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SUSTAINING BLACK STUDIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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TECHNOLOGY AND AFRICANA STUDIES: A DISCUSSION OF ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

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This paper is addressing the issue of organization as an important dimension of the academic discipline of Africana Studies. The issue of organization is important because it is the social relationships and the method of aggregating individuals for purposeful behavior of reviewing existing knowledge and creating and disseminating new knowledge. Black Studies faces the organizational question on the local campus as well as at the national level of a professional organization.

The Three Organizational Faces of Black Studies

There are three types of paradigmatic roles that Black Studies faculty and students have mastered over time. These three roles are: the activist, the scholar, and the spider. For each of these roles there is a broader conception of the organizational character of

Black Studies. These are: Black Studies as social movement, as academic profession, and as knowledge network.

THREE STAGES OF BLACK STUDIES

ORGANIZATIONAL FORM	KEY SOCIAL ROLE
Black Studies as Social Movement	Activist
Black Studies as Academic Profession	Scholar
Black Studies as Knowledge Network	Spider

Black Studies as a social movement has to do with the way in which the Black Liberation movement, while being transformed under the ideological umbrella of Black Power, moved into higher education establishing a new battlefield for transformation. We can think of this as the dialectics of integration. Many of the organizational efforts that created the intellectual and cultural basis for Black Studies were outside of the university. Instead, there were located in the autonomous intellectual tradition and political tradition of the African American community. But the movement took shape as the first wave of Black college students hit the campus after the assassination of Martin Luther King. The 1960s began with less than 200,000 African American students in post-secondary education, and after the King assassination, by the beginning of the 1970s, there were over one million African American students enrolled in post-secondary education. These social movement organizational forms had to do with giving shape and coherence to the spontaneity of innovative Black thinking and action in local communities. Black Studies discourse took place in all of the largest Black communities.

On the campus, the main expression of this social movement phase was the development of the Black Student Union. It was the first generation college student who brought with them the politics of the Black community, that is the Black Liberation movement. In addition to this, there were organizations in the community that were the force transforming these young students and continuing to relate to them while they were on campus, constituting a campus community linkage. In addition there were journals that started as a reflection of the intellectual and cultural life of the African American community, and represented the cutting edge of intellectual and ideological thinking. At this point it is clear that intellectual leadership of the Black Studies movement was coming from the community and from the Black Liberation movement.

As soon as Black Studies began to develop on campus and simultaneously worked alongside Black Studies as a social movement, Black Studies began to reinvent itself as an academic profession.

BLACK STUDIES AS SOCIAL MOVEMENT

ORGANIZATIONS	JOURNALS
Communiversity (Chicago)	Negro Digest/Black World (Chicago)
Institute of the Black World (Atlanta)	Journal of Black Poetry (San Francisco)
Peoples College (Nashville)	Black Lines (Pittsburgh)
Malcolm X Liberation University (Durham)	The Liberator (New York)
Organization of Black American Culture (Chicago)	The Black Scholar (Oakland)
African Heritage Studies Association	Soul Book (Los Angeles) Freedomways (New York)

The academic professional activities that were normal for every program or department or discipline became the model for Black Studies. For the entire history of Black Studies, the dual identity of Black Studies as social movement and as academic profession has existed. The primary reason for this is that the issues of class and racism continue to haunt the Black community, hence the ever present potential of spontaneity and struggle. Black Studies as social movement is always latent if not manifest in the behavior of the students, faculty, and community. On the other hand, as an academic profession, every year Black Studies has to meet the formal norms of each campus. Hence, the stratification of higher education in the United States has dictated the historical development of Black Studies in that context. Even though Black Studies as an academic profession has its autonomous existence at the national level, in each instance at the local level, the academic activities have to adapt to local campus norms in terms of organizational issues.

However, we are now entering a new third stage. This is part of the information revolution. Hence, Black Studies is being transformed into a knowledge network. A knowledge network is a linking together of individuals and programs on the basis of information technology. The new digital tools that we have can enable

Black Studies to unite and to present a common face, the collective face, in all our variety to the world. And in this way, in cyberspace, Black Studies can be united.

BLACK STUDIES AS ACADEMIC PROFESSION

ACADEMIC PRACTICE	BLACK STUDIES EXAMPLE
Professional Organization	NCBS, ASALH, AHSA
Curriculum	Text: <i>Introduction to Afro-American Studies</i>
Research Productivity	Newsletter: <i>Afro-Scholar</i> 1983-1991
Public Policy	Undercount of the 1980 US Census
Community Service	Murchison Community Center

The existence of Black Studies as a knowledge network is in its first phase. In this phase the academic practices of Black Studies as an academic profession are being transformed digitally into a virtual tool or manifestation. The five aspects of professional practice that we have identified as part of the academic profession (professional discourse, teaching, research, public policy, and community service) are all represented by a digital manifestation. In this example the five professional practices are identified as a knowledge network in terms of what we are doing at the University of Toledo. In each instance, the URL will take you to a website that will demonstrate how normal academic practices are carried on virtually.

