THE HISTORY AND FUTURE OF BLACK STUDIES: TEN ACTION PLANS

Abdul Alkalimat

alkalimat.org 2021 These action plans are a call aimed at students and faculty in Black Studies. The call is to standardize projects to know our history and secure our future. Black Studies, Black life and culture, must be preserved. Much has been done, but more is needed. In short, let's practice academic excellence and social responsibility!

Ten action plans are explained here, with examples. We talk the talk and walk the walk.

This is not a call to change your personal career choices, your research priorities, or your theoretical positions. It is a call to repurpose any Black Studies course with the students who are enrolled. We can turn our classrooms from sites of intellectual consumption into sites of intellectual production. Students can produce useful intellectual work.

Let's link up our work in Black Studies. If we are to be a discipline, we need discipline. All this means is following collectively agreed upon practices. Within these practices, be creative. It's like our music: structure with improvisation.

Some of the ten would benefit from departmental backing. Departments can supply the technology. They can post results on departmental websites. But regardless, we can do this. When we do, our people will know that we serve their interests.

The Black Studies founding generation is in its final years. The same is true for the Black liberation activists of the 1960s. Now is the time to activate the thousands of hours of student research time to learn and get these projects done.

Our students have a chance to not only write about history, but to become part of the permanent historical record. Get in touch if any of this appeals to you.

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Ten Action Plans

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1. Document the local history of Black Studies

Black Studies as an academic activity was one of the major achievements of the Black power movement. It advanced by confronting institutional racism in higher education. This included faculty and staff, curriculum, cultural programs, and students. Black Studies led the fight to diversify each campus and connect the campus to the concerns of the Black community. Each campus has its own story, part of a national movement, yet is unique in what actually happened.

Six aspects of this offer a framework for documenting the history of Black Studies on any campus.

- 1. **Disruption of campus life** by militant student and community action: Demonstrations and even building takeovers were often essential to force the issue of Black Studies on campus decision makers.
- 2. **Building a consensus** of what is meant by Black Studies: Processes of discussion and debate between students, faculty, and community led to language that created a common discourse and agenda for action.
- 3. Administrative organizational structures were created: This involved not only dedicated faculty

positions in the university budget, but also unit structures and degrees: departments, institutes, centers, programs, majors, minors, and certificates.

- 4. Black Studies programs became a national profession: Universities created doctoral degrees in Black Studies, peer-reviewed academic journals, and professional organizations for sharing and ideas.
- 5. Black Studies developed **theory.** This involved how curriculum was organized, especially the introductory classes for undergraduates, as well as graduate level specialization.
- 6. Black Studies united around certain **research practices.** Faculty and graduate student research began to focus on history experiences, literary texts, cultural practices, and the dialectics of gender in all of this.

Search out information on all this in campus archives, including materials of the administration; departments; campus newspapers; and college catalogues for self-reported data on courses, faculty, and structure. Do oral histories and interviews with current and previous chairs and directors.



San Francisco State University https://africana.sfsu.edu/content/history Cornell University https://africana.cornell.edu/node/1421

BLACK STUDIES

2. Write a history of every Black community

Every Black Studies program is nearby one or more urban Black communities. We often carry out research within that local community, but we seldom share that research with the members of the community, even our research subjects. This can end if we organize students to gather important historical documents and compile anthologies that explain the experience of the community.

The first stop should be the references desk of the community and campus librarians. They will be able to guide you to best available sources in the general collection and the archives.

Figure out the historical periodization of the community. Describe the demographic trends over at least the last one hundred years using the US census. What has been the size of the community? What has been its socio-economic development?

Back issues of local newspapers are an important source of information, especially during Black History Month (February). Find obituaries for key community leaders of the community.

Local historical societies (city, county, or state) are also good sources. There

are always a few locals who are excellent community-based public historians. Find the Urban League or the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History. Local genealogists are also a great source.

Search online, Look for any locally oriented Facebook pages. Use the Internet to connect with people in the local community. People are already doing incredible work.

Create a print version of this history as well as digital material on a website. Print goes deep into the community, especially across class lines. The digital edition can hold much more than print and can be regularly updated.

Conclude with a public and accessible event where both academics and community researchers make presentations.

Community members are very often doing their own research as well as being the subject of academic research.



