

THE DIASPORA

Spring 2016

THE DIASPORA is a biannual publication of the Department of African American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Contributions are welcomed from UC Berkeley's faculty, staff, and students. We also invite submissions from guest columnists and scholars who may not be affiliated with the university. Articles may be edited for length, clarity, and style.

EDITOR

Essence Harden

COVER ART

"Femme Cartaographies Cum Gender Fluids" (2014)

Melanie Griffin

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Notes from the Chair

Leigh Raiford, Department Chair and Associate Professor



On Saturday, May 21, the 2015-16 school year came to a close with our Black Graduation event at Zellerbach Hall. For almost five decades the Department of African American Studies has opened its graduation to the larger black community at Cal. As always, it was a joyous celebration for all degrees and majors; the culmination of years of hard work and dedication, discovery and growth, resistance & resilience, friendship and community. Over 100 students participated and it was an especially significant day for the graduate program: we conferred PhDs to SEVEN students (six in attendance), an all-time high for the department.

Our theme for this year's Black Graduation was "Nothing to Lose But Our Chains." In our program we heard amazing speeches from our graduates, and our esteemed keynote speaker, Dr. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, ruminating on this theme, from Karl Marx to the Black Lives Matter movement. I want to offer the version that appears in the speeches & autobiography of freedom fighter and political exile Assata Shakur.

In *Assata: An Autobiography*, a neo-slave narrative in the tradition of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, that takes us from classrooms to courtrooms, organizing meetings to prison cells, from North Carolina to New York to Oakland to Cuba, from enslavement to consciousness, Assata writes:

It is our duty to fight for our freedom.

It is our duty to win.

We must love each other and support each other.

We have nothing to lose but our chains.

Photography by Rasheed Shabazz Photography

Assata is a book I teach every year. But it comes alive anew when I hear those words and ideas taken OUTSIDE of the classroom. When they are chanted by our students in protests at Sproul Plaza, at the Golden Bear Cafe, at the Campanile. When they are asserted as a commitment to a rigorous intersectional analysis, to the core principles of black feminism, and to the unswerving belief that black lives, ALL black lives, matter.

In a year marked by ongoing budget crises, failures of institutional leadership, especially around questions of sexual harassment and racial, gender and ability equity, we owe our students, our staff, our alumni and each other renewed commitment and creative solutions, actions motivated by love and not driven by fear.

Graduations are always a cause for celebration. But for us gathered at Black Graduation, this day was also a declaration of freedom, an affirmation of community, and a rededication to the work of struggle.

We have nothing to lose but our chains.

Inside This Issue

Essence Harden, Editor and PhD Student

Welcome to the Spring 2016 issue of *The Diaspora*. Major congratulations are in order for our seven newly minted doctors! You will find brief profiles on their dissertations at the end of this issue. We also welcome Anthony Akoto Osei, Jr. as our new administration assistant and department manager Vernessa Parker keeps us up to date with cluster news, staff promotions, additions, and department changes.

PhD student Cherod Johnson reflects on the Black Feminist Epistemologies of Afro-Pessimism working group and PhD student Brukab Sissay considers the need for intra-black community political mobilization. PhD candidate Ianna Hawkins Owen dutifully takes us through the call for restroom gender equity in Barrows Hall and PhD candidate Amani Morrison reflects upon empathy and self-care as a graduate student. We have a book review from David C. Turner III, Department of Education and a rumination on anti-blackness, Asian-Americanness, and radical praxis from Kim Tran who is in the department of Ethnic Studies. We have conference reports, creative verse, photography, reviews, and critical essays on art and graphic novels by PhD Students Kianna M. Middleton, John Mundell, Malika Crutchfield, Grace Gipson, Kenly Brown, Malika Imhotep, and PhD Candidates Robert Connell and Kathryn Benjamin Golden.

It has been a pleasure serving as editor for the 2015-2016 term. I want to thank all of our contributors for their intellectual labor; Melanie Griffin for her incredible artwork; our chair Leigh Raiford, Professor Ula Taylor, Project Analyst Lindsey Herbert, Vernessa Parker, and Rania Shah for their guidance and aide in completing the spring issue; and the department of African American Studies for your sponsorship. Enjoy!



Artist Statement

Melanie Griffin, Multimedia Artist and Curator

Melanie Griffin was born in Augusta, Georgia in 1981 and now lives in South Pasadena, California. She received a BA from Antioch College, where she studied Cultural Studies and Visual Arts. She has created using music, painting, drawing and collage. Currently, she is reflecting on what she believes is a false binary between art and craft. Melanie uses loud vibrant colors, geometric shapes, and symbolism to meditate on ideas around gender, race, spirituality, mysticism and liberation through quilts, embroidery and other textile projects.



Staff News

Vernessa Parker, Department Manager

As supervisor of the Cluster, I nominated several staff members for the STAR Awards for 2015-2016 within the African American Studies, and the administrative cluster with Ethnic Studies and Gender and Women's Studies Departments. The employees include:

In regards to Operating Principles, Althea focuses on service. She provides timely, excellent service to students, staff faculty and other stakeholders. She emphasizes service over bureaucracy whenever possible. Althea worked closely with the Berkeley International Student Program (BISP) staff this summer to develop strategies to support the program. She identified Gender & Women's studies courses for the international students to attend, increased enrollment limits, and encouraged instructors to submit students to their classes for the program, and advised students on the program when necessary. Due to the encouragement of enrolling students in the BISP, the department was able to raise support funds to assist with its daily operations. Althea also attended advising meetings and trainings on her personal time and makes sure there is a departmental presence at recruitment opportunities outside of her regular office hours.

Laura Jimenez Olivera was nominated for her exceptional contributions to the Chicano/Latino Studies Program as well as her involvement with campus efforts to improve the climate for students of color, particularly for Latino Students. Laura exemplifies the Operating Principles of "We include and excel, together". She actively includes different perspectives and works cooperatively with and across departments. She thrives when we celebrate the diversity in our community and our common commitment to equity, inclusion and equal access to all. She is a community-based advisor and works with students from a diversified background.

Laura is the department liaison for the community colleges and the Puente Program. This year the department hosted 9 community college and Puente Program visits, in collaboration with the office of undergraduate admissions. The group is provided a comprehensive, full day program, which included presenters from OLIA, FAO, TRSP and a transfer student pane. Laura continued serving on various scholarship committees such as the Chicana/Latina Scholarship Foundation, the Student Achievement Awards, the Legacy Awards and served on the UCDC selection committee

Latonya Minor was nominated for handling gracefully a particularly stressful and challenging situation with the upmost compassion and integrity. Latonya simplified some processes for the graduate program such as a revised graduate brochure, and there are many times when Latonya has responded above and beyond work hour schedules and job expectations. She has assisted several students facing delicate and confidential situations and has come up with a plan of action that has resolved many situations, with the Student's best interest in mind. She has also trained new staff in the African American Studies Department on graduate policies and procedures.

Gillian Edgelow was nominated because she exemplifies the Campus Operating Principles to "Include and Excel Together". The Gender and Women's Studies (GWS) Department had a self-study and several recommendations were made for the faculty climate. Gillian was instrumental in facilitating work to help strengthen the functioning of the GWS strategic planning team (core faculty). She worked with the department Chair on adjustments to agenda style, meeting formats and minutes. She facilitated a self-reflective

exercise on team roles September 2015, and attended a 3-day facilitation training November 2015. She also facilitated meetings regarding curriculum revision and departmental strategic planning. She has been instrumental in assisting with the strategic plan for the department due to her outside experience as a facilitator. Gillian also lead exercises for faculty on team- building to increase their strength of decision-making processes and collaborative strategies for the department.

Positivity in the face of seemingly impossible staff shortages; outstanding individual initiative to learn and undertake new administrative tasks, and the utmost generosity to share her knowledge and training with other staff members are the things that come to mind when we think of Jeannie's invaluable contributions to the Ethnic Studies Department and its administrative cluster with African American Studies and Gender and Women's Studies. She is a major part of the glue that keeps the departments and the financial services of the cluster together. In sum Jeannie ensures that departmental financial services functions as best as possible due to the heavy workload and she has taken on exceptional initiative and has gone far beyond her regular job duties to assist faculty and visitors. For end of June 2015 she handles a tremendous amount of journal entries to ensure that no deficits were left in any of the 3 departmental funds. Jeannie also worked with ASUC for the new system and has taken lead on the new processes with ASUC. Jeannie has been instrumental in training other staff members on financial services.

New Employee Announcement

Eileen Andrade, our Cluster's Academic HR Analyst retired January 9, 2016. Perla Pinedo accepted the position of HR Academic Analyst for the departments of African American Studies,

Gender and Women's Studies, and Ethnic Studies.

Perla is a graduate of Antioch University in Santa Barbara where she has a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies, with a concentration in Business Management. She also has an HR Management Certification from UC Santa Barbara. She recently worked for Campus Shared Services (CSS) for over a year and a half and has over 11 years of UC experience. For CSS she was our departments HR Business Partner and she worked with the staff and I in all areas of HR including personnel policies and procedures. Perla also worked as the HR Analyst for UC Education Abroad Program Systemwide Office where she implemented and created tools for processes and procedures to create consistency and efficiencies in all areas of recruitment, new hires, separations, time keeping, payroll and employee relations. One of the major accomplishments Perla reached at the UC Education Abroad Program was the complex transition of taking UCEAP from UCLA to UCSB payroll system.

In Perla's new role, she is responsible for coordination of the academic search process, work with departmental search committees, assist with recruitment of faculty and lecturers, coordinate with CSS payroll transactions for faculty, lecturers, GSIs and work-study. She will maintain schedule of pending matters for AP cases, coordinate academic caseload, and ensure procedures and deadlines and requirements are conveyed to relevant faculty regarding personnel actions. Perla will also analyze complex academic issues, develop project scope and solutions and give professional advice to faculty and assist with critical decisions regarding academic personnel.

On Afro-Pessimism: Views On The Resurrection of a Movement

Cherod Johnson, PhD Student



Carrie Mae Weems, *Roaming*, 2006.

