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The Association of Black Anthropologists: A Brief History

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Detail from a necklace of uncut silver coins as offered in soliciting blessing. Merinina (Photo copyright BM.)

a remarkable synthesis and summary of the historical background relevant to the exhibition.

Even more remarkable is the second part of the book, entitled 'The Living and the Dead', which provides in only thirty pages the clearest and most readable summary available of the concept of 'the ancestors' and the significance of the many diverse funerary rites, tombs and cenotaphs and funerary sculpture. There is only one query: the well-known erotic human sculptures on the tombs at Sakoambe (a recent innovation) are described as being typical of all Sakalava tombs; twenty years ago at least they were limited to that one location, though conceivably they may have since been copied elsewhere. Otherwise this section contains numerous insights and clear explanations, e.g. of the significance of the extreme punishment of being excluded from the

family tomb, which means being denied entry to the community of ancestors, equivalent to being condemned to eternal oblivion. Especially interesting is the way in which Mack shows that the concept of a second burial, after the decomposition of the flesh, runs through virtually all the very diverse burial customs; and that where, as in most of the south, there is only one actual interment of the body, the subsequent erection of a commemorative sculpture replaces the second burial.

The exhibition and guide book admirably succeed in making the visitor want to learn more about a fascinating country.

1. Mack, J. *Madagascar, Island of the Ancestors*. British Museum Publications, £6.50 (£4.95 at exhibition). The exhibition is open at no charge for an indefinite period.

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# The Association of Black Anthropologists

## *A brief history*

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### **IRA E. HARRISON**

*The author is Administrative President of the ABA. Further biographical information will be found towards the end of this article. A.T. does not intend to make a habit of publishing the histories of recently formed professional groups, of which there are a large number. However, the emergence of this particular association has a wide significance for the future of anthropology.*

There has been a growing interest among some anthropologists in reinventing anthropology (Hymes 1974), rethinking anthropology's past (Lewis 1973; Willis 1973), and identifying and analysing emergent trends in the discipline (Geertz 1983; Ortner 1984). There has been a call for a sociology of anthropological knowledge (Wolf 1969) and a serious interest in the history of anthropology (Stocking 1984, 1985; Fabian 1983, Boon 1982; Harris 1980). However, the study of Afro-American anthropologists and their history and contributions to anthropology remains a neglected theme (Harrison 1977; Harrison, Jordan and Drake forthcoming).

There are several articles on the personal experiences and observations of blacks in anthropology (St. Clair Drake 1978, 1980, 1984; Walker 1982). Nevertheless, within the discipline, there remains a fundamental lack of knowledge about Afro-American anthropologists. To remedy this neglect, efforts must be pursued in several directions. One, there needs to be a general history and profiling of Afro-American anthropologists, past and present.<sup>1</sup> Two, there needs to be a critical analysis of their works and their contributions to anthropology. Three, there ought to be discussion of Afro-American anthropologists and their organization and activities. It is in this third category that this paper addresses itself: it provides a brief history of the Association of Black Anthropologists.

#### **The Caucus of Black Anthropologists**

The Association of Black Anthropologists emerged out of the Caucus of Black Anthropologists. The Caucus of Black Anthropologists emerged out of a Minority Caucus which in turn had its origin in an experimental session on black curriculum in anthropological studies in Seattle, Washington in 1968 (AAA 1968). This session was chaired by Council Taylor; and panellists included Delmos Jones, Diane Lewis, Johnnetta Cole, and Oliver Osborne. Interested persons at this session met informally afterwards and agreed that a caucus should continue to discuss the issues and problems concerning the lack of minorities and their contributions in anthropology and the social sciences. A sheet of paper

was circulated and the signers were: Carlos H. Arce, Paul Arellano, Johnnetta Cole, Herbert G. Ellis, Stephen A. Faustina, Miguel Fernandez, Nancie L. Gonzalez, Ira E. Harrison, Jean F. Hayes, James Hirabayashi, Joyce A. Hobson, Norman Johnson, Delmos Jones, Jose De La Isla, Mr and Mrs Anthony Lauria, Rosário M. Levin, Diane Lewis, Claudia Mitchell, Oliver Osborne, Rafael Ramirez, Octavio Ramario, Belvie Rooks, William A. Shack, Joseph Spelling, Gobi Stromberg, Council Taylor, and Bettylou Valentine. This was the emergence of the Minority Caucus in the American Anthropological Association (AAA).

