

Introduction: “Frontiers and Frameworks in African Diaspora Teaching and Scholarship”*

Pushpa Naidu Parekh,
Guest Editor

I am honored to represent the intellectual contributions of Spelman College’s faculty in this special issue. This publication is the first formal collection of scholarly and pedagogical articles on African Diaspora and the World (ADW) courses at Spelman College. We recently celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of our ADW Program, so the issue marks both a trajectory in a specific historically Black college as well as the intentional move towards internationalizing the educational enterprise in the United States. The contributors are faculty and program directors (past and present), writing on teaching and scholarship in ADW. I believe this issue is a timely intervention, especially when we read headlines like: “Americans Need to Learn More about World Outside America” (Gibbons) and “Why Many Americans Are Simply Clueless About Global Events” (Nelson). Eschewing neoliberal trends, the ADW story is a deliberative journey that dismantles false narratives of frontiers by embracing critical and analytical pedagogical frameworks and scholarship.

Area Studies and Field Intersections

In teaching ADW courses (since 1993, with breaks) and directing the ADW Program (since fall 2016), my overt attempt has been on connecting academic fields that have been often separated: African diaspora, African American studies, as well as Commonwealth and Postcolonial studies, and bring these various fields in conversation with each other. In my essay, titled, “Diaspora: Theoretical Perspectives,” published in the twelfth edition of the Reader for ADW 112, I reflected on the multiply layered dimensions of diaspora and the historical, cultural, experiential, ideological, discursive, political, socio-economic, institutional, communal, and identarian implications that inform notions and subject formations of the African diaspora (xix–xx).

My argument is for deepening this conversation in the academic context of ongoing developments and directions in these areas of study, which

*Dedication: In memory of ADW Program professors, Drs. Paul Jackson and Bruce Wade, who served the program over the years by imparting their intellectual insights, scholarly expertise, and courageous humanity.

resonate with, diverge from, and overlap with global, transnational, and migration/immigration studies. A preoccupation within Commonwealth and Postcolonial studies is the overlapping as well as conflicting relationship with area studies as they developed within the context of the Cold War in the US. Nations ruled by British colonizers were organized together so they could continue their legacy of British institutions and structures, so Britain could claim to be the unifying glue. However, a commonwealth also is a community with shared pain and loss, and citizens of the postcolonial countries recognize their diversity through recognition of cultural wealth whether it be precolonial or in response to the colonial, be it books in their multiple languages, economic and social modalities, and political power (especially demographic strength) beyond what British colonialism could utilize. Similar conflating colonization processes and decolonization impulses within Francophone and Lusophone contexts are addressed by independence and resistance movements and accompanying texts. Countries in Africa and its diaspora were among the many to experience European colonization; the study of its impact and resistance to it constitute a critical engagement in both African diaspora and postcolonial studies. African American studies is considered an independent field with its own trajectory, but it also resides in the intersection of these fields, constantly interacting with the other areas, and being mutually influential. Scholars in these fields are currently engaged in exploring the linkages and the departures among the diverse geopolitical regions and the areas of studies/disciplines that emerged. The contested notions of the existence, demise or refiguration of “commonwealth” and “diaspora” as complex concepts and experiences, as well as the forging of new national and transnational identity categories (based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, religion, origins and migrations, “legal” and “illegal” status, etc.) as both unfixed and marked by “rhizomatic connections, converting traditional passages of migration and commerce into reversals and redirections, speaking sideways or talking back” are rife (“The Uncommon Commonwealth”). These topics are not only the subject of intellectual debates and academic conferences, such as ACLALS, ALA, ASA, and ASWAAD, but also define current crises in many postcolonial/Global South countries, as well as influence border and immigration policies in the formerly colonizing and the Global North countries.

Institutional Context: Spelman College

Spelman College is a private, liberal arts, historically Black institution for women, “a global leader in the education of women of African descent,” a member of the Atlanta University Center (AUC) Consortium, Atlanta, Georgia, and is one of the top baccalaureate degree-granting institutions in the country for African American women (“About Spelman” 5). “Spelman is dedicated to academic excellence in the liberal arts and sciences and the

intellectual, creative, ethical, and leadership development of her students” (Spelman College Mission Statement). Spelman’s student body is more than 2,100 students from 41 states and 15 foreign countries: “Of the total student population, 67 percent received some form of federal loans, 16 percent are first generation college students, 87 percent are African American. The current graduation rate is 74 percent” (Spelman College website).

