

## STATEMENT OF ASWAD INTEREST

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I am the founding director of the African Atlantic Research Team of Michigan State University. We're an interdisciplinary support community committed to helping prepare research scholars for the difficult but needed work of PhD holders. We focus on strengthening academic and professional socialization with students from US cultural communities that have historically been excluded from higher education.

My interest and research in the African Diaspora began some twenty years ago as I organized the Research Team to study Cuba's organic and distinct religion traditions and to prepare students in this work. Almost every student who has been associated with our Team has traveled to Cuba, graduate and undergraduates. As the Team has continued, there have been few if any other professional academic associations interested or fostering African Diaspora investigators and/or investigations.

I would like to serve on the ASWAD Board to assist in enhancing the excellent intellectual and professional activities the association has begun and to help identify other arenas where our combined knowledge and can expand and amplify better understanding of African people worldwide. I believe I can help specifically in two areas; continuing to stabilize the association's financial base and strengthening our mentoring capabilities. There are other places where I bring experience and skills but to me, these two spheres of ASWAD activities are particularly sensitive and needed.