MAAFA: AFRICAN HOLOCAUST

By Claire Solak ’13

When the word Holocaust is read, images of emaciated poles and Jews behind wired fences, Hitler at a podium in front of raging crowds could come to mind. The thought of neighbors calling the Gestapo to retrieve Jewish families hidden in attics and basements, trains and gas chambers, ditches full of corpses and proud Germans living in houses belonging to people carted to their death in cattle-cars.

Genocide is not uncommon within history. In the 20th century alone, there were approximately seven genocides including the Nazi holocaust and Rwânda. One of the longest, most forgotten and significant genocides in history today is the Maafa, from a Kiswahili word for “disaster.” In modern history classes, Maafa is described as the Atlantic Slave Trade; but Let the Circle Be Unbroken: The Implications of Africán Spirituality in the Diaspora, a book written by Marimba Ani in 1994 made the term definition known. Ani describes the Maafa as the slow and systematic murder of African ethnic groups in the name of economic prosperity for Europe and the subsequent subjugation and oppression of African slaves beneath a society that devalued the African culture.

Slavery existed in Africa long before the Arabs entered Africa in search of slaves in the 7th and 8th centuries—another 1000 years before Europeans entered the slave trade. Before Arab involvement, when Africans traded slaves amongst themselves, there were three ways to enter into slavery: to pay a debt, as a prisoner of war, or as a criminal. The idea of the Atlantic Slave Trade, from the perspective of the dominant culture, tends to offer justification for Europeans taking slaves by noting that Africans enslaved themselves and sold slaves to the Arabs.

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Maafa calls for critical examination of European slavery from the vantage point of the enslaved Africans and their descendents. To that end, the Atlantic Slave Trade is referred to as the African Holocaust because of the marked differences in the way Africans and Europeans treated their African slaves. Before the Arabs, slavery was considered just another fact of African society; slaves were treated humanely and allowed societal advancements in some subgroups. After the Arabs entered the slave trade, slaves were treated inhumanely, captured and shipped off along Arab trade routes, all approximately 600 years before Europeans ever entered the market.

Prior to European adoption of slavery, the slave trade was rather slow. There was little demand for a free labor force outside of Africa. However, once Europe nearly simultaneously entered the African slave trade and landed on American shores, the slave trade exploded, as is taught in traditional American History classes. From that point forward, slaves were shipped by the thousands across the Atlantic Ocean to fill rising labor needs in North, Central and South Americas.

Maafa is unique in its view of the slavery between the 15th and 19th centuries in that it includes the lasting economic and social oppression that still ostracizes and isolates the descendents of African slaves as they live under the dominion of a culture that does not reflect the cultural identities of the Africans who were enslaved. Maafa acknowledges that slaves were taken from numerous African tribes lost their significance as individual cultures.

Many refer to Maafa as the African Holocaust because of the huge loss of life, but much the same way the Nazi holocaust enacted huge global changes, Maafa also has a very visible, but often unrecognized effect on American society.

SAARTJIE “SARAH” BAARTMAN

By: Dzung Dang ’13

Saartjie “Sarah” Baartman was born in 1789, during a period of Dutch colonization in South Africa. She was descendant of the Khoikhoi people, an ethnic group of native people in southwestern Africa, and worked as a slave in Cape Town. In 1810, at the age of 22, a man by the name of William Dunlop, discovered and convinced her to travel with him to England where she was promised money to send back home.

Baartman traveled with Dunlop and realized she would be displayed as a freak because of her usual physical features. She was presented in circuses, parades and exhibits because of her oversized buttock, large breasts and genitals. Baartman attracted lots of curiosity from men and women all over England. People would come to watch her, touch her, and be entertained by her performance, satisfying their lustful interests for four years. She was named “Hottentot Venus” by the exhibitors. Hottentot referring to a derogatory name given to people with livestock and Venus referencing Baartman being an object of admiration and adoration.

The “Hottentot Venus” exhibition popular and inspired political cartoons exaggerating the exhibit and Barrtman’s features. In 1814, she went to Paris and once again attracted attention from many people while she was owned and exhibited by an animal trainer. Once they were tired of Baartman’s show she was forced to turn to prostitution. After years of abuse, she died at the age of twenty-five thousands of kilometers from her home and family. The cause of death was given as inflammatory and eruptive sickness and possibly syphilis.