This process was aided by a resolution of the AAA (1969):

...the American Anthropological Association urges vigorous recruitment of students of Black, Chicano, American Indian, Asian, and other such backgrounds into anthropology in universities and colleges, and vigorous efforts to hire and facilitate the careers of such persons in the profession.

The following year at the 1969 annual AAA meetings in New Orleans, Johnnetta Cole and Council Taylor chaired a symposium on 'Ethnographic Research in Black Communities in the U.S.' and Belvie Rooks chaired an 'Experimental Session of the Minority Curriculum Committee on the Implications of the Current Ethnic Studies Controversy.' In 1970, a Committee on Minority Participation emerged. Gloria Marshall chaired a committee comprised of Francis L. K. Hsu, James Gibbs, Alfonso Ortiz, Thomas Weaver, and graduate students Abdulhamid Akoni and Laverne Masagesva (AAA Annual Report 1970:31)<sup>2</sup>. This is the milieu in which persons, mostly graduate students, formed a Third World Congress of Anthropologists while other students formed a Caucus of Black Anthropologists.

The Civil Rights Revolution of the 60's and the Black Revolution of the 70's began to impact on academia and the AAA. Black graduate students in the 60's sought identifiable Afro-American role models in Anthropology. They were virtually nonexistent in

academia prior to the 60's (Drake 1978, 1985; Harrison 1979a; Stewart 1982). Only 13 blacks earned the doctorate in anthropology prior to 1980.<sup>4</sup> Most of these black anthropologists did not attend AAA meetings until recently.<sup>5</sup> The first black to earn a PhD in anthropology never taught anthropology in a black college.<sup>6</sup> The third black to obtain a PhD in anthropology is better known as an educator and researcher, rather than an anthropologist.<sup>7</sup> The fourth black to receive a doctorate in anthropology never taught anthropology at the college level.<sup>8</sup> The seventh black to earn a doctorate in anthropology has been identified more with sociology than anthropology in the 40's and 50's.<sup>9</sup> The Caucus of Black Anthropologists arose to fill this void at AAA meetings as a protest movement and a child of the 60's.

In 1973, *News from the Natives*, a publication of the black anthropologists' caucus, appeared. It was a newsletter devoted to identifying and discussing anthropologically-oriented Afro-American social scientists, past and present, faculty and students. Shelia Walker, then a graduate student at the University of Chicago, was the catalyst for this four page mimeographed news sheet and questionnaire. From 1973 to 1975, this newsletter was a forum for exchange: book reviews, comments, exhortations, presentations, abstracts of papers given by black anthropologists, and employment opportunities. It was felt that we needed to move from an ad hoc grouping to a formal association. Graduate student Jerry Wright became editor of the newsletter; graduate student Anselme Remy became chair of the caucus; and a steering committee of Wright, Remy, Delmos Jones, and graduate student Patricia Guthrie began writing a constitution for an Association of Black Anthropologists. It was mainly through the efforts of this committee and graduate student Gwen Mikell that the Black Anthropology Caucus became the Association of Black Anthropologists during the AAA meetings in San Francisco, December 2-6, 1975. Anselme Remy, the new provisional executive of the Association of Black Anthropologists and outgoing coordinator of the Black Anthropology Caucus, presented plaques and testimonies to Niara Sudarkasa and James Gibbs for:

. . . contributions to the discipline of anthropology. . . the role they played in helping to transform the Afro-American anthropology caucus into the functioning ABA during the San Francisco meeting. . . and their contribution to black people (Mikell 1976).

#### **The Association of Black Anthropologists (ABA)**

The ABA is the child of the 70's, developing from the Black Anthropological Caucus. ABA began as an attempt of graduate students and junior-level anthropology professors 'to create a forum for communication among the members of the black anthropology community and of the need to work together to make anthropology relevant to Black people' (Walker 1982:2-6).

The preamble to the Constitution of Black Anthropologists reflects the spirit and desire of this intellectually revolutionary group to form a more perfect union to achieve these ends:

It is a known fact that anthropology and anthropologists have identified more with the interests of the colonial powers than with the interests of the colonized people they have studied. Today, the anthropology establishment continues to perceive and to analyze the social realities of these people within the framework of theories which were conceived to justify colonialism and racism. As Black and colonized anthropologists, it is our duty to provide an organizational framework whereby we will change

established approaches, methods and theories, and the relationships between anthropologists and the people they study.

