By any measure, this has been a challenging year. Our national political climate is toxic. Selfishness abounds. Hatreds and fears overwhelm, and politicians exploit those fears for their own selfish gains. We are also overwhelmed by a deadly pandemic. Covid-19 has fundamentally changed how we live together. And many in our own community are weighed down by unimaginable grief. So much about the future, including how we will conduct our business at Princeton, is uncertain.

Covid-19 forced the university to move classes online and for most of us to leave campus. Overall, the department transitioned without too many problems. Faculty adjusted their instruction and our students, given the stressors, performed as best as they could. Many of our concentrators faced particularly difficult circumstances. Families were impacted by Covid-19. Housing insecurity disrupted their ability to work. Uneven internet access affected the overall performance of some. But even with these challenges, I believe, we had an extraordinary year.

In 2019-2020, we graduated our third class of ten concentrators, and they were joined by nineteen graduating seniors who completed a certificate in African American Studies. This year we had five Ph.D. students who earned graduate certificates in the field. Our largest class included how we will conduct our business at Princeton, is uncertain.

In this latest iteration of the nation’s ongoing struggle with racism, with brutal murders of Black people at the hands of police and protests in the streets around the country, the faculty in African American Studies at Princeton continue to thrive. In the end, even with the disruption of Covid-19, our department continues to thrive. I have been amazed by the dedication and creativity of our faculty as we abruptly moved our classes online. Our staff worked tirelessly, under the direction of our department manager, April Peters, to provide our students and faculty with the resources necessary to make this experience the best it could possibly be. I remain convinced that we are one of the best teaching units on campus and I saw evidence of that fact in the way my colleagues taught and tended to their students, especially when our most popular professors are on sabbatical. But the overall trends continue to be exciting. Our department and university.

By any measure, this has been a challenging year. Our national political climate is toxic. Selfishness abounds. Hatreds and fears overwhelm, and politicians exploit those fears for their own selfish gains. We are also overwhelmed by a deadly pandemic. Covid-19 has fundamentally changed how we live together. And many in our own community are weighed down by unimaginable grief. So much about the future, including how we will conduct our business at Princeton, is uncertain.

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In this latest iteration of the nation’s ongoing struggle with racism, with brutal murders of Black people at the hands of police and protests in the streets around the country, the faculty in African American Studies at Princeton continue to offer the nation resources to imagine itself otherwise. We have provided analyses, historical contexts, languages to talk about the problems we face, and moral provocations for a country on a knife’s edge. Covid-19 hasn’t disrupted this fact: that we remain a national resource and the best department of African American Studies in the world.

With a bit of address and lots of excitement, we have begun preliminary preparations to move from Stanhope Hall to Morrison Hall. We are excited about the opportunity for a larger departmental space. While Stanhope Hall will be missed, we look forward to being housed in a building named after Toni Morrison, who helped build African American Studies at Princeton.

In the end, even with the disruption of Covid-19, our department continues to thrive. I have been amazed by the dedication and creativity of our faculty as we abruptly moved our classes online. Our staff worked tirelessly, under the direction of our department manager, April Peters, to provide our students and faculty with the resources necessary to make this experience the best it could possibly be. I remain convinced that we are one of the best teaching units on campus and I saw evidence of that fact in the way my colleagues taught and tended to their students, especially when our most popular professors are on sabbatical. But the overall trends continue to be exciting. Our department and university.
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ABOUT AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

This academic unit has grown from a program to a center to a department. Today the department holds many of the most prolific and notable African American Studies scholars in the world.

The Department of African American Studies at Princeton University provides an exciting and innovative model for teaching and research about African descendant people, with a central focus on their experiences in the United States. We embody this mission in a curriculum that reflects the complex interplay between the political, economic, and cultural forces that shape our understanding of the historic achievements and struggles of African descendant people in this country and around the world.

Our Staff

Anthony Gibbons Jr., Communications & Media Specialist
Jana Johnson, Department Assistant
Elio Lleo, Technical Support Specialist
April Peters, Manager, Finance & Administration
Dionne Worthy, Assistant to the Chair and Events Coordinator
Advisory Council

The Advisory Council is an external group of experts and advocates who helps the department in the execution of its mission.

**Donna Beverly Ford ’82**
Chas. Hillside
La Cañada Flintridge, California

**Brent Henry ’69**
Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Gloeddy & Popeo, P.C., Partners HealthCare System
Boston, Massachusetts

**William B. King Jr. ’67**
Director, Corp.
Nashville, Tennessee

**Henry Von Kohorn ’66**
Founder, The Princeton Prize in Race Relations
Princeton, New Jersey

**Claudia Mitchell-Kernan**
Professor Emerita of Anthropology, Psychiatry, and Biobehavioral Sciences
Parent of ’94 and ’98
Los Angeles, California

**Wes Moore**
Chief Executive Officer, Robin Hood
New York, New York

**Laurence Morse ’80**
Co-Founder & Managing Partner, Fairview Capital Partners
West Hartford, Connecticut

**Ruth J. Simmons**
President, Prairie View A&M University
Providence, Rhode Island

**Henry Von Kohorn ’66**
Founder, The Princeton Prize in Race Relations
Princeton, New Jersey

**Germaylsa F. Ferrer**
Class of 2022

**Ashley Hodges**
Class of 2021

**Masha Miura**
Class of 2021

**Irene Ross**
Class of 2020

**Nathan Poland**
Class of 2020

Undergraduate Board of Advisers

The Undergraduate Board of Advisers acts as the voice for the students in the department, in addition to hosting several events each year.
AAS Academic Committees

Priorities Committee
The priorities committee is the executive committee for AAS and is chaired by the department chair. It is tasked with reviewing the yearly budgets proposed by the chair, and with crafting the policies, procedures and guidelines governing faculty roles, expectations and responsibilities. Policies, issues and concerns relating to the process governing tenure and promotion originate with this committee, as well as decisions representing significant changes in the organization, direction, or functioning of the department. The priorities committee is also responsible for selecting postdoctoral and distinguished visiting fellows each year, and for proposing names of faculty to deliver the Morrison and Baldwin lectures.

2019-2020 Members
- Eddie S. Glaude Jr.
- Imani Perry
- Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor

Programming Committee
The department chair appoints the chair of the programming committee for a two-year term. Following committee guidelines, the programming committee responds to requests and allocates funds for co-sponsorship funding from student groups, faculty, and departments. They allocate a yearly budget and refer to department guidelines for the rules governing funds allocation. They are also responsible for proposing to the chair yearly programming that would support the vision, mission, and growth of AAS.

2019-2020 Members
- Wendy Belcher
- Joshua Guild
- Chika Okeke-Agulu

Curriculum Committee
The director of undergraduate studies (DUS) chairs the curriculum committee. The department chair, in consultation with the DUS, chooses committee members. In the absence of a DUS, the department chair will chair the committee. The curriculum committee is tasked with the oversight of issues, concerns, policies and procedures relating to the concentration and/or certificate in African American Studies. This committee has administrative responsibility for review of faculty course relief requests, and for responding to requests from faculty regarding changes in individual teaching loads. In addition, the curriculum committee reviews requests from faculty to teach new courses, reviews and signs off on hiring visiting faculty and lecturers, assigns courses to incoming fellows, and reviews semester to semester coverage of required courses for the concentration and certificate. Finally, this committee is responsible for allocating funding requests for course support, senior thesis and dissertation funding, and conference travel for undergraduate and graduate students. Committee appointments are for a two-year period.

2019-2020 Members
- Anna Arabindan-Kesson
- Kinohi Nishikawa
- Imani Perry
- Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor

2019-2020 Members
- Wendy Belcher
- Joshua Guild
- Chika Okeke-Agulu
ACADEMIC COURSES

Fall 2019 Courses

AAS 201 (EC)  African American Studies and the Philosophy of Race
   Eddie S. Glaude Jr.

AAS 245 / ART 245 (LA)  Introduction to 20th Century African American Art
   Chika Okeke-Agulu

AAS 250 (DA)  Junior Seminar: Research and Writing in African American Studies
   Joshua B. Gold, Tera W. Hunter

AAS 251 / HUM 506 / GS 456 (DA)  Topics In Global Race and Ethnicity: Scientific Racism: Then and Now
   Danielle Gautreaux Cordaro

AAS 269 / ART 269 (LA)  Seeing to Remember: Representing Slavery Across the Black Atlantic
   Anisa Alamean-Kissin

AAS 287 / HIS 307-3 (MA)  African American History Since Emancipation
   Kesewa-Hannah Taylor

AAS 300 / AMS 300 (MA)  Public Policy in the U.S. Racial State
   Kesewa-Hannah Taylor

AAS 306 / HIS 306-3 (MA)  Memory, History and the Archive
   Joshua B. Gold

AAS 307 / AAS 307 (MA)  What is Black Art: Art History and the Black Diaspora
   Anisa Alamean-Kissin

AAS 330 / ART 330-3 (MA)  Art and the Politics in Postcolonial Africa
   Chika Okeke-Agulu

AAS 329 / AAS 329 / CLA 328  Ancient Egyptian Kingship in Image, Architecture & Performance
   Deborah Virtue

DHI 211 / AAS 211 (LA)  The American Dance Experience and Africanist Dance Practices
   Celine Herring-Sablan

ENG 156 / AAS 156  African American Literature: Black Arts Criticism
   Kehinde Hameed

ENG 213 / AAS 213 / COM 213  Problems in Literary Study: On Modernisms and Blackness
   Simon Gikandi

GSS 302 / AAS 302 / POL 314  Gender and Sexuality in American Politics and Policy
   Dan Z. Biely

HIS 388 / URB 388 / AMS 380 / AAS 388 (HA)  Unrest and Renewal in Urban America
   Alison E. Isenberg

HIS 423 / AAS 423 / AFS 423 (HA)  Africa: Revolutionary Movements and Liberation Struggles
   Benedito L. Machava

HIS 483 / AAS 483 / AMS 483  Race in the American Empire
   Bernadette J. Perez

HIS 577 / AAS 577  Readings in African American History
   Tera W. Hunter

POL 319 / AAS 316 / AMS 391 (EM)  History of African American Political Thought
   Desmond Jagmohan

