UIC

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2017

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FACULTY IN THE NEWS

Professor Barbara Ransby Named in Top Women in Higher Education

Ransby, who has faculty appointments in African American studies, gender and women's studies, and history, joins a select group of scholars and administrators honored for their "significant contributions to higher education and beyond."

Ransby, a historian, writer and longtime political activist, also serves as director of the Social Justice Initiative at UIC, a campuswide program that aims to build on socially conscious research and interests across different disciplines, improve connections with community partners, and serve students interested in social justice work.

She has published widely in scholarly and popular publications and is a frequent guest lecturer internationally. Her books include an award-winning biography of civil rights activist Ella Baker, titled *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*, and *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson*.

In November Ransby began a two-year term as president of the National Women's Studies Association, which supports the production and dissemination of knowledge about women and gender through teaching, learning, research and service in academic and other settings.

She serves on the editorial board of several academic journals and is editor-in-chief of SOULS, a critical journal of black politics, culture and society.

FACULTY IN THE NEWS

Roderick Ferguson Elected President of American Studies Association

The Departments of African American Studies and Gender and Women's Studies are pleased to announce the election of their colleague, Professor Roderick Ferguson, to the post of President-Elect of the American Studies Association from July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018.

The following year Professor Ferguson will become the organization's President, and then he will serve as past-President, for a total of three years. Ferguson will lead the largest academic organization dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of U.S. culture and history in a global context. The American Studies Association values: Original research, teaching, critical thinking, public discussion, and dissent. We share a commitment to viewing U.S. history and culture from multiple perspectives and taking a stand on issues of importance and broad consensus.

Professor Ferguson joined the UIC faculty in Fall 2014 and also serves as the co-Principle Investigator for the Racialized Body Research Cluster.

Cedric Johnson Publishes Various Articles Over the Summer

Johnson recently published two articles in T*he Jacobin*. The first on the Hurricane Harvey disaster, Co-authored with Thomas Jessen Adams of the University of Sydneyhe second a magazine interview he conducted with James Forman, Jr. about Foman's new book, Locking Up Our Own.

Johnson also published an article entitled "The Panthers Can't Save Us Now" in the inaugural issue of the journal Catalyst

Aside from the published articles, Johnson also appeared on various podcast segments such as *The Chauncy DeVega Show* where he discussed Kathryn Bigelow's *Detroit* and Jordan Peele's *Get Out.*

DEPARTMENT NEWS

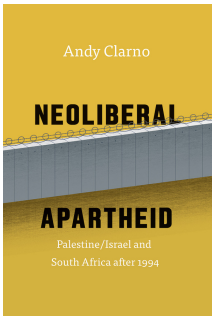
Helen Jun New Associate Head for African American Studies Department

The African American Studies department is pleased to announce that Helen Jun, who has appointments in both African American Studies and English, will now serve as the associate head of the department.

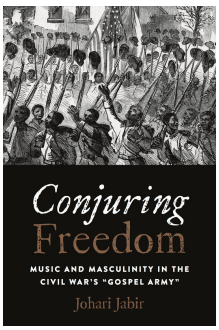
Jun will be holding office hours every Thursday from 12:30-2:30 in the Conference Room for all AAST majors and minors.

Johari Jabir, Andy Clarno, and Rodrick Ferguson Publish New Books

The African American Studies department congratulates Andy Clarno, Johari Jabir, and Rodrick Ferguson on the publication of their new books.



Clarno's work *Neoliberal Apartheid* analyzes the political, economic, and social changes in South Africa and Palestine/Israel since 1994.

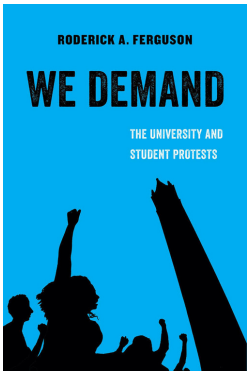


Jabir's publication *Conjuring Freedom: Music and Masculinity in the Civil War's "Gospel Army"* analyzes the songs of the 1st South Carolina Volunteers, a regiment of Black soldiers who met nightly in the performance of the ring shout.