Browse eBlackCU Browse by File Format

Print Documents and Books

Images and Photographs

Moving Images and Videos

Oral History

Other Sound Files

Websites and Hyperlinks

Browse by Decade

Note: Decades have been incompletely cataloged. Contact us to help bring history alive.

1850s

1860s

1870s 1900s

1920s

1930s 1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s

Introduction to eBlackCU

eBlackCU is a collaborative portal on African-American history and culture in Champaign-Urbana. Everyone is welcome to use and add to this website. Visit the detailed introduction to eBlackCU to learn more about what eBlackCU is doing, and how it can be used to find information on local African-American history and culture.



to access items by subjects, such as



Click Here to Add Your Content to eBlackCU - All Voices and All Formats Welcome!

Develop Digital Community Memory

eBlackCU is developing a manual on best practices for digital community history projects that can be used anywhere. Visit the manual for more

eBlackCU is using tagging to make history come ali Education, Housing Decade or Community Organizatags page to see a list of all tags.

1850s, 1860s, 1870s, 1900s, 1920s, 1930s, 194

Featured Item

School worker leads effort to develop



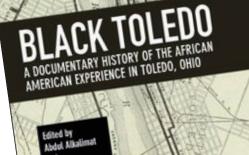
incial Sciences

New Philadelphia

Community Technology Cotillion Books eBlackIllinois Champaign-Urbana Yearbooks Tags Manual



by Gerald A. McWorter and Kate Williams-McWorter for the New Philadelphia Association



Rubin Patterson

Toledo

https://www.haymarketbooks.org/books/1213-blacktoledo

Champaign Urbana

http://eblackcu.net/portal/

New Philadelphia

https://www.abebooks.com/9780910671170/New-Philadelphia-McWorter-Gerald-Williams-mcworter-0910671176/plp

3. Document every community institution

Every community has local institutions that anchor its social life where the memory of the community can be found. Students documenting the history and current life of these social institutions is great training for what they can do later in their communities.

Cellphones can be a great research tool: photos, video, notes, adding to databases, and making phone calls. This is a lifelong lesson for collecting and managing data as part of an activist-intellectual life.

The most important historical community institution is the religious institution: church, mosque, synagogue, temple or reading room. This will usually be a Baptist, Methodist, or Catholic institution. Two historical data points are ministers and church locations. Their time periods set the historical chronology for gathering other information.

Another social institution has to do with hair care: beauty parlors and barber shops. These are sites of cultural production and discourse, and often where social capital abounds.

Every Black community has at least one high school and one elementary school associated with the history of that community before integration, and then in some cases after.

Digitizing high school yearbooks is a project that will create a very valuable resource for the community. These are also essential for historical data on leadership, teachers, and generational peers.

Other institutions include social organizations, for example Urban League, NAACP, fraternities and sororities. Every community is unique in this regard, so whatever is important in your community should be a subject of study.

This kind of project can usefully be a case for collaboration between campus and community. People have the data (documents, photographs, programs, etc.), students can provide the research labor (sorting, digitizing, web page development, etc.), and the campus can provide the free web hosting. If we can build trust, we can secure the memory of our people.



4. Document the Black liberation movement

While we are all aware of the national movement and its organizations and well known leaders, the most important agency of Black struggle has been at the local level. Most of this is people who have yet to be part of our recorded history. Every year we lose people and their documentation. We must act so that everyone can see that where there was oppression, there was resistance.

Even with the national organizations, there is a need to document their local chapters:
NAACP, Urban League, SCLC,
SNCC, CORE, Nation of Islam,
Black Panther Party, Black Workers
Congress, Coalition of Black Trade
Unionists, National Committee of
Negro Women, and many others.

Also, we need to preserve the historical documentation of key events, major demonstrations, key court cases, major legislative battles, key assassinations, urban uprisings, memorable speeches and conferences.

Key people need their life story recorded. We continue to learn

about Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. But we have to think on the scale of the slave narratives to begin thinking about the masses of people we have lost without gathering their story. This must lead us into a new era of oral history recording in the age of the Internet. We can capture testimony, transcribe and post both voice and printed versions as a permanent record of the time.

We teach about the Black liberation movement in each of our Black Studies programs. It will be easy and essential to include research in this curriculum. Over a few years we can survey the entire community, particularly with the goal of covering the 60s generation.