Black Feminist Epistemologies of Afro-Pessimism is a working group that originated in the spring of 2016, which brings together graduate students and high school debaters into critical dialogue with each other. The working group is interested in the way black feminist thought animates the recent philosophical and theoretical turn in black cultural studies known as afro-pessimism. Black Feminist Epistemologies of Afro-Pessimism mines a set of primal and overarching questions, including: what is afro-pessimism? What are its histories and theories? How do we suss out the enabling protocols of black feminist epistemology that serve as afro-pessimism's condition of possibility? What implications does this often times unrecognized genealogy

have for pursuing methods of study and political orientations that are otherwise terroristically preempted by the coercive constraints of the academy and civil society writ large? What is generative about afro-pessimism is its enduring capacity to wrestle with the category the human as universalized in liberal discourse and its return to modernity's instantiating violence of the transatlantic slave trade. Modernity was constituted through a negative dialectics of humanity, that is, an ontological negation of the will and agency of the black. Afro-pessimism seeks to meditate on the violence of this constitutive negation as that which is both foundational and in excess of rational utility, centering the gratuitous violence which positions the racialized

figure of the slave as modernity's defining element and locus for a modern conception of liberal humanism.

For afro-pessimism, the slave as an object of property and a property of (dis)possession to be used and abused at the will of the slave master is "the genesis of the white bourgeois subject," as Saidiya Hartman once put it [1]. Humanism is animated by a liberal sensibility of human progress, liberty, will and freedom. Afro-pessimism as a theoretical program is skeptical of this theorization of a western European conception of Man and the category of the human, which is constituted by and through the discursive and the material violence of race and racialization. In this way, afro-pessimism presents its readers and skeptics with blackness as a critical posture that refuses narratives and fantasies of progress by theorizing civil society's very capacity to articulate its progress as grounded in a metric sutured by the maximum imperative of anti-blackness. Thereby, afro-pessimism forces its readers to reckon with a violence whose scope and continuity put the fantasy of a cauterizing periodization of linear progress into crisis, revealing purportedly liberatory mutations of institutional operation within the modern paradigm as refinements as opposed to ruptures of an essential structure of antiblackness. To explore blackness from the vantage point of afro-pessimism is, then, to consider how slavery inaugurated into existence a non-subject position and a complex idiom of gender difference. In the case of gender, afro-pessimism puts pressure on the scandalized violence of gender within the coercive field of nineteenth century slavery and reveals the very complex terms and possible limits of gender as a historical site of analysis. As Ian Baucom once put forth, "indeed what we know of the trans-Atlantic slave trade is that among the other violence's it inflicted on millions of human beings was the violence of becoming a "type":...., a type of nonperson, a type of property, a type of commodity, a type of money" [2]. Scholars interested in afro-pessimism and its genesis have turned to the canonical scholarship of

Frantz Fanon, Hortense Spillers, Sylvia Wynter, Orlando Patterson and Saidiya Hartman, and more recent scholars, such as Frank Wilderson, Jared Sexton, David Marriott and Christina Sharpe, among others. Regardless of what side one stands on in regards to afro-pessimism, it is undeniably porous and deeply contagious as a nonpolitical position. And yet, what is perhaps even more pressing and interesting about afro-pessimism is that its gaining momentum and traction inside and outside of academia, especially from a younger generation of academics and revolutionaries alike because of its incommensurability and negative radicality that is monstrous, undisciplined, and possibly destructive. And it is for this reason that we have welcomed and continue to welcome to campus a generous group of activist scholars and visual art historians committed to understanding this resurrection of a movement, scholars such as Jill Casid, Frank Wilderson, Michael Dumas, and Jared Sexton whose scholarship is at the cutting edge of black cultural studies because of their theoretical and intellectual commitment to write with the movement in mind.

[1] Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century American* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 62.

[2] Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and The Philosophy of History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 11.

Being African and American: The Possibilities of IntraBlack Mobilization

Brukab Sissay, PhD Student

In the fall of 2010, while I was an undergraduate at the University of Washington in Seattle, I participated in a joint meeting between the Black Students Union and the African Students Association that addressed a divide that we saw between our communities on campus. Some of the questions posed asked why we, as black students on a predominantly white campus, rarely supported or acknowledged one another, and why we didn't see our struggles for recognition and inclusion as a joint struggle? These weren't simple questions, and we left the meeting even more aware of the important differences that exist between and within our communities along the lines of class, ethnicity, nationality, and religion, among others. But when we left the room, we also pledged to make programmatic and interpersonal attempts to understand one another, and to find common ground for joint mobilization. It was this meeting, in addition to a lifetime of experiences navigating my own identity as a black immigrant, that launched my research interests in this area. In part, this interest grew out of a frustration shared by many African immigrants in schools, where African American history, as it is often taught, did not usually include our histories. This complex history, which is problematically discussed by indicating its genesis in the middle passage, continuing through slavery, Jim Crow, the civil rights movement, and culminating in the black power movements and beyond, rarely engages with the lived realities of Africans on the continent or their diasporas whose arrival in the U.S. was more recent and, to a debatable degree, voluntary. For my community of immigrants

from East Africa in particular, the omission of the East African slave trade, or the ways in which the Atlantic slave trade impacted and continue to impact East Africa, is just one instance of a historical disconnect. Few of my peers learn about pan Africanism, ethiopianism, or about the roles of African Americans in African decolonial or the Antiapartheid movements. Fewer still learn that many of the iconic leaders of U.S. based social justice movements were immigrants or children of immigrants themselves. In an effort to combat this reality, one of the projects I purposefully engage in through my academic and community work, attempts to bring to the center the intersections between and across our diasporas. In addition to the need to be more historically factual and inclusive, demographic changes in our communities and schools urge us to do this work, at a time when one in ten black people in the U.S. are now foreign-born, and as the numbers of second and third generation children of African immigrants grows exponentially.

We can stay motivated in this effort by looking to the community for practices of inclusion and engagement between members of the African diaspora. Three groups in particular stand out to me in this regard: Priority Africa Network, Black Alliance for Just Immigration, and the Black Lives Matter movement. The community work they conduct, in partnerships led by native-born and immigrant black activists, engage movements that simultaneously affect U.S. born and immigrant black people. Through a multiplicity of actions, these organizations bring together folks from across the diaspora

to engage one another in dialogue and in action, and to mobilize around migrant rights and racial justice. The community work they conduct, in partnerships led by native-born and immigrant black activists, engage movements that simultaneously affect U.S. born and immigrant black people. Through a multiplicity of actions, these organizations bring together folks from across the diaspora to engage one another in dialogue and in action, and to mobilize around migrant rights and racial justice. Community based actions such as these reveal the reality that present day social movements demonstrate a continuity of immigrant black activism in the contemporary moment. As scholars, we ought to aid in this effort through a more holistic engagement with our research on the African diaspora, bringing from the margins to the center African, South American, Caribbean, and Black European histories. We could bring to the foreground historical instances of black migrants' engagements in social movements, and the examples are numerous: antislavery activism, pan Africanism, African decolonial movements, the U.S. civil rights movement, the creation of hip-hop, and so on. Furthermore, we could engage with contemporary texts, such as Chimamanda Adiche's *Americanah* and Dinaw Mengistu's *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears*, which discuss migration and blackness as conjoined elements that bring an abundance of insights into the present day experiences of transnational Afropolitans. Luckily for us, there also exists a growing array of digital resources that engage these issues. Documentaries such as *The NeoAfricanAmericans*, *23rd & Union*, *Am I Too African to be American*, *American to be African?*, and *Bound: African vs. African American* are just a few of the many profound works that can be readily accessible.

I believe that engaging intrablack mobilization could reveal the productive possibilities of having our

black communities connect racial justice and immigrant rights projects. They could address a multitude of issues facing our communities in relation to one another. For example, we could engage the growing issue of land grabs and displacement faced by indigenous communities in Africa in relationship to gentrification faced by black communities locally. We could connect the forces of globalization and capitalism that produced the middle passage and that continues to enable the present day violence faced by Africans migrating into Europe and the Middle East as they flee poverty at home. We could connect issues of anti-black police brutality locally with antimigrant and Islamophobic violence faced by black people in the Middle East, Europe, and in the United States. And as an example that's close to our students' lives, we could see the actions of black student activists' #RhodesMustFall movement at the University of Cape Town as being connected to the ongoing efforts to rename Barrows Hall, and as something that can be linked to a larger decolonizing effort worldwide. For those in my communities of African immigrants and second generation African Americans, I see this work as critical. Finding a connection between our identities as immigrants and as black people, and identifying the global impacts of antiblackness on all of our communities, will truthfully enable us to see and understand how identity matters. How we see ourselves, and the histories we internalize matter to how we deal with ourselves, our communities, and our world. For all black students, we have a responsibility to be inclusive of the multiple histories that connect us with each other, because it is through an engagement with these connected histories and realities that we may be enabled to meaningfully support the hopes of joint mobilization that we all envision.

Why The Comic Book Character Black Panther is Still Important Especially in the Marvel Universe...

Grace Gibson , PhD Student



photo credit: Zade Rosenthal—Marvel

“The fight for freedom needs no more martyrs -- it needs victory -- it needs no more atrocities to stir our blood -- it is stirred!”

-T'Challa/Black Panther

Superman, Batman, Thor, Captain America, and Iron Man. Each of these superhero characters, in their own unique way, have numerous similarities. Batman and Iron Man are wealthy billionaire businessmen who fund their own [crusades]. Captain America and Superman are physically strong and two of the most patriotic and nationalistic comic book superheroes. And Thor and Superman also share the fact that they are bodily powerhouses within their respective universe (Marvel/DC). All of these shared features are expected when examining parallels between classic comic book heroes. However, there is one similarity with each of the above-mentioned heroes that is often disregarded and expected: all five are white men. Lets change this equation and insert Black Panther. Much like Captain America (Steven Rogers), Black Panther (T'Challa) is loyal to his country and a patriotic superhero. More specifically, Black Panther who is the natural-born leader of the Wakanda nation is just as dedicated and committed to his country as Captain America is to the United States of America. Similar to Thor's homeland of Asgard, Wakanda is a mysterious and fascinating land. Thor, Superman, and Black Panther all come from a world of wonder. In addition to being patriotic and from a foreign land, T'Challa's wealth is just as comparable if not more than that of Tony Stark and Bruce Wayne. What makes T'Challa stand apart is what he does with his wealth differs greatly.

