Latin/o Studies had a very exciting year with the launching of our new gateway course and the arrival of interesting visitors. This fall, Professor Maria Cotera launched the new Introduction to Latin/o Studies, which serves as an introduction to the field for students across the college. Through lectures and discussion, Professor Cotera introduced the students to a wide array of inter-disciplinary fields and faculty across the campus. She also invited Susan Oboler from the University of Illinois-Chicago and Maria Beltran from the University of Wisconsin to participate in the class.

We also hosted Jacqueline Jiménez Polanco who gave a talk on *The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer Movement in the Dominican Republic: A Sociopolitical and Cultural Approach* and Juan Javier Pescador who shared his photo collection *Immigrants or Poligerm? Religious Rituals in the Great Lakes Mexican Chicanas/Barrancas*. Finally, our program recognized the important work of Gloria Anzaldúa by hosting a remembrance in her honor. We were graced by the visit of Emma Pérez from the University of Colorado who highlighted a panel discussion that also included Larry LaFountain-Stokes, María Cotera, and Ruth Behar. Professor Cotera’s graduate class also created a fabulous altar in her honor which was displayed on the first floor of Haven Hall. An artist-in-residence Josefina Báez joined us this past March. She performed *Dominicantitos* and also gave a talk on *A Dominican York-The Ride-Routes 15*.

Native American Studies saw an outpouring of books: Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (University Press of Kansas, 2004); Tiya Miles, *Tie That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (U.C. Berkeley, 2005), and Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (South End Press, 2005). Our new colleague Michael Witgen completed his dissertation, “An Infinity of Nations: Indians, Immigrants, and the Making of National Space and Racial Identities in America’s Northern Borderlands,” at the University of Washington. There is simply not space to list the articles or professional papers our colleagues produced this year. NAS will, this May, host a small symposium: *Encountering Within: Native Americans in Today’s Academy*. The discussion will take place among a dozen junior faculty members from a wide range of institutions; senior speakers include Jean M. O’Brien (Ojibwa/Minnesota) and Matthew Snipp (Cherokee/Stanford). We have two other major sources of satisfaction: First, we were happy this year to host the Whitefish River First Nation of Ojibwa (Ontario, Canada) during its successful visit to negotiate the repatriation of ancestral remains and funerary possessions in the University Museum of Natural History. We are proud that the Board of Regents voted in March unanimously in favor of the repatriation. Second, we welcomed to the university a strong group of five graduate students working across disciplines in Native American studies. Indeed, this year saw the revival of the Native Caucus, the University’s Native American graduate student organization.

With three of the core faculty on leave (including the director), Asian Pacific Islander American Studies (APIA) continues nevertheless to blaze new paths. In late fall 2004, the Pacific Islands Studies initiative was formally accepted as a Rackham interdisciplinary workshop. This is a key step to strengthening Michigan’s unrivalled preeminence in Pacific Islander American studies, by bridging with the field of Pacific Islands Studies. Kudos to the effort spearheaded by Susan Najita, Damon Salesa, and faculty associate Stuart Kirsch!

In Winter 2005, APIA Studies has taken our collaboration with the Office of Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs to a new dimension. One track of American Culture 305, *Asian Pacific Islander American Community Service and Learning* is focused on programming events in observance of APA Heritage Month on campus. Co-taught by Emily Lawsin and MESA coordinator Stephen Moon, this is a welcome development in bridging the resources of academic faculty and co-curricular service providers. Emily Lawsin continues her collaborative work with Joe Galura of the Ginsberg Center for Community Service and Learning.

At this writing, four graduating seniors are confirmed as completers of our new gateway course and the arrival of interesting visitors. This fall, Professor Maria Cotera launched the new Introduction to Latin/o Studies, which serves as an introduction to the field for students across the college. Through lectures and discussion, Professor Cotera introduced the students to a wide array of inter-disciplinary fields and faculty across the campus. She also invited Susan Oboler from the University of Illinois-Chicago and Maria Beltran from the University of Wisconsin to participate in the class.

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At this writing, four graduating seniors are confirmed as completers of the Academic Minor in Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies. Congratulations and best wishes go to Melanie Carbine, Lori Sanchez, Stephanie Chang, and Jaclyn Wing!!

### American Culture

**Program in American Culture at the University of Michigan**

**Spring 2005**

**INSIDE:**

- Interview with Tiya Miles
- New Scholarship in American Culture
- Director’s Letter
- Alumni Profile: Whit Soards
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### Ethnic Studies News

by Maria Montoya, Greg Dowd, and Amy Stillman

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Question: It’s a fantastic book, with both a large sense of time and topic, and a personal and specific quality as well. In reading it, I found that I was completely pulled into the story, which in turn led me quite seamlessly to contemplate the larger issues. I’m wondering if you can give us a quick sketch of the book.

Tiya Miles: The book covers the sweep of nineteenth-century Cherokee history, but from an Afro-Cherokee perspective. At the center of the story is slavery in the Cherokee Nation: how and why it developed, who decided to participate in it, and the motivations behind those choices. All these questions come together around the experience of the Shoe Boots family. The father, Shoe Boots, was a well-known Cherokee war hero; the mother, Doll, was a slave from South Carolina acquired by Shoe Boots in the 1790s. They lived together for 25 years and had 5 children, and there is no evidence that he ever freed her. There is, however, evidence that he cared for and felt kinship with his children. The story of this family connects to larger issues: colonialism, slavery, ways in which racial categories are formed and used. These issues played out at the level of the state or nation, of course, but also at the level of the community—and in the most intimate space of all, the family.

