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### Adult Chapter Meetings

Monthly, 3rd Thursday, 6PM  
Virtual Meeting  
(except in December)

### Youth Council Meetings

At Lincoln High School

### Business Name

Lincoln Branch NAACP  
P.O. Box 81322  
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**President** Dr. Dewayne Mays

**Vice President** Rebecca Gonzalez

**Secretary** Ricki Barber

**Assistant Secretary** Jessica Stoner

**Treasurer** Carrie Banks

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**Sponsor** Mar'la Overstreet

**University Chapter Advisor**

Dr. Jeannette Eileen Jones

**President** Linda Kuku

### Message from the President

I should start my comments by thanking the members and well-wishers for their support of our September 9th Banquet. It was a pleasure seeing, sharing, and visiting with you our many friends. Thank you, planning committee, for your hard work. This celebration served to remind us of all the work to be done in our community and the importance of your support.

For the past few months I wake up at night and one word haunts me – VOTE! Maybe that's because this is possibly the most important thing we will do this year. We cannot afford to suffer another crushing defeat of low voter turn-out at the polls. If we are able to make a difference in our community, we must be intentional and well informed. Not only should we register to vote but know the issues. There must be a plan to follow thru to casting our ballot. The intermediate steps of requesting a ballot, studying the ballot to become familiar with the candidates/issues, and assuring that all of the requirements such as signature and dates are completed, will ensure a satisfactory voting procedure from start to finish. Once we have completed the voting process, we can seek to aid others in their effort to vote.

A summary of a suggested voting process follows.

1. Register to vote/ check you registration – remember the ID requirements.
2. Become aware of election date deadlines.
3. Become familiar with candidates/issues on the ballot.
4. Weigh your values VS the candidate's values.
5. Make a decision on candidates/issues of your choice.
6. Develop a plan to vote (consider alternatives).
7. Vote (by mail, in person, etc.).
8. Become a voting advocate.

Please note that a free legal walk-in clinic will be offered at the Center For People In Need, at 3901 North 27th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska, on the first Friday of each month. I hope you will encourage persons you know who may need these services to take advantage of this opportunity. Also please consider supporting Omaha Branch NAACP's Annual Freedom Fund Banquet on November 11, 2023, 6:00 pm, at the Omaha Marriot, 222 N. 10th Street. Thank you for all you do for Lincoln Branch NAACP and our community.

**Dewayne Mays**  
**President, Lincoln Branch NAACP**



Dewayne Mays, PhD  
President

## Lincoln Branch NAACP Banquet Reborn!

On Saturday, September 9, the Lincoln Branch NAACP banquet tradition was reborn in a big way after some inactive years and Covid confinement. Held at the Cornhusker Marriott Hotel in downtown Lincoln, the gala event whose theme was "Thriving Together" was attended by more than 200 guests. Representatives came from civic organizations, state, city, and county organizations, as well as faith and education communities. Extra tables had to be set up for the overflow crowd. The evening began at 5 pm with an hour of socializing before the dinner commenced.

Marthaellen Florence, master of ceremony, opened the evening by welcoming everyone and reminding them of the importance of the Lincoln Branch NAACP, founded in 1918. Rev. John Goldrich, pastor of Newman United Methodist Church, gave the invocation. After Barb Miller of the Lincoln Public Schools led everyone in singing the hymn "Lift Every Voice and Sing," traditionally known as the Black national anthem, Dr. Dewayne Mays, president of the Lincoln Branch NAACP, gave the official welcome of the evening.

Dr. Mays touched on some of the achievements of the Lincoln Branch such as the meeting with Nebraska Supreme Court Chief Justice Michael G. Heavican in conjunction with Betty C. Andrews, president of the Iowa-Nebraska NAACP, in the effort to pursue more inclusive procedures for jury selections as well as the Branch's participation in the Truth and Reconciliation Project. He also challenged each member to register ten new voters before the next election.

Preston Love, Jr., politician, author, and civil rights leader, delivered the keynote address. He opened with lyrics from the song "Ease on Down the Road" from the 1975 Broadway musical *The Wiz* that was later made into a film. Using the allegorical feature of the story to highlight the Black struggle for equality and civil rights, Love emphasized the need to start the struggle all over again given the current upsurge in White racist nationalism. He said the times call for a renewal of unity, and, like *The Wiz*, African Americans should never lose their confidence in their own intelligence, heart, and courage.

Love said that the time for theorizing was over; it was now "nationtime." He was recalling the National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana, in 1972 where Rev. Jesse Jackson asked his audience composed of thousands of delegates what time it was, and they responded, "It's nationtime!" This was a call, as the Gary Declaration stated, for an "independent Black political movement, an independent Black political agenda, and an independent Black political spirit."

