

national association of mathematicians



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CONTENTS

IN THE NEWS 1

Why “Mathematicians of the African Diaspora”? 1

NAM 2007 Presentation of New PhDs 4

Animated Escher 5

George Anderson Roberts, Ph.D. 5

New Experiences in Teaching 7

The Smith College Women in Mathematics Program 7

NAM Calendar 8

NAM Board, Elections and Terms 8

Job Openings 9

NAM Membership Form 10

NAM Board 11

IN THE NEWS

The Regional Faculty Conference will be at Tennessee State University in Nashville, TN on March 30 - 31, 2007.

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (the AAAS) has awarded Dr. Raymond Johnson at The University of Maryland, and former NAM board member, the prestigious and much deserved 2006 Mentor Award for Lifetime Achievement.

We express our thanks to Dr. Dawn Lott for constructing and arranging the new official NAM website at <http://www.nam-math.org/>

The president moves: Dr. Nathaniel Dean, president of NAM, has moved from Texas Southern University to the University of Texas at San Marcos.

The NAM Board is looking for a new editor of the Newsletter. The current editor will retire at the end of 2007.

Please Pay Your NAM Dues. This Newsletter and NAM's programs are financed by its dues paying membership. Please pay. See the end of the newsletter for the form.

Why “Mathematicians of the African Diaspora”?

NAM Cox-Talbot Address by Scott W. Williams
Joint Mathematics Meetings, New Orleans, LA, January 7, 2007

As Walter Talbot was the chair of the Mathematics Department when I was a senior at Morgan, it gives me great pleasure to thank NAM for the pleasure in giving this address to honor my old friend.

May 2007 is the ninth birthday of the web site MAD (Mathematicians of the African Diaspora: <http://www.math.buffalo.edu/mad/>). During this period it has had 5 million visitors. During Black History Month 2006 there were over 400,000 visitors. MAD has received a dozen awards. Because of MAD I received a

plaque in 2004 for being one of the “50 Most Important Blacks in Research Science.” Thus, some natural questions present themselves: Why did I create it? How did I do it? What is its state now? What should be its future? Why the World Wide Web instead of a book?

GENESIS

Over the 1995 Christmas-New Year week, my wife, Glo Aniebo, introduced me to The World Wide Web. At the time I had been communicating by email for 6 years and thought the Web something similar. But through Glo’s help and encouragement I surfed and surfed and surfed over the next couple weeks, and by May 2006 I constructed my own web pages, most notably a web site for Harlem Renaissance poet Jean Toomer <http://www.math.buffalo.edu/~sww/toomer/jean-toomer.html>. Through this site I met friends and family of Toomer and the site quickly grew beyond any published book. Soon it was cited by The Encyclopedia Britannica as a primary source on the internet. The Toomer web site showed me that a web site as a “living book” may have use that traditional texts lack. For individuals desirous of a book on the Mathematicians of the African Diaspora, write it and use the MAD site as a source.



During the Fall of 1996 I read a thoroughly engaging book by George Gheverghese Joseph, *The Crest of the Peacock: Non-European Roots of Mathematics* (Penguin Books 1991). It was an effort to refute the validity of history’s ignorance of accomplishments in mathematics made in Asia, Africa, and The Americas independent of, or at times parallel with, or even prior to “discoveries” in Europe. This book provided an excellent source for the section in MAD on the ancient history of Africans in Mathematics. For more references see: http://www.math.buffalo.edu/mad/Ancient-Africa/madrefs_ancient.html

LIFTING SCIENCE

As a grade school child, I was struck by the emphasis, within the American culture, upon achievements in the Sports/Entertainment/Political Industry as indications of success. In the African American subculture, the indications are even stronger. To my knowledge, no Mathematician, Physicist, or Chemist has received an NAACP Image Award (though an actor playing scientist Percy Julian received the Award). “Every February we trot out Marian Anderson, Paul Robeson, Jessie Owens, and/or Edward Brooke. And when science was mentioned it is almost always limited to George Washington Carver (peanuts), Daniel Hale Williams (open heart surgery) and Chares Drew (blood plasma).

