

# Fade From Black: Becoming Africana

by

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## Abstract

In colleges and universities throughout the United States, the field formerly known as “Black Studies” is disappearing and “Africana Studies” programs are taking its place. This move can be explained by a variety of reasons, including a desire to disassociate from the Black Power Movement that created Black Studies and a reconfiguration of the discipline. Amidst this Black Studies “extinction” and rise of what I refer to as the “Africana Studies Movement”, it is worthwhile for scholars to reflect upon the implications of this change. This paper examines the historical and political background of Black Studies and explains the potential significance of the shift to Africana Studies as a new disciplinary umbrella.

*“The political implications of word selection further complicate [the] question of language. ...Some audiences welcome language that mutes the effects of oppression...where as others view such language as part of the problem.”*

*...Choice of word creates frameworks that remove African-American protest and criticism from their specific historical and political contexts: “The general practice has been to de-racialize the African-American protest, eschewing terms such as ‘black’, ‘racism’, ‘exploitation’, and ‘oppression’ in favor of ‘minority’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘underprivileged,’ ‘disadvantaged,’ or ‘diversity’”.*

Patricia Hill Collins<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

In 1968, San Francisco State University was the first college in the United States to establish an academic program that focused primarily on the scholarly study of peoples of African descent. They called it “Black Studies.”<sup>2</sup> It came after a lengthy and armed strike of students and faculty protesting the university’s minority admissions and hiring practices.<sup>3</sup> As “no school wanted to be the target of demonstrations and disruptive strikes,”<sup>4</sup> hundreds of universities and colleges around the country eventually followed the lead of SFSU and created departments and programs that focused on elucidating the history and marginalization of African-Americans.<sup>5</sup> In this way, the Black Studies movement was born.<sup>6</sup>

Nearly 40 years later, San Francisco State University changed the name of its inaugural department to “Africana Studies.”<sup>7</sup> In recent years other schools, such as Notre Dame University, University of Arizona, and California State at Long Beach have also changed the titles of their departments’ from “Black Studies” to “Africana Studies.”<sup>8 9</sup> This paper serves as an exploration into the factors that have prompted these name changes and the impact of this relabeling effort. Ultimately, this project functions as a reflection piece, considering the ways in which the rise of Africana Studies indicates a shift in the politics and direction of Black scholarship; distancing the field from its volatile beginnings and radicalized allegiances of the “Black Studies” movement.<sup>10</sup>

When the field of Black Studies first emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the terms “Black” and “Africana” held distinctive meaning both inside and outside of the university. In theorizing about Blackness, William Cross Jr.<sup>11</sup> wrote that:

A pro - Black perspective... includes a commitment to the destruction of racism, capitalism and Western dominance. [...] The goals of Black self-actualization [are] an awareness of the condition of the masses of Black people, development of skill, preparation for participating in the mass struggle of Black people...<sup>12</sup>

In other words, the term Blackness was invoked as a politicized identity defined by a communitarian orientation towards collective progress. Blackness reached beyond a monolithic category based on skin color – to call oneself Black, Cross argues, was an assertion of distinction from “plain, everyday Negroes”<sup>13</sup> who had only individualistic commitments to the Black community. Across the nation, a wider embrace of a Black identity during the late 1960s and early 1970s functioned as a reclaiming project. Globally, Black identity represented an effort to make transnational connections amongst people resisting racial apartheid in countries around the world. The coinciding demand on college campuses for Black Studies programs -- scholarship as articulated through the lens of the Black experience -- served as an intellectual response, expression and institutionalization of various societal goals within the academy.<sup>14</sup>

Africana Studies had a much quieter entrance into the ivory tower. Before James Turner founded the first Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell University in 1969, the term *Africana* had been a previously arcane DuBoisian reference from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> According to Turner, “the concept *Africana* is derived from an ‘African continuum and African consociation’ which posits fundamental interconnections in the global Black experience.”<sup>16</sup> “Africana” represented an “expansive”<sup>17</sup> notion of Black Studies and required a curriculum that focused on “the African background and, next, the transformation –slavery—into the African diaspora.”<sup>18</sup> Turner later placed this in opposition to the larger project of Black Studies which, he argued, put “a primary concentration on African America.”<sup>19</sup> This is a definition that best suits what Africana Studies has come to implicitly mean for many scholars – globalizing the field of Black Studies in order to counter and eradicate its traditional American focus while focusing on Africa as the central point of analysis.<sup>20</sup>

While many of the university programs and departments that study people of African descent have not always been specifically titled “Black Studies” (such as those titled “Afro-American”, “African-American”, “African-American and African” Studies), their historical origins lie within the Black Power student struggle on campuses throughout the United States and fit them neatly within the “Black Studies movement.”<sup>21</sup> As such, I posit that the contemporary academic movement to rename programs that historically study people of African descent “Africana Studies” may signal the beginning of an *Africana Studies Movement*, with its own causes and implications for the field. Just as “the systematic study of the origins of the modern Black Studies Movement is an important part of the larger study of the Black Power Movement,”<sup>22</sup> an analysis of the emerging Africana Studies Movement can offer deep insight into the field of Black Studies.<sup>23</sup>

This work is divided into three sections. The first part discusses the context and ideology that spurred the Black Studies movement. The second section identifies some of the major weaknesses in Black Studies scholarship that have led to shifts in the field and initiated the transition to “Africana Studies” departments and programs. The paper concludes by discussing the potential implications of an Africana Studies movement for *both* Black and Africana Studies. This analysis is based upon data that includes electronic correspondences with chairs of Black Studies-related departments or programs and a review of news articles and press releases about Black Studies titular changes between 1990 and 2010.<sup>24</sup>

## **Black Studies and Black Power**

The Black Studies and Black Power movements were born during a time of significant flux in American society. The assassinations of civil rights anchors Malcolm X in 1964 and Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968 sent anger running through the Black community. The deaths of these activist leaders yielded space for new spheres of influences, ideologies, and institutions within Black protest.

