Introduction

The African American Cultural Center’s (AACC) mission is to provide educational, cultural activities, leadership initiatives, advocacy, outreach and comprehensive programming focused on African, African American and African descent cultures.

Programs and Initiatives

Harambee: The academic year opened with the annual Harambee program to welcome new members of the campus into our community. Harambee is the Swahili word meaning “let us come together.” This program allows others to be introduced to student leaders, faculty, administrators, staff and community partners. This year, Harambee featured music from NC State’s African Student Union and Uninhibited Praise Gospel Choir. It was held on Wednesday, September 3, 2014 from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm in the African American Cultural Center’s Washington Sankofa Room in Witherspoon Student Center. The program drew an audience of approximately 225 people.

Brown v. Board: 60 Years Later: This year, the African American Cultural Center celebrated the 60 year anniversary of the landmark supreme court decision, Brown v. Board, which legally desegregated school. The center adopted the programmatic theme, Educational Empowerment-Replicating the Systematic Practices That Work. Two panel discussions were held to provide insight and dialogue relative to educational best practices and issues of inequity and access. Both programs were held in partnership with the College of Education.

• Education Panel, Part I: Brown v Board: 60 Years Later: This program was held on Tuesday, September 23, 2014 from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm in the African American Cultural Center’s Washington Sankofa Room in Witherspoon Student Center. The goal of the event was to help students and members of the campus community understand the legal impact of the Brown v. Board court decision, the great achievements that were made within the African American community before and after this court decision, discuss current challenges and inequalities that persist in society today, and highlight some of the systematic practices that have led to academic success in the African American community. This event was free and open to the public.
• **Education Panel, Part II: Brown v Board: 60 Years Later, Separate But Equal Revisited:** This panel discussion was held on Thursday, April 23, 2015 at 6:00 pm, and featured educators examining the impact of integration on the educational experience of African Americans. The lead panelists was distinguished educational leader, Dr. Dudley Flood.

• **The Annual Living Legends Series** connected with the Brown v. Board theme by featuring Mr. Irwin Holmes, Jr., the first African American undergraduate alumnus of NC State. The program was held on Tuesday, October 28, 2014 from 6:00–8:00 p.m. in the African American Cultural Center’s Washington Sankofa Room in Witherspoon Student Center. Mr. Holmes Jr. received a Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering from North Carolina State University in 1960. He was the first African-American to receive an undergraduate degree from the university. He went on to earn a master’s degree in electrical engineering from Drexel University. He opened doors and laid the foundation for excellence when he was among the first four African American undergraduates to enroll at NC State in 1956. He broke barriers in undergraduate education when he became the first African American student to graduate in 1960 with a degree in electrical engineering. His other three classmates would soon follow, obtaining bachelor’s degrees in 1962. Irwin Holmes graduated third in class from Hillside High School in Durham, NC. Yet, his talents exceeded the classroom. He had been ranked as high as the #2 African American tennis player in the country while in high school and thus quickly pursued a position on NC State’s tennis team his freshman year. He also participated on NC State’s track team his freshman year. His decision to join NC State’s tennis and track teams not only integrated sports at NC State, it integrated sports for the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC). Attending NC State during a time when there were “colored only” signs in both Raleigh and Durham at almost every public facility, water fountain, waiting room and building entrance, Holmes and his classmates faced major obstacles. His time on campus was not met without opposition. During his first class as a freshman, a professor “refused to teach an African American student” and forced the university to find someone else to teach that class. Holmes’ tenacity and resilience continued to add to this legacy as he went on to earn a master’s degree in electrical engineering from Drexel University. Through an interview facilitated by Tracey Ray, Interim Director for the African American Cultural Center, Christopher Hart-Williams, Editor and Chief of the Nubian Message, and Nia Doaks, Managing editor of the Nubian message, Mr. Holmes was able to share a number
of experiences both inside and outside of the classroom during his time as a student at NC State.

Art Gallery Exhibits: The African American Cultural Center Gallery presented gallery exhibits and linked programming that promote awareness of and appreciation of African and African descent cultures. The gallery was home to three major exhibits each year.

