

Best Practices Project Summaries

Project Title: The Water Brought Us: Gullah History & Culture
Location: Park Hill United Methodist Church and Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library, Denver Colorado
Sponsor: Metropolitan State College/Johnson Legacy, Inc.
Project Director: Dr. Jacquelyn Benton

Project Description and Implementation:

This project involved support for the Gullah Studies Institute held on June 29-30, 2007. The Gullah studies Institute was directly linked to a community lecture series, also offered as a three-credit upper level course in the Department of African/African American Studies at Metropolitan State College of Denver (AAS 449E): The Johnson Lecture Series: A Community Outreach Course. The lecture series' theme was "The Water Brought Us: Gullah History & Culture," and nine students signed up for the course. As requirements for the course, they read assigned texts, viewed documentaries on Gullah culture, engaged in class discussions, and devoted several hours to independent research on an aspect of Gullah history and culture. The students also interacted with community members during discussions following the community lecture series. The individual lectures were: "I Have A Dream Monument: Rosa Parks"; "Sea Island Folks: Slavery & Freedom"; "The Ring Shout Tradition: Gullah Bible"; "Indigo & Bottle Trees/ Quilting & Sweetgrass Baskets"; and "Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust: A Gullah/Geechee Film*". The community lectures took place at Park Hill United Methodist Church, and each lecture had an audience of thirty to fifty community members in attendance. The additional classroom sessions were held at the Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library, the off-campus meeting place for the nine students and the faculty member teaching the course. The course ended with students presenting and turning in their final research projects on Gullah history and culture.

NCBS funds supported efforts to reach out to the broader community through lectures and other activities as part of the Gullah Studies Institute. The Institute consisted of the following lectures: "The Gullah-Sierra Leone Connection"; "Gullah Cultural Legacies"; "Black Seminoles: Gullah Freedom Fighters"; "Telling the Gullah Story"; "African American Folk Life in the South"; "Embraced by the Gullah"; and "Oh, Freedom Ova Me!" The workshop presented during the Institute was "Circle Unbroken: The Sweetgrass Basket Tradition" and documentaries shown were "Family Across the Sea" and "The Language You Cry In." Three of the presenters are well-known figures in Gullah Studies: Emory Campbell, Executive Director Emeritus of the Penn Center on St. Helena Island; Ron Daise, singer/performer and co-creator of the children's television show, "Gullah Gullah Island"; and Joseph Opala, anthropologist and author of works on the Gullah-Sierra Leone Connection.

Project Outcomes:

Project Outcomes were evaluated using several quantitative and qualitative techniques including (a) measurement of number of direct participants and indirect beneficiaries, (b) qualitative feedback from participants, and (c) assessment of event coverage in the local media, and (d) Project Director's assessment of outcomes.

(a) Number of Participants/Indirect Beneficiaries – Around fifty people attended the Institute, mostly community members with a small number of students. This was a smaller number than expected; however, those present were engaged with the speakers and the information presented, participating in activities both days and purchasing books written by presenters, as well as general books on Gullah history and culture. Presenters came from several states: South Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia. A Gullah meal marked the conclusion of a weekend filled with lectures, storytelling, and song.

(b) Qualitative Assessments from Participants – (1) establishment of a stronger network among Gullah specialists. Bonding among presenters occurred leading to initiation of a process of collective marketing as a team available to offer presentations on Gullah culture; (2) Increased interest among participants in visiting the “low country.” Several attendees the lecture series and Institute have since indicated a desire to travel to the low country in order to further their own knowledge.

(c) Assessment of Media Coverage – The Institute received coverage in the *Denver Weekly News*, a local African American newspaper, as well as coverage in *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, a national publication. It was the first of its kind in this area.

(d) Project Director's assessment of outcomes – (1) Expanded community awareness – The primary benefit of the lecture series and the Institute was simply the further awareness and interest generated in Gullah/Geechee culture, which is not well-known in this part of the country; (2) Expanded student awareness and interest – Students have already begun signing up for the college course, “The Gullah Experience,” which will be offered in Fall 2007. The course, which includes a trip to St. Helena, South Carolina, for the annual Heritage Days Celebration, was first offered in Fall 2005, and several community members accompanied students on the trip. This will hold true this year as well.

