



1 March 2007

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CITY MANAGERS OFFICE
LAWRENCE, KS

Mr. David Corliss
City Manager
6 E 6th
Lawrence, KS 66044

Dear Mr. Corliss:

I am writing in reference to a mural project planned for Lawrence in conjunction with *Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist*, a major exhibition being organized by the Spencer Museum of Art. Although Douglas (1899-1979) was born and raised in Topeka, many residents in this region are not aware of his art and legacy as the foremost visual artist of the Harlem Renaissance. This exhibition and the programs planned in conjunction with it will help to raise awareness throughout the state of Kansas and the region of Douglas's achievements and rightful place in American history.

The Spencer has commissioned Dave Loewenstein to create an original mural in Lawrence to honor Aaron Douglas. For the mural to be experienced by as many people as possible and to bring attention to Lawrence and to Kansas, we would like the mural to be placed in downtown Lawrence. One site we are considering is the north exterior wall of the city parking garage at 9th and New Hampshire. This site is directly in the middle of our wonderful downtown and has the potential to bring in a large number of tourists as well as have a strong economic impact on the city and the region throughout its venue at the Spencer, September 9 through December 2, 2007, and beyond.

I know you are aware of Dave Loewenstein's work and his reputation as a mural artist. He continues to bring positive attention to our community and state through his work, scholarship, and strong collaborative skills. In addition, I enclose materials to familiarize you with Aaron Douglas and the project. It is my understanding that the first step in the process is to receive approval from you and the city for the 9th and New Hampshire parking garage site before proceeding with the next required steps.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss the project and specific site with you in person. Thank you for your serious consideration of this request.

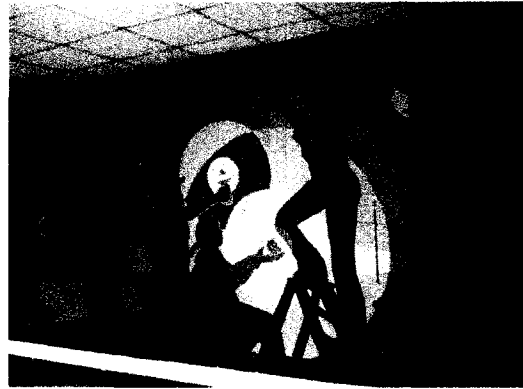
Sincerely,

Carolyn Chinn Lewis, Assistant Director
864-0140 / cclewis@ku.edu

MURAL PROJECT

Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist

Introduction. The Spencer Museum of Art has commissioned an original mural to honor Aaron Douglas (1899–1979)—the foremost visual artist of the Harlem Renaissance—as an individual, artist, and muralist. This project is part of a major retrospective of the work of Aaron Douglas, the first traveling exhibition of its kind, entitled *Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist*. The show will open **Sept. 8, 2007** at the University of Kansas (KU) Spencer Museum of Art in Lawrence and close in New York in November 2008. The mural will be created by nationally recognized Lawrence muralist **David Loewenstein**,



Mural by David Loewenstein

with the help of KU students, area youth, and community members of all ages. It will be installed in Lawrence for all to see and, in Douglas's words, to help magnify and carry on what was begun by his mural art; that is, "to be inspired and to move forward." * Mr. Loewenstein maintains a website at <http://www.davidloewenstein.com/> and is co-author, with Lora Jost, of *Kansas Murals: A Traveler's Guide*, ISBN: 0700614699, Oct. 2006.

Budget. The preliminary budgetary goal of \$242,000 for *Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist* has been largely met, chiefly with funding from the Henry Luce Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Office of the Chancellor of the University of Kansas; the Judith Rothschild Foundation is helping to fund a commissioned art film documenting Douglas's murals. Although the community video will not travel with the exhibition, we expect to make it available on our website, <http://www.spencerart.ku.edu/>, which we are updating and expanding this year. To mount an evocative mural that will serve as a fitting tribute to Douglas's work and a noteworthy addition to public art in Lawrence, we have sought expanded support for this project.