#### *Purpose*

The ABA is dedicated 1. to encouraging the anthropology of Black people. 2. to supporting Blacks involved in anthropological study. The perspective is international and Third World. To achieve its goals, the ABA seeks to identify Black people in the discipline of anthropology and to foster communication between them on issues of professional interest. It further seeks to monitor developments on the anthropological study of black populations.

#### *Membership*

Membership in the ABA is open to black anthropologists and all persons interested in the purpose of the association. Institutional membership is also available to that departments and programmes with related interests may support the ABA and receive its publications.

#### *Activities*

Activities of the ABA include:

1. annual meetings held in conjunction with the meetings of the AAA;
2. support and sponsorship of specific seminars and symposia on anthropological issues concerning Black people;
3. publication and distribution of the ABA Newsletter, *Notes from the ABA*, which provides pertinent articles and news to the ABA membership and interested readers;
4. sponsorship of the ABA Occasional Papers series; and
5. identification of black anthropologists and documentation of the black experience in the anthropological profession; and
6. communication among blacks in the discipline of anthropology and among persons whose research interests focus on aspects of the black (African and African diaspora) experience.

#### *Structure*

There are probably about 150 Afro-American anthropologists in the United States. Most of those who are active in the discipline have been associated with the ABA. The ABA's active membership is about 50 persons.

The Association of Black Anthropologists has been an organization whose goals, directions, and activities have been defined and fuelled by strong individual volunteers devoting their time, talents, and money to the organization's survival. The organization's structure lends itself to egalitarianism and participatory democracy.

Organizationally, ABA has an executive committee comprised of the president, president-elect, secretary-treasurer, and regional representatives.<sup>10</sup> There are four regional officers representing the Eastern, Midwestern, Western, and Southern regions of the United States.<sup>11</sup> There are three standing committees - membership, publications, and research and policy - comprised of executive committee members and members in the region. The executive and standing committees meet annually, while the standing committees meet separately to transact business. As a result of the small size of the organization, periodic field work, and the fact that officers have always been nationally dispersed rather than regionally centred, strong individuals have kept ABA operational.

- American Anthropological Association. 1968. *Program, 67th Annual Meeting, AAA, Seattle, Washington*. November 21-24, pp. 31-32.
1969. *Program, 68th Annual Meeting, AAA, New Orleans*. November 20-23, pp.8, 18.
1970. *Annual Report 1969 and Directory: Bulletin of the AAA* 3(1):37.
1971. *Annual Report 1970 and Directory: Bulletin of the AAA* 9:31.
- Boon, J. 1982. *Other Tribes, Other Scribes: Symbolic Anthropology in the Comparative Study of Culture, Histories, Religions, and Texts*. Cambridge: Cambridge U. P.
- Drake, S. 1978. *Reflections on Anthropology and the Black Experience. Anthropology and Education Quarterly* IX:2. 1980.
- Anthropology and the Black Experience. *Black Scholar* 7(2):2-31
1984. *Further reflections on Anthropology and the Black Experience*. ABA

Occ. Papers No. 3.

Fabian, J. 1983. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. New York: Columbia U. P.

Geertz, C. 1983. Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought. In *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books, 19-35.

Green, V. 1978.

Comments from Vera Green, ABA

President. *Notes from the ABA: A Publication of Black Anthropologists* 4(1):6.

1980. International Conferences. *Notes from the ABA* 6(3 & 4):16.

n.d. (compiled) *Black Anthropologists: A Directory, 1978-79*. Special Publication of the ABA.

Harris, M. 1980. *Cultural Materialism: The Struggle for a Science of Culture*. New York: Random House.

Harrison, I. E. 1979a. *Black Anthropologists in the Southern*

*Region. Anthropology and Education Quarterly* X (Winter)4:269-275.

1979b. South Representative. *Notes from the ABA* 5 (August) 2:10.

1980. From the Regions: The South. *Notes from the ABA* 6 (July), 1 & 2:15.

1985. Farewell to Three Anthropological Pioneers. *Notes from the ABA* 11 (Oct) 2:20-25.

Harrison, I., Jordan, G. & Drake, S. n.d. *Afro-American Anthropologists: Pioneers in American Anthropology*. forthcoming.

Hymes, D. 1974. *Reinventing Anthropology*. New York: Random House.

Jenkins, U. 1980. Letter to the Editor. *Notes from the ABA* 6 (November) 3 & 4:1-2.