Overview of African Diaspora and the World (ADW) Program

African Diaspora and the World (ADW) Program is centered on the experiences of African descended people. ADW 111 and 112 courses are required the first year, a two-semester course sequence that speaks to our students’ experiences as black women. Students learn about themselves, their history, and place in the African diaspora and the world. Many alumnae who took the ADW courses refer to them as being the most formative educational influence in their lives. From 2016 to 2019, in partnership with the First in the World grant, under the direction of Dr. Francesina Jackson (Grant PI), ADW has been undergoing an experimental study whereby one half of the ADW course sections have had Metacognitive pedagogy infused in the curriculum; the other half functioned as the control group.

The program celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in the 2018–19 year, with a series of events in May 2018 and ADW Week in October–November 2018, and the current publication project, the *JGPS* special issue on “Frontiers and Frameworks in African Diaspora Teaching and Scholarship,” which features articles by Spelman’s ADW faculty and scholars.

I was among the founding faculty who taught the course sequence from its beginnings in 1993. A cadre of twenty-six plus faculty currently teach the course every semester, and it is kudos to their hard work, diligence, and vision (as well as of our founding directors, Drs. Michael A. Gomez and Alma Jean Billingslea, and founding faculty, Jontyle Robinson) that we continue to maintain the reputation of the program as challenging, rigorous, and meaningful for our students, poised to embark on their diverse academic and life journeys. In recent years, Dr. Gomez, whose book, *Reversing Sail: A History of the African Diaspora* (New Approaches to African History, Cambridge UP) is taught in ADW 111 and 112, visited Spelman as ADW Program keynote speaker invitee on May 4 (ADW Retreat/Workshop and Anniversary) and October 29 (to inaugurate ADW Week October 29–November 2 events) to commemorate ADW Program’s twenty-fifth anniversary year. Dr. Michael A. Gomez is currently “Silver Professor of History and Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at New York University, having served as the founding director of the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD) from its inception in 2000 to 2007, and is currently series editor of the Cambridge Studies on the African Diaspora, Cambridge University Press. He has chaired the History

departments at both NYU and Spelman College, and also served as President of UNESCO's International Scientific Committee for the Slave Route Project from 2009 to 2011" ("Michael Gomez").

History of the ADW Program

In 1992, Spelman faculty, Drs. Michael Gomez (history), Jean Billingslea (English), and Jontyle Robinson (art), under President Johnnetta Cole, initiated a new two-semester course sequence to replace World Literature and World Civilization courses. The mission of the ADW program was to offer a gender-informed, interdisciplinary study of Africa and its diasporas and to emphasize the intersections and connections among the various communities of African descent globally.

Revolutionary Origins: ADW faculty note how during the early phases of the program, the new courses evoked both fervor and fear. Some saw it as "male-bashing," "white-bashing," and "Christianity-bashing." These fears were allayed by faculty's inquiry-based pedagogical practices: Center African diaspora knowledge; engage black women; decolonize Eurocentric systems; inculcate knowledge and pride in black history and identity; interrogate structural oppressions; understand, analyze, and critique concepts, intellectual debates, and texts.

ADW-FITW Collaborations (2016–2020) and Curriculum Goals

The ADW program was selected in 2015 for the First in the World (FITW) grant-funded study to advance metacognitive pedagogy and improve performance in the ADW course, progress towards degree, and student GPA. Out of more than 300 applicants across the US, Spelman is one of just two colleges in Georgia—and among only three historically Black colleges nationwide—named a 2015 First in the World (FITW) grant recipient by the US Department of Education. Spelman received \$2.7 million to incorporate new teaching and learning strategies into its curriculum focused on metacognitive learning, a system defined as "thinking about thinking" ("At a Glance"). The four-year partnership was implemented in 2016.

