Dr. William M. King Interviewed: National Council for Black Studies Founding Member

The following interview of Dr. William M. King of the Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder was organized by associate editor Karanja Keita Carroll (KKC) and senior editor Itibari M. Zulu (IMZ) of *The Journal of Pan African Studies* in July 2009.

KKC*: The National Council for Black Studies (NCBS) functions as the premier disciplinary organization for Black (Africana, Afro-American, Pan African and/or African Diasporic) Studies and Africology, as a founding member of NCBS can you share with our readers your role in the development of the organization, your feelings on the current state of the organization and some of the future issues it must engage?*

My association with what would become the National Council for Black Studies (NCBS) dates back to the spring of 1975 when I came across an advertisement in the February issue of *Black World* announcing a call for a national meeting to be held from 18-21 March of that year at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. I would later discover in the organizational files of NCBS, while collecting materials to prepare a history of the origins of the group, a copy of the announcement that had been sent to the University of Colorado at Boulder but had not made it to the Black Studies office which program had been established in 1968. At the time of the call I was in my third year as an assistant professor in the program. I attended that meeting captioned, "Black Studies: Paradox with a Promise," whose intent was to discover whether there was in existence (there was not) at that time some kind of credentialing agency not unlike those that accredited extant institutions of higher education that could be called upon to assist in the further development of the Black Studies program on the Charlotte campus because of the political manner in which it originated. This program then directed by Bertha L. Maxwell, that arose out of a campus protest on 7 February 1969, in remembrance of the deaths of three Black students in Orangeburg, SC the previous year, and which had been established subsequent to a series of meetings with several interest groups, had been told by university officials that some form of external guidance and validation was needed to foster continuance thereof and to ensure that some sense of academic rigor would be observed in the process.

If my memory is reasonably correct, there were somewhere between fifty and one hundred people in attendance, if not more, from a host of schools across the country. Nick Aaron Ford of Morgan State College in Baltimore and the Union Graduate School, from which Maxwell had received her doctorate and whose dissertation bore the same title as the conference, and who had authored a volume titled *Black Studies: Threat or Challenge?*, was the keynote speaker that first evening followed by a reaction panel and questions from the audience.

There followed over the next couple of days sessions on the origins of the Charlotte program, what was going on at the state level in North Carolina, and at the national level in workshops conducted by Andress Taylor of Federal City College, Ewart Guinier at Harvard, James Turner at Cornell, Roscoe Brown at New York University, and Curtis Porter at the University of Pittsburgh.

On Thursday evening, the 20th, following dinner, Robert Chrisman, editor of *The Black Scholar,* was the speaker. Friday, the last day of the conference was given over to wrapping up what had been presented and forming plans for what should be done next given that some kind of organization was going to be created. It was decided that a small working/planning group would be established and that that group, following the invitation of William U. Harris of the Educational Testing Service, who was also at the meeting, would convene at the Henry Chauncey Conference Center in Princeton, NJ from 16-18 July to execute the next step in the process.

What I remember most about that first summer in Princeton, aside from the Blackout that affected parts of New York State and the City of Princeton, was the intensity of the three-a-day work sessions run by Dr. Maxwell who had been elected the temporary chair of the gathering. Following an early breakfast we met for most of the morning, broke for lunch, worked through the afternoon, broke for dinner, and then returned to work for several more hours during the evening. By the afternoon of the 17th, we had covered most of the major issues respecting purpose, infrastructure of the proposed entity, and mission. One particular problem was the need for adaptability and flexibility to meet the diverse needs of the variety of bodies, including Black caucuses in white groups, out there given that we saw ourselves as an umbrella organization that would enroll both individuals and programs. What remained now was what we would call ourselves.

Looking through my notes from that meeting, to better respond to the question you are asking me here, it was understood by all present that what we would call this nascent organization was going to be more than a notion. Two possible titles were: The National Association for Coordinating and Cooperation in Black Studies, and The National Council on Black Education. As I listened to the lengthy discussion that followed, I played with the letters of each of the several names presented. After a bit, I looked up from my doodles and said to the group of about fifteen or so persons, "Oh hell, let's call it 'NCBS', The National Council for Black Studies!"

What followed was a short silence as folk allowed that title to float through their minds. I don't remember now whether we took a formal vote on the name or just agreed that that was what it would be. What my notes do show is that we spent the remainder of our time at Princeton lining out items that would be further solidified at subsequent meetings a couple of which we identified—a state meeting that would take place at Quail Roost, North Carolina, 4-5 October, a progress caucus that was held at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History in Atlanta 15-19 October, at which time Joseph J. Russell of Indiana University (IU), who would later become executive director, came aboard, and, what was supposed to be a model regional meeting, that wound up becoming a national meeting, at Boulder, Colorado, 15-18 November.

It was at this meeting that the late Herman Hudson, then Vice Chancellor for Afro-American Affairs at Indiana University, offered the facilities of IU for a National Office and agreed to host a constitutional convention that would take place in Blooming, Indiana, 13-16 April 1976 at which the first permanent officers were named: Bertha L. Maxwell as National Chair and myself as Vice Chair. One of my duties at that time was coordination of the regional representatives.

A constitution and by-laws were also drafted and subsequently revised and ratified by the Executive Board of the organization at its meeting at ETS 7-9 July 1976. The purpose of the group, codified in Article II, was "to promote and strengthen academic and community programs in the area of Black Studies." It was further noted that the "Council believe[d] that Black Studies academic programs should include any subject area that has the World Black experience as the principal object and content of study." And, finally, the "Council [would be] composed of educators, interested citizens, and students who [were] committed to the advancement of Black Studies." Written into Article III of the constitution describing organizational structure was a "transfer of power" clause to the effect that the "chairperson shall serve a two-year term. The vice-chairperson shall assume the position of chairperson upon completion of a two-year term as vice-chairperson. The secretary shall not automatically accede to the position of vice-chairperson." Preparations were also begun for the first annual meeting that would take place at Ohio State University in Columbus, 16-19 February 1977. Its theme was, "Black Studies Mobilization for Survival." It was also at this first meeting that the Council introduced the student essay program for graduate and undergraduate presentations, and acknowledged the appearance of *Voices in Black Studies,* the council newsletter that had begun publication in January 1977.

On Thursday, 17 February 1977, the second day of the convention, a number of concurrent sessions were presented covering case histories of the rise and decline of Black Studies programs around the country. Also addressed were probable administrative models, fiscal issues focused on survival, Black athletes, and the question of the legitimacy of Black Studies raised by a number of critics. Additional sessions covered curriculum development and interdisciplinary perspectives, research and academic rigor, and funding sources for the conduct thereof. One particularly important session that transpired on Friday, the 18th, addressed, "Black Studies Programs and the Accreditation Process…" an issue that was instrumental in creating the Council in the first place. On Saturday, the 19th, several hours were devoted to a roundtable discussion of careers in Black Studies that was addressed to students who were often asked, "What do you do with a degree in Black Studies?" I was a participant in this discussion and argued that you do the same with it you do with any other degree in liberal arts so long as you kept in mind that additional preparation would be required to become fully conversant with the field and an able practitioner therein. The meeting concluded with a banquet at which Lerone Bennett, Jr. was the guest speaker.

From 13-15 July of that year, we returned to Princeton where we reviewed the convention, addressed further needs, conducted regional work sessions and began to prepare for our second annual meeting that was scheduled to take place at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 15-18 April 1978. The theme of that meeting was, "Black Studies: Beyond Survival—Models for Development."

On Sunday, 16 April, during the first plenary session, the conference was disrupted by a student protest. What I remember of the incident is that they were concerned about not only student participation in organizational decision-making, but also several issues pertinent to the program on the Amherst campus—in brief a conflict between the students and faculty of the local program. They presented to the executive board, of which I was a member, a declaration and set of resolutions that called for a redefinition and reassessment of the objectives and goals of the Black Studies Movement given the then "current socio-economic conditions shaping the international and domestic situation that affects Black people." This they believed was the only way Black Studies could be made and remain relevant to the needs of Black people.