Not that the aforementioned individuals should be forgotten, but what about the Ghanaian ex-slave Anton Amo, the first (1730) Black man to earn a Doctorate of Philosophy (he taught mathematics)?

What about Charles Reason the first (1849) African American professor at a majority college (he taught mathematics)? What about Kelley Miller, the first (1887) African American Mathematics graduate student? What about the individual after which this lecture was named, Elbert Cox, the first (1925) African American Mathematics Ph.D.? The accomplishments of the aforementioned were during the time of slavery or during the height of lynching, and we should be familiar with them.

EMBARRASSMENT ENERGY

Not long after I was hired by The University at Buffalo in 1971, a local newspaper published an article captioned something like “*UB hires one of top five Black Mathematicians.*” When I saw this article several months later, I was at first puzzled and later angry. What did “top five” mean? How were they ranked, presumably because of their research?

I mean, here I had published just one paper, and I was being called *one of the top five*? ABSURD! Either my people are woefully inept, or this statement was actually an insult to my people. It did nothing for me that the author of the article claimed Black sources. It was an insult to my people.

Within the article, the other four mathematicians were not named but my chair asked me for the names of the other four. Embarrassedly I said, "David Blackwell and J. Ernest Wilkins are certainly two and Walter Claytor (a friend of my parents) possibly a third" but I did not know who had an established research career. Many letters and phone calls later I discovered all of the African American mathematicians I thought to contact had the same names. Finally it was White mathematicians who told me that Albert T. Bharucha-Reid, and possibly Charles Bell were the other two (note: Earl Barnes, John Ewell and James Joseph, were like me, each had just one published paper at the time).

Sometime later I had chance to speak with Beauregard Stubblefield, who with others who had begun writing the groundbreaking BMW (Black Mathematicians and their Works, Dorrance & Company 1980).

Until the 1970s, institutional racism made it very difficult for us to earn the Ph.D. and nearly impossible to conduct research. Insults to Claytor, Blackwell, Wilkins and others are well detailed in MAD. In spite of the scarcity of Black Mathematicians, it was a very difficult task to discover all African American Mathematicians, but BMW was a just such an attempt, and it took nearly a decade of work. The result was a marvelous gift to us as was a series of articles on Black Women Mathematicians by Patricia Kenschaft. Finally, we had an idea of who and where we had been and where we are. References of MAD: http://www.math.buffalo.edu/mad/madrefs_modern.html AND http://www.math.buffalo.edu/mad/Ancient-Africa/madrefs_ancient.html

A RESEARCH COMMUNITY

As I said previously, until the 1970s, it was very difficult for us to obtain a Ph.D. and maintain a research career afterwards. Yet we would like to train others for the Ph.D. Training students to a level of attainment, is best performed by individuals who have far exceeded that level. The first stage of training is in excitement about mathematics in the grade schools, the second stage is proper undergraduate foundation - even applied mathematics needs Analysis and Algebra, the third stage is graduate school. We have many individuals at the first two stages but very very few at the third level. For that level requires activity with research.

The primary ingredients for doing research are, (1) love of subject, (2) time to execute, (3) a community of researchers. As compared to the American society a half century ago, there is little racism in academics. Thus, the last ingredient, a community of research-oriented scientists is the most difficult. In 1997 I met the single individual who has done the most to produce an African American Presence in Research Mathematics. William Massey, one of the founders of CAARMS (The Conference for African American Researchers in the Mathematical Sciences), is responsible for 60% of my discovery of African American mathematicians to earn the Ph.D. since 1990.

MAD exists because we need to build and support a community of research-oriented mathematicians.

