CHANGING HISTORY: THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL VICTORY AND RACE IN AMERICA

2008 was indeed a historic year. It marked the 200th Anniversary of the U.S. Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 40th Anniversary of the EOF/Map Rowan University Programs, the approval of the Africana Studies Major, and the election of the first African American and the 44th President of the United States of America! On November 3, to a capacity audience in the Eynon Ballroom of the Student Center at Rowan University, Melissa Harris-Lacewell gave an electrifying, optimistic analysis of the presidential campaign that anticipated the Obama election victory the next day!

Following introductory remarks by Julie Mallory Church, Assistant Director of Counseling, Penny McPherson-Barnes, Director of EOF/Map and Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, Corann Okorodudu, Professor of Psychology and Coordinator for Africana Studies, and Ali Houshmand, Provost, Harris-Lacewell’s presentation focused on the complex dynamics that made the 2008 presidential election unique in American history. For the first time, the election crossed the boundaries of race, gender, and religion as reflected in the unusual diversity among the candidates of both parties. The Democrats chose a White female, an African American male, a Latino, and a White southern populist male. The Republican contenders included a Mormon, a Catholic, a moderate, and an evangelical. Her analysis of different potential categories of voters turned out to be prophetic. As she predicted, exit polls revealed that only a very small percentage of voters stated that their vote was influenced primarily by race. With two-thirds of the largest

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youth vote in history and a multi-racial, multigenerational movement, President Obama won on the East Coast, the Midwest, the Pacific Coast, and a substantial portion of the West. The following are excerpts of his victory speech in Grant Park, Chicago.

“If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer... It’s the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, Black, White, Latino, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled.”

Toward the end of his speech, Obama reflected on the century of changes 106-year-old Ann Nixon Cooper, one of his supporters in Atlanta, had seen in her lifetime:

“She was born just a generation past slavery; a time when there were no cars on the road or planes in the sky; when someone like her couldn’t vote for two reasons - because she was a woman and because of the color of her skin.

And tonight, I think about all that she’s seen throughout her century in America - the heartache and the hope; the struggle and the progress; the times we were told that we can’t, and the people who pressed on with that American creed: Yes we can!

At a time when women’s voices were silenced and their hopes dismissed, she lived to see them stand up and speak out and reach for the ballot. Yes we can!

When there was despair... and depression across the land, she saw a nation conquer fear... with a New Deal, new jobs and a new sense of common purpose. Yes we can!

When the bombs fell on our harbor and tyranny threatened the world, she was there to witness a generation rise to greatness and a democracy was saved. Yes we can!

She was there for the buses in Montgomery, the hoses in Birmingham, a bridge in Selma, and a preacher from Atlanta who told a people that We Shall Overcome. Yes we can!

A man touched down on the moon, a wall came down in Berlin, and a world was connected by our own science and imagination. And this year, in this election, she touched her finger to a screen, and cast her vote, because after 106 years in America, through the best of times and the darkest of hours, she knows how America can change. Yes we can!

America, we have come so far. We have seen so much. But there is so much more to do. So tonight, let us ask ourselves - if our children should live to see the next century; if my daughters should be so lucky to live as long as Ann Nixon Cooper, what change will they see? What progress will we have made?

This is our chance to answer that call. This is our moment... to reclaim the American Dream and reaffirm that fundamental truth - that out of many, we are one; that while we breathe, we hope, and where we are met with cynicism, and doubt, and those who tell us that we can’t, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people: Yes We Can!”

The Obama presidency will not end racism in America. Racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia are still institutionalized in obvious and subtle ways in our society and our everyday social interactions. It continues to affect the quality of our physical and mental health, employment status, poverty, longevity, educational quality and attainment, treatment in the criminal justice system, political participation, and other types of inequality. While the Obama presidency will not free us from these human rights violations, it does offer the hope for further collective action in the long struggle toward the attainment of social justice and sustainable development for all.

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The Fourth Annual Rosa Parks Luncheon, held on February 23, 2009 in the Eynon Ballroom of the Student Center at Rowan University, commemorated the 100th Anniversary of the NAACP, with special focus on the 40th Anniversary of the Educational Opportunity Fund/Maximizing Academic Potential (EOF/MAP) Program, which is strongly connected to the NAACP’s legacy of struggle for social justice in and through education. The EOF/MAP Program was instituted at the Glassboro Campus of Rowan University, formerly Glassboro State College, in September 1968 and at the Camden Campus in 1969 to offer special assistance to economically and educationally disadvantaged young men and women.