After her death, George Cuvier, a French scientist, acquired her body, casted her on plaster and dissected her body removing her brain, vulva and other body parts which were placed in glass jars in a preserving fluid. In addition, he acquired her skeleton and put her remains on display in the exhibition rooms of the French Museums. It wasn’t until 1904, 200 years after her death, when Nelson Mandela became president of South Africa and requested that France return Baartman’s remains. It took the French government eight years to pass to bill and on August 9, 2002, Women’s Day, Saartjie Baartman was returned to Cape Town. As Lucille Davie stated, “Baartman is home and has finally had her dignity restored by being buried where she belongs—far away from where her race and gender were so cruelly exploited”.

STUDENT PROFILE

Name: Khaliph Green  
Hometown: Chicago, Illinois  
Major: Biochemistry Major, Philosophy Minor  
Year: Junior  
Hobbies/Interests: Reading, Drawing, Dancing, and anything technological  
Cornell Activities: I’m currently the vice president of BACO, an OLA member, a Track & Field Athlete, a Concert Choir member, and a member of the multicultural fraternity Zeta Tau Psi  
What you like about Cornell: The block plan and the ability to focus on one class at a time, and the large array of diverse students that attend the college. Those two factors alone stand out to me about this college.  
Future Plans: Once I graduate from Cornell, my plans are to continue on to graduate school and fulfill my dreams of becoming a Biomedical Engineer.  
What ICL means to you: Higher cultural connections, not just between Minorities, but of Caucasians as well. ICL embodies a openness and a willingness to learn from one another and fully experience the diversity of this campus. It’s a great outlet for any student on campus and it greatly helped me in my adjustment to life here at Cornell.

BLACK CORNELLIONS EXPO

By Diego Verdugo ‘12  
The Black Awareness and Cultural Organization (BACO) has recently introduced a new effort titled “Black Cornellians Expo” that consists three different displays on the Orange Carpet of former African American students at Cornell College. The purpose of this effort is to connect the Cornell community with important history of the college and as a result, help to educate and inspire students in this institution. When BACO first introduced the idea, the reasoning behind it was to share the stories of those African American students that attended this school and left their mark, while helping current students relate to the struggles and challenges former students faced.

C’niphia Jones ’14, historian of BACO said the expo allowed current students to connect with the history of the college, serve as empowerment, and helped them appreciate more the opportunity to be able to get a high-quality education without facing the tests that those before us faced. BACO members take great pride in offering the Cornell community this opportunity as it represents their appreciation to former students for the effort and sacrifices underwent to provide students of color with a better college experience.

The first display included African American students from the 1850s to 1920s, while the second display included showcased students from the 1920s to the 1970s. During these two displays on the OC, BACO experienced great attendance and positive feedback from students, faculty and staff. The third and final display which will showcase students from the 1970s to the present will take place on Friday, February 11th on the Orange Carpet throughout the day. BACO extends an invitation to the entire Cornell and Mount Vernon communities to attend the event, learn about these students, and connect with our history.

It is apparent that BACO is placing a higher value on African American history at Cornell College this year and events like these are making it easier for members to show it. The Black Cornellians Expo has proven to be a unique opportunity for everyone to take advantage of, including non-BACO members. BACO’s vision is to look back in order to move forward and Jones supported this claim, “My duty is to carry on their stories, not just for BACO but for all the school...my research has been fun, exciting, and inspiring.”
As part of the Black History Month programming, a group of students along with Ken Morris and Heather Roberts from the Office of Intercultural Life drove to Loras College to attend a lecture by Dr. Joy DeGuy Leary, Ph. D. entitled “Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome.” Within the first five minutes of her presentation, she explained that usually when people hear the title “Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome” the first reaction is, “You’re still talking about slavery? That was more than 200 years ago! Give it a rest!” She continued by telling the audience that part of her interest in this topic stemmed from a desire to know why people react this way.

Dr. DeGruy Leary then began to talk about a key theme in her lecture: Cognitive Dissonance. She described it as the discomfort a person feels with the inability to reconcile horrific actions, in this case the horrors of U.S. chattel slavery. From there she began the meat of her discussion, what she called Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, which described and explained through her research some of the lasting and visible but unnoticed institutional effects of slavery on United States race relations.

