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Series Examines African American Traditions in Southern California

Offering insight into one of the nation's most vibrant cultural communities, the Center for Black Studies Research and the Department of Black Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara will host a summer conference series titled "African American Traditions in Southern California: History, Culture, Social Vision, and Challenges."

The conference consists of four events that will take place during July and August. All events are free and open to the public.

The series begins on Tuesday, July 10, with a screening of the film "The Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers and Contemporary African American Film," which features a retrospective of the films of the Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers as well as the work of producer and director Gregory Everett. The screening will take place at 7 p.m. in UCSB's Lotte Lehman Concert Hall.

Everett's most recent work includes the documentaries "Black Infant Mortality: Your Generation at Risk;" "History of the Hood," which examines the evolution of Los Angeles street gangs; "41st & Central," the story of the Southern California chapter of the Black Panther party as told by a father to his son; and "History of West Coast Hip-Hop."

On Wednesday, July 11, Everett and independent filmmaker Billy Woodberry will discuss their work at 7 p.m. in Lotte Lehman Concert Hall. A founding member of the Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers, Woodberry directed the landmark 1984 film "Bless Their Little Hearts." He serves on the board of directors of Film Forum Los Angeles and is an instructor at the California Institute of the Arts.

Other events in the series include:

- "The Music of Watts and South Central Renaissance" featuring Kamau Daaood and Medusa. Daaood is co-founder of The World Stage Performance Gallery, an education and performance art space in the Leimert Park area of South Los Angeles. He also is a former member of the Watts Writers Workshop and the Pan African People's Arkestra. He recorded the critically acclaimed album "Leimert Park" in 1997. Medusa, a hip-hop artist who received a Grammy award in 2002 for her work with the band Ozomatli, has been voted best hip-hop artist by LA Weekly two years in a row. Wednesday, July 25, 7 to 10 p.m. in Lotte Lehman Concert Hall
- "Social Vision/Current Challenges: Children, Educational Reform, and Women's Health," a panel discussion with Joyce Germaine Watts, Cathy Tate, Damien Schnyder, and Julie Grigsby speaking on important social issues. Watts, a faculty member of the School of Educational Leadership and Change at the Fielding Graduate University in Santa Barbara, will speak on "School Reform in Los Angeles." Tate, who is the program director of Sage, a childcare center that serves school-age children living in the Nickerson Gardens Housing Development in Watts, will discuss "The State of African American Children." Schnyder and Grigsby, anthropologists and doctoral candidates in the African Diaspora Program at the University of Texas, will speak on "The School to Prison Pipeline" and "Black Women's Health Disparities in Southern California," respectively. Wednesday, August 1, 3 to 5:30 p.m. in the McCune Conference Room, 6020 Humanities and Social Sciences Building
- "Social Vision/Current Challenges: Black and Latino Relations," a panel discussion featuring Irene Vásquez, chair and associate professor of Chicana and Chicano studies at California State University, Dominguez Hills, and Ron Wilkins, a professor of Africana studies at California State University, Dominguez Hills. Wilkins is an expert in Black and Mexican relations. Tuesday, August 7, 3 to 5:30 p.m. in the McCune Conference Room, 6020 Humanities and Social Sciences Building

"There is a relatively new area of research in California history focusing on the African American community in Southern California and the magnificent culture that has emerged," said Clyde Woods, assistant professor of black studies at UCSB and director of the conference. "The conference brings a new appreciation for the art and humanity it presents and at the same time explores different ways communities can interact to address issues and resolve conflicts."

The events in the series are co-sponsored by the UCSB Office of the Associate Vice Chancellor, Academic Programs, and UCSB Summer Sessions.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.