Need for the project. The mural will celebrate Douglas, a native of Topeka, Kansas, who, through his imaginative self-expression, has influenced generations. We believe that sharing Douglas's legacy with the public through a mural process that is in concert with his work and life is a valuable activity. Mr. Loewenstein plans to create an original work that echoes Douglas's distinctive style and explores his visual and thematic gifts. The content of the mural will be developed through a collaborative process involving participants from the Lawrence area and will result in an enduring example of public art.

Touring schedule. After opening at the Spencer Museum in the fall of 2007, the exhibition will tour nationally to the Frist Center for the Visual Arts (Nashville), the Smithsonian

* Douglas interview, L. M. Collins, July 16, 1971, Black Oral History Program, Fisk University Franklin Library Special Collections, Nashville.

American Art Museum (Washington, D.C.), and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (New York), reaching an estimated 500,000 people. The opening in Lawrence will feature extensive interdisciplinary programming, including many public events.

Exhibition book, catalogue, educational materials, and public programming.

Yale University Press and the Spencer will co-publish an illustrated scholarly book assessing Douglas's achievements and historical significance. The work will present original research on Douglas in the form of six commissioned essays by Douglas scholars and an illustrated narrative chronology documenting Douglas's life and artistic career (list of contributors enclosed). Educational materials include a free full-color brochure, a website, a family activity sheet, and an education packet consistent with national arts-education standards. The packet will contain background biographical and historical information, a tour script containing a selection of images, lesson plans and suggested activities for K-12 teachers, and reproducible gallery guides for youths and adults, written in both English and Spanish. The community mural project headed by David Loewenstein will take the form of a University- and public-outreach program inspired and constrained by Douglas's art. Additional local interdisciplinary programming includes a scholarly conference entitled "Aaron Douglas and the Arts of the Harlem Renaissance: An Interdisciplinary Symposium," a jazz and dance festival, and a performance by the Fisk Jubilee Singers. We estimate that the traveling portion of the exhibition will reach approximately 500,000 people.

Institutional credentials. The Spencer Museum of Art [IRS 501(c)(3)] is the only comprehensive art museum serving the state of Kansas. It has a long history of organizing traveling exhibitions and serves as a teaching and research resource for the University of Kansas. The exhibition is organized by Susan Earle, Ph.D., the Spencer's curator of European and American art, and coordinated by Stephanie Knappe, a doctoral candidate at KU. Dr. William J. Harris, KU professor of English, is organizer of the symposium, and Madison D. Lacy, Emmy-winning filmmaker, producer, and director, is the commissioned videographer who will document Douglas's murals.

Summary. The proposed community mural is designed to encourage public involvement and social dialogue in conjunction with *Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist*, which, with its wide-ranging programming, symposium, and KU/Yale University Press catalogue, will contribute widely to scholarship in American art. These events together celebrate the visual arts, music, dance, literature, and community—the very elements that shaped Douglas's work and defined his era. We invite your participation in what promises to be an exhilarating undertaking.

FACT SHEET

Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist

WHAT: The first nationally touring retrospective exhibition to celebrate the art and legacy of Aaron Douglas (1899-1979), a native Topekan considered the foremost visual artist of the Harlem Renaissance. This event has received support from the Henry Luce Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Office of the Chancellor of the University of Kansas.

WHEN: Premiering in Lawrence September 8–December 2, 2007, the show will be on view in 2008 at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts (Nashville) January–April; the Smithsonian American Art Museum (Washington, D.C.) May–August; and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (New York) August–November.

WHERE: The exhibition will open at the Spencer Museum of Art, 1301 Mississippi, The University of Kansas, Lawrence 66045-7500. Saralyn Reece Hardy, Director, (785) 864-4710, srh@ku.edu.



Aaron Douglas
Play De Blues, 1926 *

WHY: More than 85 works, including 33 paintings and 31 works on paper by Douglas, plus pieces by his contemporaries and students will be featured. The project celebrates the visual arts, music, dance, literature, and community—the very elements that shaped Douglas's work and defined his era. The work and ideas of Aaron Douglas have had a lasting impact on the history of art and the cultural heritage of our nation. The exhibition, programming, and catalogue emphasize the overall breadth of Douglas's achievements and contribute significantly to scholarship in American art. The exhibition offers an opportunity for individuals from many walks of life to join in genuine dialogue with each other as they interact with works of art.

