

No Woman, No Cry: A Woman at the Helm of Black Studies at Ohio University

by

Winsome Chunnu-Brayda, Ph.D
Associate Director of Multicultural Programs
Ohio University
chunnu@ohio.edu

Travis D. Boyce, Ph.D
Assistant Professor of Africana Studies and Social Sciences
University of Northern Colorado
travis.boyce@unco.edu

&

Francine Childs, Ed.D
Professor Emerita of African American Studies
Ohio University
childs@ohio.edu

Abstract

This article is an interview of Francine Childs. She was the first Black full professor at Ohio University, and she was the first—and only—woman to chair the Department of African American Studies. This interview specifically focuses on her challenges as a faculty member and as the chair concerning gender and racial equality during the early stage of Black Studies programs in the United States. In 2012, the Department of African American Studies at Ohio University will celebrate its 43rd anniversary, its longevity in part due to her dedication at the helm.



Source: *The Post*, January 14, 1987



Source: Courtesy of Linda Daniels, Director of Multicultural Programs, Ohio University, Athens, OH.

Introduction

Singer Bob Marley's first hit was "No Woman, No Cry," released with the Wailers in 1975. It achieved popularity worldwide for its easygoing reggae tune and can be heard on YouTube. However, this song also had a strong social message: for women to refrain from crying in spite of the world's problems.

At about the same time, in 1974, Dr. Francine Childs joined the faculty of Ohio University (OU) in Athens, Ohio, as an associate professor of Black Studies. She became the first Black full professor at the school. Further, she became the first female chair of the Department of African American Studies (Chunnu, 2010). Ohio University, founded in 1804, is the oldest institution of higher education not only in the state of Ohio, but also in the Northwest Territory. It was one of the few universities during the antebellum era that admitted Black students. John Newton Templeton, for example, was the first Black to graduate from the institution in 1828 (37 years before the end of the American Civil War) (Hollow, 2004; Hoover, 1954). However, it was not until 140 years after the university's founding, in 1968, that the university started its African American Studies department. At that point, there was a demand for Black Studies programs and classes throughout the country (For instance, San Francisco State University started such a program in 1966.)

Historically, early reggae music was the voice of equality and social justice in the wake of the decolonization of Jamaica (Bradley, 2002). In somewhat the same hopeful spirit, Black Studies programs in the United States (as well as other ethnic and gender studies programs) were conceptualized from an ideological standpoint of social justice. Such programs seek to debunk the ideology that a European-centered lens is the only way to view the world (Alkalimat, 2007; Christian, 2007).

But sometimes social justice aims become mired in contradictions. For example, some reggae music, once the voice of equality, has now become intertwined with misogyny and homophobia (Boyce & Chunnu, 2012; Kapp, 1992). Likewise, Black Studies programs, despite their goal of social justice, have also, in some degree, been subjected to institutional sexism and racism. For example, Dr. Childs experienced racism at the college level, in addition to sexism at the departmental level. This is her story.

Did you play a role in Black Studies, in the construction of the discipline, before you came to Ohio University? Were you involved in the 1960s?

I was involved as a student. But because I was at Historically Black Colleges, it was a whole different setting. Before I came to OU, I was the dean of students at Wiley College. I worked closely with students, taking them to different forums and organizing them, helping them to organize in the community.

Around the 1960s movement?

I was active as an undergraduate student; that's where I first met Dr. King. Then I went back to my school and organized a protest. One of my friends was working at the 7-Eleven store, but he was not working for the company because the company was not hiring Blacks. Rather, a White manager at the store was paying a Black student out of his pocket to work there. This 7-Eleven store was right across the street from our campus. It was in the heart of the Black neighborhood. So I said, "Oh, no, this can't happen." I was a graduating senior, too.

I organized a sit-in and had people around the clock. I said, "Now, we all have to study. So we're not going to let this keep us from graduating. The store was open 24 hours, so I need 24-hour coverage. There's enough of us that we can have 10 or 12 on a shift for two hours, and 10 or 12 more come, and then 10 or 12 more come, and around the clock." What we wanted the owners to do is—not only did we want them to hire Blacks, but we wanted them to pay back the manager. (Meaning give him his money back that he was paying a Black student to work for him, because he needed somebody.)

When did the Black Studies program start at Ohio University?

Actually, the whole Black Studies movement really began at San Francisco State, and it caught on with Harry Edwards and all those people out there. It caught on like wildfire. And from San Francisco, a movement began. They say it's a student movement. We had a movement that we had to keep moving; but that's where we said, "We think we have failed." We stopped being both politically protest-oriented, but that orientation was necessary to continue to keep the movement going—to keep students involved and keep students interested in the movement.

Then the presidents of universities (just like the president here at OU) began to negotiate with students, because of the riot that broke out at Kent State. OU didn't have graduation in 1970 as a result of all of these student protests that had caught on like wildfire. Students began to talk to other students in other universities, and then they began to protest. So that's why we said it was a movement. I felt that it was a movement that had to keep moving; but somehow, that process didn't continue. However, the university then began to negotiate with students and set aside some funding for students, because some of the students were getting their Master's in English and other areas.

And there are students who were self-taught. There were these graduate students who were self-taught. They were actively involved in the movement, but they were getting information from political leaders and from other people in key positions, and they pretty much knew what they wanted. They wanted to have a Black agenda.

The students at OU had a sit-in at the president's office because they didn't just want to have some Black courses scattered around. They felt like they wanted to have something that they could call home, that they could call their own. So they wanted it to be political, they wanted it to be educational, and they wanted it to be cultural. The Center for Afro-American Affairs was founded in 1968 as Ohio University's particular component of a general national Afro-American (Black) liberation movement. Within the Center was the Black Studies Institute, which offered a four-year program, which led to a degree in Black Studies.