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Given the significant achievements of the program over the years, Africana Studies, the EOF/MAP Programs, and the various other sponsors of the Rosa Parks Luncheon were deeply pleased to honor Dr. Herbert Douglas, Professor of Law and Justice and Faculty of Africana Studies, the First Director of the EOF/MAP Program, with the 2009 Rosa Parks Award, and Ms. Diane Welburn, CEO and owner of a chain of McDonald’s Restaurants in Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia, with the 40th Anniversary EOF/MAP Distinguished Alumna Award.

The Rosa Parks Award Recipient, Dr. Herbert Douglas, a social scientist who holds a Ph.D. degree from the University of Toledo, has a distinguished career as a teacher, professor, academic administrator, and champion of social justice. Apart from his leadership in initiating the EOF/MAP Program, he also established and chaired the Department of Law and Justice for nine years and served as the second coordinator of the African American Studies Concentration. In 2005 he contributed a chapter entitled “Migration and Adaptation of African American Families within Urban America” to the volume, Minority Voices: Linking Personal Ethnic History and the Sociological Imagination (edited by John Myers and published by Allyn & Bacon). He has also co-authored with his former student, Dr. Raymond D’Angelo, Chair of the Department of Sociology at St. Joseph’s College in Brooklyn, a text in its third edition: Taking Sides: Clashing Views in Race and Ethnicity, published by McGraw-Hill. Dr. Douglas has had long experience as a civil rights and anti-poverty activist within South Jersey, including his role as the President of the Vineland NAACP and his contributions as a founding member of the SCOPE Anti-Poverty Program for Salem, Cumberland, and Gloucester counties. He is a leading authority on the Civil Rights Movement, especially within this region of the United States.

In his keynote presentation, Dr. Douglas reflected on the military, economic, technological and political events that he has witnessed in his lifetime, which he referred to as one of the most dynamic periods in world history. But he offered the following caution about celebrating the Obama presidency: “I don’t see any basis for celebration regarding the first Black President—not that I fail to recognize the power of this election which is a singular, historic achievement! But looking concretely at mass conditions on the ground, Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream has not been achieved; there has been no fundamental change in (social and economic) inequality. How can we think there is any reason for celebrating when 39% of Black children are living in poverty and there are wealth gaps along the color line... From the depression in the 1930s to today’s economic crisis, I have seen Americans wrestle with the issue of color, class, and gender—with the contradictions in American life. I have seen some improvements, but I have also seen backlash and regression. I have never in the three-quarters century of my life seen a full, unfettered commitment to an honest confrontation with these issues... When it is all said and done, much remains the same in spite of the mantra of “change”. We need to position ourselves to press on these issues. We need an honest conversation about the deep, persisting inequalities along the color line in American life.”

The 40th Anniversary EOF/MAP Distinguished Alumna Award, Diane Wilson Welburn was born and raised in south Jersey, joined the EOF King Scholar Program and graduated from Glassboro State College in 1974. While working as a Social Worker with the Division of Youth and Family Affairs she achieved certification in Special Education and Early Childhood Education. In 1983, she and her husband purchased their first McDonald’s franchise in North Philadelphia. They currently own and operate 28 McDonald’s Restaurants in the Virginia, Maryland and Washington, DC area.

Mrs. Welburn is a regular donor to the Rowan University Foundation and is very active in her business and her church. She has been a volunteer for the Women’s Resource Center, Ronald McDonald House and other charitable organizations. She is active in the Links and has been the recipient of the Chester County Jack and Jill Mother of the Year Award. She and her husband were awarded the prestigious Ronald Award for their community involvement.

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In her remarks of acceptance of the 40th Anniversary EOF/MAP Distinguished Alumna Award, Mrs. Welburn urged students to meet difficulties with determination to strive for excellence. She also underscored the importance of giving back and the fulfillment she feels when on each of her birthdays, she writes a substantial check to Rowan University to support student development.

We were especially privileged to have an extraordinary, inspirational highlight of the program—a performance of two “Negro” Spirituals, including “Every Time I Feel the Spirit” by Dr. Lourin Plant, Countertenor and Baritone, accompanied by pianist Dr. Veda Zuponec. Both Dr. Plant and Dr. Zuponec are faculty of Rowan’s Music Department with exciting national, regional and international reputations.