The overarching goal of the curriculum, developed collaboratively by teaching faculty and director, was two-fold: (1) center Africa and its diasporas, and (2) understand historical and modern diasporas in the context of world developments through time

Course Sequence and Methodology: General education core course sequence, ADW 111 and ADW 112, emphasizes diverse and interdisciplinary methods of scholarly investigation. Terms of engagement central to the courses include: construction of knowledge, diaspora, identity, race, gender, sexuality, heteronormativity, trans identity, class, critical consciousness, colonialism, decolonization, resistance, resilience, ecofeminism, and intersectionality.

Student Learning Objectives: This statement includes: Critically analyze, evaluate, examine, interrogate, deconstruct, and identify historical and modern diasporas, impact of internal and external power relations, dominant knowledge systems, effects of African diasporan communities on the modern world, categories of identity, and links between degradation of the environment and human exploitation.

Learning Experiences and Activities: ADW is a reading and writing-infused course that requires students to develop well-informed questions about course content and respond to such questions in written, oral, and digital form. Students complete a variety of short reflective free-responses, essays, museum audio-narratives, reading logs, map quizzes, artistic projects, informal discussions, and formal class presentations.

Short Term Study Abroad: (during Drs. Phillips Lewis, Billingslea and Mekerta's directorship) sites included within America (Sapelo Island Gullah culture; Black Savannah, GA culture; Black New Orleans, LA culture; Black Memphis, TN culture; Black Charleston, SC culture) and abroad (W. E. B DuBois Centre for Pan African Culture, Accra, Ghana and Trans-Atlantic sites in England).

Publication and Scholarly Engagements/Projects: Several ADW faculty engaged in scholarly engagement during their years of teaching ADW. For instance, in 1998, I coedited a reference volume, *Postcolonial African Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook* (Greenwood Press, Westport, CT) with Dr. Siga Fatima Jagne, of Gambian origin, Spelman alumna and African literature scholar, also a founding faculty member of ADW. Other contributors to the volume, Drs. Jean Billingslea Brown and Soraya Mekerta, were also among the ADW founding faculty group. In addition, recently some of the contributors, Drs. Brown, Lockhart, Mekerta, and Pierre, have presented with me at the plenary and scholarly panels at the British Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies Conference (2018–19) and presented at the African Studies Association Conference. Several ADW Treatment Group faculty also presented at the "Lightening Round Instructions" sessions, FITW Conference, Spelman College, in November 2019.

Ongoing Collaborations: Besides the FITW partnership (which is discussed in Johnson et al. article in this issue), the ADW Program has collaborated with Dr. Vicki Crawford, Director of Morehouse College Martin Luther King, Jr. Collection and professor, African American studies. Dr. Crawford was invited as the speaker, with Dr. Gomez, at the 2018 ADW twenty-fifth anniversary week and was 2019 ADW retreat/workshop speaker. These engagements involved exposure to Martin Luther King archival materials at the Atlanta University Center (AUC) Woodruff Library. In addition, Dr. Sheila Walker's documentary, *Familiar Faces/Unexpected Places: A Global African Diaspora in the course ADW 111*, is included in ADW 111 syllabus, and her film, *Scattered Africa*, is being considered

for ADW 112. One of the co-curricular initiative highlights of ADW/FITW partnership is the AUC Walking Tour, a faculty designed and developed project (by ADW faculty, Drs. Joan McCarty, Kwame Kalimara and Beatriz Morales-Faba) and funded by FITW/Mellon grant. During the pre-FITW conference activity on November 16–17, 2019, ADW students were given an African diaspora-centered tour of the AUC colleges and historical sites by peers, known as PRFs (Peer Recitation Facilitators, faculty-selected upper-class students who had completed ADW curriculum, to serve as ADW tutors) in order to contextualize many ADW readings, topics, and pedagogies. In addition, Dr. McCarty, longtime faculty at Spelman’s Department of Theater and Performance, recruited theater students in the AUC institutions to perform historical figures/speeches in the manner of Reacting to the Past and critical performance pedagogy. Several students, staff and faculty, as well as Spelman’s President Campbell, have recognized this initiative, with President Campbell referring to this initiative as “an exciting innovation.”