The brutal responses to civil rights demonstrations, an overrepresentation of Black men in Vietnam and prison, and racially motivated police incidents and riots in cities throughout America triggered a reactionary movement called “Black Power”. While Black Power celebrated and valued Black cultural and aesthetic forms, it also represented a militant nationalism that made no qualms about using force in attaining, or defending the Black community -- a philosophy that directly countered the non-violent approach of earlier civil rights activists’.

The increasing influence of Black nationalism occurred while campuses nationwide were undergoing significant changes in their Black student bodies – both factors created an ideal climate for the growth of Black Studies. In 1960, seventy-five percent of all African-American college students attended historically Black colleges. By 1970, three-quarters of nearly seven hundred thousand African American college students were now attending predominantly White institutions.<sup>25</sup> Many of these young people were taken aback by what they saw as the racism, exclusion, and patronization of the academy. As the students of San Francisco State University explained,

They tell us, or try to tell us, the best way to raise our children when...as a matter of fact our mothers raised most of theirs. In our English classes we are taught to dig on writers such as Chaucer and Arthur Miller. These writers do not deal in any realistic manner with Black people. Black people should be aware of our own writers such as Dr. Hare, LeRoi, Baldwin, Williams, Wright, etc.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to equitable discussion, recognition, and treatment within the classroom, these students expressed the desire for an academic space that bridged them in meaningful ways to the concerns of the Black community outside of the university. Campus activists wanted a way to connect their scholarly work to the needs of relatives and loved ones living in the plantations, ghettos, and, even, suburbs they had left behind. On the campus of San Francisco State University, they called the academic space “Black Studies”. For them, it was an institution that would value, generate, and study Black humanity, creativity, and intellectual contribution. “Black Studies” would also produce practical resolutions and interventions in the lives of Black people outside of the academy.<sup>27</sup>

Black Power in the 1960s also pivoted around an expansive notion of Blackness—that is, Black activists such as the Black Panthers and members of the Caribbean and Latin American Black Power Movement reached out align with Blacks all over the world.<sup>28</sup> This included places like Australia, where Aboriginal Black Panthers utilized the principles of armed self-defense and replicated other forms of Black American civil rights activism to protest their own subjugation as Blacks.<sup>29</sup> In these spaces an understanding of Black identity developed which evaded the geographies and particularities of the African diaspora and produced what James Turner’s called the “black world.”<sup>30</sup>

For some adherents, these collaborative international spaces of Black Power fueled a collective academic space and movement around an identity based on color and resistance, an “oppositional critique of the existing power arrangements and relations that responsible for the systematic exploitation of black people.”<sup>31</sup>

The integration of Black Power ideals into the disciplinary formation of Black Studies also placed community-based activism and outreach at the center of academic practice. Some scholars and students argued that Black Studies should focus on de-intellectualizing scholarship and seek to engage people outside of the Ivory Tower. For example, *The Black Scholar* was established in 1969 as the first Black Studies journal and recruited contributions from people such as Black artists, activists, writers, and politicians. It was looking for

...A man of thought and action, a whole man who thinks for his people and acts with them, a man who honors the whole community of black experiences, a man who sees the Ph.D., the janitor, the businessman, the maid, the clerk, the militant as all sharing the same experiences of blackness... (*The Black Scholar*, November 1969, inside front cover)

This inclusive approach to scholarship conflicted with the vision of more traditional Black Studies intellectuals who saw the discipline as a necessary intervention within the university. These scholars were concerned with constructing Black Studies to be a rigorous academic discipline that colleagues in other areas would hold in high esteem, similar to more established fields like History and Anthropology.<sup>32 33</sup> As Pan-African scholar St. Clair Drake explained:

The very use of the term Black Studies is by implication an indictment of American and Western European scholarship. It makes the bold assertion that what we have heretofore called “objective” intellectual activities were actually white studies in perspective and content; and that a corrective bias, a shift in emphasis, is needed, even if something called “truth” is set as the goal. To use a technical sociological term the present body of knowledge has an ideological element in it, and a counter ideology is needed. Black Studies supply that counter ideology.<sup>34</sup>

Black Studies, then, served as a constant reminder of and corrective to previous Black exclusion and marginalization within other more traditional disciplines. Furthermore, its work held the potential to stem the university’s marginalization of Black research(ers) and could provide a correction for future scholarship. Despite opposing visions, people on each side of the Black Studies debate worked to reconcile Black Studies with its most significant Black Power contribution – the desire to create a discipline and generate a body of work that pertained to, encompassed, and engaged the Black community.<sup>35</sup>

## Weaknesses and Limitations

A variety of important factors have pushed Black Studies scholars to both critique and reconfigure the field, ultimately leading to a transition from the Black Studies movement into the Africana Studies movement. While this section discusses some of the central weaknesses that have affected and limited the development of Black Studies since 1969, it does not aim to provide a comprehensive list of the many ways in which the discipline has taken shape in universities throughout the country. Rather, the concerns listed here reflect the major factors that mark a very different context for Black Studies today and constrain its contemporary institutionalization.

