

UNIVERSITY OF
LOUISVILLE[®]



**ANNE BRADEN INSTITUTE
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE RESEARCH**

Opened in 2007 in honor of human rights activist Anne Braden, the Braden Institute bridges the gap between academic research and racial and social justice activism.

Newsletter

Issue No. 5, Fall 2011

“A new massive thrust toward racial justice will not alone solve all the problems that face us, but I am convinced that unless such a thrust develops—one that is global in its outlook—the other problems will not be solved.”
--Anne Braden, 1999

Anne Braden Institute Reading Room
258 Ekstrom Library
Open Mon-Thurs. 9-4:30; open til 6pm most Wednesdays; Fridays, evenings, & weekends by appointment.
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Michelle Alexander to Deliver 5th Annual Braden Lecture on “The New Jim Crow”

The 5th Annual Anne Braden Memorial Lecture on Thursday, Nov. 10, 2011, will focus on the outrageous racial disproportionality of an alarming recent growth in the U.S. prison population.

Michelle Alexander’s talk will take place at 6pm, at the Speed Art Museum Auditorium. Doors open at 5:30PM. The lecture is free and open to the public, with parking available for attendees in the museum’s parking deck for \$4/car.

Dr. Alexander is the author of the groundbreaking book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. Popular sentiment that the election of President Barack Obama signaled an end to the long history of racial discrimination in the United States, could not be further from the truth, she argues.



The book examines the ways in which our system of mass incarceration has come to resemble systems of racial control from an earlier era. Here are some facts Alexander cites in *The New Jim Crow* that run counter to the colorblind racial narrative prevalent today:

There are more African Americans under correctional control today -- in prison or jail, on probation or parole -- than were enslaved in 1850, a decade before the Civil War began.

As of 2004, more African American men were disenfranchised (due to felon disenfranchisement laws) than in 1870, the year the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified prohibiting laws that explicitly deny the right to vote on the basis of race.

According to Alexander, crime rates do not explain the sudden and dramatic mass incarceration of African Americans during the past 30 years. She argues that the rise in imprisonment rates of people of color is due to the War on Drugs, a war waged almost exclusively in poor communities of color, even though studies consistently show that people of all colors use and sell illegal drugs at similar rates.

Dr. Alexander won a 2005 Soros Justice Fellowship and now holds a joint appointment at the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity and the Mortiz College of Law at Ohio State University. She has appeared as a commentator on CNN, MSNBC, and NPR.

Please help us spread the word about this important lecture. Contact the Braden Institute to request flyers to share with your family, friends, civic organizations and students.

Join a Book Group!

Are you searching for the perfect book to read and discuss with a group this autumn?

Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, challenges readers to engage in dialogue about the racial dynamics of mass incarceration and to build a new movement for racial justice in a supposedly “post-racial” or “colorblind” America. Amber Duke, ABI Program Coordinator, explains the impact of Alexander’s work: “Because of the fact that she has now become a leading expert, I think that she has really raised this discussion on a national stage.”

Prior to the lecture, the ABI is encouraging participation in a book discussion group to raise the level of discussion locally by providing six copies of Alexander’s book per group to borrow for a 2-week period, along with a book discussion kit. We can also loan copies to individual readers who want to consider starting a group. The kit contains suggested questions, an interview with the author, and resources for further study. If interested in forming or joining a book discussion group, please contact Tytianna Smith, ABI Graduate Assistant, at 852-6142.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

My sabbatical year blew through like a whirlwind. The year spent mostly away from campus landed me at the historic Highlander Center for a couple of weeks of the fall and spring. There I drew inspiration from such folk as longtime southern cultural activists Guy and Candie Carawan--with and about whom I have begun a new oral history-based biography.

The swiftest year of my life ended with a gale force in July when I traveled to South Africa for the first time ever. It was humbling to see for myself the



status of some of the most dramatic racial change this old world has known. I also observed firsthand the complexities and challenges of racial healing in the wake of apartheid's savage inequities. Besides touring Robben Island and visiting the tiny, bare cell where Nelson Mandela was held for nearly two decades, I talked with many who had suffered imprisonment or banning for their efforts to end apartheid. [This photo shows me with activist Lionel Davis of District 6, who spent years in the prison and took me on a guided tour.] I had the honor of interviewing women anti-apartheid activists who had repeatedly crossed the color bar to build alliances across racial lines.

My skin rippled with goose bumps, as if I'd seen a ghost, at the moment when I surveyed the papers collection of a longtime S. African radical named Amy Thornton and came across a faded yellow copy of a 1959 article Anne Braden had published in a S. African journal. The work of those two staunch white allies has a lot of common ground despite their being half the world apart, and never having even heard of each other. I realized then that I had discovered an important new area of comparative research, a way to extend the ABI mission globally, and I hope to go back next year and involve UofL students.