For more on *The Black Panther* reboot check out Grace's interview with the author Tanehisi Coates on [Black Girl Nerds](#)

Created by comic book legends Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, Black Panther first appeared in the comic book universe July 1966 in the “Fantastic Four #52” issue. This date and appearance was also significant in that it would occur just three months before the inception and founding of the Black Panther Party (October 1966). Black Panther is also the first Black and African superhero in mainstream American comics, thereby paving the road for other Marvel characters such as Luke Cage and The Falcon, and DC characters like Black Lightning and Green Lantern John Stewart. Since its creation in the comics, and even current day, his creators have always treated Black Panther with a level of respect, which was a rarity for any Black character. Not only is he the first, but a multi-faceted character. Considered one of the eight smartest people (Oxford University trained) on the planet (in comic book terms), Black Panther is skilled African and contemporary martial artist, hunter, strategist, politician, diplomat, genius in physics and advanced technology, while holding the given ceremonial title chief of the Panther Tribe of Wakanda.

Moving forward, Black Panther aka T’Challa is experiencing a resurgence & cultural prominence. With a pivotal appearance/role in the new Captain America: Civil War film, Black Panther fans do not have to wait any longer for the character to continue living up to its legacy. There has been a long wait for the first Black/African superhero in comic books to make a major screen debut since his birth in the comics in 1966. Finally, a half-century later, Black Panther steps into the spotlight. The importance of Black Panther’s presence cinematically can be summed up in the words of Chadwick Boseman the actor portraying Black Panther. “Even if he wasn’t a superhero, he would be interesting to me—as an African king and warrior, ruling the most technologically advanced nation in the world,” says Boseman. “How often do you get to see that movie?” Plus, considering all that has and continues to take place against

Black bodies, whether women, men girls, and boys, (in and outside the Hollywood screen) T’Challa/Black Panther offers an additional, welcomed perspective in the comic book universe as well as a voice of pride in one’s self. His character is not just a “visitor” from another land, or an alien other from a European fantasy realm, or a typical sidekick; but Black, African, an intellectual, and royalty.

Also with the reboot of the comic book series written by first time comic book writer and MacArthur grant recipient Ta-Nehisi Coates, Black Panther is maintaining a past legacy while creating a new one, along with gaining a new set of followers. For those who were already familiar with the character, his return in the film and comic book serve as a welcomed rebirth of an acclaimed hero. And for those being introduced to this prominent character, a new sense of hope. With the re-launch of the Black Panther series by writer Ta-Nehisi Coates and illustrator Brian Stelfreeze, Coates and Stelfreeze are offering another perspective to the character, while giving voice to Wakandan nation. Instead of Wakanda just being seen as simply this mythical and spectacular African nation, readers can see the everyday, existing depictions of African culture and her inhabitants. For example, in the panel below, artist Brian Stelfreeze depicts a normal day in a city in Wakanda. Although there is no action or drama written or drawn on the page, the panel exemplifies Africans living a normal life in a technologically and culturally advanced society. Considering how Africans are normally depicted in media and popular culture these images provide a lovely, picturesque tribute to the true diversity of the Golden Continent, this is fitting considering in the comics Wakanda is also known as the Golden Country.

Another highlight in the new “Black Panther” series is Coates offering of a feminist critique and queer reading of Black women’s bodies through T’Challa’s all-female bodyguard crew called the ‘Dora Milaje’ (aka the Adored Ones).



Photo credit: Marvel Comics

The role of the Dora Milaje introduces a discussion on sexuality, gender, and power specifically within the Wakandan nation. Coates, in a modern context, explained how some of the ideas behind Dora Milaje might read as problematic. According to an interview with NPR Coates notes, “To be frank with you, though, something about their origin sort of bothered me when I thought about the real world,” he said. “Given what I know of men in the real world and what I know of men throughout history, that’s a situation that’s ripe for abuse.” This approach of discussing topics such as the ones mentioned above is a novel one considering they are rarely discussed, or not even acknowledged at all. In issue #1 of “Black Panther” Coates establishes the first queer, African couple to mainstream comic books and sets up a template for how the sexist, troubling backstories of long-standing female characters can be flawlessly course-corrected. Additionally, Coates has also been very candid about the series not just simply being a comic book that features good guys versus bad guys, but a discovery of how power flows through a society.

With the first issue released in April it has already sold a record-breaking 300,000 copies. (Comic best sellers typically max out at 200,000.) This further confirms Black Panther’s significance and popularity in the Marvel universe.

All in all, Black Panther/T’Challa is more than just a billionaire playboy, or a weak kid turned super soldier, or a demi-god from another realm, but a humble king who is the face of a distinguished nation. Black Panther is more than just one type of hero who is distinguished by one classic trait. Here is a character that was created in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement and is African. In relation to other areas of popular culture, Marvel Comics was ahead of its time. Black Panther, as a whole, continues to be an example of not only what it means to be Black in America, but a relatable character that stands the test of time. Black Panther’s presence is not simply to be another average superhero, but to change the “comic book game.”

Reflections on Departmental Service

2015-2016 GA Report & The UCB African American Initiative

Malika Imhotep, PhD Student

Departmental Service is a key tenant of our African American and African Diaspora Studies graduate experience. While there is no script for the ways we show up for our department, throughout the course of the year opportunities arise for us to join our faculty and staff in the work of maintaining, grooming and furthering our current intellectual home. As graduate students with our own personal worlds of responsibility it is sometimes understandably difficult to volunteer time and energy. Serving as our delegate to the Graduate Assembly for the 2015-2016 school year and as one of the graduate representatives on the African American Initiative Taskforce illustrated for me the ways one aspect of departmental service, institutional engagement, can be used to support the work of black studies.

The Graduate Assembly

The Graduate Assembly (GA) serves as a platform for delegates to represent the interest of our respective departments while engage issues pertinent to the UCB Graduate community at-large. Meeting monthly to discuss funding, policy, and various resolutions, the GA functions to aggregate the voices of the UCB Graduate Community in an effort to serve and support its varied needs and interests. Some topics of interest that arose in the GA this year were: UHS negotiations, support for the Center for Race & Gender (CRG), and the AFSCME Speakers Boycott in support sub-contracted workers.

As both the UHS negotiations and the AFSCME Boycott have ended, I will devote the most space here to a discussion of the CRG case.

Early this Fall the University Administration's proposed to pull the Center for Race and Gender (CRG) out of the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost and into a sub-unit under the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Equity and Inclusion. This move was proposed by the administration without any consultation from the CRG and perceived as a demotion that would endanger the centers budget and place it deeper within bureaucracy. In response, students and Staff associated with the CRG put together a statement and petition for support asking that the CRG retain its current position within the EVCP and sustain its level of funding. The petition was signed by more than 1000 students and more than 100 faculty. I was asked to voice support of the CRG on behalf of African American and African Diaspora Studies Department in the GA by a concerned member of our department. The issue was brought before the GA at the November meeting by way of a resolution that asked: 1) "That the Graduate Assembly adopts a standing policy to support the retaining of the CRG in the Office of the EVCP and supporting student groups working to maintain administrative support of the CRG" 2) "That the Graduate Assembly Campus Affairs Vice President write a letter to the Chancellor and the EVCP (i) supporting the retaining of the CRG in the Office of the EVCP, (ii) supporting the current levels of funding for the CRG, its research endeavors, and staff positions, and (iii) urging the EVCP to appoint a new CRG director, under the leadership of the current CRG Advisory Board and staff and in consultation with students." [1]

Despite the resolution being passed, in February I was notified by the students organizing on behalf of the CRG that the GA had not yet fulfilled its mandate. A letter of support to was never sent to EVCP Claude Steele regarding the CRG, but he was invited to the speak at February delegate meeting. At the February meeting EVCP Steele, reemphasized his stance stating that the “repositioning” of the CRG was a move to insure adequate oversight and support. While he did not present any evidence to support his claims that the CRG had been neglected in its current standing, he told that GA that it was because of his background experience in relation to the work of the CRG that he felt they deserved to be in an office that was “more equipped” to manage them. There was no further vote or resolution advanced after the February meeting, but students organizing on behalf of the CRG were not satisfied with the response of EVCP Steele and the GA still has to make good on its promise to support their efforts.

The African American Initiative Implementation Committee

September 3rd, 2015 Chancellor Dirks announced “a comprehensive effort to address the underrepresentation of African American students, faculty, and staff at our university, and improve the climate for those who are here now and all who will join our community in the future.”[2] This effort, The UCB African American Initiative, was a direct response to the demands set forth by the UCB Black Student Union last spring.[3] The initiative is meant to address the representational disparities faced by black students, faculty and staff by refocusing and creating new institutional mechanisms. The focus areas (taken directly from the BSU demands) include: Recruitment and Yield, Holistic Support for black students through a Black Resource Center, GSI and Faculty training to address campus/classroom climate, Faculty Diversity, and the renaming

of buildings (including our own Barrows Hall). While the focus derived from the BSU centers black undergrads, several of these issues impact our department directly and black graduate students more generally. The African American Initiative Implementation Committee (AAIIC) had its first meeting in February of 2016 which I was asked to attend by the Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA).

That first conversation began with a discussion of the 20 Million Dollar endowment promised as part of the initiative. In compliance with Prop 209 which inhibits race based scholarships, the funds will be raised and housed by an outside organization. Potential fiscal partners have been identified and the fundraising committee has begun outreach. With regards to Recruitment & Yield, some areas of concern were identified. Thinking about both marketing and what it means to support students once they get to campus. The R&Y sub-committee through the African American Student Development Office hosted a community forum on February 24th. The Black Resource Center as a temporary space (Hearst Annex) and an allocated permanent space (MLK Basement). Within the BRC there is conversation about how to pull in and employ graduate students, many of whom were displaced when the administration allocated the BRC to the Hearst Annex. Most movement and development of the BRC plan is contingent on funding. GSI and Faculty training around issues of exclusion in the classroom has begun. 800 GSI & Faculty were trained in the fall and 400 in the spring. This training was conducted by the Graduate Division who set the curriculum of an interactive theater model designed by GSRs. There was talk about incorporating this training into Pedagogy courses that are required for all grad students. Provost Steele has changed hiring guidelines to make it clear that diversity is to be prioritized by all departments with regards to faculty diversity. With regard to building names, some preliminary research has been done by the administration. No confirmed changes as of yet.

It was voiced that there was a need for emphasis on the black graduate student experience. At the second meeting of the semester we brainstormed ways to strengthen existing departmental support structures to serve as advocates for black graduate students. There was also a lot of talk about ways to foster unity in the UCB black community at large at a structural and cultural level. I think our position as the department of African American and African Diaspora studies is one that should be closely involved as both a space for folks academically invested in exploring blackness and a safe space for black folks within the academy.

