

Editor's Note

The *Afro-Hispanic Review* celebrated its tenth Anniversary at Vanderbilt University in October of 2015, marking a milestone in the histories of the University and the journal. Ian Smart, Henry Richards, and the late Stanley Cyrus, its first editor, founded the journal as a publication of the Afro-Hispanic Institute at Howard University in January of 1982. The *Afro-Hispanic Review* filled a void in literary scholarship, bringing much needed attention to an important population that had been previously ignored or silenced by the outdated emphasis on *mestizaje*, or *blanqueamiento*, or the appearance of racial equality. Its pioneering originators were perplexed by an academic profession that seemed to ignore black writers and themes.

From its inception, the *Afro-Hispanic Review* became part of a growing movement of mainly black scholars living in the United States, who were influenced by the Civil Rights and Black Power movements during the decades of the sixties and seventies. They supported the construction of a black voice and consciousness in the United States but also in Spanish America. Early innovative works included Gabriel Couillard's *Race and Colour in Caribbean Literature* (1962) and Lemuel Johnson's *The Devil, the Gargoyle and the Buffoon* (1969), but also Richard Jackson's *The Black Image in Latin American Literature* (1976) and *Black Writers in Latin America* (1979), Miriam DeCosta Willis' anthology *Blacks in Hispanic Literature* (1978), Martha Cobb's *Harlem, Haiti, and Havana* (1979), Marvin A. Lewis' *Afro-Hispanic Poetry 1940–1980: From Slavery to "Negritud" in South American Verse* (1983), and my own anthology *Voices from Under: Black Narrative in Latin America and the Caribbean* (1984), all drawing on the experiences of blacks beyond any singular national identity.

There were increasing numbers of conferences to publicize this growing body of literary studies, in particular the symposia on Afro-Hispanic Literature at Medger Evers College, organized by Clementine Rabassa, author of *Demetrio Aguilera-Malta and Social Justice* (1980), and with Gladys Seda Rodríguez published the proceedings *Studies in Afro-Hispanic Literature* (1977–79). Also, the journal followed in the tradition of Spanish American periodicals such as the Ecuatorian *Meridiano Negro: Una revista cultural de los afro-ecuatorianos* and the Colombian *Negritud*.

The *Afro-Hispanic Review* reflects the history of slavery and its impact on Afro-descendants throughout the Hispanic world. It is widely known that more than 90% of enslaved Africans were taken to Latin America and the Caribbean. Of the more than ten million enslaved who survived the Middle Passage, some four million worked in the fields of the Caribbean, another estimated four million in the plantations of Brazil, and less than four hundred thousands in the cotton fields of the Southern United States.

The *Afro-Hispanic Review* promoted a black image and articulated a black voice when Spanish American government officials and intellectuals erroneously

claimed equality among the races, fully knowing that Afro-descendants continued to occupy the bottom rung of the social and economic ladder. The same allegations were made of many administrators and scholars of institutions of higher learning in the United States, who questioned the validity of such studies and used the literary canon as an excuse to exclude black voices. The *Afro-Hispanic Review* challenged the perception about blacks, uncovered a rich and hidden cultural past, educated a growing interested public, and encouraged curricular changes. The original editors reminded the readers of the journal's mission, and it became a permanent fixture on the back cover and read as follows:

Functions:

The Foreign Language and Latin American Studies curricula of many academic institutions in the Americas do not reflect the richness of Afro-Hispanic culture, the considerable body of Afro-Hispanic literature, nor the diverse contributions of Spanish-speaking Blacks to the creation and development of the nations of Latin America and elsewhere. Neither does the study of history in the region specifically reflect the significant impact of the African presence over the centuries. *Afro-Hispanic Review* was founded in an effort to correct such omissions.

The Review will:

1. introduce to the scholarly world neglected Afro-Hispanic works, authors and themes.
2. encourage curricular modifications that reflect a greater appreciation of the contributions of the diverse constituent groups to Hispanic civilization.
3. foster a more pluralistic vision on the part of educators involved in foreign languages and cultural studies.
4. promote the incorporation of cultural elements related to the students' own experience, thus making the study of languages, literature, history, sociology and anthropology more meaningful.
5. sensitize more students and other sections of the public to the active, rich and interdisciplinary content of Hispanic literature in general and of Afro-Hispanic literature in particular.
6. reexamine and redefine the considerable contribution of Blacks to the development of the Spanish-speaking nations.
7. increase Pan-Africanist studies and the exploration of parallels and differences in response to similar social situations.

8. provide a publishing outlet for scholars in the humanities and social sciences who are interested in the Afro-Hispanic studies.