WWS 335 / SOC 335 / AAS 335 (DA)  Race and Public Policy
   Emir Lopez

WWS 345 / PSY 384 / AAS 345 (EC)  Prejudices: Its Causes, Consequences, and Cures
   Stacey Sinclair
Spring 2020 Courses

AAS 230 (HA)
Topics in African American Studies: Remembering and Forgetting: Race, Violence, and History in the US
Mari N. Crabtree

AAS 303 (EM)
Topics in Global Race and Ethnicity: The Post-Colonial Imagination and Africana Thought
Kevin A. Wolfe

AAS 303 (HA)
Topics in African American Studies: Remembering and Forgetting: Race, Violence, and History in the US
Mari N. Crabtree

AAS 303 (SA)
Topics in African American Culture and Life: Black-ish and the Black Middle Class
James A. Aron

AAS 307 (SA)
Black Feminist Theory
Imark Perry

AAS 320 (LA)
Enter the New Negro: Black Atlantic Aesthetics
Anita Arakeri-Kennan

AAS 320 (LA)
African American Literature: Harlem Renaissance to the Present
Kwesi Milby-Ashiris

AAS 320 (SA)
African American History to 1863
Tera W. Hunter

AAS 320 (SA)
Gangsters and Troublesome Populations
Lawrence Ralph

AAS 320 (SA)
Making History: Museums, Monuments, and Cultural Heritage
Seydou C. Ciss

AAS 320 (SA)
Disability, Difference, and Race
Lawrence Ralph

AAS 320 (SA)
Black and Asian in America
Kwesi Milby-Ashiris

AAS 321 / HUM 321 / GSS 325 (HA)
History of Black Captivity
Dannelle Gutarra Cordero

AAS 321 / REL 321 (HA)
History of Black Captivity
Dannelle Gutarra Cordero

AAS 321 / REL 321 (HA)
Black Rage and Black Power
Edith S. Gough Jr.

AAS 326 (SA)
Topics in African American Culture and Life: Black-ish and the Black Middle Class
James A. Aron

AAS 326 (SA)
Topics in African American Culture and Life: Black-ish and the Black Middle Class
James A. Aron

AAS 335 (SA)
Intersectional Activism and Movements for Social Justice
Deneen Z. Strolovitch

AAS 335 (SA)
The Architecture of Race
Ashke Sandvik

AAS 341 / ART 375 (LA)
The American Dance Experience and Dance Practices of the African Diaspora
Dawn A. Jones

AAS 341 / ART 375 (LA)
Introduction to Hip Hop Dance
Joseph Elmezzi

AAS 341 / ART 375 (SA)
New Diasporas: Black British Literature
Simon E. Gikandi

AAS 341 / ART 375 (SA)
Major Author(s): August Wilson: African American Life in the 20th Century
R. N. Sandberg

AAS 341 / ART 375 (SA)
Modern Brazilian History
Isadora M. Mota

AAS 341 / ART 375 (SA)
Race and Drugs and Drug Policy in America
Keith A. Waldso

AAS 360 / ART 360 (SA)
The Architecture of Race
Ashke Sandvik

AAS 360 / ART 360 (SA)
The Architecture of Race
Ashke Sandvik

AAS 362 / WWS 386 / POL 338 (SA)
Race and the American Legal Process: Emancipation to the Voting Rights Act
Anita Arakeri-Kennan

AAS 362 / WWS 386 / POL 338 (SA)
Race and the American Legal Process: Emancipation to the Voting Rights Act
Anita Arakeri-Kennan

AAS 364 (EM)
Disability, Difference, and Race
Lawrence Ralph

AAS 364 (EM)
Disability, Difference, and Race
Lawrence Ralph

AAS 366 / HIS 386 (HA)
The American Dance Experience and Dance Practices of the African Diaspora
Dawn A. Jones

AAS 366 / HIS 386 (HA)
The American Dance Experience and Dance Practices of the African Diaspora
Dawn A. Jones

DAN 211 / AAS 211 (LA)
The American Dance Experience and Dance Practices of the African Diaspora
Dyane Harvey Salaam

DAN 222 / AAS 222 (LA)
Introduction to Hip Hop Dance
Joseph Elmezzi

ENG 236 / AAS 236 / ART 236 (SA)
New Diasporas: Black British Literature
Simon E. Gikandi

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New Diasporas: Black British Literature
Simon E. Gikandi

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Major Author(s): August Wilson: African American Life in the 20th Century
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Utopias of Yesteryear: Socialist Experiments in Africa
Benedito L. Machava

ENG 236 / AAS 236 / ART 236 (SA)
UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES IN AAS

The Department of African American Studies offers both an Undergraduate Concentration and an Undergraduate Certificate that expand and deepen a student’s understanding of race in the United States and in the world. Students who pursue and fulfill all requirements for the Concentration are awarded a Bachelor of Arts in African American Studies. Alternatively, the Certificate in African American Studies is equivalent to an academic ‘minor’ in African American Studies. Undergraduate students in both tracks select from the same course offerings.

The Curriculum requirements in the Undergraduate Program in African American Studies reflect the complex interplay between political, economic, and cultural forces that shape our understanding of the historic achievements and struggles of African-descended people in this country and their relation to others around the world. The Course of Study is directed in three distinct subfields: African American Culture and Life; Race and Public Policy; and Global Race and Ethnicity. In addition to offering a Concentration and Certificate program for its home students, the department organizes a Junior Research Seminar, a Senior Thesis Colloquium, African American Studies Study Abroad opportunities, as well as an array of courses, public events, and lecture series open to all students.

Course of Study & Subfields

African American Culture and Life (AACL)

In this track, students encounter the theoretical canon and keywords, which shape the contemporary discipline of African American Studies. Accessing a range of interdisciplinary areas, situated primarily in the United States, students learn to take a critical posture in examining the patterns and practices that order and transform Black subjects and Black life.

Race and Public Policy (RPP)

In the Race and Public Policy subfield students use and interrogate social science methodologies in examining the condition of the American state and American institutions and practices. With an analysis of race and ethnicity at the center, students examine the development of institutions and practices, with the growth and formation of racial and ethnic identities, including changing perceptions, measures, and reproduction of inequality.

Global Race and Ethnicity (GRE)

In the Global Race and Ethnicity subfield, students use the prevailing analytical tools and critical perspectives of African American Studies to consider comparative approaches to groups, broadly defined. Students examine the intellectual traditions, socio-political contexts, expressive forms, and modes of belonging of people who are understood to share common boundaries/experiences as either:

1. Africans and the African Diaspora outside of the United States and/or
Undergraduate Certificate Requirements

Undergraduates who opt to pursue a certificate in African American Studies (AAS) gain access to an extraordinary bibliography that prepares them to think about difference in sophisticated ways.

Earning a Certificate in African American Studies

Students must complete two AAS core survey courses from the list below:

- AAS 245 Introduction to 20th Century African American Art
- AAS 353 African American Literature: Origins to 1910
- AAS 359 African American Literature: Harlem Renaissance to Present
- AAS 366 African American History to 1863
- AAS 367 African American History Since Emancipation

Students must take three additional elective courses in AAS, Cross-Listed by AAS, or from our approved cognates list, and at least one of these must be in the Global Race and Ethnicity subfield.

Additionally, students are encouraged to make African Americans and/or African American Studies central to their senior thesis topic.
2020 Undergraduate Certificate Students

Himaayah Agwedicham  
Department of Politics  
Newark, NJ

Mahishan Gnanaseharan  
Department of Politics  
West Orange, NJ

Siarad Hassan  
School of Public and International Affairs  
Frederick, MD

Polly A. Hochman  
Department of Geosciences  
Chicago, IL

Kuteara Jamison  
Department of Psychology  
Corona, NY

Heavyn Louise Jennings  
Department of Psychology  
Memphis, TN

Micaela Keller  
Department of Politics  
Ann Arbor, MI

Alexander Laurenzi  
Department of History  
Mt. Lakes, NJ

Katherine Leung  
School of Public and International Affairs  
Albuquerque, NM

Miriam Li  
Department of Philosophy  
Plainsboro, NJ

Atarah McCoy  
School of Public and International Affairs  
Newton, MA

Sharon Musa  
Department of Neuroscience  
Upland, CA

Morgan Thompson  
Department of Sociology  
McLean, VA

Florence Odigie  
Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering  
Arverne, NY

Betsy Vasquez  
Department of Neuroscience  
Hamilton, NJ

Kezia Maami Otinkorang  
School of Public and International Affairs  
Leonia, NJ

Krystal Alicia Veras  
Department of Sociology  
Lynn, MA

Matthew Taitano  
Department of English  
Tamuning, Guam

Alia Michelle Wood  
Department of English  
Warren, MI

Sophia Elizabeth Taylor  
Department of Politics  
San Francisco, CA
Undergraduate Concentration

Overview and Requirements

Students who choose to declare a concentration in African American Studies experience a fuller account of the field, preparing them for a range of professions, as well as graduate work in African American Studies.

The steps to complete the concentration are as follows:

Students complete two core survey courses listed below. At least one of these must be a pre 20th century course.

- AAS 245 Introduction to 20th Century African American Art
- AAS 353 African American Literature: Origins to 1910 (pre 20th century)
- AAS 359 African American Literature: Harlem Renaissance to Present
- AAS 366 African American History to 1863 (pre 20th century)
- AAS 367 African American History Since Emancipation

In the fall of their junior year, concentrators take AAS 300 Junior Seminar: Research and Writing in African American Studies. This course introduces students to theories and methods of research design in African American Studies in preparation for the junior paper. At the end of their fall semester, juniors declare a subfield to pursue, selecting from:

- African American Culture and Life (AACL)
- Global Race and Ethnicity (GRE)
- Race and Public Policy (RPP)

Four courses must be taken in the chosen subfield with two additional courses as follows:

- If the chosen subfield is AACL or RPP, then two GRE courses.
- If the chosen subfield is GRE, then one AACL and one RPP.

Students may choose up to two approved cognate courses in other departments. In total, nine courses are required for the concentration.

Additional Requirements

Concentrators must demonstrate proficiency by completing independent writing and research. In the spring of their junior year, students complete independent research in order to write a junior paper that incorporates African American Studies. Seniors complete independent reading and research to develop a senior thesis that incorporates African American Studies and their chosen subfield. Seniors take a comprehensive exam derived from the work of their thesis.