The essence of their argument proceeded from the premise that there was "an interrelationship between all dimensions of knowledge and human experience. [That] Black Studies should encompass every aspect of the educational process (academic course offerings, support systems, skills development, research, etc.). [That we] must stop teaching Black Studies with traditional methods and begin to develop new methodologies that relate concretely to our people's daily experiences." Lastly, they contended that by combining academic excellence and social commitment "to active engagement in the struggles of Afro-Americans" new theories would emerge to define and describe behavior other than that practiced by more traditional scholarly types such as those gathered on their campus in annual meeting. Yes, NCBS was "a professional organization designed to represent the interests of the masses of Black people" in their view. However, this could be effected only, "by maintaining solid links with all sectors of the community, particularly students, parents, teachers and administrators at all levels of education."

At a late night session of the executive board that began at 9:35 PM that same day, the secretary read from a letter on student participation from Kent Poindexter. No immediate action was taken but a motion was offered and passed to discuss the events from the plenary session. Too, nominations were opened for William E. Nelson of Ohio State University as Vice-chair, with Alyce Hill of Morehouse College being nominated for Secretary. They were then closed with the elections scheduled to take place at 7:00 PM on the 17th. I was requested by Maxwell to prepare a report respecting a constitutional change to allow student participation on the board. In the meantime, the board did approve making Poindexter a student member. I was also informed that I would chair the morning plenary session that I vaguely remember as tense but without disruption.

The fourth annual planning meeting of the executive board was held, as before, at the Henry Chauncey Conference Center at ETS, 12-14 July 1978. It was the first executive board meeting under my leadership and was important in that it was a test of whether the transition of power clause that had been written into the constitution two years earlier would work—that is, the vice-chair acceding automatically to the chair. This was done to effect continuity in the nascent organization, something that might not have obtained had the entire leadership cadre been replaced every year or every two years. There had been some discussion about abrogating that clause at an earlier meeting at which I remember commenting that we had a constitution to guide us in these matters and we needed to abide by that constitution if we were to be viewed as a credible professional organization. It was also the first executive board meeting at which there was active student participation.

In my letter to the membership dated 1 July 1978, I cited the portion of the constitution that legitimized my accession and went on to share some thoughts and feelings that I hoped would reflect how I intended to guide NCBS during my two-year term of office. I spoke of the need to increase membership and to specify, at the next executive board meeting after consultation with the membership chair, Alyce Wright, the benefits of belonging to the organization. I indicated that my predecessor had spoken of the need to set "criteria for Black Studies programs," to establish a "National Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Black Studies Programs;" that I hoped to continue the work she had started and carry it to the next level.

I recalled a statement I had seen in a then recent issue of the *Journal of Negro Education* to the effect that "Black Studies as we know, is a misnomer in that it refers to a historical approach or a Black perspective, rather than to critical research of the actual conditions in which Black people live." That type of statement bothered me because it was one reminiscent of a philosophy espoused by those who advocate the study of Black people as objects, something quite distinct from Black Studies whose interpretive frames flow not out of some foreign ideology, but out of the historical experiences and folk wisdom of Black people. Too, I continued, I wanted very much to believe that my own activities in the field since the middle 1960s were more than sound and fury signifying nothing. Granted I wrote, while I might be stretching the intended meaning of the phrase, I did sense a kind of narrow shortsightedness in comparable works to the one I cited that might be used to inform the work before us.

There was no question, in my own mind, I went on, that I was biased in the direction of and by the values incident to having acquired a traditional liberal education that was mostly western in orientation and content. However, I was asking the members of NCBS to directly confront and examine the character of their own intellectual training. In so doing, the objective of the exercise was one of increasing their sensitivity to the nature of the socialization processes we all have transited to become a member of whatever craft/clan we acknowledge to define whatever it is we do in the academy/larger world of which we are a part.

Without such an examination, I was thinking of Socrates here who is reputed to have said that "the unexamined life was not worth living," we could shortchange ourselves in the open-ended pursuit of those strategies, modes of inquiry, and the like mandated by a call for a rigorous and systematic investigation of the life and history of Black people.

I spoke about the curriculum committee that had been formed at the Amherst meeting. It was my intention, I wrote, to charge that committee with the task of suggesting a content model for Black Studies to be presented at our third annual meeting wherever that would be held. I would also ask that committee to consider what I was saying in my letter to the membership and I invited them in their deliberations to respond to what I had said. I also hoped to address further the matter of evaluation and accreditation that had first come up at the 1975 meeting in Charlotte moving to people a committee that could begin work forthwith.

Closing my letter, I wrote that this was their organization and would only be as good as the effort they put into it. I was selected, I concluded, to convene, preside, and perform such other duties as were deemed necessary to carry out the wishes of the Council: you are the Council. Without you, without your labor in the vineyards, mine was little more than an empty position to which no one need pay attention. In return for their efforts, I concluded, I pledged to do my best. I could do no more.

Because of the leadership change the minutes of this board meeting make clear the meeting was both retrospective and prospective. Indeed, one of the things discussed at length was the Amherst conference from earlier in the year and what kinds of things might be done to mitigate some of the problems experienced there.

One of these was a motion passed unanimously to appoint Yolanda Robinson as the national conference committee chair. She would work with the local committee to ease the execution of the conference plan something that had been absent in April. One item of significance was the creation of a committee on evaluation, intervention and management charged to investigate cases of members at their home institutions in matters of privilege and tenure. The remaining reports of the various officers and committees suggest, as I remember them, that we were now beginning to address the nuts, bolts, et al necessary to stabilize and secure the organization for the next step in its evolution. A program committee was established to prepare for the 1979 conference that would take place at the Wood Lake Inn in Sacramento, California 18-22 March. The theme of this conference would be, "Mobilization for Societal Change," and would be coordinated by Otis Scott then director of Pan African Studies at Sacramento State University.

This conference was subdivided into four topics one for each day of the meeting. Each day began with a plenary session that I chaired followed by concurrent seminars that expanded on a particular topic concluding with reports on the daily activities. Monday's was "Academics," Tuesday's was "Political Action," while Wednesday's was "Research." Thursday was given over to final reports, evaluations, and recommendations for future action.

Several matters were taken under consideration by the executive board that convened its semi-annual meeting at 8:05 PM on the 19th. Among these were additions to the board, the resignation of Herman Hudson as chair of the NCBS Advisory Committee, the formation of a committee to meet with the executive director to select a new chair of the advisory committee, and the creation of two committees to study issues of accreditation and standardization of the curriculum that would report to the board at the 22-24 July meeting in Princeton, New Jersey.

The board voted to formally establish a student committee as a standing committee of NCBS. It would have 20 student members, two from each of the ten regions of the organization. This committee would also assume responsibility for the establishment of guidelines, and with the assistance of a board member, operation of the student essay competition. At an organizational meeting convened by me on 21 March at 7:25 PM, I asked for responses from the body as to the overall conference itself, and received many suggestions for improving the conduct of business and structural maintenance. I also peopled the curriculum standardization committee to work out and suggest models for undergraduate curricula, and the accreditation committee. At a final meeting of the executive board I convened at 10:25 AM on the 22nd, I requested and received additional suggestions to improve the effectiveness of the conference and the committees that had been peopled.

The summer board meeting at ETS was called to order at 1:09 PM on 22 July. Following the reports of the standing committees of the board and the executive director, the preliminary reports of the curriculum standards and accreditation committees were presented for discussion. A short recess was called before the discussion began, the meeting reconvening at 2:25 PM.

At that time I reminded the board that at the 1978 July meeting, an evaluation and management committee had been created and peopled to serve as a crisis committee of sorts "to investigate, respond, and recommend action on problem situations;" I requested the assistance of the executive committee in developing a charge and operational procedures for that committee in that the executive director had received several cases of grievance and tenure denial. The meeting was recessed for dinner, reconvened thereafter, at which time a number of the items cited above were discussed, and recessed at 9:00 PM until the following day, 23 July when it was reconvened at 9:00 AM at which time the discussion was resumed including the topic of site selection for the fourth annual meeting. Meal breaks were taken during the course of the day, the meeting recessing at 9:00 PM until the 24th at 9:00 AM.

In this final session, the board approved the selection of Milwaukee, WS as the fourth annual meeting site for a 26-29 March 1980 conference whose them would be, "The Challenge to Black Scholarship: Activism in the Eighties and Beyond." The executive board meeting at this gathering would be my last as the national chair of NCBS. William E. Nelson of Ohio State University would succeed me on 1 July of that year.

Aside from several concurrent sessions covering the institutionalization of Black Studies, communications, the arts and humanities, the legal, economic and political orders of society, what I remember most about this meeting was the submission of the final reports of the curriculum standards committee and the accreditation committee. You will recall that the creation of these entities was the rationale for the 1975 meeting at Charlotte where I began my association with NCBS.