Andy Clarno Promoted to Associate Professor of African American Studies

Andy Clarno, who also has an appointment in Sociology, was recently promoted to Associate Professor of African American Studies.

Ferguson's work *We Demand: The University and Student Protests (American Studies Now: Critical Histories of the Present)* demonstrates that less than fifty years since the pivotal shift in the academy, the university is moving away from "the people" in all their diversity.



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR COURTNEY BONAM

Assistant Professor Courtney Bonam speaks about her recent work, which explores implicit racial bias and racialized physical space.

AAST: How long have you been at UIC?

COURTNEY BONAM: I started as an assistant professor in psychology in January 2012 and my joint appointment with African American studies is starting this Fall.

AAST: So the work that you do in psychology, how does it relate to African American studies?

CB: My work really focuses on the racial biases that people hold and the ways in which they are often expressed indirectly. Most of the work I do involves studying how White Americans' racial stereotypes shape their perceptions and judgments of Black Americans and the places where they live. For example, in my research I have used hypothetical scenario experiments to examine how people's stereotypes about the amenities found in Black neighborhoods can affect the value of homes owned by Black people. Using this same method, I've also examined how assumptions about how much industrial pollution Black (vs. White) neighborhoods experience could lead people to be more open to further polluting Black neighborhoods, rather than protecting them from additional environmental harms. With all of the work I do, I'm studying social psychological processes that affect Black life in America today.

AAST: Do you ever look at how the black community lives?

CB: Yes – I am just starting to examine Black Americans' stereotypes about both Black and White physical spaces, like neighborhoods or schools. I'm getting ready to collect data with a national sample of Black Americans that will also examine how Black racial identity may (or may not) affect the way in which Black people apply the stereotypes they hold to, for example, decisions about home values and where they want to live.

AAST: Do you think that it is possible to not have deep-seeded biases against other

CB: Yes. I think it depends on how you're socialized, for example, the conversations that families have (or don't have) about race. I also think that being able to directly interact with people from different backgrounds can help combat some of the distorted cultural representations that we're often exposed to, which I believe play an important role in reinforcing racial biases. Also, some of my research shows that learning more about the history of racism in America can help White Americans recognize that racism is still a problem today. I think this willingness to recognize the present problem is another way to reduce one's own biases.

To continue reading this spotlight, click here

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

CANISHA RUSS

Promise Prize scholar Canisha Russ is currently a Music Business major and African American Studies minor. She speaks to us about her experience at the Change, Create, Transform Summit she atteneded this past July.

AAST: Tell us about yourself, what is your major/minor and how did you come to choose them?

CANISHA RUSS: Well, I'm a music business major and an African American Studies minor. I chose music business because I've been singing since I was a kid, so, I originally wanted to be a singer when i grew up. But now I changed it around, because I figured it would be more, I don't want to say profitable ….but…you know it would be kind of profitable to major in music business so I can do the management side of it and manage musicians. Like I want to manage singers and stuff like that since I study singing so I can help them learn how to sing and then like manage them and push their music, and then also like perform on the side.

And the African American studies minor obviously came from this past semester. I thought like I was interested in taking African American Studies and classes, and since I was going to be taking quite a few anyway, I figured I would minor in it, you know?

AAST: Okay, great. Now that we know a little about you, tell us about about the award you received this past school year.

CR: So, It's the Marie Nesbitt Promise Prize Award and it is for the organization Change, Create, Transform. The award was $5,000 and a trip to Washington D.C over the summer. The person who runs the organization is named Vicki Prior and the point of the trip was basically to have a summit. You sit down and have round table discussions with other scholars about current events that are like plaguing the African American community and stuff like that. Politics and everything. We do excursions on the side, like going to museums and restaurants. We went to an African restaurant and ate Kenyan food and had ambassadors speak to us.