One of our greatest faults as African Americans has been to closely define those who are "worthy" of our support. First it was skin color. More recently it has been birthplace and this too is of ignorance. Our landscape would look quite bare with the omission of Gaston N'Guerekata (born in the Central African Republic), Kate Okikiolu (born in England) or Arlie Petters (born in Belize), three of our greatest living Mathematicians. The MAA's web site SUMMA has restricted its attention to African Americans. I believe we should expand to the African Diaspora beyond the provincial orientation within America.

The first five years, I worked evenings and weekends, spending 30 to 40 hours a week focused on the site. My wife, Glo Aniebo and her Igbo son advised me on African cultural values so that what I, an American took for a snub, was quite different coming from a Kenyan or Ghanaian. Through Paulus Gerdes of Mozambique, I developed a relationship with the African Mathematical Union by offering to develop and host a web site for its Commission on the History of Mathematics in Africa.

OBSTACLES

There are hidden tasks associated with MAD. Every day there are at least 30 emails about the site. In December and May this number doubles. During Black History Month there have been between 100 and 300 emails daily from grade school children, their parents, and teachers who hope I have information not exhibited. Sometimes my patience has been strained.

My patience became more than strained as I met African American Mathematicians who said the web site was racist, and who did not wish to be designated this way. The harder they pushed, the more resistant I became. I have been threatened with lawsuits over the web site (my university backed me completely in this issue). I have received (physical) threats from “friends” of a mathematician whose claims to a “nomination” of Nobel Prize in Physics for solving the Unified Field Theorem, I have publicly doubted.

In 2002, hackers from Europe and Asia used the server which houses MAD to attempt entering the Pentagon’s computers. Because of the FBI investigation, I can no longer upload to the web site from off campus. Thus, I frequently carry files from home, where I work on MAD, to school where I upload.

The sole unyielding obstacle to this site has been my health. A two month hospital and bed stay in 2005, and resulting reduced energy has cut my work on the site this past 18 months from 30 hrs/wk down to 3 hrs/wk. Thus, I am nearly a year behind in updates.

Still, MAD is a necessary voice too long in coming. It is a voice, not restricted to America or Americans, a voice not restricted to history, but the present with an eye upon the future. Even if it dies, its legacy, illuminated by the light of MAD, will not. That legacy?

The African Diaspora has and always will contribute to Mathematics.

NAM 2007 Presentation of New PhDs Joint Mathematics Meetings, New Orleans, LA, January 7, 2007



Shown left-to-right are Dawn A. Lott - Vice President, Angela Grant, Robin Todd Wilson, Bryan Williams, Carla Cotwright, Stephane Keeton, Nate Dean - President

Animated Escher

It is sometimes said that the mathematician's artist is MC Escher. At the joint meetings you could buy Escher ties and mugs. For 15 years one has been able to see the collected works of Escher on the web. Now you can see animated representations on Youtube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhfhgbmZe9s>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rX917y1Ly8o>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukdpt7ZrUJA&NR>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IR-4JhaRg4A>
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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8SWGzknRUM&mode=related&search=>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhfhgbmZe9s>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWq8uw5ENyY>

George Anderson Roberts, Ph.D.- A Tribute to a Mathematician July 1, 1940 – February 13, 2006

There is a concept called “tikkun olam” which means “repairing the world.” It may be that the memories of the accomplishments and impartations of one man are significant to the repair of the world just as one argues that the “butterfly effect” can cause a storm in a part of the world seemingly removed from the place where the wings of the butterfly fluttered. The life accomplishments of Dr. George A. Roberts are, in my opinion, an example of a life that took part in “the repairing of the world of mathematics.” Dr. Roberts was the first African American man to receive the doctorate in mathematics from Texas A & M University – College Station.