The book’s trajectory really comes from the evidence available about that family. Earliest documents pointed me toward the acquisition of Doll. The later evidence took me to the end of the nineteenth century, when the grandchildren of Shoe Boots and Doll applied for citizenship in the Cherokee nation. They failed in this effort, and their failure helps illuminate the ways in which racialization basically won out over kinship. Even though people in the Cherokee Nation knew that Shoe Boots was Cherokee, a number of factors compromised the possibility of affiliation through kinship: the activities of white Christian missionaries, the U.S. government, and the Cherokee Nation government in particular. In the end, the people with the power to grant citizenship decided to deny it to the Shoe Boots descendants on the basis of laws and official regulations, as opposed to on the basis of the family ties that they knew existed.


Tiya Miles: In the book, I try to understand that there was a sort of bargain made by the Cherokee elite: an attempt to preserve Cherokee sovereignty, but at the expense of redefining some really important Cherokee values. I hate to say that “colonization won out,” because I don’t believe that. But the fact is that things changed dramatically, and people suffered for it. All the actors were caught up in systems of Euro-American colonization and chattel slavery, and people were forced to make choices within awful, narrow parameters. And yet, the story continues to have meaning today. Think of the recent court cases within the Cherokee Nation and the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma that have to do with figuring out the contemporary place of freedmen and women in Indian nations. Stories like the Shoe-Boots’s show that there are people who are legitimately Afro-Cherokee, or Afro-Creek, or Afro-Seminole, etc. If these native communities had been able to continue defining themselves as they had in the past—with a good deal of respect for the meaning of kinship even across racial lines—descendants of freedpeople would not have to turn to the U.S. government to help establish their status. But so often in the contemporary moment, people want to read one another phenotypically: if you look black, then you can’t be anything else. This is just one case among many. And of course it’s a completely flawed way of thinking... it’s nonsensical. It’s frustrating as well to realize that even as many native nations are trying to revitalize tradition, they often overlook the tradition of accepting non-Indian individuals into communities and families.

Question: These kinds of things—membership and sovereignty—are pretty vexing issues for Native people across the country, perhaps now more than ever.

Tiya Miles: One of the reasons this book is so powerful, for me at least, is your portrayal of Shoe Boots. On the one hand, you have simply have sympathy for him as a Cherokee caught up in the midst of Removal and the various negotiations and politics of the Cherokee Nation. And yet, he’s a slaveowner... and after all those years with Doll, never found it in himself to free her. For me, he really stands as evidence of the difficulties of doing history, of the conceit of thinking that we really can get inside the head of someone—far removed from us in time, space, and culture.

Tiya Miles: I spent a lot of time on this question. Was he a moral man? It mattered to me, and it was so confounding. I found only two cases of Cherokee men going public with the existence of their black children and being willing to face the repercussions so as to have those children freed. That was better than what most white men were doing, but at the same time, he would not free Doll. What does one make of that? I’ve struggled to figure out whether I could respect him, whether there was anything worthy about the relationship. In the end, I came to two conclusions. One is that in the only testimony I found in which Doll represented her own life, she said that she was Shoe Boots’s wife, that they were married in a Cherokee manner, and that she was entitled to land he would have received as a veteran. I want to believe that he wasn’t a monster, since she was claiming him in this way. He had to have had some ethical code that he was living by. That code, I think, was Cherokee kinship; even though he didn’t free Doll, he seems in a manner to have respected her as a person. At the same time, he did in fact involve himself in the business of slavery. Even if he started slowly, he got pretty good at it. He went to court. He was involved in selling and trading, and attempts to purchase, and there’s no getting around that. At one point, he gave Doll, his first child, and two other slaves away! He possessed the power to do this, and he did do it. So I have a bifurcated view. On the one hand, Doll’s view—at least as it appears in the historical record; on the other hand, that of a scholar looking back at the evidence that says he was a slaveowning man. He traded people and gave them away like he would objects. And I have simply to rest with those two visions of him.

Question: The result is a book that I found an incredibly moving and powerful piece of history... but also something that goes beyond that. I can hardly wait for it to be out in paper, because I’ll be assigning it in class. You’re also working on an anthropology. Can you give us a short description of that project?

Tiya Miles: Sure. Like a lot of people, I found that I couldn’t include everything I wanted to discuss in the first book. One of the ideas I had to limit was the suggestion that African Diaspora Studies as a field has often overlooked the presence of African descended people (and therefore, African-influenced cultures) in Native American nations. When we talk about the Atlantic world, we forget that the American Atlantic, from north to south, was the terrain of indigenous American people prior to European colonization. I’m co-editing the next book with Sharon Holland, a scholar of Afro-Native literature, and it’s an interdisciplinary collection of essays by scholars and artists that tries to map out the presence and meaning of the African diaspora in Native American communities. This book will be called “Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country,” and we are thrilled to have received permission from Lakota artist, Francis Yellow, to reproduce his beautiful antique-map drawing on the cover (image below).