered historiography.

Kobi Kambon's "Amos N. Wilson: A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Africentric Psychological Warrior (1941-95); Some Personal Reflections and Professional Observations" reflects on the impact Amos Wilson had on him both personally and professionally. He describes how they met and the spiritual nature of their relationship. Kambon recalls Wilson's great intellectual and inspirational contributions to the movement, and the fine example of dedication and commitment to Afrika's liberation and vindication. Furthermore, he states that Wilson had the special gift for being able to translate Afrikan-Centered conceptual-theoretical paradigms, knowledge and principles into practical/everyday Afrikan reality. According to Kambon Wilson stands out among Afrikan-centered psychologists because he explicitly tied psychological concepts and principles to practical Black socio-political-economic realities. For Kambon, Wilson's shining example will continue to inspire us, and his ideas will continue to instruct and guide us toward the fulfillment of African liberation.