Highlights from Spring 2007

UNESCO TST 6th Annual Summer Institute: hosted by Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition
Yale University

In June, site coordinator Lisa Randle represented the CLAW program at the 6th annual UNESCO TST Curriculum Initiative Summer Institute. Orbie Smith, a curriculum specialist at Pee Dee Elementary School in Horry County, attended her second national meeting. We were joined on the campus of Yale University by site coordinators and teachers from Connecticut, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Vermont.

The national meeting opened with dinner, a Yoruba prayer and libation, and welcome greetings from Yale and UNESCO representatives, Dr. Nancy Ruther, Dr. Nan Woodruff, Dr. Sylvia Frey, and Nana Amos. Dr. Robert P. Forbes gave a presentation on the historical circumstances and commemorative activity on both sides of the Atlantic relating to the British and American banning of the slave trade. The Honorable Keith L.T. Wright, New York State Assemblyman (70th District), discussed legislation (passed in 2005) to establish the Amistad Commission to review statewide school curricula regarding the slave trade in America in social studies classes. Dr. Karen Jackson Weaver, Executive Director of New Jersey Amistad Commission, spoke about the New Jersey Department of Education’s work to implement materials and texts which integrate the history and contributions of African Americans and the descendants of the African Diaspora in the public school system. The evening ended with the presentation of commemorative gifts from the UNESCO-USA sites to mark the launch of the 2007-08 Atlantic Freedom Tour of Amistad America. Arthur Hardy-Dubleday, Assistant Director of Development, and Donald George, a Sierra Leonean who is the International Multicultural Education Coordinator, were on hand to receive these gifts, items that iconographically represent each site’s connection to the slave trade, for display at each stop of the Amistad America.

Over the weekend, site coordinators and teachers shared projects and lesson plans from the past year. One of the activities emerging from the 2006 institute that all sites plan to continue is to expand upon the work of Joseph Definer of Vermont, to garner more recognition of Arlington National Cemetery’s Section #27 where United States Colored Troops (USCT) are buried. Ron Thompson and Phillip Williamson, both of Duke

Message from the Director

Academic year 2006-7 was one of the busiest in the CLAW program’s history. February saw an international conference on the Irish Atlantic funded in part by the Humanities Council, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Irish government, and the American Council for Irish Studies. The conference was followed immediately by a tourism planning charrette co-sponsored by the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor, and the College’s Hospitality and Tourism Management department and the Office of Research and Grants Administration. The charrette was the most visible event so far in the CLAW program’s efforts to commemorate the bicentennial of the banning of the international slave trade and to use that commemoration to encourage greater acknowledgment of African American contributions to the material and cultural development of this region. A pdf version of our booklet listing the extraordinarily rich variety of commemorative events coming up in 2007-8 and around the city of Charleston is available at http://www.cofc.edu/atlanticworld/Conferences%20Page Commemoration%20Book%20Update.pdf.

Beyond these one-time events, and in collaboration with all of the charrette partners, CLAW has moved to establish a number of initiatives that will ensure the long-term sustainability of African American heritage tourism projects that render visible a more inclusive picture of Charleston’s history than has generally been presented before. The program has applied for funds to this end from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and to the Preservation and Access division of the NEH to establish a database of public records pertaining to African Americans in the Lowcountry up to 1875. Simply completing these two grant applications was a massive collaborative effort and I thank everyone involved so far.

Starting this fall, CLAW is working with local genealogy expert Wevonneda Minis to host a conference and workshop series on African American genealogical research, starting with a first one-day conference on October 27th (see details inside), and continuing in 2008 with a series of six hands-on workshops. We are also well on the way in our planning for the conference in March 2008 “Ending the International Slave Trade: A Bicentenary Inquiry.” Full details of this conference will be printed in the Spring issue of Connections.

Simon Lewis
Director—Program in the Carolina Lowcountry
and Atlantic World
Associate Professor of English
Energy in Cincinnati, Ohio, presented a workshop on race relations. To wrap up the weekend, Dr. Frank Mitchell, a noted scholar of Connecticut's role in African Americans' journey to full citizenship, led a walking tour of Grove Street Cemetery and New Haven Green. (Lisa Randle)

The Irish in the Atlantic World

Sponsored in part by the Humanities Council of South Carolina, the American Conference for Irish Studies, the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the South Carolina Irish Historical Society, CLAW held a major conference on the Irish in the Atlantic World between February 28 and March 2. With over one hundred people registered from all over North America as well as Ireland, and with many more attending public plenaries, the conference got off to a great start with a guided walk of Irish Charleston, led by Stephen White of the Charleston Historical Society. It was followed by an opening reception sponsored by the Colonial Government of Ireland in New York. After opening remarks by Brendan O'Coill on behalf of the Irish government, Dr. Kerry Quinn of the University of Alabama at Birmingham gave a plenary lecture on Ireland and the American South. Other plenaries by Dr. Donald MacRaid of the University of Ulster on "The Orange Atlantic" and by Edmund Murray of the Center for Irish Latin American Studies on the Irish in Latin America were also well attended and well received. The final plenary on Thursday, March 1 by Dr. Mick Moloney of New York University on the music of Irish-American impresarios Harrigan and Hart was an appropriate musical end to the major public plenaries. The conference concluded with a gala luncheon, fittingly held in the historic long room of McCady's Restaurant, and a final plenary moderated by David Gloger, breaking down themes and including prominent scholars Drs. Kerby Miller of the University of Missouri, Nicholas Canny of the National University of Ireland, Galway, Janet Nolan of Loyola Chicago, Charlie Fanning of Southern Illinois University, and Donald MacRaid of the University of Ulster.