• “Verdadism: Creating Social Change Through Abstract Art with Social Commentaries” by Soraida Martinez was featured in conjunction with the university’s celebration of National Hispanic Heritage Month in September 2014. The exhibit kick-off event featured an artist talk on tolerance and understanding by Soraida, Creator of Verdadism. Since 1992, Soraida Martinez has been creating Verdadism paintings with written social commentaries for the purpose of encouraging self-empowerment and social change. The art of Verdadism depicted racism, sexism, stereotyping, hope, identity, alienation and the social issues faced by women, African-Americans, Latinos and many individuals in mainstream America. This art talk and exhibition has evolved from over 22 years of the artist’s observations and personal experiences as a Puerto Rican woman in contemporary American society. Over 20 fine art prints from original Verdadism paintings created from 1992 to 2005 were on exhibit, including: ©1994 Please Stop Calling Us Minorities! We All Know That’s an Unfair Label With Negative Connotations; ©1995 La Latina; ©1995 Women Working Together; ©2005 A Tribute to African-American Women; ©1996 The Weeping Puerto Rican Cuatro Player; ©1996 Between Two Islands; ©1992 Puerto Rican Stereotype: The Way You See Me Without Looking At Me; ©1992 Rigid Man; ©1993 What Prejudice Looks Like; ©1994 One Day I Found A Lump In My Breast. The artwork was on display in the African American Cultural Center Gallery from Monday, September 15–Friday, September 26, 2014. This event served as the kick-off for the university’s month-long celebration.

• “Any City, AMERICA,” works by J. Stacy Utley was featured in partnership with the College of Design, October 6 – December 12, 2014. Critically acclaimed artist J. Stacy Utley, who earned his degree in architecture and environmental design at NC State, designed this exhibit through the placement of portable objects in urban spaces. His work addresses the social process of gentrification. It is a catalyst in the discussion on the implication of change in an existing context through urban renewal or gentrification. He simulated this process by taking my own ambiguous yet familiar portable objects –miniature houses that serve as architectural prototypes-- and placing them in urban spaces. Painted white, the houses are symbolic, metaphoric, allegorical, evocative and ambiguous. Their juxtaposition in the context of apparent urban renewal is an uncanny co-existence of the old and new, certainty and uncertainty, the past, the
present, or the unknown. Photographing this juxtaposition in context gives the portable object equivalence to its surrounding in both scale and effect. In reality, however, small in scale and ambiguous, the object becomes a signifier for change. In addition to hosting an artist talk, the African American Cultural Center hosted a Lunch and Learn on the topic of gentrification. The Lunch & Learn: “Any City, AMERICA” was held on Tuesday, October 7, 2014 from 12 noon – 2 PM in the African American Cultural Center’s Washington Sankofa Room in Witherspoon Student Center and featured Dr. Richard Dellafave, professor emeritus in sociology.

• “Irrevocable Grace,” works by Jaleesa B. Maye, was presented in partnership with College of Design and the Women’s Center. The opening of the exhibit and meet the artist talk was held on Wednesday, February 11, 2015 from 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm. The work was on exhibit in the gallery beginning on Monday, February 2, 2015 – Friday, May 15, 2015. While creating and collecting this body of work, Jaleesa Maye sought out text and images that would give life to thoughts and approaches, while paying homage to the Afrikan woman. The artist searched through thousands of photographs of African American women that had been meticulously archived by the Library of Congress and realized a commonality between the women depicted. According to the artist, “be it 1894 or 1956 all of the women seemed to possess a bold unyielding grace. It was the reverberation of grace that fueled the flame, it was Toni Morison who lit the match.” “The best art is political and you ought to be able to make it unquestionably political and irrevocably beautiful at the same time.” (Toni Morrison’s quote). It was irrevocable, unalterable, unchangeable grace.