Senior Colloquium

Concentrators are required to participate in the Senior Colloquium, which seeks to provide a space for seniors concentrating in African American Studies to reflect upon their experiences within the Department, and upon how the understanding and insight they have gained here can and should influence their lives beyond graduation. The Senior Colloquium meets a total of six times per term. A member of the AAS core faculty leads each colloquium meeting.

Senior Thesis & Exam

During the senior year each student, with the guidance of a faculty adviser, must complete independent work, which consists of writing a thesis. The senior thesis will then serve as the basis of the senior comprehensive exam.
Taylor Branch, born and raised in New York City, concentrated in African American Studies and pursued a certificate in Spanish Language and Culture. She arrived on campus originally intending to focus on international politics and political theory, but soon realized that cultural studies was infinitely more exciting and offered a critical lens to analyze her own experiences. After making the switch, she has been most interested in the intersections of race and the legal system in regards to notions of citizenship and democracy. She hopes to integrate her love of travel and Latinx culture into her investigations of racialized legal processes.

On campus, Taylor divided her time between her three jobs, and choreographing and dancing with BAC, Princeton’s hip-hop dance company. In the past she’s been involved with BSU, serving as its secretary from the spring of 2016 to fall of 2017, and USG, serving as the co-chair of the Diversity and Equity Committee during the same time period. Post undergraduate work, Taylor hopes to continue traveling throughout South America before figuring out a capacity in which she can best address racial injustice in the legal system.

Senior Thesis
“The Mark of Cain: Tattoo Surveillance and its Consequences in Brazil”
Adviser: Anna Arabindan-Kesson
Malachi Byrd discovered his passion laid in discovering and attacking institutionalized racism in all of the overt and covert ways that they perpetuate. Whether in educational opportunities, healthy food access, or police brutality, he is committed to the battle against anti-Blackness. When Malachi originally arrived at Princeton, the African American Studies Department was not yet a department. Immediately realizing that the institution that he attended demanded loud and thorough resistance in order to evolve, Malachi immersed himself with a few other passionate students to build the Black Justice League, which would go on to unashamedly push the university towards a more intentional investment in a more inclusive, and accommodating culture for its underserved students.

A long-time rapper and spoken word artist, MalPractice, has always believed in the intersection of art and activism. From the mix of his African American Studies degree and Creative Writing certificate, to being selected as Washington D.C.'s inaugural youth poet laureate (2015), to publishing his dually named book and mixtape, Crowning Too Early (2017), he displayed in his artwork where his research interests lie: fully interrogating the evaporation of Black childhood.

Senior Thesis
"The Hotel Tour: An Autoethonographic Study of African American Displacement and Black Performance as a Tool for Manifesting Home and Reclaiming Experience"
Adviser: Joshua B. Guild
OLUWATOYIN J. EDOGUN
Smyrna, Tennessee

Oluwatoyin Jera Edogun pursued her African American Studies degree through the subfield of African American Culture and Life. Her research interests are primarily focused on the ways that ordinary African Americans engaged in resistance against oppression through leisure or small acts of rebellion. She is a Mellon Mays Fellow, and she plans on pursuing a Ph.D. in African American Studies before going on to be a professor of African American History. One of her favorite classes at Princeton has been "Race and the American Legal Process: Emancipation to the Voting Rights Act," which was taught by Imani Perry. The course allowed her to think critically about laws that are primarily thought of as beneficial to the Black community, such as Brown v. Board of Education.

She was one of the founding members of the Black Student-Alumni Coalition, which aims to strengthen the relationship between Black students and alumni. She was also the president of the Princeton Association of Black Women. When she was not in class or leading meetings for the student groups she headed, Toyin was involved with the cheerleading team and DoroBucci Dance group.

Senior Thesis
"Twice As Good: The Socialization of Black Girls in the Jim Crow South"
Adviser: Imani Perry
KADENCE MITCHELL
Henderson, Nevada

Kadence Mitchell, a native of Tacoma, Washington, entered Princeton with intentions of becoming a public policy major, and quickly discovered a fascination with political theory. Kadence threw herself into studying the intersections between policy, theory, and race and planned to focus her research on the study of Black political theorists, particularly those who are queer, who are women, or who are both. In doing so, she hoped that it would catalyze changes in policy that are more just and more honest.

On campus, Kadence split her time between three campus jobs, intern and peer educator positions with the Princeton LGBT Center, and various civic service and social justice initiatives and collectives. Her combined interests in justice, race, orientation and community led Kadence to coordinate and found, alongside her peers, collectives such as the Black Student-Alumni Coalition, and the podcast series #WokeWednesdays.

Senior Thesis
“"This Is Not A Story to Pass On: Examining the Psychic Legacies of Intergenerational Trauma Through Black Women’s Literature”
Adviser: Tera W. Hunter
AAS 2020 CONCENTRATOR

MATTHEW OAKLAND
Elk Grove, California

Proudly hailing from Sacramento, California, Matthew Oakland pursued the Global Race and Ethnicity subfield. Informed and shaped by the sociopolitical, linguistic, and ethnic dynamics of his home state, Matthew's academic interests encompass broadly questions of race, class, gender, Diaspora, identity, and language. As a Mellon Mays Fellow, he aims to diversify the academy, an ambition he plans to achieve through the pursuit of a Ph.D. to become a professor.

On campus, Matthew split his time between two campus jobs; served as a member of the Black Organization for Leadership Development (B.O.L.D.); volunteered with the Petey Greene Prison tutor program; served as an LGBT center peer educator; danced hip hop with diSiac Dance Company; and was a founding member of the Black Student-Alumni Coalition.

Senior Thesis

"Las Apariencias Engañan": Exploring the Hidden Transcripts of Cuban Rap"

Adviser: Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor
AAS 2020 CONCENTRATOR

OZICHI OKOROM
Rosedale, New York

Coming to us from Queens, New York, Ozichi Okorom chose to declare the Global Race & Ethnicity subfield, as she pursued her interest in Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian feminist activism, as well as the impact of the Nigerian Civil War on the way that Nigerian Igbo raise their U.S. born children. The summer before her third year, Ozichi was granted funding from the Martin A. Dale ’53 Summer Awards, where she spent two months in Brazil interviewing Black women to learn about the influence of religion and spirituality in their everyday lives.

On campus, Ozichi was involved in Princeton’s premier African dance group DoroBucci, as well as one of the founders of an emerging group called the Black Spectrum Collective, which is dedicated to building a radical community and providing resources for Black artists on Princeton’s campus. Ozichi also contributed to the department by serving as a student employee in African American Studies since her junior year.

Senior Thesis

“When Black Women Gather: Dimensions of Community Building, Political Organizing, and Empowerment in the Online Space”

Adviser: Aisha Beliso-De Jesús
NATHAN POLAND
Rockville, Maryland

Nathan Poland, from Rockville, Maryland, pursued the Race and Public Policy subfield within the African American Studies Department to study mass incarceration, institutionalized racism, and the legal history of discrimination following his experience working as an investigator for the Bronx (Public) Defenders Office in the summer of 2017.

Outside of his course of study, Nathan is deeply committed to realizing social justice and inclusion. He gave time to two in-prison tutoring programs, one that supported incarcerated men earning their GEDs and another that helped prepare soon-to-be-released women to apply for jobs, create resumes, and rejoin the workforce. Nathan was also proud to serve as a fellow for the Carl A. Fields Center for Equality and Cultural Understanding. Additionally, he was a member of the Undergraduate Board of Advisers for the Department of African American Studies and a Residential College Adviser in Rockefeller College. If that wasn’t enough, Nathan also served as a student employee in the Department of African American Studies since his freshmen year.

Senior Thesis
"Racing the Numbers: The Double Life of Racial Statistics"
Adviser: Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor
KATHERINE MARIE POWELL
Chicago, Illinois

Proudly hailing from Chicago, Illinois, Katherine Powell was drawn to the intersections of race, gender, Diasporic identity formation, and socio-literary studies. She pursued the Global Race and Ethnicity track with a focus on African and African Diaspora women’s literature. Katherine was excited to declare AAS as her major, as she found it was the best fit to do interdisciplinary studies of Black life with a Black lens.

Besides being interested in Black womanhood, she participated in many activities on campus. She was an Orange Key tour guide; an officer of disiac Dance Company; a mentor for the Princeton University Mentorship Program; and an intern at the Carl A. Fields Center. One of her favorite experiences at Princeton was the Humanities Sequence and the fall break trip to Rome, where she studied the iconography of slavery in the city.

Senior Thesis
“Throwing the Voice, Constructing the Self: Black Feminisms and Literature in Martinique and Senegal, 1930s —1970s”

Adviser: Wendy Laura Belcher
IRENE ROSS
Princeton Junction, New Jersey

Irene Ross pursued the African American Culture and Life track with an interest in the influence of the cosmetic industry and political movements on manifestations of fashion trends within the Black community, and the economic implications for such trends. Irene strived to incorporate what she learned from pursuing a Visual Arts certificate with her research in AAS.

During her time at Princeton, Irene was chair of Wildcats A Cappella and Editor-in-Chief of her online publication, Black Arts Magazine. In addition, she was a member of the Undergraduate Board of Advisers for the Department of African American Studies. In the future, she hopes to earn a Ph.D., write books, and teach at the collegiate level.

Senior Thesis
Adviser: Eddie S. Glaude Jr.
DESTINY SALTER
Denver, Colorado

Senior Thesis
“Doomed as Cartoons Forever: Subjection and Liberation in Sidney Lumet’s The Wiz”

Adviser: Eddie S. Glaude Jr.
2020 Senior Prizes & Winners

The Badi Foster Distinguished Senior Prize in African American Studies
Awarded annually to the senior concentrator who has distinguished his or herself academically as well as beyond the classroom, reflecting a commitment to the intellectual, political, and artistic traditions in African American Studies.

Nathan Poland ’20

Outstanding Junior Paper in African American Studies Prize
This prize is awarded to the senior who submitted the most outstanding Junior Paper.

Katherine Marie Powell ’20
“Speaking the Truth of Fiction: Literary Disruptions of the Dominican State Myth, post-1937 Massacre”
Adviser: Prof. Reena Goldthwaite

AAS Spirit Award
This award is selected by AAS staff and is given to a senior for their positive contributions to the department. It recognizes students who informally assist the faculty, students, and staff.