Jareldine Mays, Chair of the Membership Committee and Co-Chair of the Banquet, presented the Lenora Letcher Award to two well-deserving members of the Branch: Jessica Stoner, longtime secretary of the Lincoln Branch, and Jackie Egan who is a member of Banquet Planning Committee and has served on the Scholarship Selection Committee, Annual African American Awards Committee, Nominations Committee, and GOTV.

Dr. Thomas Christie, Chair of the Education Committee and Co-Chair of the Banquet, presented the next award, the Leola Bullock Community Service Award, to Albert Maxey, Sr. and Dr. Jose Soto. Albert Maxey, Sr. played basketball at UNL, and after graduation he joined the Lincoln police force. When Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. came to Lincoln in 1964 to give a speech at Pershing Auditorium, Maxey was part of the security detail assigned to Dr. King. Originally from Puerto Rico, Dr. Jose Soto who is a UNL law school graduate has been the longstanding Vice President of Access, Equity, and Diversity at Southeast Community College. He has been a powerful voice on the Nebraska Supreme Court's Access to Justice Commission.

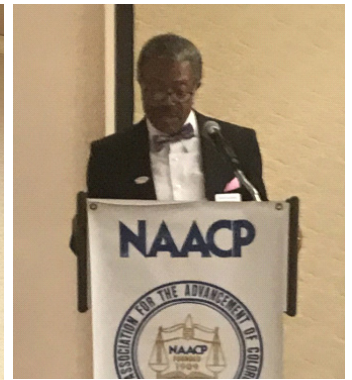
Dr. Jeannette Eileen Jones, past president of the Lincoln Branch NAACP and professor of history and ethnic studies at UNL, received the past president award.

After closing remarks by Dr. Mays and the benediction by Rev. John Goldrich, Barb Miller led the guests in singing four verses of

"We Shall Overcome" while everyone held hands and swayed with the song.



Preston Love, Jr. delivering Keynote Address



Dr. Dewayne Mays gives the welcome address.



Three wise ladies of the NAACP: (from left to right): Carrie Banks, Treasurer of the Lincoln Branch; Rebecca Gonzales, Vice President of the Lincoln Branch; and Jareldine Mays, Banquet Co-Chair and Chair of the Membership Committee



What an NAACP banquet night! A full house!



Jareldine Mays presents a Lenora Letcher Award to Jackie Egan; Jessica Stoner was also a recipient of the award.



Dr. Thomas Christie presents the Leola Bullock Community Service Award to Albert Maxey, Sr. Dr. Jose Soto was also a recipient of the award.



## Jareldine Mays Honored with ACLU of Nebraska Award

On October 9, Sam Petto, Communications Director of ACLU of Nebraska, informed Jareldine Mays that she is the 2023 recipient of ACLU of Nebraska's Robert M. Spire Founders Service Award. This award is given annually to an individual who has worked for a lengthy period of time to advance and protect Nebraskans' civil rights and civil liberties. Jareldine Mays will join a list of other recipients that include the likes of Sen. Ernie Chambers, Marj Plumb, Beatty Brasch, and Jean and John Krejci among many other notables.

Jareldine Mays is a past president of the Lincoln Branch NAACP (2012 to 2014) and currently the co-chair of the Lincoln Branch NAACP Banquet Committee as well as the chair of the Membership Committee.

To honor Jareldine Mays, a small reception will be held for an intimate gathering by ACLU of Nebraska board members and executive director Mindy Rush Chipman at the Federal Trust Building on November 2. Mays will be attending with three guests.

Members of the Lincoln Branch NAACP are delighted that Mays has been honored this award and join together in congratulating her.



Jareldine Mays

## Otoe-Missouria Day Celebrated in Lincoln for the Second Year

*Mary K Stillwell*

Members of the Jiwere & Nut'achi, known in English as the Otoe-Missouria tribe, returned to their homeland in Lincoln, Nebraska, on September 21 to celebrate Otoe-Missouria Day for the second year in a row. Two teepees erected by Native university students on grass east of Lied Commons and the Sheldon Museum of Art welcomed the thirty-one adults and children who arrived from Red Rock, Oklahoma, for a three-day visit.

A welcoming ceremony and luncheon were held at the Lied Center Annex. Lincoln Mayor Leirion Gaylor-Baird kicked off festivities by reading the September 21 Otoe-Missouria Day Proclamation acknowledging that Lincoln sits on the tribe's ancestral lands, thanking them and other indigenous caretakers who have lived here in the past and continue to reside on the land, and marking the date as official Otoe-Missouria Day. The date of September 21 is significant; on that day in 1833, the Jiwere & Nut'achi Nation peoples signed the first of two treaties ceding land that would become Lincoln with the U.S. Government. The Mayor's remarks were preceded by a Color Guard, a song of Welcome, and an Opening Invocation by Otoe-Missourian AddieTohee. Cory DeRo-in, whose ancestors once walked this land, told assembled group, "Our old folks are looking down on us, happy that we're here, that

we're able to come back and walk in their footsteps. In my heart, I feel like I'm at home."