Black Studies can collaborate with other departmental initiatives, especially graduate students in history, as well as local memory institutions (libraries, museums, archives). Community-based publications, modest numbers of locally-focused pamphlets can make a big impact and raise the visibility of Black Studies.



5. Document Black organizations

All Black organizations should be documented and have their history recorded. When Black people organize and sustain their unity much gets accomplished. This is the most important way to demonstrate that Black people were operating at a high level of culture and social development.

Black Studies needs to document itself. There have been national, regional, and statewide organizations. These documents are mainly in the personal files of former and current activists in Black Studies. After establishing trust, students can be used to work with people to organize archives and compile collections to be digitized that document organizational experiences.

All organizational information is important. Compiling the minutes of an organization can preserve quite valuable information about both the life of the organization and the community in which it functioned. Sometimes there are annual events that need to be documented. Of course, every organization will have a leadership, sometimes one that holds positions

for a long period of time, and sometimes leadership that changes in succession. All of this is important.

Local publications should also be included in this. This includes local magazines and newspapers, as well as self-publishing projects. The best way to save our history is to digitize all important material, and then negotiate with the campus library to archive the digital files on a permanent basis. This might also include the local library or museum.

Another focus can be local businesses. Sometimes a local business is an anchor for a community, a store or a barbershop or a funeral parlor. A student project to document a business using print material, photographs, and newspaper articles can be a very useful memory project for a community.



6. Compile comprehensive bibliographies

Every work of scholarship is anchored by the bibliography at the end. This connects all our work. A bibliography of mainstream publications can be built using massive online databases such as World Cat and Google Scholar, and even more commercial sources such as Amazon Books. But they don't include what is self-published or locally produced.

The entire 20th century saw the publication of bibliographical reference sources on African Americans. It became a main activity of reference librarians, both for academic subjects and topics of local community interests as well. In some cases, book length bibliographies were published on key topics. There is always the danger that the bibliographical record of one generation will not be the starting point for the next generation. Much intellectual work can thus be disregarded and lost.

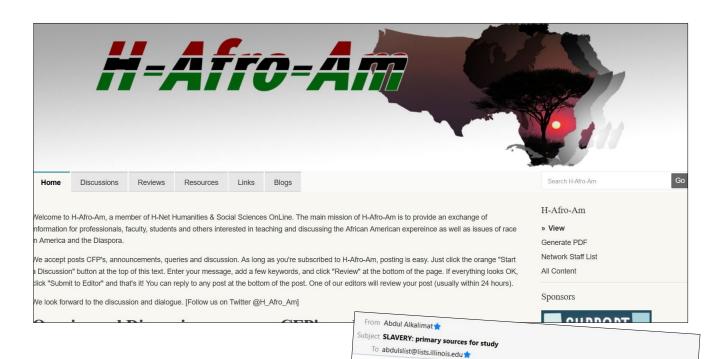
The historical bibliographical reference for major research is the 1928 book by Monroe Work, *A Bibliography of the Negro in Africa and America*. But most graduate students and faculty in Black

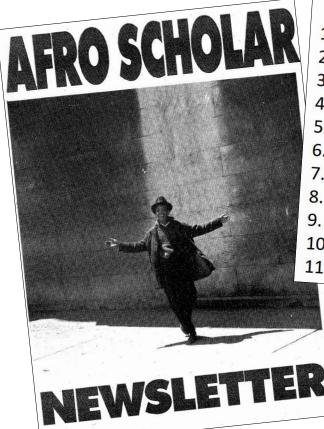
Studies have never used this book. Our grounding in Black intellectual history needs improvement.

Use a tool like Zotero (https://www.zotero.org/) to enable young scholars to maintain bibliographical control over their entire set of references over the course of their career. This includes all projects, so that the references are archived for each project, and as well as being a collection of everything.

Zotero can absorb book and article entries from WorldCat (https://www.worldcat.org/) and JSTOR (https://www.jstor.org/). It interfaces with Amazon Books too.

Even with big topics like slavery or the Black Panther Party or African American novels, it is still possible to build a comprehensive inclusive bibliography. This is an appropriate task as part of a research career on your chosen subject. This would be an important contribution to the profession.