**IN REMEMBRANCE OF JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN**

Africana Studies has lost a major US historian, John Hope Franklin, who died on March 25, 2009 at the age of 94. As a scholar and an activist, he had a transformative effect on Black history and American history. Although he had close to 20 books to his credit, he is most known for his scholarly text “From Slavery to Freedom (1947)” which has served as a historical corrective to American history by integrating African Americans into the complex narrative of American history. This book has gone through several editions and continues to be used in university classes nation-wide.

**2009 AFRICANA STUDIES BREAKFAST RECEPTION AND AWARD CEREMONY**

On May 11, Corann Okorodudu, Coordinator of Africana Studies and Christine DiBlasi, Administrative Assistant for Interdisciplinary Studies, hosted 35 guests including students, faculty, staff and administrators at the Annual Africana Studies Breakfast Reception and Award Ceremony. In his opening remarks, Jay A. Harper, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, shared his perspective on the importance of Africana Studies, his involvement during his tenure as dean in its development and establishment as a major at Rowan University, and his call on those present to continue to support the institutionalization of the program. Desmond Miller, Professor of Sociology and Director of the Liberal Arts and Sciences Institute for Research, gave an exciting presentation on Africana Studies as a Perspective for Promoting Social Justice. In his remarks, he shared how his research, particularly on Katrina, had benefited from perspectives offered by Africana Studies. He also emphasized the relevance and potential contribution of Africana Studies to the broad range of occupational and graduate school opportunities that the graduates might undertake.

The following seniors received Africana Studies Certificates for their completion of the Concentration in African American Studies:

Shamira M. Alford, Sociology
Michael T. Cucci, History
Jeffrey Flanagan, History
Diana M. Gray, ElemEd./History
Dionna K. Hargrove, Sociology
Joanna C. Jackson, Writing Arts
Michael J. Liss, History
Joseph J. Micarelli, History
Stephen G. Ott, History
Marjorie Tuff
Tyler L. Voll, History
Thomas J. Witcraft, History

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Jeffrey Flanagan also received the Excellence in Africana Studies Medallion Award. He attained a 3.629 overall Grade Point Average (GPA) and a 3.6 GPA in the African American Studies Concentration. During his undergraduate studies, he served as a research assistant to Dr. William Carrigan of the History Department and made two undergraduate research presentations. He will be attending the College of William and Mary as a PhD student in History in the Fall of 2009.

The Award Ceremony also included two Distinguished Service Awards. The first was given to Dr. Richard Grupenhoff (Radio/Television/Film), who is retiring, for his outstanding scholarship on African American Film History and his initiative in developing a regular undergraduate course in this area. After receiving his PhD from Ohio State University, he began teaching in the Communications Department at Glassboro State College in 1975. In 1988 he published a biography entitled, The Black Valentino: The Stage and Screen Career of Lorenzo Tucker. As a result of the research he did for this book, he became an expert in “Race Movies”, i.e. those feature films made between 1915 and 1950 which were produced by Blacks with all-Black casts for Black audiences. Following several years of teaching special topics courses on the Harlem Renaissance and African American Films, in 1990 he began to teach a regular course on African American film History, which was the first course of its kind in the State of New Jersey. He has since lectured on African American Film History in many universities, including Harvard, Columbia and the University of Osnabrueck in Germany. He has also served on the Africana Studies Steering Committee for the past ten years.

Dr. Jay A. Harper, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, also received an award for his outstanding leadership, encouragement, support and oversight throughout his tenure as dean in the development of the Africana Studies Major. He earned a PhD in Psychobiology from State University of New York at Stony Brook. As dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences over the past ten years, Dr. Harper has promoted the expansion of undergraduate and graduate programs as well as interdisciplinary studies, including Africana Studies. When he arrived at Rowan in 1999, the Africana Studies Major was only a dream. He encouraged us to develop the introductory course, to focus the major on the Black experience both in the U.S. and in the Diaspora, and served as a consistently strong advocate for the major which was finally approved in February 2008. Dr. Harper has accepted the position of Provost of the University of Mary Washington, named for Mary Washington, mother of President George Washington, and located in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Although we will greatly miss his support, we wish him fulfillment and success in his new position which he begins on July 1, 2009.
WELCOME TO CHANELLE ROSE, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AND AFRICANA STUDIES!

Presentation on the 15th Amendment to the US Constitution

Panel on Expansion of the Right to Vote, October 20, 2008, Rowan University
Sponsored by the Thomas N. Bantivoglio Honors Program


“EVEN before Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton threw their exploratory committees into the ring, every reporter seemed to be asking which candidate are Americans more ready for, a White woman or a Black man?...