The underlying philosophy and purpose for the creation of the Black Studies Institute (the academic component of the Center) by its founders was two-fold:

1. It was created to meet the academic, cultural, and counseling needs of Afro-American students in particular, and the larger university community in general. The academic component always perceived as central was also the focal point for all other activities and services relevant to Afro-American Studies.

2. The Center for Afro-American Affairs cherished its integral relationship with the larger university community and sought to develop and cement mutually beneficial relationships with all other facets of Ohio University. Thus its aim was the achievement of a deepened and liberating knowledge of Afro-American and third-world affairs. By the way, the Center for Afro-American Affairs had four deans: Harry Morgan, William Sutton, James Barnes, and Thomas Porter. They served between 1968 and 1980. They are listed in the order in which they served. We also had an Afro-American Affairs newspaper, and the students wrote it.

The Black Resource Center was another component of the Black Studies Institute. At the Black Resource Center we did counseling as well as taught practical study skills courses. We offered six practical study skills courses. So what we would do is this: professors would teach our two courses, and then we would teach a practical study skills course as well (six courses). We would have 30 students or so in each of those classes. The center sought to meet the needs of students who were not prepared for the rigor of the university system. There was no selective admission, and some students needed help. There was also a cultural component. There was an arts workshop, Black theater and dance groups, as well as a student group (the Black Student Cultural Programming Board, BSCP). They were all out of the Black Resource Center.

In 1980, the Center for Afro-American Affairs was placed under the auspices of the College of Arts and Sciences, with a program leading to a degree in Afro-American Studies. This organizational change facilitated the institutionalization of the academic component of the

Center's program and a concomitant reduction in the ancillary nonacademic functions in relation to the Black community capabilities. This goal was accomplished in the fall of 1984. The Department of Afro-American Studies completely overhauled its curriculum once it transitioned. Thus, the transformation into a department enhanced the department's ability to deliver a comprehensive academic program as well as heightened its research to Arts and Sciences; the school made an all-out attempt to recruit majors and minors and increase the enrollment during the winter and spring of 1985. The enrollment doubled between 1985–86.

After the Black Studies movement started in San Francisco, it came to OU—and then?

All over the country. Feathers were ruffled, because they did not want to legitimize Black Studies as a discipline.

Where? Nationwide or OU?

This was nationwide. That's why it was a fight. It was a struggle all over the country. That's why it became necessary for us to form a National Council of Black Studies, because Ethnic and Special Studies wasn't really the focus. The focus was more on academic development (tutoring), even though they may have had some courses. But these types of courses were not the same kind of discipline that we were really looking for, for Black Studies.

When you first came to Ohio University in 1974, what was your position?

I came here as an associate professor. I was the first professor with a doctorate, other than the Dean. He had a doctorate. I applied for a position in the College of Education and, I believe, in sociology. The College of Education didn't have a position open. So they sent my résumé to African American Studies, because they knew that they were looking for someone who could teach their education courses and The Black Family.

So they sent your résumé to Black Studies Institute?

Yes, they sent my résumé to Dean Barnes, the Dean of the Black Studies Institute. Interesting: My friend's secretary sent my resume to Ohio University. I was trying to finish my dissertation, and his secretary sent my résumé to the College of Education. I was out of town, and that next Monday Gwen Rosemond (director the Black Resource Center) from Ohio University called and informed me that they wanted me to come for an interview. I agreed.

The Dean met me at the airport. Upon my arrival at OU, I was really impressed and fell in love with the students who were on the committee, when they met with me. Those who were here during the summer, they met with me after the interview. I mean, they wined and dined me and just showed me the campus and the community.

What courses did you teach?

I taught The Black Family, Introduction to African American Education, Techniques of Teaching in Inner-City Schools, The Black Child, and a psychology course titled “Afro-American Personality,” and the late Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. non-violence course.

These are courses that I developed. Because of my educational background, I sometimes lectured in the College of Education. Additionally, I had supervised student teachers before coming to OU.

Upon being hired as the first faculty in the department with a doctoral degree at the rank of Associate Professor, I had some clout that non-terminal degreed individuals with bachelors and master’s degrees did not have. I had taught high school biology for five years, worked as a residential counselor, taught at McKinney Job Corps Center and served as the Dean of Students respectively at a historically Black college (Wiley College) in Texas. In addition as a graduate student, I had worked as co-director of the Continuing Education Office at East Texas State University (now Texas A&M at Commerce) as well as served as a supervisor of student teachers and helped with the new transitional team in the new state teachers education program in the state of Texas. Thus, I was not a novice. I also became involved in the larger university community as the current faculties in the Black Studies Institute were not.

Therefore, I went and met with the principals of all of the schools in Athens [*where the university resides*]. But before going and meeting with the principals of the schools, I met with the faculty in the College of Education. I talked to them about sending some of their students to take my courses, because I was going to have students get field experience. As part of the field experience, I would take students to Cleveland public schools, Youngstown, Cincinnati, and we would go to Columbus (we would go to Columbus a couple times a week). We did not go to Dayton, but I took them to Huntington, West Virginia.

They had to do a field experience in the Athens City Schools. However, prior to their visits to the schools I would talk to each of the principals at the various local schools. I told them that I would like to have my students help with tutoring and be able to sit-in on classes. I wanted my students to get classroom experience, similar to student teaching, where the teacher was in the classroom. I asked the teachers to let them lead classroom discussions. Therefore, the program really grew. However, when we became a part of the College of Arts and Sciences in 1980, everything changed. Arts and Sciences wanted the College of Education to agree to a partnership that would allow credit for their students. It never happened. Therefore, a successful program was terminated.

So at the time, students could you get a Bachelor's degree in Black Studies at OU?