SLAVERY: Selected sources

- 1. The enslaved people
- 2. The laws
- 3. The plantations
- 4. Chronology
- 5. Selected fiction
- 6. Selected Non-fiction
- 7. Trans-Atlantic Slavery Trade
- 8. Origins of the people
- 9. Political economy of slavery
- 10. Fight and flight for freedom
- 11. Global Slavery Today

Afro Scholar

http://alkalimat.org/writings.html#11bibliographies

H-Afro-Am

https://networks.h-net.org/h-afro-am

Abdulslist

abdulslist@lists.illinois.edu

7. Document our Black Studies curriculum

The main activity for each of our campus programs is the curriculum we teach. We organize readings and audio-visual material on aspects of a subject that we cover with lectures and discussion over the course of an academic term. Sometimes we have an agreed upon syllabus so that faculty can take turns but cover the same basic material. Sometimes the course is unique to the faculty member teaching it.

A major emphasis has to be placed on the foundation course, the one we use to introduce the field to both majors and non-majors. There are three basic approaches to this course: a textbook (for example the ones by Alkalimat or Karenga), a published anthology of readings, or a collection of unique materials organized by the instructor. Many courses are a combination of this.

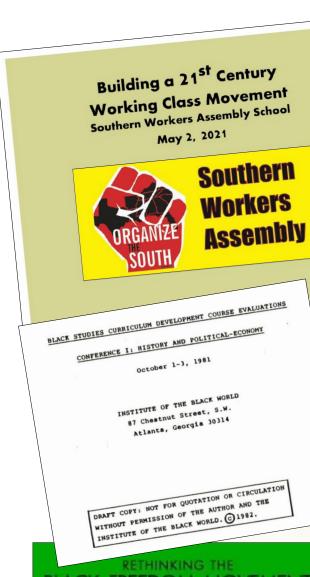
Sharing information on the experience of teaching this course is a clear responsibility of every Black Studies professional organization. There needs to be a session on the Introduction course during every annual national conference. The content of this course across all

degree granting programs defines the discipline of our field of study.

We need to be concerned with our pedagogical objectives. How do we orient our students to access knowledge, and in turn to create new knowledge. What are the methods we use in focused scholarship, and what methods do we intend to function as the information behavior of everyday life.

Institutions that have limited course loads for faculty have a responsibility to the profession to develop course syllabi that can be adopted and used in other institutions. This includes both historically significant material as well as the most recent important scholarship.

Formal lecture courses have been packaged as videos that can be used by other institutions. This has proved to be an important resource that united the profession. We need to resist the proprietary harm that keeps us from sharing our intellectual production.



TWO CONTINENTS OF CONTEMPORARY

AFRICAN REVOLUTION

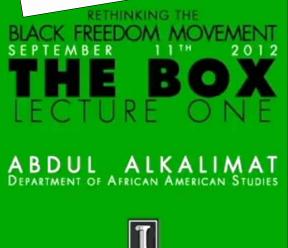
(Course Outline)

Prepared By:

Harun Kofi Wangara

Abd-Al Hakimu Ibn Alkalimat

(formerly Gerald A. McWorter)



Spellman College tlanta University Center ring Semester, 1968-69

IBW Reports
http://alkalimat.org/IBW
Rethinking Black Liberation: The Box Lectures
http://alkalimat.org/audioviz.html#thebox
Two continents of African Revolution
http://alkalimat.org/writings.html
SWA Workers School
https://southernworker.org/

8. Document our conferences

When we aggregate in our conferences important discourse takes place. This is a practice that has been carried forward since the 19th century. In fact the National Negro Convention Movement that began in 1830 was well documented (https://coloredconventions.org/). They kept detailed minutes and reproduced texts of key speeches.

This is a standard that we can replicate. In fact, the discussions and debates at such conferences are more important in many ways than standalone texts, especially when the text is examined out of context.

The documentation of a conference is a living anthology of diverse voices. This will document the intertextuality of peers and provides a process that helps us avoid the danger of dogma. Great voices viewed in context become more understandable as part of a social process. Even viewing Malcolm X as an expression of a historical social process helps us to avoid falling prey to the great person theory of history. If Malcolm X could be, then others could be as well.

The first step that everyone can take is to digitize and share the program of the conference, and even your presentation. This would be the documentary basis for a narrative history of professional activity, having information on who spoke on what topics will identify intellectual trends. Every campus might also pull together all local presentations to keep a record of local professional production.