Voices of Past ADW Directors

As current director of the ADW program, I initiated and developed faculty enrichment efforts as part of and going beyond ADW’s twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations, which continued through 2018–19. In order to represent the arc of the program’s growth, challenges, and continuities, I invited past directors to contribute their reflections on the following points and to explore other topics or points of interest and significance as well: historical overview of ADW program (during the director’s tenure at Spelman); description of initiatives, any special projects during the director’s tenure; programmatic issues and challenges; curricular deliberations; initiatives in scholarship and teaching; and rewards, challenges, and the processes of teaching and researching in the field. Faculty in the ADW program have been regarded as active scholars and teachers in the field.

“My Time as ADW Director” by Dr. Kathleen Phillips Lewis (ADW Director, 2001–2004)

I served as Director of the ADW Program from 2001 to 2004.

- During that time, we experienced economic downturn when departmental annual budgets were kept flat and vacant faculty lines were frozen. As a result, departments began pulling their full-time faculty out of ADW teaching, and the ADW program was left to rely increasingly on adjunct faculty, which made it difficult to ensure the sameness of student experience and in the quality of teaching across all sections.

Accordingly, we placed a high premium on our weekly instructors' meetings, where readings were discussed prior to being taught in individual sections. In these meetings, the experts on specific course materials were responsible for training the other instructors.

- We started annual reports and evaluations of ADW faculty to be sent to their department chairs for inclusion in their annual evaluations so that they could be credited for their work in ADW.
- We also tried hiring graduate grading assistants to ease some of the burden of the overloaded full-time faculty. That did not work out well since graduate grading assistants did not share the same familiarity with the material as did the instructors.
- We started intentionally participating in ASWAD and other conferences by organizing panels of ADW faculty and funding their attendance.
- We organized a series of four "Learning to Look / Behind the Mask" workshops that focused on integrated learning and bringing together different ways of looking to tell our story (including digital storytelling; visual sources—images, photographs etc.; and use of online archives, repositories, and virtual museums). Two workshops were held at Spelman College, one at Sapelo Island, and one at Dillard University.
- Worked with the *Knowledge Is Power* Initiative to bring awareness to the need to save the ancient Timbuktu Library Archives.
- We started traveling diaspora workshops for ADW faculty—to various diasporic community sites within America (Sapelo Island Gullah culture; Black Savannah, GA culture; Black New Orleans, LA culture; Black Memphis, TN culture; Black Charleston, SC culture) that provided faculty with a variety of African diaspora experiences to inform their teaching.
- We started the ADW newsletter, *The Griot* (discontinued).
- Mona Phillips and I (the previous and the then directors of the program) coauthored an introduction to the ADW 111 and 112 Readers.
- We started the publication of collected student essays and creative works, also called *The Griot*.
- We built up a comprehensive library of ADW-related video resources for instructional/classroom use.
- We organized an ADW film series that would feature films from our collection used in classes, often followed by panel discussions. Films were run twice weekly. This "film series" helped free up class time usually used for film viewing, for discussion of said films and their relevance to other class materials.
- We organized a series of guest speakers, and guest performances as convocations, special lectures, and special presentations at Spelman College, e.g., Cynthia Flemming (Ruby Doris Smith-Robinson), Mabel Williams (*Negroes with Guns*), Wilma Mankiller (Cherokee Chief), Karl Winter (African Thumb piano *Kalimba* player) and many more. Also cosponsored several diaspora-related events and presentations.

“My Spelman Years” by Dr. Sheila S. Walker (ADW Director, 2004–5)

After a decade as professor of anthropology and director of the Center for African and African American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, where I was usually the only African American at the College of Liberal Arts administrative meetings on that campus of more than 40,000 students, I was happy to be in Spelman’s culturally affirming African American academic community, something I had never experienced. I was also pleased to be able, for the first time, to offer the results of my decades of learning about Africa and the African diaspora to an African American institution.

