



*The*  
James Weldon Johnson Institute  
*for the*  
Study of Race and Difference

EMORY UNIVERSITY

SPRING/SUMMER 2018

## In this Issue

Letter from the Director

Meeting the Moment 2

About the 2017–2018 Visiting Scholars

Amrita Chakrabarti Myers: The Freedom Writer 3

Ashanté Reese: Dreaming a More Just World 6

Ashley Brown: Illuminating Athletes' Place in Society and History 9

Derek Handley: Sharing the History That Speaks to Him 11

Felipe Hinojosa: Church Takeovers and Their Impact on Latino Religion 13

Justin Hosbey: Back Home and Very Gainfully Employed 15

Kyera Singleton: Archival 'Play' Yields Dissertation Topic 18

Taína Figueroa: On the Road to Becoming a Latina Feminist Philosopher 20

Alison M. Parker: Righting a Historical Wrong 22

Taylor Branch Delivers JWJI Distinguished Lecture 24

Looking Back at the Race and Difference Colloquium Series 27

Major Programs Calendar: 2017–2018 32

Teaching Race and History: Institute Course Offerings, Spring 2018 34

## Director's Letter: Meeting the Moment

Dear Friends of the James Weldon Johnson Institute,

Thank you for your continued support. We have had an eventful and productive academic year and would like to use its end—and this newsletter—to reflect on where we have been and look forward to next year.

We are on our way to creating the intellectual hub for the study of race and civil and human rights that our founder, the late Rudolph Byrd, envisioned. In our third full year of operation, JWJI was pleased to host 11 wonderful scholars. We continued to provide Emory and the wider Atlanta community with quality, timely programming on issues related to race, ethnicity, and its intersections. And we developed stronger ties with research partners at area institutions.

The past year has certainly been challenging for our nation—politically, socially, and culturally. I firmly believe that JWJI exists to “meet the moment.” The only way our country can resolve the seemingly intractable problems of inequality and racial division is through informed, empirical, and civil dialogue about racial issues.

The research being produced at JWJI can play a critical role in these important debates. I hope that you will take a minute to read about the work of the institute. We are excited about the scholarship that our affiliates are producing. Our staff and fellows are anxious to make a positive contribution to important social and policy debates. We continue to partner with the local community and

beyond to disseminate important findings that can empower and uplift communities across the country.

We cannot do this important work without your support. We are always humbled at the number of people who faithfully support us by attending our events. And we are forever grateful for those who are able to sustain us financially. We look forward to deepening those partnerships in the coming year. If there is any way we can partner with or be of service to you, please let us know.

Again, thank you so much for your support. We hope you enjoy our updates.

Sincerely,

*Andra Gillespie*



## Amrita Chakrabarti Myers: The Freedom Writer

How does a big-city girl survive in the cornfields? Amrita Chakrabarti Myers has an answer for that.

When Myers first came to Indiana University (IU) almost 13 years ago, she had lived in sprawling places: Edmonton, Alberta, Toronto, Montreal (where she was born), and New Brunswick, New Jersey. When she first got to Bloomington, Indiana, she confesses to feeling a bit of culture shock.

### Justice grows tall in the Midwest

Myers—the Ruth N. Halls Associate Professor of History and Gender Studies at IU—describes a commitment to social justice and activism as a “big big big part of who I am,” and specifically cites the Black Lives Matter movement. She continues, “Anyone who spends more than 10 minutes with me will find this out.”

To her great pleasure, she has found many of her IU colleagues to be all-in on this idea. Myers not only respects them as scholars and teachers; in addition, she notes, “they are out in the streets with me doing the hard work, at nights and on weekends. They are attending demonstrations, conducting workshops, and educating students, giving of their time and resources—in short, doing a lot of things they don’t get paid for. That is not why we are there. We are doing volunteer work because this is what matters to us.”