Budget:

The expenses for the Johnson Lecture Series and the Gullah Studies Institute totaled over \$13,000, and the \$2,500 award from NCBS/NBUFC went toward the \$500.00 honorariums given to each of the presenters at the Gullah Studies Institute. Funds received through the Office of Diversity at Metropolitan State College totaled \$5,336.72, which was used to cover expenses from the lecture series and to cover the airfare of all the presenters. Additional funds came from donations to Johnson Legacy, Inc.

Project Title: Septima P. Clark Afterschool Program
Location: DeKalb High School, DeKalb, IL
Sponsor: Center for Black Studies, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL
Project Director: Dr. LaVerne Gyant

Project Description and Implementation:

The project involved conduct of an after school program and other enrichment activities that targeted students at DeKalb High School, most of whom were members of the high school's Black Student Union. Participating students met once every two weeks from 2:30 to 4:00. The after school sessions were facilitated by the project director, staff of the Center for Black Studies, and approximately 10 student volunteers from several Northern Illinois University student organizations. The participating Northern Illinois University student organizations included the Black Graduate Student Association, Black Student Union, the National Pan-Hellenic Council, and the SISTERS organization.

The after school sessions consisted of Black History instruction, discussion of current events, tutoring. Additional enrichment activities including dance instruction, a visit to the DuSable Museum, and participation in activities at Northern Illinois University, including Black History Month program activities a Black Male Summit sponsored by the Center for Black Studies, Black Male Initiative, the Young Warriors, the African American Leadership Conference, The Black Women's Health Symposium, and The Teen Summit. The student also participated in the first DeKalb School District-wide Black History Month event. Students were also encouraged to read novels and relate what they were learning at the Afterschool program in their classes. The program operated from Fall 2005 until June 2007.

Project Outcomes:

Project Outcomes were evaluated using several quantitative and qualitative techniques including (a) measurement of number of direct participants and indirect beneficiaries, (b) identification of post-project continuation of activities, (c) qualitative feedback from participants, and (d) director's assessment of outcomes.

(a) Number of Participants/Indirect Beneficiaries – The project directly served approximately 25 high school students and approximately ten college students and their organizations and the families and friends of the high school students were indirectly impacted by the project. As an example, some parents participated in site visits and some became more actively trips and getting more involved in their children's education.

(b) Post-project continuation of activities – (1) The Black Student Union is now an officially school sponsored organization - prior to the project the organization was informally sponsored by the Center for Black Studies; As a result of this project a Black history course will be offered at DeKalb High School in Fall for the first time since 1990; (3) The project led to the first district wide Black History Month Program was held

this year, cosponsored by the Center for Black Studies and the DeKalb School District;
(4) The Center has been asked to form mentoring programs for two of the middle and high schools. These mentoring programs are a scaled down model of what was offered to the high school students as part of the project.

(c) Qualitative Feedback from Participants – Comments received from student participants included:

“This was a great program. Even though I couldn’t attend I learned a lot.”

“I enjoy the films, esp. the one about Black flyers.”

“Motivational”

“This program help[ed] me in seeing the importance of going to college and reading.”

(d) Director’s Assessment of Outcomes – (1) Increase in student empowerment a – Students met with the high school principal to discuss issues adversely their experience at DeKalb High; (2) Increase in student academic motivation – The interest of some students in attending college increased. Prior to the afterschool program, DeKalb High students, especially African Americans and Hispanics, were not encouraged to go to college or take college prep courses.

Budget:

Project expenditures covered books, videos, other resource materials, supplies, meeting expenses, transportation expense, tee shirts, and certificates. NCBS/NBUFC funds of \$2,500 were supplemented by funds and in-kind contributions from the Center for Black Studies, the Black Graduate Student Association, the Black Student Union, the National Pan-Hellenic Council, and the SISTERS organization totaling \$2,750.

