

CARTON 9:11

THE BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS

"THE ONYX EXPRESS"
INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT ALLEN

2003

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RA Interview Read for
An Oxy Cross

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Prof. Allen-

Here's the interview (in the body of this email and attached). Please read over it and make sure that I have quoted you correctly, and have spelled your book titles correctly as well. I would appreciate a response by Wednesday. Thank you!

Shanesha

Investigating Social Change, recovering Lost Stories:

An Interview with Professor Robert L. Allen.

by Shanesha R. F. Brooks

Currently working on a book on C.L. Dellums, Professor Robert Allen has a joint appointment in the Ethnic Studies and African American Studies Departments. He holds a Ph.D. degree from UCSF in Sociology. He is currently teaching a course on Race Politics in the U.S.

Shanesha Brooks-SB

Professor Allen-RA

SB-First a little background info about yourself:

RA- I've been teaching at Berkeley since ¹⁹⁹³1994. I teach African American and Ethnic Studies. Prior to coming to Berkeley I taught at Mills College and San Jose State University. I am also one of the editors of The Black Scholar, a black studies research journal that has been publishing since 1969.

SB-Is Robert Chrisman still involved with The Black Scholar?

RA-Yes, he's the Publisher and Editor in Chief. He's now the head of Black Studies at University of Nebraska at Omaha. We do all of our communication through internet, fax, ^{phone} and Fed-Ex (he chuckles). He's very much involved.

SB-I worked with him a little bit on my Langston Hughes project

RA-Oh really?

SB-...two years ago when I was a sophomore.

RA-Right, he was here at that point right before he left for Nebraska. So good, you know him then.

SB-Yes. So what are some of your interests?

RA- Well, my areas of interests are social change and social movements, and I've done quite a bit of writing on that, like my books ^{political economy} Black Awakening and Capitalist America, Reluctant Reformers, and Port Chicago. I am also interested in African American history in general. My current work Honoring Sargeant Carter is about a Black WWII hero, and it just came out as a matter of fact. ^{in the area, include}

SB-Great, so anything else?

RA-Well those are the main aspects. In terms of African American history I have an interest in recovering what I call "lost stories," stories about individuals or events who are important but have been lost. For example the Port Chicago story, the book I did on Lee Brown who is an African American labor leader, and the book on Sargeant Carter. I call those recovering lost stories of individuals and events who made a difference.

SB-How would you describe yourself as a high school student?

RA- (Immediately laughs) Oh...so-so (laughs). I went to Booker T. Washington High School in Atlanta, which is an all black high school, 3,000 students. It was such a huge place. I came from a relatively small black elementary school, so it was an overwhelming experience. I sort of got lost there. But I found a mentor in my math teacher, Mr. Anderson, who took me under his wing. He was organizing a chess club, matter-of-fact, so I got involved in the chess club. That helped me get through high school because it gave me a focus; it gave me a group to hang out with, ~~a-chie to be a part of~~. He told all of us "it is ok to be who you are, and however you do that is fine. You just have to focus and get through here!"

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SB-Would who you say makes you unique?

RA- (another chuckle) Oh...I don't know...I think in terms of academics, I think it's understanding how positive change occurs. I don't know if this makes me unique, but that is a deep interest that I ^{have} always had. I actually got involved in the Civil Rights Movement and that's where it started. I started out as a Math and Physics major at Morehouse College but in the course of getting involved in the Civil Rights Movement ~~and that struggle that got me~~ ^{I become} interested in how do social movements work, how do societies change or not change. That stirred my interests and led me to ~~get involved in~~ ^{study} Sociology.

SB - So what is the topic of your current book, and when will it be published?

RA - Well, I'm currently doing research on C.L. Dellums, who was one of the founders of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Union, which is the most important Black labor union in the history of this country and played a huge role in the impact it had on the African American community and on American society generally. He also happens to be the uncle of former congressman Ronald Dellums. But no one has ever written about the work of C.L. Dellums himself. The man played a huge role in the building of the union and the struggle for Civil Rights in California. His papers are at the Bancroft Library and I've been going through 40 cartons ~~plus~~ ^{plan} of his works and letters. I'm in the early stages of researching what I ~~hope~~ to be a critical biography of C.L. Dellums on his

role in the union and in the Civil Rights movement in California. I can't say when it will be published, but I hope to start writing this summer.