Other speakers included Sandra Washington, city council member; Mark Brohman, executive director of the Wachiska Audubon Society, and Carlee Rigatuso, president of UNL's UNITE group. Kevin Abourezk, deputy managing editor, Indian Country Today, and Renee Sans Souci, educator and cultural consultant, served as emcees. Otoe-Missouria and Lincoln Indian Center drum groups offered songs and dances lead by Princesses from the two groups. Local youth and UNL students served food to their elders and cleaned up afterward.

The Center for Great Plains' Reconciliation Rising project, established by Margaret Jacobs, director of the center, and Kevin Abourezk, hosted the homecomings in 2022 and 2023. Reconciliation Rising is a multimedia project founded in 2018 to produce podcasts and short films showcasing Natives and non-Natives working together and moving toward reconciliation.

Thursday evening, the Otoe-Missourians were welcomed with a dinner at the Lincoln Indian Center. The following day they walked the land of their ancestors at Seven Mile Prairie and after lunch at the Unitarian Church of Lincoln, they participated in a healing ceremony at Spring Creek Prairie. On their way back to Oklahoma on September 23, after a stop at the Dieken Prairie, they visited Indian Cave State Park in southeast Nebraska, once Otoe-Missouria land, to view Indigenous cave paintings found there.

Originally from the Great Lakes region, the Otoe-Missouria, traditionally hunter-gatherers, moved south in the 1800s and made their home in inhabited modern-day Lincoln and much of the southeast region of the state. They ceded the land that became the United States in 1854 and were moved to the Big Blue Reservation (now Beatrice, Nebraska). Life on the Big Blue Reservation was difficult. Hunting for buffalo was not allowed as the government encouraged a shift from a migratory life to an unfamiliar, settled agrarian one. Their land was sold by Congress in 1881 and once again the Otoe-Missouria were forced to pull up stakes and begin a long walk to Oklahoma.

For an overview of the day, go to: <https://news.unl.edu/newsrooms/today/article/otoe-missouria-day-reconnects-indigenous-people-to-the-land/>.

If you would like to view the September 21 Proclamation Ceremony, including the reading of the full proclamation, it is available for viewing at

[https://mediahub.unl.edu/media/21381?fbclid=I-wAR0y\\_3OUMYIkwBZ04q\\_cexNjuxL72-](https://mediahub.unl.edu/media/21381?fbclid=I-wAR0y_3OUMYIkwBZ04q_cexNjuxL72-)



Kevin Abourezk and UNL Native Students erect teepees to welcome the Otoe-Missouria to Lincoln

## Poems

### By Aliyah American Horse



Aliyah American Horse

*Aliyah American Horse is a small town girl from Gordon, Nebraska, where she graduated. She is also an enrolled member of the Oglala-Lakota tribe. She currently attends Black Hills State University in Spearfish, South Dakota, where she is working towards her bachelor of behavioral sciences degree. She was named Nebraska Youth Poet Laureate for 2023-2024 by the Nebraska Writers Collective. She has spent her life dedicated to art, family, friends, and all that she is passionate about. Her goal through her poetry is to advocate for Native American Communities, MMIW (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women) and mental health while also sharing stories of life, love, and the beauty of the world. She is inspired by the people around her who have supported her along her journey and her experiences that shine through in her poetry. Her main goal in life is to make a change in the world no matter how small.*

### Set me Aflame

I can't remember the last time I felt  
The candle in my chest  
When the butterflies flutter their way  
Up through your throat and out through your lips  
And turn to kisses and the words of love  
They flew into the heart of a soul tied to mine  
All awhile our heart beats in synch, and we fell into one another  
His spirit sang a song to mine, so they danced until the sun did rise  
Our souls were set on fire, and the flames were the color of our  
dark desires  
There's a certain type of coldness when the candles done burning  
The loneliness is bitter, and you can't seem to find the light  
Almost like a gun pointed directly at your heart

But pulling the trigger would be too easy  
So those butterfly wings turn to the claws of a million centipedes  
And your insides are ripped to shreds  
Our once peaceful lyrics are turned to hell in the words of song.  
We can no longer dance when we know the sun won't rise  
Instead, I wait until the day our two souls are set a lite