Jordan, G. 1982. Minutes of Last ABA Meeting. *Notes from the ABA* 8 (March) 2:10.

Lewis, D. 1973. *Anthropology and Colonialism. Current Anth.* 14.5(Dec):581-602.

Mikell, G. 1976. Sudarkasa and Gibbs Honoured by ABA. *Notes from the ABA* 2(March):6.

Ortner, Sherry B. 1984.

Four individuals that perhaps best illustrate this pattern are Vera Green, Shelia Walker, Glenn Jordan, and Ira Harrison - one each from the Eastern, Western, Midwestern, and Southern regions, respectively. They represent and articulate consistent commitment to the original purpose of the Black Anthropology Caucus, which was carried over in the ABA: a commitment 'to provide a structure for social scientists from the Black world. . . [to encourage] brothers and sisters from other disciplines. . . to participate in and to co-ordinate as much information and as many resources as possible' (Walker 1973), about anthropology's relevance for Black people.<sup>12</sup>

#### Vera Green (1928-82)<sup>3</sup>

Vera Green, former Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology and Director of the Latin American Institute, Rutgers University, was the first president of the ABA from 1977-78. From 1971-73, she was a board member of the Society for Applied Anthropology; and from 1977-80 of the AAA. She articulated the aspirations, concerns, desires, and needs of the caucus and of the ABA to the greater American anthropological community. A major need was for ABA to know itself; to know its membership. Securing a grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation, Vera was able to compile and to publish the first and only directory of black anthropologists (Green n.d.). ABA became a non-profit organization under Vera's tenure (Green 1978:6). She not only represented ABA in the US on the AAA Board, but she also represented ABA at the First Congress on the Black Culture in the Americas in Cali, Columbia, August 24-28, 1977. She represented ABA at the 5th annual meeting of the Caribbean Studies Association in Curacao, Netherland Antilles in 1980, and was elected the US Vice-President of the Second Congress of Black Culture in the Americas (Green 1980:16).

Vera was not only the link between the ABA and the AAA, and the ABA and the Association of Caribbeanists, but also she was the bridge between the graduate students in the early and middle 60's and those students who entered anthropology in the late 60's and early 70's. She quietly and carefully provided information and insight necessary to cool scenes at ABA meetings when tempers were short, heat high, and illumination needed. She had that slow, easy smile that lets one know that things were all right but could be a whole lot better. Vera was industrious, a continual contributor to *Notes from the ABA*, sincere, self-sacrificing; and that is why her death in 1982 caused us great pain. ABA has never recovered.

Whereas Vera Green gave ABA legitimacy and respectability in anthropological circles, Shelia Walker gave ABA vitality and visibility.

#### Shelia Walker

Shelia S. Walker is an Associate Professor, School of Education, University of California, Berkeley. As a graduate student she originated and edited the newsletter, *Notes from the Natives*, as the Caucus of Black Anthropologists made the transition from an oral culture group in 1968 to a cultural group in print in 1973. This four page mimeograph newsletter gave voice and conscientiousness to the Caucus. It encouraged a closer association and galvanized attention in the questionnaire Call and Response<sup>4</sup> from professionals: Ann Barnes (Norfolk State), Azuka Dike (Ramapo College of New Jersey), Dennis Forsythe (Sir George Williams University), Ira Harrison (Meharry Medical College), Milford Jeremiah (Morgan State University), Diane Lewis (College Seven, UC Santa Cruz, UC), Dolores Newton (State University of New York at Stony Brook), Anselme Remy (Fisk University), Hugh Smythe (Brooklyn College), John Stewart (University of Illinois-Urbana), Charles Warren (University of Illinois-Chicago Circle), and student Virginia Grant (State University of New York at Buffalo), Patricia Guthrie (University of Rochester), Verne Taylor Hamilton (State University of New York at Buffalo), Tena Lockett (State University of New York at Buffalo), Yolanda Moses (University of California at Riverside), Gregory Muthleb (Wayne State University), and C. Onyeka Nwanunobi (University of Toronto) (Walker

1973:4-6). This was the first nationwide roster of anthropologically oriented black social scientists.