Kunta Kinteh Island: An Evening with Elvin Ross was held in partnership with the Africana Studies program film festival and the university’s annual Diversity Education Week held annually in October. This film and discussion with the filmmaker was held on Monday, October 20, 2014 beginning at 6:00 pm in the Witherspoon Cinema. This documentary film chronicles the process of renaming Ft. James Island in South Carolina, which was a holding cell for enslaved Africans during the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade, to Kunta Kinteh Island—after one of The Gambia’s most well-renowned sons. It shares the points of view of both the government and the Kinteh family, who still preserve their history as residents of a neighboring sea Island. This film embodies the rich spirit of a people that can be passed on throughout the diaspora for decades to come.

Annual Red, White & Black Walking Tour was held in partnership with the university libraries on Thursday, November 20, 2014 and April 9, 2015 at 3:00 pm. The tours began on the quad side of Holladay Hall and allowed students, faculty and staff to learn about the spaces and places on NC State’s campus that have had significant impact on the lives and experiences of African American students and the larger community. Dr. Walter Jackson, NC State associate professor of history, and Ms. Toni Thorpe, program coordinator at NC State’s African American Cultural
the Center led the fall tour. Toni Thorpe, Dr. Craig Brookins and Dr. Katherine Mellon Charron led the spring due to Dr. Walter Jackson’s passing in February 2015. As a result, the spring tour was dedicated to his memory. Marian Fragola from the university libraries and Toni Thorpe led this collaboration. Students, faculty and staff not available to join the tour were encouraged to try out the Red, White & Black mobile web app that allows users to employ their smart phones and other mobile devices to embark on a self-guided walking tour that highlights the rich history of African Americans at NC State (www.lib.ncsu.edu/m/exhibits/redwhiteblack).

The Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Campus Commemoration was held on Monday, January 12, 2015 in the Talley Student Union State Ballroom and featured Dr. Melissa Harris-Perry. Melissa Harris-Perry is the presidential endowed chair in Politics and International Affairs and director of the Anna Julia Cooper Center on Gender, Race and Politics in the South, at Wake Forest University. She has her own talk show on MSNBC and is a columnist for The Nation, National Contributing Editor of Essence magazine. A book signing was included in the event, as she is the author of Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America and Barbershops, Bibles, and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought, which won the 2005 W. E. B. Du Bois Book Award from the National Conference of Black Political Scientists and 2005 Best Book Award from the Race and Ethnic Politics Section of the American Political Science Association. Harris-Perry is also a trustee of The Century Foundation. Her talk for the evening program was entitled “We Can’t Breathe: The Continuing Consequences of Structural Inequality Fifty Years After King” and drew an audience of about 600 people. The event was free and open to the public. A mid-day invitation only luncheon with Melissa Harris-Perry was hosted a gathering of 60 AACC partners (faculty/staff) and students.

AYA Ambassador Program: Based on the values at the center of the Akan adinkra symbol, Aya or the fern and symbolizing endurance and resourcefulness, the African American Cultural Center Ambassadors are students who embrace the dual missions of the African American Cultural Center, promoting awareness and appreciation of the cultures and histories of Africa and the African Diaspora. AYA students are an integral part of the African American Cultural Center assuring that our work will continue and endure. The African American Cultural Center had 42 students serve as AYA ambassadors for the 2014-15 academic year. The AYA ambassadors participated in a number of leadership and professional etiquette workshops/retreats, as well as service learning opportunities.

Origins of the Dream: Hughes’s Poetry and King’s Rhetoric by Dr. Jason Miller: This one-hour talk was presented in partnership with D.H. Hill Libraries on Tuesday, February 10, 2015 at 7:00 pm in the Hunt Library, Auditorium. Dr. W. Jason Miller talked about his new book Origins of the Dream: Hughes’s Poetry and King’s Rhetoric.

Since Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, some scholars have privately
suspected that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “dream” was connected to Langston Hughes’s poetry. Drawing on archival materials, including notes, correspondence, marginalia, and a newly uncovered audio tape, Dr. W. Jason Miller provided a completely original and compelling argument on Hughes’s influence on King’s rhetoric in more than just the one famous speech. Miller is associate professor of English at NC State and the author of *Langston Hughes and American Lynching Culture*.

