especially what they know about the struggle for civil rights. He concluded that: “So, when we look at episodes in African American history or the classic civil rights movement through the lens of popular culture, films, and memory, we need to be very careful and practice critical thinking. Most importantly, we need to properly historicize these events.”

Dr. Dagbovie then shifted the conversation to a discussion about how he defines and conceptualizes African American history, largely based upon a chapter from his book, *African American History Reconsidered* (University of Illinois Press, 2010).

He then concluded his lecture with a deconstruction of what we now call African American History Month, a project that was started in 1926 by Carter G. Woodson and his “Negro History Week.” Dr. Dagbovie showed a host of images that indicated how Black History Month has been used by advertising companies and corporations. Such commercialization of the month began a far back as the 1920s when it was only a week long. Dr. Dagbovie shared images of ads from grocery stores, about footwear and hair products which exploited this annual event. An example of such advertising can be seen below, in which a beer company has taken advantage of Black History Month and its audience. It is important to recognize voices such as Dr. Dagbovie’s when analyzing something that has grown to have a lot of influence and importance over America. African American history is vital to understanding American society, yet today it has also fallen prey to companies who seek to earn a dollar. Next Black History Month be more aware of what you see during this time and ask yourself “what, today, is the meaning of Black History Month?”

Dr. Pero G. Dagbovie is a Professor of History and Graduate Director at Michigan State University. Dr. Dagbovie was a special guest speaker for this year’s Black History Month. His lecture was entitled: *Defining America’s Promise: Reflecting on the Meaning of African American History.* He opened his lecture in the MPR by introducing components of his lecture which focused on three issues: 1), popular representations of black history in recent Hollywood films; 2), the fundamental meaning of black history; and 3), the origins, evolution, deeper meanings, and the present status of Black History Month.

Dr. Dagbovie provided an analysis of some of the most recent films that have been released dealing with African American history, including *The Help,* *42,* *12 Years a Slave,* and *The Butler.*

Part of his argument was that many young people today use such films to construct their notions of African American history, especially about the struggle for civil rights. He concluded that: “So, when we look at episodes in African American history or the classic civil rights movement through the lens of popular culture, films, and memory, we need to be very careful and practice critical thinking. Most importantly, we need to properly historicize these events.”

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**Special Topics in this Issue:**

- What is Black History Month all about?
- What is Race and Culture Studies?
- Commemorating the life of Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Surviving Imprisonment in the state of Washington.
- What does the media really show us?
- Recognizing our exceptional students.

**Inside this issue:**

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- False Imprisonment: 3
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Black History Month 2014 Brings Dialogue to EWU

“A Legacy of Fortitude, A Future of Triumph: Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964” was the theme of this year’s Black History Month. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was put in place to end discrimination based on race, ethnicity, nationality and gender. What we learned in the lectures, panels and films of Black History month this year, is that America still has a way to go in order for the law to be fully followed by individuals and institutions.

In collaboration with the JFK library the month began by commemorating the media moments of the 1960s at a reception in the library; there was music, dance and poetry performances along with a guest speaker. The different panels consisted of the following topics: Black Liberation in America and South Africa, giving knowledge on their similarities; three men who lived during the 60s shared personal stories of, and connections to the Civil Rights Movement (pictured bottom left); brothers and sisters from Black Greek organizations discussed the importance, concerns, and struggles of each in history and today; and the last panel discussed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its implications then and now (pictured top left).

The lectures began with a talk by professor Rachel Dolezal about Black Hair and the struggle and liberation throughout time in relation to it. Professor Angela Schwendiman gave a talk on the racial divide which she posits still exists today. There were two guest speakers; Gerald Hanker-son, who discussed his false imprisonment and his road to freedom (see pg. 3). While Dr. Pero Dagbovie discussed the meaning of African American history (see pg. 1), Dr. Dagbovie and Dr. Jerry Garcia, professor of Chicano Studies and History, also sat on a panel discussing the connections between African American and Chicano communities.

The month also included the screenings of The New Black and Central Park Five; one discussing the connection between gay rights and the Black civil rights struggle and the other chronicling the story of Black and Chicano boys who were falsely imprisoned for rape (movie available at the library).