Using Black Studies as a vehicle to produce inclusive Black scholarship and community initiatives often conflicted directly with the sexism and homophobia of its Black Power roots. Creating representative Black scholarship through Black Studies would prove a challenge for those that the Black Power movement had often excluded or silenced, particularly Black women and members of the queer community at large. One of the most famous groups connected with the Black Power movement, the Black Panthers, is still notorious for its degrading treatment of women. In her autobiographical book “*A Taste of Power*,”<sup>36</sup> Elaine Brown recognized the inherent tension between Black Panther Party ideology and empowerment for its female members. For Brown and other female Panthers, pursuing racial liberation required a repudiation of feminist politics and emphasized discomfoting gender roles and expectations.

Like most black women of the time, we considered the notion of women’s liberation to be a “white girl’s thing”. Unlike the new feminists, we were not going to take a position against men... We had no intention, however, of allowing Panther men to assign us an inferior role in our revolution. [Some of us] concluded that they better not try to fuck with us. We would not be rewarding *any* Brother with our bodies, in the bedroom or in the kitchen.<sup>37</sup>

Ultimately, many Black women in the Black Panther Party eschewed feminism, prioritizing racial allegiance over gender equity in the struggle for Black equality. Other groups involved with the Black Power movement felt the same anxiety surrounding issues of gender within the fight for Black freedom.<sup>38</sup> Unsurprisingly, the compromises regarding gender equity within Black Power carried over into the development of Black Studies.

Black women... were expected to “stand by their men” in the academic struggle for race rights. Such blatant sexism and, in some cases, downright misogyny in the academy occluded the specificity of Black women’s experiences and contributions to and within black studies...Black women’s institutional work as well as intellectual interventions in black studies departments remained understudied, devalued or marginalized by the reigning black male theorists who deemed “race” to be the proper sphere of study.<sup>39</sup>

By diminishing and dismissing Black female scholarly contribution within Black Studies, the discipline’s hetero-patriarchal bias yielded a preoccupation with the production and maintenance of a heteronormative Black family unit.

As Rinaldo Walcott wrote in his essay *Outside In Black Studies* “it is only too obvious to say that by and large the Black Studies project has in its thought produced Black community as assumed and essentially heterosexual.”<sup>40</sup> To this end, all other constructions of Black families outside of hetero-patriarchy deviated from the norms of Black Power — and, for some, lay outside the parameters of Black Studies. This apparent heterosexism has left writing that depicts the Black queer experience on the fringes of Black Studies, alongside other similarly disregarded Black female scholars.

The combined exclusion of Black women and queer communities from traditional Black Studies scholarship has weakened its positioning as a de-marginalizing space. It is also a limitation that has pushed Black female and queer scholars to look for other options in creating academic work that speaks to their own experience. A discipline with an already specific purview would only suffer from the loss of such intellectual contribution -- as has Black Studies. For those who stayed, pushing beyond the influence of Black Power sexism within Black Studies meant “the establishment of what is now emerging as the discipline of Africana Studies”<sup>41</sup>— an alternative to the stifling origins of Black Studies.

The Black Power roots of Black Studies did more than provoke internal skirmishes concerning the politics of ex/inclusion – its legacy of protest and nationalism has also interfered with its institutionalization on the college campus. Many college administrations created programs or departments that studied people of African descent only after enduring lengthy, occasionally armed, and forceful pressure from the student body (or threats thereof).<sup>42</sup> Such history of oppositional power, student protest, and counter-ideology fit it with an anti-establishmentarian political identity. Even on campuses where Black Studies programs were peacefully integrated into the academic curriculum, many [white faculty] rejected what they felt was the highly political content of black studies and sought to steer the new programs toward traditional standards of white scholarship.<sup>43</sup> Author of the book *White Money/Black Power*, Noliwe Rooks, adds that on college and university campuses Black Studies aroused competing tensions whereby Blackness could equal racial cooperation or militancy, but never both simultaneously. Within that context, the questions of political orientation, peaceful racial relations, and Black Power loomed large.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, the “steering” of curricular revisions and university standards for Black Studies sought to navigate the politically charged atmosphere around race and “Blackness” within the academy. Linked to this troubled integration (or assimilation) of Black Studies’ on the university campus was its increasingly limited departmental funding and administrative support (also known as the ghettoization of Black Studies).<sup>45</sup> As a result, outside patrons, such as the Ford Foundation, had a critical role in shaping the institutionalization of Black Studies. For example, the Ford Foundation used “strategic grant-making”<sup>46</sup> to financially reward the schools that focused on what it deemed “serious academic study and teaching” within Black Studies.<sup>47</sup> In action, this meant that the Ford Foundation “refused to fund programs and groups that couched their requests within the rhetoric of Black Power.”<sup>48</sup> African American studies scholar Joy James wrote,

Although the current presence of Africana Studies on college and university campuses emerged out of civil rights protests fought during a mass movement era, today the “studies”, having been institutionalized, struggle mostly for their maintenance and expansion, and to some degree for recognition from endowed parental authorities.<sup>49</sup>

In seeking a critical ‘counter-ideological’ space within the university, Black Studies became vulnerable to the whims of those who held the purse strings. As John Bracey describes it, “the dynamic speeches, manifestos, calls to arms, rallies, marches, etc. yielded to memos to deans, provosts or chancellors, to interminable meetings about personnel decisions, outside evaluations, self-studies, fundraising campaigns and the like.”<sup>50</sup>

