Project Context & Purpose

Please include the original project purpose statement and revise for any changes that occurred in the project after the start date with a short explanation of the changes.

Original Project Purpose Statement:

At the center of this small grant request is the need to continue a critical conversation on Black Environmental Thought that began over five years ago at the first Black Environmental Thought Conference at Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, Alabama. Since that time a group of scholars and practitioners has increasingly made the case that there is a critical need for innovative new research and educational vision beyond the European frame which characterizes much of this scholarship. Indeed, currently, the agrarian roots of European Americans drive the definitions, priorities, and participation for ecological balance in the food system, including the definition of sustainability. A second Black Environmental Thought Conference (BET II) will be held at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, Sept. 21-23, 2012 in order to continue and expand these critical conversations for theory building and social practice.

The initial grant proposal focused on the need to continue to articulate African American philosophical and ecological traditions and sustainability. We will do this by partaking in a day long forum with Dr. Monica White, a sociologist at Wayne State University (now at the University of Wisconsin-Madison). Dr White is one of the leading researchers on Black agricultural practices, as well as research which centers Black women in the history and practice of Black Environmental Thought. We are inviting her to be one of the keynote speakers at the BET II Conference and the faculty cluster wants to ensure that we can work with her through an extended conversation.
The request will pay for her travel to the BET conference, as well as expenses related to her participation in the faculty dialogue. We also request funds to support the participation of AfroEco, one of our community partners, as well as some of our students in the forum with Dr. White.

Tweaks in the original project

Black Environmental Thought researchers, practitioners and communities gathered for the second Black Environmental Thought Conference at the University of Minnesota in September 2012. Through the support of the mini-grant, Dr. Monica White was brought in as a featured speaker. Rather than a day long symposium, our faculty, community partner and students were able to participate in a workshop facilitated by Dr. White. As a featured speaker and workshop facilitator, she crafted an analytical and practice frame regarding Black environmental thought. She focused on the role of Black women’s activism around food justice in her workshop facilitation. Most importantly, her contributions as a conference keynote speaker and workshop facilitator advanced our understanding of a too often invisible aspect of Black environmental thought, the role of Black women in this work. The discussion brought us into a deeper conversation and vision of how to develop the depth and breath of Black environmental thought. Those involved in the conference and workshop were stretched in terms of addressing some of the burning issues of the field.

### Work Completed

Please provide a summary of the work that was completed for the mini grant project.

**Summary of Work Completed**

1) We built the shared work and knowledge of university scholars, selected scholars in African American & African Studies and community based activists and intellectuals around the unsettled issues of Black environmental thought.

2) We brought the collaborating participants into conversation and actions on how to further the scholarship and practice of Black environmental thought, lifting up issues of food sustainability and Black women’s environmental thought contributions.

3) We strengthened the commitment of the Black Environmental Thought Conference participants to advance the research and scholarship of the developing field over the next five years.

4) We helped faculty within African American & African Studies clarify how we might build our curriculum to incorporate Black environmental thought in new course content.
5) Professor Yuichiro Onishi of the Department of African American & African Studies and Sam Grant of AfroEco, our community partner, began crafting a community engagement component around food justice for one of Professor Onishi’s classes.
Partnerships & Collaborations

Please provide a summary of the project personnel, partnerships and collaborations that worked directly on the project or were started as a direct result of the mini grant project.

Partnerships and Collaborations:

1) The project advanced the Department of African American & African Studies community work. This commitment to community engagement is directly aligned with the Department’s teaching mission. We are revising our curriculum and introducing a “green component” given the Black Environmental Thought Conference and Professor White’s contributions.

2) We were successful in solidifying our collaboration with our community partner Afro Eco with a commitment to collaborate on planning Black Environmental Thought 3

3) We began preparing an edited volume highlighting the work of core scholars such as Dr. Monica White and other key researchers and community contributors in the area of Black environmental thought.
**Project Outcomes**

*Please provide a summary of the outcomes of the mini grant project including future plans for the project.*

**Project Outcomes and Future Work**

1) We successfully facilitated the Black Environmental Thought Conference, filling the university with a leading environmental scholar, Dr. Monica White as well as with a number of national and international group of scholars, artists, educators and community participants who shared knowledge and gained knowledge through the exchanges.

2) We developed increasing clarity on how to transcend the agrarian roots of European American environmental thought. We began to frame a perspective which lifts up Black environmental thought by beginning to rethink the definitions, priorities, and participation for ecological balance in the food system, including the definition of sustainability rooted in these ideas. These were core goals of the project.

3) We extended the work of food justice research and Black women’s role in articulating Black environmental thought (which is the specialty areas of Dr. White and a key contribution of her workshop).

4) We consistently brought the collaborating participants into conversation and planning around a shared vision of advancing the scholarship and practice of Black environmental thought. We recognized that this work is not always easy or straightforward. Thus the community and academic participants struggled with moving the work forward and committed to continued information exchanges. Our future work involves sharpening the conference scholarship research into 2013-2014.

5) We are completing work on an edited volume on Black environmental thought.