The greatest reason for progressives to refuse to be drawn into an irrelevant debate about Senators Clinton and Obama is that it is destructive. We can accomplish much more if we act as a coalition. Think, for instance, of the powerful 19th-century coalition for universal adult suffrage. The paradoxes between being a chattel slave by race and chattel as a wife, daughter or indentured worker turned abolitionists into suffragists, and vice versa. This coalition against a caste system based on race and sex turned the country on its head — until it was divided by giving the vote to its smallest part, Negro men. Sojourner Truth famously warned that this division would cripple the movement for decades to come — and it did. Only a half-century later did white and black women get the vote, by then tarnished by the racist rhetoric of some white women and diminished by racist restrictions and violence at polls.

This time, we could learn from history. We could double our chances by working for one of these candidates, not against the other. For now, I’ve figured out how to answer reporters when they ask if I’m supporting Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama. I just say yes.”

As Steinem points out, the controversial and contentious issues over race and gender that developed during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary are rooted in a history that can be traced to the decades leading up to the Civil War.

Throughout the late nineteenth century, African Americans’ and women’s campaigns for equality often unfolded simultaneously and they often relied on one another for support. Many of those who spearheaded the Women’s Rights Movement had been active in the abolitionist movement. After the Civil War ended, many of the women’s rights advocates who had supported the abolitionist cause and participated in the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 intensified their push not only for the equal citizenship of African Americans, but all citizens, especially women.

On May 10, 1866, these female abolitionists and suffragists helped found the American Equal Rights Association, which was established to “secure Equal Rights to all American citizens, especially the Right of Suffrage, irrespective of race, color and sex (AERA President Lucretia Mott).” However, it was within this organization that the first signs of a split in the forces of the Woman’s Rights Movement developed over the proposed fourteenth amendment (ratified, July 1868). Many women’s rights advocates were outraged because for the first time, the proposed Amendment added the word “male” into the US Constitution. In fact, the presence of the word “male” in this proposed amendment was mentioned not only once, but three times. As a result, the women’s rights movement split over whether to support it as a means of finishing the job of establishing full citizenship for the free slaves and other African Americans. The government was giving the Black man the vote while excluding white and black women from the franchise.

Frederick Douglass, the famed abolitionist, writer, scholar, and one of the most influential African Americans of the 19th century, was one of very few males who publicly supported the women’s movement. Despite his friendship with leading woman suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Douglas firmly believed that the post-Civil War period was, in fact, as President Abraham Lincoln had stated, ‘the Negro Hour.’ He argued that women should wait rather than jeopardize the chances of the Black men getting the vote. He believed, like others of his ilk, that women and Negro suffrage were both just and logical. But he argued that the nation would not accept two reforms at one time; therefore the question of suffrage must be divided and the first chance be given to the Negro. Some women

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suffragists (e.g. Lucy Stone) opposed the wording of the amendment, yet they favored its passage for black men. Others like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton refused to accept anything that excluded women from the suffrage.

The enfranchisement of Black men became one of the several legal challenges that faced the newly reunited nation during the Reconstruction period. The ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment (December 1865) abolished slavery in the United States and also nullified the three-fifths clause of the Constitution that counted slaves as $\frac{3}{5}$ of a person. The Fourteenth Amendment made slaves citizens (July 1868). Despite the passage of the 13th and 14th Amendments, Southern states used a variety of tactics, including violence, to keep Blacks from voting, and even some Northern states did not give Blacks the franchise.

The basic right to vote was not protected in the U.S. Constitution against discrimination based on race. After the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln and his death on April 15, 1865 (President Lincoln died from wounds suffered during the attack by assassin John Wilkes Booth), Vice President Andrew Johnson, a Democrat from Tennessee, was sworn in as president. On May 29, 1865, while Congress was in recess, President Andrew Johnson began implementing his Reconstruction Plan, which did not require the enfranchisement of black men in the former Confederate states.

Many states rejected the referendum to enfranchise black men in 1865. In fact, they began adopting Black Codes to essentially regain control over formerly enslaved African Americans. Under these Black Codes, former slaves were arrested for vagrancy and other restrictions on their freedom and they were afforded no jobs other than plantation workers or domestic workers.