The fight for institutional survival likely influenced Black Studies scholars and administrators to change the titles of their program to “Africana Studies.” The change in label removes the politically charged term “Black” and its explicit connection to Black Power ideology. Moreover, using “Africana” can expand the purview of Black Studies to include faculty members whose work may pertain to the African Diaspora, but might not have a focus on the tense subject of race and power. A larger faculty translates into a larger department, more university resources, and a more influential position among scholarly peers – issues that are already increasingly exacerbated by decreasing student interest in Black Studies. Indeed, scholars who have changed the name of their Black Studies programs/departments to Africana Studies repeatedly cite a desire to make the program more viable, relevant, and appealing to their schools.<sup>51</sup>

Waning student enrollment in Black Studies has been a major challenge for the institutionalization of Black Studies.<sup>52</sup> In order for Black Studies scholars to demand more support on campuses, such as department status and faculty, they require a large enough number of students to merit such advances. Such pressure has forced Black Studies to become what University of Minnesota African-American studies professor John S. Wright called “a bottom-line enterprise” that aims to increase student enrollment and majors through increasingly desperate means.<sup>53</sup> For some scholars, using “Africana” instead of “Black” might make Black Studies classes a more inviting space for various students. In an interview with a school newspaper, Alosi Moloi, the department chair of the newly minted Africana Studies (formerly Black Studies) department at California State University at Long Beach, explains:

As an adjective of race, the term "black" in black studies is a connotation taken by some to mean exclusion, despite the department's interdisciplinary and cross-cultural design.

When some students come in here, they don't know whether they are welcome or not...[W]e tell them this is not a department of black students only. This is a department of university students.<sup>54</sup>

One Black Studies program launched a marketing campaign on campus to gain student attention, and others have decided to fold their Black Studies programs into Ethnic Studies departments in order to attain departmental integrity. One major professional association in the discipline has come to embrace the switch – the National Council of Black Studies, founded in 1975, chose to use “Africana Studies” in the title of its sole academic journal launched in 1992 (*International Journal of Africana Studies*).<sup>55</sup>

Declining student enrollment has also raised concerns about the marketability and value of a Black Studies degree outside of the academy, contributing to the effort spent to reinvent the field. Scholars find it to be increasingly important that they demonstrate the field’s practical relevance for students who expect the university to supply them with a successful integration into the workplace. Director of the Africana Studies Department (formerly African American Studies) at the University of New Mexico, Professor Finnie Coleman, noted that “our students are going to be facing a global society, and we need to be prepared.”<sup>56</sup> The assistant dean of the college wrote in a statement “I am personally happy to see this name change, as well as the refocusing of the curriculum...I think the department will continue to make any necessary changes that will increase the value of the degree it offers.”<sup>57</sup> The desire to make Black Studies into Africana Studies is not just fueled by ideological conflict—it is also a practical way to increase the external value of the degree. Thus, Africana Studies serves as a way to not only expand the content of Black Studies, but also improve its reputation in the corporate and non-academic world.

Besides vocationalization, an often overlooked cause of wavering student demand for Black Studies may also be the shift in Black student populations on college campuses. Middle and upper middle class Black students have slowly replaced the working poor Black urban students who had been recruited in the 1960s attend predominantly white college campuses in large numbers and demanded Black Studies upon their arrival. This Black student body, often labeled “African American” has also undergone a shift in ethnic composition, seen in the rise of Black immigrant students on predominantly white elite college campuses. Paul Robeson Jr. takes note of this shift in his book, “A Black Way of Seeing” when he writes that “Most African-American students in predominantly white institutions of higher learning have been drawn from the relatively small minority that is descended from immigrants.”<sup>58</sup> The change in class and national identity of Black students on campus has undoubtedly affected the participation of Black students in Black Studies, which was largely the product of less privileged American-born students. As Rooks points out, the “increase in numbers of students of African descent from the Caribbean, Africa, and Latin America” is one of many factors that have “severely strained the intellectual coherence, cultural significance, and institutional stability of those programs founded in the late 1960s.”<sup>59</sup>

In a recent study about native and immigrant Black college students, Douglas Massey and Camille Charles found that there are no significant social differences between immigrant students and African-American students that would explain this change in university admission, including academic performance on campus.<sup>60</sup>

They speculate that “for whatever reason, children from immigrant families have come to exhibit the set of traits and characteristics valued by admissions committees.”<sup>61</sup> In her study comparing the experiences of Black Americans and West Indian immigrants in the US, Mary Waters argues that Black immigrants hold a lower expectation of our interpersonal race relations and a greater sense of efficacy due to their native identity as a dominant racial member developed within a majority Black society (which results in higher ambition). Ultimately, Waters argues that all these factors improve the quality of interracial encounters for West Indian immigrants (and other Black immigrants by implication).<sup>62</sup>

Additionally, it is possible that universities have increased the admission numbers of Black immigrant students because of not connecting with American race-based politics and the experience of African Americans. Tavia N’yongo<sup>63</sup> suggests that the last major activist collaboration between native and immigrant Black students ended with the fall of apartheid in South Africa, also ending the last major transnational Black struggle on college campuses. Since then, the divide between native and immigrant Blacks seems to have deepened. It is possible that immigrant students feel separated from the racially steeped identity discourse of native Black students, which differs markedly from their post-colonial and transnational identities. For, as Robeson also notes, “The self-identification “Black” asserts cultural distinctiveness but rejects identification with any foreign nation.”<sup>64</sup>

