

Association for Africanist Anthropology 2005 Annual Report

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The AfAA had an excellent year and is experiencing increased vitality. Our membership has risen, with a high point of 315 members in April of 2005. Student memberships have fluctuated between 114 and 93. This year, we wish to target student memberships by offering a graduate student article award, a concept launched by former AfAA president Gracia Clark. A reception held at this year's annual AAA meetings proved highly successful in attracting both current and former members, many of whom verbally committed to rejoin the association. For the past three years, our expenses have stayed stable and within income. Our budgetary status is strong. Plans to support travel of African scholars to the annual AAA meetings have not been viable over the past two years. This year's travel awardee, Geoffrey Nwaka from Nigeria, changed his plans at the last moment and elected not to travel to Washington, D.C. As a result, we have saved funds in this area and can also report a \$5,000 overall increase in our net assets. At this year's annual meetings, members decided to focus efforts on graduate students and increasing our national membership base before relaunching collaborative travel award projects on the African continent.

Our core activities continue to cluster around the AAA meetings. This year, Maria Cattell, our long-term program chair, worked with David Turkon, the new chair, to develop an exciting collection of panels, including collaborative panels with the Association of Black Anthropologists and the Association of Feminist Anthropology. These panels were extremely well attended and generated a good deal of stimulating discussion. Maria Cattell plans to run for another term to continue to work with David Turkon on the program committee in the future. Our reception and informal gatherings hosted by our board members in Washington helped to continue the discourse and reinvigorate scholarly exchanges. The distinguished lecture entitled "Accountability and Authority in African Ethnography" by former AfAA President Gracia Clark attracted a substantial audience following the reception.

Newly elected board members include Nancy Schwartz (Treasurer) and Jennifer Coffman (AAA newsletter liaison). Both have assumed full responsibilities for their posts and are doing excellent work. Nancy Schwartz plans to house the AfAA listserv at the Community College of Southern Nevada and has the support of Dean Charles Okeke, who is also an Africanist scholar. In the meantime, since the departure of Gracia Clark, the AfAA has used the assistance of Richard Thomas at the AAA office to send out listserv communications. Transferring the listserv from Indiana University at Bloomington to the University of California, San Diego proved difficult and cumbersome. We plan to complete the listserv transfer with Nancy Schwartz and Dean Okeke during 2006, pending the dean's final approval. The Executive Committee also agreed on the addition of two new International Liaison positions for Africa and Europe. The purpose of the organizational restructuring generating these positions is to increase membership and organize AfAA-sponsored activities on the African continent and in Europe on an ongoing basis. These plans will include continued links to the Pan-Africanist Anthropological Association (PAAA) through its Cape Town meetings in 2006.

At the 2005 board meeting, members unanimously agreed to invite Bogumil Jewsiewicki, an internationally acclaimed professor of African Studies at the Université Laval, Québec, to be our distinguished lecturer for 2006. Professor Jewsiewicki has agreed. His lecture will be preceded by a reception at the San José meetings. We intend to continue to use these receptions as a recruitment and reactivation device at the annual AAA meetings. The overlapping meetings of the AAA and the African Studies Association (ASA) in Northern California next November should also provide an opportunity to increase our membership and stimulate collaborations with scholars from the African continent. While the collaboration with the PAAA remains important, the Executive Committee also expressed interest in finding additional ways of working with scholars from the African continent through our International Liaisons and other outreach activities. The ASA meetings in San Francisco offer an auspicious beginning for these collaborations. We propose to expend some of our funds on arranging daily transportation between the AAA meetings in San José and the ASA meetings in San Francisco in order to facilitate these interactions. As a member of the ASA panel coordinating committee in the area of popular culture, I will work as a liaison between the two associations along with some of our other Executive Committee members (Gwendolyn Mikell, Betty Harris, and Nancy Schwartz). These plans should be both cost-effective and intellectually productive.

Members voted to initiate an Elliot Skinner Book Award for outstanding publications in Africanist anthropology. Through our new Interim Secretary, we will begin plans for putting this award into place by early 2007. Members will choose a panel of referees for this award as well as for the graduate student essay award. Executive Committee members also suggested that we give a Distinguished Service Award in the form of a plaque presented at our annual Business Meeting. We still need to reorganize our Nominations Committee and vote on a change of our bylaws to include the two new executive positions. The AfAA Executive Committee will address further long-range planning issues more systematically at the San José meetings, and will work to strengthen the effectiveness and continuity of our organization.

During a concluding discussion at our Business Meeting, members agreed that AnthroSource will not have a great effect on the AfAA due to our small size. We do, however, look forward to the digitizing of AAA publications as a way of promoting the newly proposed AfAA awards and international projects. On the whole, the AfAA had a very positive transitional year in 2005, and we look forward to launching new and exciting projects in 2006.