### Steel Graves and October Days

Ten. Ten. 4:36  
October laid her sweet kiss  
On a Nebraska afternoon  
Cruising sunny dirt roads, looking for tomorrow  
Dips and curves laid deep, engraved  
By generations of teenage dreams  
And drunken summer speed  
Rusted barbed wire entangled between rotting posts  
Hide the words to our story and frame our faces in the back roads  
An engine follows the trails at 80  
And squeals quiet save me's  
She barrels down those county roads  
She wakes up those dips and curves  
To make them her own  
When the wheels spin so fast they fly  
And the rear bumper kisses each side  
The wind will stop blowing  
And the sun will stop smiling  
Down on that dirty road  
As that steel grave rolled  
She woke up the land  
And blew up storms of clouds of dirt  
The dirt turned to the mud in our ears and the dust in our lungs  
And buried our minds in the earth  
October's breath cut short  
As our worlds were set fire by silence  
Hearing nothing but the ringing sounds of a language  
Only God spoke  
Our hearts still beat and are our legs still walked  
But our souls and lives, grim had caught  
We were dropped  
In 6 feet deep steel graves  
On a simple October day  
Ten Ten. 4:36  
October laid her bitter kiss

## Drunk Indians

by Aliyah American Horse

The Devil shares a bottle with my nation  
Drinking her right down to his home  
America, land of the free  
And home of possibility  
Except when your skin isn't heavenly pure  
And your family name didn't come from across the British sea  
My white friends are scared to drive through my reservation  
In fear of their life  
When in reality, we are fighting for our own  
A girl once told me how the "drunk Indians" made our small  
town dirty  
As if this land wasn't ours to begin with  
I know we kept our sacred grass clean  
But what bothers me is the "drunk Indian" myth  
I have family members who've drank their liver dry  
I know people who've sat on the side of the road and died  
Because they couldn't stumble their way home one night  
I've been to more funerals than weddings  
Which is why my family is so close  
Because you never know.  
We pass around bottles of vodka and whiskey  
To mourn what they've taken and drown the pain  
As we know we will find the same grave  
Because we are no longer brave warriors  
We are just livers filled to the brim with sin  
And to you,  
Just another drunk Indian

## Shed No Tears Unci

by Aliyah American Horse

I'll sit in your lap and listen to your tales  
As you put my dark hair into braids  
Unci, tell me the stories of your days  
The wars in Wounded Knee, your fallen siblings  
And the long nights on our reservation  
Grandmother, tell me of your sisters and brothers  
As you touch my sacred skin with purity  
Tell me what it's like to be a native woman  
And how to grow old and tell stories just like you  
Teach me how to sew our families star quilts  
And braid my own children's hair  
Unless my life is taken before I get there  
And you are the one to sew the quilt I'm buried with  
Unci, don't cry when my skin becomes game  
And I'm hunted for my long dark braids  
Shed no tears when men find me easy  
Easy to murder and easy to rape  
And the news channels won't bother saying my last name  
Afraid of His Horses, Long Soldier, or Blue Bird  
But in my name will my justice lurk?  
Justice for my sisters never found and murdered  
Don't cry Unci  
For it was not my fault that our family's blood has bled  
Just tell our stories and never let my sisters names fall dead

## Lincoln NAACP Committee Members

### Chair of Education Committee

Thomas Christie

### Chair of Legal Redress Committee

Catherine Wilson

### Chair of Political Action Committee

Currently Open

### Advisory Committee

Chassidy S. Jackson-Goodwin

### Newsletter Editor

Frank Edler

### Assistant Editors

Kathleen Rutledge, Mary K. Stillwell, and  
Micaela Fikar



## Q & A with the New NAACP Chapter at UNL

*Editor: The NAACP Chapter at UNL is not only being revived but also re-chartered. Dr. Jeannette Eileen Jones, Professor of Ethnic Studies and History, is the lead faculty advisor to the Chapter that is also receiving assistance from Law Professor Catherine Wilson; Professor Charlene Maxey-Harris, Associate Dean of University Libraries, Dr. Jake Kirkland, and Joe Morrison. The Lincoln NAACP Chapter is most grateful for the revival of the university chapter, and we wish them a successful voter registration drive!*

**Prof. Catherine Wilson:** Why re-charter the NAACP Chapter at UNL?

**UNL NAACP:** We wanted to re-charter to give students a platform to be politically active. We also want to build a stronger

community amongst the BIPOC students at UNL.

**Prof. Wilson:** What is your primary goal for the year?

**UNL NAACP:** Our goal for the year is to expand our membership and lay a strong foundation for our future projects. We are planning on focusing on voter registration as a chapter.