Realistically speaking, we know that some environments are more difficult to negotiate than others, and the fact that George Anderson Roberts succeeded in obtaining his Ph.D. in Mathematics, focusing on Approximation Theory in 1979, is a historical fact worth repeating and sharing with the next generation. A quiet and focused lifestyle in his mathematical journey, enhanced by confidence and hard work are, perhaps, a couple of the many attributes Dr. Roberts displayed among his students, colleagues, family and acquaintances.

The memories of his outstanding career as a mathematician are somehow related to the Jewish concept “tikkun olam” for it is evident that his life and service to others has immeasurably impacted the lives of his colleagues, family, children and grandchildren. Just as a rabbi takes pride in scribing the Torah, so we must take part in scribing the history of men like Dr. George A. Roberts, who accomplished what some have thought was impossible.

A heritage in mathematical accomplishment can be transmitted through family, friends and students. Numerous students have been touched by the accomplishment and wisdom of George A. Roberts. There are students who have succeeded in graduate level mathematics because of the impartation passed on to them by their mentor. G. Donald Allen, Professor of Mathematics, Texas A & M University – College Station, said of Dr. Roberts: “George has developed a strong interest in mathematics education issues, and had done some good work in the area of teacher professional development.”

Dr. Roberts was a family man, a father and grandfather, encouraging his progeny to go forward and persist in doing whatever you desire to do, never giving up, and always valuing the merit of hard work.

A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before great men, a wise book says. George A. Roberts did not speak of his own accomplishments in national or international publications; rather his service to others speaks to the element of greatness in his life. His son, Jason, is so inspired

by the life and accomplishments of his father that he has committed to reading his father's work in order to become cognizant of the depth of understanding his father had for mathematical thought. In pursuit of this deep understanding there is the potential of Jason to make a contribution in the use of mathematical modeling in the area of risk management and risk control in his job in the corporate sector. This dream is so worthy of mention for the accomplishments of the past generations ought to be a foundation for the accomplishments of future generations.

To quote his Life Accomplishments published in his memorial service program, it reads:

Dr. George A. Roberts was a distinguished professor and great teacher who inspired all who worked with him or who worked under his tutelage. His tenure at Prairie View A & M University began in 1983, as Associate Professor of Mathematics. In 1992, he was promoted to the rank, Professor. As a colleague, he was dependable, timely, devoted, honorable and capable in his numerous roles—chair of over 30 departmental, college, university committees, and served as Vice President of the Faculty Senate. He was Graduate Advisor and Coordinator of Graduate Programs in Mathematics since 1988.

He advanced from the rank of Instructor in 1966, to Professor and head of the Department of Mathematics at Wiley College. During that time he completed his Ph.D. Degree in Mathematics at Texas A & M University, in 1979. The title of his dissertation was "Uniqueness and Interpolation of Entire Harmonic Functions."

Dr. Roberts' contributions to education included teaching, research and service. In addition to his teaching career spanning forty years, he has published in the Journal of Approximation Theory, presented research papers at national meetings, and made contributions to funded projects.

Dr. Roberts has received numerous awards, that include: Teacher of the Year, Educational Achievement, Omega Man of the Year, Outstanding Turner Graduate, and Personalities of the South, as well as inducted into the Science Hall of Fame. He served as Adult Leader for the Boy Scouts of America Troop 141, Chair of the Scholarship Committee of Nu Iota Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Adult Sunday School Teacher and Chair of the Deacon Board and the Building Fund Committee at Walnut Grove Baptist Church in Carthage, Texas.

Dr. Roberts was the fifth of eleven children. He was born July 1, 1940 to Barker and Thelma Hicks Roberts. He attended public school in Carthage, Texas. As a young man, George was determined to get an education. He graduated from Wiley College and later received his Masters degree from the University of Arizona. However, his greatest academic accomplishment was becoming the first Black to earn a Ph.D. in mathematics from Texas A & M University – College Station, in 1979.