Nathan Poland ’20
Black study is a synonym for radical imagination. Yet, we often find the phrase radical imagination thrown about far too easily. If the operations of power suppress the imagination, then it simultaneously ensures that the force of the imagination becomes abstracted. Becomes immaterial. Becomes inconsequential. Becomes cut off from the weight of the histories and freedom dreams that undergird it.

If we’re to speak of radical imagination, we must speak, too, of radical traditions and the individuals, communities, and ideas that have shaped them. And for that intellectual tradition we call the Black radical tradition, those individuals, communities, and knowledge formations continuously take flight as we imagine—and practice—abolition.

Fly—to be fly—is more than just being cool, stylish, or confident, though it is all those things. When we speak of flight, we manifest the stories of enslaved persons flying back to Africa, and of salt weighing the body down and preventing escape. My own grandfather told me stories of the Silk Cotton Tree and Gang-Gang Sarah, an enslaved woman who tried to fly back to West Africa by jumping from a silk cotton tree. She fell to the ground because she’d eaten salt. There’s the flight of the airplane, as Ishmael Reed points us to in his tongue-in-cheek tale Flight to Canada, as a way to escape the South and make it to Canada; there’s the flight of enslaved persons to the North. There’s the flight of space—of escaping into the dark void outside this world and the dreams of Sun Ra who told us that space was the place and that to get there we would need to take flight. The flights of imagination of artists like Janelle Monae, whose reckoning with Afrofuturism and whose tightrope dancing looked like she was walking on water.

Fly, flight, flying is a political act. A creative act. A cultural act. An act of radical imagination. Flyness sits as part of a longer genealogy, a longer tradition of the figure of flying and flight embedded within the Black Diaspora. Fly is a Black funk that beats in our hearts, resonates in our bones, and plays through our souls. Fly is sacred and defiant in the face of non-believers.

The Black radical imagination—spanning centuries, geographies, and mediums—shapes the values and community I’ve found woven through every aspect of my time in AAS: from the courses I’ve taken with the likes of Associate Professors Kinohi Nishikawa, Eddie Glaude, Cornel West; to the Faculty-Graduate Seminars I participated in with Professors Ruha Benjamin, Wallace Best, and Kwame-Yamalatta Taylor; to the work I’ve had the deep pleasure of assisting Diène Worthy with over the years; to the community of graduate students who have come from across disciplines to help imagine the future of the field but also embolden each other to continue the work we do.

So, when I say that Black study—that funky, risky practice that exists despite racist, classist, sexist, and ableist environments, that refuses institutional suffocation—is a synonym for radical imagination, I am simply inviting you all—as African American Studies has for me—to stay believers.

The Experience of Katherine Marie Powell’20

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AAS Undergraduate Funding Opportunities

Concentrators who require research funding for independent work may apply to the Department of African American Studies for support. Students must provide a full account of their research proposal and a detailed itemized budget. If travel is desired, student must submit a planned itinerary.

Junior Paper Research Funding
To assist concentrators in building expertise and a library, the Department of African American Studies provides AAS concentrators funding for books that are essential to their junior independent work.

Summer Research Funding
Summer awards provide financial support to enable Princeton University undergraduates to pursue worthy projects that provide important opportunities for research and/or personal growth, foster independence, creativity, and leadership skills, and broaden or deepen their understanding of the subject matter within the field.

Senior Thesis Research Funding
The Department of African American Studies (AAS) offers senior thesis research grants to Princeton students who plan to research in a subject for their Senior Thesis related to the field of African American Studies.

Concentrators Conference Funding
This opportunity provides funds to AAS Concentrators to attend relevant academic conferences.

Study Abroad Opportunities

Students in the department have the opportunity to study abroad in programs related to African American Studies for a semester (fall or spring), a year or a summer. The department offers recommendations for programs students may enjoy, but there are no restrictions on eligible programs.
GRADUATE STUDIES
PROGRAM IN AAS

The Graduate Studies program in African American Studies provides an opportunity for students to complement doctoral studies in their home department with coordinated interdisciplinary training in African American Studies. Students entering the program may come from any department in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Graduate engagement with the department is not limited to students pursuing requirements of the certificate. Participation in the Faculty-Graduate Seminar, with its annually rotating focus area, is open to all Princeton graduate students seeking to engage in the intellectually stimulating community of the department. Recent seminar topics include 'Black Studies in the Digital Age,' 'Sexuality in African American Communities and Cultures,' 'Black Studies and Biopolitics,' 'African/American Diasporic Literature,' and 'The Politics of Black Families and Intimacies.' The department also sponsors programming and events throughout the academic year for graduate students at all stages.

Program Requirements

Students wishing to obtain a graduate certificate in African American Studies are encouraged to consult with their home department advisers and the African American Studies Director of Graduate Affairs, ideally during their first year, to plan their course of study. Interested students provide an application of their interest to the department and must complete all requirements listed below.

**Earning the Graduate Certificate**

The graduate course of study is determined by the graduate student’s home department adviser in consultation with the Curriculum Committee in the Department of African American Studies. Certificate requirements include completion of AAS 500 African American Intellectual Tradition and two other courses in the Humanities or Social Sciences:

a) Whose contents are judged to be devoted primarily to race; or
b) for which they write research papers devoted to race; or
c) which are independent study topics tailored to the student’s interests in race.
AAS Faculty-Graduate Seminar

The Faculty-Graduate Seminar is an intimate intellectual community that comes together to discuss work in progress around a common theme across a wide range of disciplines. Our goal is to establish a small but intellectually diverse and committed group of scholars who will attend all meetings and engage in sustained discourse during the year. Each meeting lasts one hour and twenty minutes followed by dinner. Given these goals and the limited meeting space, we will be accepting only twelve (12) graduate students into each semester’s seminar. We encourage graduate students to commit to both semesters and preference for spring registration will be given to students engaged in the fall seminar. Participation in the African American Studies’ Faculty-Graduate Seminar for one academic year or the equivalent (two semesters) will fulfill one of the requirements for the AAS Graduate Certificate.

2019-2020 TOPIC
Black Design: History, Theory, and Practice

Faculty Host: Kinohi Nishikawa

As our media-saturated culture exhausts every possible angle of consuming race, a new generation of scholars, activists, and artists has turned to investigating the structuring conditions of how Blackness is experienced in everyday life. Their interest lies in highlighting how race has served as both an invisible subject and a necessary object of design. Bringing together some of the leading figures in the emerging field of Black Design studies, this seminar examines the construction and disruption of racial “commonsense” by those whose creative and technical labor often goes unnoticed. Our work will be geared toward recovering historical precedents for and theorizing contemporary applications of Black Design. In so doing, we will take seriously Teju Cole’s recent contention that design is “not [only] an intellectual exercise,” exploring what it means to “do” Black Design in practice-based fields such as graphic design, illustration, book arts, game design, industrial design, fashion, museum curation, art installation, urban planning, and landscape architecture.

2019-2020 Guest Speakers

Fall 2019

Wednesday, October 2, 2019
Tia Blasingame, Scripps College

Wednesday, October 23, 2019
Jerome Har里斯, Housing Works in NYC

Wednesday, November 13, 2019
Tanisha C. Ford, University of Delaware

Wednesday, December 11, 2019
Kortney Ryan Ziegler, Independent Scholar

Spring 2020

Wednesday, February 12, 2020
Jomo Tanku, Designer

Wednesday, February 26, 2020
Toni L. Griffin, Harvard University

Wednesday, March 11, 2020
Sara Zewde, Studio Zewde

Wednesday, March 25, 2020
Kenny Carlbuddi, University of Notre Dame

Wednesday, April 8, 2020
TreaAndrea Russworm, University of Massachusetts

Wednesday, April 15, 2020
Antonette D. Carroll, Creative Reaction Lab

Wednesday, April 22, 2020
Akira Drake Rodriguez, University of Pennsylvania
2020 GRADUATE CERTIFICATE RECIPIENTS

Kessie Alexandre

Dissertation: “Floods and Fountains: Water Politics and Black Ecologies in Newark, NJ”
Dissertation Defense, May 7, 2020

Kimberly G. Bain

Dissertation: “On Black Breath”
Dissertation Defense, July 2, 2020

Chaya Yvonne Crowder

Dissertation: “Intersectional Solidarity: The Political Consequences of a Consciousness of Race, Gender and Sexuality”
Dissertation Defense, Summer 2020

Michael R. Glass

Dissertation Defense, May 13, 2020

Julia Hori

Dissertation: “Restoring Empire: British Imperial Nostalgia, Colonial Space, and Violence since WWII”
Dissertation Defense, May 18, 2020
I didn’t take my first course with an African American Studies professor until my sophomore spring. I’d floated around the humanities departments, trying to find a way to study literature in French and Spanish, and not the least bit interested in Spain or France. I was (and still am) fascinated by the alchemy that happens when Black people across the Diaspora encounter the violence of whiteness, shift the master’s language, and create new worlds out of old words.

Interestingly enough, that first class was AAS 235, with Professor Ruha Benjamin. Though the course focused specifically on the social construct of race, it demonstrated some core tenets of the department more broadly. I was struck by Professor Benjamin’s meticulous and engaging lectures, the readings and precept discussions. More than anything, though, I noticed the kindness and care that went into the work she did.

I declared AAS and joined a brilliant cohort of peers. Our junior fall, Professor Murakawa and Professor Guild introduced us to an interdisciplinary method of seeing and recording the social world. The guiding principle was to study how it was in order to dream up how it might be. Junior sem — and all my coursework in the department — helped me understand where we all stand inside the University, and the commitment we need to have to our communities outside its gates.

Learning with my cohort has meant understanding that we don’t study power in order to accrue it, but because we want to craft a more just world together. As Professor Murakawa cautioned us: “White supremacy thrives in imprecise language.”

Throughout my time in the department, I’ve been blessed to travel for my independent work and return to the fascination I have with language that drew me to study Diasporic Black feminism in the first place. Each time I took a trip, I knew I had a support system in New Jersey that was traveling with me. I could reach out when I encountered something tricky in the archive or had a question about translation. From Santo Domingo, to Fort-de-France, London to Dakar, I have never felt alone in my studies. I knew that as I explored my voice, I could lean on the knowledge of my peers and professors to strengthen my work.

