Association for Africanist Anthropology
2007 Annual Report
Prepared by Bennetta Jules-Rosette, AfAA President

The AfAA continues to improve and strengthen with our revitalized activities. The year of 2007 was extremely successful. We initiated a membership drive, continued our outreach activities, and hosted an exciting reception at the 106th Annual Meetings of the AAA in Washington, D.C. During the early part of the year, our membership hovered around 302. After the Meetings, our membership increased to 331, making us one of the most visible of the smaller sections of the AAA. Our increased membership was a result of a year-long membership campaign, an extremely well-attended reception, and the redesigned AfAA website. We also filled all vacant board positions, and our board is very active.

At this year’s AAA Meetings in Washington, D.C., the AfAA planned a two-part Presidential session entitled “Africa Unbound: Trajectories of Equality, Inequality and Social Justice in Postcolonial Africa.” This panel attracted a capacity audience. The session was exciting, engendering debates about social equality in Africa, ethnic and regional boundaries, and political strategies. Organized by David Turkon, Maria Cattell, and Robert Gordon and chaired by Robert Gordon and Maria Cattell, this session introduced a number of topical issues, including postcolonial anthropological paradigms, orphan-care practices, and issues of identity, gender, and political organization. Interesting debates emerged among the conference participants and demonstrated the lively development of shared discourses across diverse paradigms within the AfAA. Among our other offerings, we also sponsored an invited panel on changing models of citizenship with relationship to HIV/AIDS organized by Susan Pierszyk with David Turkon as discussant and one on signifying social inequalities organized by Bennetta Jules-Rosette and J.R. Osborn. Our panels were rich and provocative.

The meetings were further enlivened by Treasurer Nancy Schwartz’s introduction of the AfAA wristbands, which read “AfAA Putting Africa Back on the Map.” The wristbands circulated among AfAA members and other AAA participants, providing a useful strategy for inviting non-members to our events. Our wristbands, posters, and flyers were distributed at both the new AAA membership booth in the book exhibit area and around the meetings by a number of Board Members. This flurry of activity created a positive response within the AAA and helped us attract new members.

During the course of the year, we launched an aggressive membership drive. Alice Horner, an independent consultant, was hired to update and consolidate our mailing lists. We targeted both older lapsed members and new potential members. Combined with our annual reception, this strategy attracted considerable attention and clearly helped to increase our membership to 331 immediately following the November 2007 Meetings. The AfAA also updated and redistributed the recruitment letter that was developed by Carolyn Martin-Shaw for the 2006 meetings in San José. This flyer contains the latest information about our section, its website, and its awards.

We had a wonderful gathering on the evening of November 29 in remembrance of Elliott P. Skinner at the Annual Meetings of the AAA in Washington. Gwendolyn Mikell presented an extremely moving retrospective of Elliott P. Skinner’s life and career, incorporating her personal experiences and quotations from Professor Skinner’s work. The tone of her distinguished lecture was both upbeat and inspiring. The presentation was accompanied by a touching slideshow prepared by J.R. Osborn, who spent several months organizing photographs and memorabilia of
Professor Skinner. Following the formal presentation, members of the AfAA Board, Elliot P. Skinner’s colleagues and former students, and other admirers spoke to his scholarly prowess and intellectual generosity over the years. Nancy Schwartz also presented a very moving memorial statement on Eugenia Shanklin, a long-term AfAA member who had just rejoined the Executive Board before passing away. With the room full to capacity, we enjoyed good conversation and gourmet food.

Continuing the tradition begun with Bogumil Jewsiewicki in San José in 2006, Bennetta Jules-Rosette presented a distinguished Africanist award to our speaker Gwendolyn Mikell. This year’s glass trophy award was impressive and was intended to be a tribute to the esteem with which we hold Gwendolyn Mikell as a Past AfAA President. The award was also a further commemoration of her and Elliott P. Skinner’s contributions to the founding of the AfAA. Additionally, award certificates were presented to all Executive Board members, whose diligent work was exemplary during the 2007 year.