Converts to a new way of doing history

The faculty’s activism also leads to stronger academic interest on the part of students, many of whom come to class for the first time saying, “I

heard you speak at a rally last summer.” During Myers’s tenure at IU, the student body has changed in encouraging ways. They are, she says, “fierce and passionate” and light up every demographic: Jewish, Muslim, white, black, first-generation, and transgender. Recently, she is even seeing wealthy white students face their own privilege and work across barriers.



A black women’s historian and historian of slavery, Myers has crafted a new way of thinking about history. Students arrive believing it to revolve around memorization of names, dates, places, battles, and generals. Instead, she tells them, “This is not Jeopardy, not about recall. The discipline of history consists of stories of people like you and me. Historians must attend to why things happen, to the connections between events. Their analysis must cover the why and the how, not just the who and the what.”

### Forging ahead

Ensuring that her students are willing to follow sources where they lead is something that Myers herself needed to master, especially during her

doctoral program at Rutgers University. Asked about the extraordinary success of her first book, *Forging Freedom: Black Women and the Pursuit of Liberty in Antebellum Charleston*, Myers confesses, “I didn’t understand fully what I had written until my dissertation was almost finished. I thought that I was going to write about enslaved women, but I actually wrote a book about free black women during the era of slavery.”

The recipient of many honors—including the George C. Rogers Jr. Book Award for best monograph on South Carolina history from the South Carolina Historical Society—*Forging Freedom* is a book in two parts: the first consists of topical chapters about how women of that era became free, the types of jobs they performed, the kinds of property they acquired, and so forth.

The second half is the volume’s lifeblood: studies of individual women and their families that might have remained beyond reach were it not for her dogged pursuit. The obstacles to Myers’s research were many: she was studying a population—black women—for whom education was illegal. She says, “There were no family papers, diaries, or a nice big collection of boxes, as we often have for whites. This is also a group with no leisure time to write.” Myers thus depended on items such as government records, tax material, legal records, and census data. It is not work for the impatient. She observes, “You have to be willing to sift through thousands of pieces of paper that are not indexed or collated in any way, much of which isn’t useful, to piece together black women’s stories. I spent a year in South Carolina vacuuming their archives.”

At JWJI to complete her second book, Myers thinks about the success of her first book in ways that go beyond its numerous awards, saying, “I am not just describing events of 200 years ago. Sadly, in some ways, especially in the political moment in which we live, people say that the book’s themes are very familiar. They can see their lives and struggles in those of their ancestors. For instance, the fight to find adequate jobs and housing, to accumulate wealth and pass it along to their children.”

### Chinn up

Now at work on her second book, titled “Remembering Julia: An Antebellum Tale of Sex, Race, Power, and Place,” Myers is investigating the decades-long relationship of Julia Chinn, a woman of color, and US Vice President Richard Mentor Johnson, a white man who served under President Martin Van Buren. The couple lived together openly in rural Kentucky during the early decades of the nineteenth century, despite public disapproval of interracial sex.

Myers describes encountering the reference to Johnson and his “mulatto concubines” in a US survey textbook. The reference left her full of questions. After filtering through a series of trashy websites that sensationalized the couple’s relationship, Myers discovered a political biography of Johnson written in 1932. Driving to Kentucky to do her research, Myers says that, once again, “public documents saved my life.” Although the Chinn women were literate, no documents in their own hand have survived.

Chinn, whom Johnson referred to as his “wife,” and her daughters acquired a fair amount of social and financial power owing to their connection to him. The limits of that power were clearly marked, however, and the privileges of white kinship declined for black women the farther they moved from the source of their power. Black women also discovered that any attempt to acquire the social niceties and respect extended to white women would bring swift retribution.

In February, Myers gave a lecture on her manuscript-in-progress at the Woodruff Library. As she considers the waning months of her time at JWJI, she is already sad at the thought of leaving. Beyond the lively pot-lucks with her other fellows and an outing to see Black Panther, they have, she says, “become one another’s family.”

She described one fellow on the job market and the mentoring he received from the other fellows, which resulted in six campus visits and five offers. And, for herself, she is grateful to fellow Ashanté Reese, who aided her in developing a framework for how to talk about geographies of resistance. Admits Myers, I needed an anthropologist to help

me with that; the historians wouldn't have gotten me there." She goes on, "I didn't expect any of this when I came here. I will miss my JWJI colleagues like crazy."