A wonderful opportunity arose immediately when Dr. Beverly Guy-Sheftall told me that the United Negro College Fund Global Center had funds for HBCUs to do projects with Afro-Latin Americans to create curriculum materials about the latter. That had my name on it, so I invited an Afro-Venezuelan researcher colleague to collaborate with me in developing a proposal. We defined the major themes necessary to understand the African diaspora in the Americas and invited Afrodescendant leaders from the nine Spanish-speaking countries in South America to a meeting in the predominantly Afro-Venezuelan region of Barlovento, asking them to write texts addressing the themes and discussing their communities’ roles in their nations. The texts were uniformly inadequate to the task because in their countries the participants had learned nothing about their communities and their histories. Some communities—in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Bolivia—were claimed by governments and authoritative sources not to even exist. Yet presumably nonexistent community leaders from those countries attended the conference and were perfectly capable of talking about their communities and their issues, albeit with little historical knowledge.

Our discussions led us all to learn from each other, and to learn about our commonalities as Afrodescendants in the Americas. Everyone committed to researching and learning more about their communities. We concluded that it was impossible to create curriculum materials given the dearth, and unrepresentative nature, of information available and that it was up to us to *generar conocimiento desde adentro*, to generate knowledge from the inside, from the perspective of the communities themselves, in order to create valid curriculum materials. It is important to emphasize that these Afrodescendant leaders were not researchers but became committed to this unique opportunity to learn and tell the stories of their communities and wrote very informative texts—with considerable feedback from me.

Our next meeting was at Spelman, and I secured further funds for two more meetings that we held in Afrodescendant areas of Ecuador and Bolivia. Our goal became to compile the results of their findings into a book. The book, which I edited, was published in Bolivia in 2010 as *Conocimiento desde adentro: Los afrosudamericanos hablan de sus pueblos y sus historias* [Knowledge

from the Inside: Afro-South Americans Speak of their Communities and their Histories (in Spanish). I was fortunate to meet a Colombian researcher who worked with Afro-Colombians, recognized the value of the book, and made it more accessible by having it republished by the Universidad del Cauca press in 2013.

The high point of my year as Distinguished Professor (2003–4) was inviting to Spelman the members of what we called the Grupo Barlovento for the locus of our first meeting. They were ecstatic to be on an African American campus, there being nothing of the sort in their nations and the mere idea being unimaginable. We had a two-day bilingual seminar (with simultaneous interpretation), cosponsored by the African Diaspora and the World Program, at which Afro-Latin guests and Spelman faculty and students got to share their diasporic knowledge, *desde adentro*, from the inside.

“Contribution” by Dr. Beth-Sarah Wright (ADW Director, 2005–2008)

The “Introduction” to the ADW 111 and 112 Readers, by Drs. Kathleen Phillips-Lewis and Mona Phillips states, “On official documents and in official spaces, African Diaspora and the World is an interdisciplinary, two-semester, gender informed, writing intensive course required of all students at Spelman College . . . [which] has as its goals the development of students’ writing and thinking skills and the sharpening of students’ awareness of diverse cultural and historical experiences . . . consistent with the College’s commitment to preparing young women for full world citizenship . . .”, it is a “created non-judgmental space in which we can have conversations about the things which lie like rich treasure buried deep within the belabored consciousness of African peoples [and] dethrone complacency that is born out of ignorance, blindness, misinformation and false perception” (Phillips-Lewis and Phillips ix). ADW is, without doubt, a transformative course worthy of the label of Spelman’s signature course.

An interdisciplinary program taught by a team of professors, from varying areas of expertise teaching the same curriculum, raises some challenges which were organized into three main areas: canon, collaboration, and consistency. A primary concern that was brought to my attention was the need for a true ADW canon of literature including relevant films and documentaries for both ADW 111 and 112. While we did as a team revisit and refine the readings and the curricular trajectory each year, it was evident that a strong core be created and that a robust ancillary list of readings be generated. Not only that, there was a desire to combine the readings into one published reader for the two semesters. In response, the team collaborated at our summer workshop to seek out relevant scholars in various disciplines, current scholarship and created a canon more reflective of the scholarship throughout the diaspora, including readings on Black Russians and Black Turks, and African-oriented math and

science scholarship. In summer 2005, we published the first combined 111 and 112 Reader.