The curriculum standards committee report began by articulating a rationale for a core curriculum in Black Studies and concluded with suggestions on how its institutionalization might be effected. It addressed issues of content and legitimacy and spoke to the kinds of skills its authors believed were needed to prepare one for unknown futures that could only be imagined.

The accreditation report derived from Article II of the NCBS constitution that I had helped to write in Bloomington, IN four years earlier. Its task was to detail a set of policies, procedures, and practices for strengthening and promoting academic programs in the area of Black Studies to ensure their continuance, development and evolution. In so doing the objective was to begin to meet the changing needs of an increasingly heterogeneous and globalized population with divers interests that no "one-size-fits all" could cover. Too, although it was pointed specifically at affirmative action programs, the decision of the US Supreme Court in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* in 1978 further tightened the prospective horizon for Black Studies and similarly captioned endeavors as conservatives reasserted themselves in the quest to erode certain of the earlier hard won gains. This, along with changes in the larger climate of opinion resulting in a muted institutional will did not augur well for the continuance of some programs and the expansion of others without serious modification in their structures and/either missions.

And then, on the last day of the conference, as I stood off to the side, listening to some remarks by the executive director, I was startled to hear my name called, motioned up to the podium, handed a nice certificate of accomplishment and invited to depart stage left. My time was up. I had done what I could. And now it was someone else's turn. Once again I was reminded of the impermanence of all things. My task now was to adjust to the absence of power and authority that rotation out of office brings with it.

In the years since my departure from the chairship, I must confess that I have not been all that regular an attendee at NCBS meetings. My best guess is less than a dozen of the thirty odd that have occurred since 1980.

Once or twice I have gone because I have been invited to an anniversary of sorts, or because they wanted to recognize founders, former leaders, whatever. I remember at least one meeting I attended when the then president of the council did not know who I was and so skipped over me during the introductions of folk at the board table. Boy, did he get reamed by one of my successors. Still, I do know about the several power struggles within the organization, and attempted takeovers by the more ideologically pure. For the most part, however, I have been allowed to fade into the mists of anonymity that, too, reminds me of the impermanence of all creations whether of man or the Force that animates the universe. The most recent meeting I attended was the year before last in Atlanta when I was invited to be part of a past president's roundtable. So that is the one I have in mind as I turn to answer the remaining parts of this question.

The prime directive of any entity subsequent to its creation is survival. It does not really matter for what purpose it was created, a purpose often encapsulated in its mission statement. The National Council for Black Studies was established to address a specific set of needs being experienced at the time by the nascent Black Studies program at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. As C. Wright Mills wrote in *The Sociological Imagination* many years ago, "private troubles have a way of becoming public issues." Students who had been victimized and vandalized by the "3-D Theory of History—Best Practices in Deletion, Denial, and Distortion," students who had sought to commemorate several of their own who had been shot down the previous year in a neighboring state for no reason other than they wanted to be treated as equals in accord with what the land of their birth had put on paper, students who wanted a way of coping with the cultural myopia that kept them marginalized, students who sought a corrective to their own and others mis-education, had with helpful others created a device that had the potential to change many things if only what they had wrought could be sustained. And so, people were invited from hither and yon to help them address those needs so they could realize their mission at the time—incorporation into the infrastructure of the campus curriculum.

Today, NCBS ain't necessarily broke. But it does need fixing if this partial review of its history can be believed. There is a need, in my view, for it to become more self-aware, as a prelude to committing to a fluidity that enhances its adaptability for success in the years ahead. Some of its struggles in the past have had to do with adopting without adapting foreign ideologies that have no real relevance to the situations the organization will encounter on its journey to which it must learn to respond not react. During the revolution reading Mao, Malcolm, Fanon, Cabral et al was considered de rigueur. But how many of those romantic revolutionaries read what those folks read? Indeed, as a colleague of mine once said, the *Handbook of Chemistry and Physics,* not *The Little Red Book,* would be the requisite manual for survival in the twenty-first century.

My final thought here takes me back to the carving on the lintel over the door at the great Temple of Karnak in Egypt. It was noted there that the principal task for any man was to "KNOW THYSELF." For it was in the process of acquiring self-knowledge that one accessed the genesis of all knowledge. That and trust yourself. These, for me, are the principal elements of any leadership program that I would recommend to the council for its continuous renewal and survival.

KKC: *Given your tenure within Black Studies from 1972 until present, what is your current research agenda (besides the history of Black Denver), and what new contributions do you intend to make towards the advancement of Black Studies?*

Since leaving graduate school at Syracuse University in 1972 and moving to the University of Colorado at Boulder (UCB), my research and teaching activities have focused on problem-based projects in the following areas: Afroamerican Studies, Metropolitan Studies, Citizenship and Public Affairs, Education and Social Justice, Transdisciplinary Social Science and Science, Technology and Society.

A current major project is writing a history of Denver, Colorado's Black community. A second major project that is slated to begin next year is authoring a history of the Department of Ethnic Studies at CU. Minor projects, many of which are offshoots of major projects, mostly journal articles, essays, and the like, arise as I discover lacunae along the way or that get called into consciousness by my own curiosity. For example, I recently published a piece on the desegregation of Denver School District #1 in 1873. Another would be a piece that is being revised on my involvement in the development of the Ph.D. program in the ethnic studies department. A third that will be presented at the forthcoming meeting of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History addresses the role Black people played in inhibiting statehood for the Territory of Colorado in the 1860s because they were denied the franchise three years after they had received it. This paper is all about the importance of coalition politics when your numbers in the larger population are just barely sufficient to effect a critical mass that you use to shape the sociophysical spaces you inhabit.

I should say here that I do not see what I am discussing/doing as separate and distinct activities respecting the advancement of Black Studies as an intellectual endeavor. Rather, my activities are contained within what I believe is the corpus of the field. I view myself as a scholar-activist meld in that I collect information, process it, transform it into useable knowledge and retransmit it to the several communities in which I hold membership as presenter, consultant, organizer, et al. Or do you mean by the phrasing of your question contributions specifically aimed at expanding the scope, range, methods, theoretical substance, data sets, interpretive frames, etc. of Black Studies as an area field? If this is what you mean then I would have to say in all honesty nothing per se that meets that specific criterion.

What I mean here is that when I begin a project I have an objective in mind and, I do appreciate that that objective shapes the process of its realization. Simultaneously, the final objective is itself reshaped by the process. In short, what I am attempting to do here is get the questions I seek to answer clear in my own mind. For me this is the most important aspect of any research endeavor regardless of the subject, topic within that subject, method employed, information collected, analysis performed, interpretation derived, manner in which the results of the work are communicated to their respective audiences.

When I was writing my first book, *Going to Meet A Man: Denver's Last Legal Public Execution, 27 July 1886,* a colleague at another institution told me that the one thing I should be concerned with was telling a good story. If, as I wrote in an earlier publication, a first purpose of life is expression, then the clearer, more compelling I make that expression, the greater is the probability that my second, third, and nth audiences will chew on and possibly digest what I have had to say. This is especially the case when what you are doing is promulgating new insights, interpretations and the like based on a different ideological orientation, search strategy, methodological technique, analytical procedure etc. that raise questions about the adequacy and appropriateness of the extant paradigm, if not also point out its limitations and its legitimacy.

I talk about these issues with my students in research design and theory construction courses I occasionally teach attempting to acquaint with them the importance of learning and internalizing the history, philosophy, and sociology of the crafts/guilds they embrace as an occupational destination. My objective here is to assist them to see how what they have chosen to do evolved and how that understanding can aid them in addressing that endeavor's limitations. Meeting the role expectations of clan membership is one thing. Actual role behavior is another thing altogether wherein we express our own idiosyncratic styles growing out of our experiences and the meanings we have made thereof. I am fond of saying that while it is the case that I can learn from anyone, in the final analysis I must become my own teacher. In short, I must learn to value the feedback derived from my experiences to inform the limitations that restrict the range and scope of those universes of definition I postulated at the beginning of a project and/either in my preparations for research.