The experience gave a new depth of understanding to a philosophy I had before known only in the abstract: that racial healing can have meaning only if it is coupled with concrete actions to reduce structural racism in both its overt and covert forms. That realization made me excited to tell people there about the work of the ABI, and to return to do more here on Louisville's own racial healing project. I hope you'll consider joining us for some of the important conversations and projects we have underway this year. Many thanks to Amber Duke, our students & volunteer leaders for keeping the ABI moving steadily forward this past year.

--Cate Fosl

HEALING HISTORY ACADEMY

A community study group of 28 Louisvillians will spend the next 6 months looking at local racial/social justice history and how it can help to address today's social problems. The "Healing History Academy" had its first meeting on August 30 and will culminate in February 2012 with each member creating a follow-up project in his/her neighborhood or workplace.

Thanks to a Kellogg Foundation Racial Healing grant, we were able to recruit a small but diverse group from neighborhoods in each quadrant of the county and ranging in age from 20s to 60s.

They are meeting with local educators, artists, performers, historians, and community activists to consider the meaning and unfinished business of social and racial justice movements of the 20th century U.S. Each participant will then turn that knowledge into action at the conclusion of the program by developing a follow-up project based on material learned in the academy.

The Healing History Academy is the ABI's main contribution to a city-wide, two-year racial healing initiative of the Louisville Metro Department of Public Health & Wellness Center for Health Equity, in partnership with the ABI, UofL's College of Arts & Sciences Office for International, Diversity and Outreach Programs; Jefferson County Race Community and Child Welfare Initiative; and Women

in Transition. This initiative is funded in part by *America Healing: A Racial Equity Initiative* of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Nearly 90 people applied for the 25 available spots in the Academy. While we couldn't accommodate everyone who wanted to participate in the discreet sessions, each month also features a second, optional learning session open to all who are interested. See the back page of this newsletter for a list of Healing History Academy events!

Sit Ins' Anniversary Exhibit

The ABI's year-long commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the southern student sit-ins and the birth of SNCC culminated with an online exhibit highlighting the 50th anniversary of the start of mass youth sit-ins in downtown Louisville. The oral history-based exhibit shares the stories of a small number of the thousands of people involved in this particular fight for justice in Louisville 50 years ago.

Visit <http://exhibits.library.louisville.edu/omeka/sitins/index.html> to hear their stories about why they felt they needed to act. Find out what it was like to prepare and participate in a demonstration. Listen to stories of how parents reacted to a child's arrest. Learn of some whites supported the students' efforts.

The idea for an online exhibit came from the ABI, but it took many people to create the final product. Dr. Tracy K'Meyer conducted the interviews and excerpted them for the exhibit. The interviews are held by UofL's Oral History Center. The KY Oral History Commission and the Historical Society granted permission for use of the video interviews. Carrie Daniels digitized the audio files and provided transcripts from the UofL collections. KY Center for African American Heritage allowed us use of their audio interviews too. With the help of UofL Photographic Archives, Rachel Howard collected photos for the exhibit. The Office of Libraries Technology set up the open-source web publishing platform. Terri Holtze designed the web site. Thanks, all!