Our collaboration was not limited to the creation of this canon but also in addressing the consistency in pedagogy and learning throughout the program . . . under my leadership we created more common experiences for all students to participate in joint plenaries as well as conceived and designed a common end of semester assessment together that students were to take at a common time and place. All professors were instrumental in contributing questions and designing an array of questions that reflected the range of learning. The common assessment was designed to not only mirror the rigor and breadth of the content but also to hold ourselves accountable as educators to ensure we were teaching the curriculum and giving our students a holistic experience of the ADW content. This was both an ambitious and necessary goal due to the unique challenges of this type of course as well as the integrity of the Spelman promise to our students. ADW is unquestionably an essential part of the Spelman experience and it is my sincere hope that it will continue to thrive and flourish and embody the best of what Spelman has to offer future generations.

***“My Involvement with the Beginning of ADW and Beyond” by
Dr. Soraya Mekerta, ADW Associate Director (2008–11)
and Director (2011–16)***

When, in the fall of 1992, I joined the faculty at Spelman College, I became quickly aware that an interdisciplinary team of professors was meeting regularly to talk about and imagine a new course, which would turn out to be the African Diaspora and the World (ADW). I became a member of the team shortly thereafter. The ADW course would be piloted during the 1993 academic year. The pilot having been a success, the faculty, with the support of the administration, voted for the full implementation of the new course, which would start in the fall semester of 1993. Many who comprised the original team of eighteen faculty members from all disciplines, including myself, would teach the course for many years, some, including me, continuously. Also, some of us had the privilege of directing what would soon become the ADW Program.

During the three years I served as associate director and the five years I served as director, we continued the biweekly discussions and the summer workshops. During most of this time, ADW was essentially funded by Title III, and we offered as many as twenty-six sections of the course sequence each semester. Full-time faculty teaching the course attended several ADW related conferences. The teaching faculty was a mix of all ranks, and included full-time Spelman faculty, with a heavy reliance on adjunct and part-time faculty. While I served as associate director, the College approved an ADW minor. The minor included a travel study course as an option, and indeed,

for two consecutive years students traveled to London to study the Black British diaspora, and to Accra Ghana. During my tenure as director, ADW faculty went to the dorms and to the cafeteria and participated in several “taking ADW out of the classroom” activities during which students and faculty would engage in meaningful discussions on the topic of the African diaspora and the world. When I was director, we instilled a more formal and structured activity, called “Conversations with ADW faculty,” where faculty members showcased their work as scholars and focused on a particular theme, theory, or terms of engagement and segments of the course to foster discussions with students. Also, the College hired three full-time faculty members on tenure track positions teaching both in their department and ADW each semester. Additionally, the College gave a joint appointment to a multi-year faculty and hired two tenure track faculty whose full teaching responsibilities would be to teach ADW.

Publication Project Initiative in ADW Program (2016–2020)

This special issue of the *Journal of Global Postcolonial Studies (JGPS)* is titled “Frontiers and Frameworks in African Diaspora Teaching and Scholarship”; it includes articles on African diaspora scholarly research and pedagogical inquiry. Its purpose is multi-fold:

- *Recognize the twenty-fifth anniversary milestone of ADW Program at Spelman
- *Revisit the revolutionary beginnings of ADW curriculum
- *Disseminate current developments in teaching and scholarship in the field
- *Reflect and reconsider the future and sustainability of ADW curriculum
- *Document the journey and dynamic processes of Program growth
- *Develop innovative curriculum in interdisciplinary studies
- *Infuse relevant, recent and reflective pedagogy and scholarship in the field
- *Create theorizing spaces and advance pedagogical innovations.