Sheila continued to author articles in the newsletter and to edit it, while earning her doctorate in 1975.<sup>15</sup> In 1978, she became editor of the newsletter *Notes from the ABA*: a publication of the Association of Black Anthropologists, which succeeded the newsletter, *Notes from the Natives*. Her writings were not confined to the newsletter as she published anthropologically-oriented articles in such popular magazines as *Ebony* (June 1977, *Essence* (July 1977), and *The Black Collegian* (January 1981:81). Nor was her editorship restricted to the newsletter as she edited special issues of two professional journals, *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* (Summer 1978) and *The Black Scholar* (September-October and November-December 1980), as well as authoring articles in these journals.

It was this vitality that gave the newsletter a more sophisticated format, moving it from letterweight to stockweight paper, complete with an ABA logo in August 1979. This issue ushered in one of the most exciting years of the Association as editor Walker changed the colour of the newsletter from black and white to old gold and black and encouraged John Gwaltney and Rhett Jones to become frequent newsletter contributors. Her new newsletter enhanced the image of ABA and the Association received many laudatory statements on its quality.<sup>16</sup> Shelia's legacy to ABA was an editorship that initiated the Black Anthropology Caucus newsletter, *Notes from the Natives*, and then transformed *Notes from the ABA*, into a journalistic format that has not been equalled.

#### Glenn Jordan

Glenn Jordan, graduate student and part-time instructor, Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois-Urbana, inherited the editorship of the ABA newsletter from Shelia Walker in 1981. Shelia resigned and the newsletter's primary base of operations shifted to Midwest region. Willie Baber, Assistant Professor of Anthropology and African Studies at Purdue University, was co-editor, as Glenn Jordan was also named secretary-treasurer of ABA.<sup>17</sup> From 1981 to 1985, Glenn Jordan edited and published the newsletter, first as assistant director in the Afro-American Studies and Research Program at the University of Illinois-Champaign-Urbana, and later as a student and instructor.

Glenn Jordan's main contribution to ABA is not only the editorship of the newsletter, the main channel of ABA's communication to its membership, and interested others, but also the initiation of the *ABA's Occasional Paper* series:

No 1: Shelia S. Walker (University of California-Berkeley), *Reflections on Becoming a Black Anthropologist*.

No 2: Dallas L. Browne (Colby College), *Race and Class in Kenya: The Asian Question in Africa*.

No 3: St Clair Drake (Stanford University), *Further Reflections on Anthropology and the Black Experience*.

No 4: Rafael Lopez Valdez (Cuban Academy of Sciences), *The African Component in the Formation of the Cuban People*.

No 5: Ira E Harrison (University of Tennessee-Knoxville), *Colonialism, 'Health Care Systems' and Traditional Healers*.

The idea of such a series surfaced in *News from the Natives* as early as 1975, but only became a reality under Glenn's editorship in 1982. Shelia's editorship had provided ABA with breath and visibility; building upon Shelia's efforts Glenn's editorship of both the newsletter and the occasional paper series gave ABA a publication depth that it previously lacked. The membership now had access not only to news, book reviews, short articles, and employment listings, but also lengthy and substantive contributions on the history of Afro-Americans in anthropology and on races, racism, classism, and colonialism.

It was perhaps Glenn's hard work and quiet, but steady dedication behind the scenes that enabled ABA to survive the shock of Vera's death. After Vera's death, the organization began to waver as various ABA officers rotated in and out of offices, members changed jobs, and earlier support and enthusiasm in ABA began to wane. ABA, a child of the Black Anthropology Caucus and the sizzling 60's, had survived the sombre 70's and was moving into the awkward 80's. Glenn's

Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties.

*Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26(1):126-166.

Ross, H. R. 1980. *Black Pioneer: Ancestors, Elders and Others in Afro-American Anthropology*. Paper delivered at the 15th Annual Meeting of the Southern Anthropological Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

Southern Anthropological Society. 1978. *Program. 13th Annual Meeting*. Lexington, Kentucky, April 12-15, p.11.

1979. *Program. 14th Annual Meeting*. Memphis, Tennessee, February 21-24, p.12.

1980. *Program. 15th Annual Meeting*. Louisville, Kentucky, March 20-22. Symposium £12.

Steward, J. 1982. *Anthropology in Black Studies. Notes from the ABA* 8 (3 & 4):13-16.

Walker, S. 1973a. Purpose. *News from the Natives*, a publication of the Black Anthropologists' Caucus 1 (January):1.

1973b. Call and Response. *News from the Natives*, a publication of the Black Anthropologists' Caucus 1 (March):4-6.