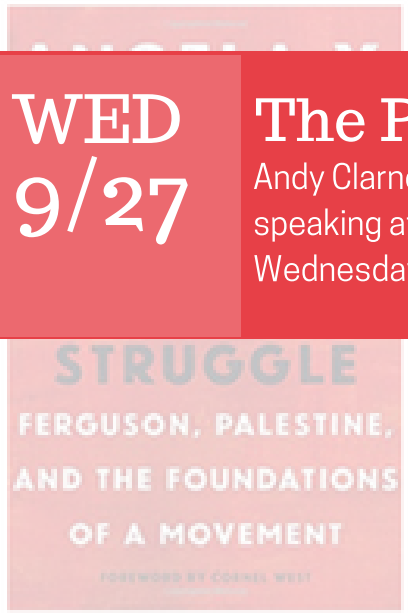
I saw all of your pictures, you looked like you had an amazing time.

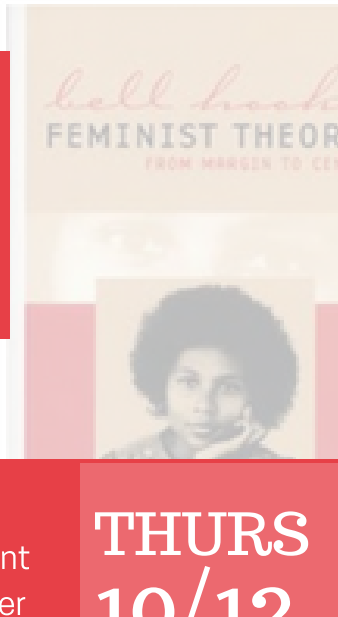
AAST: What was your favorite place out of all of the ones you visited?

CR: Um, actually it was the African American Museum. There were so many floors and so many different things to see in there. I spent a lot of time on the fifth floor, so I didn't get to see everything [laughs]. The fifth floor was really geared towards my major so that's why I spent so much time there. But I did see the bottom three concourses which goes form slavery all the way up to I believe Obama's inauguration. And then after that you have a bunch of floors dedicated to things like sports and entertainment.

To continue reading this spotlight, click here

SAVE THE DATE

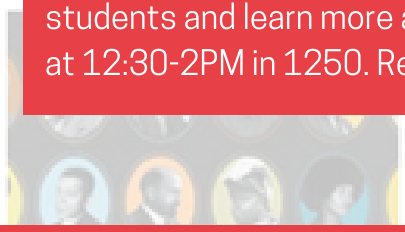


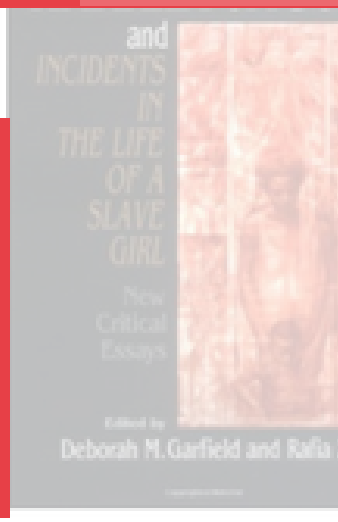


WED 9/27

The Politics of Policing Panel

Andy Clarno, Patrisia Marcias-Rojas , and Cedric Johnson will be speaking at an event organized by the UIC sociology department on Wednesday 9/27 at 12PM in BSB 4105





Department Mixer

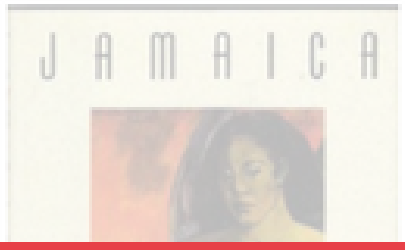
All majors, minors, and peopleinterested in the department are welcomed to join us to meet with the faculty and other students and learn more about the program Thursday 10/12 at 12:30-2PM in 1250. Refreshments will be provided.

THURS 10/12

TUES 10/24

Conversations with Andrea Ritchie

Andrea Ritchie will be discussing her new publication *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color* at 12:30PM. Her new work examines police violence, racial profiling, and immigration enforcement against Black women, Indigenous women, and other women of color. Location will be announced soon.



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