HOW: Both inside and out, the Spencer will be transformed in recognition of Douglas's vision. A well-known artist/videographer will produce an original film (in itself a work of art) to capture Douglas's celebrated on-site murals in a portable format. With the help of KU students, area youth, and community members of all ages, Lawrence muralist David Loewenstein will create a Douglas-inspired mural. Interdisciplinary programming ranges from the Fisk Jubilee Singers and a jazz and dance festival to public lectures and a scholarly symposium. Educational materials for youths and adults will be provided in both English and Spanish. Yale University Press and the Spencer will co-publish an illustrated scholarly book assessing Douglas's achievements. The work includes original research in the form of six commissioned essays and an illustrated narrative chronology documenting Douglas's life and artistic career.

WHO: Organized by Susan Earle, Ph.D., the Spencer's curator of European and American art, the exhibition is coordinated by Stephanie Knappe, a doctoral candidate in art history at KU.

OPPORTUNITIES: The Aaron Douglas exhibition honors the work of a socially engaged artist whose vision of optimism and self-expression has influenced generations ever since.

* *Play De Blues* from a portfolio of six prints plus cover, created in a collaboration between Aaron Douglas and Langston Hughes for *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life*, 1926. Museum purchase: The Helen Foresman Spencer Art Acquisition Fund, The Office of the Chancellor, and the Lucy Shaw Schultz Fund, 2003.0012.01-07.

VIDEOGRAPHY PROJECT

Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist

To capture the on-site murals of Harlem Renaissance artist Aaron Douglas (1899–1979) in an easily transportable format, the Spencer Museum of Art has commissioned an artistic video as part of *Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist*, the first national traveling retrospective of the artist's work. The video will document Douglas's on-site murals, which are not otherwise available to the exhibition; travel with the exhibition; and serve as a permanent record of Douglas's mural art, which is fragile and must undergo periodic restoration.



Aaron Douglas, *The Founding of Chicago*, Spencer Museum of Art, Museum Purchase: R. Charles and Mary Margaret Clevenger Fund, 2006.0027.

Project videographer. Madison Davis Lacy, noted filmmaker, producer, and director, has been named videographer for the project. Mr. Lacy's film honors include Emmy Awards for the documentaries "Free to Dance" (PBS), "Beyond Tara—The Extraordinary Life of Hattie McDaniel" (AMC), "The Time Has Come" (*in Eyes on the Prize: America at the Racial Crossroads* [1965-1985]; PBS), and "Richard Wright—Black Boy" (PBS, BBC). He also received a Peabody Award for the film "Back to the Movement." Mr. Lacey served as executive producer for the feature-length documentary *Paris is Burning* and has many other film projects and other endeavors to his credit.

Exhibition dates. The exhibition will open at the University of Kansas (KU) Spencer Museum of Art in Lawrence, running from September 8, 2007 through December 2, 2007. Then it will tour nationally to the Frist Center for the Visual Arts (Nashville), the Smithsonian American Art Museum (Washington, DC), and close at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (New York) in December 2008.

Project description. The commissioned video is intended to add a contemporary, interpretive dimension and aesthetic to the record of Douglas's murals in the context of the Great Depression, the Harlem Renaissance, and African American life and art of the 1920s and 30s. Douglas, a native of Topeka, Kansas, is best known for his large-scale public murals and illustrations in magazines and books—art forms that resist typical museum presentation. The Spencer has risen to this challenge by presenting Douglas's *in situ* murals (those at Fisk University in Nashville; the Harlem YMCA in New York; and, possibly, a private home in Wilmington, Delaware), which cannot be lent physically to the retrospective, to a wide audience by means of an artist-made video, which is to be a work of art in its own right.

Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist is being organized by Susan Earle, Ph.D., the Spencer's curator of European and American art, and coordinated by Stephanie Knappe, an art-history doctoral candidate at KU. The exhibition will feature approximately 90 works by Douglas, along with many items rarely seen by the broader public—several of which are important pieces currently in private hands. Additionally, a full-color catalogue co-published with Yale University Press will be available, and extensive interdisciplinary and public programming is scheduled at

each venue. A Washington (DC)-based member of the exhibition's National Advisory Board declares that *Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist* may be the most significant exhibition on the subject of Douglas in our lifetimes.

Project goals. By using videography to document the vital historical murals of Aaron Douglas, Mr. Lacy will provide archival footage of the paintings while establishing a meaningful contemporary connection to Douglas's art. We propose that this project will promote lasting public awareness of the scope of Douglas's achievements, which are underrepresented in our region, and offer a meaningful encounter with Douglas's work to people of all ages and backgrounds.

Project budget. The National Endowment for the Arts and the Judith Rothschild Foundation are funding the videography project. Our budgetary goals for the overall exhibition have been largely met through the support of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Henry Luce Foundation, the Office of the Chancellor of The University of Kansas, KU's Hall Center for the Humanities, and Capitol Federal (Topeka), who are our corporate sponsors.

Background of Aaron Douglas. Aaron Douglas (1899–1979), a native of Topeka, Kansas, was a socially conscious artist who vividly captured the spirit of his time. In illustrations for progressive journals and books, paintings, prints, and murals, his forceful ideas and their distinctive artistic forms have produced a powerful visual legacy of the Harlem Renaissance. Although unknown to many even now, the ideas that Aaron Douglas espoused and the works that he created have had a lasting impact on the history of art and the cultural heritage of our nation.

Touring schedule. After opening at the Spencer Museum in the fall of 2007, the exhibition will tour nationally to the Frist Center for the Visual Arts (Nashville), the Smithsonian American Art Museum (Washington, DC), and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (New York). Nashville and the New York of the Harlem Renaissance were especially significant to Douglas. For the Lawrence, Kansas, venue we are collaborating with organizations in Topeka (Douglas's birthplace) and Kansas City, Missouri (where Douglas taught at segregated Lincoln High School from 1922–25) to foster a regional celebration of the artist and to recognize his roots in and influence on the Midwest.

Exhibition book, catalogue, educational materials, and public programming.

Yale University Press and the Spencer will co-publish an illustrated scholarly book assessing Douglas's achievements and historical significance. The work will present original research on Douglas in the form of a commissioned introduction, six commissioned essays by Douglas scholars, and an illustrated narrative chronology documenting Douglas's life and artistic career. Educational materials for the Lawrence exhibition include a free full-color brochure, a website, a family activity sheet, and an education packet consistent with national arts-education standards. The packet will contain background biographical and historical information, a tour script containing a selection of images, lesson plans and suggested activities for K-12 teachers, and reproducible gallery guides for youths and adults, written in both English and Spanish. A community mural project headed by nationally known artist David Loewenstein will take the form of a university and public outreach program inspired by Douglas's art. Additional local interdisciplinary programming includes a scholarly conference entitled "Aaron Douglas and the Arts of the Harlem Renaissance: An Interdisciplinary Symposium," a jazz and dance festival, a Harlem-style "rent party," and a performance by the

Fisk Jubilee Singers. We estimate that the traveling portion of the exhibition will reach approximately 500,000 people.

Key personnel. **Saralyn Reece Hardy** is director of the Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas in Lawrence; **Dr. Susan Earle**, exhibition organizer, is curator of European and American Art at the Spencer; **Stephanie Fox Knappe**, exhibition coordinator, is a Ph.D. candidate in American art at KU. Symposium organizer **William J. Harris**, a professor in KU's Department of English, specializes in American literature, African American literature, jazz studies, American poetry, and creative writing. **Kristina Mitchell** is Director of Education at the Spencer; and **Amanda Martin-Hamon** is Public Programs Coordinator; both have extensive credentials and backgrounds in their respective areas. The commissioned video will be created by the distinguished filmmaker **Madison Lacy**.