Asked where her scholarship might lead her after completing the narrative of Julia Chinn, Myers was uncharacteristically tight-lipped, saying only, "Julia deserves all my love right now."

## Ashanté Reese: Dreaming a More Just World

Drop the names Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker, and watch Ashanté Reese’s eyes light up. As someone who is Southern-born (Crockett, Texas: population, 6,544), and from a rural family, Reese says there were many things that resonated with her in both women’s work.

For example, Reese was intrigued that Hurston had been trained by anthropology legend Franz Boas at Barnard College, where she would become its first black woman graduate. In the evolution that eventually led Reese to choose anthropology, she notes, “I wasn’t initially driven by research questions but instead by the kind of writer I wanted to be.”

After finishing her undergraduate education at Trinity University and teaching at the Coretta Scott King Young Women’s Leadership Academy in Atlanta, Reese credits her students with helping define her research interests. At the King Academy, among other duties, Reese coached track, which meant that students sometimes came to her house.

Once, on a mission to feed them before returning them to their parents, they were in the grocery store. She noticed that her normally boisterous and lively students were acting more timidly inside the store, and indeed one student voiced what the others must have been thinking, saying, “We don’t have anything like this in our store.”

It was that spark, realizing that food access varies according to where you live—along with understanding the special burdens of a student with type-2 diabetes—that led to Reese’s interest in the connections between food access and health disparities. And this pattern of influence is not unusual, says Reese, who claims, “My entire career is filled with stories of how I have changed based on the people I meet.”

### **Historian turned ethnographer**

When Reese departed for American University in pursuit of a PhD, she was ready to go beyond her undergraduate focus, which had been on history and African American studies. Says Reese, “I like



history, but I can’t say that I like it as a discipline.” Instead, she says, “My interests in graduate school were really driven by the lives of the students I taught in Atlanta.”

Examining what she terms “the rise and fall of supermarkets along the lines of racial residential segregation,” Reese also wanted to know something else: if inequalities are built into the food system, what does the life of someone experiencing that injustice look like? Conducting fieldwork in a predominantly black neighborhood in north-east Washington, D.C., Reese developed a theory she calls “geographies of self-reliance,” which holds that history, racial solidarity, and a commitment to building self-reliant communities, in spite of racism, are embedded in the local geography.



For Reese, what is so hopeful—in a field of study committed to illuminating injustice—is that black people are able to meet their needs despite inequality.



After a time at Rhodes College, Reese joined Spelman College as an assistant professor of anthropology in 2015 to build its program in food studies, which launched the next year. A fellow faculty member handles food chemistry, while Reese tackles the social implications of food. She finds that many of her students are activists, and she tells them, “The best activists are those who read and study. This is the perfect field to marry your academic and activist interests.”

She is a wildly popular teacher who, though modest, does acknowledge her “cult following.” Knowing that she is not an auditory learner has influenced Reese to keep lectures to a minimum and to vary her techniques to keep students engaged. Aware of Spelman’s being gated in a West End community, Reese ensures that her students travel beyond those boundaries, as they did recently when—on a mission to practice participant-observation—they walked to a neighborhood pizza shop and talked to the owner.

Reese speaks of “the honor of instructing black women” and is determined to “teach them how to own their ideas.” Part of driving that point home is the modeling, big and small, that she provides her students. Laughing, she offered this example of one of the small things: “My hair changes style depending on the month. My students say, ‘Wow. Check you out. You move through the world like this.’ ”

### **Cooking up that first book**

At JWJI, Reese is a UNCF-Mellon Faculty Fellow focused on preparing her dissertation for publication. Titled “Between a Corner Store and a Safeway: Race and Food Access in the Nation’s Capital,” it is under contract to University of North Carolina Press, with a hoped-for release date of early 2019.

Reese had no hesitation answering who this book is for, saying, “while I investigated the inequalities, the people were still living, doing, creating. I research food only because I care about what food means to black lives and black geography. My biggest hope is that people see this in the book.” She adds, “maybe I have made some progress in dreaming a more just world.”