The AAS department, I think, is made up of individual kindnesses that reflect a larger commitment to caring for each other. I have always known that every professor in the department wanted to listen to my ideas, even when they were half-formed. Stanhope Hall is a home amid the university’s perpetual foreignness. There would always be a friend, or someone who could explain that one paragraph of the reading that seemed indecipherable to me. Jana Johnson, April Peters, and Dionne Worthy have also played an integral role in my experience in the department, simply by providing a space where I could breathe freely.

The core of the department is a dedication to knowledge as much more than a thought experiment, but a way to live. I am forever indebted to the professors who introduced me to the work of radical left, Black feminist thinkers across the Diaspora. Every moment I’ve spent in Stanhope, and gathering virtually in the past few months, I have been incredibly grateful for the intuitive twinge that led me to the department my sophomore year. Studying in this community has been a great joy, and coming through a department dedicated to doing work inside and outside the University’s gates has changed me as a thinker and a person.
The Department of African American Studies offers a wide variety of events and programs during the academic year. Through these thought-provoking topics and bold speakers, we aim to educate and empower students, the Princeton campus, and our local community.
Fall 2019 Events

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19
Labyrinth Live at the Library Presents:
"Race after Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code"
Featuring Ruha Benjamin & Eddie S. Glaude Jr.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25
Politics to Pop Culture: A Conversation with Marc Lamont Hill and Imani Perry

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1
Gauss Seminars in Criticism: "A Call to Action: The Burning Case for a Green New Deal"
Featuring Naomi Klein with Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9
Graduate & Law School Application Q&A Session
Featuring Imani Perry

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15
Graduate Affairs Job Market & Reception

Spring 2020 Events

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18
AAS Graduate Affairs Workshop
Featuring Wendy Belcher, Michael Glass and Keeanga - Yamahtta Taylor

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24
Postdoc Lecture: "Serving the Last Plantation: The Politics of Race, Space, and Work in the U.S. House Cafeterias"
Featuring James Jones

MONDAY, JUNE 1
AAS Class Day Virtual Ceremony

FRIDAY, MAY 29
AAS Virtual Reunions - Surviving the Senior Thesis and Entering the Wider World in the Midst of the Pandemic
Panelists: Nathan Poland, Irene Ross, and Destiny Salter
Moderated by Ruha Benjamin
This year, we graduated our third class, and the cohort was particularly strong. Our 10 concentrators were joined by 19 graduating seniors who completed a certificate in African American Studies, and five doctoral degree students who earned graduate certificates in African American Studies. We know that these young scholars will continue to excel and impact every arena they enter.
Our Faculty

The department holds many of the most prolific and notable African American Studies scholars in the world.

AAS Core Faculty

Anna Arabindan-Kesson
Wendy L. Belcher
Ruha Benjamin
Wallace D. Best
Eddie S. Glaude Jr.
Reena N. Goldthree
Joshua B. Golland
Tera W. Hunter
Naomi Murakawa
Kimohi Nishikawa
Chika O. Okeke-Agulu
Imani Perry
Keeanga-Yamattha Taylor
Autumn M. Womack

Our Faculty

Anna Arabindan-Kesson

Assistant Professor, Department of Art and Archaeology & Department of African American Studies

Professor Arabindan-Kesson is an assistant professor of African American and Black Diasporic art with a joint appointment in the Department of Art and Archaeology and is a faculty fellow at First College. Born in Sri Lanka, she completed undergraduate degrees in New Zealand and Australia, and worked as a Registered Nurse in the UK before completing her doctoral degree in African American Studies and Art History at Yale University.

Professor Arabindan-Kesson focuses on African American, Caribbean, and British Art, with an emphasis on histories of race, empire, and transatlantic visual culture in the long 19th century.

Her courses include survey classes on African American and Caribbean Art, and more specialized undergraduate and graduate seminars such as, "Seeing to Remember: Representing Slavery Across the Black Atlantic and Art of the British Empire."


Wendy Laura Belcher

Professor, Department of Comparative Literature & Department of African American Studies

Professor Wendy L. Belcher is a professor of African literature with a joint appointment in the Princeton University Department of Comparative Literature and the Department for African American Studies. Working at the intersection of Diaspora, postcolonial, medieval, and early modern studies, she has a special interest in the literatures of Ethiopia and Ghana and is working to bring attention to early African literature (written between 1300 and 1900), particularly that in African languages, through her research and translation.

One multi-book comparative project aims to demonstrate how African thought has animated British and European canonical literature. This includes the widely reviewed finalist for the Bethwell A. Opot Award for best book on East Africa: Abisynia’s Samuel Johnson: Ethiopian Thought in the Making of an English Author (Oxford, May 2012), which theorizes the discursive possession of English authors and texts. The next part of the project is in progress, a book titled The Black Queen of Sheba: A Global History of an African Idea (under contract with Princeton University Press) about the circulation of Ethiopian thought in Europe from 1000 to 2000.
Wallace D. Best
Professor, Department of Religion & Department of African American Studies
Wallace D. Best specializes in 19th and 20th century African American religious history. His research and teaching focus on the areas of African American religion, religion and literature, Pentecostalism, and Womanist theology. He has held fellowships at Princeton’s Center for the Study of Religion and the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute at Harvard University.

University of Chicago Press
Ruha Benjamin
Associate Professor & Arthur H. Scribes Bicentennial Preceptor, Department of African American Studies
Ruha Benjamin specializes in the interdisciplinary study of science, medicine, and technology; race-ethnicity and gender; knowledge and power. She is the author of People’s Science: Bodies and Rights on the Stem Cell Frontier (Stanford University Press 2013), Race After Technology (Polity 2019), and editor of Captivating Technology: Race, Carceral Technoscience, and Liberatory Imagination in Everyday Life (Duke University Press 2019), as well as numerous articles and book chapters.

Professor Benjamin received her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Anthropology from Spelman College, Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy in sociology from UC Berkeley, and completed postdoctoral fellowships at UCLA’s Institute for Society and Genetics and Harvard University’s Science, Technology, and Society Program. She has been awarded fellowships and grants from the American Council of Learned Societies, National Science Foundation, Ford Foundation, California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, and Institute for Advanced Study. In 2017, she received the President’s Award for Distinguished Teaching at Princeton.

Eddie S. Glaude Jr.
James S. McDonnell Distinguished University Professor & Department Chair, Department of African American Studies
Eddie S. Glaude Jr. is a scholar who speaks to the black and blue in America. His most well-known books, Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul, and In a Shade of Blue: Pragmatism and the Politics of Black America, take a wide look at Black communities and reveal complexities, vulnerabilities, and opportunities for hope.

2019-2020 Achievements
BOOK PUBLISHED IN 2019
Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code

Awards & Achievements
• Winner of the ASA Section on Racial and Ethnic Minorities Oliver Cromwell Cox Best Book Award 2020
• Awarded Honorable Mention in the ASA Communication, Information Technologies, and Media Sociology Section’s Book Award 2020

2019-2020 Achievements
Appointed Director of the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies, Princeton University

2019-2020 Achievements
BOOK PUBLISHED IN 2019

Awards & Achievements
• Winner of the ASA Section on Racial and Ethnic Minorities Oliver Cromwell Cox Best Book Award 2020
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Military Encounters (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), and Global Circuits of Blackness: Interrogating the African Diaspora (University of Illinois Press, 2010). Her research has been supported by fellowships and grants from the American Historical Association, Coordinating Council for Women in History, Ford Foundation, Mellon Foundation, Woodrow Wilson Foundation, Social Science Research Council, and Fulbright. Professor Goldthree is an Associated Faculty Member in the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies and in the Program in Latin American Studies (PLAS).

Reena N. Goldthree
Assistant Professor, Department of African American Studies

Reena Goldthree specializes in the history of Latin America and the Caribbean. Her research and teaching focus on social movements; political theory; labor and migration; and Caribbean feminisms. She earned her bachelor’s degree in History-Sociology (magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa) from Columbia University and her master’s degree in History from Duke University. Her current book project, Democracy Shall be No Empty Romance: War and the Politics of Empire in the Greater Caribbean, examines how the crisis of World War I transformed Afro-Caribbeans’ understanding of, and engagements with, the British Empire. Beyond the book manuscript, her work has appeared in the Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History, Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas, The American Historian, and Radical Teacher. She is the co-editor of a special issue of the Caribbean Review of Gender Studies on gender and anti-colonialism in the interwar Caribbean (December 2018). She has also published essays in New Perspectives on the Black Intellectual Traditions ( Northwestern University Press, 2018), Caribbean

Joshua B. Guild
Associate Professor, Department of History & Department of African American Studies

Joshua Guild specializes in twentieth-century African American social and cultural history, urban history, and the making of the modern African Diaspora, with particular interests in migration, Black internationalism, Black popular music, and the Black radical tradition. A graduate of Wesleyan University, where he was a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow, he received his doctoral degree in History and African American Studies from Yale. His research has been supported by fellowships and awards from a number of institutions, including the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, and Harvard University’s Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History. In 2012, he was a fellow at Harvard’s W.E.B. Du Bois Institute of African and African American Research. Guild is currently completing his first book, in the Shadows of the Metropolis: Cultural Politics and Black Communities in Postwar New York and London, which will be published by Oxford University Press. The book examines African American and Afro-Caribbean migration and community formation in central Brooklyn and west London from the 1930s through the 1970s. He has published or has forthcoming essays on topics ranging from the pioneering Brooklyn politician Shirley Chisholm, the politics of calypso in the age of decolonization and civil rights, and Black Power in diasporic perspective. His next book project, tentatively entitled The City Lives in You: The Black Freedom Struggle and the Futures of New Orleans, will focus on struggles for racial and economic justice in New Orleans from the mid 20th century Black freedom movement through the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil disaster. Professor Guild’s interests in digital humanities, new media, and public engagement are reflected in the 2014-15 African American Studies Faculty-Graduate Seminar that he organized, “Black Studies in the Digital Age.” He serves on the Executive Committee of Princeton’s Center for Digital Humanities. He is also an Associated Faculty member in the Program in Urban Studies.

Professor Guild is the Director of Graduate Affairs in the Department of African American Studies.
Tera W. Hunter

Edwards Professor of American History, Department of History & Department of African American Studies

Tera W. Hunter is Professor of History and African American Studies at Princeton University. She is a scholar of labor, gender, race, and Southern history.

