

Department of Africana Studies

The Department of Africana Studies is an interdisciplinary department encompassing the study of the history and culture of Africa and the African diaspora. Its professors are trained in a broad range of disciplines including anthropology, folklore, history, language and literature, musicology, political science, and sociology, among others. The Department of Africana Studies at Rutgers University is committed to “scholarship in the service of social justice worldwide.” The nexus of intellectualism, culture, and activism embodied by Paul Robeson is of central concern to our faculty and is reflected in our scholarship, teaching, and student opportunities.

Africana studies is the study, research, interpretation, and dissemination of knowledge concerning African-American, African, and Caribbean affairs and culture. Using the tools of the social sciences and humanities, Africana studies examines the structure, organization, problems, and perspectives of the peoples of Africa and the African diaspora. Africana studies also examines issues of politics and social change in African-American communities and various African and Caribbean nations. The term “Africana” incorporates the three areas of concentration within the department—African, African-American, and diaspora/comparative social sciences and humanities. The African diaspora comprises people of African origin outside the African continent, and is studied in comparative context.

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The Department of
AFRICANA STUDIES
40th Anniversary Celebration

The Power of Change: 100 Years of the NAACP Civil Rights in the Age of Obama

A lecture and panel discussion featuring
Benjamin Todd Jealous, President and CEO of the
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

October 27, 2009

Sponsored by the Office of the President, the Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, the School of Arts and Sciences, and the Department of Africana Studies. Cosponsored by the Student Chapter of the NAACP.

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Photo: Jeffrey MacMillan

Benjamin Todd Jealous

President and CEO, NAACP

Benjamin Todd Jealous grew up believing that there was no higher calling than to further the cause of freedom in this country and in the world. It is a mind-set he inherited from his parents and grandparents. Their drive for community betterment blazed the trail for Jealous's own deep commitment to social justice, public service, and human rights activism. Now, as the 17th president and chief executive officer of the NAACP and the youngest person to hold the position in the organization's 100-year history, Jealous is well positioned to answer the call.

During his career, he has served as president of the Rosenberg Foundation, director of the U.S. Human Rights Program at Amnesty International, and executive director

of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, a federation of more than 200 black community newspapers. From his early days of organizing voter registration drives up until his nomination and election as NAACP president, Jealous has been motivated by civic duty and a constant need to improve the lives of America's underrepresented. All things considered, Jealous's leadership roles and active community involvement have well prepared him for his current duties as president of the NAACP. In fact, his path through journalism and the Black Press is not unlike several other former NAACP presidents, including Roy Wilkins, Walter White, Ida B. Wells, and W.E.B. Dubois.

As a student at Columbia University, he worked in Harlem as a community organizer for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. On campus, Jealous led schoolwide movements for homeless rights, full-need financial aid and need-blind admissions, and environmental justice.

These protests ultimately led to the suspension of Jealous and three other student leaders. Jealous used this time off to work as a field organizer helping to lead a campaign that prevented the State of Mississippi from closing two of its three public historically black universities and converting one of them into a prison. He remained in Mississippi to take a job at the *Jackson Advocate*, an African-American newspaper based in the state's capital. His reporting—for the frequently firebombed weekly—was credited with exposing corruption among high-ranking officials at the state prison in Parchman. His investigations also helped to acquit a black farmer who had been wrongfully and maliciously accused of arson. His work at the *Jackson Advocate* eventually led to his promotion to managing editor.

After graduating from Columbia in 1997 with a degree in political science, Jealous went on to serve as executive director of the National Newspaper Publishers Association. While there, he rebuilt its 90-year-old national news service and launched a web-based initiative that more than doubled the number of black newspapers publishing online.

Active in civic life, Jealous is a board member of the California Council for the Humanities and the Association of Black Foundation Executives, as well as a member of the Asia Society. He is married to Lia Epperson Jealous, a professor of constitutional law and former civil rights litigator with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. They presently reside in Washington, D.C., with their young daughter.

The Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences' Department of Africana Studies welcomes you to the first program in a series of events commemorating its 40th anniversary during the 2009–2010 academic year.

Program

Introduction

Gayle T. Tate, Chair, Department of Africana Studies

Welcome

Richard L. McCormick, President
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Introduction of the Speaker

The Reverend M. William Howard Jr., Chair of Rutgers Board of Governors

The Power of Change: 100 Years of the NAACP Civil Rights in the Age of Obama

Benjamin Todd Jealous, President and CEO, NAACP

On February 12, 2009, the NAACP marked its 100th anniversary. The NAACP headquarters, based in Baltimore, Maryland, along with its 1,700 units nationwide, will host celebrations and observances throughout the year ending on February 12, 2010, that highlight the significant role the organization has played in leading social change in America. The NAACP is the nation's oldest, largest, and most widely recognized grassroots-based civil rights organization. Its more than half-million members and supporters throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, conducting voter mobilization and advocating for equal opportunity in the public and private sectors.

Panel Discussion

Guest Panelists

- **James E. Harris**, President, New Jersey State Conference of the NAACP
- **Sharon Robinson-Briggs**, Mayor of the City of Plainfield
- **Theodore Carrington**, Environmental Justice Committee Chair, New Jersey NAACP
- **Nkechinyere Ugoji**, Program Coordinator, TRIO Student Support Services Program

Questions and Answers

Reception