KKC*: Can you share your understanding of the socio-historical relationship of Black Studies and Ethnic Studies?*

For me, the socio-historical relationship between Black Studies (I prefer this name because this is what it was when I started in the field) and Ethnic Studies is fundamentally evolutionary. That is ethnic studies, at least as manifested at UCB, is a reflection of institutional realities of the late 1980s when the already established programs in Black Studies and Chicano Studies were combined with interest groups in American Indian Studies and Asian American Studies to form the Center for Studies of Ethnicity and Race in America, that in 1996 became the Department of Ethnic Studies.

For it was made clear at that earlier time that the institution was not in a position financially and/either politically to support separate degree-granting programs for each people of color then on the campus a status held by the Black Studies program alone since 1976. At the same time, however, I must also point out that every people in the history of the planet has told stories about its origins, its relations with others, and detailed their experiences along the way to what and where they are now. What they have not always had the opportunity to do is become the custodians of those experiences.

Black Studies, in my opinion, differs from these accounts in that, from its inception, it has acknowledged and accepted as part of its operational reality, the political character of knowledge as a social product and the agency of Black people in a manner not dissimilar from that encapsulated in the dominant paradigm that governed the operational reality of the American academy. This made it an entirely different species than the study of Black people which activity tended to treat Black folk as objects acted upon and more often than not portrayed them as possessing seemingly insurmountable deficit characteristics.

In brief, assuming the validity of the Black historical experience mediated through Black folk wisdom that guided the interpretation of that experience, it tacitly raised the issue of the corporate willingness of the University to bring into the organization materials having the potential to challenge the legitimacy of the extant belief system that was a product of, wrote the late John Henrik Clarke the colonization of "information about the world" during the European discovery and conquest of the world. Indeed, this Black folk wisdom is crucial here and is best captured in the old slave proverb, "It ain't what you don't know what gets you into trouble; its what you know for sure what ain't so!" and its corollary, "'Jus 'cause somebody say it don't make it so!" Indeed, espoused belief is not the same thing as seeing what is as it is not as we would have it be. For it is here that our ideological orientations and the manner in which such orientations shape our conceptualizations that Emerson's consistency as the hobgoblin of small minds wreaks its havoc on our perceptions.

With the passage of time, and the entrance of other "educated" peoples of color, women, and other stigmatized groups into the academy, their *Studies* have borrowed a number of strategies and tactics from Black Studies that have been adapted to meet their particular needs. Thus, by the time we arrive at conjoint programs in ethnic studies, we are talking about co-operating to ensure survival in the face of an intensified cultural imperialism that must prevail for those who run the world to continue running the world even if through their neocolonial surrogates.

Granted, this co-operation has not always been voluntary, if only because, while people are ordinary, experience is not. Thus we must look at both the similarities and differences in the characters of our respective oppressions to better thwart the false competition for second place that made the Romans and their commitment to "Divide and Conquer" a planetary power in their day.

This is doable in ethnic studies to some extent, as long as we share our understandings, to meliorate creating an "us versus them" stance. Yes there will be ideological differences between us because our cultures are sufficiently different to want to do things our own way. Well do I remember those night long discussions of the 1960s when we struggled to develop a common nomenclature so that we could converse with each other despite our differences and realize an operational meaning that we could use to guide our logistics toward the end of self-determination.

Clearly our objective then was unity not uniformity. And that unity could not be realized if we spent ourselves castigating and banishing those who differed as deviants. I chuckle about this now recalling being told that I would be OK as soon as I embraced the correct consciousness—Marxist-Leninist—and stopped asking so many questions about the necessity of decoding the particular situation in which we were then enmeshed. Clarity of vision is a resource of power. And exercising power as expression for articulating our needs and as instrument for addressing those needs transcends how nicely we play with each other in the local sandbox.

KKC: *Since the 1992 publication of your "The Importance of Black Studies for Science and Technology Policy" and its republication in both editions of Nathaniel Norment Jr.'s African American Studies Reader few Black Studies professionals have critically engaged the relationship between Black Studies and the Physical and Natural Sciences, why do you think this is the case?*

To answer your question about how few Black Studies professionals "have critically engaged the relationship between Black Studies and the physical and natural sciences," I went back and reread the paper you cited, "The Importance of Black Studies for Science and Technology Policy." This paper, that was a revision of a talk I had given at Northern Illinois University on 17 October 1985, was first published in *Phylon* in 1992, and subsequently republished in both editions of Nathan Norment, Jr.'s, *The African American Studies Reader,* the most recent being in 2007. After reflecting on what I had read and returning to your question, the simplest answer I can give you is, they don't see a relationship between the two in much the same sense most people do not see science and religion as same but different means of apprehending understanding of the forces and phenomena of the universe. Let me amplify this a bit.

The first thing I noticed, after my rereading was that, aside from wording changes and differences in emphases, the ideas I embraced then are, pretty much, the same ideas I am talking about in various aspects of my work now. I wrote about science and technology as artifacts of the mind, and how, in so being, they were "influenced by the values, attitudes, beliefs, ideologies and behavior of their creators, and by the cultures in which they are created, developed and deployed."

In essence, doing science and technology and crafting policies to guide their use is fundamentally a human endeavor, a species of learned behavior. Further, we lose much in an examination of the products of those endeavors whenever we separate them from the people who made them. Clearly, this is a very different conceptualization of science and technology than the one usually presented to the public. But this is not the way they are generally perceived.

The several times I have taught a course called "The Afroamerican Scientist and Inventor," and the couple of times I have taught "Science, Technology and Society," or "Science, Technology and Policy," I have taken pains to examine the role of Black people in science and technology and the impact of science and technology on Black people. In the first instance, I was not surprised to discover that most people know very little about Black people in science believing that it is a "double-dome" type of activity that would not attract those who have long been perceived, even by themselves on occasion, as not the sharpest knives in the drawer and so incapable of doing science. Moreover, where there is a paucity of role models to expand your horizons as to what is possible, it follows that you might not think of earning money by doing science because no one you know or have seen does science. And, if you have not been gotten to early on in your schooling experiences before your are debriefed from learning as a natural activity of the human mind, there is no way for you to secure the necessary prerequisites—especially the academic discipline—to prepare you for the rigors of learning science in the later grades and in college, the socially approved ways of feeding the scientist pipeline.

In the second instance, there is the general societal problem of scientific illiteracy, often because of the way it is taught, that is, from a practitioner point of view rather than a consumer point of view. Accordingly, it is perceived as a kind of "magic" that requires special preparation so that we, too, do not become sorcerer's apprentices and seek to embrace what we cannot control. Moreover, raising questions about something that is supposedly so difficult to comprehend, that is outside the self-policing boundaries of the intellectual clans/guilds we join is not unlike the way in which apprenticeship programs of the AFL sought to restrict the number of certified knowers to protect the price paid for their labor. Indeed, there is a mythic quality to this endeavor reinforced by the socializing rituals that are part of our induction into the culture of the clans/guilds we join. Questioning the domain paradigm is akin to heresy. And who, in their right mind, wants to be deemed a heretic courting banishment from the tribe. Consequently, to raise the question of the impact of science and technology on a particular population regardless of how frequently science and technology (S&T) are covered in the mass media is seldom asked because S&T are not seen as directly relevant to the types of investigations we are taught to conduct in Scholar School.

In either case, what seems clear to me is that unless and until we alter our conceptualizations here, our beliefs will always interfere with our perceptions and inhibit our ability to remedy the problem. This is an issue I addressed in another piece I wrote titled, "Enhancing Scientific and Technical Literacy in Afroamerican Communities," in which I argued that knowledge of S&T already exists in the Black community. "That what is necessary at this juncture is the realization that that knowledge exists, and that what must happen to increase Black representation in these fields is the systematic cultivation of that knowledge to better enable Black people to influence the course of their collective destinies." Let me pursue what I mean by that in the next question you have asked believing it is a more appropriate venue for an expansion of my remarks.

KKC: *Can you expound upon the relationship between Black Studies and the Sciences? Have you done any new research within this area? What are some current issues that require the intersection between Black Studies and the Natural and Physical Sciences?*

In responding to this question let me digress for a moment and recall some of the points made by students protesting at the April 1978 meeting in Amherst, MA. In their declaration that was presented on the 17th, they spoke to the origins of Black Studies, its "over focus" on the humanities and social sciences in view of its "political birth", and indicated that it was imperative for the objectives and goals of the Black Studies Movement to be reassessed and redefined "in view of the current socio-economic conditions [to which must be added the consequences of science and technology policies and practices] shaping the international and domestic situation that affects Black people." They also wrote that in defining Black Studies, their "key underlying assumption [was] that there is an interrelationship between all dimensions of knowledge and human experience." Further, the field, in their view, needed to "encompass every aspect of the educational process… [meaning those working in the field] must stop teaching Black Studies with traditional methods and begin to develop new [ones] that relate concretely to our people's daily experiences" that have expanded over the years as new opportunities have opened up and taken advantage of by those who were prepared to enter therein.