Our reception was immediately followed by the AfAA business meeting in which we revisited issues of membership, publicity, awards, and the AfAA website. Hudita Mustafa acted as the Secretary for the business meeting, which opened with a Treasurer’s Report presented by Nancy Schwartz, a summary of our new fundraising and membership initiatives, and a discussion of the further implementation of strategies to expand our membership base. We also discussed possible future projects that would involve donations to African institutions and libraries. However, given our current budgetary status, the implementation of these plans was set aside for further review. The Association seeks to establish coalitions across founding and newer members as we address these very critical issues.

Among our most important innovations this year, was the launching of the Elliott P. Skinner Book Award and prizes for graduate and undergraduate papers. We developed guidelines for these awards during the spring of 2007 and refined them just before the fall meetings. One of the tasks now facing the section is the implementation of the new awards. We will be reaching out to our entire membership for suggestions of nominees in each category. It was agreed that all Board Members would work to promote the new awards actively by contacting colleagues, graduate students, and undergraduate students in order to disseminate information about the awards and collect manuscripts for submission.

The Executive Board agreed that the deadline for all awards would be Thursday, May 15, 2008. The guidelines for the awards are as follows:

**Elliott P. Skinner Book Award:** This prize will be awarded to the book that best furthers both the global community of Africanist scholars and the wider interests of the African continent as exemplified in the work of Elliott P. Skinner. Special consideration will be given to works drawing upon extensive research in the field or those advancing new methodologies for fieldwork in Africa. Following the 2006 guidelines, we agreed that all books nominated for the award should, at least initially, focus on Sub-Saharan Africa.

**AfAA Graduate Student Paper Award:** This prize will be awarded to the best graduate student paper in Africanist anthropology. Special consideration will be given to works highlighting emerging perspectives or demonstrating promise to develop a major contribution in the fields of Africanist anthropology, African studies, or African Diaspora studies.

**AfAA Undergraduate Paper Award:** This prize will be awarded to the best undergraduate paper in Africanist anthropology based on nominations from faculty mentors.
As a result of the work entailed in initiating these awards, we scheduled a Board Breakfast Meeting on Friday, November 30 as a follow-up to our November 29 Business Meeting. At the Breakfast Meeting, we resolved to form standing committees that would implement the AfAA’s new plans. We finalized membership of the Award Committees and discussed the very important upcoming AfAA elections. Nancy Schwartz was chosen to coordinate the new Nominations Committee consisting of participants from the entire Executive Board. Betty Harris was elected to chair the Elliott P. Skinner Book Award Committee. David Turkon assumed the chair of the Graduate Student Paper Award Committee, and Nancy Schwartz was chosen to head the Undergraduate Award Committee.

In the AfAA Elections for 2008, a President Elect will be chosen, along with a new Treasurer. The two International Liaisons, David Coplan representing Africa and Ben Soares representing Europe, agreed to run for reelection and renew their positions. David Turkon, the co-chair of the Program Committee, is scheduled for reelection. Nancy Schwartz will also run for election to the Program Committee. The Board unanimously nominated Mwenda Ntarangwi as a candidate for the Treasurer position, and he accepted the nomination. Suggestions for the President Elect position included AfAA Program Committee Co-Chair Maria Cattell of Bryn Mawr College, J. Lorand Matory of Harvard University, and Anita Spring of the University of Florida, Gainesville. At the Board Breakfast, we learned that Anita Spring will not be available to run for at least two years. Bennetta Jules-Rosette’s term as President will expire at the 2009 Meetings of the AAA. She plans to give her Presidential Address in San Francisco in 2008. At that time, the President Elect and new Board Members will also be introduced, and the first AfAA book and paper awards will be presented.

As one of AfAA’s International Liaisons, David Coplan attended the Annual Conference of Anthropology in Southern Africa (ASnA) in September of 2007 at the University of Pretoria. He reported on these sessions and the accompanying debates on the definition and frameworks for basic and applied research in Southern Africa. Professor Coplan’s article, which appears in the January 2008 edition of the Anthropology News, represents the type of engagement that we hope our International Liaisons will develop with anthropological conferences and activities in their regions. Jennifer Coffman continues to serve effectively on the Executive Board as the AfAA liaison to the Anthropology News.

Kudos are also due to AfAA Graduate Representative J.R. Osborn, who redesigned the AfAA website during the spring of 2007. The new website contains updated Bylaws, information on current Association officers, and notices for upcoming awards and events. J.R. Osborn agreed to remain as the webmaster and Graduate Representative on the Executive Board. He will also keep the Executive Board informed of changes and updates of the AAA Listserv.