A native of Miami, Professor Hunter attended Duke University where she graduated with distinction in History. She received an MPhil in History from Yale University and a doctoral degree from Yale. Professor Hunter previously taught at Carnegie Mellon University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She joined Princeton faculty in the fall of 2007.

Her first book, To Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors After the Civil War, was awarded the H. L. Mitchell Award in 1998 from the Southern Historical Association, the Letitia Brown Memorial Book Prize in 1997 from the Association of Black Women’s Historians and the Book of the Year Award in 1997 from the International Labor History Association. Most recently, she released, Bound in Wedlock: Slave and Free Black Marriage in the Nineteenth Century. Professor Hunter is also co-authoring: The Making of People: a History if African Americans with Robin D. G. Kelley and Earl Lewis under contract with W. W. Norton Press.

Naomi Murakawa

Associate Professor, Department of African American Studies

Naomi Murakawa is an associate professor of African American Studies at Princeton University. She studies the reproduction of racial inequality in 20th and 21st century American politics, with specialization in crime policy and the carceral state. She is the author of The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America (Oxford University Press, 2014), and her work has appeared in Law & Society Review, Theoretical Criminology, Du Bois Review, and several edited volumes. She has received fellowships from Columbia Law School’s Center for the Study of Law and Culture, as well as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Health Policy Research Program.

Prior to joining African American Studies at Princeton, she taught in the Department of Political Science at the University of Washington. Of how book design has influenced the production and reception of African American literature from World War II to the present. Nishikawa has published widely on modern African American print culture, with a particular emphasis on newspapers, magazines, and independent publishers.

Recent publications include an essay on Black experimental novelist William Melvin Kelley in American Literary History (2018) and an article on Black Arts movement editor Hoyt W. Fuller in Chicago Review (2016). Nishikawa has also contributed chapters to the forthcoming collections Black Cultural Production after Civil Rights (Illinois), African American Expression in Print and Digital Culture (Wisconsin), and Are You Entertained? New Essays on Black Popular Culture in the Twenty-First Century (Duke).

Kinohi Nishikawa

Associate Professor & John E. Annan Bicentennial Preceptor, Department of English & Department of African American Studies

Kinohi Nishikawa specializes in 20th century African American literature, book history, and popular culture. He earned his bachelor’s degree in English from Dartmouth College and his doctoral degree in literature from Duke University. At Princeton Nishikawa teaches courses on African American humor, African American authors (James Baldwin and Afro-Asian studies).

Nishikawa’s first book, Street Players: Black Pulp Fiction and the Making of a Literary Underground, was published by the University of Chicago Press in 2018. His major work in progress is Black Paratext, a study of book design that has influenced the production and reception of African American literature from World War II to the present. Nishikawa has published widely on modern African American print culture, with a particular emphasis on newspapers, magazines, and independent publishers.

Recent publications include an essay on Black experimental novelist William Melvin Kelley in American Literary History (2018) and an article on Black Arts movement editor Hoyt W. Fuller in Chicago Review (2016). Nishikawa has also contributed chapters to the forthcoming collections Black Cultural Production after Civil Rights (Illinois), African American Expression in Print and Digital Culture (Wisconsin), and Are You Entertained? New Essays on Black Popular Culture in the Twenty-First Century (Duke).

Chika O. Okeke-Agulu

Professor, Department of Art and Archaeology & Department of African American Studies

Chika O. Okeke-Agulu is Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Art & Archaeology. He specializes in classical, modern, and contemporary African and African Diaspora art history and theory.
He previously taught at The Pennsylvania State University, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and Yaba College of Technology, Lagos. He is the author of Ubora Uchechukwu: Line, Image, Text (Skira Editions, 2016); Postcolonial Art History: Art and Decolonization in Twentieth-Century Nigeria (Duke, 2015); and (with Okwui Enwezor), Contemporary African Art Since 1990 (Damiani, 2010). He is coeditor of Essays on Contemporary Art and Architecture, a Kehinde Wiley in Honour of Dennis Nwoki (Goldline & Jacobs, 2012); and Who Knows Tomorrow (Kehinde Wiley, 2010). In 2006, he edited the first ever issue of African Arts dedicated to African Modernism, and his writings have appeared in African Art Since 1980 (Damiani, 2010). He is coeditor of Nwoko: Line, Image, Text, and the blog of the African Studies Review. He has also worked on the Advisory Board of the Center for the Study of Visual Arts, National Council on the Arts, University of South Florida, Tampa, 2016; Frank Jewett Mather Alumnus Award for Outstanding Service to the Arts (The College of Arts and Sciences, University of Pennsylvania, 2007). In 2005, Professor Okeke-Agulu was appointed the Robert Sterling Clark Visiting Professor of Art History at Williams College, and Fellow at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute (2006). He was a Woodrow Wilson Career Enhancement Fellow (2010). Among his many awards and prizes are: Honorable Mention, The Arnold Rubin Outstanding Publication (annual) Award; (Arts Council of African Studies, 2017); The Melville J. Herskovits Prize for the most important scholarly work in African Studies published in English during the preceding year (African Studies Association, 2016); Distinguished Alumni Award for Outstanding Service to the Arts (The College of Arts, University of South Florida, Tampa, 2016); Frank Jewett Mather Award for Distinction in Art Criticism (College Art Association, 2016); and Outstanding Dissertation (biennial) award (Arts Council of African Studies, 2007). Okeke-Agulu serves on the board of directors of College Art Association, the Advisory Board of the Center for the Study of Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, the executive board of Princeton in Africa, and editorial boards of African Studies Review and Journal of Igbo Studies.

2019-2020 Achievement

Chika Okeke-Agulu is Named 2020 Kirk Varnedoe Visiting Professor at the Institute of Fine Arts, NYU

Imani Perry
Hughes-Rogers Professor of African American Studies, Department of African American Studies

The Hughes-Rogers Professor of African American Studies and faculty associate in the Program in Law and Public Affairs and Gender and Sexuality Studies at Princeton, Perry has written and taught on a number of topics regarding race and African American culture. Using methods of discussion and analysis from various fields of study—including law, literary and cultural studies, music, and the social sciences—Perry’s work often focuses on contested issues such as the influence of race on law, literature and music. In her work, Perry has taken on complicated and timely issues. In her 2011 book, More Beautiful and More Terrible: The Embrace and Transcendence of Racial Inequality in the United States, for example, Perry discusses the ongoing intersection of race and politics in America.

In addition to More Beautiful, More Terrible, Perry is the author of Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop and We Forever Stand: A History of the Black National Anthem, a cultural history of the Black national anthem, “Lift Every Voice and Sing.” Her biography of Lorraine Hansberry, Looking for Lorraine: The Radiant Life of Lorraine Hansberry was published in September 2018. In 2019, she published one of the most anticipated books of the year: Breathe: A Letter To My Sons: an unflinching challenge to society to see Black children as deserving of humanity.

Perry received a bachelor’s degree from Yale University. From there, she went on to obtain both her Juris Doctor degree from Harvard Law School and a doctoral degree in the history of American civilization from Harvard University.

2019-2020 Achievement

BOOK PUBLISHED IN 2020

Breathe: A Letter to My Sons

Awards & Achievements

• 2019 National Book Critics Circle Award

In her most recent book, Breathe: A Letter to My Sons, Perry discusses the ongoing intersection of race and politics in America.

2020 NAACP Image Award Nominee - Outstanding Literary Work (Nonfiction)

Best of Lists: Best Nonfiction Books of 2019 (Msika Reviews)

25 Can’t Miss Books of 2019 (The Undated)
Autumn M. Womack
Assistant Professor, Department of African American Studies and Department of English

Professor Autumn Womack specializes in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century African American literature, with a particular research and teaching focus on the intersection of visual technology, race, and literary culture. She earned her doctoral degree in English and Comparative Literature from Columbia University, and from 2015-2016 she was a postdoctoral fellow in Rutgers University’s Department of English. Most recently, Professor Womack was a 2016–2017 faculty fellow at Penn State University’s Center for the History of Information (CHI).

Professor Womack’s book manuscript, Reform Visions: Race, Visuality, and Literature in the Progressive Era, examines the important formal and technical features of emergent visual technologies such as photography, motion pictures, and social surveys to Black literary culture from the 1880s through the 1920s. She has published on this and other topics in Black Camera: An International Film Journal. Women and Performance, American Literary History, and Small Axe: Salons. Her contribution to a published roundtable on “Racism’s Afterlives” is forthcoming in J19: A Journal of 19th Century Americanists and her exploration of antebellum data visualization in The Anglo-African Magazine will appear in Cambridge University’s volume Transitions in African American Literature, 1850–1865.

Like her research, Professor Womack’s teaching is interdisciplinary in its scope. In addition to regularly teaching courses in the area of 19th-century African American literary culture, she has taught and developed courses on race and visual culture, literature and surveillance, as well as a single author course on Toni Morrison.