As Reese pursues work on her book, she is overjoyed with her JWJI compatriots. The beauty of coming across town from Spelman, says Reese, is “that I get to be in a different place and still be here in Atlanta.” She had the other JWJI fellows over to her house for tamales around the first of the year. “Qualitatively,” she says, “my life is so much better knowing this group of people. Our research interests align. I have done a bunch of things in my career but, by far, this has been one of my favorite experiences. It feels like magic.”

### **Future pathways**

What will the self-described “warrior for liberal arts education” do next? Armed with a grant from the Associated Colleges of the South, she and a former Rhodes College colleague will co-teach a course in fall 2018 called Just Food in the US South. Students from both institutions will learn virtually and also have the chance to visit each other’s cities. Reese and her colleague also plan to collect material from food justice activists for a museum exhibit in Memphis and Atlanta.

Reese’s next food project will center on black women growers and activists in the South and the intersections of food and spirituality. One of the aims will be to explore precarity. Another will be to probe the relationships among spirituality, friendship, and the justice work these women pursue. She observes, “I’m particularly interested in understanding how they cultivate and maintain

hope for a just world through their day-to-day activism and growing. These women are trying to prevent precarity for others. But what amount of it do they incur in their personal lives as a result of their work?”

There also is what she describes as a “super-secret” project on Hurston that she will undertake with a fellow ethnographer. So hush-hush that, at press time, no details were forthcoming. Stay tuned. This is a young scholar with energy for the long haul.



## Ashley Brown: Illuminating Athletes' Place in Society and History

Sports and the academy have had a typically uneasy relationship. Sports are an integral part of the college experience of many students at all types of schools, yet academics don't always appreciate athletics or athletes as subjects of serious study.

That is changing, as scholars such as Emory professors Erin Tarver and Pellom McDaniels write about such disparate topics as sports fandom and black jockeys. Joining them is JWJI visiting fellow Ashley Brown, who is building her burgeoning academic career on scholarship and teaching about the history of sport.

### A student of Althea Gibson

A recently minted PhD from George Washington University, Brown wrote her dissertation on Althea Gibson, the first African American, or person of color, to win a Grand Slam tournament in tennis. Gibson played in 19 major finals and won 11 titles, five in singles and one in mixed doubles in her relatively brief run to the top of women's tennis. After taking a sabbatical from tennis, in 1960, she became the first black woman to earn playing privileges on the women's professional golf (LPGA) tour.

Brown, who has a longstanding interest in sports and took up golfing in 2008, says, "I found myself not only falling for the game but developing an interest, of course, in the history of the game and realized that I needed to know more about the history of African Americans in golf." Gibson is better known for her tennis accomplishments, says Brown, mostly because she wasn't nearly as successful in golf. She came close to winning only one tournament. "Even as of now—2018—no African American woman has won an LPGA title," says Brown. Black women, including Tiger Woods's niece Cheyenne, have won collegiate titles and even international tournaments but no majors in the US so far.

### Handling the celebrity

In deciding to study Gibson, Brown wondered, "What were her experiences in tennis? And then



I imagined all sorts of hardships and really just the courage and temerity and support that must have gone along with breaking those barriers in tennis. What must she have gone through when she decided to pursue a career in golf?" Gibson's accomplishments were celebrated in the black community and the black press, although the latter could sometimes be among her fiercest critics. She was the first black female athlete to appear on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*, yet was variously described as needing to "come down to earth," "ugly," and an "ungrateful jackass."

That last remark came in 1957, says Brown, soon after Gibson won Wimbledon. "She stood her ground after she felt that she had been disrespected by some reporters," Brown explains.

“In Chicago, there was an incident in which she stood up for herself, and she received all kinds of bad press after this.” Gibson was a proud woman, who was grateful for the help and support that she received as an athlete and who wanted to give back but never quite found herself in the position to do so.