Now let us add to that Allison Davis' observation that Black scholars cannot, any longer, afford the luxury of solely remaining in the disciplines in which they have been trained. Clearly, all technologies of the intellect, all constructs of the consciousness, have limitations that must be identified and addressed so that we can create a more fully fleshed out portrait of the sociophysical spaces we inhabit. This expression of our work can then be used as instrument to further shape the quest for self-determination.

Assuming we do all of the things alluded to thus far, what we have also done is expand the range and scope of Black Studies such that we can now begin to ask different kinds of questions, no longer limited by the theories and methods of a particular craft/guild, about the forces and phenomena we encounter in our daily lives inclusive of the products of technoscience process and practice.

For example, the social, economic, and political consequences of something as simple yet profound as the traffic signal developed by Garrett A Morgan, the incandescent filament developed by Lewis Lattimer in Edison's laboratory, Hyram S. Thomas's potato chip, Augustus Jackson's ice cream both of which are over consumed with less than savory consequences, or George Washington Carver's work, not only with the peanut but the sweet potato as well. More recently let us add the names of Ernest J. Wilkins, a mathematician who was one of twelve Black scientists/engineers working in the Manhattan Project to develop the atomic bomb, a weapon of war, and George Carruthers whose Far-Ultraviolet Camera/Spectrograph went to the moon aboard Apollo 16.

Indeed, such questions about the impact/import of such activities inform the need to redefine the character and concerns of Black Studies and will become more important as science and technology play an even larger role in economic development than they have. So let me return then to the article I mentioned in the previous question to see what it offers us as we plan for creating and implementing new theories, methods, and information sources for the field as requested by the students at Amherst thirty plus years ago.

Science, I wrote in that piece that was a revision of a 1985 talk I gave in the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies at UCB that is no more, is old. It did not begin with the Greeks as all too much of ancient history would have us believe, or with the Copernican revolution. Rather, it began when humans first exercised their curiosity that I contend is the chief characteristic of science, "a coherent system for creating meaning and beauty—an extension of a people's common sense understanding of the world," and, in the words of Wade Nobles who wrote in 1978, "Idiosyncratic to the people whose commonsense it is built upon."

A little later on in that talk, I opined that science was a process-structure, i.e., a systematic way of exploring and examining the world growing out of but at the same time embedded in the cultural system of its creators. Further, as it evolved it "acquired a social support apparatus that [saw] to its care, feeding, and continuance through the creation of training programs beginning in the elementary school and continuing through the college, university and post-doctoral level." Accordingly, SCIENCE was less a universal and more "the product of a specific time, place and people who sought to make a different kind of sense of the world than the one they then possessed." This meant, I wrote, that it needed redefinition as ethnoscience whose cultural boundedness would have to be addressed if it was to be of value for those whose prior participation had been restricted, for whatever reason.

Once this redefinition was effected the content and practice of science as a human endeavor could be more easily accessed by humanities and social science scholars in concert with practicing scientists. They could then begin to examine a host of questions about the manner in which information is identified, collected, organized, evaluated, and interpreted, its epistemological and political character assessed, and the ethics of its application considered.

This would help, I observed, to demystify science, especially if as we taught it we also included illustrative materials from the history of science so that it might come to be seen as less remote, sterile and absent of real-world concerns.

I spoke of Robin Horton's contention that if we remove the cultural surrounding within which the classificatory practices of science are performed, as we have done in reifying the practice of law into a thing itself, focus mainly on the subject matter of science itself and not the processes of scientific investigation and exploration, we relocate science to a theoretical universe that limits its utility and adaptability. Further, in so doing coupled with an accelerated rise in the division of scientific labor especially in the twentieth century, we realize a kind of intellectual parochialism that fosters and rewards "pure" research more so than application.

Simultaneously, we limit access to this new universe until novitiates whose interest in and curiosity about science may have begun in wonder to undergo a lengthy initiation process to acquire the "special values, attitudes, languages, knowledge and skills" necessary to do science and take "a pledge to abide by the norms, [mores and folkways] of the chosen group." In short, we create a situation that is "more likely to alienate than entice new recruits to its ranks especially where [learning "science-speak" before addressing the wonder of it all does] not appear to be relevant to [the] lived experience" of survival in a hostile environment. So, how do we correct this? How do we enlarge the scope of Black Studies to recruit additional scientific talent to better realize the United Negro College Fund's understanding that, "A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste."

Turning first to the elementary grades, I propose the addition of photographs and short biographies drawn from the lives and work of Black scientists and inventors that could be placed around the classroom coincident with the first instruction in science and/either a first course in history where the accomplishments of the person become the subject matter of the lesson. The focus here would be on who did what. How they did what they did, what motivated them to do it, with what result. In more advanced classes, students might also research what a Charles Turner in entomology, Daniel Hale Williams in medicine and surgery, Matthew A. Henson in exploration might have had to do to prepare them for what they did do. The objective here is to provide new role models to heighten the interest of young people in science and technology as ways of making sense of the world around them. Role playing, skits, and other teaching techniques could be added here to involve children, and even, perhaps, make their school day more interesting and exciting.

Moving on to the intermediate level, it is here that we begin to alter our construct of science in keeping with its history and practice. It is also here that we introduce the notion of fashion in science to help dispel the common wisdom that it is a fixed body of facts; that it is hermetically isolated from the outside world and thus objective (whatever is subjectively constructed cannot by definition be objective); and something other than a species of social knowledge whose laws, theories, and procedures, cannot contradict the fundamental assumptions that guided their creation.

Along with an introduction to the history of science, technology and medicine in ancient civilizations, Egypt, China, Sumer, Greece, some attention should be paid at this time to describing the kinds of questions scientists and inventors ask. How and from where they originate, how they are shaped and in a sense become the autobiographical expressions of self-knowledge as the genesis of all knowledge, and how those questions are then turned into operational procedures that become experiments to test the questions that have been posed.

For example: The astronomical practices of the Dogon, Maya and Aztecs; the inquiries and activities of Imhotep, the father of medicine, and the work of ancient African peoples in mathematics, irrigation and construction could be included in the curricula. Berthel Carmichael in mathematics, Shirley Jackson in physics and Mae Jamison in space exploration could be use as exemplars to show that science is not a males only activity. The goal here is to further communicate the idea of science and technology as lived experience--belief, opinion, interpretation, expectation, and conduct. In short, to help potential apprentices learn that science and technology are ways of life that anyone with the requisite preparation can learn and that all civilizations have practiced throughout time.

As we move into the middle and secondary years, continuing even to some extent into the post-secondary years, increasing emphasis should be put on the fact that there is nothing universal (indeed, universal is itself a cultural construct) about the kind of science that is currently taught in the schools and in the academy except that all peoples at all times however they have chosen to define it, have done science. Moreover, in their travels they have carried those ideas with them or shared them with others who have come to visit, as was the case of the early Greeks who went to finishing school in ancient Egypt in much the same manner nineteenth-century Americans went to Europe to complete their educations.

Since the late middle ages coincident with the rise of the age of exploration in Europe, western civilization has embraced a Eurocentric conception of science that until very recently was most easily characterized as mechanistic, derivative, intrusive, and imperialist. This is not to say it has not brought beauty and some beneficence to the world. Rather, it acknowledges that Euroscience, pushy in the extreme, has tended to crowd out other interpretations of science. Its handmaiden, technology, the process of creation, was mated with science in the last years of the mechanical era (post civil war America), a time when the priests of materialism sought to consolidate their control over more spheres of life in a bid to expand the scope of their power.

Because of this, what we must begin to show here are the social costs and consequences of doing science as we have done it, a particularly profound area that Black Studies could explore, especially scientific racism and sexism. These dominance oriented practices and ideologies repeatedly to demean and diminish people of color and women that they might be better exploited and kept in their places.