It is the rejection of nation-based versus race-based identification that may contribute to both tension between Black immigrant and native students, and the differences in their university admission. Furthermore, immigrant students with a fragile immigration status would be even less inclined to compromise their education by taking up a militant posture towards the university, reducing the likelihood for radical Black student action. Consequently, it seems that the activism that initiated and propelled Black Studies has been curtailed through increased Black immigrant and middle class matriculation and Black student stratification and professionalization, all of which have contributed to a decreased student demand for the field.<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, the contention that Black Studies suffered from an American bias has always been an issue for the discipline and made the international component of Africana Studies even more enticing. The over-representation of the American subject in Black Studies scholarship provides some scholars with evidence that international and transnational perspectives have been deemphasized and marginalized within Black Studies.<sup>66</sup> In this way, Africana Studies also serves to function in what Itibari Zulu describes as “a fancy attempt to thwart the Black experience in north America” and establish a “safe zone for mass inclusiveness.”<sup>67</sup>

While the global engagement of the Black Studies project is debatable, its focus on race has been another source of significant contention within the field. Since not all Africans, and others in the African Diaspora, self-identify as Black, a racial commitment seems to come into conflict with a continental, or Africana, preoccupation.

Leaving behind a claim to Blackness seems to provide scholars with space in which they can pursue work that represents what Gilroy called “a counterculture to modernity” instead of one based upon phenotype. It is this possibility that I will reflect upon in the remainder of this paper.

## Moving Forward

Until this point, I have demonstrated the ways in which the move of Black Studies to Africana Studies gives the discipline the potential to expand its global and diaspora focus, address its institutional challenges (viability, student demand, etc.), dissolve its troubling relationship to Black Power, and create a space for “Blackness” without a politicized context. These recent and uni-directional changes of nomenclature within the field provide a simple way to distinguish between two divergent trends that have taken place in the time since the Black Studies Movement began.

Consequently, I have arrived at my own definitions of the two disciplinary umbrella terms, “Black Studies” and “Africana Studies”. It is my central conclusion that these two are discrete, yet overlapping, fields rising from two distinct, but overlapping, movements (the Black Studies Movement versus the Africana Studies Movement). Black Studies is marked by the study of ideas, institutions, people and practices that have been previously excluded or marginalized within other disciplines as a result of racism or Eurocentric methodology and, in its institutionalized form, serves as a continued protest against the modern university’s imperialistic foundation and a vanguard against a return to those roots. Most importantly, Black Studies requires that its students and academics value a practical connection to Black lives outside the realm of the academy—it argues that *doing* something means more than just *writing* something. As Africana Studies, Black Studies become the generalized study of people of African descent, including their history, customs, traditions, and movements around the globe. In short, the Africana Studies Movement encapsulates the displacement of Black Studies’ original essential functions -- 1) *the study of the political and social realities of Blacks* and 2) *active intervention into those conditions*.<sup>68</sup>

The Africana Studies Movement represents four key components – the institutionalization of Black Studies within the academy, a move away from identity studies to largely area or geographical studies, a decline in the promotion of activist ideology of Black Studies and community engagement, and *an increased susceptibility to including the work of scholars who have little interest in or understanding of race – Blackness, in particular.*

In examining the metamorphosis of Black Studies in the last forty years, we see that the *center* of the discipline has moved. While there are still intellectuals within Africana Studies concerned about and committed to analyzing race, their positions and work will likely become increasingly marginalized in Africana scholarship.

In the Africana Studies movement, research has the potential to forego the politics of race and community engagement and instead prioritize the generalized study of African descended peoples and Africa - related objects. In other words, Africana Studies may continue to produce scholars who study Black “objects” without having to reflect upon the reality or lived inequality of Blackness or their own personal responsibility to the Black community. The rising popularity of “Africology”, or the “African-centered” analysis of the Black experience is an indicator that supports this hypothesis.<sup>69</sup>

But, in the process of shifting to an Africana umbrella, valuable research into non-African notions of what I call ‘pan-Black identity’ may become occluded and overlooked. Black race consciousness amongst Australian Aboriginals or Haitian nationals generally does not fit within an African-centered paradigm, but provides us with important information about race and power. Additionally, without a focus on social justice service and action, we stand to alienate the very students we aim to engage. As Bracey explains, “All the rhetoric we use about commitment to a larger community and struggle is often puzzling to our current students who don’t see any movement to attach themselves.”<sup>70</sup>

Some scholars will argue against the assertion of race-based and activist distinction I draw between these two fields, contending that this type of critical work is happening within Africana Studies. I would concede that there is a facet of Africana Studies dedicated to what Reiland Rabaka calls “Africana Critical Theory” “an anti-colonial theory critical of both the physical and psychological forms and forces of violence unleashed by the European interruption and intervention in African history and cultural practices, and African philosophical, spiritual and axiological systems and traditions.”<sup>71</sup> Still, Africana critical theory serves as only one facet of the Africana Studies discipline --- a (important) component of the field, but not its primary location.<sup>72</sup> Even James Turner, founder of Africana Studies, has observed the trend in which,

Many of the first faculty in the field are gradually de-emphasizing involvement in community activities as they have succumbed to (or have been seduced by) the orthodox norms of academic traditionalism in their pursuit of careerist aspirations for legitimacy and acceptability... Younger faculty have not been quite as engaged by commitment to community outreach and the wedding of intellectual and social activism on behalf of the liberation of the black community. *This phenomenon is denying Black Studies both a critical bridge to the potential beneficiaries of applied scholarship, that is, the external community and a source of power to facilitate the continuation of innovative projects in the face of renewed opposition.*<sup>73</sup>