Absolutely, however, after my first three years changes began to occur. It was necessary for some upgrade in the curriculum, because the university was beginning to discuss a possible move or change in Black Studies.

Because of my background in curriculum and instruction, I began to refine the curriculum as chair of the curriculum committee.

What move or change was the university discussing?

A move of the department to the College of Arts and Sciences. As I mentioned earlier, in 1980, the Center for Afro-American Affairs was placed under the auspices of the College of Arts and Sciences

When the Center for Afro-American Affairs went to the College of Arts and Sciences, was the structure maintained?

No. Upon becoming a part of the College of Arts and Sciences our whole structure changed, as did our name. We became the Afro-American Studies program until 1992 then we became African American Studies.

What happened to the Black Resource Center?

The Black Resource Center was relocated. That was a good thing. We were getting students, Black and White, taking our classes. But we were also helping the students at the same time. As I became involved with various students across the campus, it was apparent that there was a need for some type of structured assistance for students in various areas. Wherever a need existed we sought to fulfill it by contacting various individuals across the campus to partner with us. And that component went to Carolyn Henderson. The Black Resource Center went under the Academic Advancement Center in the library.

You were the first tenured African American female at Ohio University?

In 1979, I became the first Black tenured full professor. Dean Barnes, of the Black Studies Institute told me that since he was leaving, he thought maybe I should go ahead for full professor. A panel of three professors from the College of Arts and Sciences reviewed my credentials.

A year after you became a full professor, the Center for Afro-American Affairs was placed under the auspices of the College of Arts and Sciences. The name changed from the Center for Afro-American Affairs to the Afro-American Studies program. At what point after the transition did you become chair?

I become chair in 1985, this was probably due to the enormous amount of work I did as acting chair during the summer when the chair was attending a summer institute. I had developed brochures of the courses for the year and written a proposal that was funded. I met with all of the colleges to see how African American Studies courses could meet the needs of their students.

My educational background, training and experience put me in a different position, as did my having been a Dean of Women and Dean of Students. When I became chair, I organized the graduate students and the undergraduate students. We did a newsletter, and I took it over to the journalism department. It had pictures, listings of our courses, and a list of all the people in the department. The dean in the College of Communications, begged me to come under him. He said, "Francine, oh, we could do great things." But we agreed that, based upon the fact that most of our courses were social science, that Arts and Sciences was the right fit.

I planned and coordinated events on an annual basis. I began to meet with students for discussion groups. I held forums with the Black student leaders. My presence was felt at every Black student function.

I gained the respect and admiration of the students, assisted them in organizing the Gospel Voices of Faith. This group quickly became a nationally known group. My mentor Dr. John Hurst Adams a Bishop in the AME Church helped set up concerts in churches in various cities across the country which included: St. Louis, MO; Tulsa, OK, Oklahoma City, OK; Memphis, TN; Little Rock, AK; and Dallas, Waco, Austin, McKinney & Corpus Christi, TX. Louisville, KY; Kansas City, MO. These singing tours served as a means of recruiting for the university and professional networking opportunities for members of the choir.

Upon graduating from the university they sought and secured jobs through the contacts made while on tour. Students attributed the Gospel Voices of Faith Choir as a valuable vehicle for enhancing them educationally, socially, spiritually, and morally.

However, it is important to note that I was appointed as Chair by the Dean of Arts of Sciences, not because of departmental vote.

Were you the first female chair of the department?

Yes. I was the first and only female to have served as chair. At the time, in Arts and Sciences, there were only two female chairs, Nancy Bain and I.

Who mentored you throughout this process?

Dr. David Albert Talbot. I took my first graduate class from him and got a perfect score on my mid-term exam. He said he thought it was a White student until I held up my hand when he called my name. He was a professor at East Texas State University, now Texas A and M at Commerce. During my tenure as chair of the department, I invited him to be our speaker during Black History Month. He spoke in Galbreath Chapel.

As chair, how many majors did you have?

We never had many majors; however, it increased from about 8 to 20.

What about minors?

During my tenure as chair, we had about 125-140 minors.

What about the enrollment in the Afro-American Studies classes, were students of various ethnic backgrounds enrolling in these classes?

Yes, Black and White students were enrolling, but not in extremely large numbers at first. Some classes that I taught, I might have 10 students. And sometimes, in the Techniques of Teaching in Inner-City, maybe I would have 15 students. This was due to the fact that we were providing services. In other classes however, I would have anywhere from 40 to 50 students. I tended to have the larger enrollments.

I am not trying to pat myself on the back, but as chair, I really brought visibility to the department. We realigned the course offerings. I met with various colleges and departments about giving credit to their students for enrolling in our courses. For example Health Sciences gave their students credit for the Black Child, Black Family, and African American Psychology courses. When I became chair, the Black media and the art courses had nice enrollments. We created some new courses. The Tier III classes—the university was beginning to reinstitute that type—so that's when I wrote a proposal for the Gandhi-King class. I seized upon the opportunity. Maisha Hazzard (a part-time teacher for us) was in communications. Maisha and I went to the Curriculum Council, to make a case for the Black media to be our mega course to meet a general area requirement—so that students all over the campus (first-year students coming in) could take the course. I won the argument, and so students got credit for it.

I changed that course from a ceiling of 50 to a ceiling of 250, so that it became my mega course. That was the beginning of a turnaround. My Tier III course—even though I was the chair, I would let 65 students in there; that's a 400-level course.

There would be 60 or 70 in the Tier III, and literature classes started getting 25 and 30. We set up the course Introduction to Afro-American Studies 101 and 102. We started opening that course up so that we could have more students taking those classes.

