

Association for Africanist Anthropology 2006 Annual Report

Prepared by Bennetta Jules-Rosette, AfAA President

The AfAA had an active and very successful year. Our membership has remained fairly stable, with a high point of 307 in April of 2006, representing a slight decline from last year's peak of 315, and a low point of 291 in November 2006. Some of our losses were in the category of graduate students, which we are determined to target as an important audience. In addition, some of this decline may also have resulted from the simultaneous scheduling of the African Studies Association (ASA) Meetings in San Francisco. This scheduling conflict may have conceivably diminished onsite registration and memberships in November, since we experienced our largest drop from 302 to 291 at that point. Although we had initially discussed working with the AAA on offering some form of transportation between the San José meeting site and San Francisco, this plan ultimately proved to be unfeasible. Several AfAA members were actively involved in the organization of panels and events at the ASA meetings and were unable to make the trip to San José due to schedule conflicts. **In the future, we hope that similar scheduling overlaps, which were not supposed to occur due to an agreement made some years ago, will be more systematically addressed with the cooperation of the AAA.** The note appearing in the ASA bulletin, in collaboration with the AAA, concerning this logistic problem and outlining travel alternatives was not a sufficient solution, and it did not provide a viable alternative for those wishing to commute.

It is essential that the AfAA Executive Board and active members focus on developing more strategies for increasing AfAA membership. Carolyn Martin Shaw, formerly in charge of membership, issued a recruitment letter that was distributed by flyer at the AAA Meetings. This flyer did seem to attract people to our reception, but it is not clear whether we will experience an increase in membership as a result. Everyone present at our reception and business meeting agreed on the necessity of updating our website and putting into place an independent listserv in order to expand our membership base and keep members informed about our ongoing activities. J.R. Osborn, the AfAA graduate student representative, has already contacted Michael Lambert, the previous web coordinator, and he now has access to the site files for updating.

As with last year, we held a lively reception preceding the Distinguished Lecture. The reception drew a capacity crowd and was an important venue for conversation and networking. This year's Distinguished Lecturer was Bogumil Jewsiewicki of Université Laval. His lecture entitled "Postscriptural Communication, Postphotographic Images, Performance as Heritage Preservation in Africa" was stimulating and received a positive response. It also attracted many non-members to our event. Professor Jewsiewicki examined Congolese popular painting as a reflection of political repression and cultural change. The reflexive inclusion of one of the artist's paintings in dialogue with Professor Jewsiewicki was particularly compelling. Jennifer Coffman, the AfAA newsletter liaison, took photographs of the session and has already prepared a newsletter article on this event. The AfAA presented Professor Jewsiewicki with a photograph and an award for his Distinguished Scholarship, and he proposed to help with the membership recruitment of senior scholars. Professor Jewsiewicki also received the Distinguished Africanist Award at the ASA, at which time he mentioned the activities of the AfAA and thanked us for the award.

During the AfAA Business Meeting, several important projects were outlined. Hudita Mustafa acted as Secretary for the meeting, and she has been formally nominated to run for this position in the upcoming AAA elections. The meeting opened with a thorough Treasurer's Report presented by Nancy Schwartz, who suggested several new fundraising strategies including a possible silent auction and the design and sale of an AfAA t-shirt (See attached report). David Turkon then reported from the Program Committee, co-organized by Maria Cattell. He outlined the necessity of starting to plan our invited panels at a much earlier date and presented ideas for a Presidential Panel as part of next year's AAA meetings, which center around the theme of "Difference, (In)equality, and Justice." Emmanuel Babatunde offered to join in these efforts, and we agreed that he would be nominated as a candidate for the Program Committee. Plans for a Presidential Session are well underway, and the committee completed a proposal with a slate of participants in late December.