Institutional credentials. The Spencer Museum of Art is the only comprehensive art museum serving the state of Kansas. It has a long history of organizing traveling exhibitions and serves as a teaching and research resource for KU. The Spencer recently took over stewardship of the ethnographic collection of the University of Kansas, which includes approximately 10,000 Native American, African, Latin American, and Australian artifacts. The Museum's staff has grown from one curator at its founding in 1928 to a growing permanent professional staff of 26, plus 20 part-time undergraduate and graduate research assistants. Museum attendance has increased from 100,000 in 2004 to more than 120,000 last year. The Spencer is a nonprofit organization located in the center of the nation, dedicated to addressing the role of art in the human experience. Our mission is to reach the broadest audience possible through the collection, study, and thoughtful presentation of works of art and to enhance the lives of KU students, faculty, and staff.

Summary. Creating a video presentation as part of *Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist* is an undertaking that corresponds at every level with the goal of presenting, preserving, and interpreting work of the highest aesthetic merit. While recording Douglas's on-site murals, the film/DVD will link the imagery and spirit of Douglas's world to our own. The traveling exhibition celebrates the visual arts, music, dance, literature, and community—the very elements that shaped Douglas's work and defined his era. The video, programming, and catalogue will contribute significantly to scholarship in American art, especially in the area of the visual arts of the Harlem Renaissance. Furthermore, the project offers a distinctive opportunity for individuals to join in genuine dialogue with each other as they engage with transformative art on a national scale.

We believe that this video, both independent of and as an adjunct to the exhibition itself, will preserve Douglas's legacy and foster a richer understanding of the work of an artist who created a socially engaged vision of optimism and explored self-expression in ways that have influenced generations ever since.

SYMPOSIUM

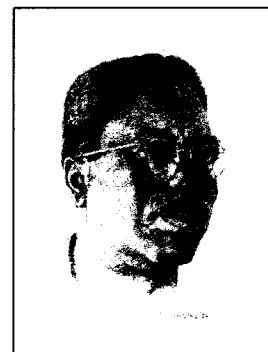
Aaron Douglas and the Arts of the Harlem Renaissance: An Interdisciplinary Symposium September 28–29, 2007

Introduction. The Spencer Museum of Art's traveling retrospective exhibition of the work of Aaron Douglas (1899–1979), *Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist*, scheduled to open September 7, 2007 in Lawrence, may be the most significant exhibition on the subject of Douglas in our lifetimes, says a Washington, DC-based member of show's National Advisory Board.

Purpose. To further develop and complement this ambitious undertaking, the Spencer has scheduled an interdisciplinary symposium for September 28 and 29, 2007. The principal objective of the forum is to encourage deliberation and conversation among the museum's diverse audiences about the complex constellation of artists, writers, and creative thinkers who comprised the Harlem Renaissance and to highlight Douglas's place within it. The conference will feature invited speakers whose topics will spark wide-ranging conversations, with particular attention being paid to the Harlem Renaissance; the links that Douglas forged during that period with his contemporaries in the visual, literary, and performing arts; and how these connections relate to today's world.

Budget. The initial budgetary goal of the core exhibition (more than \$242,000) was met largely through generous support from the Henry Luce Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Office of the Chancellor of the University of Kansas. Originally, the conference was a less complex idea envisaged as a faculty symposium. However, as the symposium concept grew to complement the exhibition in scope and ambition, it became clear that an interdisciplinary forum warranted a national presence and greater public outreach. The Henry Luce Foundation and the University of Kansas Hall Center for the Humanities have agreed to help fund this expanded concept. However, the original budget has been amended to include travel, lodging, and honoraria for the national keynote presenter and six symposium speakers and to provide support for related programming and activities.

Need for the project. The symposium is an integral part of the museum's plan to foster a regional dialogue on the subject of Aaron Douglas and the Harlem Renaissance and to establish present-day links to that era. Clearly, the ideas that Aaron Douglas espoused and the work he created have had a lasting impact on the history of art and the cultural heritage of our nation. The symposium is organized to engender far-reaching conversation about the Harlem Renaissance—the era during which Douglas made a name for himself and with which he is most closely associated—within the setting of the larger exhibition. It reflects the interdisciplinary nature of Douglas himself and promises to be exceptional in that it will encourage the free flow of ideas between and among disciplines, groups, and individuals. The boundaries that sometimes separate the visual, literary, musical, and theatrical arts will be regarded as porous rather than impermeable. Furthermore, the conference and its related activities are expected to draw audiences from universities and art institutions located within the state,



Aaron Douglas,
Self-portrait, 1954,
Spencer Museum of
Art, Museum Purchase:
Peter T. Bohan Art

in neighboring states—and even the nation—along with people from all walks of life. Events are open to the public, and everyone will be encouraged to join in the open discussions planned.