SB- what is your definition of research?

RA-I like doing primary research, where you work with original documents. And I also like doing interviews, which I consider a form of primary research. Through research you are able to give things an interpretive meaning, and that excites me, because it's like you are coming upon this treasure of material and trying to analyze it and understand it and put it in a form where others ~~could~~ ^{can} understand the impact this person had on the world.

document

SB-So is it a lot of work?

RA-Yes, a whole lot of work, you know that yourself...(We laugh) But at the same time it is very rewarding because it's very personal...handling the materials that he wrote...(he gestures) this is what he wrote! This is his handwriting. So you feel that you are as close to the individual as possible without getting to know him personally. ~~He~~ wrote in this narrative form where he told stories in his letters, so it's also very interesting to read them. They are not detached business letters; they are personal narratives.

Dellums

SB-If you could describe C.L. Dellums in three words, what would they be?

RA-(He laughs) Pugnacious. Funny. Committed. Pugnacious in the sense that he knew he had to fight and he was ready for the struggle. He was a very strong leader in that regard. Funny, he had a great sense of humor; he loved to joke back and forth with A.

Phillip Randolph. People who knew him told me as well that he was a very funny guy. Committed: all of his life was devoted to the struggle. He was totally committed to the union. He got involved in the NAACP in the early 1940s, and the fair employment practices law, he devoted fourteen years of his life to see that that law was passed, and after it passed he sat on the commission responsible for overseeing the implementation of the law. That union and ^{the} March on Washington in 1941 brought tens of thousands

of jobs. Tens of thousands of black people migrated to the bay area. The strong presence of African Americans on the west coast is in part due to this union. This is something most people don't realize.

SB-Wow, I didn't know that

RA-Yes, see most people don't. And if those jobs hadn't opened up, there wouldn't have been a migration, so that really changed things.

SB- One last question: What goals in life or in your career do you hope to accomplish?

RA-I love teaching and I love research. I feel like I've done a lot and I feel like there's so much more to do. There are so many stories and so many examples of struggles. It creates a lot of opportunities for research and this is what I hope to continue doing.

SB-Any last words?

RA-Never give up. Stick with your project and follow through.

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Shanesha R. F. Brooks-First a little background info about yourself: **Robert Allen**- I've been teaching at Berkeley since 1993. I teach African American and Ethnic Studies. Prior to coming to Berkeley I taught at Mills College and San Jose State University. I am also one of the editors of *The Black Scholar*, a black studies research journal that has been publishing since 1969. **SB**-Is Robert Chrisman still involved with *The Black Scholar*? **RA**-Yes, he's the Publisher and Editor in Chief. He's now the head of Black Studies at University of Nebraska at Omaha. We do all of our communication through internet, fax, phone and Fed-Ex. **SB**-I worked with him a little bit on my Langston Hughes project... **RA**-Oh really? **SB**...two years ago when I was a sophomore. **RA**-Right, he was here at that point right before he left for Nebraska. So good, you know him then. **SB**-Yes. So what are some of your interests? **RA**- Well, my areas of interests are social change, social movements and political economy, and I've done quite a bit of writing on in these areas, including my books *Black Awakening and Capitalist America*, *Reluctant Reformers*, and *Port Chicago*. I am also interested in African American history in general. My current work *Honoring Sergeant Carter* is about a Black WWII hero, and it just came out as a matter of fact. **SB**-Great, so anything else? **RA**-Well those are the main aspects. In terms of African American history I have an