Dr. Roberts was a devoted husband of forty-one years to the love of his life, Mary, who affectionately called him "Sweetie." He was the loving father of three sons: Michael, Jason, and John. Jason and his wife, Tiesha, gave Dr. Roberts the pride and joy of his life—two grandchildren, Jalen and Karis.

In conclusion, Professor Togba Sapolucia who recognized Dr. Roberts as his teacher and colleague stated, "During my studies in three different countries (Liberia, Guinea, and the United States), Dr. Roberts is the professor who impressed me the most because of his high level of intelligence and understanding of mathematics." Professor Sapolucia is currently a professor at Houston Community College – Northeast Campus.

This tribute honors Dr. George A. Roberts as a man of great achievements while also a man of stability and compassion. He served more than fifty-five years at the same church, and demonstrated his passion and love for "truth and excellence" by teaching Sunday School and serving as Chairman of the Deacon Board at Walnut Grove Baptist Church. We salute a man who enriched our heritage and whose accomplishments will elevate our expectations of the generations to come.

MAA New Experiences in Teaching

Project NExT (New Experiences in Teaching) is a professional development program for new and recent Ph.D.s in the mathematical sciences (including pure and applied mathematics, statistics, operations research, and mathematics education). It addresses all aspects of an academic career: improving the teaching and learning of mathematics, engaging in research and scholarship, and participating in professional activities. It also provides the participants with a network of peers and mentors as they assume these responsibilities. Each year, about sixty faculty members from colleges and universities throughout the country are selected to participate in a workshop preceding the Mathematical Association of America (MAA) summer meeting, in activities during the summer MAA meetings and the Joint Mathematics Meetings in January, and in an electronic discussion network.

Faculty for whom the 2007-2008 academic year will be the first or second year of full-time teaching (post-Ph.D.) at the college or university level are invited to apply to become Project NExT Fellows.

The application deadline is April 16, 2007. For more information, see the Project NExT website, <http://archives.math.utk.edu/projnext/>.

Project NExT is a program of the MAA. It receives major funding from the ExxonMobil Foundation, with additional funding from the Dolciani-Halloran Foundation, the Educational Advancement Foundation, the American Mathematical Society, the American Institute of Mathematics, the American Statistical Association, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Texas Instruments, the Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators, the Association for Symbolic Logic, the W.H. Free-

The Smith College Women in Mathematics Program

Smith College was the undergraduate alma mater of the first two African American women to get the Ph.D. in Mathematics. The Smith College Mathematics Department is starting two new and unusual programs for women next fall. They will form the core of Smith's Center for Women in Mathematics and they will be supported by a substantial grant from the National Science Foundation. Smith is hoping minority students will be a significant presence in the Center.

The first program is a junior year program. Majors from other schools around the country will spend their junior year at Smith taking a concentration of mathematics courses. They will benefit from a department centered on women, a relatively rich curriculum (approximately 20 different upper-level courses per year), and the small classes of a liberal arts college. Smith and the NSF will make up the difference between Smith's fees and those at the students' home institutions.

The second program is a post-baccalaureate program in mathematics. It's for women who discovered their love for mathematics too late to major in the subject, or too late to have a major strong enough to get into a good graduate school. It's a chance for women with BAs to return to college and spend a year taking undergraduate mathematics, their expenses covered by Smith and by the NSF.

Please visit the website: www.math.smith.edu/center

If you know of women who might be interested in either program, tell them to email Ruth Haas, the chair of the mathematics department: rhaas@smith.edu.

Ruth Haas and Jim Henle, co-directors, The Center for Women in Mathematics

NAM Calendar

You can find NAM's *Online Conference Calendar* and the most recent links to relevant conferences announcements at NAM's official website <http://www.nam-math.org/>

Many details concerning NAM's events are posted on the NAM headquarters website <http://jewel.morgan.edu/~nam/>

NAM Board, Elections and Terms

For Nominations to the NAM Board, Elections and Terms please contact NAM's Majority Institution member and election supervisor Dr. Earl Barnes School of Industrial Systems Engineering; Georgia Institute of Technology; Atlanta, GA 30332-0205 **by August 1**. Make certain the nominated individual agrees to run, and serve if elected. Send vita data such as Name, email address, School, position, and date of last degree.