There were an estimated 800 people who attended these events. Faculty, staff, students and community members participated in discussions and gained knowledge from the events. Please join us again next year.

Launched: Race & Culture Studies Major

As of Winter quarter 2013 Eastern has a new major based on race and culture. Race and Culture Studies as a field of study emerged in the late sixties and early seventies in response to claims by university students that traditional disciplines did not include the study of the experiences of racial “minorities.”

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the field, courses in Race and Culture Studies draw from a variety of disciplines such as racial and cultural studies, history, political science, sociology and communication studies. The deep and broad focus of the discipline not only prepares students for understanding the experiences of the various racialized communities in the United States, but also helps them understand and examine American society at large, as well as the important continuities and commonalities across other national and racial boundaries. The degree consists of a total of 80 credits. Forty credits are foundational courses. To obtain the remaining forty, you must pick two cultural studies fields Africana, Chicano or American Indian studies, to focus on, receiving 20 credits from each.

If you are interested in the Race & Culture Studies major contact, the Executive Director Dr. Deirdre Almeida at dalmeida@ewu.edu or 509.359.2441. Or you can contact the directors of Africana or Chicano Studies.

A New Era: Black Student Union

By: Satori Butler

The Black Student Union has made tremendous progress over the last year. Since 2012 the Black Student Union general membership has doubled. We have also been collaborating with a lot of organizations on campus to bridge the divide and show that the Black Student Union is not limited to African American students. We have also worked hard to bring faculty and staff together at our traditional Soul Food Sundays every month. As president this year I can proudly say that we have been very successful and hope to keep this legacy going. We meet regularly on Mondays in Monroe 204 at 3:30pm. We have regular SWAG sessions (students with a goal) study sessions on Tuesdays and Thursday at 4pm in the library. All students are welcome. If you have any questions for the Black Student Union please feel free to contact us at ewubsu4@gmail.com or visit us on Facebook: ewubsu/ Facebook.
In collaboration with Student Activities, Involvement and Leadership and the Africana Studies Program, Gerald Hankerson the President of the NAACP Alaska, Oregon and Washington region, was brought as a keynote speaker for Black History Month 2014.

Mr. Hankerson presented the keynote presentation *Sentenced to Life: One Man’s Story of Imprisonment and Freedom*. He spoke to an audience of over 300 about his life story of being falsely convicted at the age of 18 and sentenced to life in prison. He was the first man in Washington State to receive clemency on a death sentence. His story highlighted the injustices and institutional racism that exists in US society.

Bringing Gerald Hankerson to speak at Eastern Washington University brought attention to the issue of race and how racism is manifested in the 21st century; his story opened up an avenue for conversation around this issue. He spent time with student leaders to talk about issues that are important to them. He also met with faculty and staff and discussed the importance of educators becoming more active in the lives of students of color. He informed the staff that prisons are being built based on the reading level of 4th grade African American boys. Most of the audience did not know this was the case and realized the importance of reaching students young. His visit was well received by those who attended. Currently Hankerson serves as a Board member of The Defender’s Association. He also serves on the State’s Advisory Board of the Office of Public Defense, and he is a member of Seattle’s Race & Social Justice Initiative (RSJI).

The Africana Studies Program partnered with Spokane Community College to provide a Community Course to the Cheney/Spokane community for the first time in fall quarter 2013. SCC provides space for the EWU Africans Studies course which allows it to be more accessible to the community. EWU’s Africana program and SCC will be hosting the second quarter of the Africana Studies Community Course in Spokane, WA from April 10th-May 15th.

Each week we invite scholars from various disciplines to provide a lecture and lead discussion on a topic centered on African American History & Culture. This is a 6-week course held once per week from 5:00PM-7:00 PM. This time frame allows for “lecture,” film and discussion. The idea is to offer community members an opportunity to learn in a communal space about the African American experience. Participants can pick and choose which session to attend. There is no charge to participate. We hope to see you there.

The Community Course is offered both Fall and Spring quarters. This quarter it will run on Thursdays from April 10th-May 15th.