Her lecture does not sugar coat. She does not talk in circles to beat around the cognitive dissonance bush. She presents the facts as she finds them. For example, she spoke about the statue of liberty’s chains and how in a prior design Lady Liberty held broken chains in her hand instead of the tablets to represent the U.S. commitment to a society without governmentally instituted slaver. In the final design, the broken chains appear beneath Lady Liberty’s feet yet they are nearly invisible from all viewpoints. Dr. DeGruy Leary showed us photographs from her visit to Ellis Island in which she took a picture of these chains. The only visible part of the chains is a tiny lip over the edge of the base. If a viewer didn’t know the chains were there (and many don’t) they would be missed entirely.

Though she ran short of time, Dr. DeGruy Leary’s message is not just a new perspective on history in a way that includes the ancestors of everyone. It is a message of healing and ways to at last begin the process of repairing the generations-deep racism initially created by the trauma of slavery. She asserts that the first step to healing is acknowledgement; the first step is to acknowledge the horrific history that creates cognitive dissonance and share them. She challenges people of all races to examine their behavior and make changes so these negative habits can be dealt with to really have an effect on generations to come.

"Being at Dr. Joy DeGruy’s speech really opened my eyes to unequal opportunity. I’ve always been taught to ignore it because “it’s not worth wasting your time worrying about things you can’t change,” but being at Dr. DeGruy’s speech has really revolutionized the way that I’m going to think about issues involving race. At this point I now realize that there is a real reason behind the things that black people as a society have for the ways that they act. I now understand many of the opinions that black people have that demean things that come naturally with being black, like having super kinky hair or dark skin. Now I understand who defines the American standard of beauty. I understand now the real reasons behind why we do what we do, such as our coping methods, why we denigrate our children when we should build them up.”

~Courtney Elaee
Dear Cultural Connection,

I went to South Africa thinking that I had good ideas for how to create positive changes in society, and I left realizing that a culture must be changed from the inside out. Instead of giving a broad overview of all my various activities, let me share one story with you:

South Africa’s constitution guarantees every citizen a house with their own land. But there isn’t enough funding. The houses aren’t being built. Instead, people are kicked out of their shacks with the promise of new, government houses. I and other students visited the housing developments to meet the people who are organizing into a group called Abahlali, a radical movement to create better living conditions for everyone living in poverty.

First we visited the shack dweller’s camp. People were living in houses made of mud. One woman had lived there for 32 years. The whole area smelled like feces because the toilets were out in the open, on the ground. These settlements are slowly being destroyed by the city and the people moved into temporary “Tin Towns”.

What we found in the Tin Town was shocking. These “houses” are decrepit, without running water or electricity. The children can’t go to school because it is too far away. They play soccer all day in a patch of dirt and rocks. A tavern near the settlement allows drunken men to sexually abuse the young children when the mamas are at work. Because of this, many of the children have HIV. The people there are righteously angry. The government promised them houses over a year ago, and they are still living in these conditions.

But then we visited the government houses. Even these were abysmal. A toilet without running water, 10 people living in a one-room house, and a roof that drips when it rains.

Strangely, everyone we met was happy to see us. They danced and sang and took pictures with us. We, who were visiting, like tourists of poverty, looking at them from such a privileged position. They weren’t angry. I would have been so angry. I would have shouted, begged, cried. Never sang and danced and WELCOMED. But they wanted us to see them. They wanted us to tell the government about them so that they can move into their promised homes.

In Zulu, the greeting is "Sawubona," literally "I see you." It is an acknowledgement of existence and dignity. It is easy to overlook poverty, to overlook any injustice in society. It is harder to see it, to connect with people in those circumstances, and to realize that you are an outsider and may not be able to make a positive difference. Sometimes, all you can do is to see. All you can do is to tell people about them. And they asked us to tell, tell everyone.

For more about the shackdwellers movement, visit http://www.abahlali.org/.

Sincerely,

Annie Schneider
ORGANIZATION PROFILE: BACO

By: Đzung Dang ‘13

BACO is the oldest ICL group on campus that is committed to educate the campus on African American culture through innovative programs. BACO is run by the executive board which is composed of 5 positions: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Historian. The organization meets on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each block in the Martin Luther King room in the Commons.