Focusing on the history, philosophy, and practice of science in different lands, cultures, and times, can provide a sense of perspective where insight into the structure and uses of science is given equal billing with the subject matter of science. The problem with most human values instruction in the trades is that the latter is emphasized at the expense of the former. We separate the two treating them as if they are not indissolubly linked, allocate disproportionate amounts of time to their coverage, and refigure the whole as a simple technical problem regarding the allocation of resources (knowledge, funding, skill, etc.) whose solution lies in the provision of craft-specific information.

Indeed, what we want to have young people in this middle plus years learn is that, in a manner of speaking, science is what its creators have made it for whatever purpose. As with all things, science is both instrument and expression.

As instrument it is a tool designed for concentrating power; as expression it summarizes lessons learned. And, as with all things human, science has limits beyond which, given its current configuration, it cannot go. Knowing the weaknesses of science will help us learn its ways of resisting change. We must also impress upon our children that we can choose the kind of science we wish to practice as we self-sensitize to the politics of the skilled positions in society. We can choose because choice, an exercise of power, is the means by which we differentially shape the realities we inhabit.

Yes, I am aware of the expectational dilemma here our children face in many of the schools they attend and the erosive character of the curricula they transit. But this is a crucial time in their development, and some way must be found to counter the sense of irresponsibility and ineptitude built into the operational philosophies of our schooling systems.

"A mind is a terrible thing to waste," the United Negro College Fund reminds us. Yes, it is. But even more terrible is the wasted spirit of our youth because for some of us they have become inconvenient by their presence among us. We have no place for them because they are different. And, as we all know, difference has a tendency in the proper social setting to become deviance that is punishable. Authority is preserved, change is resisted, and under-development proceeds. Here, then, in recapitulating our biographical materials, we must emphasize by examining the barriers, cultural, political, economic, psychological, social, in their lives, how Blacks in science and technology secured the discipline to learn and practice their crafts in spite of the limitations placed on their opportunities to progress and succeed. Throughout the course of these levels, one message I wish to impart given the centrality of work in this culture, is that one can earn a living doing science. The material content of the instructive process as we move into the more advanced levels can be lifted from the several science clans, as they exist now, singly or together. The idea is to provide exposure to a range of options and their prerequisites.

Similarly, as I intimated above, this is a time for further grounding in the ethical conduct of science, that is, a science sensitive to the conduct and consequences of its practice. For science without a conscience is barren as the infamous Tuskegee Syphilis Study conducted for over forty years out of a false set of premises dictated by nineteenth century racial medicine doctrines that informed the education and training of its sponsors from 1932 to 1972 have made clear. The objective ideal of knowledge is an illusion. Our task then is to become simple not simplistic as we have tended to do with an overemphasis on rationalism as the TRUE path to enlightenment. In being we touch the unity underlying the diversity of creation. We learn that existence is relationship; that cause is effect, that opposites complement, and that harmony prevails. We adopt an ecological ethic at whose center is the principle "do not unto others what you would not want done unto you." We cannot conquer nature however much we attempt to explain or justify our conduct in that direction. Clearly, we foul our nest at our own peril.

And finally, it is also here that we begin to introduce our students to science and technology policies, another site for input by Black Studies, where we put forward the idea that we can say what kind of science we want and what it shall be in the public domain.

IMZ: *Why is the folk wisdom of Black people employed in your research, and how does it inform your worldview, normative assumptions, and frames of reference?*

Folk wisdom, at least as I use the term in my own work, is all about the meanings one makes from lived experience and how those meanings are used to guide subsequent conceptions, perceptions, and conduct. Consider the old slave proverb, "It ain't what you don't know what gets you into trouble; its what you know for sure what ain't so", and its corollary, "'Jus cause somebody say it don't make it so!" These two statements remind us that one, there is always more than one side to a story, and, two, and stories are told for any number of reasons not all of which are readily evident.

Consider, as an example, the conversation between Obi wan Kenobi and the young Luke Skywalker from the fourth episode of the film series *Star Wars*. Kenobi, one of the few remaining Jedi knights says, "Luke, one day you will learn that truth is a function of the belief system you embrace." In short, as you age, as you acquire additional experiences, you will hopefully learn that not everything you are told by persons in a position of authority is an accurate reflection of historical reality—this is one of the reasons it gets revised so often. That is, there are both errors of omission, arising from not having all the necessary information at the time of conception through interpretation, and errors of commission predicated on perpetration, also known as the hidden agenda. My use of folk wisdom, then, is a way of reminding myself that, "beliefs inform scholarship, and values give meaning to facts." Further, that beliefs and values change (hopefully) as we change, and that allowances must be made therefore.

Clearly, if one mission of scholarship is to explore, explicate, illuminate, and foster understanding, it is critically important for us not to fall prey to myths like objective investigation. Nor must we fail to remember that all constructs of the consciousness are limited and impermanent. As the conditions that caused them to be created change, their efficacy fades as well.

Accordingly, in schooling our youth into the scholarly arts we must emphasize the importance of two things: One, the acquisition of self-discipline so that they may better accomplish whatever tasks they undertake; and two, that they have an obligation to ask new and different questions, seek out new information sources that have not yet been tapped, develop new methods of investigation, and formulate new techniques of analysis in the course of their preparation for whatever they do. They cannot simply mimic the ways and beliefs of their instructors because they are not their instructors—their time, their reality is different. It has different needs, and will require different solutions for the problems they encounter.

KKC: *Early during your tenure at the University of Colorado at Boulder your teaching focused upon "Afrocentric Research Methodology," can you discuss the importance of research methodology within Black Studies, how would you define and/or describe an Afrocentric research methodology, and why an Afrocentric research methodology is necessary for research and scholarly initiatives in Black Studies?*

In several of my publications I have described and defined my conception of an Afrocentric research orientation. I have also indicated that it is a different way of looking at how the world is organized. For me this world is an interconnected relational network of which I am a part and I cannot separate myself there from even if I wished to do so which I do not. As I develop this answer you might also see what role the folk wisdom piece I addressed in the prior question plays here in detailing the importance of a research orientation in Black Studies.

Reflecting back it is clear to me that I had already begun to see the world in this manner before entering college after service in the U.S. Navy. Very early on, as I initiated self study in Negro history, I began to realize that what I was learning—beginning with the physical sciences and mathematics then moving on to clinically oriented psychology—with a minor in sociology, was not providing answers to the questions that I had regardless of the amount of information to which I was exposed. When I matriculated into the University of Akron two years after receiving my B.A., and started work on a graduate degree in sociology these feelings intensified and so I left that department—in part because they were not receptive to what I proposed for a master's thesis that would eventually become my doctoral dissertation—and moved into the Department of Urban Studies where I was first exposed to meaningful interdisciplinary study with a focus on cities as organic entities. It was when I moved on to the Interdisciplinary Social Science Program in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University that I found an intellectual home that allowed me to bring together the materials and methods I needed to more effectively do the work that truly interested me.

One of the first things I learned at Syracuse while also teaching, and later as its director, in the Center for Urban Studies, an undergraduate program that gave academic credit for life experience, at Utica, a college of the University, was the difference between the "knowledge-building orientation of the disinterested scholar," something I knew I was not, and "the problem-solving outlook of the social engineer." I was most comfortable as a scholar-activist who sensed the difference between the variable change rates of the material (fairly rapid) and not-material aspects (slow, often resisted because of a commitment to preserving illusory certainties) of a society's culture and its social institutions. This difference was made manifest in the approaches taken by the above in their respective articulations of the interrelationships between theory, method, and problem selection.

For the interdisciplinarian, theory had value only to the extent that it could be directly applied to address complex, interlocking social problems often generated by peoples' differences and their concurrent interests however they appeared. Accordingly, method selection in interdisciplinary social science was determined by the kind of problems one encountered not as a vehicle for refining increasingly more abstract theory. It was an expectation that one would become familiar with the methods of as many of the specific social science disciplines as possible; but it was also understood that each student would become aware as well of the strengths and weaknesses thereof and select from them the ones that best fit the object of their affection.

Too, a principle objective of the several social science history courses I took was exploring the emergence of a group of more restricted disciplines out of philosophy coincident with the professionalization of scholarship, each with its own knowledge base, theoretical systems, and methods attuned to a particular subset of the human experience that might be analyzed. Unfortunately, as these disciplines evolved, they also became more inward looking, detached, and tended to lose sight of other aspects of the human experience, crafting not a holistic portrait thereof but one fragmented, incomplete, and epistemologically weak bearing only superficial explanatory power because so much was excluded from their universes of definition. And it was this mindset that I took to Colorado and into the Black Studies Program and subsequently the Department of Ethnic Studies.