Conferences reflect generational experience. Each generation has the sole responsibility for preparing the historical record of its work. In our professional organizations this is critical, and even more so in the age of virus pandemics. We can't all attend a conference, but we are all interested in the proceedings. The access we all have to digital tools and web storage space makes the possibility of documenting conferences an easy process.



Documents and Photos from the Year to Pull the Covers Off Imperialism

Black Studies in the 1960s was reborn in the Black Power Movement. It was a confrontation with institutional racism in higher education and spread to all levels of schooling. It was a radical project that linked educational activities to Black Liberation. Many activities took place.

One of the projects organized by Peoples College and the African American Studies Program at Fisk
University was the "Year to Pull the Covers Off Imperialism." A conference was held at Fisk on January 10-12,
1975. It was simultaneous with the Institute of the Black World and the African Liberation Support Committee,

ent Movement, notably the founding of the February First Movement

Left to New Y Comm (People Robert Black F the laur Year to Imperial College, January

PERSPECTIVES ON BLACK LIBERATION AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION



Radical
Tradition
and a
Legacy of
Struggle
Conference
Proceeding

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BLACK STUDIES
6th Annual National Conference





nat was then distributed nationally to Black Studies academics and Black / by Black Studies faculty and students to rethink how to relink with the ocuments (and photos below) are being shared to strengthen the past.

> BLACK POWER CONFERENCE REPORTS

ACTION afram associates, inc. / 103 east 125th street / harlem, new york 10035 / (212) 876-9255

Philadelphia Aug. 30 - Sept. 1, 1968

Bermuda July 13, 1969

dedicated to



Congress of African Peoples

https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-1a/caphistory.htm

YPTCOI

http://alkalimat.org/yptcoi/

NCBS Conference Program

http://alkalimat.org/writings.html

eChicago

http://echicago.illinois.edu/

Perspectives on Black Liberation and Social Revolution http://alkalimat.org/writings.html

9. Document our life stories

Within the context of history and social relations each of us is an individual, and each of us has a unique story of how we have lived our lives. Each of our stories is important to some people, family, friends and co-workers. When each story is told it can become relevant to the entire historical context and social relations that we are embedded in.

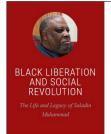
People are asked biographical questions all of the time: How do you feel today? What did you do over the weekend? How did the family reunion go? Telling our story as it happens is part of life. Making a summation, writing a full narrative is something that should be done as a way of evaluating the path we would have walked. Autobiography helps us make sense of our lives. It's a Sankofa project.

Autobiography is a tradition in African American literature. But is should not be thought of as something that famous people do. No, it is a literary genre that everyone should embrace when possible, and for activists in Black Studies autobiography is a way to go. Sometimes it is important to do this for someone else. To prepare a biography. This is connected to family genealogy that places people in a network, but biography goes deeper into the life experiences of a single person. In this context we need to think about our parents and grandparents.

In the context of Black Studies each campus should commission students, for pay and course credit, to prepare biographical studies of each head of Black Studies on that campus, with photos and documents. These are the leaders who have built our profession and we need to honor them with memory statements about them.

The same holds true for people in the community who have achieved and who have made important contributions in the fight for freedom, justice, and equality. Key people mentioned in other parts of this handbook are prime candidates for this kind of individual treatment. Usually there will be one or more newspaper articles that can be used to begin such a project.





INTRODUCTION

AUTUBIUGKAF

WKIIINGS

PHOTOS

LINKS

Introduction





Autobiography

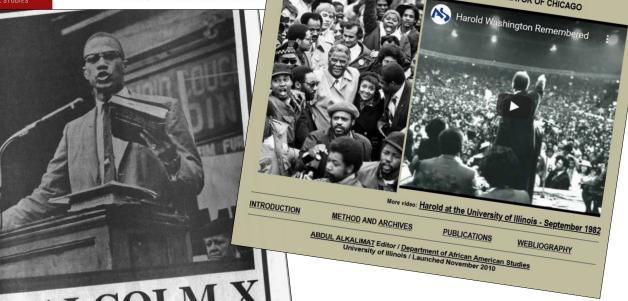
10 Key questions





Reflecting on Black Power in the time of Black Liv





MALCOLM X

الحج ملك الشباز

STUDY GUIDE

Harold Washington

http://eblackchicago.org/HAROLD/

Martin Luther King

https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/

Saladin Muhammad

http://theblm.net/saladin/

Malcolm X

http://www.brothermalcolm.net/

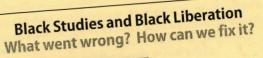
10. Invent new ways to publish

We know the coercion: publish or perish. But there is more than this that should motivate us to publish. We need to preserve and share our ideas, and the best way to do that is to publish our ideas in printed form.