As the curriculum chair, I submitted our history courses and literature courses to the Curriculum Council (and courses such as The Black Family and The Black Child), so that those courses could meet general area requirements. When those courses started meeting general area requirements, then our enrollment skyrocketed.

The students loved the Black media class. That really was a turnaround for the department, and we had one of the highest-weighted student credit hours on the campus, with three full-time faculties and one graduate assistant. We had more weighted student credit hours than some other departments, because we had fewer people, but we had large enrollments.

How did you get students to enroll in the courses?

I started a forum every Sunday evening in Baker Center. I invited Black faculty and got their support, because I started the Black Faculty Caucus.

So the faculty came. We would have a roundtable in Baker Center (the Student Union). I would have issues on the table and asked how might we get students involved. I would have discussion items on the table, and I would have a faculty member at each table. That is how we would introduce our courses, introduce the faculty, and we started encouraging faculty to be advisors to students groups. I was advising three or four student groups.

I started putting out brochures. I would plan the courses that we were going to teach for the whole year. I planned the events that we were going to have for the whole year.

All of my friends who were major scholars from all over the country—I would have them come in: Na'im Akbar, Geneva Gay, James Banks (who was “Mr. Multicultural Education” back then), Barbara Sizemore, and just everybody who was a leading scholar in the Black community and in Black Studies. I had them come and give lectures. When I brought in someone like Na'im Akbar, I would interact with Psychology. Na'im was a psychologist, so it turned out that somebody in the Psychology department had been at Florida State and knew him. So I set up a session for him to lecture with graduate students in psychology. I made time for faculty across the campus to have lunch with him. So that's what I would do for scholars who were connected to different areas. And I wrote proposals.

Additionally, there was no Black faculty or staff on any major university committees. I said, “There's something wrong with this.” We started a Black Faculty Caucus. At one time I was the chair of the recruiting committee.

After you became chair—did the graduate numbers increase?

When I first came to OU, I was told you that we had graduate students (not many). Mr. Rose, Professor Rhodes and I had graduate status. Therefore, many of our courses had graduate students. As a matter of fact you and Travis were enrolled in my 582 course. Yes, our graduate numbers increased.

So the department was on the move?

I was doing whatever was necessary to make a connection with students and the department. I encouraged students to start clubs in their major fields. For example, I had them start a Black psychology club and a Black social work club.

One of my friends from New York came and worked with the Black social work students because that was her area. We had a Black education club; we had a Black political science club. That is when the Black engineering society (NSBE) was started, and the Black computer science club. And another thing that I did: I rallied every Black faculty and staff person on campus.

Who advised the Black student groups?

Gwen Rosemond was the advisor for most of the Black student organizations (I encouraged faculty members serve as advisors as well). They started the Miss Black Homecoming (today is called the Blackburn Spencer Scholarship Pageant) after I came here. I told them they needed to think about starting a scholarship fund. And so that's when Donald Spencer (the first African American to chair the Ohio University Board of Trustees) was a member of the board of trustees. They started the Blackburn Spencer Scholarship. ("Blackburn" is for Martha Jane Huntley Blackburn, who was the first African American female graduate from Ohio University).

So you were also encouraging students to become engaged intellectually through professional organizations?

Yes. I was rallying the Black organizations and Black students to develop professionally, as well as become connected to professional organizations.

What were some challenges that Black students faced at time?

There was one thing that really got me riled up. There was a dance in Baker Center. They had a fashion show, and after the fashion show, they were having a dance. But someone had roped off the steps from the old Baker Center. They had roped that off, so that the students coming from the dance could not get out that front door. The students called me, because I was tired and I had gone home. They called me and said, "Doc, they have roped this place off."

Who roped it off?

Some White male students who had bats and clubs. And the students told me, "We can't get out of here." So I said, "Call security. I'm on my way." There was racial tension! Additionally, female students were being raped. I didn't know of any Black women who had been raped, but I knew of a number of White women who had been raped.

I said to the president of the university, the dean of students, the chief of police, and the mayor of the city, that until they did something about the racial violence and the sexual abuse of women, that I would never eat again. This was before I was chair.

Okay, is this a good transition to discuss your fast?

My fast was related to the department; it was related to Black male students being attacked, and to women being raped. It was also about the lack of Black faculty and administrators as there were no Blacks in housing, Baker Center, and student services. So my fast was about injustice all over campus. I had come up with a list of grievances, which I sent to the dean of students (who was then Joel Rudy); I sent them to the president; the chief of police and to the mayor of the city. I called every church in town and asked them if they would send a representative to meet with the administration. Here is what really caused me to fast, and you've heard that story. I had never fasted in my life before. But I was jogging on the bike path at 5:30 AM in the morning, and I was quoting Scriptures and praying as I was jogging. I heard an audible voice saying: "There's power in prayer," just like that! I looked around and I asked, "Lord, is that you?"

I started running. And by another fourth of a mile, I heard that voice again. So that's why I went into fasting. Over 1,500 people assembled in front of the president's office. And it's interesting—there might've been more than that if the papers had come out on time. But every student organization came and read the resolution. Black students, White students, all of the student fraternities, sororities, and people came out and supported that cause. Because of that, I had a good reputation with students.

To recap: First there was an all-Black department. There were several challenges. Eventually the department went from being a separate entity (with its own dean and assistant dean) to a department under the College of Arts and Sciences. You became the chair. Under your leadership the department grew, but I am sure you encountered challenges?

In the department, under my jurisdiction, I tried to connect students and faculty. I sent out letters and asking every Black faculty, staff, whatever area they were in, if they would participate in a Black forum during Black History Month. I also invited some of the Black people from the community to come, such as Herpel Saunders. I asked some other people if they would come and participate on the panel. Every Black faculty, staff, and administrator on this campus participated if they were in town. Those people who were going to be out of town and unable to come sent me a letter of regret that they were not going to be able to come. Plus, I organized student panels and put Frank Henderson as the chair of the student panels. So there were student panels, and we did a whole weekend.