interest in recovering what I call "lost stories," stories about individuals or events who are important but have been lost. For example the Port Chicago story, the book I did on Lee Brown who is an African American labor leader, and the book on Sargeant Carter. I call those recovering lost stories of individuals and events who made a difference. **SB**-How would you describe yourself as a high school student? **RA**- (Immediately laughs) Oh...so-so (laughs). I went to Booker T. Washington High School in Atlanta, which is an all black high school, 3,000 students. It was such a huge place. I came from a relatively small black elementary school, so it was an overwhelming experience. I sort of got lost there. But I found a mentor in my math teacher, Mr. Anderson, who took me under his wing. He was organizing a chess club, matter-of-fact, so I got involved in the chess club. That helped me get through high school because it gave me a focus; it gave me a group to hang out with. He told all of us "it is ok to be who you are, and however you do that is fine. You just have to focus and get through school." **SB**-What would you say makes you unique? **RA**- (another chuckle) Oh...I don't know...I think in terms of academics, I think it's understanding how positive change occurs. I don't know if this makes me unique, but that is a deep interest that I've always had. I actually got involved in the Civil Rights Movement and that's where it started. I started out as a Math and Physics major at Morehouse College but in the

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Nazi Graffiti Invokes Anger, Elicits Positive Reaction

By Inga Wilder

On Christmas Eve, the African American Theme House was targeted by hate crimes. The sign outside of the house, picturing the continent of Africa and painted in the colors of Africa (red, green, yellow and black) was spray-painted with a swastika, the symbol of the German Nazi party, along with a cross inside of a circle, the symbol for the Aryan Nation. The African American Theme House, part of the Berkeley student cooperative association, was not the only target of such acts. Many other ethnic groups have been targeted by such acts since

the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

When Felicia Moore-Jordan, co-manager of the house, was asked how the attack was viewed by the people living in the house, she, along with other house members, submitted this response: "Angry. Upset that this type of racism is still happening in 2003. Pissed off and threatened because it was very personal. Imagine what it feels like to wake up on Christmas Eve and see a swastika and an Aryan nation symbol out front of your house. And especially at the Afro house which is supposed to be a sanctuary for black students. It was very upsetting; racism right in your face."

After this incident occurred, the Black community on campus created a list of demands describing what we would like to see accomplished to increase the awareness of racism and hate crimes. This list includes a multicultural center, academic programs regarding racism, a place where students may report hate crimes and racist attacks, and a section in the Student Code of Conduct which deals with hate crimes and racism. The main goal of this list is to provide a safe learning environment for students and to make those responsible for crimes directed towards other students pay for their actions.

Campus News Briefs

UC Budget Cuts

By Michelle Myers

The UC system is operating with \$1 million less than expected in its budget, due to the sweeping budget cuts Governor Gray Davis has made from institutions in California. Cuts will be made to university funded research, academic support, and student services. Chancellor Berdahl will not know until next school

year exactly which cuts will be made and how deeply into each program.

"The only solution will have to be a balanced solution that will inflict pain on everyone," said Chancellor Berdahl in a luncheon on Feb. 7th addressing UC Berkeley trustees.

When tuition fees increased this semester, the increase provided enough money to soften the blow of rising tuition

to students who receive financial aid. One third of the money raised from the roughly \$200 tuition increase for Cal students this semester has been reallocated back into financial aid.

The chancellor expects that the only way to deal with middle class complaints about the cost of college is to remind people that education is an investment, not purely a cost.

BSHA, Covenant With Christ Donate Toys to Intensive Care Unit

By Antrina Brantley and Michelle Myers

Some of the toys were bigger than their recipients, but the parents enjoyed the toys anyway.

On Tuesday, December 17, Black Students in Health Association and Covenant with Christ passed out over 50 stuffed animals to children at the Oakland Children's Hospital. Both student groups held a toy drive throughout November and planned to

distribute the toys to toddlers at the Hospital. However, when the groups arrived at the hospital, they did not have enough toys for all 120 of the toddler age children, so the hospital staff suggested they take the 50 stuffed animals they had to the Intensive Care Unit for the developing premature babies.

"It was an honor for the BSHA to be a part of the toy drive at Children's Hospital in

order to take time out and give back to the community," said Antrina Brantley, member of BSHA. "We gave stuffed animals to babies (in ICU?) and sent a few home so that their siblings could also receive them. Although the babies couldn't respond verbally, it felt good to know that we could touch the lives of the babies, siblings, and parents with simple acts of kindness by letting them know we care."