**Prof. Wilson:** How might the adult chapter assist with your goals?

**UNL NAACP:** We are going to need help with fundraising, mentorship, and overall guidance with our chapter structure.

**Prof. Wilson:** Who are the officers for the group?

**UNL NAACP:** Our officers are as follows:

President: Linda Kuku

Vice President: Tristian Swift

Treasurer: Jacquie Paul

Secretary: Jaidyn Bogard

PR Manager: Nyakuoth Tuach

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## The First Black Studies Course at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

*Frank H. W. Edler*

When things happen for the first time, they have in many cases a founding quality. Think of the first printing press, the first steam engine, or the first political act that establishes a new nation. Firsts are important when we consider major social and educational changes in America. For example, the first Black Studies department to be established as a result of the Black Power Movement in the Sixties was at San Francisco State College in 1968. The new president at San Francisco State, Robert Smith, acted to establish a Black Studies department with Nathan Hare, Black sociologist, as acting director. This, however, was not the first program of African Studies at an American university. The earliest African Studies program, as Abdul Alkalimat has shown in his work *The History of Black Studies*, was established in 1943 at Fisk University championed by Mark Hanna Watkins, the first African American to earn his doctorate in linguistics. Another early interdisciplinary African Studies program was started in 1948 by Melville J. Herskovits, professor of anthropology at Northwestern University.

Where did the University of Nebraska stand in the turmoil of the Black revolution for civil rights and the fight for greater African American representation on college and university campuses? It may be surprising to some, but the University of Nebraska was in the thick of it. On October 30, 1966, when Stokely Carmichael, chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), spoke to students at UC Berkeley laying out his understanding of Black Power, UNL on the same day was holding its own Black Power Teach-In sponsored by the university chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Carl Davidson organized the SDS chapter at UNL and was its first president in 1965. Al Spangler was elected president in 1966 at the time of the Black Power Teach-In.

A major first in relation to Black Studies at UNL happened in the spring semester of 1969. A new interdisciplinary course was offered at the university. The new two-credit course was called "The Negro in American Society" (listed in the bulletin as History-Sociology-English 198), and it was divided into three five-week sessions, taught by different professors in each of the three subject areas. The course was given for three consecutive spring semesters beginning in 1969. After the first year, it was changed from two to three credits. It was not renewed after the spring of 1971 when the name of the course was changed from "The Negro in American Society" to "The Black Experience in America."

This was a faculty-led effort with student support that had its genesis in the 30 October 1966 "Black Power Teach-In" sponsored by the UNL chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), headed by Al Spangler. Representatives from a number of the major civil rights groups in the country were asked to speak at this first university-affiliated teach-in on Black Power. The three-hour teach-in focused on clarifying various interpretations of "Black Power," examining the implications of those positions, and evaluating them.

Among the panelists were Hughes Shanks, former member of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE); Bob Smith from the Atlanta office of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) headed nationally by Stokely Carmichael (now Kwame Ture) who helped to place the concept of Black Power at the center of American attention; Greg Calvert, secretary for the national SDS; Dr. Patrick R. Wells, UNL faculty member in pharmacy and previous president of the Lincoln NAACP (1967-1968), and Ernie Chambers, Black activist from Omaha.

Following the teach-in, Dr. Jack Siegman, assistant professor of sociology, offered a non-credit course in the spring of 1968 through the Nebraska Free University (NFU) entitled "Black Power." NFU was a student-led organization founded in December of 1966 that offered non-credit courses for the first time in February of 1967. Twenty-four courses, many of current interest, were offered by faculty, graduate and undergraduate students as well as members of the community. They promised greater participation and discussion than standard lecture courses. Dr. Philip Crowl, new head of the history department, attended one of Siegman's "Black Power" classes and asked the Black students what they wanted, and their reply was a course in Black history. From this seed, Crowl developed a more complex and ambitious course.

Clearly, the new university course "The Negro in American Society" was fraught with huge challenges and assumptions, not the least of which was whether White professors not only had the understanding and knowledge of how to teach Black history and engage Black culture but also whether they could break the mold of the standard White versions of American history that were still riddled with racism. In addition, the huge amount of scholarship that Black intellectuals had produced at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HCBUs) had hardly been disseminated in White colleges and universities. As Abdul Alkalimat has stated in his recent work *The History of Black Studies* (2021, Pluto Press), "[t]he first two generations of Black PhDs and artists in these institutions [HCBUs] laid the foundation for Black Studies scholarship, and, in that respect, they were directly responsible for the genesis of what became Black Studies" (page 61).