Project Title : *Black Studies/Public School Initiative Rescuing our Youth with Factual Information : Toward Pragmatic Solutions*

Location : Imhotep Academy Charter School, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Sponsor : African American Studies Department, Temple University

Project Director : Dr. Molefi Kete Asante

Project Description and Implementation :

The project was designed to provide professional development for teachers whose mission included delivering information to students in an urban community about African and African American Studies. Primarily directed at public charter schools in the Philadelphia area, most of the teachers came from the Imhotep Academy where the conference was held. The All-Day Mini-Conference specifically addressed a predominantly African American student population, and the conference utilized the expertise of scholars who are affiliated with the National Council for Black Studies (NCBS) ; the premiere professional organization dedicated to academic excellence, and social responsibility.

Project Outcomes :

The charter school teachers decided to conduct, on their own, an annual professional development programs using NCBS scholars. This was a major outcome because it was decided by the the charter schools to continue to meas the importance of providing accurate historical and sociological information in their curricula. It's worth noting that many schools do not have the trained professional trainers to teach the teachers and this will ensure that the teachers, including the transition teachers, will be taught properly so that they can do their jobs well.

Teachers evaluated the program as excellent in the delivery of information useful as content in lesson plans and classroom activities.

The Mini-conference has become a part of the annual report of the charter schools. Schools are to make a report to their boards and this mini-conference was one of the highlights.

Budget :

Project expenditures covered graduate student assistants, speakers, equipment, food, snacks, transportation, and speakers. NCBS/NUBUFC funds of \$2,500 were supplemented by an in-kind contribution of time (\$500.00) of Dr. Molefi Kete Asante.

PROJECT TITLE: The Fannie Lou Hamer Living Legacy Project
**Black Classic Books; Books Without Borders;
Project Malawi**

LOCATION: Carnegie Center – Atlantic City, NJ; International
Community

SPONSOR: The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey
Africana Studies Program

COORDINATOR: Dr. Patricia Reid-Merritt
Project leaders: Dr. Beverly Vaughn, Dr. Melaku
Lakew

BACKGROUND

Fannie Lou Hamer was a visionary civil rights leader and organizer who emerged from the one of the harshest and socially oppressive living conditions in the State of Mississippi. Yet, with an indomitable spirit and sheer determination, she was able to muster enough strength and courage to challenge America's unjust political, social, and economic systems. Her 1964 challenge to the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey altered the form of participatory politics and forever symbolized the struggle of the nation's poor, Black and forgotten citizens. The project was named in her honor as we seek new ways to lift up her legacy and continue the work that she begun.

The Fannie Lou Hamer Living Legacy Project had two main objectives: to support a community outreach program that engaged the local African descended communities in self-help educational and empowerment projects; and, 2) to engage and participate in community activities that reflect the life and legacy of one of the great leaders of the civil rights movement, Fannie Lou Hamer. The 2500.00 grant supported three different programs:

The BLACK CLASSIC BOOKS series was held during the months of February and March (2005). The program, held at the Richard Stockton College Carnegie Center in Atlantic City and the Atlantic City Public Library, involved a series of weekly readings with interested community members and students. The program was co-sponsored by 101 Black Women Plus. During the five week mini course, participants were provided with books by Africana authors and given the opportunity to discuss their understanding of the work with one of the scholars from the Africana Studies Program. Books were provided free of charge. Approximately 30 students were enrolled in the mini course.

BOOKS WITHOUT BORDERS is a student organization that evolved out of the South African study tour course. Over 10,000 books were collected and shipped to a public library in African nations.

PROJECT MALAWI was initiated by a faculty member after her visit to the country. This project successfully organized the collection and shipment of musical instruments to

assist in the development of a music program at the University of Malawi (2004). Stockton's continued work on this project allowed us to purchase sheet music (musical scores) for the program to be added to their permanent collection (summer 2005).

Outcomes

All three programs were successfully implemented. The short term outcomes were measurable in the public exposure and recognition given to the Africana Studies Program in contributing to and/or sponsoring these community outreach programs. Those who participated in the Black Classic Book Series expressed appreciation for the opportunity to discuss works by African American authors with the college professors. In addition, they encouraged the Africana Studies Program to continue the program in the community. We anticipate that this expression of "go *_____*!" is one of the most positive long-term outcomes of the program.