BACO is different from other ICL groups in the sense that they are the oldest ICL group and that they have a strong sense of pride and roots in Cornell College’s campus. Moreover, the members of the group always try to learn about their history in order to take the organization to the next level. Through different activities that the organization offers every year, we can see the continuous effort to educate students and the community about African American culture and to erase stereotypes. Some of the events that BACO has are: Black Carnelians Expo, MLK week, Cultural Trip, various Black History Month events, and also, they invite speakers to come to campus. All of the events aim to help students increase awareness and gain knowledge about African American culture and about BACO specifically. For this month, February 8th, BACO had MPAACT (The Maat Production Association of Afrikan Centered Theatre) visit Cornell’s campus to demonstrate a variety of stories within the African American community.

For right now, BACO has 15 general members and 8 active members. During their meetings, members often brainstorm and discuss upcoming programs and what needs to be done before each event takes place. They encourage people to come to their programs as most of them are open publicly, and also to general meetings to learn and find out more about their organization.

In the future, BACO looks forward to having more students/participants to attend their events to educate the community and break stereotypes about African Americans. After all, we cannot deny BACO’s effort in bringing diversity and perspectives to Cornell College’s campus.

BACO E-BOARD PROFILE

Name: Audriana Logan
Hometown: Chicago, IL
Major: Politics
Year: Junior
Hobbies/Interest: Pre-Law, Football
What she likes most about Cornell: Personal relationships that she has with faculty and staff.
Activities: BACO, Sister 4 Sister, PALS, Pre-Law Program
Future Plans: She plans to attend Law School after Cornell.
What ICL means to you: ICL means family. She looks at the members of ICL and sees her brothers and sisters. If it wasn’t for ICL support, she would not still have been a Cornell student.
**FACULTY PROFILE**

**Name/Position:** Catherine Stewart, Associate Professor of History and Chair of Ethnic Studies

**Department & Location:** History Department, College Hall 208

**Hobbies/Interest:** I really love music—classical and jazz—so I often listen to National Public Radio on KSUI for classical and KCCK for jazz, and I sing around the house (not just in the shower) and occasionally play our piano or drag my German cello, Bertolt (named for Brecht) out of the closet. When I’m in New York, I love going to the Metropolitan Opera. In the last couple of years, I’ve started taking mindfulness/meditation classes at the University of Iowa. I write poetry (in secret) and enjoy watching films (older classics as well as new releases).

**Future Aspirations:** To have more time for research and my own scholarship; I’m realizing that time has run out for my earlier aspirations of becoming a Broadway star or a gospel singer. I still think about becoming a filmmaker. This past summer, I had the opportunity to explore some amazing plantation ruins on a remote island in the Bahamas; that experience made me feel that maybe I’d chosen the right profession after all.

**What you like about Cornell?:** The student body, which is made up of such interesting, passionate, and down-to-earth people, and the remarkable faculty and staff members I’ve gotten to know. Cornell’s wealth lies in the extraordinary people (students, faculty, and staff) who come here to engage in meaningful collaborations of all kinds, and who encourage each other in substantive ways. I feel honored by the friendships I’ve formed here.

**What is your favorite memory at Cornell so far?** I have quite a few favorites, so it is hard to choose. I guess memories of the adventures I’ve had with students off-campus in Chicago with those who took the urban-history course I teach at the Newberry Library are among the top. There’s something about the experience of being off-campus with students which really fosters a closer and more spontaneous process of getting to know someone well. I have some great memories of hanging out in Hyde Park with students, going to film festivals, and other happenings around the city. I’m looking forward to taking students off-campus next year to explore the island of San Salvador in the Bahamas.

**What is rewarding about your position?** Having the freedom to design my own courses and teach subject matter which I want to explore myself and share with others. I chose to accept the position at Cornell over other offers because of the rare opportunity Cornell affords its instructors for creative and intellectual freedom in course design, and the ability OCAAT offers for teaching subjects in ways which would not be possible on a traditional semester plan. There are important texts I’ve been able to share with students as a result of our unique schedule, and opportunities for conducting oral history interviews, making short documentary films, and doing archival research.

