



The Tenth Annual Mellon Faculty Seminar in Bahia, Brazil

July 5–17, 2011

THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION AND THE UNITED NEGRO COLLEGE FUND ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE MELLON FACULTY SEMINARS IN SALVADOR, BAHIA, BRAZIL

Interdisciplinary in nature, the theme and focus of the Mellon Faculty Seminars will change each year in order to explore the many questions and themes shaping Mellon fields and disciplines, and also to maximize the participation and representation of scholars who teach and conduct research in these disciplines and fields. Based in Salvador, Bahia, the tenth annual Mellon Faculty Seminar will take place July 5-17, 2011.

GOALS OF THE MELLON FACULTY SEMINARS

Broadly speaking, the goals of the Mellon Faculty Seminars are faculty enrichment and development. More specifically, the Mellon Faculty Seminars are designed to realize the following goals:

- to promote meaningful links between teaching and research in the humanities, social sciences and the sciences
- to deepen knowledge and understanding of these subject areas or Mellon fields and disciplines by focusing upon significant topics, texts and themes under the direction of a senior scholar or expert
- to create a community of inquiry across cultures, disciplines and institutions within the historical and cultural context of the African diaspora
- to provide effective models of interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship
- to support the professional advancement of faculty at the member institutions of the United Negro College Fund

APPLICATIONS MUST BE POSTMARKED NO LATER THAN JANUARY 31, 2011.

APPLICATIONS MAY BE MAILED TO:

Dr. Cynthia Neal Spence
Programs Director
UNCF/Mellon Programs
Spelman College
350 Spelman Lane
Box 333
Atlanta, GA 30314

Applications sent by email and fax will not be accepted

Applicants will be notified by March 1, 2011

SEMINAR DESCRIPTION

CONSTRUCTING WOMEN IN THE AFRICAN DIASPORA: IDENTITIES, CULTURE AND POWER

Dr. Kim D. Butler

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How did women of African descent successfully carve identities and spaces of empowerment against the forces of racism and patriarchy that defined the Afro-Atlantic world? Forced into subservient roles as domestics, wet-nurses, prostitutes, field laborers and breeders, African-descended women quickly began to carve a host of paths towards greater personal freedom and challenged the systems of their oppression. This seminar explores the routes and roots of black women's empowerment, from their most extraordinary stories to the everyday strategies

that have become integral to African diaspora women's culture. In so doing, it interrogates modalities of social and political control and contestation, and the integral role played by African descent women in those multivalent dialectics of power.

The site of the seminar is the city of Salvador, Bahia, labeled by Ruth Landes as the "City of Women" after field research which introduced her to influential women who were reshaping the landscape of African-based religious institutions in the early twentieth century. Those traditions helped bring notions of the African feminine, as represented through the mythologies of Iemanja, Oxum, Oya and other deities, into Brazilian popular culture. The Afro-Bahian woman has become an iconic

archetype of race and nation, marketed since the days of Carmen Miranda and an essential element of contemporary cultural tourism.

This seminar will familiarize faculty participants with black women's histories and contemporary issues in Bahia as a dimension of the broader history of women in the Afro-Atlantic diaspora. It begins with an examination of the historical locations of black women in Brazilian society and the multiple strategies they employed to resist and construct their own bases of power and security. Following these histories into the twentieth century, it continues with an exploration of the continuing challenges to African descent women today.