Special Issue Goals

This special issue marks several goals, specific among which are collective reflections on and production of teaching pedagogy and research/scholarship on African diaspora as an interdisciplinary area of study and its global significance. The first part of the special issue’s title “Frontiers and Frameworks” has relevance for initiation of various journeys and modalities of visualization and interpretation. Since “frontiers” is often the language in which “western” colonial or expansion expeditions were cast, it is through reflective and resistant transmutations that new trajectories of decolonization can be imagined and framed by the processes of critical decentering. In the process, the terms “frontier” and “framework” here offer the possibilities of reenvisioning and reassembling the complex and diverse

cartographies and nodes of African diaspora, both within historical and geographical topographies and the purview of the academic spheres. New directions in African diaspora scholarship and teaching are engaged in reorienting and reframing the field, concept, and content as well as approaches to studying the interdisciplinary area. The contributors in this special issue grapple with not only articulating evolving relations and intersections of African diaspora-centered histories and contestations (colonization and decolonization, past and present, traditions and modernity, continuities and oppositions), but also enable perspectival shifts, and continuous and ongoing revisions. They offer critical and creative possibilities for constructing concepts and genres, as well as ideological nuances of recasting African development discourses from African pessimism to African prosperity, Afro-futurism, or Black optimism across geopolitical and disciplinary borders. ADW faculty at Spelman are currently engaged in integrating environmental justice topics through ongoing ADW faculty monthly meeting curricular discussion sessions and the Mellon-funded workshop on incorporating a gender and sexuality lens in ADW, with Drs. Beverly Guy Sheftall and Cynthia Neal Spence (principal investigators).

Highlights of the Special Issue Articles

The contributors to the special issue aim to advance the African diaspora field by focusing on pedagogy and scholarship in the field. Several concepts dominate in the special issue: linkages and divergences, continuities and disjunctions, intersections of time and space, memories and experiences, and identity categories, histories, and reconstructions in the African diaspora. The contributors to articles on teaching and scholarship on African diaspora specify interdisciplinary research/teaching/instructional methods and approaches. For example, the scholarship here evinces grounding in and divergence from established works like Lisa Latucca's *Creating Interdisciplinarity: Interdisciplinary Research and Teaching Among College and University Faculty* and Tanya Augsberg's *Becoming Interdisciplinary: An Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies* (where "interdisciplinary studies are generally characterized as a means for (a) solving complex problems, (b) drawing on multiple perspectives, (c) constructing a more comprehensive understanding, and (d) complementing the constraints of disciplinary approaches"). Specifically, contributors Jackson et al., Lockhart, Mekerta, Lindsay and Pierre articulate pedagogical integration of metacognition, performative, and aesthetic approaches to the teaching of ADW, as demonstrated through discussion of their teaching and framing of projects in ADW and other courses. In addition, contributors Brown, Carlson, Valecce, and Lewis explore field and scholarly developments in African diaspora, including discussion of Black women in politics, review of recent books on the topic, exploration of gender and sexuality frameworks, analysis of films and

literary works about the African diaspora. These contributions encompass a section of the faculty's enrichment of the field of African diaspora. This special issue celebrates and showcases their articles to assess developments so far and indicate further advancements in the field. While contributors analyze theoretical frameworks (considering African diaspora studies as an interdisciplinary field; infusing race/ethnicity, class, nationality, gender/sexuality perspectives), ADW faculty at Spelman is currently engaged in considering the topics rife today: perspectives on environmental racism and inclusion of sexuality lenses in studying the African diaspora. The contributors are among Spelman faculty who model instructional innovation and interventions through reflection on practices responsive to student-centered learning (for example, faculty reflect on questions such as "how do I improve teaching in response to student performance and student evaluations of my ADW course?"). Since 2016, several ADW faculty members implemented teaching theories and practices, and discussed case studies to advance student motivation, critical thinking, and self-efficacy. The ADW-FITW partnership helped faculty in the Treatment group (see Jackson et al.) explore metacognitive approaches to teaching ADW. However, faculty in ADW, over the years, have explored research and teaching strategies to advance connected thinking, and collaborative and integrated learning, considering (a) how are varied sources of information brought to bear on the topic, (b) how is subject matter contextualized and decompartmentalized, and (c) how do you design interdisciplinary research and/or learning activities, to develop cross-curricular and collaborative competencies. In this process, ADW faculty consider design, use, and impact of assignments and evaluation rubrics or criteria to support specific pedagogies and student learning outcomes (for example ADW courses include essay writing, multimedia audio narratives, artistic and performance projects, map quizzes, reading logs, and oral presentations to support critical and connected thinking, experiential and hands-on learning, technology and multimedia competency, and performative and embodied knowledge construction, etc.). Furthermore, they undertake their research and teaching self-assessment, and develop opportunities for community building through faculty development opportunities (for example, use of teaching resources and student evaluations for improvement; participation in and take-aways from the monthly ADW implementation and dissemination sessions and various workshops) at Spelman College.