There seems to be some space between the work we do as graduate students and the work we do as departmental citizens. Which is to say there are ways to make our commitments to black life, to black study, felt by the larger campus community that might aid in fostering a climate in which black students (grad & undergrad) feel seen, engaged, and supported.

[1]All Meeting Agendas and Resolutions can be found on the GA Website: <http://ga.berkeley.edu/delegates/assembly-meeting-materials/>

[2]<http://diversity.berkeley.edu/african-american-initiative>

[3]<http://afrikanblackcoalition.org/2015/03/12/black-students-at-uc-berkeley-demand-institutional-changes/>; additionally there was a UC wide report conducted on African American student

The Black Feminist Collective at Stanford University

“Black Femininity and Our Academy”

Kenly Brown and Grace Gipson, PhD Students

The experience of the Black Woman in today's academy has been a complex journey. In some discussions she is seen as fascinating, some intimidating, others unknowledgeable and unqualified, and the worst case invisible. Black Femininity continues to be misunderstood and pathologized. However, The Black Feminist Collective at Stanford University sought to challenge the above notions with the “Black Femininity and Our Academy” colloquium.

The “Black Femininity and Our Academy” colloquium was held on Saturday April 16th on the campus of Stanford University. This year's colloquium served as a “spirit-led gathering to intentionally exchange black feminine energy and learn ways of being to that end”. Based on the success of last year's first gathering, “Black Women in Academia,” it engaged members from all spheres of the Stanford community. And this year the collective not only sought to highlight the scholarship within the academy, but educators and knowledge-producers in a variety of realms.

The colloquium began with a live a performance of “We Wear the Mask,” where an ensemble of women shared their stories through the masks they wear as a defense to get through their days, professions, responsibilities, and accountability to friends and family. The masks represent defense mechanisms that have aided to the survival of Black women through slavery, institutional racism, violence, etc. We learn that we can break down the masks in order to fully engage in our daily pursuits, desires, passions, and identity formation. In addition to breaking down survival mechanisms, we

also participated in workshops that discussed natural healing practices, navigating the academy, counseling, and hip hop's influence in gender politics. We specifically led a workshop on our experiences in the academy as Black women and how our network and successes are built out of a community. It was amazing and worthwhile to also hear the experiences of other Black women graduate students and junior faculty to inform and field questions from undergraduate students who are interested in pursuing a graduate degree. Overall, the symposium was engaging, rejuvenating, and inspiring to continue our work as doctoral students and also to continue these conversations beyond the walls of the academy because our Black femininity is beautiful, expansive, and ours to own as we accrue success, failure, and wisdom throughout our lifetimes. All in all, “Black Femininity & Our Academy” was colloquium that provided attendees the opportunity to learn from other Black scholars in various arenas and dream ourselves



*Both authors pictured at
“Black Femininity and Our
Academy.” Photo courtesy of
Kenly Brown and
Grace Gipson*

Procedural Memory

journaling on daily terror

I was named. Yet I thought only dogs and pre-owned cars were retitled. Chicago Tribune: July 26 1988. "Thirty-nine black children 2 years old or younger are available for adoption in Cook County-the highest number in four years, according to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services." With palms splayed: I am open for taking. I have heard that if you cannot feel that placenta-muffled voice on your forehead as first world whisper, you are not here. Lonesomeness for a sound inaudible: I race my heart until it reaches an embryonic beat. I was named anew. But say it hushed because my creeping is maddening. My cries make my mother her six-year-old self who could do nothing right. Great-grandmother undid every doing my mother loved herself for, re-tucked every bed my mother dreamed in. I have yelled at a poorly folded sheet certain that its crease left me on purpose. So I grasp a corner: I press my spine into a wall; it is a hug. And I am available. Mother to baby book: "She is not as beautiful as the others [babies], but still beautiful." I am runner up to babies, lovers, and Canadian vacations. That is why I sleep like I am fighting for first: bed tossed and sweated. The hall switch has burnt out but I expect light (I have had this reoccurring nightmare for years. It is her voice unsounded in my hands). Every spring our basement floods and the bones of dead bunnies wash up beside tulip bulbs. Things do not always go where they are supposed to. Bones do not stay put. "Officials are stepping up a campaign to find black parents." Read that back for errors. Kick down doors for hellos. Hold your tongue in exile. Brace your ribs for snapping. Read her mouth for amniotic safety: find me (inside). Finally I said, "dissociation is only my spirit, alligator mouth closing in reverse, inhaling itself back into the stone I was released from." My name was Wanda. And I am vacant.

/Hold for placement/

Kianna M. Middleton

Bay Area Black Power and the Early Days of Black Studies: The Reading Room Yields a Treasure Trove of Archives

Robert Connell, PhD Candidate

For years the Erskine A. Peters Reading Room, named after the late scholar who once taught at UC Berkeley and was well-renowned for his mentorship, has housed a small but impressive archive of film and video collection related to the Black freedom struggle in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Packed away in shelves and boxes, these reel-to-reel and cassette films, along with cabinets full of documents, posters, and short-run Bay Area radical newspapers. Unfortunately, many of these archives, some of which document the foundational events of the African American Studies department itself, remained largely inaccessible, contained as they were on dead mediums or disorganized in cabinet shelves. As such, this year the Reading Room has endeavored to organize and properly archive this priceless material so that our students and faculty, the wider UC community and beyond can access this collection.

Most students engage with the Reading Room as a functional library space in which to work quietly, review previously completed dissertations, qualifying position papers, and senior honors theses, or consult the small but highly specialized collection of books, periodicals, and reference materials. Faculty often leave books on reserve for their classes or borrow films to supplement their lectures. However, the Reading Room also increasingly became a space where the department's non-administrative, scholarly records were being stored. Course kits and syllabi, research papers and field work data from former faculty, departmental newsletters from African-American/Black Studies departments we have established relations with, and old not-yet-digitalized issues of *The Diaspora* from the early 2000s are of particular note. The renovations over the summer of 2015 accelerated this process, with the June Jordan collection

formerly housed by Poetry to the People, and over 100 books from Prof. Charles Henry's library coming under the care of the Reading Room.

Most intriguing to me, as I began my yearlong GSRship caring for the room in Fall 2015, was the substantial video collection dating back to the early period of the department's existence. Given the layer of dust in the cabinet housing the film and their reel-to-reel format, it was apparent that this footage had not been seen in quite some time. Highlights of the footage include: recordings of Berkley and Oakland's first celebration of Black History Month in 1977, for which the department appears to have played a pivotal role in organizing; 1978 recordings of a community symposium on police brutality in 1978 featuring representatives of the Black Panther Party and Republic of New Afrika; voluminous footage of the Marcus Garvey Symposium in 1977; a 1976 performance of Langston Hughes' "Simply Heavenly" & "Soul Gone Home," produced by the department; video documentation of James Baldwin's visit to the Bay Area in 1979; and dozens of recordings on faculty guest lectures in the department, including St. Clair Drake and Angela Davis.

Fortunately, in collaboration with the California Audio Visual Preservation Project, these film are in the process of being digitalized for long term preservation and to make them accessible online. Also, in collaboration with the Doe and Bancroft libraries, the document archives, including June Jordan's collection, will be transferred to the Bancroft in order to ensure their preservation beyond which the Reading Room has the capacity to do. As such, the department's scholarly archives will have a chance to be preserved and made accessible for generations to come.

photography

Malika Crutchfield, PhD Candidate

“progression”

While looking at this image I ask viewers to consider the following: What assumptions do you make when you view this image? For example, might you make assumptions about the subject of this photograph in regard to the person’s gender and gender presentation?

Does the fact that the face, torso, or figure of the subject is not highlighted or visible influence what you see or look for in the image? With these questions I attempt to complicate the ease with which we often add up and then label what we see, in order to highlight the breadth of generalizations that it may be possible to make about who we see as a result.

“zeitgeist”

Taken in West Oakland, dual messages of hope speak volumes in a single fleeting moment. At once capturing a major citywide awareness campaign while also magnifying an internal celebration of black lives, this image is a visual homage and solidarity cry with the Black Lives Matter movement, and at the same time an encouraging reminder that the bourgening housing market explosion, and therefore nearly criminal raising of rent prices across working class and middle class neighborhoods Oakland over the last decade is not going completely unchecked and unchallenged by community advocates.



“progression”



“zeitgeist”

Review: "Black Awakening in Obama's America" From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation

David C. Turner III, Ph.D. Student, Social and Cultural Studies in Education

"Can there be Black liberation in the United States as the country is currently constituted? No. Capitalism is contingent on the absence of freedom and liberation for Black people and anyone else who does not directly benefit from its economic disorder." (Taylor, 2016 p. 216)

While reading *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, I couldn't help but get lost in the narrative. "This movement is about us," I tell myself as I anxiously read through the pages to see how she captures this current moment. With a sophisticated yet accessible analysis, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor examines the growing divides between the Black political elite and the Black working class in her new book. As she centralizes class politics and their manifestations from civil rights to the present, Taylor complicates how we understand the technologies of anti-Black racism through the contradictory growths of Black poverty and Black access to political and economic capital.

One critical intervention that Taylor makes covers the failure of Black participation in partisan politics. Focusing on political bodies such as the Congressional Black Caucus and Black elected officials, Taylor disfigures notions of "progress" by providing a critique of capital and complacency by public officials. With a range of issues, from the widespread acceptance amongst public officials for the growth of the carceral state to the large corporate fundraising efforts of the Congressional Black Caucus, Taylor works to demonstrate that Black people having access to the larger political structures has regressed social change. Taylor argues,

"The conflict between the Black political establishment and ordinary Blacks, however, has been driven not only by budget constraints but also by contempt for the Black poor and a dramatically narrowed vision for what constitutes Black liberation (p. 106)." Punishing poor Black people, while simultaneously having a booming Black political class, created a fissure in Black political thought that had severe limitations for radical action, culminating in the conditions that lead to the movement for Black lives.