Gibson had some health problems beginning in the late 80s and early 90s. “In the early 90s, she actually contacted her former doubles partner, Angela Buxton, and she suggested that she was going to commit suicide,” says Brown. Although Gibson had cycled through many doubles partners, she and Buxton had stayed in touch. “Buxton deserves a lot of credit for really swooping in and saving the day, as we might say,” Brown adds.

Although a barrier breaker, Gibson, who died in 2003, was not particularly visible as a tennis icon, even as women’s tennis became increasingly popular in the 1970s. Most likely it is because she was proud and headstrong, in Brown’s words. “She was someone who wanted to be independent, and these are not necessarily traits that were respected in women.”

### **The agency of African American athletes**

As part of her fellowship, Brown is teaching a second-semester course, African Americans in Sports. They’ve talked about Gibson, of course, but also the boxer Jack Johnson, Frederick Douglass “Fritz” Pollard, the first black head coach in the NFL, and Paul Robeson, the gifted singer and actor who was an All-American football player at Rutgers University and later played in the NFL. “The students are asking really thought-provoking questions about things like the agency of these athletes and the pressure that they are under to ‘represent,’ ” says Brown. “Then also, why it seems that people are more inclined to pay attention to athletes than folks who are leaders in other fields.”

As academia looks to catch up to the scrutiny athletes and sport receive in popular culture, young scholars such as Brown will continue to cast a critical eye on how the specter of competition and athletic play inform society and history.

## Derek Handley: Sharing the History That Speaks to Him

It was in the last year of his master's of fine arts in creative writing that JWJI dissertation fellow Derek Handley took a class called Rhetorical Education. "I thought, oh my gosh, what is this? I learned about Aristotle and Cicero and Quintilian and this history of rhetoric and rhetorical education," he says. "And it just spoke to me in so many different ways that I knew I was going to explore it."

Not long after, Handley began a PhD in rhetoric at Carnegie Mellon. "Some people see rhetoric as a pejorative term, but one definition is the art of persuasion," he says. A class in rhetoric of place during his graduate work at Carnegie Mellon deepened his interest. "We learned about how place can be used rhetorically, how place can inform," he says. "Even where a speech is given may be a rhetorical device. What if Martin Luther King Jr. didn't give his 'I Have a Dream' speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial? How much did the Lincoln Memorial as a backdrop play to the meaning of the speech?"

### **The making of "rhetorical citizens"**

In his dissertation, "Strategies for Performing Citizenship: Rhetorical Citizenship and the Black Freedom Movement," Handley looks at citizenship as a mode of rhetorical resistance used by African Americans to respond to urban renewal and housing policies during the 1950s and 1960s.

He examines the rhetorical and discursive strategies embraced by African Americans in Pittsburgh and Milwaukee in their attempts to protect their communities and assert their rights as citizens. He argues that African American residents operated as rhetorical citizens in a struggle for power with municipalities over the future of their neighborhoods.

"I wanted to know about the rhetorical strategies of ordinary people on the ground. How did they organize? What were they doing to get their voices heard?" he says. "The overarching framework is this notion of rhetorical citizenship, which thinks



of citizenship in terms of types of action. There are protests and marches, but it can be something as simple as the fact that these folks would form neighborhood clean-up drives, because if their neighborhoods were clean, then it would be harder for it to be declared blighted."

### **A crooked path got him straight to his interests**

When asked what path led him to this research and to JWJI, Handley laughs and says, "So, it wasn't a straight line." An English major at Hampton University, he entered the US Navy after graduation, working first as a helicopter pilot and then a writer in public affairs. Stationed with the navy in Fallon, Nevada, and working in PR, he sought out a teaching position in writing at

Western Nevada Community College. That experience—teaching a class in basic writing—clicked.

“It was a wonderful experience. Some of my students were military veterans, some of them were local, some of them were from the nearby Paiute reservation,” he says. “And I said, this is what I want to do. I want to teach.” When his active duty was complete, he returned to Pittsburgh, teaching at Community College of Allegheny County, earning a master’s degree in creative writing, and taking that pivotal Rhetorical Education class. His PhD program at Carnegie Mellon followed, and the rest is (rhetorical) history.