2019-2020 Achievement
Autumn Womack Named 2020-2023 Charles G. Osgood University Preceptor
Our Faculty

Associated Faculty

Dannelle Gutarra-Cordero  
Lecturer of African American Studies

Jacob S. Dlamini  
Assistant Professor of Department of History

Paul Frymer  
Professor of Department of Politics

Simon Gikandi  
Robert Schirmer Professor of English, Department of English

Dara Z. Strovlovitch  
Associate Professor of Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies

William A. Gleason  
Hughes-Rogers Professor of Department of English

Judith Weisenfeld  
Agnes Sherburne Young Professor of Religion, Department of Religion

J. Nicole Shelton  
Stuart Professor of Department of Psychology

Keith A. Wailoo  
Chair & Henry Putnam University Professor of History and Public Affairs, Department of History

Stacey A. Sinclair  
Professor of Psychology and Public Affairs, Department of Psychology & Woodrow Wilson School

Leonard Wantchekon  
Professor of Department of Politics

Monica Y. Youn  
Lecturer in Creative Writing, Lewis Center for the Arts
Faculty Emeritus

Kwame Anthony Appiah
Lawrence S. Rockefeller University Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus

Toni Morrison
Robert F. Goheen Professor in the Humanities, Emerita

Nell Painter
Edkins Professor of American History, Emerita

Albert Raboteau
Henry A. Adams Professor of Religion, Department of Religion

IN MEMORIAM (1931 - 2019)

Valerie Smith
Woodrow Wilson Professor of Literature and President Swarthmore College

IN MEMORIAM (1946 - 2002)

IN MEMORIAM (1935 - 2019)

Visiting Faculty

Kevin Wolfe
Citizen Postdoctoral Fellow, Society of Fellows

Mari N. Crabbtre
Visiting Research Scholar

James R. Jones
Visiting Research Scholar

Claudia Tate
Professor of English and African American Studies

Howard Taylor
Professor of Department of Sociology

Cornel West
Professor of African-American Studies
Princeton scholars discuss race, politics and the 2020 presidential election

by Denise Valenti, Office of Communications

Thursday, February 13, 2020

Eddie Glaude Jr., the James S. McDonnell Distinguished University Professor, professor of African American Studies and chair of African American Studies, moderated the discussion during a luncheon that included University staff members and community members. He was joined on stage by LaFleur Stephens-Dougan and Ali Valenzuela, both assistant professors of politics. The panel was organized in honor of Black History Month and featured Eddie Glaude Jr., the James S. McDonnell Distinguished University Professor, professor of African American Studies and chair of African American Studies, and Ali Valenzuela, assistant professor of politics. The discussion was about race, politics, and the 2020 presidential election.

Eddie Glaude Jr., left, the James S. McDonnell Distinguished University Professor, professor of African American Studies and chair of African American Studies, moderated the discussion during a luncheon that included University staff members and community members. He was joined on stage by LaFleur Stephens-Dougan and Ali Valenzuela, both assistant professors of politics.

“This conversation is beyond theory and academics,” said Tonya Gibson, co-president of the Princetonians of Color Network and a web project manager in the Office of Information Technology, who introduced the panel. “It impacts our everyday lives and the lives of generations to come.”

Professor, professor of African American Studies and chair of African American Studies, moderated the discussion during a luncheon that included University staff members and community members. He was joined on stage by LaFleur Stephens-Dougan and Ali Valenzuela, both assistant professors of politics.

“The last two Democratic debates have not had a single word discussed about immigration,” he said. “And what’s going to be the number one issue that [President Donald] Trump and his allies try to use to divide the country? It’s going to be immigration.”

Doug Stephens-Dougan and Ali Valenzuela are likely to abandon candidates like former Vice President Joe Biden — who is counting on Black support in later races — if they perform poorly.

“We live in a moment that is fraught,” he said. “We live in a country that feels like it’s in a cold Civil War. Ugliness, the underbelly of American politics, is pretty much in clear view. The ghosts of the past haunt out in the open.”

He noted that at the beginning of the presidential campaign, the Democratic field was the most diverse in history, but that its Black, Latino and Asian candidates have since dropped out. Dougan-Stephens said the diversity of the early states was likely a reaction to nativism and racism, but that, “Some of us might have overestimated our fellow citizens’ commitment to a diverse field.”

Valenzuela said that having a remaining all-white field of candidates is “disappointing,” particularly because the identities of the candidates influence the types of conversations that come to the fore during the debates.

“I think the road to the White House runs through Black and Latino voters,” Valenzuela said. “Turnout for these groups of voters is going to be key. How strongly they support the Democratic candidate also is going to matter.”

Black voters are likely to abandon candidates like former Vice President Joe Biden — who is counting on Black support in later races — if they perform poorly.

“I want the road to the White House runs through Black and Latino voters in 2020,” Valenzuela said. “Turnout for these groups of voters is going to be key. How strongly they support the Democratic candidate also is going to matter.”

Dougan-Stephens said Black voters tend to be pragmatic and realistic when thinking about this issue. Another way in which a lack of diversity has played out thus far in the campaign is in the early primaries. Iowa and New Hampshire, the first two states to select candidates, are overwhelmingly white, the panelists said.

“They are playing an outsized role in the process,” Doug Stephens-Dougan said, noting that a bandwagon effect can create momentum for candidates early on. “It has an impact in terms of fundraising ability, media attention. It’s really problematic.”

“Can we all just agree that caucuses have to go?” Valenzuela said. As far as what role voters of color will play in the primaries and general elections, Doug Stephens-Dougan said Black voters tend to be pragmatic and are likely to abandon candidates like former Vice President Joe Biden — who is counting on Black support in later races — if they perform poorly.

“There are limits to what ordinary people are willing to endure to secure the bottom line of their employers. Chris Christie, a Trump supporter and a former New Jersey governor, pleaded with Americans on May 5 to risk disease and death by returning to work. ‘Everybody wants to save every life they can’; he said, but we’ve got to let some of these folks get back to work. Otherwise ‘we’re going to destroy the American way of life in these families.’

The ‘American Way of Life’ is shaping up to be a Battleground


Monday, May 18, 2020

There are limits to what ordinary people are willing to endure to secure the bottom line of their employers. Chris Christie, a Trump supporter and a former New Jersey governor, pleaded with Americans on May 5 to risk disease and death by returning to work. ‘Everybody wants to save every life they can’; he said, but we’ve got to let some of these folks get back to work. Otherwise ‘we’re going to destroy the American way of life in these families.’

The ‘American way of life’ is shaping up to be a battleground.

On one side is the working class. From Amazon warehouse workers to striking sanitation workers in New Orleans , there are limits to what ordinary people are willing to endure to secure the bottom line of
buried within this is the false notion that the U.S. is free from the work hard enough. that when people have not been successful it is because they did not creates success. of course, the contrapositive is also believed to be true, individualism and self-sufficiency where hard work is valorized and social welfare programs would be worse than the pandemic. at the core for republicans, the “american way of life” as one with big government will have to be provided by the federal government. it is that simple.

but if we expect tens of millions of people to stay at home for even longer, that is possible only if people have access to income, food, stable housing that would mean if people cannot work, then these things will have to be provided by the federal government. it is that simple.

for republicans, the “american way of life” as one with big government social welfare programs would be worse than the pandemic. at the core of our vision of the united states is a celebration of supposed nard individualization and self-sufficiency where hard work is valorized and creates success. of course, the contrapositive is also believed to be true, that when people have not been successful it is because they did not work hard enough.

buried within this is the false notion that the U.S. is free from the hierarchies of class. instead, republicans and most mainstream democrats would argue, america has fluid social mobility where a person’s fortunes determines the heights of his or her success. this powerful narrative has motivated millions to migrate to this country. but for tens of millions, this view of the “american way of life” has no bearing on the challenges on their lives.

typically, the contradictions of our society are buried beneath the american flag, suffocating hubs and triumphalist claims of exceptionalism. but what about those who are not lucky enough to have had all of the country’s problems to the center of american life? it has also highlighted how our political class, disproportionately wealthy and white, dilutes for weeks, only to produce underwhelming “marche” bills that, at best, do not more than barely maintain the status quo.

the median wealth of a u.s. senator was $3.2 million as of 2018, and $900,000 for a member of the house of representatives. these elected officials voted for one-time stimulus checks of $1,200 as if that was enough to sustain workers, officials voted for one-time stimulus checks of $1,200 as if that was enough to sustain workers, whose median income is $43,973 and whose lives are now nearly two months into various mandates to shelter-in-place and not work outside their homes. as a result, a tale of two pandemics has emerged.

the crisis spotlights the vicious class divide cleaving through our society and the ways in which it is also pernicious with racism and xenophobia. african americans endure disproportionate exposure to the disease, and an alarming number of videos show black people being brutalized by the police for not wearing masks or social distancing while white people do not share the same fate. black people do not share the same fate. in new york city, 92 percent of those arrested for violating rules regarding social distancing and 82 percent of those receiving summons for the same offense have been black or latino.

our society imagines itself to be impervious to the rigidity of class, but it is overwhelmed with suffering, deprivation and hunger. food banks across the country report extraordinary shortages of food, as workers, unable to work are unable to rebuild of the image of a country of universal abundance. according to one report, a food bank along the affluent new jersey shore has set up a test of a policy not for the pandemic but for the needs of u.s. workers.

everywhere, the signs of a crisis that looks like the great depression are impossible to hide. in agricultural towns, cars formed half-mile-long lines in two different directions, waiting to pick up free food. in san antonio, 10,000 cars waited for hours to receive food from a food bank. even where restrictions are being relaxed, food access to food stamps while hunger is on the rise. nearly one in five children and 17 percent of those under 18 haven’t enough to eat.

that “way of life” may also begin to look like mass homelessness. through the first five days of april, 31 percent of tenants nationwide had failed to pay their rent. and while more people paid in may, continued payments seem unsustainable as millions fall into unemployement. forty-three million households, including 25 million in the u.s., but there is no public rental assistance for residents who lose the ability to afford their rent. with only a few weeks left on many eviction moratoriums, there is a thin line between a place to shelter in and homelessness for tens of millions of americans. many elected officials in the republican party have access to covid-19 testing, quality health care and the ultimate cushion of wealth to protect them. yet they suggest others take the “risk” of returning to work as an act of patriotism necessary to regnerate the economy. this is duplicitous and skeptical regarding the moral responsibility of u.s. workers.

while the recent stimulus bills doled out trillions of dollars to corporate america and the “financial sector,” the smallest allocations have provided cash, food, rent or health care for citizens. the gaps in the thin membrane of a safety net for ordinary americans have made it impossible to do anything other than work to return.

this isn’t just malfeasance or incompetence. part of the “american way of life” for at least some of these elected officials is keeping workers just poor enough to ensure that the “essential” work force shows up each day. in place of decent wages, decent pay, robust distribution of personal protection equipment and the simplest guarantees of health and safety, these lawmakers use the threat of starvation and homelessness to keep the work force intact.

in the case of the meatpacking industry, there is not even a veil of choice, as these jobs are inexplicably labeled essential, as if life cannot go on without meat consumption. the largely immigrant and black meatpacking work force has been treated barely better than the carcasses they process. they are completely expendable. thousands have tested positive, but the plants chug along, while employers offer the bare minimum by way of safety protections.

according to workers, “there were any question about the conditions endured in meatpacking plants, consider that 145 meat inspectors have been diagnosed with covid-19 and three have died. the statements of the two senators from south carolina, Lindsey Graham and Tim Scott, vociferously opposing the extension of $600 supplemental payments to unemployment insurance, offer another stark example of how workers are being compelled to return to unsafe work environments. Mr. Scott referred to the supplement as a “perverse incentive” to not work. he and Mr. Graham argued that the payments
 FEATURES ARTICLE

Can You Be Black and Listen to This? by Autumn Womack, Los Angeles Review of Books

Thursday, Jun 4, 2020

I return to Elizabeth Alexander’s 1994 essay “Can You Be BLACK and Look at This?” often. Sometimes by go where I don’t reach for it. Other times, the essay pops into my mind without warning and I find myself frantically searching my computer for a PDF. This is one of those times.