In 1985, 1986, during Black History Month, the students did their programming. I brought in an author Maya Angelou as the keynote Black History Month speaker that Friday night, because we had our panels that day. The students had theirs on Friday evening. The Black faculty and staff had an all-day event on that Saturday. And that was the first time (and the last time!) that there's ever been this kind of programming. I mean, Dora Wilson (former dean of Fine Arts) played the piano and Edward Payne sang. I'm telling you, we were crying, it was so awesome. Sam Bolden, Glenn Doston, and I did the education panel. There were panels on every major area where we were, such health sciences; every area in which there were Black people on the campus.

During my tenure as chair, several people worked on forming state conferences and having an Ohio consortium of Black Studies. This group of people included Edward Crosby from Kent State, Nick Nelson from Ohio State, the chair at UC Cincinnati, and Yvonne Williams from the College of Wooster. They came to OU on a number of occasions. We wanted to set up a network where we could cross-teach courses and have students at other campuses taking our courses. For example, you could be teaching a class there; Vattel could be teaching a class here; and students at Kent State could interact—they could simultaneously be taking a course.

Further, I started a program for the kids in the community. I had an Imani program with graduate students from communications and graduate students from the College of Education. There were students involved from my Black Child class as well. So we would do four hours of class, and that Saturday program would go from 10 AM to noon; and the student got an hour credit for that. We would tutor the kids. For example, we taught them Swahili and Spanish. Also, medical students would come and do some health education.

The department really grew under my leadership. Because I had a background in curriculum and instruction, I knew how to go and meet with chairs and directors of programs. Nevertheless, like other departments around the country we still struggled for legitimization.

Why?

I think that Black Studies was not legitimized in this country because people did not see the value of Black Studies. People did not seem to understand that when you look at history, you look at history - historically.

What if you put history in the context of Black people? What if you view history from the frame of reference of the thought of African people? It is this other frame of reference that was not being taught. So in effect, the history of a people was not really being taught. That's why White students who were in my class went to the history department and said, "We are learning more in African American Studies history than we are learning over here in your History department. We want credit in History for the courses that we've taken in African American Studies."

After you took over, it seems that there was more cooperation from departments on campus?

I think the cooperation was out of respect for me personally. We did some good things. For example, we had national conferences, bringing in renowned scholars and authors to the university in topics such as political science, sociology, and literature. Our department brought in big artists in music, art, and dance. We brought in major people who were political scientists from all over the country. We were really on a roll! When I did the multicultural studies conference, I had graduate students from the College of Education and professors moderating sessions. We were also able to publish a journal on Black media. It was a beautiful time. Whenever we had functions, students as well as community members would attend.

When did the Lindley Cultural Center come into being?

I came in 1974, 1975. I believe that's when the Center came into being. We had already started the Black Student Union. When I was the advisor to the Black Student Union, we felt that we should have a place.

It had been called the Lindley Student Center, but we changed the name to Lindley Cultural Center. In the beginning, there was just a pool table and a TV. When I became chair, I wanted it to be more than just a pool hall. So we wrote a proposal, and we got new furniture in there. We got a bigger TV. We started having different events in there. For example, that's where they had all of the dances.

How long did you serve as chair?

I served as the chair for five years.

What did you notice after you left the chair position?

Well, it was noticeable that the courses now met general area requirements. That really helped, because students across campus could now take our history courses and receive general education credit. This is something that I accomplished not only as the chair, but as the chair of the curriculum committee.

Did you want to stay on as chair?

I had to have an angioplasty; my heart was 90 percent blocked. So we succeeded with just the three of us, with one of us as chair and two full-time faculty members. We succeeded—in spite of the lack of resources.

I attribute my love and work with students at Ohio University to my previous jobs prior to coming to Ohio University. As a public school teacher, I went above and beyond my job description by staying after school working with students, visiting their homes, getting to know their parents, taking them on field trips [through my personal expenses]. As a science and biology teacher, most of my students majored in biology and went on to become medical professionals (i.e. doctors, dentists). At McKinney Job Corps Center, I was a live-in resident advisor and counselor. My residents were consistently rated as *the most likely to succeed* and I won dormitory of the month so many times that I was exempted from the competition. As Dean of Women at Wiley College, my stellar performance at that level put me in a position to be promoted to the position of Dean of Students the next academic year when the current Dean relocated.

As the Dean of Students, I wrote the accrediting documents for the Division of Student Affairs, coordinated and established the calendar of events. Moreover, I worked directly with all student groups and served as the advisor to the Gospel Choir and the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. I kept the tradition that all students choosing to become a member of any student organization (including fraternities and sororities) must have at least a 3.0 grade point average.

When I came to Ohio University for the job interview, I was extremely impressed with the students on the committee. The students on the committee comprised of leaders of various Black student groups who treated me like royalty during the on-campus interview. Needless to say it was because of the students that I accepted the position at Ohio University. Furthermore, it has been because of student that I remained for the next 30+ years.

Where do you see Black Studies going—Black Studies nationally and Black Studies at OU? It seems that the discipline is growing, and is getting recognition in some places. On the other hand, it seems that students are looking to major in areas where they can find a job. It seems that many students are having a hard time selling themselves with a degree in African American studies.

Well, we never had a problem with that. We wrote proposals and connected the students' coursework with jobs. For instance, in the Techniques of Teaching class, we took our students to help in the public schools. Yvonne was setting up the Statehouse with interns. Additionally, hosting national conferences at OU, helped as well.