That is, Black and Africana Studies scholars today are less concerned with integrating activism and analyses of race-based power and imperialism into the discipline. Rather, as Okafor recently pointed out in his analysis of contemporary debates over Black studies nomenclature, “a consensus has emerged around one factor, namely that any black studies project that is conceptually divorced from Africa is a geographical and cultural starting base is a non-starter.”<sup>74</sup>

## Conclusion

In the Africana Studies Movement, examining the ways in which power is mobilized according to color differences throughout the world may no longer serve as the primary objective of Black Studies, and community engagement and activism may continue to become less valuable to scholars in the field. This, of course, introduces important questions: Where will the space for discussion of race and ethnicity and its impact on both national and global society be located? Will the question of race become increasingly marginalized in Africana Studies? Will projects that create viable connections between Black scholars in university spaces and members of adjacent Black communities continue to exist? Will studies of pan-Black identity be able to emerge and develop within a field so preoccupied by the land-mass we now call “Africa”?

Black Studies in its origins was an indictment of white scholarship, and a critique of the union of race and power. In its current form, the Africana Studies Movement represents the attempt to reshape the discipline in order to advance its scholarly progress and institutionalization while potentially marginalizing the study of race and forsaking the role of scholar-activist. As scholars of Black and Africana Studies, we must continue to reflect on the direction of the field in critical and even uncomfortable ways. It is our task to ensure that Black Studies as a “counterideology”, or, even, counter-institution, remains in the “Africana” future, at least until the problems of race-based oppression and dominance have been thoroughly resolved. In this way, we must continue to open up spaces that push beyond Africa(na) if we hope to truly understand the impact of race, white supremacy, and power throughout the world -- and within the Ivory Tower.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Hill Collins. *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice*. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), xxii.

<sup>2</sup> The origins of both Black Studies and Africana Studies can be best linked to one person: feminist, pan-africanist, anti-colonialist, scholar and philosopher W.E.B. DuBois. Du Bois was the first writer to use the word “Africana” when, in 1909, he proposed the idea for an “Encyclopedia Africana” that would “[cover] the chief points in the history and condition of the Negro race” (Gates, 1999 and Rabaka, 2007). It should be noted that by the time Du Bois produced an encyclopedia on the Black experience in 1945, he had dropped “Africana” from its title, instead calling it “The Encyclopedia of the Negro”. (See: Henry Louis Gates and Anthony Appiah. *Africana : The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*. New York: Basic Books, 1999).

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<sup>3</sup> J. Paul Leonard Library. (2007). "On strike! shut it down!! (exhibit 1999)". Accessed December 18, 2007, from <http://www.library.sfsu.edu/about/collections/strike/case3-text.html>; Manning Marable, "Introduction: Black studies and the racial mountain," *Dispatches From the Ebony Tower*, ed. Manning Marable ( New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Robert Allen, "Politics of the Attack on Black Studies". *Black Scholar* 6 (1974): 4.

<sup>5</sup> Manning Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion*.(Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991).

<sup>6</sup> This article is adapted from a May 2008 conference at Temple University held by its Department of African-American Studies.

<sup>7</sup> Molefi Kete Asante, (2005). *Africology: Naming an intellectual enterprise in our field*. Accessed 12/18, 2007. <http://asante.net/scholarly/africology.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Tracy Dingmann, "Take charge; New Director Wants to Broaden Horizons of African American Studies," *Albuquerque Journal*. February 10, 2006; Misako Miyagawa, "Black studies becoming Africana studies". *Daily 49er*. November 7, 2007; E-mail to the author, "Re: Regarding Information on your Department," April 3, 2008 ; La Monica Everett-Haynes, "UA Counters Trend, Expands Black Studies," *Tucson Citizen*, December 15, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> In the initial stages of this project, I distributed an informal email survey to chairs of Black Studies departments throughout the United States. It is important to note that some Black Studies departments have changed to other names like "African Diaspora Studies" or "African-American Studies", reportedly in efforts to either subvert or reify an American focus in studying people of African descent. Some others had changed the name from "African-American Studies", etc., to "Africana Studies" for the same reason. Simply put, some scholars believe "Black" is too diasporic in its breadth—and some think it is not diasporic enough. Though I do not examine this tension specifically in this project, it stands out as was particularly interesting in light of the paper's discussions.

<sup>10</sup> Though I have consulted with numerous administrators of Black/Africana Studies programs and departments throughout the country, in addition to drawing on newspaper accounts of the name shifts, my objective for this piece is primarily investigative and not necessarily definitive. I acknowledge that I am using specific programs to mark larger disciplinary trends.

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<sup>11</sup> Cross was specifically creating a model by which he theorized about the larger societal shift from “Negro to Black” as self-referents for people of color, but his definitions of Blackness are particularly relevant in capturing the contemporary understandings of Black identity for activists and (young) scholars at the time. William Cross, “The Negro-to-Black Conversion Experience: Toward a Psychology of Black Liberation,” *Black World* 20:9 (1971):13-27.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>14</sup> Black Studies, from here on in this paper, will generally represent university-based programs that have studied people of African descent since the Black Studies movement of 1965-1975, with an emphasis upon the relationship between Black scholarship and Black Power. I set that in contrast to the contemporary possibility of an “Africana Studies Movement”, which encapsulates a wider academic embrace of the term and philosophy of “Africana Studies as conceived by Du Bois and articulated by Turner.