Another critical intervention that Taylor makes in her book highlights the tension between the "old guard" and the "new guard" of grassroots political thought and action. Juxtaposing the demands of establishment organizations such as the National Action Network, Operation PUSH, and the NAACP to grassroots Ferguson organizations such as the Organization for Black Struggle, and larger national organizations like the Dream Defenders and the Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100), Taylor differentiates the scope and the interconnectedness of the demands. As "old guard" groups such as the National Action Network would focus on individual cases, "new guard" organizations such as BYP 100 emphasize the role institutional racism and its connections to capital, which demonstrate a more nuanced and sophisticated analysis of racial oppression.[1] Taylor states:

"But the movement in Ferguson has also validated those who embraced a much wider view by showing how the policing of African Americans is directly tied to the higher levels of poverty and unemployment in Black

Black communities through the web of fees and fines and arrest warrants trapping Black people in a never-ending cycle of debt. The gravity of the crisis confronting Black communities, often stemming from these harmful encounters with the police, legitimizes the need for a more encompassing analysis.” (p. 168)

With the leadership of “new guard” organizations largely being Black women, the prevalence of Black feminist politics has created space for intricate analyses of race, class, and gender. Taylor not only highlights how new guard organizations take an intersectional approach to each act of police violence, but the types of campaigns that the larger movement for Black lives has adopted. With campaigns such as #FundBlackFutures, #SayHerName, #JailsFargo, and put the #TBackInBlack from organizations such as BYP, the Afrikan Black Coalition, and the Black Lives Matter Network, new guard organizations are working to transform the American political landscape for All Black lives, which presents a radically different model than focusing on individualized cases that are mostly male-centered and politically narrow.

Even though this book provides several critical interventions, it has limits. Methodologically speaking, the book does not explore in any particular aspect of the movement in depth, nor does it have a systemic method for presenting/collecting information. Also, being such a “snapshot” of the time limits critical theoretical insights that could have been made with fundamental research questions and a guiding methodology. However, what the book lacks in “academy rigor,” it makes up for in knowledge dissemination. Taylor does a brilliant job collecting information about certain movement actors, and her explicit focus on class is refreshing to see, especially among scholars studying race.

As a social movement scholar and an organizer, I can say with the utmost confidence that this book

that begin to drastically shift relationships of power in the United States, the necessity of Black study is crucial to sustaining the movement’s energy and purpose. I would recommend this book to anyone’s course on social movements, race relations, politics, or a grassroots program for political education. If you are reading this, and you would like to get involved in the movement, please feel free to contact me.

You have nothing to lose but your chains.

[1] The Black Youth Project 100 has released a radical policy agenda titled “The Agenda to Build Black Futures.” In this report, analyzes the intersection of racial and economic inequality through a Black queer feminist lens, which helps them include various identities in their analysis. For more information, please go to <http://agendatobuildblackfutures.org/type/reports/>

Sharing and Caring: On Professionalism and Self-Care in Academia

Amani Morrison , PhD Candidate

As academics we are regularly expected to navigate complex relationships with colleagues, students, advisors/mentors, staff, faculty, the university (and university system), and “the field.” We share institutional space, share work, and share departmental responsibilities. More than that, we share a significant portion of our time, our energy, and ourselves. Being in academia can be a very vulnerable experience. With all that is to be given by and expected of us, it is important to show up for ourselves as we also show up for others. Professionalism and self-care should not be mutually exclusive. When we invest in a culture of honesty, transparency, and respect, they don’t have to be.

Honesty and Transparency

In all of our labor, it is important to be honest with ourselves and transparent with others. For instance, I may have committed myself to reading and discussing a colleague’s or student’s work but cannot prioritize it over the teaching-grading-conferencing hustle of mid-semester. It is imperative that I am honest with myself about my priorities so that I can be transparent about them with others I am responsible to. Assessing my priorities honestly may cause me to reconfigure them altogether to take into account my commitments or, alternatively, it may help me to understand and communicate how or why I cannot meet my commitment. To be clear, understanding my reasons for shifting or postponing a commitment does not automatically equate to my reasons being excusable; however, it does allow me to understand who I am as an academic and professional in this particular moment with this particular situation

(and perhaps who I am in my academic capacity more generally). I may or may not love what I see and may need to make some adjustments. Perhaps I am over-performing in the conference arena and am underperforming in my teaching, or I’m giving all I’ve got to my students but little-to-nothing to support the work of my colleagues or activities of my department. Or maybe I can show up for everyone but myself. Whatever the situation, I must strive to neither have my productivity displace professionalism, nor have either of those ideals preclude my self-care.

Conversely, I cannot wave the banner of self-care as a means of evading or not being accountable for professionalism and productivity. When working to strike a healthy and meaningful balance becomes far too much, I again need to be honest with myself and transparent with others and perhaps gracefully bow out of some duties temporarily (if possible) for some intensive self-care. Caring for my profession as an academic means I must care for myself to function well in it, and caring for myself means being intentional about creating a sustainable path on my journey to my personal and professional goals.

Mutual Respect

Respect is also central to maintaining both professionalism and self-care. Once I am honest with myself, I must respect my own needs for physical and emotional well-being and try make that self-respect sustainable. This might mean blocking out time in my schedule to eat, nap, run, meditate, take a long bath, or get a massage.

It might equate to planning out my grocery shopping so that I intentionally buy nutrient-dense foods. It could mean finding a space in nature or place of worship to maintain a spiritual grounding. It might mean meeting weekly with a therapist to process my journey. Whatever it looks like, respecting myself necessarily involves caring for my physical and emotional needs.

Moreover, self-respect in academia means respecting my own time, resources, and deadlines. No one is going to stop me from putting their needs before mine. I cannot exist and succeed as an academic without giving, but if I do not set boundaries around my giving, I jeopardize the possibility for my existence and success. If I do not respect myself and the things I have to give, why should I expect anyone else to?

Further, when I take care of and respect myself, I have a larger capacity to care for and respect others. I can respect your whole self and your needs as well as your time, space, and deadlines (among other things) as I learn to respect myself and mine. Self-respect flows into mutual respect, which allows for a supportive professionalism. I am unlikely to regard accountability as antagonism or boundaries as burdensome when participating in a culture of mutual respect. In fact, such an environment enables me to invest in myself and motivates me to invest in others so that we might all thrive.

It is possible to be both a cared-for and a caring academic, sharing in productivity, accountability, and sustainability. We owe it to ourselves to strive to be both. Being in tune with our own needs while also balancing expectations of ourselves and others is not necessarily an easy task, so it is also crucial to be kind to ourselves in the process. We will not always get it right—in fact, we often won't. And that's okay. But it is key that we don't stop trying.

Building on the Past to Prepare for the Future: 40th Annual National Council of Black Studies Conference

Grace Gipson, PhD Student



*NCBS President Georgene Bess-Montgomery celebrating
with local host committee members at the Opening Reception*

“Thus we attend each NCBS Conference to “be renewed,” and fortified as we feast at the table of knowledge, wisdom, pedagogy, poetry, strategies, and hospitality. Each day of the conference presents a veritable cornucopia of panel discussions, plenary sessions, and workshops, all aimed at lifting us higher and deepening our commitment to Black Studies and NCBS.”

These are words spoken by this year’s president Dr. Georgene Bess Montgomery during her Welcome Address for the 40th National Council of Black Studies Conference. Dr. Bess Montgomery’s words were timely and inspiring as we embarked on a milestone year for the organization.

This year’s conference was held on March 16-19th in Charlotte, North Carolina. Appropriately, the

Conference theme this year was “40 Years of Black Studies in the Local, National, and Global Spaces: Past Accomplishments and New Directions.” The conference opened with an evening reception put on by the local host committee University of North Carolina, Charlotte in which they presented NCBS with a memorable 40th birthday cake. The following days would prove to be an engaging and stimulating conference. Panel presentations included such topics, but not limited to, as the state of Black Studies in the United States, Economics/Political Economy, Healthcare, Sexuality and Queer Studies, Religious Studies, Black Lives Matter, and International Education.

This year’s conference also served as the first year of renaming the Student Essay Contest to the

“Terry Kershaw Student Essay” competition. The contest was renamed to honor trained sociologist, longtime NCBS member, and ground breaking Africana Studies scholar Dr. Terry Kershaw who passed away on October 28th, 2015. According to close friend and colleague Dr. Charles E. Jones, “his scholarship impacted the foundation and methodology of Black Studies. Terry laid the groundwork for future scholarship. He was always thinking about the ways to improve the position of Black people.” And this year’s winner’s are definitely laying the groundwork and improving the position of Black people and those of the African diaspora. One of this year’s winner’s was our very own Amani Morrison who took first place in the Graduate Essay Contest with her essay “Black Hair Haptics: Touch, Affect, and Transgressing the Black Female Body.” Congrats Amani!!

Also for the second year in a row students and faculty from Africa University in Zimbabwe graced the National Conference with not only their presence, but also their research. Additionally, the department had nice representation of current and alumni to present their research, which included: Charisse Burden-Stelley, Jarvis Givens, Grace Gipson, and Rasheed Shabazz. In addition to great student work, this year’s conference welcomed acclaimed poet and scholar activist Sonia Sanchez who served as this year’s keynote plenary speaker.

As another year closed, scholars were reminded of the living legacy that Black Studies created some 50 years ago. Although there have been many challenges facing the growing discipline, there have been just as many highlights. As educator and poet Mari Evans proclaims, “Black Studies, since its inception, has flourished at various universities and colleges, in departments, graduate programs, minors, and majors challenged often about its continued relevance in “post-racial” society, disavowed and forbidden to be taught in some states,

misinformation printed in textbooks to mis-educate, Black Studies remains the beacon and the standard, “tall as cypress/strong/ beyond all definition still/defying place/and time/ and circumstance/ assailed/ impervious/ indestructible.” NCBS continues to push the envelope and create spaces for past, present, and future scholars.

So as to not miss out on the continued greatness, make to mark your calendars for the 2017 NCBS conference, which will be held in Houston, Texas.

Imperative: An Asian American Reckoning with Anti-Black Racism

Kim Tran, PhD Candidate, Department of Ethnic Studies

As scholars, activists and community members it seems we find ourselves in a moment of reckoning. What are we to do with anti-black racism, the differential racialization of anti-blackness, with solidarity itself? Gaffes abound. This year we have seen countless attempts to forge what Jared Sexton has called an “ultimately conservative allegiance” between Black community and Asian Americans. For woefully public examples we can turn to the misogynoir of Eddie Huang and the gentrifying political decisions of Oakland mayor Jean Quan. In “Proprieties of Coalition: Blacks, Asians, and the Politics of Policing” Sexton explicitly points to this fraught—if not outright doomed—trajectory of cross-racial allegiance as void of “a coherent ethical justification” with which to resist racism. Ultimately, he lambasts Asian Americanists who have in alarming fashion glossed over economic culpability and class difference in service of a colorblind racial coalition.