BSU: Black Tie Banquet

By: Ayanna Fernandez

Eastern Washington University’s 2013-2014 Black Student Union brought back a tradition that the campus has not seen since the 1990’s: The Black Tie Banquet & Ball.

In the past, the Black Tie Banquet & Ball was hosted by the Black Student Union annually. The organization would acknowledge students and faculty members across the university with awards for the work they had accomplished.

The Black Student Union decided to continue with these traditions; giving awards to those with outstanding academic achievement, community service and athletic excellence.

On February 28, 2014 The Black Tie Banquet & Ball was held in Hargreaves Hall on EWU’s campus. The theme of the ball was The Harlem Renaissance to acknowledge people of color throughout that era. Awards were given to commence the banquet, followed by a light dinner and student performances and finally a ball to bring the event to a closure.

This is a tradition The Black Student Union plans to continue yearly. We hope to see you there next February.
Joshuena Williams is a freshman with a 3.3 GPA pursuing a degree in Humanities, with a Religious Studies minor. She chose to move from Los Angeles to Cheney because she wanted “to try something different.” For some people difference can be uncomfortable, even scary, but for Joshuena difference is exciting, and she has been actively involved in making the EWU campus a place where differences are valued. She has been involved in several student clubs on campus, including Eagle Pride, the Black Student Union and MECHA, and has been active in social justice issues by travelling to Olympia to Lobby for the Dream Act and Comprehensive Health Care, participating in the Women’s and Gender Studies Activist in Residence Program, and participating in a Leadership Conference sponsored by the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane. Joshuena’s goal is to be a force for change in the world, and after graduation she plans to join the Peace Corps and travel to Indonesia or Africa to assist with educational programs, unless something different comes along before she gets there. Joshuena summed things up in a recent Easterner interview written by Ayanna Fernandez, “I am black. I am a woman. I am a lesbian. To society those may be seen as disadvantages, but I believe that it makes me so much more powerful.”

New Micro-aggressions Brochure

Africanas Studies just released a new brochure about Racial Micro-aggressions. “Racial micro-aggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group, and are expressed in three forms: micro-assaults, micro-insults and micro-invalidations.”

Today many people think we live in a post-racial society, and they do not realize that some actions and remarks are actually discriminatory, despite one thinking they are compliments or fact. The brochure covers all of the forms of micro-aggressions and discusses how they are harmful, how we can combat them, whether you are the aggressor or the target, how they are manifested in higher education, and it also gives examples of some racial micro-aggressions experienced by faculty and students here at Eastern.

MLK Day March and Service

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: ‘What are you doing for others?’” On January 20th, 2014 Africana Studies, the Office of Community Engagement, the Black Student Union and other EWU students came together to “take a day on.”

The day began with a rally which incorporated Spokane political figures and a special guest speaker. The guest speaker encouraged those who would partake in the march, to walk off any stress or concerns in their lives. “Just walk it off.”

The rally ended with Dr. Martin Luther King’s most infamous speech, most commonly referred to as the “I have a Dream” speech which was played in its entirety; allowing the audience to hear every word leading up to the dream.

The march followed, with Eastern students, faculty and staff marching behind a start something big banner to show school spirit and people from the Cheney/Spokane community carrying signs from their respective organizations, in step with the drum line. Later that day, 130 Eastern students volunteered at ten organizations around the Spokane area. The BSU and Africana Studies faculty/staff volunteered at the MLK Family Outreach Center of Spokane.

Remember what Dr. King stood for, and be sure to join us next year, not only for the rally and march, but for a day of service as well.
In the fall quarter Africana Studies brought Dr. Anna Everett of the University of California, at Santa Barbara to speak to students about race, gender and culture in the media. Dr. Everett is a Professor of Film, Television and New Media Studies and the former Chair of the Department of Film and Media Studies at UCSB.

Dr. Everett was invited to be the Shirley Graham Du Bois Fall Lecturer. Shirley Graham Du Bois was a writer and also the wife of African American scholar W.E.B. DuBois. Mrs. Du Bois attended and graduated high school from Lewis & Clark in Spokane. This lecture series seeks to continue her legacy of education and activism.