1975. New Developments at the AAA in Mexico City. *News from the Natives* 1 (February) 4:4.

1977. What's in a Name. *Ebony* XXXII.8 (June):74-76, 78, 80, 84.

1977. Bahia: Africa in America. *Essence* (July): 42-43, 64, 67.

1978. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, Special Issue, 'New Perspectives on Black Education' 9.2 (Summer).

1980. *Black Anthropology. The Black Scholar*. Two-Volume Special Issue, 11.7 and 8 (Nov-Dec). Co-edited with Cole, J.)

1980-1981. Careers in Languages. *The Black Collegian* 11.3 (Dec-Jan): 80-83.

Willis, W. S. 1974. *Skeletons in the Anthropological Closet. In Reinventing Anthropology* (ed. Hymes, D.), pp. 121-152. New York: Random House.

editorship of the newsletter, editorship of the occasional papers series, and service as secretary-treasurer provided ABA with a much needed internal stability and a viable external visibility. His organization of the sale of occasional papers and the back issues of *Notes from the ABA* helped to keep ABA's image in print and the publications solvent.

Glenn Jordan continues to edit the occasional paper series and now serves as vice president of the ABA. He is currently editing a volume of essays on pioneer black anthropologists (St Clair Drake, his mentor), and coediting with Harrison and Drake a volume on the history of blacks in anthropology. Glenn provides ABA with consistency, hard work, and commitment to the ideas of the Black Anthropology caucus.

#### Ira E Harrison

Ira E Harrison, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, was a member of the Minority Caucus, the Caucus of Black Anthropologists, and the first Southern representative (Walker 1975:4).

The major responsibilities of regional representatives are to identify black anthropologists (students and professionals in their region), and to encourage their efforts in the discipline and with ABA. In 1977, Ira surveyed colleges and universities in the Southern region identifying four black anthropologists. Ira Harrison and Marilyn Wells presented the results of that survey in the paper, 'The Distribution of Black Anthropologists in the Southern Region - A Dateline Indicator for Social Change' in Lexington, Kentucky at the annual Southern Anthropological Society meeting (Harrison 1979a; Southern Anthropological Association 1979b:11). He met Yvonne Jones and Tony Whitehead, and they discussed their research interests and ABA.

Ira organized, chaired, and presented papers on Afro-American anthropology and anthropologists at the Southern Anthropological Society meetings in Memphis, Tennessee in 1979, and Louisville, Kentucky in 1980 (Harrison 1979:10, Harrison 1980:15; Southern Anthropological Association 1979:11, 1980). Undergraduate students like Louise Skinner, graduate students like Fredia Glenn, Steven Jones, Doris Derby, and Linda Weber, newly minted PhD's like Janice Stockard-Anderson; junior-level professors like Yvonne Jones, Tony Whitehead, and Annie Barnes, and a pioneer black anthropologist Professor Hubert B Ross, of Atlanta University - all these were involved in presenting papers, discussion of issues concerning black students and anthropology, and building the ABA (ibid). This activity earned Ira the reputation as a model ABA regional representative (Green 1978:4:6; Jordan 1982:812, 10).

Harrison did not restrict symposium activities to the Southern region. In 1981, he organized, chaired, and presented papers in the Western region at the 80th annual meeting of the AAA in Los Angeles, in the Midwest region at the 82nd annual meeting of the AAA in Chicago, Illinois, and in the Eastern region at the 84th annual meeting of the AAA in Washington, D.C. in 1985 (AAA Program 1981, 1983, 1985). Two themes were woven throughout this activity: the involvement of black anthropologically-oriented social scientists (students and professors) and the quest for Afro-American anthropological pioneers. Thus, Ira assembled a forum to articulate the ideals of the Black Anthropological Caucus (Walker 1973a(10):1).<sup>18</sup>

#### Conclusion

What lies ahead for the ABA? The central challenge is survival and further development in the 1980's. Like many organizations emerging out of the Civil Rights Protest of the 1960's, it seeks survival and greater legitimacy. ABA needs to increase its membership, to increase active participation of its membership so as to remove the administrative responsibilities from the shoulders of a few individuals, to build its publications - and increase its voice - within the national and international anthropological community. ABA welcomes relationships with anthropologists throughout the world.

Author thanks Faye J. Harrison and Glenn Jordan for reviewing and commenting on an earlier draft of this paper.