**cont'd on page 7**

## First Black Studies Course at UNL, con't.

The concept of Black Power was a wake-up call; it drew a political line in the sand and said that African Americans would no longer accept the White academy's assimilated version of Black history. Indeed, it would take a massive revision of American history to break that mold before Black history could be seen again with fresh eyes, a revision that is still in progress today given the 1619 Project. This attitude of skepticism by Black students toward White versions of Black history was evident when the course was first offered. Although 350 students registered for the first offering of the course, only about twelve or fifteen Black students enrolled. The low Black enrollment clearly indicated a lack of confidence in a Black studies course taught by White professors. Claude Bolton, a Black student taking the course, confirmed this when he said, "[s]ome blacks think it is necessary to have a black professor teaching the course" (*Daily Nebraskan*, February 21, 1969, p. 1).

There did not seem to be much dispute that the course was aimed at and designed for White students. Although Siegman stated that the motivation for creating the course "came from both black and white students," he, nevertheless, admitted "[i]t is obvious that it is directed at white students." Fred Schmidt in his *Daily Nebraskan* article "De Profundis" said the "course is aimed at enlightening white students and that is as it should be" (March 6, 1969, p. 2). No doubt White students needed enlightening; however, Black students, most likely, did not want to take the course simply to learn what White students should have been taught about Black history and culture.

Although Crowl asked Black students what they wanted, I wonder to what extent the White professors, who participated in the three offerings of the course, actually put themselves in the shoes of Black students and thought about how deeply personal such a course would be for them. Did they think at all about how teaching Black students might be different than teaching White students? Did they understand the deeply existential impact such a course could have for Black students who may have taken the course as a way to explore their identity and engage the issue of what W. E. B. Du Bois called double consciousness? As Du Bois famously said in 1897 in "Strivings of the Negro People," "[o]ne feels his two-ness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."

Some searching questions were indeed asked by White faculty about how Black students would engage a Black studies course. For example, Charles A. Peek, a doctoral student who taught the literature section of the 198 course in the spring of 1970 also attended the fourth annual conference on comparative literature at the University of Southern California that same spring. The title of the conference that took place on April 16 and 17 was "Black Literature." Peek also attended UNL English department committee meetings seeking to increase Black student enrollment in freshman English classes. He asked questions of the committee like "[w]hat would they [Blacks] come here for?" and does the university plan "to develop courses or classrooms that would be of use to black students in forming their abilities to think creatively and critically so they could better address their particular needs as students, individuals, and members of black communities" (Charles A. Peek, unpublished manuscript, *Race Across the Plains*, Chapter 8, "Make a Plan or Take the Plunge"). Peek also taught a freshman English class with Black students from North Omaha.

Peek's recollections of his Freshman English class offer a unique perspective on the times: "I do know that a whole body of students [in his class] came from Omaha's north side Black Community and that one of them was, as I recall, the daughter of Dan Goodwin, owner of the Spencer Street Barber Shop where Chambers worked after his complaints over being called 'boy' got him



photo by Dan Laitely

Ernie Chambers, Civil rights activist: "Negroes have no alternative. I am for fighting back."

## Ernie Chambers . . . 'Negro not member of today's society'

by Jim Pedersen  
Junior Staff Writer

While white students sit in class and worry about their next date, Negro students must worry about their families and their future, according to Ernie Chambers, an Omaha civil rights activist, who spoke at Selbach Graduate's Mon-

When asked if he supported a Negro revolution, Chambers replied, "Negroes have been put in a position with no alternative but to fight back. I am for fighting back." He added, however, that he did not advocate a revolution at present.

Ernie Chambers speaks to UNL students after a showing of the film "A Time for Burning" that featured Chambers (*Daily Nebraskan*, Feb. 7, 1968, p. 1).

'let go' at the Post Office—all this after graduating from Creighton Law School—but years before he became Nebraska's longest serving state senator" (*Ibid*).

Other concerns about "The Negro in American Society" were also brought up. The course structure was unusual. Teaching the course from three disciplines would clearly expand the viewpoints brought to bear on the subject matter, but class time would have to be allotted for the integration of perspectives. Thus, one danger inherent in the course was that the three five-week sessions would remain independent of each other and no class time would be given at the end of the course for questions that crossed all three perspectives. This kind of course demands a high degree of coordination among its faculty members not only in text selection but also in possible areas on integration in viewpoints.