Indeed, the *Afro-Hispanic Review* was first published from 1982 to 1986. At the conclusion of this first stage it was transferred to Marvin Lewis and Edward Mullen, who coedited the journal for more than twenty years as a joint publication of the departments of Black Studies and Romance Languages at the University of Missouri. Marvin Lewis, a leading scholar of Afro-Hispanic literature, wrote numerous monographs on Afro-Colombian narrative, Afro-Hispanic poetry, Afro-Uruguayan poetry, Afro-Argentine literature, and Equatorial Guinea. Edward Mullen left his mark with research projects on Langston Hughes, the Harlem Renaissance, the Spanish American short story, Afro-Cuban literature, and Richard Madden's English translation of Juan Francisco Manzano's works.

Upon Marvin Lewis' early retirement, the *Afro-Hispanic Review* was transferred to Vanderbilt University, and the journal established its new office in the Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center, printing its first issue in the Spring Semester of 2005. Though Vanderbilt University has many distinguished editors and journals, the *Afro-Hispanic Review* is the only one that is produced from start to finish on the Vanderbilt campus, and this central task is accomplished with the help of a graduate assistant editor of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. Other graduate students and faculty regularly assist in the different stages of production.

The journal continues to honor its original mission to promote the study of Afro-Hispanic literature and culture, but it has also introduced some changes. The *Afro-Hispanic Review* is visibly a different publication. The format was changed from its original 8.5 x 11 inch layout to a more conventional 7 x 9 inch design, from a thirty-three pages standard issue to some with more than four hundred pages, and all with expressive covers, featuring blackness or representations of blackness. In addition, the *Afro-Hispanic Review* has become more interdisciplinary and welcomes essays on topics pertaining to the black experience regardless of field; it regularly features articles on literary criticism, music, religion, history, politics, anthropology, art, or any other area of inquiry. Though, from inception the journal was published triannually and was later change at the University of Missouri to be released biannually (Fall and Spring Semesters), we have continued to maintain the Missouri schedule with one important difference. At Vanderbilt the journal offers one standard and one monographic number. The monograph allows the journal to set the parameters for intellectual inquiry by making new research available in a timely manner. It also provides the opportunity to expand the journal's mission and seek relations between Afro-Hispanics and other cultures and languages where black people reside.

The editor commissioned monographic issues on the works of Afro-Cuban writer, Manuel Granados, 24.1 (Spring 2005) and famed Afro-Colombian writer, Manuel Zapata Olivella 25.1 (Spring 2006); on African Religions in the New World 26.1 (Spring 2007) and Palo Monte *firmas* 31.1 (Spring 2012); on Afro-Asia 27.1 (Spring 2008), Equatorial Guinea 28.2 (Fall 2009), and Afro-Brazil 29.2 (Fall 2010), and therefore becoming a trilingual publication in Spanish, English, and Portuguese. The *Afro-Hispanic Review* 33.1 confronted the thorny issue of race and racism in Cuba, when the former director of the prestigious publishing house of Casa de las Américas, Roberto Zurbano, was dismissed from his position for authoring an essay in the *New York Times* on racism in Cuba, precipitating an international debate in favor and against his position. Despite existing differences between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, 32.2 (Fall 2013) envisions a singular concept of Hispaniola. Equally important, the journal has become a bridge to the Nashville community. 29.1 (Spring 2010) and 32.1 (Spring 2013) feature paintings by Puerto Rican Nashvillian artist, singer, and composer, Gil Veda. 30.1 (Spring 2011) gathers Latino works exhibited by Nashville Arts Commission. The present issue illustrates the artwork of Latino artist Lyle Carbajal, whose mundane artistic contributions appeared in the art gallery Tinney Contemporary in 2015.

The anniversary was marked with a panel of invited guest editors of four monographic issues: Narciso Hidalgo, on African Religions in the New World; Emanuelle Oliveira, on Afro-Brazil; Megan Myers on Envisioning Hispaniola, and Ifeoma Nwanko, on a future issue of Afro-Central America.

I would like to thank Chancellor Nick Zeppos for chartering a bold mission for our university, one that supports diversity. His committee on Diversity, Inclusion, and Community will soon release a report that will make Vanderbilt University a national leader on diversity and inclusion. I firmly believe in excellence, enrichment, and knowledge through diversity. The journal's anniversary celebration was made possible by support from the Chancellor's Office and the College of Arts and Science.

I owe much gratitude to Frank Dobson, who welcomed the *Afro-Hispanic Review* to the Black Cultural Center, and his generosity reflects the historic and close collaborations between African Americans and Afro-Hispanics and Afro-Latinos in the United States. We support each other's mission and collaborate on a continuous basis. In addition, I want to recognize the co-chairs of the Diversity, Inclusion, and Community committee, Beverly Moran and Keivan Guadalupe Stassun, for their support, and to Gretchen Selcke for organizing and hosting the celebration.

Though many know the *Afro-Hispanic Review* as an academic peer-review journal, the *Afro-Hispanic Review* is committed to promoting diversity on campus and building bridges between Vanderbilt and the Nashville community. It aims to be a leading national and international publication with connections to people of African descent throughout the world.