In the fall semester of 1973, my second year on the campus, I offered for the first time, Black Studies 450: "Research Methods in Black Studies." Looking over the syllabus for that course, and contrasting it with more recent ones, I find myself smiling at what I had written then and what I sought to accomplish. It was not that I was a rookie instructor; I had been teaching at the collegiate level for four years already. But it was ambitious if I must say so myself. Among the topics to be covered were epistemology, assumptions, frames of reference, values and science, etc to the last item, "Whatever else I have forgotten."

There was also a list of questions that I wanted people to utilize as guides that even now I look at and say, "WOW!" For example, "I have written on several occasions that the various disciplines provide vantage points, anchors for seeing different but related facets of a collective phenomenon. It is when these disciplines become ends in themselves that we have the disjointed situation that passes for education in our schools. My question then is: keeping in mind that there might be reasons for this (the rule of divide and conquer is an example) why and how do you feel it came to be this way? What have been some of the consequences of its being this way? Would you want to change it? Why? What might happen if you did?"

Another, that clearly reflects my own interdisciplinary background was, "If we examine the field of physics which many of the social and behavioral sciences have tried to pattern themselves after to increase their legitimacy, we find that most of the laws of physics are statistical (probabilistic) in nature. Can the same kind of analysis be made respecting the occurrence of human behavior, and, if so, what shape might this analysis take? In answering this question, please try to remember that one essential quality of human behavior is its relative randomness; also that statistical analysis for the most part is time bounded—i.e., it freezes a moment in time which may not ever occur again and abstracts it out of a sequence of continuous behavioral process for closer examination."

The last two I offer here, reflecting the influence of the sociology of knowledge on my own thinking that I had just them begun to read, and hoping to convey how important I took knowledge creation to be, although there were ten total, are (4) "A chief criticism of white scholars raised by their Black counterparts has to do with the absolute idiocy of the white scholar's foregoing of the relativity [and impermanence] of all standards; his attitudes, his approaches to the process of investigation are gold-plated standards from which to judge the works of others. If we argue that Blackness is itself an approach, an attitude, a state of mind, or a frame of reference, does that not suggest or imply the potentiality for its also becoming an end in itself subject to the same kinds of criticisms that have been raised about the work of white scholars? Further, in terms of what I have tried to say here, what might all of this mean if what we are forced to do in the end is settle for a kind of humanist eclecticism which borrows from all people, cultures, etc to arrive at some kind of synergistic whole which is greater than the sum of all its constituent parts?" And finally, (7) "Our most favored mode of learning in western society and America in particular is first, polarization into categories, and second, a linear flow within that category. My question: Are other ways through which this process might be conceptualized/actualized? Is it possible, for example, to have a not linear/polymorphological/indeterminate social science? Related to this is a further question respecting the languages we employ to examine and relate to the worlds around us. Given that we are as dependent on it as we are, to what extent can any of us say we are the masters of language? Reflecting on this situation, how would you go about identifying, describing, evaluating the meaning it has for you?"

In later versions of this course my approach becomes decidedly more political. For example, in the 1990 syllabus I say, "This course is about learning how research in the sociobehavioral sciences and humanities gets done. My model for this course is that of the pre-school age child exploring itself and the environs within which he/she/race? /etc (any/all reflecting different orders of perception and thus reality) seeks to create meaning and beauty in the world. I employ this model deliberately, because once one has entered school, one then becomes subject to inculcation into the canons of belief espoused by some authority to foster fealty to its inherent goodness (harmlessness) and the truths it transmits to sustain its own legitimacy. Since group survival has always taken precedence over personal survival, you are first taught how to be a student (according to the dictates of the system being taught) to better learn and profess the correct mantras when called upon to do so. This establishes an asymmetrical balance of power between you (the student) and those designated teachers that is at the heart of the schooling/education debate: For the essence of education obtains in drawing out of you what you already know how to do, whereas, the essence of schooling obtains in the inculcation of a curriculum which is a political statement about a desired reality. The consequences of either are profound where one accepts the proposition that self-knowledge is the genesis of all knowledge. Necessarily then, all knowledge is biased because it is a social construct--that is, the organization of information for some specific purpose. This means that all knowledge is bounded by the cultures within which it is created and disseminated by whatever means…. Who is it, then, that crafts the expectations of our behavior? Especially where that behavior--supported by a vast assumptional substructure--is learned in a semi rigid, formal arena evaluated by those who write the operations manuals used to instruct the students that transit their courses. Grading, in such a situation, is thus more an index of replication than a critique of a self-creation; that is, a measure of how well you did what you were told to do more so than a reflection of what you have learned by doing. To counter the kind of mind-set that kind of system produces requires taking you back before the time (figuratively) you encountered that system for the first time. This done, we can then begin work on the notion that there are other orders of reality in the universe. That one of these orders is called Afrocentric. And that, its worldview, normative assumptions, and frames of reference flow out of the historical experiences and folk wisdom of Black people. Let your motto for this course be that of the first edition of Freedom's Journal published 16 March 1827, "We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us. Too long has the public been deceived by misrepresentations, in things which concern us dearly, though in the estimation of some mere trifles; for though there are many in society who exercise towards us benevolent feelings; still (with sorrow we confess it) there are others who make it their business to enlarge upon the least trifle, which tends to the discredit of any person of colour; and pronounce anathemas and denounce our whole body for the misconduct of this guilty one. . . .In short this course is about a game called the 'Scholarly Dozens.' For here is where you shall learn the making of truth."

The most recent offering of this course now called, "Research Methods in Ethnic Studies," adds to the above the statement, "Belief informs scholarship; values give meaning to facts," and Zora Neale Hurston's definition of research, "Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose. It is a seeking that he who wishes may know the cosmic secrets of the world and that they may dwell therein." To conclude this answer, all research is conducted in a political environment. This is especially the case when it is funded by some external agency whose motivations may not always be evident.

IMZ: *Briefly inform us about the history of Black Denver in terms of location and identity; and your overall effort to report on its evolution.*

Black Denver: A History, is intended as an interpretive recapitulation of Denver Colorado's Black community covering the period 1858 when the city is founded through 2000. It attempts to answer questions that arose in the course of research for a previously published work, *Going to Meet a Man: Denver's Last Legal Public Execution, 27 July 1886.*

Like many other places outside the South during the nineteenth century, Denver had but a few Black folk—the 1860 census identified twenty-three in an overall population of 24,000—and from what I can tell by looking at the manuscript returns, they were a truly varied lot. In the years that followed they appear to have lived a mostly segregated existence that constrained their power outside the boundaries of their own place and space even as other persons of color became residents of the city—American Indians, Asians, and Hispanics.

By the beginning of the twentieth century they were approximately three percent of the city's population a figure that remained fairly constant until about 1960 although it doubled numerically between 1940 and 1950 as a consequence of public spending for the war effort. Thereafter, until 2000, as whites filled up the suburbs their percentage of the population increased markedly, declining slightly as gentrification of older neighborhoods that had been predominantly Black were converted to upscale residences attracting the "better classes" back to the urban core.

Like many other medium sized cities—Denver's gross population hovers between 450,000 and 500,000—it has experienced its share of problems. But as has been pointed out by more than one observer, the city has not had the imaginative talent, will, or committed resources to efficaciously address those problems. Its largest employers have tended to be in the public sector albeit in more recent years; high tech has become an increasingly significant element in the city's occupational base.

Telling the story of Black Denver, then, is a little more involved than those stories we find of Black communities in other places at other times. It is also a story the bulk of whose informational sources are public documents as in-migrants to the area with but few exceptions did not bring with them/preserve a fully fleshed out historical record.

Yes, there are some Black families who have been in the area for four, and even five generations. Yes, there are numerous social and community organizations that have played a part in the development of Black Denver. However, again with but few exceptions, the saved records to document that experience are sparse making this, as I noted above, more of an interpretive venture where one's intuition is itself a resource respecting the identification of pertinent materials. Clearly, this is one of the reasons I began this task with a series of more narrowly scoped publications that have assisted in the conceptualization of the larger work now underway. I can even see a light at the end of the tunnel now, and know it is not a train coming in my direction. The work is rewarding. And like a number of other things I have done, I find myself learning more about me in the process than the subject at hand.