As for the future of the discipline, I wrote an article several years ago titled "Black Studies' Quest for Survival: From Traditional to Non-Traditional Curricular." I will share the some of the conclusion and recommendations that I made in that article. Afro-American studies program have made significant contributions to the educational community in the past and will continue to enrich the academic, and wider social life of Afro-Americans as well as other Americans, and the world.

It is the role of progressive forces among the university administrators, Black faculty members and students to join forces in keeping a vital dimension of the university community functioning. Black studies departments must be comprehensive in scope. They must be academically sound. These departments must continue to wage the struggle against racism and oppression. They must engage in far-reaching research. They must assess students' needs, re-evaluate their programs, revise and upgrade the curriculum and serve as a vehicle for social change.

With the current focus on science and technology and new strategies for survival, people will have to acquire new skills to make transitions from obsolete to new positions, to seek advanced degrees, to continue learning after a stoppage period to enter the world of work. But more than anything, people will begin to seek knowledge for knowledge's sake, or to acquire skills in an area of interest after retirement.

Black studies programs must develop community oriented workshops and seminars in educational development, gerontology, and environmental and consumer protection. Lifelong learning and community service must become the ultimate mission of Black studies programs, as of all true education.

Overall, what role would you say Ohio University has played in the construction of Black Studies in the United States?

I think we played a major role. We had people like Winston Van Horne and James Upton. We had some scholars. For where we are located, I think we played a significant role in educating students as well as the community about Black history.

References

- Alkalimat, A. (March, 2007). *Africana studies in the U.S.* Eblackstudies.org, <http://eblackstudies.org/su/complete.pdf>
- Boyce, T., & Chunnu Brayda, W. (accepted 2012). Battyboy must die! Reggae music and its vilification of gays in Jamaica. *Journal of Black Studies*.
- Bradley, L. (2002). *Reggae: The story of Jamaican music*. London: BBC Worldwide Ltd.
- Christian, M. (2007). Notes on Black Studies: Its continuing necessity in the academy and beyond. *Journal of Black Studies*, 37(3), 348–364.
- Chunnu, W. (2010). Childs, Francine C. In Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (Eds.), *African American national biography*. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved April 22, 2012 from <http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0001/e4972>
- Geddes, A.L. (1987, January 14). Professors recall King's life, era, values. *The Post*.
- Hine, S. (1977, August 28). Area teacher first tenured black at OU. *Sunday News-Globe*, p. 7-D.
- Hollow, B. (2004). *Ohio University, 1804–2004: The spirit of a singular place*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.
- Holpp, K. (1987, March 6). Traveling OU educator brings back culture, ideas of India. *The Athens Messenger*, p. 9.
- Hoover, T. N. (1954). *The history of Ohio University*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.
- Kapp, D. (1992). Reggae against racism ... But what about sexism? *Agenda*, 14, 68–70.
- Mah, L. (1989, July 15). Childs – undiminished devotion to students, learning. *Minority Newspaper Workshop Publication*.
- Parks, E. (1995, May 9). Faculty win for outside work. *The Post*.
- Radford, M. (1989, February 12). Peace Corps singles out OU scholar: Francine Childs is top black educator. *The Athens Messenger*.

Appendix A

Amarillo (Tex.) Sunday News-Globe, August 28, 1977, p. 7-D

Area teacher first tenured black at OU

By SUSAN IHNE
Times Staff Writer

Dr. Francine Child's goal of "being first" drove her to become the first black to become a tenured full-professor at Ohio University this summer.

"I grew up under my grandfather's saying that 'Can't is dead and ignorance is behind the door,'" the 37-year-old Wellington native said.

"I've always wanted to be first in everything. I would actually cry if someone would beat me pulling cotton," Dr. Child said of her younger years on a cotton farm.

She has achieved her No. 1 goal many times since she left her farm home where she was raised by her grandmother, the late Mrs. Clara Frazier.

Dr. Child received her bachelor's degree in biology in 1962 from Paul Quinn College in Waco. She was the first graduate of Booker T. Washington High School in Wellington to graduate from college.

She went back to Wellington after graduating to teach for three years. During the summers, she worked on her master's degree in biology at Texas Southern University in Houston and Prairie View A & M College in Prairie View.

Migraine headaches caused by her thesis project involving rats forced her to give up biology and start from scratch on a master's degree in counseling which she received from East Texas State University (ETSU) in Commerce in 1970.

During that time she was one of the first residential advisors at the McKinney Job Corps Center in McKinney. The dormitory she advised was "Dorm of the Month" for nine months in a row until the administration decided it wasn't fair not to pass around the award.

While at McKinney, she was offered a job as dean of students at Wiley College in Marshall. A year later, she took a part-time job as director of special services at ETSU while working on her doctorate degree.

In 1975, she received her doctorate in supervision, curriculum and instruction. She had begun teaching Afro-American Studies at Ohio University in Athens in September, 1974.

Of the 18 black professors, Dr. Child has been there the shortest time but was the first to become a tenured full-professor. She is president of the Black Faculty Administrative Caucus.

At Ohio University, Dr. Child has taken the only black church in the community and changed it from a 15-member congregation to one which has a 37-member traveling choir.

She restarted the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Athens. It now has 97 members and she hopes to raise the number to 200 this year.

"I guess I'm looked upon as a person who gets things done," she said of her various activities. "I'm never content when I'm short of getting the best."

A former tennis, basketball and track coach, Dr. Child jogs every morning. Lately she said her reading material consisted of the Bible and books by Oral Roberts.

Her lifelong goal, besides being first, is to see and help racism be eliminated.

"I really believe someday people will stop asking 'What neighborhood do you come from,' 'Who was your father or mother,' 'How much money do you make' and 'What school are you from,'" she said.