In these major events there were ten sessions featuring about thirty-five papers. The conference succeeded in its aim of being interdisciplinary as possible with sessions ranging from the Irish in the American Colonies to the Latin American/Caribbean in the family stories. 7 p.m., Charleston County Public Library.

At the final panel discussion, Kerby Miller described the conference as one of the "most stimulating experiences" in his intellectual life. Dr. Eamon Wall, President of the American Conference for Irish Studies, wrote a letter to President Benson expressing how this had been one of "the most original and best organized conferences" he had attended "in the past twenty years." The organizing committee was also pleased that, thanks to the active support of the local Irish societies, there were large turnouts from the local community at plenary events. A selection of papers is already in the process of being edited for the CLAW series at the University of South Carolina Press.

Commemoration and Collaboration: A South Carolina Tourism Summit

On March 6th and 7th, 2007 the CLAW program, supported by funding from the SC National Heritage Corridor and the College of Charleston, brought together more than seventy local educators, historians, tourism professionals, and community development professionals to discuss ways to increase the visibility of slavery-related sites and tours in and around Charleston, drawing attention to the international dimensions of the slave trade and its abolition.

In preliminary meetings and discussions, the interested parties had recognized the intellectual and ethical urgency of drawing attention to African American contributions to Charleston, the Lowcountry, and beyond—of "rendering things visible" the title of the CLAW program's grant application to the NEH—and of "overcoming the acknowledgment gap" the title of the overall commemoration project) in existing tourism, that generally underplays African American contributions. Local hunger for such recognition coupled with demand from visitors from outside the area leads us to believe that we can devise economically viable tourism strategies that meet these two goals.

Steered through the proceedings by CLAW Director Simon Lewis, Mr. Bernie Mazzyck (Chair of the SC Association of Community Development Corporations), George McDaniel (Drayton Hall), Perrin Lawton (Convention and Visitors Bureau), Queen Quet Marquetta Goodwine (Gullah/Geechee Coalition), Michael Allen (National Park Service), Joe James (West Africa Council of SC), and Bernard Powers (College of Charleston), delegates identified a number of conceptual issues as well as a number of concrete proposals. These proposals were then taken in hand by facilitators John Hildreth and Joe McGill (National Trust for Historic Preservation), whose guidance a smaller group of delegates drew up a list of priority projects: the establishment of an African American Heritage Association; the establishment of an African American Family Heritage Center; the creation of a comprehensive website dedicated to African American heritage in and around the Charleston area; the systematic installation of historic markers; and the design and erection of a public memorial.

Further discussion of these goals was held on a blog-site, via e-mail and at subsequent meetings at the College in April and June. A full report of all these proceedings is available from the CLAW office.

Since the implementation of the goals above will be costly, the College of Charleston Foundation has established the Lowcountry African American Heritage Fund for which we earnestly seek your donations. To make a contribution to this fund on-line, please visit http://ia.cofc.edu, or contact the CLAW office.
The Hines Prize is awarded biennially for the first book manuscript on a Carolina Lowcountry and/or Atlantic World topic. Dr. T.J. Desch-Obi beat out a strong field of competitors to win the 2007 Hines Prize for his manuscript *Fighting for Honor: The History of African Martial Arts Traditions in the Atlantic World*. Dr. Desch-Obi’s detailed and comprehensive account shows how enslaved Africans, particularly Igbos and captives from what is now Angola, brought their local martial arts traditions with them to the New World. Whether in Brazil, Haiti, or rural South Carolina these traditions in unarmed combat and in stick-fighting were maintained, honed, and adapted to local conditions, playing significant roles in enslaved communities’ self-defense, resistance and establishment of self-worth. What scholars such as Lorenzo Turner, Robert Farris Thompson, Daniel Littlefield and Judith Carney have done in drawing attention to the importance of African influence on New World culture in language, art, music, religion, and agriculture, Desch-Obi now does for African influence on physical combat techniques and other displays of physical prowess in the Americas.

Dr. Desch-Obi earned his Ph.D. from UCLA, and currently teaches in the history department at the City University of New York’s Baruch College. He is the third winner of the biennial Hines Prize, the first two being Brad Wood (2003) and Nic Butler (2005). As with the two previous winners’ manuscripts, Dr. Desch-Obi’s manuscript will appear as a book in the University of South Carolina Press’s Lowcountry and Atlantic World series.

The USC Press series has added three more titles since the last issue of *Connections: Margaret Cormack’s Saints and Their Cults in the Atlantic World, Jonathan Mercantini’s Who Shall Rule at Home?, and Arlin Migliazzo’s To Make This Land Our Own*. David Geggus’s volume of essays on responses to the Haitian Revolution has been reprinted a second time and Bertrand van Ruymbeke’s first Huguenot volume is scheduled for reprinting, while a number of additional titles are in various stages of preparation, including Hines Prize-winners Desch-Obi’s *Fighting for Honor* and Butler’s *Votaries of Apollo*. For a full list of the twelve volumes published in the series so far go to http://www.cofc.edu/atlanticworld/publishing.html or http://www.sc.edu/uscpress/series.html.

The deadline for the next Hines Prize is May 1st, 2009. If you have a first manuscript in hand or in preparation relating to any aspect of the Carolina Lowcountry and/or the Atlantic World or if you know others who do, please consider entering it for the 2009 competition. The prize carries a cash award of $1,000 and preferential consideration by the University of South Carolina Press for the Program’s book series.