Sexton critiques Asian Americanists for “shifting of the terms of debate . . . from race to class”. Heeding his appraisal and taking it as urgent for academicians and activists, the question becomes: how do we forge an ethics of comparativity against which numerous scholars have chafed (see Wilderson 2010, Lowe 2005, Ferguson 2012)? How do we do Asian American Studies differently? How do we engage with a long history of chattel slavery and state sanctioned violence against black bodies while also honoring colonialism and exploitation on the Asian continent? In other words, how do we think relationally?

The logics of white supremacy are both distinctive and interrelated. The task at hand for both scholars and theorists is locating a framework that simultaneously speaks to anti-blackness itself as well its attendant logics of white supremacy. In reference to Asian American pan-ethnicity, Sexton argues alongside Yen Le Espiritu “the question of anti-black racism troubles contemporary efforts at mediation among the non-white . . . in ways that exceed even the immanent critique of that conceptual touchstone and principle of organization”. Sexton illuminates an embedded impossibility of critique within Asian American Studies; an inadvertent failure to both see and engage anti-black racism and anti-blackness within the field and perhaps within sociality writ large. What then are we to do as Asian Americans with our own interpellation as a part of the racial schematic yet apart from anti-blackness?

Community organizers allow scholars to glimpse functional—albeit imperfect—frameworks for solidarity. Andrea Smith, scholar and founding member of INCITE Women, Gender Non-Conforming and Trans People of Color Against Violence, contends that while slavery/capitalism is accompanied by other pillars of white supremacy (she also references genocide/colonialism and orientalism/war) “it is still a central one that we cannot “go beyond” in our racial justice organizing efforts”. Scholarship and indeed organizing itself, need not supersede, or exist peripherally to the long duree of chattel slavery. This pillar is itself the foundation of racial capital in the United States.

To forgo or sublimate it under a greater rubric of racial injustice is not only to deny that factuality, but also to pursue an unethical approach to scholarship that at its best is little more than an extension of the neoliberal multicultural project. Nor is it our task to create a third space of which we are so fond as Ethnic Studies practitioners. Our work as Asian Americanists within this moment of Trayvons, Erics, Sandras and Myas is to find a way to work in relation to anti-black racism and to dwell upon our complicity within its enunciations.

Working Relationally

How do we take up the aforementioned template for reimagining cross racial coalition that is attentive to the particularity of anti-blackness, but also the colonization of non-black bodies? In short, how do we form feasible coalitions across racial difference? Transnational Feminist Chandra Talpade Mohanty makes a gesture through the category of women of color or third world women. She infers, what seems capable of constituting such a category “as a viable oppositional alliance is a *common context of struggle* rather than color or racial identifications” (emphasis in the original). Put differently, while we may not face identical forms of marginalization, we experience parallel conditions which bring forth simultaneous oppressions. It is commonalities amongst the *motivating forces and not their consequences* which enable feminists of color to connect across different experiences of state violence.

While Mohanty alludes to a relationality that cannot be apprehended as either similarity or discordance, grassroots organizers against incarceration might best illustrate relationality as a productive comparative gap “between explanation and resistance” (Fred Moten 2008). A short snippet in Ruth Gilmore’s work about Los Angeles based group

Mothers Reclaiming Our Children notifies non-Black people generally and Asian Americans more specifically—that while we can and do reside within an undeniable anti-black racism, the contemporary demands identifying and mobilizing against our role(s) within it.

Conclusion

The instigating question of this meditation centered around the ethical possibilities for academicians, activists and community members within this anti-black colorblind racist and deathly historical moment. With failure in mind as a potentially imminent endpoint, the organizer in me does what the scholar finds impossible—hazards a guess toward a political strategy borne of a critical ethnic studies impulse.

Critical ethnic studies is more than the facile comparison of the oppression of different communities of color. At its best, Roderick Ferguson describes it as an “immanent critique of power/knowledge and disciplinarity” (2012). Perhaps the Asian American task at hand within this epoch is to map how specific figural and literal Asians create a cartography of distinctively classed racial projects which have extended the roots of anti-black racism. Such figures span American and Asian history, from the Chinese contract laborer who was “brought to the Americas to supplement, replace, and obfuscate the labor previously performed by slaves yet to be differentially distinguished from them” to the model minority Vietnamese refugee (Lisa Lowe 2006). Their passages have been aided and abetted by an investment in the white liberal bourgeois family on one hand and the affirmation of liberal humanism on the other. Both were deployed as a means of buttressing imperialist white supremacist heteropatriarchy vis-à-vis a productive distance from the black enslaved.

As a scholar of Vietnamese-Black coalition, I therefore need a new starting point; one cognizant of the aforementioned structural and figural distance. I begin with the space of imposed privilege and fundamental difference. I begin with the admission that Vietnamese refugeehood—while precarious in its own right—also pivots upon an American desire to assuage its imperialist guilt by facilitating legal citizenship. I begin with examining cross racial coalitions in post Katrina New Orleans between Black and Vietnamese communities as more than evidence of a forthcoming multiracial utopia, but as affective moments that cohabit tensions of perpetual foreignness, racial middlemen and transatlantic slavery. I begin with identifying the dark underbelly of anti-black racism as the counterpart to coalitions of resistance.

Writing to and from community forces Asian Americanists to reconcile our marginalization with the imposition of our own privileged racialization wrought of anti-blackness. It requires acknowledging the intimacy of two communities in which one serves as a “barrier between us [white people] and the Negroes with whom they do not associate; and consequently to whom they will always offer formidable opposition” (Lowe 196). And while we will not and should not deny our own histories of oppression, we must reckon with anti-blackness as the cultural and structural connective tissue of our institutions, identities and yes, our movements.

This has been a perfunctory, but hopefully spirited response to Sexton’s extended “invitation to radical rethinking”. It has been a shorthand, cursory and fraught attempt to explicitly follow Sexton’s directive. However, I hope to have outlined an ethics of and for a different comparativity, one that can be mobilized to imagine a different socius (Ferguson 47). I’ve done so in the hopes that we can arrive at a relational solidarity that is not different in degree, but in kind (Jared Sexton 2014)

The Barrows Hall All Gender Restroom in Context: Q&A For The Re-Designated 6th Floor Barrows Restroom

Ianna Hawkins Owen, PhD Candidate

While organizing support for an All Gender re-designation of the restroom on our floor of Barrows Hall at UC Berkeley, I was asked by the Department of African American Studies to draft an FAQ-style infosheet for circulation. This document is the result of that request, and of conversations with Professors Leslie Salzinger and Minoo Moallem of the Department of Gender and Women's Studies, and with undergraduate GWS major Hira Safdar. The 6th floor restroom re-designation in December 2015 was one of the results of a settlement reached between unionized graduate student grievants, their lawyers, and UC Labor Relations. At the time of re-designation, the 6th floor units had already unanimously endorsed the change.

I encourage anyone who is a member of an African American Studies, Ethnic Studies, or Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies Department, as well as any other department or program, to edit or repurpose this text in service of campaigning for all gender restrooms on your campus, your buildings, and your workplaces.

**All gender restroom (noun):
a room containing one or more toilet stalls in a public building**

Why “all gender”?

Single-gender designated restrooms such as “men’s restrooms” and “women’s restrooms” exclude or cannot accommodate people who do not fit (or align themselves with, or exist in excess of) these binary categories. Re-designating a restroom as “all gender” makes restroom use safer for those who are transgender, gender non-conforming, and those who often face harassment in single gender bathrooms; for people with disabilities who employ a personal assistant of a different gender; and for student parents who may need to accompany their children.

What is “gender”?

Gender is assigned at birth by doctors according to historically, socially and geographically specific criteria;

that is to say, it is the result of the hegemonic common sense of our time that assumes a link between genital characteristics that, when out of alignment with the prevailing norms, may be manipulated to fit those norms. You might imagine that sex comes before and determines gender when in fact, in the words of Susan Stryker (2009), “the sex of the body does not bear any necessary or deterministic relationship to the social category in which that body lives” (11).

Binary gender identification is compulsory. Children receive subliminal and explicit messages that train them to think of “girl” and “boy” as fixed and as the only existing gender categories. Expectations from adults, authority figures and other children shape one’s alignment with these categories. When children deviate from these expectations, they may be coercively re-aligned with their assigned gender through psychological, social or

physical force. Failing to align with accepted gender roles may result in the foreclosure of educational and employment opportunities, employment opportunities, social and familial isolation, as well as psychological and physical violence.

Many of the institutions that shape our adult lives perpetuate myths of biological gender fixity and in so doing, continue to dictate the manner in which we organize our lives. In continuing to conflate terms like sex and gender, insisting on their over determination and/or refusing self-determination, we are not only no better than our forebears who insisted that gender unfits women for intellectual labor, for example, but we also contribute to the ongoing mess we have today in which archaic and harmful notions of gender result in what activists have identified as an epidemic of murders of trans women, particularly black trans women, in 2015. Ask yourself, in all seriousness, do some bodies matter more than others?

Why here?

The 6th floor of Barrows Hall is shared by African American Studies, Gender and Women's Studies, LGBT Studies, the Center for Race and Gender, the Center for the Study of Sexual Culture, and the Beatrice Bain Research Group. Although we may lend out our rooms for meetings, the floor is predominantly used by members of these departments, centers and groups, and the events that they host. As such, our floor disproportionately requires access to a restroom that is designated "all gender" because the majority of the occupants of the 6th floor do not identify as men and because the departments of African American Studies and Women's and Gender Studies have historically fought for greater, not less, inclusion.

What does this means for me?

Previously, if you had to go to the 5th floor or 7th floor to use a restroom designated for "women," you will now be able to use the bathroom on the floor that you work on.

Previously, if you used the 6th floor bathroom clandestinely "after-hours" out of fear or inconvenience at having to travel to a different floor at night and were afraid of getting caught, you will now be able to use the 6th floor restroom with peace of mind.

Previously, if you used the 6th floor bathroom because it was designated for "men" you can continue using the 6th floor bathroom with no change whatsoever.

Why now?

Although the struggle for an all gender restroom on the 6th floor has a long history, over the last year and a half the campaign for all gender restroom access has accelerated because:

- the UAW fought for and secured historic contract language mandating all gender restroom access for academic student employees in Summer 2014;
- in September 2014 UC President Janet Napolitano has called for the conversion of single-stall restrooms across the UC system to "all gender" designations as a first step toward making restrooms on UC campuses safer and more accessible for everyone;
- student activism has underscored the need for all gender restrooms now through direct actions, emphasizing that the proposed changes at the system-wide-level have gotten mired in bureaucracy;

•a graduate student of the 6th floor who filed grievances with UC Labor Relations was told by a representative of UCLR and by the dean of graduate division that they would rather see all gender restroom grievances resolved at the departmental level.