Much of the same can be said for our on-going work with the student organization, Books Without Borders, and Project Malawi. There is no way of measuring how many hundreds of individuals will, ultimately, benefit from these special projects. We will continue to find ways to support these initiatives, as Africana Studies faculty and in the name of civil rights activist and pioneer Fannie Lou Hamer.

Budget: The total cost for the Black Classic Books Series was \$1557.00. This included: Books (\$1120.00), Printing/supplies (\$187.00) and Travel Stipends (\$250.00)

The co-sponsoring organization paid for the opening reception and the College provided the use of the facility at no cost. For **Books Without Borders**, the total cost of shipping the books was well over \$9000.00. The Fannie Lou Hamer grant contributed \$500.00 to the cost of shipping. **Project Malawi** was supported with \$500.00 for musical purchases.

Lifeline Prison Project NCBS Community Engagement Report

The Georgia State University (GSU) Department of African-American Studies (AAS) was awarded a National Council of Black Studies (NCBS) Community Engagement Grant. The purpose of the grant was to continue the Lifeline program, GSU AAS department's outreach to inmates in the federal prison system. On July 29, 2006, the GSU AAS served as a co-sponsor to the Hip-Hop Summit at the Federal Correctional Complex (FCC) in Coleman, Florida. FCC Coleman is the largest prison in the United States containing a women's camp, two maximum, and a medium and low security facilities for men. The Hip Hop Summit organized by the prisoners took place in one of the maximum facilities (United States Penitentiary II) and the medium and women's camp.

Outcome

With the community engagement grant and community contributions, GSU AAS was able to bring 25 people from the Atlanta metropolitan area to participate in the summit. Four AAS undergraduate majors and one alumni and one faculty went on the trip. The rest of our group was composed of Hip Hop artists and organizers. We participated in the summit as masters of ceremony and performers in the three facilities participating in the Summit. In the evening at USP II our delegation served as panelist to evaluate the content and form of prisoner artist performances and essays on the state of Hip Hop. Over one thousand prisoners participated in the Hip Hop Summit. Due to community contributions to the Lifeline project we were able to utilize funds from the NCBS community engagement grant to participate in three other events at USP II at Coleman, the Rastafarian Coronation celebration, Kwanzaa and Black History Month. At Coronation Day and Kwanzaa, GSU faculty, students and alumni provided libation statements, African dance and drumming, spoken word performances for the programs. In the afternoon of each program GSU faculty facilitated a dialogue between GSU and Spelman students with men from the institution. Approximately 250 inmates participated in the general program, while 50 were involved in the panel and dialogue. About 250 prisoners participated in Kwanzaa. At the Black History program students and community activists and scholars, including Marimba Ani, who were a part of our delegation served as panelists and artists. Workshops were organized on Gender and Male/ Female relationships and the Fall of Street Legends. Dr. Akinyele Umoja served as workshop facilitator. 500 prisoners participated in the cultural program associated with Black History Month and only 75 in the workshops, due to limited classroom space.

Use of Funds

FCC Coleman is a 6 hour drive from the city of Atlanta. Funds were primarily used to rent vehicles and gasoline for the travel. Since we were required to be at the prison in the morning for the Hip Hop Summit and Coronation funds were also used to obtain lodging and food for the program participants. Miscellaneous items as video and audio tapes and batteries were also purchased.

Matching Funds and In-kind Contributions

Community (non-university) contributions of \$500 complimented the funds for this trip. Georgia State University Office of Student Affairs and College of Arts of Sciences allowed us to utilize seven passenger vans to participate in the Kwanzaa program in December 2006. GSU also contributed funds for gasoline for this trip.

Benefits of the Program

The interaction of students and scholars with the incarcerated is mutually beneficial. This project has facilitated a dialogue between students and scholars and the incarcerated. Young prisoner articulated that the exposure to Africana Studies perspectives from our effort and more importantly socially conscious inmates have challenged self destructive consciousness and behavior. This is reflected in their essays and art. Plans for publication of essays are in discussion. Two of the students participating in the summit presented papers at the national meeting of NCBS in 2006 at San Diego utilizing data collected at the Summit. Other students are working on projects.