<sup>15</sup> I want to note that Du Bois did revive his interest in producing an Encyclopedia Africana later in his life in 1963, at the behest of Kwame Nkrumah (William E. B. Du Bois, *W. E. B. Dubois on Sociology and the Black Community*, eds, Dan S. Green and Edwin D. Driver. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.).

<sup>16</sup> James Turner. “Africana Studies and Epistemology: A Discourse in the Society of Knowledge.” In *Africana Studies: A Disciplinary Quest for Both Theory and Method*, ed. James Conyers, Boston: McFarland & Company, Incorporated, 1997: 94.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> I have arrived at this implicit definition through primarily firsthand reports from Black/Africana Studies scholars—these sources include the articles listed in this paper as well as responses to informal surveys I distributed to professors and administrators of Black/Ethnic/Africana Studies programs at the top 25 universities and small liberal colleges (50 surveys total). The questionnaire is available in the appendix.

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- <sup>21</sup> Delores P. Aldridge and Carlene Young, "Historical Development and Introduction to the Academy." In *Out of the Revolution: The Development of Africana Studies*, eds. Delores P. Aldridge and Carlene, New York: Lexington Books, 2003: 59-76.
- <sup>22</sup> Peniel Joseph, "Dashikis and Democracy: Black Studies, Student Activism and the Black Power," *The Journal of African American History*, 88.2 (2003): 274.
- <sup>23</sup> For more in-depth discussions on the specific details of negotiations regarding Black/Africana Studies nomenclature on university departments, see the special issue of *Journal of Black Studies* titled "Defining Ourselves: One Name, One Discipline?" edited by Patricia Reid-Merritt (September 2009; 40 (1)).
- <sup>24</sup> These articles were collected using Google News archives, Google search, and Lexis-Nexis Archives.
- <sup>25</sup> Marable, 2000.
- <sup>26</sup> Leaflet, 1969, "Demands of San Francisco State College Black Students Union," In *Black Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century*, eds. A. Meier, E. Rudwick, and F. Broderick, Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1978: 529.
- <sup>27</sup> Allen, 1974.
- <sup>28</sup> Jennifer Clark, *Aborigines & Activism: Race, Aborigines, and the Coming of the Sixties to Australia*, Crawley, Western Australia: University of Western Australia Press, 2008; Kathy Lothian, "Seizing the time: Australian Aborigines and the Influence of the Black Panther Party 1969-1972." *Journal of Black Studies* 35.4(2005): 179-200.
- <sup>29</sup> Clark, 2008.
- <sup>30</sup> Turner, 1997, p. 94.
- <sup>31</sup> Marable, 2000, p. 5.
- <sup>32</sup> Such as Molefi Kete Asante, who established *The Journal of Black Studies*, a year after the *Black Scholar* was created.

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- <sup>33</sup>Jonathan Scott Holloway and Ben Keppel, *Black Scholars on the Line: Race, Social Science, and American Thought in the Twentieth Century*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.
- <sup>34</sup> St. Clair Drake lecture at Brooklyn College (September 23,1969), as quoted in Marable, 2000, pgs. 5-6.
- <sup>35</sup> This debate about how to be a Black intellectual that produces academically sound scholarship that is also relevant to the Black community continues to this day and can be directly linked to this Black Power push for academic agency during the late 60s and 70s, as discussed in Robert L. Allen's paper "Politics of the Attack on Black Studies".
- <sup>37</sup> Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1992: 191.
- <sup>38</sup> E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson. "Introduction: Queering Black studies/" quaring" queer studies," in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, eds., E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson Durham: Duke University Press (2005): 1-17.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid: 3.
- <sup>40</sup> Rinaldo Walcott, "Outside In Black Studies," in *Black Queer Studies*, eds. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson, : *A Critical Anthology*, Durham: Duke University Press (2005): 92.
- <sup>41</sup> Gordon, Vivian Verdell, "Black Women, Feminism, and Black Studies," In *Out of the Revolution: The Development of Africana Studies*, eds, Delores P. Aldridge and Carlene Young, New York: Lexington Books, 2003, p. 168.
- <sup>42</sup> Allen, 1974.
- <sup>43</sup> Marable, 2000, p. 11.
- <sup>44</sup> Rooks, Noliwe M. *White Money/Black Power: The Surprising History of African American Studies and the Crisis of Race in Higher Education*. Beacon Press, 2006: p. 22.
- <sup>45</sup> Allen, 1974.
- <sup>46</sup> Rooks, 2006, p. 26.
- <sup>47</sup> Marable, 2000, p. 13.

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<sup>48</sup> Rooks, 2006, p 22.

<sup>49</sup> Joy James, "The Future of Black Studies: Political Communities and the 'Talented Tenth'." In *Dispatches from the Ebony Tower: Intellectuals Confront the African American Experience*, ed. Manning Marable (2000): 154.

<sup>50</sup> John H. Bracey Jr, "Black Studies in the Age of Obama," *Socialism and Democracy*, 25.1(2011): 9.

<sup>51</sup> Dingmann, 2006; Everett-Haynes, 2005; Miyagawa, 2007; Wilson, R. (2005, April 22). Past their prime? *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

<sup>52</sup> In addition to the reasons listed in this piece, some scholars may also contend decreasing student involvement in Black Studies may reflect a uniform depoliticization of all students within the academy since the Black Studies Movement. While, more work needs to be done to discover the kinds of student decision-making processes that have affected these programs, I attempt to highlight a few of the possibilities in this essay.