Gwendolyn Mikell prepared a brief report on the Elliott Skinner Book Award for outstanding publications in Africanist anthropology. The Board discussed the parameters for the award and agreed that \$1000 should be offered and that books encompassing the past two years would be considered. The AAA informed us that our plans for the upcoming award should be in place and published by June 2007 at the latest. Gwendolyn Mikell will work on forming an awards committee. Several board members informally volunteered to read the books once they have been obtained from the publishers. We also agreed that the books should, at least initially, focus on continental sub-Saharan Africa. Based on the launching of this award, we considered Elliott Skinner as a candidate for the 2007 AfAA Distinguished Lecture, during which time he would present the first book award. In 2008, the Distinguished Lecture will be given by the outgoing AfAA President, who will also present the book award. We also agreed to offer a graduate student paper award of \$500 and an undergraduate award of \$100. Organization of a committee for the student awards is still pending. Nevertheless, an announcement will be prepared in order to meet the AAA deadline in the spring.

Newly elected board members include two International Liaisons: David Coplan representing Africa and Benjamin Soares representing Europe. The roles of the new international liaison positions involve the recruitment of international scholars to the AfAA and attending key events and anthropological conferences on behalf of the AfAA. In his capacity as liaison, David Coplan attended the meetings of the Pan-Africanist Anthropological Association (PAAA) in Cape Town and reported on the event. Benjamin Soares has started his recruitment work in Europe, but he stated that his task would be greatly enhanced once the website has been updated. An AfAA graduate student is also in place and attended the reception for AAA graduate student section representatives organized by Jason Gonzales.

On the whole, the AfAA accomplished a great deal during 2006. Our Executive Board is now solidified. We are still in search of a Nominations Committee, which will be particularly important for the election of new officers during the 2008 AAA elections. The Nominations Committee should be formalized before the 2007 AAA meetings so that we can discuss the nominations slate, which will include several key positions. It is also important that we review and adhere to our nominations bylaws so that a new President Elect will have enough time for appropriate preparation. The AfAA is now an extremely vital organization with renewed energy and expanded discussions. We hope to strengthen our outreach capacity by using this reinvigorated organizational structure.

Association for Africanist Anthropology 2006 Annual Treasurer's Report

Prepared by Nancy Schwartz, AfAA Treasurer

The Association is in good financial shape. Our membership has declined slightly, but it is still larger than many other sections of the AAA, including both those that have had publications and those that have not. We have been able to enjoy healthy membership figures in the absence of a publication. The controversies over the impact of AnthroSource on AAA sections' membership fees and financial viability should not affect our financial health.

We have long had members willing to pay dues (currently \$25.00) because they are passionate about Africa. We have planned several ventures to raise our membership, increase our financial health, gain greater representation at the meetings through more panel slots, and continue to grow the future generation of Africanists.

Our dues are relatively low but we have been able to build a reserve and initiate several new projects while maintaining our financial health. Our Net Assets at the end of November 2006 were \$40,148.24, an increase of \$1,725.23 from the beginning of the 2006 year.

In 2007, we are budgeting more for our Business Meeting/Reception than in the 2006 budget. Our plans are to expend \$2,900 at the 2007 meetings vs. the \$2,613 budgeted for and the \$2,421.77 indicated in the AAA November 2006 financial statement for AfAA. Our 2006 Reception/Business Meeting/and Distinguished Lecture was a resounding success and well-worth the expense.

We are planning to spend \$500 for the publication to distribute our Distinguished Lectures for 2006 & 2007 to members. This will be an added benefit of membership. We also plan to spend \$500 for upgrading and maintaining our website with our Graduate Student Representative.

To recruit new members, maintain current members, and add yet another incentive to come to the meetings, we are going to initiate the Elliott Skinner Book Prize (\$1000); continue to offer an honorarium for our Distinguished Lecturer (\$500), award two graduate students a prize of \$250 to help them come to the meetings, initiate an undergraduate student paper prize award (\$100), present a plaque and check as a Distinguished Lifetime Service Award to an Africanist scholar living outside of Africa (\$250), and a plaque and check as a Distinguished Lifetime Service Award to an Africanist Scholar based in the African Continent (\$250).

We will spend about \$100 in mailings for recruitment of members. We spent \$4.26 through November 2006 for mailings and an increase is clearly warranted. We are currently budgeting \$300 to use the AAA listserv until an independent listserv can be established. This will keep members apprised of our activities and become a benefit for new members.

For further development and promotion, we have budgeted \$1000 to sell of t-shirts, or donated African goods at a booth in the Exhibit Hall, and have a board breakfast or a social event in addition to our reception at the 2007 annual meeting.