Dr. Everett spoke on numerous components of race, gender and culture in the media, particularly the video game industry. She has been researching the ways in which marginalized people are portrayed in video games, or are not portrayed at all. Dr. Everett spoke about the negative portrayals of Blacks in the video game Grand Theft Auto. Blacks are never innocent bystanders, and they mostly represent those persons on drugs, persons selling themselves, and those committing theft and other crimes. Dr. Everett also assessed whether persons playing these games blur lines between fantasy and reality. The research she reviewed created yet another problematic issue with the video game world; the research posited that people of color who play these games will have difficulty distinguishing between fantasy and reality, and that they would be more likely to live out game experiences in real life than whites would. Dr. Everett was concerned by this and stated that research needed to continue to correct such biased conclusions.

Dr. Everett also mentioned that the portrayal of Black women in video games is very stereotyped. She specifically talked about the Sheva Alomar character in Resident Evil 5. Overall Everett found problems with the game’s synopsis, as the game was located in Africa and the tribal and primitive renditions of locals were very disturbing and problematic. Even “Sheva” was portrayed in a primitive way in parts of the game (see picture below). Dr. Everett wanted to bring attention to this form of media which easily steals people’s time, and she asked whether such media can harm not only the player, but those who the player interacts with on a daily basis.

Her lecture opened up discussion which will continue as video games progress and become even more popular. Next time you play a video game pay attention to the representation of the characters and whether it could be seen as problematic in your eyes or in the eyes of another.

Anna Everett, PhD

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**Martin Luther King Jr. Day School Supply Drive**

In January for more than ten years the Africana Studies Program holds the Martin Luther King, Jr. School Supply Drive. It is in commemoration of Dr. King and his continued work to give to those who need assistance. MLK day is a day not to take off but to do something positive for one’s community; that is what this drive asks of people.

The purpose of the drive is to collect school items in the middle of the academic year to help those grade school students in Cheney and Spokane who are unable to replenish their supplies, prior to the spring semester, on their own.

The drive took place from January 3rd until January 24th this year. Boxes for donations were located in Africana Studies, the EWU bookstore and the Cheney Owl Pharmacy. This year over 607 items were collected. The school supplies were then turned over to Cheney Outreach who make sure materials collected get to families in need.

Africana Studies wishes to thank those who donated this year and would like to encourage you all to donate something to this cause next year.

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**Africana Silent Auction 2013**

In the fall of 2013, Africana Studies hosted their Annual Silent Auction and Welcome reception. This auction collected over 20 items donated by 17 community members. Items included ranged from books, movie tickets to gift cards. The purpose of this event is to raise funds for Africana events such as the Williams Graduation Celebration. Africana hopes to make this event larger next year, and hopes you’ll participate by donating and/or bidding on the items.
In Remembrance: BSU Holds Memorial about Violence in Chicago

On January 17th this year the Black Student Union held a candle lighting to raise awareness about violence in Chicago, Illinois and those that have lost their lives because of it. A Light for Life Memorial Candle Lighting was an hour long event which began in the PUB with a guest speaker who grew up on the Southside of Chicago. Tommy Williams, Jr. is a Co-Founder and CEO of Operation Healthy Families in Spokane. He came to Washington to play football for EWU back in the 90s. Tommy spoke at this BSU event about how his mother always worried about his safety in Chicago. Her worry made him more aware of his surroundings and his actions. He spoke about coming to Cheney and feeling more relaxed. He said that when he returned to Chicago his family and friends were concerned that he was not being careful as he moved around the city. Tommy shared with the audience about the day to day life in Chicago. He spoke about the numerous friends and relatives he’s lost to gun violence.

The purpose of this event was to inform the EWU community, living in Cheney where one can easily relax in their surroundings, that in Chicago there is a homicide almost every day. The BSU took this time to light candles for those who have lost their lives in Chicago, throughout the U.S. and the world to violence. Attendees also bought and released balloons in remembrance. The funds received at the event went to support organizations in Chicago who try to raise awareness of the crime that is paralyzing the city.