**All the benefits of good company**

Today at JWJI, Handley is finishing his dissertation and planning the next step on his path. As he applies for teaching positions, his varied background, including his position in the Department of English and his subspecialty of African American rhetoric, give him great flexibility.

When he talks about what he has gained from JWJI, he points first to the people. The speakers who expand his thinking and his network, and the insight gained from those with experience all around him. “A great thing for the dissertation fellows is just having access to the other fellows—the postdocs, the associate professors, the full professors who’ve already done what we’re trying to do,” he says. “The fellowship among the fellows has been amazing.”

## Felipe Hinojosa: Church Takeovers and Their Impact on Latino Religion

Believe it or not, JWJI Visiting Fellow Felipe Hinojosa didn't connect to history right away. Growing up in Brownsville, Texas, a border town, "None of us got any history of what it meant to be Mexican in the United States, what it meant to be the children of immigrants. My dad was an immigrant, born in Mexico, and my mom was born in Texas," he says. "And in the school system we didn't learn what it meant to live in a bicultural community, a border town, the way that we did."

### **"What's my story?"**

It wasn't until he was an English major at Fresno Pacific University, that his love of history emerged. Reading books by Edward Abbey and Terry Tempest Williams, "I started to ask deeper questions—Who am I? What's my story, where do I come from," he says. "It triggered questions for me that only history could answer, where I felt most satisfied when I went to the history books."

Today as associate professor of history at Texas A&M University, Hinojosa's teaching and research interests include Latina and Latino and Mexican American studies, American religion, social movements, gender, and comparative race and ethnicity. In addition, he serves as director of undergraduate studies in the history department and is the cofounder and cocordinator for the Latina and Latino Studies Working Group, which is sponsored by the Melbern G. Glasscock Center for Humanities Research at Texas A&M University.

### **Studying the "apostles of change"**

This year at JWJI, Hinojosa is working on "Apostles of Change: Radical Politics and the Making of Latino Religion," in which he explores how a handful of church takeovers in the 1970s—by groups such as the Young Lords and Católicos Por La Raza—inspired a Latina and Latino religious renaissance, both cultural and political. He investigates the role of theology and faith, and points to radical politics as fundamental to understanding the origins of Latina and Latino religious politics in the US.



"Now, the hook for me was that historians have written about these occupations and takeovers, but for the most part, they have ignored religious archives or what the church's response was at a national level and at a denominational level. How did they respond to these activists and what happened after the activists were kicked out of those churches?" says Hinojosa. "Was there change, and not only a response from white clergy, but from the many Latinos and Latinas who were Protestants and Catholics in these institutions who were surprised and taken aback by this sort of revolutionary occupation of their church building? As soon as I looked at that, I discovered that this was much bigger and it carried much larger implications."

**Grants that made the research richer**

Hinojosa is grateful to JWJI for the intellectual community he has been welcomed into at Emory and also for affording him the opportunity to focus. Last fall he spent time writing, but he also took advantage of JWJI grants to research at archives including the United Farmworker collection at Wayne State University. And he crossed the US to conduct 12 oral histories with activists in Houston, Chicago, and Los Angeles. “I wanted to just get to know them. I had read about them, and so finding them and talking to them was a real privilege for me,” he says.

Spring semester Hinojosa taught Latino and Latina Civil Rights Movements in Emory College as he continued with his writing. He will return to Texas A & M and finish his book, which is under advance contract with the University of Texas Press, and then it’s on to the next project, he says. “My goal in all of this is to begin to think about Latina and Latino history as part of a larger narrative of civil rights history in the United States.”



## Justin Hosbey: Back Home and Very Gainfully Employed

“Okay, I probably have no shot at getting this job, but I have to apply anyway,” an anxious Justin Hosbey told himself as he put his name in the hat for a position as assistant professor in Emory’s anthropology department. Hosbey was completing his PhD at the University of Florida in 2016 when the position caught his eye.