What we do with the most ease is to talk. We do this in class on a regular basis. We do this when we make conference presentations. We participate on panels and present our ideas. We talk.

Now, in this digital age, most of us have become users of power point slides when we give a talk. This led us to invent a new form of publishing – the SLAPER. SL for slides, and APER for paper. Together they make up the new word, the SLAPER. It's pronounced *slay-per*.

We transcribe our talk, edit it, add slides, and we have a new publication to post on our personal web page or the departmental web page. Every faculty and graduate student in Black Studies can produce at least one slaper per year.





Abdul Alkalimat February 20, 2016

A speech at the
Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History
Detroit, Michigan

By Abdul Alkalimat February 20, 2016



Chicago's Africa: Identity, Scholarship, and Politics

Abdul Alkalimat, University of Illinois, October 13, 2017



Chicago's Africa: Identity, Scholarship, and Politics

Abdul Alkalimat
The Returns Conference
University of Chicago
October 13, 2017

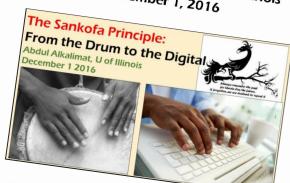
Keynote talk for the Returns Conference sponsored by the University of Chicago

Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, 915 E 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637

Conference theme: "What does it mean to return—to a cultural history, to a movement, and to the site of Africa in developing an artistic language?"

The Sankofa Principle: From the Drum to the Digital

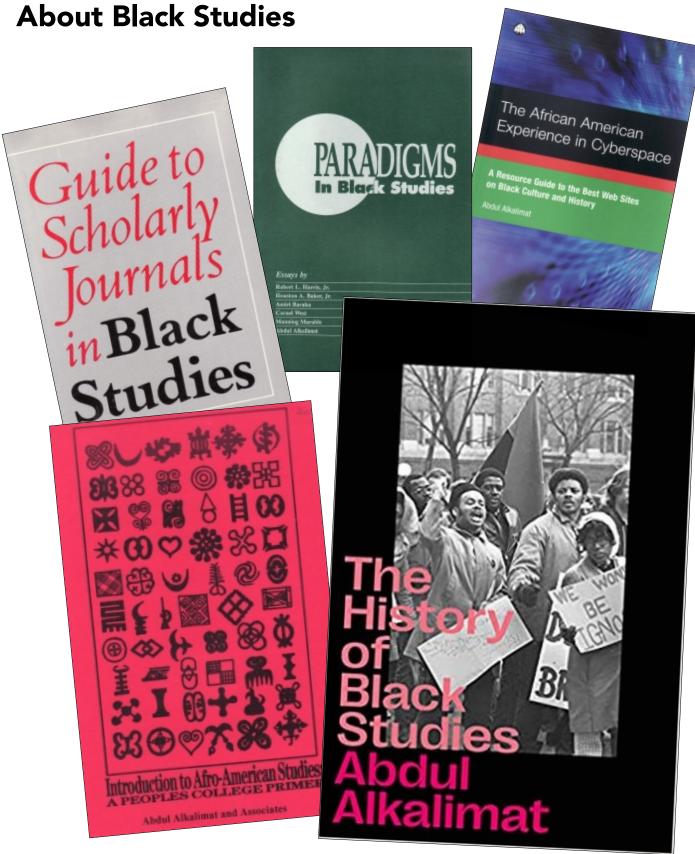
Abdul Alkalimat, University of Illinois December 1, 2016



Keynote for the 30th Symposium on African American Culture and Philosophy hosted by the Purdue University African American Studies and Research Center

Conference theme: "Exploring the 'Humanity' in the Digital Humanities: Africana/Black Studies Perspectives on the Digital Humanities"

Black Studies and Black Liberation (Detroit 2/20/16) The Sankofa Principle (Purdue 12/1/16) Chicago's Africa (U Chicago 10/13/17) all at http://alkalimat.org/writings.html



Four of these titles are available at alkalimat.org/writings.html; *The History of Black Studies* (2021) is available from Pluto Books or any bookseller.