<sup>53</sup> Krieger, Lisa M. and Bartindale, Becky. "Black Studies Going Global," *Hartford Courant*, December 25, 2005.

<sup>54</sup> Miyagawa, 2007.

<sup>55</sup> "NCBS Online - International Journal." *NCBS Online - International Journal*. Accessed December 20, 2013. [http://www.ncbsonline.org/international\\_journal](http://www.ncbsonline.org/international_journal).

<sup>56</sup> Dingmann, 2006.

<sup>57</sup> Miyagawa, 2007.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Robeson Jr, "A Black Way Of Seeing: From "Liberty" To Freedom", Seven Stories Press, 2006: 5.

<sup>59</sup> Rooks, 2006, p 29.

<sup>60</sup> Douglas S. Massey, Margarita Mooney, Kimberly C. Torres, and Camille Z. Charles. "Black Immigrants and Black Natives Attending Selective Colleges and Universities in the United States." *American Journal of Education* 113, no. 2 (2007): 243-271.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 268.

<sup>62</sup> Waters, Mary C. (1999) *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities*. New York: Harvard University Press.

<sup>63</sup> N'Yongo, Tavia. "American Memory and the Postcolony." ASC Fontaine Society Colloquium. Annenberg School for Communication, Philadelphia, PA. 4 Apr. 2008. Lecture.

<sup>64</sup> Robeson Jr., 2006, p. 5 - italics from original text.

<sup>65</sup> This decreased activism and struggle for institutional security is not unique to Black Studies—scholars such as Catherine Orr et al (2004) and Robyn Weigman (2002) write of similar changes in Women's Studies, which has also undergone its own titular transitions (i.e. Gender Studies) in recent years. (See: Robyn Wiegman, "Academic Feminism against Itself," *NWSA Journal* 14.2 (2002):18-37; Catherine Orr and D. Lichtenstein, "The Politics of Feminist Locations: A Materialist Analysis of Women's Studies," *NWSA Journal* 16.3 (2004):1-17.)

<sup>66</sup> Clarke, Kamari Maxine and Thomas Deborah, (2006). Globalization and the transformations of Race. In *Globalization and race: Transformations in the cultural production of blackness*. Clarke, Kamari Maxine, and Deborah A. Thomas, eds, Durham: Duke University Press: 2006.

<sup>67</sup> Zulu, Itibari M. (2012) "Africana Studies: Post Black Studies Vagrancy in Academe". *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.5 (7), pp. 3-8: 5.

<sup>68</sup> It should also be noted that many African-American Studies and some African Studies programs have also shifted to Africana programs, in a similar fashion as Black Studies programs. For example, African Studies and African languages and literatures programs were included in the Africana Studies Department at Rutgers University from its inception in 1969 (see: Johnson, Walter R. "Dismantling African Studies at Rutgers University." Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology, Feb. 2012. Web. 20 Dec. 2013. [http://www.aaanet.org/cmtes/commissions/upload/06\\_Johnson.pdf](http://www.aaanet.org/cmtes/commissions/upload/06_Johnson.pdf). At the University of Florida, the African and African American program founded in 1969 became the Department of Africana Studies in the 1990s in order to "to reflect its "Diasporan focus" (see: "A Brief History of Africana Studies at USF." *USF*. University of South Florida, n.d. Web. 20 Dec. 2013. <http://africanastudies.usf.edu/overview/history/>). Additionally, the African American and African Studies Department at Ohio State University was originally a "Black Studies" department, and have recently debated the move to become "Africana Studies." These shifts can be explained by all of the reasons listed in this paper, rise in immigrant students, desire to address globalization, etc., but I will not focus on it here.

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This is not to say that the change from African-American Studies and African Studies to Africana Studies, or any analogous change, is not important or worthy of examination. However, “Black Studies” was the title of the first US- based program that studied people of African descent and the name of the movement that established all such related programs, and I have observed that “Africana Studies” is replacing the umbrella function of “Black Studies” in contemporary academic discourse (through re-naming departments, titles, journals, and associations). Thus, I have decided to focus specifically upon the “Black Studies to Africana Studies” phenomenon as indicative of a greater disciplinary transition and ideological repositioning. Furthermore, the move from “Black Studies” to “Africana Studies” is part of a spectrum through which programs such as African/Afro-American Studies, Pan-African Studies, Africology, and other related disciplines have all moved. In time, the growth and development of African-American and African Studies may eventually preclude the importance of the Black/Africana Studies umbrella under which they currently fit and deserve further research.

<sup>69</sup> Okafor, Oguejiofor Victor. "Africology, Black Studies, African American Studies, Africana Studies, or African World Studies? What's So Important about a Given Name?," *Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.6, no. 7 (2014): 220.

<sup>70</sup> Bracey, 2011: 10.

<sup>71</sup> Reiland Rabaka, *W.E.B Du Bois and the Problems of the Twenty First century: An Essay on Africana Critical Theory*. New York: Lexington Books, 2007: 68.

<sup>72</sup> This assertion regarding the marginalization of Africana Critical theory within Africana Studies is, of course, an argument that can be debated – however, it is a notion expressed by Rabaka and implied within Turner’s own articulation of Africana Studies. In any case, I am less concerned with proving this thesis than denoting it as a potential reality.

<sup>73</sup> Turner, 2003: 72 (italics mine).

<sup>74</sup> Okafor, 2014: 218.

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