



Dear Fellow Colleagues:

I am writing to express my interest in joining the board of ASWAD. I have always been interested in serving within the organization and I feel that this the right moment. I am currently the Director of African Studies and an Associate Professor in African Studies and English at Penn State. Previously, I was the Director of Black Studies and an Associate Professor of English at The City College of New York (CCNY). I am an Africanist by training and my areas of specialization are African Literature and Postcolonial Theory. However, my work has taken me into areas such as expressive and material culture, art history, feminist studies, film studies, and now aesthetics. I have lived and studied in West Africa, the Caribbean, Brazil, Europe, and now the US. I am a Fulbright scholar and have served on the National Fulbright board. My book, *African Roots, Brazilian Rites* won the New York African Studies Best Book award in 2013. I just published an edited volume called, *Transnational Trills in the Africana World*, about music and artistic expression in "Afro-Global" space. I have edited a special issue of *WAGADU: A Journal of Transnational Women's and Gender Studies* titled, *African and Diasporic Women's Literature: Transitions, Transformations and Transnationalism*. And, I am currently working on my second monograph, *Beyond the Text: Aesthetic Theory in Black Narrative and Visual Culture*. I was also one of the founders and editor of an online arts/culture journal, Afrobeatjournal.org.

What I bring to ASWAD are my skills for organization. During my tenure at City College, I built the largest Black Studies program in the country, increasing the majors over 900% and bringing in hundreds of new students into the classes. I achieved this revitalization through a combination of activities, building bridges with other academic units, developing wonderful working relationship with faculty and administration, respecting students and listening to their desires and concerns, and providing a space that was not only conducive to learning, but also to building community on the campus, and creating career trajectory pipelines so students could clearly see the benefits of being one of our majors. I also created, planned and executed a series of public programs that not only publicized the program, but the College, and extended into the Harlem and New York City community. And I am beginning to do the same with African Studies at Penn State.

I've organized and served on multiple committees and levels of faculty governance within the university structure. I've also been a key member of the New York African Studies Association. I became a member at large in 2012, the Vice President in 2013, the President in 2015, and convened an international conference with the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies (MESAAS) at Columbia University in 2016. Each of the previous years, I was integral to the planning of the annual conference. Another one of the tasks, I undertook during the course of my Presidency was to revitalize and update the Association's media presence, and the website restructure that I orchestrated is still the template used today.

I think with my experience, organizational skills and desire to serve, I can make a valuable contribution to ASWAD, and would appreciate the chance to do so. Please see the following sites for more details of my profile: <https://africanstudies.la.psu.edu/people/czs796> and <https://psu-us.academia.edu/CherylSterling>. Thank you.

Cheryl Sterling