

Introduction

by Martina Kohl

The fifth U.S. Embassy Teacher Academy, which continues to provide a successful national platform for new ideas on teaching about the U.S. and to influence American Studies curricula in German high schools, met in Paderborn in October 2007. It was jointly organized by the Cultural Section of the U.S. Embassy Berlin and Professor Emeritus Peter Freese of the Institute of English and American Studies at the University of Paderborn. It was supported by the University of Paderborn and the Langenscheidt Verlag Munich. Forty-five junior and senior teachers, teacher trainers, and textbook editors from fourteen *Bundesländer* met for four busy days in the Liborianum, a modernized cloister in downtown Paderborn providing an ideal venue for the exchange of information through plenary lectures and the discussion of innovative teaching units in parallel workshops. The outstanding faculty, which explored selected historical, political and cultural aspects of “Ethnic Visions of the United States of America,” consisted of

- Roger Daniels, Professor Emeritus, University of Cincinnati,
- Karsten Fitz, Professor of American Studies, University of Passau,
- Peter Freese, Professor Emeritus, University of Paderborn,
- Markus Heide, Assistant Professor of American Studies, Humboldt University of Berlin,
- Paula Ross, Artist, Berlin,
- Peter Schneck, Professor of American Literature and Culture, University of Osnabrück, and
- Laurenz Volkmann, Professor of “Englische Fachdidaktik,” University of Jena.

Roger Daniels, the Dean of Asian American Studies, delivered a knowledgeable keynote lecture on the Asian American experience based on his many years of research and teaching. Peter Freese presented an overview on “National Identity and Ethnic Diversity in the USA” and how to make this complex and controversial issue teachable in the EFL-classroom. Karsten Fitz, Marcus Heide, Paula Ross, and Peter Schneck dealt with screen Indians in the EFL-classroom, aspects of Latino literature and film, the expression of ethnicity in visual culture, and the reflection of race and law in African American literature respectively. Laurenz Volkmann added a workshop on intercultural encounters in Jumpha Lahiri’s short stories.

Five of the plenary lectures are hereby presented as a thematic issue of the electronic *American Studies Journal*. Peter Freese put them all together as guest editor of this issue. Anybody who knows how time consuming and laborious the task of an editor can be will appreciate his profound knowledge, superb skills and efficiency he brought to this task. My co-editors, the faculty and I are grateful for his continued support of teacher training in Germany. To the contributors of this issue, the outstanding faculty of the Teacher Academy 2007, I extend my greatest appreciation and my sincere hope that we will continue our cooperation. Roger Daniels remains to be singled out for his readiness to travel all the way from Seattle to Paderborn to share his wealth of knowledge.

We hope that “Ethnic Visions of the United States of America” will contribute to your invaluable work in the classroom.

Dr. Martina Kohl, Berlin, June 2008