

Dr. Lee Frank Hagan (1945-1986)

Lee Frank Hagan, professor and academic administrator, was born on July 28, 1945 in Brunswick, GA to Felton Hagan (1917-2009), apartment complex Maintenance Supervisor in Elizabeth; and Melvania Rhymes-Hagan (1918-2008), a Newark Nurse Assistant. Lee was one of four children, including Oadline Delores, Maurice Lawrence, and Jerome Anthony. The Hagan family migrated to Newark in 1952 where Lee attended the public schools of the city—graduating in 1963 from South Side High [School](#) (now Malcolm X Shabazz High [School](#)). During his years at South Side, Lee was a member of the Bulldogs Cross Country running team, Boys Glee Club, and the Boys Explorers Club.

Hagan earned a Bachelor and Master of Arts degree in History from Seton Hall University (1967 and 1969). His master thesis, “The Black Abolitionists, 1830-1860: Their Role and Relationship with the White Abolitionists,” was completed under the direction of noted historian and college president John B. [Duff](#) and scholar-activist in civil, disability, and labor rights Edwin R. [Lewinson](#).

Hagan received a Doctorate of Education from Rutgers University in 1983. His dissertation, entitled “Black Studies Programs: An Analysis of Curricula,” examined the development and changes that took place in Black Studies curriculum at four year New Jersey institutions from their inception to 1982. Hagan’s committee consisted of Kenneth D. Carlson (Chair), Samuel DeWitt [Proctor](#), Elaine C. [Condon](#), and Leonard L. [Bethel](#). Also instrumental in his research were professors Alan K. Colón ([Howard University](#)), Douglass Davidson ([Institute of the Black World](#)), and prominent Pan-Africanist [Leonard Jeffries \(CCNY\)](#).

Hagan became an Instructor (1969-1976); Assistant Professor (1976-1984); and Associate Professor (1984-1986) of Black Studies, History, and Social Science within the History [Department](#) and Director of Afro-American [Studies](#) at Jersey City State College, now New Jersey City University ([NJCU](#)). During his seventeen NJCU years, Hagan was an advisor to numerous student organizations and belonged to the Committee on Global Studies, General Studies Curriculum Committee, Latin American Studies Program Advisory Committee, and the Executive Steering Committee for the Black Enterprise Seminar Series.

In the fall of 1975, Hagan helped establish (along with Phil Littlejohn, Samuel McGhee, the John Raines, Rosetta Rutledge, Sandra Stothoff and Ann Tisdale) the Black Alumni, Administrators, Faculty, Students and Staff Organization ([BAAFSSO](#)) to improve the representation and eradicate inequities of Blacks at NJCU.

In 1980, Hagan was a member of the Marion Thompson Wright study group, along with distinguished historians Larry A. [Green](#), Clement A. [Price](#), and Giles R. [Wright](#), which promoted the study of New Jersey African American History and whose efforts in 1981 led to the establishment of the annual Marion Thompson Wright [Lecture](#) series—one of the nation’s longest running scholarly conference series devoted to the historical literacy of a community.

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Additionally, Hagan was an active member of the [Schomburg](#) Library Lecture Series Advisory Board, the New Jersey Historical [Society](#), the [Association](#) for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, and the African Heritage Studies [Association](#) where he became good friends with celebrated Afrocentric scholars Yosef A.A. Ben-[Jochannan](#) and Ivan G. Van [Sertima](#)—each of whom gave a eulogy at Hagan’s Homecoming celebration at NJCU on November 5, 1986.

Moreover, Hagan was a board member and chairman of the Conference Planning Committee of the New Jersey [Association](#) of Black Educators; and the Eastern and Weequahic Park Tennis [Association](#) (Newark, NJ).

At the age of 41, Lee F. Hagan transitioned to join the ancestors on Thursday September 4, 1986 at St. Michael’s Medical [Center](#) in Newark due to complications from cancer. He was cremated at Rosedale Crematory.

New Jersey City University recognized Hagan’s important contribution to the institution by establishing and naming their Africana Studies [Center](#) in his honor soon after his death.

Sources:

Obituary, “Lee F. Hagan, 41, college professor,” *The Star-Ledger* (Newark), 6 September 1986.

Hagan, Lee F. *Black Studies Programs: An Analysis of Curricula*. EdD diss., Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University, October 1983.

Hagan, Lee F. *The Black Abolitionists, 1830-1860: Their Role and Relationship with the White Abolitionists*. Master of Arts Thesis: History Department, Seton Hall University, July 1969.