1. Ira E. Harrison (University of Tennessee), Glenn Jordan (University of Illinois), and St Clair Drake (Stanford University) are currently co-editing a volume on the history of Afro-American anthropologists. It focuses on persons trained during the first half of the twentieth century. The tentative title is *Afro-American Anthropologists: Pioneers in American Anthropology*.

2. Gloria Marshall is now known as Niara Sudarkasa.

3. These were professors and graduate students concerned about minorities in the profession of anthropology.

4. Pioneer doctorates in Afro-American anthropology are: Laurence Foster (Deceased) - Pennsylvania, 1931  
Mark Hanna Watkins (Deceased) - Chicago, 1933  
William Allison Davis (Deceased) - Chicago, 1941  
Arthur Huff Fauset (Deceased) - Pennsylvania, 1942  
Ellen Irene Diggs - Havana, 1945  
Hugh H. Smythe (Deceased) - Northwestern, 1945  
St Clair Drake - Chicago, 1954  
Monet Fowler - Cornell, 1954  
Hubert Ross - Columbia, 1954  
Elliott Skinner - Columbia, 1954  
William Shack - Chicago, 1957  
Council Taylor - Yale, 1957

This list is modified from Ross (1980).

5. Most of these pioneer black anthropologists had ceased attending AAA meetings prior to the origin of the ABA. ABA activities helped to encourage pioneers like Diggs, Drake, Ross and Fowler to attend AAA meetings in the 70's and 80's.

6. Laurence Foster, according to a former student and his class secretary, never taught anthropology at Lincoln University. In addition, both my father and my brother-in-law, former students of Foster at Lincoln University, were surprised to learn that he was an anthropologist, although he taught sociology.

7. William Allison Davis is better known as an educational researcher on intelligence testing and scholastic achievement than as an anthropologist.

8. Arthur Huff Fauset never taught anthropology on the college level.

9. St Clair Drake was identified more in the 40's and 50's with sociology rather than anthropology.

10. Past chairs of the Caucus of Black Anthropologists include Delmos Jones, past president of the Association of Black Anthropologists including Anselme Remy (interim executive, 1975-77); Vera Green (1977-78); Anselme Remy (1978-79); Johnnetta Cole (1979-80); John Stewart (1980-83); A. Lynn Bolles (1983-84); Tony Whitehead (1984-85); Ira E. Harrison (1985-87).

11. ABA regions are: WEST - Hawaii, Washington, Arizona, Oregon, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Alaska, California, New Mexico; MIDWEST - North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio; SOUTH - Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands; EAST - Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine.

12. These four are not the only ABA members to illustrate these ideas. However, except for Vera, who is deceased, they have persevered in their dedication to the ideals of the caucus and the association with their time, talents, and funds.

13. Vera Mae Green died of cancer on January 17, 1982. See 'In Memory of Vera Mae Green', *Notes from the ABA* (8.2) dedicated to the memory of Vera M. Green, Ph.D. (1928-1982), former president of the ABA. Also see Woodbury (1982).

14. 'Call and Response' was the name of the questionnaire Shelia made the call for information in. Those names responded. In the Black Church, call and response interactions frequently take place between the ministry and the congregation.

15. Shelia Walker was also the first West regional

Wolf, E. R. 1974. American Anthropologists and American Society. In *Reinventing Anthropology* (ed. Hymes, D.), pp.251-263. New York: Random House.

Woodbury, N. 1982. Vera Mae Green. *Anthropology Newsletter* 23 (March) 3:5.

representative of the ABA in 1975.

16. See Jenkins 1980 as an example.

17. Baber is currently an Associate Professor.

18. Vera Green, Shelia Walker, Glenn Jordan, and Ira Harrison are not the only individuals who have volunteered time and effort to ABA. However, they are the best representatives from each region on commitment and consistency to the goals for which ABA originated. Other persons who contributed time, energy, and money to ABA are Johnnetta Cole, Anselme Remy, Patricia Guthrie, Jerry Wright, Delmos Jones, Yvonne Jones, Gwen Mikell, John

Stewart, Council Taylor, Tony Whitehead, Charles Warren, Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, Rhett Jones, John Gwaltney, Eleanor Ramsey, A. Lynn Bolles, Elliott Skinner, William Shack, James Gibbs, Niara Sudarkasa, Willie Baber, Yolanda Moses, Faye Harrison, and Dallas Browne.

