

CAS AT FIFTY: NOTES ON THE FIRST QUARTER CENTURY, 1964-1989

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When it was founded in the 1964-65 academic year, the Center had two core faculty members: Rene Lemarchand (Political Science, appointed 1962) and Clement Donovan (Economics, appointed 1940). Lemarchand was the first Center Director, 1964-68. While the National Defense Education Act was signed into law in 1958, the first Title VI Centers received funding in 1959—nineteen in all. The UF Center for African Studies was founded with the intent of applying for Title VI funding. It received its first NDEA Center grant in 1965, thus joining the Center for Latin American Studies as a Title VI Center.

The Center's preoccupation in its first years was to develop its infrastructure, which meant first of all expanding the core Africanist faculty. The first two hires were both in 1966: Brian duToit in Anthropology and David Niddrie in Geography. Two additional core faculty members arrived in 1967: Haig Der-Houssikian in Linguistics/Swahili and Hunt Davis, Jr. in History. By the end

of the 1972-73 academic year, when the initial period of Title VI Center funding ended the core faculty had increased to seven, with the addition of Paul Kotey in African humanities. There were now four additional resource faculty with extensive African field experience who could direct theses and dissertations on African topics. Course offerings had increased to forty-five, with twenty-four at the graduate level, and the library had begun to develop substantial holdings on Africa.

When Haig Der-Houssikian became director in 1973 (serving until 1979) upon returning from a Fulbright in Angola, the Center thus had a modest profile nationally, but it had established itself as an accepted norm in the academic life of the University of Florida. The fact that the university expanded its support of the Center despite not having Title VI funding is testimony to its significance on campus. There were four additional appointments to the core faculty over the next two years: Anita Spring in Anthropology, Bernadette Cailler in French, and Mildred Hill in English. Thus, by 1976, when, due to the

ongoing university support, the Center was successful in its application for Title VI funding, the core faculty had increased to eleven with three new faculty members in the resource category, bringing that total to seven. Course offerings had increased to sixty-six, and there were now about twenty-five graduate students each year.

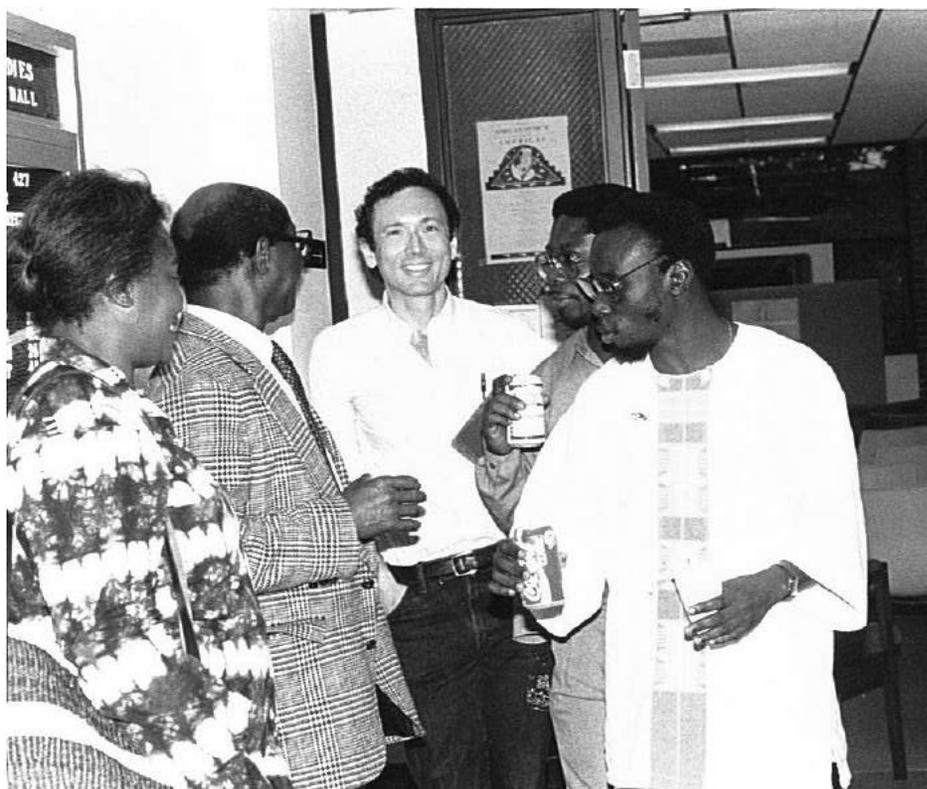
The Center was well placed to compete successfully for Title VI funding in 1976 and, for the first time, NDFL (subsequently FLAS) fellowships to support graduate students. The faculty continued to grow. A major expansion in the curriculum was the increase in African language instruction beyond Swahili. UF began to offer Shona in addition to Swahili, using the Fulbright program to bring graduate students from the University of Zimbabwe as teaching assistants while working on their degrees. Arabic was also added, as was Yoruba. This expanded language instruction led to the Center receiving six NDFL fellowships. It also laid the groundwork for a truly major institutional expansion of African Studies a few years later: the establishment in 1982 of the Department of African and Asian Languages and Literatures, with Haig der Houssikian as chair, in 1982-92. With departmental status, new faculty positions opened up.