**Advice to Cornell Students:** My advice for Cornell students is the same advice I’d give to anyone and try to follow myself: stay interested, curious, and open-hearted when you encounter new information, new ideas, new people, and new approaches. Give yourself and others time to unfold and try to embrace the unknown.
February 1, 1902 - Playwright, poet, author Langston Hughes born

February 2, 1807 - Congress bans foreign slave trade.

February 3, 1956 - Atherine Lucy enrolls as the first African American student at the University of Alabama.

February 4, 1913 - Rosa Parks, civil rights pioneer who sparked Montgomery bus boycott, born.

February 5, 1934 - Major league home run champion Hank Aaron born.

February 6, 1867 - Robert Tanner Jackson becomes first African American to receive a degree in dentistry.

February 7, 1883 - Ragtime pianist and composer Hubie Blake born.

February 8, 1968 - Three South Carolina State students killed during segregation protest in Orangeburg, S.C.

February 9, 1964 - Arthur Ashe, Jr. becomes first African American on U.S. Davis Cup team.


February 11, 1990 - Nelson Mandela is released from prison after 27 years.

February 12, 1909 - NAACP founded in New York City.


February 14, 1879 - B.K. Bruce of Mississippi becomes first African American to preside over U.S. Senate.

February 15, 1961 - U.N. sessions are disrupted by U.S. and African nationalists over assassination of Congo Premier Patrice Lumumba.

February 16, 1874 - Frederick Douglass elected president of Freedman's Bank and Trust.

February 17, 1902 - Marion Anderson, internationally acclaimed opera star, born.
February 18, 1931 - Toni Morrison, winner of 1988 Pulitzer Prize for fiction, born.

February 19, 1923 - In Moore vs. Dempsey decision, U.S. Supreme Court guarantee due process of law to Blacks in state courts.

February 20, 1934 - Four Saints in Three Acts, by Virgil Thompson and Gertrude Stein, premieres as the first Black-performed opera on Broadway.

February 21, 1965 - Malcolm X is assassinated in New York.

February 22, 1989 - Col. Frederick Gregory was the first African American to command a space shuttle mission.

February 23, 1868 - W.E.B. Dubois, scholar, activist and author of the Souls of Black Folk, born.

February 24, 1922 - The home of Frederick Douglass made a national shrine.

February 25, 1853 - First Black YMCA organized in Washington, D.C.

February 26, 1965 - Civil rights activist Jimmie Lee Jackson died after being shot by state police in Marion, Ala.

February 27, 1988 - Debi Thomas becomes first Black to win an Olympic medal in figure skating.

February 28, 1984 - Michael Jackson wins eight Grammy awards.

February 29, 1892 - Sculptor Augusta Savage was born.

Source
http://www.theblackmarket.com/february.htm
WHAT’S UP!

Sustained Dialogue
De-Stereotype Me Day
Monday, February 21, 2011 11am-1pm on the OC
?’ contact LGuerra12

Lyrically Inclined
General Meetings: Wednesdays, 6:30pm in Stockholm
?’s contact CSolak13

Eyes of the World
General Meetings: 1st & 3rd Wednesday’s of the block
Harlan Dinning Room at 11:45 am
?’s contact Ryu11

Sister 4 Sister
General Meetings: 1st and 3rd Wednesdays
Stockholm at 11:30am
&
Help A Sister Work Out (HASWO)
Saturday’s & Sunday’s @ 10:30am
Rowe Fitness Center

Colleges Against Cancer
Relay for Life entertainment opportunities
April 15th in the Sport Arena
?’s contact SThoele13
Organization for Latino Awareness Presents:

Jorge Zevallos

"Where Are You From?:
White Privilege and the Immigration Debate"

Most immigration debates concentrate on the legality of the presence of some immigrants or how these immigrants "steal" jobs in the U.S.

This workshop examines immigration through the lens of white privilege and how it has informed immigration policies throughout U.S. history. Participants will gain a clear understanding of how these policies have favored immigration from some areas of the world while restricting immigration from others.

When: Thursday, February 17th
Time: 7:00 pm
Where: Hedges Conference Room
Questions?: DVerdugo12