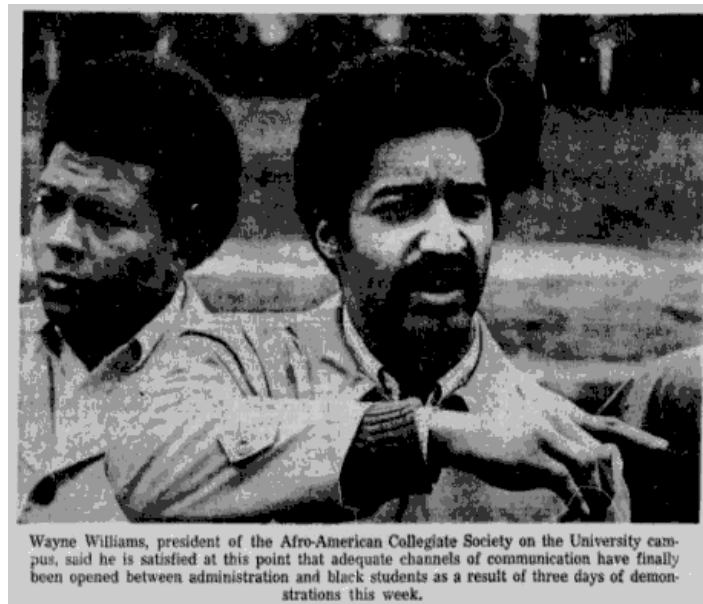
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## First Black Studies Course at UNL, con't.

A strong believer in the importance of class discussion, Peek recognized the danger and in the spring of 1970 restructured "the literature section to allow student participation and discussion." During the five weeks of the English section students would meet once a week in fifteen smaller groups led by "students in each group who had worked with the same literature before" (*Daily Nebraskan*, "Letter to the Editor," July 27, 1971, p. 2). This would provide for greater discussion since the class enrollment was so large.

Discussion was also extended outside the classroom when Olive Taylor, Black professor of history at Howard University, came to UNL as a guest lecturer for "The Negro in American Society." In one of her talks she laid it out bluntly to her audience: "We're not going back to Africa. If we don't get a piece of the nation's pie, there isn't going to be any pie" (*Daily Nebraskan*, February 20, 1970).

In making the course interdisciplinary, Crowl was also responding to student senators at the University who had passed a resolution in November of 1967 urging the university to develop



Wayne Williams, president of the Afro-American Collegiate Society on the University campus, said he is satisfied at this point that adequate channels of communication have finally been opened between administration and black students as a result of three days of demonstrations this week.

Photo of Wayne Williams, *Daily Nebraskan*, April 18, 1969, page 1.

programs "wherein students from various disciplines would come together to work on and study common or specific problems, projects, or talks facing society today." Student senator Dennis Schulte hoped "an interdisciplinary course could be devised for next semester" (*Daily Nebraskan*, Nov. 2, 1967, p. 1).

From the beginning of the course, however, there were differing faculty views about the importance of keeping the course interdisciplinary. Both Siegman and Dr. Robert Knoll taught the first course in 1969 -- Siegman taught the sociology section and Knoll the English section -- and they disagreed about whether to keep the course interdisciplinary. Siegman agreed that the initial course should be interdisciplinary, but he thought that as Black studies courses expanded, there should be separate courses each examining the Black experience in history, sociology, and literature. Knoll disagreed with this saying that "[i]t is not a very rich subject." He continued by saying that if you divided the course and "put it into three departments, you would have three thin subjects" (*Daily Nebraskan*, February 21, 1969, p. 1).

However, there were additional reasons for bringing other departments into the course. Crowl admitted, "I didn't have a staff member with sufficient background in Negro history to teach a class in it, nor were there funds to get a specialist" (*Daily Nebraskan*, July 6, 1971, p. 4). Indeed, he may not have had faculty with experience enough even to teach the five-week history section of

the course so he relied on five volunteer faculty members, each teaching one of the five weeks. This threatened to balkanize the course even more.

After the history segment of the course had been completed (it was the first segment taught in the spring of 1969), Fred Schmidt recorded his observations in the February 21 *Daily Nebraskan* article mentioned above. He said Crowl gave "an excellent introductory lecture" to the history section which, according to the 1969 Bulletin of the College of Arts and Sciences, focused on "slavery and its impact on American history, emancipation and its consequences" as well as "the history of segregation."

He went on to praise William I. Sherman, specialist in Latin American studies, for his lecture on slavery. The problem, however, was the lecture focused on slavery in Latin America, not on slavery in the United States. He was critical of Professor Duly's "flippancy" and Professor Rose's "endless nervous pacing on stage" (the course met in the Love Auditorium). He did praise Professors Rawley and Braeman for their concise treatment of the crucial issue of the course -- "the black man's struggle for equality."

On April 15, 1969, when the first offering of the course was still in progress, the Afro-American Collegiate Society (AACS) on campus, whose president was Black law student Wayne Williams, sent a list of twelve demands to UNL administration and held non-violent demonstrations in and around the administration building during the afternoons of April 16, 17, and 18. The Black students' demands included among other things the hiring of a Black counselor and a Black studies coordinator, dramatically increasing the recruitment and enrollment of Black students as well as establishing a Black Studies program.