In response to the disenfranchisement of former slaves and freed Blacks, African Americans acted: As early as October 1864, a group of free Black men met in Syracuse, New York, and established the National Equal Rights League to fight racial barriers in the Union states. They passed resolutions endorsing the abolition of slavery, legal equality regardless of color or race, and Black male suffrage. After the war, Northern blacks petitioned Congress for a constitutional amendment for equal suffrage. In January 1869, the National Convention of the Colored Men of America met in Washington, D.C., with the aim of advocating suffrage for all black men in the United States and the education of former slaves. The following month a committee of twelve urged President-elect Ulysses S. Grant to be vigilant in the fulfillment and administration of equal rights. In response to their request, Grant pledged as president to uphold equal protection under the law.

Most African Americans looked to the Republican Party for assistance and control of Reconstruction ultimately remained largely in the hands of the Republicans, who had substantial majorities in both houses of Congress. The push for the amendment reflected both the egalitarian ideals of Reconstruction and the self-interest of the Republican Party. The resurgent strength of the Democratic Party motivated Republican efforts to secure the enfranchisement of African American men, most of whom could be counted on to vote Republican.

In the winter of 1868-1869, Republicans of the outgoing 40th Congress began drafting a constitutional amendment for equal manhood suffrage. But the conservative, radical, and moderate factions of the Republican Party created divisions and Congressional Republicans were initially divided on the language and scope of the amendment. Radicals wanted to bar the federal and state governments from disfranchising voters because of race, property, literacy, and other classifications. Moderates believed that the amendment should be limited to suffrage for Black men, with states retaining authority over other voting qualifications.

Despite these divisions and the proposed variations of the amendment, on January 30, 1869, the House passed a resolution, 150-42, submitted by Republican George Boutwell of Massachusetts to amend the Constitution to forbid the federal and state governments from denying the vote to citizens based on “race, or color, or previous condition of slavery.” Its language was almost identical to the final form of the Fifteenth Amendment. The House of Representatives approved/passed the 15th Amendment on February 25, 1869, by a vote of 144 to 44, and the Senate passed the 15th Amendment on February 26, 1869, by a vote of 39 to 13. Section One of the Fifteenth Amendment reads: “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Section Two authorizes Congress to enforce the amendment “by appropriate legislation.” Ratified on February 3, 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment was the last of the three Reconstruction Amendments. On March 30, 1870, Secretary of State Hamilton Fish issued a proclamation certifying the ratification of the 15th Amendment by the states.

The promise of the 15th Amendment would not be fully realized for almost a century. During the 1870s, after the Compromise of 1877, White-only Democratic governments returned to power in the South and many white Northern reformers lost interest in the plight of Black Americans.
Through the use of poll taxes, literacy tests, Southern states were able to effectively disenfranchise African Americans. Violence by militant groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, and state restrictions on voting seriously reduced the percentage of Black voters until the “Second Reconstruction” of the mid-twentieth century. It would take the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 before the majority of African Americans in the South were registered to vote. Nevertheless, the Fifteenth Amendment was an important beginning, granting the constitutional right of all Black men to participate in local, state, and national government for the first time in American history.

He received his masters and doctoral degrees in history from Harvard University and taught at several institutions including: Fisk, St. Augustine, Brooklyn College, North Carolina Central, University of Chicago, Howard and Duke. His many stellar career accomplishments include the following: He served as the first Black department chair at the predominantly White Brooklyn College; the first Black professor to hold an endowed chair at Duke University; and the first Black president of the American Historical Association. He received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Bill Clinton in 1995 and the John W. Kluge Prize for lifetime achievement in the study of humanity in 2006. He also held the following international appointments: Pitt Professor of American History at Cambridge University, Consultant on American Education in the Soviet Union, Fulbright Professor of History in Australia, and Lecturer in American History in the People’s Republic of China.

As an activist in the Civil Rights Struggle, his scholarship contributed to the foundation of social science evidence for the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision that outlawed the racist doctrine of “separate but equal” in American public education. His life-long activism included joining Martin Luther King, Jr.’s 1965 March from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, to protest the denial of Black voters’ rights. Also, in 1987 he testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee to oppose the nomination of Judge Robert Bork to the Supreme Court.

“Mirror to America”(2005), John Hope Franklin’s autobiography, presents a fascinating look back at the life of an extraordinary man and a pioneering historian. In it, he recounts the innumerable obstacles he faced as a result of racism, acknowledges the many strides that U.S. society has made in his lifetime, and yet understands that there is still significant progress that remains to be made.