KKC: *I am aware that you have been working towards a Ph.D. program in Ethnic Studies at University of Colorado at Boulder. Can you briefly describe the structure of the program and its possible contributions to the academic advancement of Black Studies?*

The most recent incarnation of the proposal for Ph.D. in Ethnic Studies was submitted to the College of Arts and Sciences this past June. It was the next phase in a process begun in 1994 when I wrote a short, two-page draft aimed at accepting persons who possessed at least a bachelor's degree for study at the graduate level beginning in 1995. The objective of the proposed program was to produce persons with the requisite research and teaching skills who could do "original" research into the lives and histories of African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans, disseminate the results of their investigations, and teach others what they had learned how to do. Interestingly, this draft was prepared two years before the Department of Ethnic Studies became a department in the College.

The focus of this draft and all subsequent drafts was on comparative ethnic studies in that, as I noted in responding to an earlier question, a Center for Studies of Ethnicity and Race in America had been created in 1987 reflecting institutional realities unlike at the University of California at Berkeley, and a few other places where Black Studies is still an independent entity. Let me say here, however, that this is not necessarily a bad thing in that there are some commonalities evident in the less than equal treatment of these groups who seek to be treated as equals in keeping with the intent of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

In the current draft, incoming students must have at least a master's degree, and they can enroll in any of thirteen topical courses some of which are combinations of courses described in earlier drafts. A separate appendix, describes a twelve-credit graduate certificate that can be used as a cognate for those doing graduate work in more traditional departments. The preface says the program "will focus on interdisciplinary examinations of the intersections of race, class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality in national and transnational contexts," and, "it will address social concerns within analytical frameworks developed within, and emerging, from the field of Ethnic Studies and emphasize the need for flexible, adaptable, and innovative responses to such concerns."

In some ways, however, what is proposed here appears to be a very traditional graduate program except for the subject matter of the degree. A couple of the elements that I had included in a May 2007 draft like the Personalized Learning Plan and the acceptance of persons with just a bachelor's degree were removed. Clearly, it is a proposal that looks to the better utilization of persons currently rostered in the department and new faculty that may be added as the economy improves. It is a proposal that appears to have learned from past efforts without repeating the mistakes of those earlier years. As for what it will contribute to the academic advancement of Black Studies per se, that remains to be seen.

KKC: *With the creation of new Ph.D. programs in Black (Africana, Afroamerican, Pan African and/or African Diasporic) Studies and Africology, what is your advice to new and/or recent graduates of these programs, and how do you think we can advance the discipline?*

In working with students over the years, whenever I sense confusion and uncertainty about purpose and/either direction, I am in the habit of saying to them, "Go find a rock somewhere and plant yourself there upon. Make sure there are no sharp points to disturb you while you consider the following two questions: "What for you is important?" "What are you willing to do to get what you want?" The first of these questions is, of course, about values; the second is a self-assessment of their integrity. For in the words of the imminent American philosopher, J.R. Ewing of Dallas, "Once you give up your integrity anything is possible."

What I would add now is an exit interview of sorts for these new students to ascertain the extent to which their experiences in those programs met, failed to meet, and exceeded their expectations prior to their entrance into the program. Too, I would ask them to detail what they learned about themselves transiting the program and how that knowledge assists them in apprehending what they can do now that they could not do before the transit. What I am after here is a sense of their capacity for vision creation, and whether they have acquired the discipline and stamina to bring those visions to fruition. If all these programs do is train clones of their instructional staffs, then they are worse than useless. What they should be about is bringing forth and developing whatever talents those who seek admission bring to the table with them. Emphasis, then, must be placed on cultivating confidence, flexibility, imagination, and an ethical sense in that what they have learned is a resource of power that must be used judiciously less they become the apprentice who cannot find the OFF button after pressing START.

Whether this set of suggestions will advance Black Studies as a discipline is something I cannot answer at this juncture because I do not know what it will need in the days ahead. What I believe is that we have to trust those we have trained to write their own scripts in accord with their own needs in keeping with the situations in which they find themselves.

KKC: *What would you consider to be three of the most pressing issues affecting the future of Black Studies today, and why?*

In preparing a response for this question I went back and looked at the program for the first annual meeting, in 1977, of the National Council for Black Studies whose organizational theme was, "Black Studies: Mobilization for Survival."

On pages four and five of that program there is a brief history of Black Studies in the United States from its individual roots in the nineteenth century to its more institutional activities in the twentieth that are ongoing however much they have changed in the last thirty years.

That history speaks to the singular purpose of Black Studies practioners whether acting as isolates or in concert to become the custodians of their own experiences. In so doing they would use meanings made from those experiences as lessons for crafting the strategies and tactics of self-determination.

That history also details the obstacles and barriers those folk sought to overcome along the way—prejudice, discrimination, financial insolvency—to name but a few, that impeded the quest for survival without which self-determination was a moot issue.

Accordingly, the balance of that program was given over to symposia and workshops outlining a series of topics, questions, and practical problems that had to be addressed, and have continued to be addressed in subsequent meetings.

So, the first pressing issue I would list is more cautionary. Immediately after any organization is formed, its prime directive shifts from realizing the execution of the mission for which it was established to survival of the organization. That is, a focus on lost prevention rather than a forward-looking developmental mindset that sees new challenges as opportunities to grow and evolve. Necessarily someone must be tasked with the care and feeding of the founding vision to ensure its continuing relevance as societal conditions change; and that person must be divorced from the day-to-day running of the place so as not to get caught up in the minutia of management. Resources must be allocated to support this person, and the governing board must invite a regular report that can serve as course corrections along the way.

A second pressing issue is the creation of an endowment fund whose principal is invested and reserved for the future. A portion of the revenue from might be used to supplement the operational needs of the organization, but it must be understood what these monies are for is fostering a kind of graded independence that will allow actions to be taken for the overall improvement of the existential conditions and political positions of the people it represents.

A third pressing issue is recruitment of new members to the organization to ensure two things. One, fresh perspectives and new ideas; and two, workers to carry out the policies generated by the governing board as clarified by the executive leadership of the group. To preclude top-down decision-making that could impede the realization of organizational flexibility birthing a resistance to change that hastens demise, there should be placed in the constitution and board by-laws, explicit clauses calling for a periodic review of those documents, their structure and content and the practices they superintend. While it is the case that change is part of the natural order and of society as well, humans have a way of resisting change both in themselves and in their creations as they seek the illusion of certainty.

IMZ: *I understand that your studies in Shotokan Karatedo have helped you learn some things about yourself, how has that been true and would you recommend it for others?*

I began my studies in Shotokan Karate-Do (traditional Japanese karate) in my late 40s although my first martial arts instruction was received from the Marine hand-to-hand combat instructor while I was in the navy. I have been training now for more than twenty years and teaching karate for more than seventeen in my own dojo. In 2006 I became a certified instructor after completing over thirty classes from a number of different masters, writing forty-three papers on a variety of subjects, and successfully passing an examination that was both written and practical. Last year, I was certified as an examiner, again both written and practical tests, meaning that after an apprenticeship of one year, I could be authorized to test my own students.

Perhaps the most important things I have learned in karate are to trust myself, my training, and the reality that how you recover from a mistake and what you learn in the process is more telling than making the mistake in the first place. Indeed, there are some life lessons you cannot learn without making mistakes. I have also learned to listen to the wisdom of my body, especially now that it has more than a few miles on it.

Another item of significance is the difference between responding and reacting to whatever situation you encounter. As there are so few things in life we can control, there is, accordingly, so much about which we need not worry. Thus, whether we respond (a focused, measured action) or react (mostly emotional) tells us much about our ability to handle the uncertainty and ambiguity of life. It is a lot like the elders telling us to be patient for this too shall pass. Too, there is also the truth that taking the same mindset into every situation is a recipe for error. No two situations are ever the same. Thus, your trust in yourself and in your training is reinforced as you expand the scope, range and content of your repertoire of actions.

Lastly, there is the discovery that you can frequently do more than you believed. This understanding comes as you acquire the discipline to more efficiently utilize the resources you have available.

Is this something I would recommend to others? Maybe. One of the first things I ask potential students after finding out if they have previous martial arts experience is whether Harambee is the only dojo they have checked out, and Shotokan the only style they have explored. I then invite them to observe a class to see if what I teach is something they want to learn. As there are no contracts in my dojo, whether they stay or go is up to them. And that is the way it should be.