BLACK STUDIES AS KNOWLEDGE NETWORK

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE	BLACK STUDIES EXAMPLES
Professional Discourse	Conference Online: New York 2003 http://eBlackstudies.org/may2005/
Teaching	Text Online: http://eBlackstudies.org/intro/
Research	Project BAD: http://www.murchisoncenter.org/acrl/
Public Policy	9/11: War or Peace: http://www.africa.utoledo.edu/911/
Community Service	Cyberchurch: http://www.cyber-church.us

Paradigm Shift

The organization of scholarship and the structure of programs is not merely adding a new kind of technology, but entering a new stage of development. In order to highlight this, we have developed a review of methodology that includes the vital use of digital technology. We have a new "D7 Method." The D7 Method includes con-

ventional aspects of the scientific method or an empirical approach to the study of phenomena but includes both the issue of digitization, which is the Black Studies of the future as well as difference and advocacy that maintains the concern for social change that comes out of the past and the origin of Black Studies. The critical point is digitization. The digitization of research in Black Studies and the digitization of communities as a form of community service can be the critical step to transform the next decade of Africana Studies. There are three great digitizations that are a part of this process: discourse, scholarship, and experience. The method we call the D7 Method is an attempt to lay out systematically the steps that can be taught as a norm and how we carry out our research and curriculum development. The key innovation here has to do with D3, digitization. That is moving our information to cyberspace, hence making it collective,

THE D7 METHOD

D1. Definition	Defining the problem, summing up the relevant literature, formulating the research question and/or hypothesis
D2. Data	Operationalizing the variables, drawing a population sample, collecting data regarding the variables
D3. Digitization	Inputting, scanning, and otherwise putting the data on a computer—organized in some useful way
D4. Discovery	Analyzing the data to test the hypothesis or answer the research question
D5. Design	Laying out the data and analysis in text, tables, and figures to convey the findings to various audiences
D6. Dissemination	Sharing the findings with the various audiences as widely and effectively as possible
D7. Difference	Using the research to make a difference in your research community or the larger world

more democratic, cheaper to use, easier to carry out. This is the focus on actually changing the world, uniting with the community, embracing the concept of advocacy. We have used the D7 method in the University of Toledo and present our experience as a model for the future of building and transforming discipline into a knowledge network.

The digitization of discourse has changed the definition of community. In the past, discourse had been really limited to people who have face-to-face relationships either on a campus or at nation-

al professional meetings. Sometimes, the discourse was just somewhat limited to talking via telephone (one-to-one communication) or via mailings (one-to-many communication). However, with the digitization of discourse, such as a listserv discussion list or some form of web-based communication such as a bulletin board, one has instantaneous asynchronous many-to-many communication. *H-Afro-Am* is the largest digitization of discourse project. There are 2,500 Black Studies scholars and graduate students who are subscribed to this list for daily exchange of emails. In addition to the actual exchange of information on a daily basis, every post is archived and is archived and is searchable on the website.

Three Great Digitizations

- *Digitization of Discourse*: Online communication for education, organization, and mobilization.
- *Digitization of Scholarship*: Linking Black Studies scholarship online for global transparency and accessibility.
- *Digitization of Experience*: Virtual community of everyday life including the struggles for survival and liberation.

The digitization of scholarship is a way of making the past and the present a simultaneous experience because of the ease of which one can retrieve a document once it's been digitized. The digitization of scholarship is important because not only does it collectivize our knowledge but enables us to share our work and overcome any distinction that exists between the campus and the community. On the web, all the information is equally available to everyone who has a computer or can get to a public library. This is important because every major research topic really requires collaboration. This occurs by scholars who are in effect replicating each other's work, and also by having a coordinated approach to the overwhelming research agenda of any major subject once one gets into the particularity of the issues that need to be analyzed. So the digitization of scholarship begins to challenge the other forms of scholarships based upon both the speed and convenience that the web provides. The old approach includes waiting for presentations at annual professional meetings, the publication of quarterly professional journals, and of course book publication itself. The general trend toward a knowledge network is to increase the sharing of scholarship, which in general promotes and encourages more research and more publishing and therefore constitutes a

win-win situation for everyone.

The digitization of experience is perhaps the largest area of digitization because it addresses a fundamental question regarding the digital divide. Most of the discussions of the digital divide have to do with owning and using computers and having access to the internet. Basically the use of the computer and the internet have to do with surfing and downloading information that can be found on the worldwide web. However, the digitization of experience puts a focus not on downloading other people's information but rather uploading information from individual research projects, individual communities, individual institutions, families, and people. The digitization of experience looks at the political culture of everyday life as the greatest reservoir of behavior and activity that constitutes access to the knowledge and wisdom of the Black community.

The organization of the digitization process does not need to have face-to-face synchronous relationships. This can lead to a tremendous reorganization of the field because it enables us to aggregate ourselves in small groups with highly specialized topics regardless of where we are in the world and enable us to work effectively on a day-to-day basis.

The organization of Black Studies as a knowledge network is an important return to the ideological concern of Black Studies at the beginning, without the polemical character and divisive style of ideological groupings. In the beginning, Black Studies wanted to continue to link the campus and the community. The knowledge network does that. In the initial stages Black Studies saw itself as mobilizing Black people around knowledge that could be used in transforming social life and making life better. A knowledge network enables people to aggregate, analyze, and advocate.

In sum, what I've attempted to outline is that there are three stages of Black Studies or rather there are three simultaneous modes of operating. The activist, the scholar, and the spider are all hats that each of us can wear, sometimes separately, and sometimes simultaneously, because the activist must have a form of expression as a spider, and the scholar, too, must be able at times to take the form of the spider; and of course the best of all possible worlds is when Black Studies professionals take on all three identities and reproduce these identities in the students that we teach.