All members of the Board shall be elected to a term of office for a period of two years and elections shall be staggered for continuity. Regular elections shall occur in the fall of each year and the persons elected shall be duly installed at the first Annual NAM meeting following the election. The term of each elected position is three (3) years. The editor will be an appointed position for a period of three years. The Editor shall be responsible for the production of the Newsletter and shall perform such other duties as the Board of Directors may specify. The Executive Secretary shall be selected to serve for a period of five (5) years and shall begin the term of office at the Spring Board Meeting. His/her selection must be the unanimous choice of the existing Board of Directors.

The election of the members of the Board of Directors shall be by official ballots and shall be supervised by the Board of Director's Committee on Legislation-Nomination when the election is by mail, all current members in good standing in NAM shall be provided a ballot and given reasonable time to return it.

The election cycle is shown below :

2007: Secretary/Treasurer; Region C Representative; Community College Representative.

2008: President; Region A Representative; Government/Industry Representative.

2009: Vice President; Region B representative; Majority Institution Representative.

2010: Secretary/Treasurer; Region C Representative; Community College Representative.

Job Openings

Recall that for several years, NAM has had a web site with listings of open positions. This process is open to advertisers in the Newsletter. Advertisements too late for the publication date appear there. The remainder of the advertisements appear there six or more weeks before they appear in print in the Newsletter. See the editor's web site within MAD: <http://www.math.buffalo.edu/mad/NAM/>

UCLA Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics

The Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics (IPAM) at UCLA is seeking its next Director, to begin the position in July 2008. Candidates with imagination, energy and experience are encouraged to apply. It is necessary that IPAM's Director possess sufficient scientific distinction to be offered a faculty position at UCLA. Further information about IPAM and its programs is available at www.ipam.ucla.edu.

Candidates are asked to send a CV and cover letter to directorsearch@ipam.ucla.edu. For fullest consideration, applications should be received by June 1, 2007; however, applications will be considered until the position is filled. For a detailed job description, go to <http://www.ipam.ucla.edu/jobopenings/director.html>. IPAM is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

Harvey Mudd College

Harvey Mudd College invites applications for a Teaching & Research Postdoctoral Fellowship in the Mathematical Sciences. Excellence in teaching is essential, as is evidence of a strong and ongoing research program. The fellow will teach a course per semester and participate in the department's experiential/inquiry-based learning programs. Further information available at <http://www.math.hmc.edu/jobs/>. Preference given to applications received by February 15, 2007.



National Association of Mathematics Membership Form

(For New Applications and Annual Membership Renewal)

Membership Calendar Year: January 1 - December 31

Name _____

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Institution/Employer _____

Telephone: Home () _____ Office () _____

Fax () _____ E-mail Address _____

Select Appropriate Membership Type

Student : \$15 Individual : \$25 Contributing : \$50 Sustaining : \$75

Institutional : \$100 Life : \$400

PLEASE RETURN THIS COMPLETED FORM AND MEMBERSHIP DUES TO :

**Dr. Roselyn Williams, Secretary-Treasurer
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P.O. Box 5766
Tallahassee, Florida 32314-5766
Phone: (850) 412-5236 (O) E-mail: roselyn.williams@famuedu**

Individuals and Students: Please complete below if you did not send NAM this information within the past three years.

List all degrees you currently hold. Circle the correct degree.

B.S. or B.A.: Area _____ Institution _____

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Ph.D. or Ed.D.: Area _____ Institution _____

Other: Area _____ Institution _____

Desired Participation in NAM

Institutional Representative (for NAM) Area or State Representative _____

Committee Membership (specify interest): _____

Need additional information about the organizational structure of NAM

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