Plan of action. Organized by KU professor William J. Harris, in consultation with the Spencer's exhibition organizer Dr. Susan Earle and coordinator Stephanie Fox Knappe, the symposium will add energy to the overall exhibition by addressing in depth the history, culture, art, literature, dance, and music of the Harlem Renaissance and Aaron Douglas's place within it.

Public outreach. The Spencer is in consultation with organizations in Topeka (Douglas's birthplace) and Kansas City to foster a regional celebration of the artist and to recognize his roots in, and influence on, the Midwest. The museum's energetic public outreach effort, currently underway, is expected to attract visitors and participants from the community, region, state, and nation to both the exhibition and the symposium. The Spencer is actively engaged with community leaders and people involved in many areas, including individuals who have worked with the African American Oral History Project and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and others who are connected to the Lawrence, Topeka, and Kansas City Public Libraries; the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce; local and regional print media; two regional Public Broadcasting Service television stations, KCPT (Kansas City) and KTWU (Topeka); and our local Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR) local affiliates KANU in Kansas City and KTWU in Topeka. The regional committee for the symposium and exhibition also includes the executive director of the Kansas African American Affairs Commission, the director of the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, and Fisk University alumni, among others.

Context. After opening at the Spencer Museum of Art in the fall of 2007, the traveling portion of *Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist* will tour nationally to the Frist Center for the Visual Arts (Nashville), the Smithsonian American Art Museum (Washington, DC), and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (New York). Organized by Susan Earle, Ph.D., the Spencer's curator of European and American art, and coordinated by Stephanie Knappe, an art-history doctoral candidate at KU, the show will feature approximately 90 works by Douglas as well as pieces by his contemporaries and students. Moreover, it will bring together many works rarely seen by the broader public, several of which are important pieces currently in private hands. We estimate that the exhibition will reach approximately 500,000 people.

Summary. We propose that the symposium taking shape within the context of the Spencer's 2007 exhibition *Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist*, is a uniquely worthy undertaking. The symposium and cabaret will celebrate the visual arts, music, dance, literature, and community—the very elements that shaped Douglas's work and defined his era. Together, the national exhibition, scholarly publications, and interdisciplinary regional symposium will contribute significantly to scholarship in American art, especially in the area of the visual arts of the Harlem Renaissance. We are confident that the Spencer's September 2007 symposium, “**Aaron Douglas and the Arts of the Harlem Renaissance**,” will generate an environment that will make it easy for people to join in a genuine dialogue about art, culture, and life—as we bring the “then” of the Harlem Renaissance into the “now” of modern life.

Aaron Douglas and the Arts of the Harlem Renaissance: An interdisciplinary Symposium

Working List of Symposium Speakers, by Session

- Keynote: **Richard J. Powell**, John Spencer Bassett Professor of Art History, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (confirmed).
- Historical/cultural context: **Gerald Early**, Merle Kling Professor of Modern Letters, Washington University, St. Louis (confirmed)
- Visual art: **Amy Kirschke**, Associate Professor of Art and Art History, University of North Carolina, Wilmington (confirmed).
- Literature: **Arnold Rampersad**, Sara Hart Kimball Professor in the Humanities and Cognizant Dean for the Humanities, Stanford University (invited).
- Music: **Robert G. O'Meally**, Zora Neale Hurston Professor of English and Director of the Center for Jazz Studies, Columbia University (confirmed).
- Dance: **Brenda Dixon Gottschild**, Professor Emerita of Dance Studies, Temple University, and writer for *Dance Magazine* (confirmed).
- Theater: **David Krasner**, Adjunct Associate Professor of Theater Studies, English, and African American Studies, Yale University (confirmed).