To achieve her goal, she is studying for the entrance exam to medical school so she can become a psychologist or an urban and family doctor.

If she doesn't go to medical school, she would like to enter the mortuary business. As a funeral director, she would give pre- and post-death counseling and own a floral shop.

Eventually, she hopes to settle in the Dallas area.

"I'm a hope-to-die Texan," she said. She visits her mother, Mrs. Margaret Thomas of 1209 N. Tyler, whenever she gets the chance to come back to Texas.

Source: *Sunday New-Globe*, August 28, 1977

Appendix B

Faculty win for outside work

by ELIZABETH PARKS
Post Staff Writer 5/9/95

Two OU faculty members were recognized Friday for their work outside the classroom.

Assistant professor of virology Calvin James and professor of Afro-American studies Francine Childs were presented with Student Affairs Faculty Contribution Awards by Dean of Students Joel Rudy at an awards reception Friday afternoon in the 1804 Room of Baker Center.

Outside the classroom, James is active in Upward Bound, a program that encourages minority students to pursue careers in health and medicine. He is involved with the Athens Friends of International Students and has served as an informal mentor to medical students. He was a university professor in 1991.

Childs, Rudy said, was described by a reference as a "mom away from home." She is involved with Gospel Voices of Faith, her church and the African-American community in Athens. She said she has opened her home to students who have been ill or in financial need. Childs was named a university professor in 1978 and 1989.

Other nominees for the award include Dave Stone, assistant professor for the School of Applied Behavioral Science and Educational Leadership; Cassandra Reese, assistant professor of journalism; Frances Pearson, assistant professor for SABSEL; Peter Johnson, professor of chemistry and biomedical sciences; Valerie Perotti, associate professor of management systems; Dominique Bardet, instructor of modern languages; and Jane Johnson, assistant professor of education at the Lancaster branch campus.

The two winners received paintings by Ann Matlock, assistant professor of art.

Rudy surprised Fred Weiner, award selection committee chair, by presenting him with a framed map depicting Athens as the center of the world. The map was made by OU's cartography department. It was presented to Weiner in recognition of his contribution to the selection committee during the ten years the award has been given. Weiner has headed the committee every year but the first. Twenty-three faculty members previously have been awarded.

OU President Robert Glidden addressed the awards reception. Students, particularly young students, Glidden said, probably think about life's adjustments more than their studies.

Weiner said, "What the award seeks to do is recognize the faculty members' contribution to development and growth within the division (of student affairs)."

The division of student affairs includes residence life, judiciaries, counseling services, the international students office, Galbreath Chapel, health and wellness, student activities and career planning.

Nominations for the Student Affairs Faculty Contribution Awards come from staff and students who are connected with the different departments in the division of student affairs, Weiner said.

This year's six selection committee members, two students and four staff members, came from several departments within the division of student affairs, Weiner said. He also said the committee based its selection on interviews with references of the nine nominees.

Mary McNulty, a reference for James, works for AFIS with him. AFIS provides foreign students with a variety of services, including social events, networking with community members and emergency services. James, the organization's secretary, is involved in all aspects of the services offered, McNulty said. She also said he has given a "big contribution of time and effort."

A 1974 OU graduate and former student of Childs', Rev. Walter Moss attended the awards reception. He said Childs influenced him all four years of his college career, and she was always encouraging him, other African-Americans and students in general.

Source: *The Post*, May 9, 1995

Appendix C



Dr. Childs, Fulbright Hayes Scholar in India. Source: Courtesy of Linda Daniels, Director of Multicultural Programs, Ohio University, Athens, OH.

The Messenger, Athens, Ohio — Fri., March 6, 1987 — Page 9

Traveling OU educator brings back culture, ideas of India

By KEN HOLPP
Messenger student reporter

The conditions of the people of India were brought home last summer to Dr. Francine Childs, chairwoman of the Center for Afro-American Studies at Ohio University.

Childs, who teaches courses on the life and teachings of Martin Luther King Jr., was the recipient of a Fulbright-Hays Scholarship for a trip to India. Along with 15 others, she traveled to India for six weeks to study Gandhian philosophy and theories of non-violent conflict resolution.

The trip was an eye-opening experience, according to Childs.

For the first two weeks of the trip, the group attended a series of workshops and seminars. The speakers included former members of Parliament, social workers, journalists and representatives of various religious sects in India. They talked about the politics of India and how it related to Gandhian philosophy, the impact of language on the culture and the plight of education.

"Different points of view were presented," Childs said, not just one.

Along with that, the group went on a series of tours around the country to see how people in various places lived, and how the Gandhian philosophies were being implemented.

They visited the site where Gandhi was assassinated, several museums, temples and holy places.

On their visit to Bombay, they met with a former member of Parliament who was a relatively new supporter of Gandhian philosophy. He talked about how he had become convinced that Gandhi's teachings had substance, Childs said.

Bombay is the Hollywood of India, according to Childs, who said one of the things that she found interesting is that their stars are also popular political figures.

Americans have just started the practice of electing october to public office, Childs said, a common practice in India for years. Their stars are heads of states all over India, who make their political statements through their films, she said.

Another thing Childs noticed was the treatment of women. In the northern areas, they have almost no rights, but "the farther south you travel, the higher the status of women."

One of the people she met was Ela Bhatt, a leader of the women's effort to form a labor union. She also was a member of SEWA, the Self-Employed Women's Association, a trade union with 14,000 members.

"The work of SEWA helped to improve the lot of women there," she said. Childs said she believes India will be one of the forerunners of modern scientific technology. "Any college worth its salt will have a student teacher from the Tata Institute in India," she said.

Even though parts of the trip were depressing and disheartening, Childs said she is glad she went. "My life is richer and fuller for being able to go," she said.