There are so many reasons why, right now, Alexander’s meditation on African Americans’ long relationship to images of anti-Black violence feels especially urgent: the perpetually growing body of data that show just how disproportionately Black and brown people have been affected by COVID-19; the still fresh accounts of Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor’s deaths; and last week, the cell phone footage of George Floyd’s murder that circulated virally. So I reached for Alexander, again. This was not altogether surprising. Even though the essay is nearly 30 years old, it is still timely. It is an essay about the ways that Blackness and visual media converge to produce Black life as a problem that must be solved through, among other tactics, deadly force. Recorded from a distance, the 81 seconds of footage of King’s beating is not so much the point of the story as a reminder of the anti-Black violence. The video of King’s beating is not so much the point of the story as a reminder of the anti-Black violence. The video of King’s beating is not so much the point of the story as a reminder of the anti-Black violence. The video of King’s beating is not so much the point of the story as a reminder of the anti-Black violence. The video of King’s beating is not so much the point of the story as a reminder of the anti-Black violence. The video of King’s beating is not so much the point of the story as a reminder of the anti-Black violence. The video of King’s beating is not so much the point of the story as a reminder of the anti-Black violence. The video of King’s beating is not so much the point of the story as a reminder of the anti-Black violence. The video of King’s beating is not so much the point of the story as a reminder of the anti-Black violence. The video of King’s beating is not so much the point of the story as a reminder of the anti-Black violence. The video of King’s beating is not so much the point of the story as a reminder of the anti-Black violence. The video of King’s beating is not so much the point of the story as a reminder of the anti-Black violence. The video of King’s beating is not so much the point of the story as a reminder of the anti...
events. Hearing the videos might have disrupted, she suggests, the process ofspectatorship that has always been at work in the process that transmutes *Black* life into a disposuable object. The promise of sound is that it interrupts the (ir)reductibility of violence and reenacts the event in real time, a time when the terror in King’s voice and the cries of witnesses might have paved the way for a different outcome.

I return to Alexander as I avoid the viral video of this atrocity: a man kneeling as Floyd gasps for air, calls for his mother, and repeats the phrase, “I can’t breathe.” Or at least this is what I’ve read and heard he says. Like so many of my friends, I have not watched the video. The decision was not so much a kind of non-decision, which, Elizabeth Alexander helps me remember, owes to the deep vulnerability and knowledge that is lodged in air, calls for his mother, and repeats the phrase, “I can’t breathe.” Or at least this is what I’ve read and heard he says. Like so many of my friends, I have not watched the video. The decision was not so much a kind of non-decision, which, Elizabeth Alexander helps me remember, owes to the deep vulnerability and knowledge that is lodged in my flesh. Witnessing doesn’t necessarily require watching.

If we have been able to avoid watching videos of anti-*Black* violence, it is more difficult to avoid listening to them. Sometimes we hear the voice of the victim, sometimes it’s the unintentional sound of the recorder; other times it’s a static, a kind of low frequency that is equal parts social life and technology. And when we hear the voices become iconic in their own right. Nor was it an overt act of resistance. I was too exhausted for that. It was a kind of non-decision, which, Elizabeth Alexander helps me remember, owes to the deep vulnerability and knowledge that is lodged in my flesh. Witnessing doesn’t necessarily require watching.

As demonstrations against police brutality and systemic racism have erupted across the country and around the world, many protesters have taken aim at physical representations of the oppression. Black people have faced for centuries: statues and monuments. Protesters have torn down Confederate monuments in areas across the country, from Virginia to Alabama to Washington, D.C., and beyond. By the more than fifty monuments that have been removed over the past month, the vast majority were taken down by officials feeling pressure from their constituencies, including on the campuses of the University of Alabama and Ole Miss, in Indiana, and in Florida. On Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia, multiple monuments are coming down. On June 10, protesters toppled a statue of Jefferson Davis. After a state law passed allowing local officials to remove statues, Richmond mayor Levar Stoney used his emergency powers to order the removal of Confederate statues on city property. Within a week, four of the five towering Confederate statues on Monument Avenue have been taken down. On June 12, Mayor Rahm Emanuel ordered the removal of a 65-foot-tall monument to Robert E. Lee that stands on state property, though a court has temporarily blocked his efforts. Not to be deterred, protesters have sprayed painted messages on the base of the monument and lit up the massive structure with pictures of George Floyd, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglass.

And it is more than just statues: institutions are casting aside Confederate symbolism of all kinds. The Navy has moved to ban Confederate symbols from bases and ships, while NASCAR has banned the Confederate flag from its events. This week, the Maryland General Assembly killed the state flag, which was adopted in 1864 and bears the Confederate emblem. People around the world have brought new attention to the symbolism of all kinds. The Navy has moved to ban Confederate symbols from bases and ships, while NASCAR has banned the Confederate flag from its events. This week, the Maryland General Assembly killed the state flag, which was adopted in 1864 and bears the Confederate emblem. People around the world have brought new attention to the symbolism of all kinds.

This movement driving people to the streets is not just about one horrific police killing—it is about challenging the very systems rooted in America and its history that dehumanizes and denigrates Black life, that set the conditions for police brutality. Confederate statues represent the myths and lies that underlie the persistent racism in American society. To tear down these symbols of historical oppression is to declare a new age, one in which we confront—rather than glorify—our history and confront the reality of who we are in the present.

Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia, the former capital of the Confederacy, epitomizes the problem with Confederate monuments. Until Mayor Stoney initiated the removal of its statues, the street was lined with five Confederate figures: Jefferson Davis, Stonewall Jackson, Robert E. Lee, J.E.B. Stuart, and Matthew Fontaine Maury. The street was designed in 1890 as part of a neighborhood that excluded Black residents for decades. Once a symbol of the Lost Cause, the street can now represent a national turning point.

In the wake of the Civil War, America faced a choice: to engage in the project of Reconstruction and redefine the nation as a true democracy for all citizens—including freed Black Americans—or to preserve the idea of white supremacy. By the 1890s, when the Robert E. Lee statute was erected in Richmond, it was clear the nation had chosen the latter. The Redemption Era took hold as white supremacy regained political and social control, and slavery morphed into Jim Crow segregation. Establishing these statues as symbols of a time where the terror in King’s voice and the cries of witnesses might have paved the way for a different outcome.

Reclaiming History
by Julia Chaffers, AAS

Friday, Jul 10, 2020

As demonstrations against police brutality and systemic racism have erupted across the country and around the world, many protesters have taken aim at physical representations of the oppression. Black people have faced for centuries: statues and monuments. Protesters have torn down Confederate monuments in areas across the country, from Virginia to Alabama to Washington, D.C., and beyond. After the more than fifty monuments that have been removed over the past month, the vast majority were taken down by officials feeling pressure from their constituencies, including on the campuses of the University of Alabama and Ole Miss, in Indiana, and in Florida. On Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia, multiple monuments are coming down. On June 10, protesters toppled a statue of Jefferson Davis. After a state law passed allowing local officials to remove statues, Richmond mayor Levar Stoney used his emergency powers to order the removal of Confederate statues on city property. Within a week, four of the five towering Confederate statues on Monument Avenue have been taken down. On June 12, Mayor Rahm Emanuel ordered the removal of a 65-foot-tall monument to Robert E. Lee that stands on state property, though a court has temporarily blocked his efforts. Not to be deterred, protesters have sprayed painted messages on the base of the monument and lit up the massive structure with pictures of George Floyd, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglass.
Publications & Articles

M. Levin explains, "the Confederate monuments dedicated throughout the South from 1880 to 1930 were never intended to be passive commemorations of a dead past; rather, they helped do the work of justifying segregation and relegating African Americans to second-class status."

This context is vital to understanding the impetus for today’s pressure to remove these statues. The construction of Confederate monuments was meant as a message to tell Americans what and whom white people valued. Such efforts intensified as Black people gained more rights and moved closer towards equality throughout the twentieth century. Confederate statues are not simply about Southern heritage or pride—to say so would be to ignore the Black Southerners who have fought for generations against slavery and white supremacy.

The pervasiveness of Confederate symbols in the North makes clear that these symbols are about race, not geography. For example, the Massachusetts suburb of Walpole, a town nearby mine, chose the "Rebel" as its mascot in the 1960s. Up until the 1990s, Confederate flags adorned school teams’ uniforms, filled the stands, and appeared in yearbooks. Until a few years ago, the yard next door to Walpole High School featured a large Confederate flag—whenever my high school teams played against Walpole, we drove past it on our way to the game. Even this year, school officials had to warn families not to bring "rebel flags" to the graduation ceremony. Not only was Massachusetts never part of the Confederacy; it fancied itself the birthplace of America; the pinnacle of its values of democracy and freedom. That Confederate symbolism seems so large here, tells you all you need to know about its purpose.

The pervasiveness of Confederate imagery across the country is just one symptom of the larger disease of American racism, embedded in the American society, one that supports white power. The Lost Cause myth is that in truth, the Confederacy was wholly opposed to the American Dream and was the failure of our nation's promise of people's misunderstanding of history. Sanitizing the past by glorifying those who oppressed others impedes progress today. Think about all the erased history that has to occur for people to interpret a flag correctly against the government its leaders had sworn to protect and serve, the Confederate States of America and its white-supremacist government waged a four-year-war against the United States of America and the principles Americans value most highly."
## BY THE NUMBERS

### 2019-2020 Facts & Figures

Some quick data points about the growing Department of African American Studies.

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(Ozichi Okerom’20, Asia Matthews’21, Irene Ross’20, Nathan Poland’20, Katherine Powell’20, Oluwatoyin Edogun’20, Kadence Mitchell’20, Matthew Oakland’20)