

In a campus that is continuously shaped by a kaleidoscope of cultures, we need to explore our past — and discover what binds us culturally and socially — so we can appreciate today.

Anonymous



How can one be truly vigorous in linking together the many facets of teaching and research with community involvement? Well, consider the energetic pace of Paulette Fleming's career as associate professor in the Art Department. It's a teaching career devoted mostly to outreach activities and, not surprisingly, to children.

"Kids are a very important part of my life," she offers. "See, I used to work with Brownies. I started a Girl Scout troop, and at one time, I handled two troops. All that and graduate school. Can you imagine that?"

Quite a feat, one might say. But think of the diverse interests Fleming pursued later on: a string of art exhibitions and designs for theatre productions in Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Ohio; extensive research on art education and environmental aesthetics; and the list goes on.

At CSUF, Fleming brings to the fore her expertise in the dynamic and holistic elements of art education. In one class (*see photo*), her main concern has been teaching teachers different ways to develop children's perceptions of art and the "world of art" around them. In other classes and in the projects she spearheads, the development of artistic expression and the many cultural manifestations found in art forms take center stage. All this, captured in a teaching technique nurtured by a richly diversified background.

Listen to her explain: *"I've been exposed to a variety of remarkable influences. I've traveled to other countries*

and have learned so much about my African-American heritage. Fortunately, I've also had extensive training and experience in different art fields."

At present, Fleming is also deeply involved in research — focusing on a project that examines, in a fresh and different light, her African-American heritage. Her preliminary inquiries into the huge plantations of Crewell, North Carolina, reveal profoundly how African culture retained much of its original form when it was brought over to the United States.

Eventually, she hopes to provide explanations on the significance of this region and the role of the plantation workers in the country's development. *"In a way," she optimistically states, "this would help connect African-Americans to Africa and to their African heritage."*

The overall picture of Paulette Fleming's work is a reflection of a multi-faceted career. As a literal example, one self-portrait was done in mixed media — doing what artists would call an assemblage of photo-

graphs, mementos, artifacts, and other personal symbols that are related to the subject. *"I never throw anything away," she says. "Artists like me, and like many other African-American artists in particular, tend to put together things that represent themselves, their past, and their culture in their work."*

And if Fleming were to do a work of art that would truly represent her present and future concerns in art education, it might be a mural of multi-colored pieces. Because in addition to her continuing work with educators and children, she devotes much of her time working with the community — a gesture that has inspired others to get work done in and outside the classroom.

"We need to bring community people to the campus to share art experiences with them," Fleming proposes. "But we also need to bring our students out of the campus environment and into the public school systems so they can practice what they learn and, at the same time, explore the community's cultural traditions."

Toward this end, Fleming, along with other faculty and administrators, worked on a project called Partners-in-Art. This project exposed participants to the art of the ethnic and cultural communities of Fresno. In the real sense of the word, it's been a partnership of sorts: the students with the teachers, the university with the community, and the cultures that link us all together.