**African American Read-in: “The Life and Legend of Malcolm X,”** a discussion on the life and legacy of Malcolm X and through sharing and comparing the works of Manning Marable (*Malcolm X: A Life Reinvented*, 2011) and Alex Haley (*Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 1965) took place in the African American Cultural Center Library on Friday, February 6, 2015. This event was held in conjunction with the national African American Read-In, which takes place across the nation annually between February 1st-28th.

**The Annual Blacks in Wax Live Museum** was held on Saturday, February 21, 2015 from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm. The Blacks in Wax Live Museum provided the campus and greater Raleigh community the opportunity to watch history come to life as students and friends reenact great moments in African American history for the community’s education. This community service opportunity that impacts not only our students, but intellectuals of all ages and ethnic backgrounds. This event was free and open to the public. It took throughout Witherspoon Student Center (all rooms in the African American Cultural Center, the campus cinema, rooms, 201 and 204). This program yielded a record 500+ visitors.

**Black Philanthropy: “A Nickel and a Prayer”** was an interactive dialogue presented by Mr. Darryl Lester, assistant director for the African American Cultural Center and Mr. Vincent Bayyan, the interim director of corporate and foundation relations at UNC-Chapel Hill and held on Tuesday, February 24, 2015 from 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm in room 356 of the African American Cultural Center. The program acknowledged that within the African American community, philanthropy is the act of sharing. It encompasses twin concepts of giving and serving as communal enterprise rooted in our ancestral heritage. This charitable impulse can be traced back to Africans living in small villages exchanging and giving for their survival. Black Giving from Africa to America gave the presenters an opportunity to discuss the dynamic heritage of the “give back” within our culture and our community.

**The Annual Ebony Harlem Awards of Excellence** was held in partnership with Multicultural Student Affairs on Sunday, April 26, 2015 at 5:00 pm in the Talley Student Union Ballroom. Started in the spring of 1993, this annual recognition of student achievement honors outstanding male and female students in various categories. Each winner receives a hand-carved Sankofa bird, a hallmark of the African American Cultural Center, which serves as a
reminder the importance of remembering one's roots in order to progress. This year’s program including the naming of the Joanne G. Woodward Leadership Award, in honor of the retiring Vice Provost for Institutional Equity and Diversity.

“What’s on the Table?” was a new initiative of the cultural center. This weekly opportunity for students allowed them to gather in a safe environment for student-led passionate conversations about a wide variety of topics that matter to them. Discussions often reflected their cultural experiences and exchanges as children and young adults. The weekly series serves ad judgment-free talk from the heart and was held on Friday afternoons from 3:00pm to 4:30 pm in the African American Cultural Center lounge area.

The African American Cultural Center Library houses over 7000 titles focused on Africa and the African Diaspora. Housing over 2000 unique titles, the library serves North Carolina State University students and faculty, STEM Early College High School students and members of the local community. In order to provide security to the AACC Library collection, newly acquired 3M Library Security Gates were install in July 2014 and an equipment maintenance contract was secured. In addition, AACC Library AACC Library Office acquired (1) new Dell computer in of 2015; IP-TV was serviced and made available for use in the library for laptop presentations and educational TV.

• **New Books and Videos:** New books and videos were acquired for 2014-2015 (70 new titles). In addition, AACC Library Bookmarks were designed and disseminated as a promotional item. In April 2015 the first AACC Library e-Newsletter Announcement was distributed highlighting new acquisitions, donations, book recommendations. A new process/service began on 2014-15, Book Hold/Transfer Process. This service enables students to request books to be placed on hold in person or online at other NCSU Campus Libraries and we will transfer the requested books directly to designated libraries. This service will help students save time and eliminate campus proximity issues.