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# conferences

## CROSSING ESCALATORS: THE AAA'S 1986 MEETING

Robert Towler in his analysis of Christian belief in Leeds found that believers in that city fell into two groups, those who celebrated more fervently Christmas and the birth of their religion, and those who preferred the perhaps more subtle implications of Easter and death and rebirth. I heard him say once that most hymns showed the same division and that only Cardinal Newman had managed to express both forms of celebration in the same hymn. I found myself remembering this as I waited to leave New York on my return from Philadelphia and the American Anthropological Association's annual pre-Christmas jamboree, during the first week of December. I also reflected on the nice reversal that the Association of Social Anthropologists' annual ritual of renewal in the U.K. is held around Easter. To my British colleagues I was born once only as a Mancunian (and swaddled unsuccessfully in Marxism) and my presence at the ASA conference on Cognitive Anthropology a matter of surprised comment. It was a US graduate of Cambridge, whom I have most often met in Sainsbury's there, who told me in Washington DC 1985 that I was 'matter out of place', but apologized profusely recognizing my serial rebirths in 1986. Well-known anthropological Newmans in this regard must include Mary Douglas and the late Victor Turner but also Raymond Firth, Aidan Southall and at least two Williams Watson.

I do not think that it is just foreign visitors whose intellectual integrity is slaughtered and triumphantly reborn (if they are lucky) at the triple A. (Although it is rare for a graduate of Chicago to seek political refuge in Berkeley and non-existent in the other direction.) The meetings are held not in the cloistered calm of Oxbridge or Keele, Kent or Norwich but in the overheated sameness of a bustling and to the British at least, expensive, even at conference rates, hotel.

As a veteran of four such meetings I have no more encountered the excitements of the soap-opera Hotel than I have come across Appleby and other than intellectual or syntactical crimes in the many Oxford and Cambridge colleges I have visited with the ASA. To the hotel, AAA is just another convention and the foreign visitor who for Apex reasons arrives too early and leaves too late may well meet the one before and the one after, in this case electronics salesmen and educational administrators. Since the meetings coincided also with the Army-Navy football game on this occasion, one met in the elevators sixpack-carrying, seven foot giants in dress uniforms carrying encouraging streamers saying 'Down with the Army', making me feel both more and less at home than usual.

The other early arrivals are job-hopefuls or despairers for whom there are at this stage training seminars on various aspects of self-presentation; members of the Board of Directors whom democracy requires arrive early, leave late and miss most of the academic content of the meeting to run the Association's increasingly complex affairs; and attenders at pre-meetings conferences like this year's two-day event on Visual Anthropology.

With the opening of registration on Wednesday afternoon, the literally thousands of conferees arrive in a flurry of warm greetings to colleagues not seen for at least a year and often much longer. First-time attenders, graduate students or recent PhDs look on and feel, realistically, excluded by these embraces and cries of esoterically shortened names. An innovation this year was a special official welcome party for those attending for the first time. Meanwhile the academic programme has begun with neither bang nor whimper but slow build-up until at its peak on Thursday and Friday, its 17 editors will have filled all 26 meeting rooms at the conference

headquarters hotel and another eight at the Holiday Inn, five blocks away. Participants at sessions may number anything from four or five to several hundred depending on the subject, the fame or competence of the speakers and the time of day and day of week. Interwoven with the academic meetings are the business meetings of the AAA itself and of the American Ethnological Society and the other thirteen constituent units as well as numerous parties and receptions given by units, university departments and the Association. The climax is according to taste and inclination: the AAA business meeting on Thursday evening, the heavy dispersed partying on Friday, or the Awards Ceremony and Distinguished Lecture on Saturday, or, since the US is the home of the movies and thus capable of multiple climax, all three.

This year's Distinguished Lecturer was an old friend, and intellectual affine as the husband of Kathleen Gough, David Aberle, who brought us up to date on the latest thinking of the more sophisticated continuing undercurrent in anthropology of evolutionist thought - something I, at least, needed since I had last heard him in the Manchester seminar thirty years ago where his reception had not been of the warmest as we both recalled. Characteristically he was not only erudite about modern biological and natural science thinking and about tribal societies but drew ecological conclusions about nuclear energy and ensuring the future of modern urban industrial society as well. To David and to many others with quite diverse theoretical views, the naiveties of crude sociobiology are not a stimulus to turn their backs on biology but to find a more intellectually acceptable relationship. The earlier part of this meeting, as dotted with standing ovations as a Conservative Party Conference but in this case with genuine feeling and justification, had seen awards to a schools department in Hawaii, and to Ward Goodenough, J.