What's Goin On? Events Calendar for Feb. - April

-Throughout February- Kappa Alpha Psi sponsored School Supply Drive, supporting Oakland Elementary Schools contact Pierce Minor
-2/22-Black Arts Festival, AASD Office
-2/24- poet and writer Nikki Giovanni speaking and reading poetry; 4pm, Lipman roomm, 8th floor Barrows Hall, sponsored by Poetry for the People
-2/28-End of Black History Month celebration, Afro Floor, time TBA

-3/1-Empowering Women of Color Conference, Pauley Ballroom sponsored by the Graduate Women's project
-3/7-3/9-BRRC Retreat
-3/18-Iota Phi Theta sponsored "Changing Perspectives Writing Workshop." check out www.demgeez.com
-4/5-MOVE Against AIDS- a hip-hop-athon benefiting Pangaea Global AIDS Foundation; www.MOVEAGAINSTAIDS.com
-4/11-Cal Day
-4/10-4/13-BRRC Black Senior Weekend
-4/18-"From All Perspectives" Show, Sponsored by ASUC; www.asuc.org

Silvester Henderson Robert Allen speaks about his research on C. L. Dellums

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“Outstanding Community Leader Award” in 1998. Professor Henderson was named “One of Ten Most Influential African Americans” of the year 2000 by CityFlight Newsmagazine. He even developed a Gospel Piano Curriculum, which is the only course of its type in the entire United States.

In 2002, Professor Henderson was honored with two “City Proclamations”, from Pittsburg and Martinez, both cities in California. He received these honors for his continuing efforts in using Gospel Music as a tool for encouraging, “communities to come together.” Most recently, the Office of Congressman Pete Starks, bestowed Professor Henderson with a “Congressional Honor”, for his advances in bringing academic recognition to the gospel song as an African American art form. Henderson’s educational objective is to ensure an academic home for African American Music. “As I pursued a music education and a career in teaching, I realized I wanted to teach African-American church music at the college-level and promote awareness of gospel music,” says Henderson. He aspires to gain the gospel song national academic recognition and one of his ultimate goals is to develop a formal college curriculum for gospel music at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, with aspirations of creating a Gospel degree with a concentration in Gospel music.

Under Henderson’s direction, the Young Inspiration

Gospel Choir (YIGC) aids in achieving the aforementioned goals. In April of 1992, YIGC recorded their first live album entitled “The Gospel Experience.” This recording was placed in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian Institute’s Gospel Music Division, as they named the Young Inspiration Gospel Choir the “finest” university gospel choir in the nation. In fall 1998, Professor Henderson & the Young Inspiration Gospel Choir released their second recording, titled “The Second Gospel Experience.” In 2000, the NAACP honored the choir with its “Outstanding Musical Achievement Award.” Henderson and his choirs have hosted and performed with such gospel greats as Richard Smallwood, Reverend Daryl Coley, Walter Hawkins, Calvin Bernard Rhone, Kurt Carr and the Kurt Carr Singers, Melanie Daniels—vocal coach for Mariah Carey, the noted Kirk Whalum—saxophonist for Whitney Houston, Billy Porter—the vocal soundtrack artist for Bette Midler’s movie entitled “The First Wives Club,” the R& B artist Vesta, and many more.

Henderson cares deeply about his students and devotes a vast amount of energy to teaching. With all of his dedication, hard work, zeal and passion, there is no doubt that Professor Silvester Henderson will be achieving even more success in the field of gospel music. *The Onyx Express* salutes him as he continues to work towards bringing his aspirations of gospel music to fruition.

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SB-Any last words?
RA-Never give up. Stick with your project and follow through.

Senior Portraits

How do you want to be remembered?

Don't miss out on being remembered in CAL's award-winning yearbook! Schedule a sitting today!

Sign-up for your portrait for the 2003 Blue & Gold yearbook! Lauren Studios will be in Heller Lounge Feb 18th through March 7th to take portraits.

To make an appointment stop by Heller Lounge (on the 2nd floor of MLK) Mon-Thurs. from 7 am to midnight or come to our table on Sproul.

Sign up online at [laurenstudios\(F-Sun\)!](http://laurenstudios(F-Sun)!)

Questions? Call 642-8247 * bluegold.berkeley.edu