HINDU VILLAGE—Francine Childs, Ohio University professor of Afro-American studies, hands a Hindu woman in India 40 rupees for her maintenance for the month. Childs was in India last summer where she visited the Hindu village and said she decided to give the needy woman the money because she resembled a friend of hers in Athens.

Source: *The Athens Messenger*, March 6, 1987

**Peace Corps
singles out
OU scholar
Francine Childs is
top black educator**

By MARY RADFORD
Messenger staff writer

It was her grandmother who kindled the fire, but Dr. Francine Childs tended her own flames. "I always had a burning desire for education," she said.

This week the Ohio University professor and chairwoman of the Afro-American Studies Program will be honored for imparting that "burning desire" to her students.

Childs is one of three Ohio educators to be named Peace Corps Black Educator of the Year for 1988-89. The award goes to black educators who instill students with pride in black culture and encourage them to work with students of other races to build understanding and trust.

"My ultimate goal is to see black students and all students work to the greatest of their potential," Childs said.

(Continued on page A-9)



— Messenger photo by Bill Graham

BLACK EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR — Dr. Francine Childs, chairwoman of Ohio University's Afro-American Studies Program, has been named a Peace Corps Black Educator of the Year. She came to OU in 1974 and has opened her mind, heart and home to hundreds of students.

Messenger 2/12/89

Source: *The Athens Messenger*, February 12, 1989

Childs – undiminished devotion to students, learning

By Linda Mah
Staff Writer

Perhaps more eloquently than her words, the quick flash of her dark eyes and sharp smack of her hand on the desktop reveal Francine Childs' devotion to her students and to the Afro-American Studies program she resurrected at Ohio University.

During her tenure as chairwoman of the department, however, there were frustrations that threatened to smother her enthusiasm. These include health problems and what Childs sees as bureaucratic games; both inhibited the growth of the program, which she said was "dying."

The health problems — she had surgery for a blocked artery in December — and the lack of administrative support have now prompted her to step down after three years as chairwoman on July 1.

"Many of my dreams have been fulfilled," Childs said, "but I guess I'm one who expects so much more, that I could not say all that I wanted to accomplish has been accomplished."

Childs said she could have done much more if the department had received funding and more faculty. Overcoming these obstructions drained her energy.

"It's having to be tough, having a stick-to-it-ness and perseverance to

not lose your head," she said, "or lose your self-confidence in your capabilities because of roadblocks that are set in your way."



Francine Childs

Childs said some people believe she "was trying to build an empire."

"My goal," said the 49-year-old Texas native, "has not been to leave a name for myself, but to leave a name for Afro-American Studies. Because Afro-American Studies hopefully is going to go on long after I've gone."

As the chairwoman, she has rebuilt the program from one with no majors and only four minors to a department with four majors and more than 100 minors. In the process,

Lindley Cultural Center began to focus on the needs of OU's black students and now hosts receptions and educational programs.

The same drive and energy she puts into her administrative duties are amplified in her classroom.

In class she appears to run on perpetual energy, feeding from the ideas and images bandied back and forth with students.

She performs a fervent dance in front of the chalkboard as she teaches. Childs alternates between pointing at a student and asking, "What did you think?" and closing her eyes to reflect.

She nods in agreement with ideas, but if students pause, she quickly asks "And?" She expects students to explain their opinions.

She scotch-tapes long sheets of paper, crammed with scribbles, on the chalkboard and discusses on negrecence, the process of becoming black.

Childs jabs at the paper to stress a point. Occasionally, she pauses briefly, in midstream, and peers at the paper, then says quizzically to the students, "You really can't read that, can you?" then the facts continue tumbling forth.

Childs came to Ohio University in 1974 after earning her doctorate at East Texas State University.

She was offered many administrative jobs but was drawn to teaching and working directly with students. Childs, who will remain an Afro-American Studies professor, said she wants to affect the students' lives.

"I guess that's where my heart was," Childs said. "I've spent a lifetime, all of my working years, trying to be the best and trying to develop and bring out the fullest potential in the young people I work with."

"My life revolves around working with students."

One of Childs' most popular and unusual classes is "Ghandi and Martin Luther King Jr.: Nonviolence as a Strategy," which requires students participate in nonviolent protests.

The class was created to change the way students think about the world. Childs wants them to learn about war, racism, violence, militarism and social structure and how these elements intertwine.

Twyla Jones, a master's graduate who took the Ghandi/King class in 1985, recalls having to portray a woman who was going to have an abortion. As she walked to the Athens abortion clinic, the other students divided into pro-choice and anti-abortion groups shouting slogans at her, trying to influence her decision.

"It was inspirational and mind-consuming," Jones said.

This summer, Childs will send her black students and white students to apply for the same job at local businesses. She said she hopes to expose them to some of society's obviously racist practices.

Once more, Childs' eyes flash and her hand slaps the desk as she begins to explain the need to refine constantly the structure of her classes.

"How do we stimulate them so and enlighten them so and intrigue them with new concepts and new knowledge and new ways of looking at things so that they will stay in the classes," Childs asked, "that they will tell their friends about the classes, that they will come back and take another class?"

There is one reason why she does what she does. The students.

"I want the students to leave with a breadth of knowledge," Childs said. "I like to think that the class is only the beginning."

"I try to design my classes so they will have a lasting impact on the lives of the people who take them and that a spark of interest will be created so they will continue to research and explore the knowledge gained from the class for the rest of their lives."

7/15/89 Minority Newspaper Workshop Publication

Source: *Minority Newspaper Workshop Publication*, July 15, 1989.

Appendix F



Dr. Francine Childs (center) with newly hooded Ph.Ds
Dr. Winsome Chunnu-Brayda (left) and Dr. Travis Boyce
(right). June 12, 2009.