• **Programmatic Functions:** The AACC Library functions this year included suggested reading lists created to accompany the following AACC Programs: **Fall, 2014:** Education Panel: Brown v. Board: 60 Year Later, Any City America Art Fall Gallery Exhibit/ Any City America Lunch & Learn - J. Stacy Utley Martin & Malcolm Event/ Kwanzaa featuring The Meeting: Martin Luther King, Malcolm X; **Spring 2015:** Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Campus Commemoration featuring Dr. Melissa Harris Perry - “We Can’t Breathe: The Continuing Consequences of Structural Inequality Fifty Years After King, Gallery Exhibit/ Artist Talk – Irrevocable Grace, African American Read-In: The Life and Legend of Malcolm X, Blacks in Wax, Nikki Giovanni Lecture, Brown v. Board: 60 Years Later and Part II Separate But Equal Revisited.
Co-sponsorships: The African American Cultural Center co-sponsored the annual Kwanzaa celebration with Multicultural Student Affairs on December 2, 2014 in the campus cinema in Witherspoon Student Center. The program featured the play, “The Meeting,” presented by Pin Points Theatre presenting potential answers to the question, “what would have happened if Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X had met more extensively before they were both assassinated.” The award-winning drama gave factual and surprising information about these leaders, their relentless wit and humor and unwavering commitment to human rights and the times. The African American Cultural Center co-sponsored the annual Pan-Afrikan lecture featuring an evening of Poetry, Love and Enlightenment with world-renowned poet, writer, commentator and educator, Nikki Giovanni on March 25, 2015 in the Talley Student Union Ballroom.

Resident Student Organizations: The African American Cultural Center housed eight student organizations. They included the following:

- African American Student Advisory Council
- Society of Afrikan American Culture
- The Collegiate Chapter of 100 Black Men of America, Inc.
- African Student Union
- Peace Church
- Uninhibited Praise Gospel Choir
- AYA Ambassadors
- Black Business Students Association

Staff

- **Tracey Ray**, Ph.D., interim director
- **Darry Lester**, assistant director (July 2014 - April 2015)
- **Toni Harris Thorpe**, program coordinator
- **Angela Jenkins**, librarian
- **Crystal Harkless**, office manager (July 2014 - December 2014)
- **Karen Welton** (October 2014 - April 2015)
- **John Miller**, program assistant
- **Brayndon Stafford**, office assistant

Student Employees: Albert Shin, Camerian Williams, Lisa Redfearn, Phillippe Bailor, Shailicia Gerald, Taylor Adams, Chris Belton, De’Shanta Milan, Jessica Cater, Matthew Wright, Torisha Dozier, and Shardasia Edgerton

Professional Development: Darryl Lester attended the 24th annual conference of the Association
of Black Cultural Center’s held at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign on Thursday, October 30- Sunday, November 2, 2014. Tracey Ray and Angela Jenkins participated in the webinar: Black Cultural Centers on Predominantly White Campuses: Their Purpose and Future—A 21st Century Analysis, A National Dialogue with Ms. Renee Thomas, Director of the Black Cultural Center, Purdue University (West Lafayette, IN). Toni Thorpe participated in the NCBI workshop, Controversial Issues, Dr. Derald Wing Sue’s workshop on microaggressions, and Dr. Shakti Butler’s talk on Systems of Inequities.

Alignment with NC State’s Strategic Plan Goals

1. Enhance the success of our students through educational innovation
   - AYA Ambassador Program
   - Leadership and professional etiquette workshops and service learning opportunities
   - Ebony Harlem Awards of Excellence
   - “What’s On the Table” weekly discussions

2. Enhance scholarship and research by investing in faculty and infrastructure
   - 70 new titles added to the collection in the African American Cultural Center Library

3. Enhance interdisciplinary scholarship to address the grand challenges of society
   - Any City America Gallery Exhibit and Learn-and-Learn on the topic of gentrification
   - Brown v. Board, 60 Years later programming and panel discussions
   - Black Philanthropy, A Nickle and a Prayer program and discussion
   - “What’s On the Table” weekly discussions

4. Enhance organizational excellence by creating a culture of constant improvement
   - Co-curricular programs provided by the African American Cultural Center

5. Enhance local and global engagement through focused strategic partnerships
   - Black Philanthropy, A Nickle and a Prayer program and discussion
   - Annual Blacks in Wax Museum

Annual Report, 2014-15