The requirements for Title VI funding had expanded to include an active outreach program to schools, colleges, universities, businesses, and the general community. Hence, the Center in 1976 embarked upon an active outreach program with the first Outreach Coordinator appointed in 1978. A major outreach undertaking was creating a traveling art exhibit that travelled to fourteen other institutions and museums in the Southeast over the next three years. The material in this exhibit also forms the foundation for the Harn Museum's African art holdings. The Center also began to conduct summer institutes for teachers.



Yet another outreach activity was the Center's funding and publication three times a year of the *Bulletin of the Southern Association of Africanists*. With a circulation of 800, it was addressed primarily to K-12 and community college curricular needs.

The Center again in 1979 lost its Title VI funding for what were now being called National Resources Centers (NRCs) just as Hunt Davis took over the directorship. The challenge facing the Center, if was to regain Title VI funding, was to define what there was about African Studies at UF that made it a national resource for Africa so that it could compete successfully for a restoration of Title VI funding in 1981. The Center was fortunate that the university maintained its commitment to African Studies for this two-year period and even funded some of the areas that a Title VI grant would have covered. The answer arrived at was that UF was a land-grant university with a well-established Africanist liberal arts and sciences faculty and a focus on tropical and sub-tropical agriculture that was unique in the land-grant system. The Center's 1981 Title VI application reflected this expanded agricultural interest, for the resource and support faculty included six faculty members in the Food and Resource Economics Department, a soil scientist, and a wildlife ecologist. By the next year, the list of IFAS faculty affiliate with the Center had expanded to include five more in food and resources economics, four in agronomy, two in veterinary medicine, an additional soil scientist, and one each in animal science, extension service, and horticulture.



There was much more going on in UF African Studies in the 1980s beyond the focus on African agriculture. From 1980-88, the Center also was the host institution for the *African Studies Review*, which is a publication of the African Studies Association, with Hunt Davis serving as editor. In 1984-85, the Center established what was to become its major annual set of lectures/conferences on critical African-related topics, which it named in honor of Gwendolen M. Carter. The core faculty of African specialists continued to expand. Ron Cohen came to UF from Northwestern in 1982 and constituted a major anthropology hire that gave the Center enhanced visibility. Another major hire was that of Goran Hyden, who joined the political science department in 1987. In 1988, Peter Schmidt assumed the center directorship and joined the anthropology faculty as a specialist on African iron age archaeology. These faculty appointments, and numerous others, led to a continued expansion of African course offerings and of master's theses and doctoral dissertations on African topics.

The renewal of the Center's Title VI funding in 1981 also allowed for the expansion of the Center's administrative

structure. Della McMillan was appointed as the first assistant director of the Center and Patricia Kuntz became outreach coordinator. These two positions enabled the Center to greatly expand its activities and presence on campus, including the Baraza lecture series, working groups, conferences, and outreach to schools and colleges. Expanded Center funding under Title VI also enabled the Center to support a growing number of graduate students with FLAS Fellowships. A mark of how far the Center had come from its early days was the willingness of Dean Charles Sidman to authorize an external search for a new director when I stepped down since he believed that such a search would enhance the Center's national presence and reputation.

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