Perhaps it seemed too good to be true: the job was in the field he loved, in a city he had lived in happily since he was six, and at an institution he respected and had been coming to since middle school as a member of Atlanta Public Schools’ Urban Debate League, which was sponsored by the Barkley Forum, Emory’s award-winning debate team and community service organization. No pressure to land this job, right?

Despite his nerves, Hosbey’s overture to Emory was no shot in the dark. He is the real deal—an immensely promising young scholar to whom Emory made this unique offer: he either could start immediately in the anthropology department or make his transition to Emory a bit more gradually—as a postdoctoral fellow at JWJI his first year.

He chose the latter for a variety of reasons, but primarily for the opportunity it affords to revise his dissertation, “Charter Schools, Black Social Life, and the Refusal of Death in Post-Katrina New Orleans,” into a book.

### “Where are you going with this?”

For many years, Hosbey imagined a career in journalism, majoring in it as an undergraduate at Georgia State University. That is, until he read about anthropology via—no kidding—a Wikipedia entry. Once he took an anthropology course as a junior, he knew that his fate was sealed, even if the change of major required extending his timeline by a semester.

Turns out that some of the things he enjoyed about journalism—in his words, “exploring a passion for culture, for how humans situate themselves in spaces and construct their lives”—were



more satisfying through anthropology because he saw greater room to explore issues using a critical lens.

It is no surprise that Emory’s interest in Hosbey was so strong: his career at University of Florida was extraordinary. Studying with the legendary Faye V. Harrison, Hosbey not only fulfilled the requirements for the doctorate in cultural anthropology, with a certificate in digital humanities, he also worked under Paul Ortiz as an oral historian for the Alachua County African American History Project and the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program’s Mississippi Freedom Project. Asked how he juggled all of the above, Hosbey notes, “The work I did in oral history, those were second and third jobs. I managed out of necessity. I have a passion for African American culture and life. It is almost like a spiritual thing.”

The seed for his doctoral research came in 2011, when Hosbey attended an American Educational

Research Association conference. There, he listened to a talk by a former New Orleans teacher who was fired after Hurricane Katrina, as indeed was the city's entire workforce of instructors following a decision to convert to charter schools in the immediate aftermath of the storm.

The teacher—"forceful and eloquent" in describing her own loss and that of the city—was by then working in another state, her career barely patched back together. But Hosbey continued to ponder the fate of New Orleans: on a neighborhood level, how were people responding to the destruction of the traditional schools?

"Nothing like this ever happened on this scale in the US after an environmental catastrophe," he indicates. "It was so undemocratic. Imagine having an entire workforce lose their jobs simultaneously mere months after a devastating hurricane." The replacements were primarily from the Northeast or Southwest, many of them affiliated with Teach for America. Most of the new teachers would call themselves progressives. "Yet," says Hosbey, "despite the best of intentions, they reproduced structural inequality."

Starting in 2007, a rich body of work on this full-scale conversion to charter schools emerged in the field of education. In 2010, former Education Secretary Arne Duncan famously declared the hurricane to be the "best thing that happened to the education system in New Orleans."

"As an anthropologist, it was not my place to figure out a solution to what type of schools New Orleans should have," says Hosbey. "Instead, I planned to explore the issue this way: How are we, as black people, affected on the cultural level when our schools are taken from our community?"

A first-generation college graduate in his family, Hosbey has enjoyed deep support from both parents for his accomplishments. But he smiles in recalling that his father, when he was in graduate school, asked, "Where are you going with this? You have been at this for 27 years." Both father and son would soon find out.

### **NO place he'd rather be**

To conduct his research, Hosbey spent a year living in the 7th Ward and Gentilly areas—historic multigenerational, black neighborhoods in New Orleans. Beyond wanting to understand the effects on the community of the radical change to the school system, he also wanted to understand better why New Orleans is such an important cultural site for black life in the US. "What constellation of history, culture, language, music, and magic come together to make New Orleans such an important place for black American culture?" Hosbey asked. And then he dove in, making himself part of the community, going to school board meetings, fundraisers, zoning meetings, and talking with parents and children in their homes.