Logistics

The placard designated the 6th floor restroom as for men-only has been replaced with a permanent sign that designates the restroom as “all gender”—a white triangle inside a blue circle (the Berkeley campus newly designated standard symbol for an all gender restroom) accompanied by the word “restroom.” The sign also contains embossed brail for blind restroom users.

What are the legal dimensions of this?

In the summer of 2014 the UC Student Workers Union (UAW 2865) agreed to new contract language with the University that guarantees GSIs access to all gender restrooms within a reasonable distance from their workplaces. The relevant contract language can be found here, under section F: http://ucnet.universityof-california.edu/labor/bargaining-units/bx/docs/bx_2010-2013_20_non-discrimination.pdf

Infrastructurally, our building code states that buildings must have a certain number of restrooms available to men and to women. If marked as “all gender” this restroom will continue to satisfy these quantities because neither men-identified or women-identified people will be excluded from a restroom designated as “all gender,” yet single-gender restrooms do exclude people based on gender identification.

What about the locks?

Locks on restrooms on campus are in direct violation of the California state building codes that require a certain number of available stalls per building user. The UC Berkeley administration has ordered that all such locks be removed in order to comply with state regulations, and facilities on campus are in the process of complying with this order. This process is ongoing apart from the all gender bathroom process, although the issues are of course linked by their concern with the basic right of all people to have safe, healthy and convenient access to restrooms.

Do other universities have “all gender restrooms”? Are there other all gender restrooms on our campus?

According to UMass Amherst’s The Stonewall Center, by 2014 over 150 schools already implemented all gender restrooms. At UC Berkeley, many of the dorms feature all gender restrooms, including showers. The Tang Health Center’s restrooms are totally all gender. It is the campus itself, as a site of work and instruction, that is lagging behind. Until the implementation of the temporary 8th floor all gender restrooms, the nearest all gender restroom to Barrows Hall was in Stephens Hall (or Anthony Hall, during their very limited hours of operation).

What about the need for single-gender restroom access for religious modesty and practices like those involved in ablution?

With the change of the 6th floor men’s restroom to an all gender restroom, the 5th and 7th floor restrooms remained assigned to women. The 4th floor remains assigned to men and the 8th floor has one designated for women and one for men. In addition, the first floor, the floor with the greatest traffic,

continues to have two multi-stall single-gender restrooms.

Won't it be awkward?

Perhaps far less awkward than the ways in which you already mix company in restrooms with your advisors who write recommendations for you, your bosses who control your time, administrators who control your budgets, your elders who know more than you, or your students who admire you or aspire to replace you. If you are concerned that mixing genders in a restroom introduces an element of sexual desire or tension into the space, consider for a moment that restrooms are not segregated by sexual or romantic orientation but by gender, which bears no deterministic relationship to that body's pleasures.

I don't want to share a restroom with people who do not share my individual gender identity.

What should I do?

If you do not wish to use a bathroom open to all genders, you can continue traveling to the 5th floor or 7th floor restrooms designated for women-only or you can travel to the 4th floor to use a restroom designated for men-only. If you think that traveling two floors is too much of a burden, please imagine for a moment that most buildings on this campus have no all gender restrooms and workers who need such bathrooms must travel across campus to those few and far between restrooms marked for "all gender." Adding an all gender restroom in Barrows Hall on a floor accessible by all four building elevators is simply a step toward equity.

I am primarily concerned with safety. What is the safest option here?

The safest course of action is to make sure that anyone can access a restroom within a reasonable distance to their worksite at all times. The unreasonable distance that folks requiring all gender restroom access must travel has been known to result in adverse health affects such as kidney infections, dehydration and psychological duress.

Single-gender restrooms are highly policed spaces where restroom users that do not fit or abide by the logic of binary gender identity (attached to things like dress codes, hair cuts, body shape, etc.) are subject to harassment and threat or actual violence.

The myth that men will take advantage of women in all gender restrooms has been widely circulated by right-wing media and trans exclusionary radical feminists. According to a 2014 survey by MediaMatters.org collecting information from 12 states that have passed non-discrimination laws in public accommodations, there have been no instances of the above-mentioned problem.

On the other hand, violence against transgender and gender non-conforming people is all too common. According to UCLA School of Law's William Institute's recently published study, "Gendered Restrooms and Minority Stress: The Public Regulation of Gender and its Impact on Transgender People's Lives":

- "Eighteen percent of respondents have been denied access to at least one gender-segregated public restroom in Washington, DC," with African Americans experiencing this slightly more often than their counterparts. (71)

- “Sixty-eight percent of respondents reported experiencing at least one instance of verbal harassment in gender-segregated public restrooms,” with black respondents at the second highest rate (87%). (72)
- “Eight respondents (9 percent) reported experiencing at least one instance of physical assault in gender-segregated public restrooms.” (73)

For more information on either of the above citations, please visit:

<http://mediamatters.org/research/2014/03/20/15-experts-debunk-right-wing-transgender-bathro/198533>

<http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Herman-Gendered-Restrooms-and-Minority-Stress-June-2013.pdf>

I don’t want to make a political statement. Isn’t leaving the restroom “as-is” the most neutral option?

If we are to take seriously African American freedom struggle activist Fannie Lou Hamer’s historic words “Nobody’s free until everybody’s free” then it is incumbent upon us take action now to re-designate the 6th floor restroom—and beyond—as “all gender” in light of the ongoing movement on campus and across the UC system to make this basic human function, safer and unremarkable for all of our students, faculty, workers, and invited guests and event participants. To refuse to take action on this issue is not a neutral action: it is the explicit re-entrenchment of exclusionary practices that put particular bodies at risk and refuse sanctuary to people in one of their most vulnerable positions: using the restroom.

For more Q&A options, check out:

<http://amplifyyourvoice.org/youthresource/youthresource-gender-neutralfaq/>

Writing with Friends: Reflections on the ADS Graduate Writing

Kathryn Benjamin Golden, PhD Candidate



As confident, competent scholars and as people who can be prone to the very human constraints of distraction, fear, and doubt, sometimes we find great difficulty and frustration in the writing process among and between the pleasure and joy of producing new knowledge. It can become easy to grow discouraged or uncertain about our methods, our approaches, the salience of our thoughts and words, or moreover, doubtful about the transformative potential of our scholarship – the weight of the significance our work bears on the world. Writing alone can compound these feelings. Establishing a community of writers and scholar-friends determined and committed to pushing through the writing process is especially conducive to productivity, the lucidity and organization of thought, and to our overall health as people and scholars.

This spring, graduate students at disparate stages and with varying writing objectives were privileged with the opportunity to share in the love and labor of

writing with colleagues and friends each dedicated to the production of knowledge about African people. Between April 1st and April 3rd, Kenly Brown, Rob Connell, Jarvis Givens, Kathryn Benjamin Golden, John Mundell, Mariko Pegs, and Olivia Young gathered at St. Dorothy's Rest in Camp Meeker, a few miles north of Occidental in Western Sonoma County. We wrote, read, studied, and discussed our work in a spacious, fire-lit commune surrounded by towering redwoods encouraging each of us to breathe a little more deeply. We shared walks, meals, and laughter together, and allowed ourselves the space and time to a restful approach to writing as a process that is pleasurable before it is laborious.

The energy of the three-day writing retreat was uplifting, positive, and supportive as we came together to inspire our thinking and understanding of our work and affirmed each other in the process. The focused community fostered throughout made possible a kind of clarity around the indispensability of enjoyment,

balance, and rest. It also reminded us that our work is important and meaningful as it expands, deepens, and is produced among, within, because of, or even in spite of a real and living community of questions, theories, thoughts, words, failure, triumph, doubt, and assurance. There is profound advantage in writing with friends.

It would be remiss of me to end these reflections without a special thanks to Olivia, whose leadership, insights, and wisdom about the essential nature of community nurture, meditation, and wellness have privileged graduate students in our department with such an exceptional opportunity for collaborative building and growth. Participants would also like to extend our gratitude to the department for being so supportive of us in these endeavors. May we continue this tradition in the years to come!

Good Hair

John Mundell, PhD Student

Let me unbraid your hair,
Dona Maria.

Let me unravel it like the
lines of confusing poetry,
comb out each story
of your children,
free it from dictatorship memories
between my fingers
humming samba verses
averse to over-interpretation.

But you never understood the beauty
of your hair.

Let me remind you of the
gray strands
that make you
twist
each word of native wisdom
into flowing sentences
of a language that only you understand.

Let me unbraid everything,
Dona Maria,
and teach you the beauty
of your hair.

St. Clair Drake Research Symposium, 2016

John A. Mundell, PhD student

On May 6, 2016, the Department of African American Studies hosted its 24th annual St. Clair Drake Research Symposium with great success. The theme this year, “Diaspora Across the Disciplines,” brought together graduate and undergraduate scholars from the Department, as well as individuals from other UC Berkeley departments and professional schools, the community, and other institutions whose work engages in, around, about, and through blackness and Black Studies. Different from other years, the event was hosted in the newly renovated Social Sciences Matrix on the eighth floor of Barrows Hall. With more space, more people were able to attend, witness, and discuss the montage of scholarship and creativity on performative display.

From mid-morning to the early-evening, we were privileged to hear from five excellent panels. The first, “Decompositions: Body and Blackness in the Literary,” constituted of Zachary Manditch-Prottas, Kianna M. Middleton, and Ianna Hawkins Own, discussed the difficulties that emerge when the raced body, the sexual body, the disabled or disordered body, and the bonded body are at the center of inquiry. “Black to the Future: Foundational Disruptions in the Archiving of Black Belonging,” composed by Stephen P. Readus (UI-Chicago), Rasheed Shabazz (UCB alumnus), and Grace D. Gipson, illustrated the ruptures that occur in black intellectual thought, journalism, and cyberspace where a registered going-against-the-grain creates space for black belonging.