Overall, the AfAA had an extremely productive year in 2007. We have started to rebuild our infrastructure and our membership continues to grow. The Executive Board is now in place and active, and we have new Nominations and Awards Committees. After a period of transition, the Executive Board is moving forward with full force. The results of this revitalization are visible in our increased membership, our exciting range of invited sessions, our new website, and our contributions to the AAA as a whole. We plan to further strengthen our membership, increase member involvement, and continue with our innovative events next year. We have established upward momentum and a sound infrastructure for the execution of future AfAA projects, and we hope to have another very successful year in 2008.
Association for Africanist Anthropology
2007 Annual Treasurer’s Report
Prepared by Nancy Schwartz, AfAA Treasurer

Our membership has grown. At the end of October 31, our membership, which hovered around 302 for much of the period from October 2006 to March 2007 started to increase. We now have 331 members.

We are larger than the Association of Black Anthropologists (316), Society for Anthropology of Work (268), Society for Anthropology in Community Colleges (249), Society for Humanistic Anthropology (226), Society for Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists (226), Culture and Agriculture (237), Anthropology of Consciousness (239), the Melanesian Interest Group (210), Central States Anthropological Society (192), Society for Food and Nutrition (186), Association for Latina and Latino Anthropologists (195), and the Association of Senior Anthropologists (152).

We still need to catch-up to the other area societies. However, our membership is increasing faster than all but one of them. The Middle East Section’s membership is up more than ours with an increase of 8.65% (364). However, the Society for East Asian Anthropology is up only 1.81% (448). The Society for Anthropology in North America is up only 2.98% (455). The Society for the Anthropology of Europe is up only 2.49% (469). Our membership is up 6.62% as of October 31.

Our finances are in excellent shape. At the beginning of the year our Net Assets were $38,031.56. Our revenues for the ten months ending August 31 from membership and mailing list rental were $4339.25; our expenses $2151.45, so we took in more than we spent. As of October 31, 2007, we had $40,219.36 in assets.

We have spent some money on a number of initiatives that have made major improvements to the health and future of AfAA. 2008 expenditures will also benefit our members. Here they are:

THE ANNUAL AfAA RECEPTION: We continued with our annual reception as a prelude to our Distinguished Lecture and Business Meeting. The reception included refreshments, and it drew a capacity audience.

PUBLICATIONS: We will be publishing the lecture of the 2006 speaker, Bogumil Jewsiewicki. We are hoping to publish this year’s 2007 memorial for Elliot P. Skinner. Our publications will be bound copies. They will be sent to members. We hope this will be the first in a series of occasional publications.

THE ELLIOTT P. SKINNER BOOK AWARD. We are going to award $1000 each year for this prize. The prize is described in the AfAA Year-2007 Annual Report and on our website. The deadline for submission for all awards will be May 15 of 2008.

We are instituting a GRADUATE STUDENT PAPER AWARD. We will give a $500 to a graduate student who has presented at the annual meeting.

We will be instituting an UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT AWARD of $100 for the best paper submitted to the committee, whether the paper is for presentation at the meetings or not.
We awarded our first **DISTINGUISHED LIFETIME SERVICE AWARD** to an Africanist Scholar Living Outside of Africa at the November 29 reception. Gwendolyn Mikell received the Distinguished Africanist Award, including a glass award and a $500 stipend for her lecture.

In the future, we plan to institute a **DISTINGUISHED LIFETIME SERVICE AWARD** for an Africanist Scholar based in the African continent.

The AAA is rolling out listservs for sections. We have been charged $500 for this service. J.R. Osborn was also compensated for his design of the website.

We paid an independent scholar, Alice Horner, a small sum to conduct a membership drive. Our membership began to increase right after we initiated this effort. The drive addressed both lapsed members and new prospects. Emails sent to lapsed members starting in February 2007 let them know that we want them back.

To help pay for the book prize, we sold wristbands with the slogan “AfAA Putting Africa Back on the Map” through the AAA membership booth in the Book Exhibit Hall. The wristbands are tricolor: black with red lettering and a green map of Africa, or orange with black lettering and a green map. We are selling them at one for $3.00 or two for $5.00. All profits will help support the Elliott P. Skinner Book Award.