Works Cited

- "About Spelman." *Spelman College Fact Book 2018–2019*. 2018, pp. 5–13. www.spelman.edu/docs/oirap/fact-book-2018-2019.pdf?sfvrsn=3c8e6e51_0. Accessed 27 Jan. 2020.

- "At a Glance." *Spelman College*, www.spelman.edu/about-us/at-a-glance. Accessed 29 Jan. 2020.
- Augsburg, Tanya. *Becoming Interdisciplinary: An Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*. 2nd ed., Kendall/Hunt, 2005.
- Campbell, Mary Schmidt. "ADW Walking Tours and Script." Received by Pushpa Parekh 20 Nov. 2019.
- Gibbons, Cait. "Americans Need to Learn More about World Outside America." *The Badger Herald*, 19 Nov. 2018, badgerherald.com/opinion/2018/11/19/americans-need-to-learn-more-about-world-outside-america/. Accessed 17 Feb. 2020.
- Gomez, Michael A. *Reversing Sail: A History of the African Diaspora*. 2nd ed., Cambridge UP, 2019.
- Latucca, Lisa. *Creating Interdisciplinarity: Interdisciplinary Research and Teaching Among College and University Faculty*. Vanderbilt UP, 2001.
- Mekerta, Soraya. "ADW and its Beginning." Received by Pushpa Parekh, 2 Feb. 2020. "Michael Gomez." *New York University*, as.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/as/faculty/michael-gomez.html. Accessed 16 Feb. 2020.
- Mission Statement. *Spelman College*. www.spelman.edu/about-us. Accessed 27 Jan. 2020.
- Nelson, Daryl. "Why Many Americans Are Simply Clueless About Global Events" *Consumer Affairs*, 12 Oct. 2012, www.consumeraffairs.com/news04/2012/10/why-many-americans-are-simply-clueless-about-global-events.html. Accessed 17 Feb. 2020.
- Parekh, Pushpa N. "Diaspora: Theoretical Perspectives." *The African Diaspora and the World: Readings for 112*. 12th ed., edited by Kathleen Phillips Lewis et al., Copley, 2005, pp. xix–xxviii.
- Parekh, Pushpa N., and Siga Fatima Jagne, editors. *Postcolonial African Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*. Greenwood Press, 1998.
- Phillips-Lewis, Kathleen. "Re: My Spelman Years." Received by Pushpa Parekh, 19 Dec. 2019.
- Phillips-Lewis, Kathleen, and Mona Phillips. "Introduction." *The African Diaspora and the World: Readings for 111*, edited by Olis Yaa Ajinaku et al., Copley Custom Textbooks of Xanedu Custom Publishing, 2004 (2003), pp. ix–xx.
- . "Introduction Part II: The Journey Continues." *The African Diaspora and the World: Readings for 112*. 12th ed., edited by Kathleen Phillips-Lewis et al., Copley, 2005, pp. vii–xiii.
- Spelman College Website*. www.spelman.edu. Accessed 27 Jan. 2020.
- "The Uncommon Commonwealth." The Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (ACLALS). aclals2019.org.nz/. Accessed 27 Jan. 2020.
- Walker, Sheila. "Re: My Spelman Years." Received by Pushpa N. Parekh, 3 Sep. 2018.

Wright, Beth-Sarah, Kathleen Phillips, and Mona Phillips. "An Introduction to African Diaspora and the World." *African Diaspora and the World: Readings for 111 and 112*, edited by Carla Aniagoh et al., Copley Custom Textbooks of Xanadu Custom Publishing, 2006, pp. xiii–xv.

———. "Re: My Spelman Years." Received by Pushpa Parekh, 3 Sep. 2018.