After lunch, the VèVè Clark Institute for Engaged Scholars of African American Studies presented a panel of varying works on questions of localized black social movements, queerness, and visual culture. The Scholars—undergraduate majors—who presented were Gary White, Sabrina Robleh, Myles Santifer, and Kerby Lynch. The following panel, “Dissenting Consent: Black Gendered Labor Against State Violence,” featuring John A. Mundell, Ina Kelleher (Ethnic Studies), and

Cherod Johnson, brought together works that evince a conscientious opposition by black women on spiritual, emotional, and artistic grounds to state-sanctioned violence, ingrained in the very space that they must fight to occupy. The final panel, “Black Feminist Traversals,” with Derrika Hunt (School of Education), Frances Roberts-Gregory (Environmental Science, Policy & Management), and Nicole Ramsey, explored iterations of black feminism that negotiate and navigate spatiotemporal constraints placed upon their efforts to produce knowledge, to conserve and protect the natural, and to participate in radical processes of decolonization. Following a reading of self-authored poetry and fiction from members of the Department, Chiyuma Elliott, Jacqueline Boland, Aya de Leon, and John A. Mundell, we officially concluded the symposium at a reception to the spinnings of DJ/MC Mylo Mu (a.k.a. Myles Santifer).

As the Drake has become an end-of-the-year ritual in our department, we in the Department have enjoyed watching it grow and take on other forms, providing a platform for all types of academic, community, and creative work; more so, their confluence. For example, an electronic exhibition of photography by Malika Zwanya Crutchfield—“Imagining and Framing Blackness: Visual Imagery”—ran throughout the day in the atrium of the Matrix. Her work strips away the banality of quotidian spaces in which blackness circulates, thus placing blackness, visualizing its dynamism in the ephemera of time. As such, where our inspirations collide is what we envision for the Drake, a manifesto of our work in Black Studies, in blackness, a ceremony for our collective oeuvre to be shared and relished. It has been with great honor and privilege that, with Nicole Ramsey and Professor Chiyuma Elliot’s help, I could co-organize this year’s symposium and contribute to a long-standing tradition. But keep your eyes on the horizon, because next year will be our 25th annual Drake Symposium—surely, like this year’s, another event to be remembered!

Award Recipients and Publications

A selection of publications and awards by graduate students during 2015-2016

Rob Connell,

- UC Dissertation Year Fellowship for 2016-2017

Grace Gipson,

- Berkeley Center for New Media Summer 2016 Research Fellowship
- PCA/ACA Spring Popular Culture Research Workshop Fellowship at Bowling Green State University

Jarvis Givens,

- Dean's Postdoctoral Fellow at Harvard Graduate School of Education (2016-2018)

Amani Morrison,

- First place for the 2016 NCBS Graduate Student Essay Contest for the paper "Black Hair Haptics: Touch, Affect, and Transgressing the Black Female Body."
- The Bancroft Library Study Award to conduct archival research in Bancroft's holdings.

John Mundell,

- VèVè and Alonso Clark Summer Travel Grant from the Department of African American Studies
- Tinker Research Grant for summer research in Brazil from the Center for Latin American Studies
- Center for Race and Gender Graduate Student Research Grant

Ianna Owen,

- UC President's Postdoctoral Fellowship to work with Professor Nadia Ellis of English, UC Berkeley

Jarvis Givens

"Modeling Manhood: Reimagining Black Male Identities in School," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 47.2 (2016)

Olivia Young

"Retracing the Contours of Her Figure, Slippages Begin to Appear: Reckoning the Archive with Senam Okudze-to's Large Reclining Nude," *Women & Performance: Sentiment and Sentience: Black Performance Since Scenes of Subjection*, forthcoming

Congratulations to Our 2016 M.A. Recipients

Masters of Arts in African American Studies



Michael J Myers II



Jamal Bates

Congratulations to Our New PhD Candidates

Doctoral candidates who have passed their qualifying exams in 2015-2016



Kianna Middleton



Olivia K Young

Position Papers Middleton

“The Legacy of Sedimented Acts”: A Brief Genealogy
of Gender, Sex, Disability, and Blackness in America

“Erotic Investments:
A Turn Toward Lesbian Desire in the African Diaspora

Position Papers Young

Words Not Yet Formed for Bodies Not Yet Found: The
Tactical Cartography of a Diasporic Imaginary

Longer Deeper Looking: A Genealogy of Black Visual
Studies and Black Performance Studies

Congratulations to Our PhD Recipients

Doctors of African American Studies, 2015-2016



Dissertation Title: Starving from Satiety: Explorations of Uncommon Hunger in 20th Century African American Literature

The dissertation traces moments of what I term 'uncommon hunger' through close reading of scenes of consumption/production apt to be analyzed as illustrating various characters' engagements in/with phenomenal experiences of 'hunger' for metaphysical rather than physical satiation.

Dr. Gabrielle Williams

Congratulations to Our PhD Recipients

Doctors of African American Studies, 2015-2016



Dr. Michael B. McGee, Jr.

Dissertation Title: Practicing Freedom:
The Pragmatics of an Ideal

My dissertation is a cultural investigation of the ways the meaning of freedom change in America from Emancipation through the turn of the 20th century. I can best describe my project as a series of questions about freedom: what happens when emancipation is not enough? Is it possible to tell someone else how to be free? What does freedom actually look like? And, what is the difference between having freedom and being free?

Congratulations to Our PhD Recipients

Doctors of African American Studies, 2015-2016



Dissertation Title: Ordinary Failures: Toward a Diasporan Ethics

Ianna Hawkins Owen is receiving her PhD in African Diaspora Studies with a Designated Emphasis in Women, Gender and Sexuality from UC Berkeley. her committee is comprised of Drs. Darieck Scott (chair), Leigh Raiford, Juana María Rodríguez and Michael Cohen. Her work examines recitations of black failure in literary and visual art objects and considers failure in the forms of misrecognition, betrayal, suicide and asexuality. Ianna has accepted the UC President's Postdoctoral Fellowship to work with Dr. Nadia Ellis in the Department of English at UC Berkeley.

Dr. Ianna Hawkins Owen

Congratulations to Our PhD Recipients

Doctors of African American Studies, 2015-2016



Dr. Kimberly Thomas McNair

Dissertation Title: Cotton Framed Revolutionaries: Tshirt Culture and the Black Protest Tradition

In my dissertation, I examine protest tshirts and the long tradition of black resistance culture through clothing practices. I have specific interest in 20th and 21st century African American history and the U.S. Black Freedom Movement since 1965. My research documents how African American tshirt designers and wearers negotiate the history of image and race from the Black Power Movement to the current Movement for Black Lives. I am interested in how protest tshirts are a space for contestation and exchange, memory making, body rhetoric, and how digital and online formats have changed the archive.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the emergence of these graphic tshirts as discursive activism and their relationship with other media activations. I consider how activists and tshirt producers use images, symbols, and slogans from past and present movements to illustrate shared concerns, strengthen networks, and publicize movement goals. At the heart of this project, is a curiosity about how participants' (i.e. tshirt producers' and wearers') reflections give insight into the ideological shifts in black political participation over time.

Congratulations to Our PhD Recipients

Doctors of African American Studies, 2015-2016



Dr. Charisse Burden

Dissertation Title: *The Modern Capitalist State and the Black Challenge: Culturalism and the Elision of Political Economy*

This dissertation seeks to comprehensively refocus the analytical frameworks dealing with black modern subjectivity through an in-depth examination of “Culturalism,” or the regime of meaning-making in which Blackness is culturally specified and abstracted from material, political economic, and structural conditions of dispossession through state technologies of antiradicalism. Cold War liberalism institutionalized the hegemony of cultural politics and Culturalism by foregrounding cultural analyses of African retention and syncretism, cultural continuity, and comparative diasporic cultures. As the Cold War instantiated the bifurcation of the world and influenced the direction of decolonization, the African diaspora as an analytical framework became reduced to its cultural aspects. It essentially framed connections among African descendants in terms of culture; asserted Black modernity and claims to equality on cultural grounds; and constructed culture as the domain of struggle. Culturalism divorced Blackness and the African diaspora from the material realities of governmentalized, transnational state projects that sustain racial and class hierarchies.

Congratulations to Our PhD Recipients

Doctors of African American Studies, 2015-2016



Dr. Christopher Petrella

Dissertation Title: Courting Carcerality: The Rise of Paraprisons in the Era of Neoliberal Racial Statecraft

My project examines the legal, political-economic, and ideological manifestations of the U.S. neoliberal racial state through the lens of parapublic carcerality. I introduce and elaborate the term parapublic carcerality throughout this exploration to describe more accurately the incursionary, politico-regulatory technology of what has heretofore been indexed by the lingua franca of “private prison” and/or “for-profit prison.” Parapublic carcerality is a significant conceptual contribution to the subfield of carceral studies in that it invites a shift in scholarly analysis from prison as a static, readymade punitive institution to carcerality as a tentacular (re) iterative site of regulatory social practice and meaning-making all while avoiding the analytic snares inherent to public/private dichotomization.

Moreover, my project explores the ways in which the internal logic of the U.S. neoliberal racial state is operationalized and crystallized in modern carcerative sites and practices. That is, it considers the techniques by which the neoliberal racial state pits law against capital and courts against corporations in order to broker temporary socio-political balances that maintain hierarchies of social difference oriented toward white supremacy and black subjugation.

Congratulations to Our PhD Recipients

Doctors of African American Studies, 2015-2016



Dr. Jarvis Givens

Dissertation Title: Culture, Curriculum, and Consciousness: Resurrecting the Educational Praxis of Dr. Carter G. Woodson, 1875-1950

Jarvis' dissertation explores the educational philosophy of Carter G. Woodson and his influence on educators during Jim Crow through institutions he founded, textbooks he published, and partnerships with Black teacher networks. More specifically, he analyzes Woodson's argument that the ideological foundations of schools relied on a human history of the world that centered Whiteness and distorted the humanity of Black people. By writing Woodson's iconic educational model into the history of Black education, Culture, Curriculum, and Consciousness raises larger questions about this historiography--namely, the Booker T. Washington vs. W.E.B. Du Bois binary of industrial vs. classical education, and how it has cropped out other critical models and thinkers in Black educational history. Ultimately, this study forwards the "Black Educational Heritage" as a more expansive framework, born at the intersection of freedom, education, and affect.

Dr. Givens has accepted the Dean's Postdoctoral Fellow at Harvard Graduate School of Education (2016-2018).

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2016





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere thanks to all our contributors;
Melanie Griffin for your artwork; and the Department of
African American Studies for your sponsorship.
Congratulations to the graduating class of 2016!