NU Lincoln campus president Joseph Soshnik agreed with the demands except for the establishment of a Black studies program; however, in the fall of 1970 the university introduced an eighteen-hour Black studies minor that included three required courses: Black-White Psychology (Psych 182), The Black Experience in America (Soc 198), and Race Relations (Soc 117). In addition Lodis Rhodes was hired as coordinator of African American Studies. Rhodes was a Kansas State University graduate with a master's degree in psychology who had played football for KSU and had been president of the KSU Black Student union for two years (*Daily Nebraskan*, "Black Studies Minor Offered," September 17, 1970, p. 5).

Rhodes was hired in June of 1970, and as coordinator of African American Studies he took over from Crowl the coordination of History/Sociology/English 198. He also took over from Siegman the teaching of the sociology section of the course the third time it was offered (*Daily Nebraskan*, "Popular Black Studies Course Dropped Because of a 'Lack of Coordination,'" July 6, 1971, p. 4). In 1974 Rhodes left the University of Nebraska and joined the faculty at the University of Texas.

After the spring of 1971, the course was dropped. Even in its last offering, however, the course remained popular with an enrollment of over 250 students. Rhodes said that "it was primarily a problem of the lack of cooperation among the departments involved, English, sociology, and history." Dr. Leslie C. Duly, associate professor of history who taught the history section, agreed and added, "[c]ooperation was a problem if we're talking about intensive coordination. It was a problem not only in selecting textbooks but in faculty listening to each other."

Crowl in his comments to the *Daily Nebraskan* as to why the course was dropped stated that "[t]he biggest problem was grading...[t]he English department let the students grade themselves [sic]" (Ibid). This statement was aimed primarily at Peek who allowed the practice to occur for a short period due to class disruptions during "strike week." In a July 27 letter to the editor of the *Daily Nebraskan* Peek clarified the issue and corrected Crowl's statement. In addition Crowl may have felt

con't'd on page 9



### First Black Studies Course at UNL, con't.

the English and sociology departments did not fight hard enough to retain the interdisciplinary course because they wanted their own course in their respective departments: "[t]he English department wants a full course and sociology the same" (*Daily Nebraskan*, July 26, 1971).

In the spring of 1972, the Board of Regents approved the creation of the Institute for Ethnic Studies and the following year Dr. Ralph Vigil, professor of history, was hired as its first director. Prior to this an Institute of Latin American and International Studies directed by Dr. Roberto Esquenazi-Mayo had been established in 1967. The Institute for Ethnic Studies consisted of three minors: Native American studies, African American studies, and Chicano studies.

Today, the Institute, directed by Dr. Joy Castro, offers a major and minor in Ethnic Studies with minors in African American Studies, Latin American Studies, Indigenous Studies, Latinx Studies, and African Studies. The minor in African American Studies alone boasts a curriculum of sixteen courses ranging from an introduction to African American Studies to the history of hip hop, from African American women's history and Black women authors to African American literature and the history of American enslavement as well as the history of jazz.

The development of Black studies took a bold step forward in the fall of 2022 with the announcement by the College Board of a new Advanced Placement course in African American Studies. It is not surprising that the course will be "multidisciplinary, addressing not just history, but civil rights, politics, literature, the arts, even geography" (*New York Times*, "The First A. P. African American Studies Class Is Coming This Fall," August 31, 2022). Unfortunately,

Governor Ron DeSantis and the Florida Department of Education prohibited the pilot course in Florida because "the course was indoctrinating students and lacked educational value" (*NPR*, "College Board slams Florida officials...", February 13, 2023). This political interference, however, into the educational curriculum will not long stand because Black history is so intimately tied not only to the identity of African Americans but to all Americans. The truth will out.

### Omaha Branch NAACP Announces Annual Freedom Fund Banquet

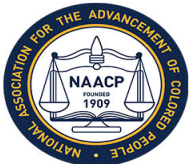
The Omaha Branch NAACP is pleased to announce that it will be celebrating its Annual Freedom Fund Banquet on November 11, 2023, 6:00 pm, at the Omaha Marriot on 222 N. 10th Street.

The Freedom Fund Banquet is the primary fundraiser and membership recruitment event sponsored by the Omaha Branch of the NAACP. The Branch is asking for increased sponsorships and generous financial support to meet its goals and fulfill its mission.

Rev. T. Michael Williams, president of the NAACP Omaha Branch, stated that Rev. Dr. Wendell Anthony, President of the Detroit Branch and a National Board member, will be the keynote speaker. He went on to say that Dr. Anthony "presents a strong message for accomplishing our Vision as well as bringing clarity to our theme Thriving Together."

In addition, the Banquet will include the presentation of Two Freedom Fighter Awards and Two Community Partner Awards and as well as a President's Award.

Let's be sure to support the Omaha Branch Banquet!



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