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2011-12 Upcoming Events

- **October 6 (Thursday):** Noon - 1:30 p.m., Room 275, Brandeis School of Law. The Law School Diversity Committee, the Black Law Students Association, and the ABI will present: "Two Centuries of Black Louisville: A Photographic History," featuring the book's authors-- Mervin Aubespin (community activist, artist, and retired *Courier-Journal* editor), Ken Clay (entrepreneur, cultural event producer, and retired vice president of Kentucky Center for the Arts) & our own Dr. J. Blaine Hudson (community activist, author, and dean of the UofL College of Arts and Sciences). A light lunch will be available at 11:30 a.m. Special Guests: Central High School Law & Government Magnet Students. After the program, the authors will sign books. This event is free and open to all.
- **October 12 (Wednesday):** Let's Talk Lunch--A Preview of the 2011 Anne Braden Memorial Lecture. Join us for a free lunch (first come, first served!) at the UofL Cultural Center, Noon-1PM. We will host a panel discussion on the mass incarceration of people of color, featuring legal scholar-activist and UofL instructor Elizabeth Jones, ABI Community Council co-chair Mari Mujica and others. This discussion is an excitement-builder for the upcoming Michelle Alexander talk (see details below!).
- **October 1-November 4:** Day of the Dead Exhibit at the KY Museum of Art & Craft (715 West Main), featuring altars decorated in memory of Anne Braden, Lilyalyce Akers, Woodford R. Porter, and David Hershberg. The theme for Louisville's Day of the Dead Celebration this year is "The Legacy of Community and UofL Leaders," and it is organized by UofL's Latin American/Latino Studies Program. The exhibit culminates with a **Day of the Dead Celebration Friday, November 4, 5-10PM at the museum.** For hours, visit their website at <http://www.kentuckyarts.org>
- **November 10 (Thursday):** "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness" by **Dr. Michelle Alexander.** The fifth annual Anne Braden Memorial Lecture in U.S. civil rights movement history features a talk by Michelle Alexander on her highly acclaimed book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* at the **Speed Art Museum Auditorium (2035 S. 3rd Street) 6PM (doors open at 5:30).** Free and open to the public. Book signing and reception to follow.
- **January 14 (Saturday):** "Remembering the Freedom Rides, 1961 and 2011" An MLK Birthday Celebration joint session of the Healing History Academy and UofL's Saturday Academy. 12:45-2 pm at the DuValle Education Center (3610 Bohne Avenue)
- **February 2 (Thursday):** Join us for *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, a play by Pearl Cleage, directed by Nefertiti Burton at 8PM in the Thrust Theater. This University of Louisville Department of Theatre Arts performance of Cleage's poignant, Depression-era drama set in Harlem will be followed by a talkback and reception sponsored by the ABI.
- **February 17 (Friday):** 3:30 pm, Room 300, Bingham Humanities at UofL. "Reportbacks on ABI-funded Social Justice Research," A Faculty Research Forum featuring Profs. Jennie Burnet (Anthropology), Glenn Crothers (History), & Nicole Seymour (English). Sponsored by UofL's Commonwealth Humanities Center with the ABI. Refreshments served.

New ABI Student Team: Their Passions and Favorite Quotes



The ABI welcomes new PAS graduate assistant Tytianna N.M. Smith (top L) and 2 new part-time Women's and Gender Studies grad students, Jenny Stith (bottom) and Alisha West, who are working with the ABI this year on special projects. We're also excited that Carissa House-Dunphy and Amina Ahmed are back to staff our work-study positions. We asked everyone on our student team to share their passions or their favorite social-justice related quote.



Tytianna: The social issue I am most passionate about is the historical impact of oppression on the contemporary African American family that includes, but is not limited to, the misperception of persons throughout the African Diaspora. As a future author and educator, I will continue to build power for progressive change through advanced research in academe to further deconstruct oppressive systems that exist institutionally and internally.



Alisha: I am passionate about raising awareness of sexual violence against women. In the last century many laws have changed to help protect women from sexual abuse but we still have a long way to go if one out of every four women will endure some sort of sexual aggression in her lifetime.

Jenny: "We don't set out to save the world; we set out to wonder how other people are doing and to reflect on how our actions affect other people's hearts." - Pema Chodron

Carissa: "Be the change you want to see in the world." - Mahatma Gandhi

Amina: "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it." - George Santayana

ABI Community Council

- Khalilah Collins
- Keneka Cheatham (staff rep)
- Judi Jennings
- Mari Mujica (co-chair)
- David Owen (faculty rep)
- Shameka Parrish-Wright
- Mimi Pickering (regional rep)
- Carla Wallace (co-chair)

ABI Affiliated Faculty

- J. Blaine Hudson, Dean, College of Arts & Sciences
- Tomarra Adams, assistant professor of Pan-African Studies
- David Anderson, associate professor of English
- Rhonda Buchanan, director, Latin American and Latino Studies / professor of Spanish
- Delinda Buie, professor, rare books curator, University Libraries*
- Nefertiti Burton, associate dean of Diversity, Community Outreach and International Programs; assoc. professor of Theatre Arts
- Thomas Byers, professor of English
- John Cumber, professor of History
- Margaret D'Silva, professor of Communication
- Lauren Heberle, assistant professor of Sociology
- William C Hoston, assistant professor of Physics
- Katherine Burger Johnson, associate professor, Manuscript Collections Archivist, University Archives and Records Center*
- Ricky Jones, associate professor of Pan-African Studies
- Tracy K Meyer, professor and chair of History
- Avery Kolers, associate professor of Philosophy
- Lisa Markowitz, associate professor and chair of Anthropology
- Theresa Rajack-Talley, associate professor and chair of Pan-African Studies
- Susanna Remold, assistant professor of Biology
- Kaila Story, assistant professor of Women's and Gender Studies / Pan-African Studies and Audre Lorde chair
- Nancy Theriot, professor and chair of Women's & Gender Studies
- Russ Vandenbroucke, professor of Theatre Arts

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Thank you for your support!