Faculty Spotlight: Professor Angela Schwendiman

A film enthusiast, Mrs. Schwendiman attended US Santa Barbara and completed her first two degrees in Film Studies. She later worked for four years at a local NBC affiliate in Spokane before returning to school at Eastern Washington University to complete her post baccalaureate in Electronic Media and Film. During her studies as a graduate student, she discovered her interest and developed a love for African American Cinema, the Black Film Historiography, as well as Third World Cinema and the expression of the Empowerment Theory film. Her Master’s Thesis focused on ‘Resolving the Problem of the ‘Two-ness’ and the Struggle for Identity in Independent African American Films.

Professor Schwendiman began her career as an adjunct faculty for the Spokane Community Colleges teaching Film Communications. She subsequently joined Eastern Washington University as a producer and host at KEWU for the radio program while also working as an adjunct professor in Africana Studies teaching African American Cinema. Professor Schwendiman joined Eastern Washington University as a full time faculty member in 2009 and holds the position of lecturer in Africana Studies. Currently, she teaches course in Introduction to African Culture, African American Family, African American Cinema, Black Aesthetics, various Independent study courses, and introduced a new class in Winter 2014, African American Social and Intellectual Thought. From Booker T. Washington to Cornel West. She continues to research and present lectures on topics concerning the formation, defining, and redefining of blackness, culture, identity, and gender in film. She has been happily married to Bryce Schwendiman for nearly 25 years and is the mother of nine wonderful children.

A brief interview with Professor Schwendiman revealed her favorite components of teaching, her ideal student, her favorite class to teach, the one movie she’d recommend and her future aspirations.

What is your favorite part about teaching?
-It is the positive affects it can have on students. I desire to enlighten their minds in order for them to want to make contributions to society based on the knowledge they have learned. When students learn to apply knowledge to their lives and to make a difference, that is what makes me happy about teaching.

Describe your ideal student.
-A student who comes to class everyday prepared; they have read and are ready to contribute in an informed manner. They should give opinions based on knowledge they have gained from the class resources, rather than from personal opinions.

What is the class you love teaching most?
-African American Cinema. It always feels like coming home.

What film would you recommend for those that cannot take your class?
-Sankofa. It was written to counteract the lack of knowledge many Americans have about African American history. It is a movie meant to decolonize the minds of African Americans by giving them the knowledge of how we have come to live in the conditions of oppression we live in today. When some African Americans move up in the world, the colonization of their minds creates a way of thinking that would allow them to harm their own people with no knowledge of it or remorse. This movie can create an awakening for those who watch it.

What are your future aspirations?
-I would like to earn a doctorate degree. This is something I personally need to do. I’m not sure what I would like it to be in but time will allow me to make that decision. I’m not sure where a doctorate would take me in higher education, but I would like to do research and write books on social and public policy to hopefully make change. I’d like to see transformative measures take place in society; if higher education is not here to make change then what is its purpose? I believe in individual efforts but it has to be coupled with collective institutional change as well.
Africana Studies courses provide understanding and appreciation of the universal African diaspora today and historically from an African-centered world view. They also give students the opportunity to evaluate the influence of African culture on the entire human civilization.

Keepers of the Dream: Award & Recognition Ceremony

In acknowledgement of Black History Month, the Africana Studies Program at Eastern Washington University began hosting the “Keepers of the Dream” Awards & Recognition Ceremony. This event invites all programs and departments throughout the University and other unique programs to recognize the achievements of students of African descent primarily but also students of various ethnicities who are involved in research and/or community service initiatives that focus on people or communities of African descent.

On February 26th, 2014 the Second Annual Ceremony was held in Tawanka. This year’s events brought together over sixteen departments, programs and unique programs to recognize twenty Eastern students for their exceptional work and academic excellence or their community service. Also this year the Black Student Union recognized a faculty member, Dr. Bayyinah Jeffries for her dedication to Africana Studies and students.

In the next column is a list of names of the recipients this year. Africana would like to congratulate you all again, and would like to extend thanks to those faculty and staff who nominated and presented to students this year.