Some parents in New Orleans viewed charter schools as a good thing. They saw an opportunity to place their children in better schools that were not bound by neighborhood zoning. What, though, were the dangers for students now often crisscrossing the city to arrive at school each day? For some kids, in that changed landscape, they had to be ready as early as 5:30 a.m. to catch the bus to school. And there were clear differences, based on class, in the ways that black parents could navigate the system, especially as the public transportation system slowly rebuilt itself after Hurricane Katrina. In addition, many historic schools that were important to black New Orleanians were either permanently shuttered or converted into charter schools after the hurricane.

Hosbey's fieldwork led him to argue that the destruction of neighborhood schools in low-income and working-class black communities has "fractured, but not broken, black space and place making in post-Katrina New Orleans." Asked what his hopes were for his book, Hosbey indicates that, in many ways, it will be "a love letter to black educators." He continues, "In thinking about my own life and education, it has been primarily black women teachers who have supported and mentored me."

### **Next stop: Atlanta**

As the book takes shape, Hosbey is enjoying the camaraderie of mixing with the other JWJI fellows. It is "wonderful," he says, "to be in a cohort

with scholars at different stages of their academic career. Some are full professors, some recently got tenure, and some are like me—just starting out. Everyone is generous with their advice. I am so glad that I chose to do this my first year.”

Spring semester, Hosbey taught Blackness and the Politics of Space and Race. With units on South Africa, West Africa, the US South, and Caribbean, the course asked the following questions: How do black people make meaning within spaces that already are overdetermined by racism, segregation, and economic inequality? What are the joys and pains of black life under those constraints? Students were so excited about the course that they were adding—not dropping—it after the first day.

Hosbey’s first book will lead naturally to his second project—on black social life in Atlanta. Among the things that interest him: What was the lure of the black mecca in the 1990s and 2000s?

What were the realities? Here in Hosbey’s hometown, he knows all too well that there is a level of dissonance. There is the glitz and glam of Atlanta’s popular culture, for instance. But it also has the highest income inequality of any city in the US and a disturbing trend of steady downward mobility for succeeding generations of African American families.

At one point, Hosbey’s father was able to see him present on his New Orleans research at a conference in Chicago. It was a moment for father and son. Hosbey says, “He could see the import and value of what I was doing.” Indeed, he then could answer for himself the question he had posed years ago. “Where is all this going?” Very far indeed.

## Kyera Singleton: Archival ‘Play’ Yields Dissertation Topic

A port city, Baltimore was a destination for free and enslaved African Americans in the mid-19th century. Those who lived and worked on plantations were often there as hired help, leased by their owners, or were runaways. Kyera Singleton, a 2017–2018 dissertation fellow at JWJI working toward a PhD at the University of Michigan, discovered this vibrant history quite by accident, but it became the cornerstone of her thesis, “Containing Black Women: Gendered Geographies of Imprisonment in the American South, 1840–1900.”

### **Adeline and other imprisoned black women**

Like most budding graduate students, Singleton had a broad idea of what she wanted to study—black women and slavery—but hadn’t narrowed down the topic. She had read the book *Southern Horrors* by Crystal N. Feimster, which profiles Ida B. Wells and Rebecca Latimer Felton, two women journalists and public figures on opposing sides of the lynching issue. In it, Singleton discovered the story of Adeline, who was sentenced to years of hard labor for stealing a few dollars. “At the time, I couldn’t wrap my mind around that,” Singleton says. “I had never really thought about black women and imprisonment in such an early period, but that kind of made me curious.”

When she told one of her dissertation committee members, Martha Jones, that she had never visited an archive, the professor invited Singleton to join her as a research assistant on a trip to Maryland. When they arrived at the Annapolis archives, instead of giving Singleton work instructions, Jones, now the Society of Black Alumni Professor of History at Johns Hopkins University, told her to play around in the archives and see what she found, showing Singleton how to work with the archive database and other materials.

“When we think of black people and imprisonment, we mostly think about the convict lease system that starts after the abolishment of slavery,” says Singleton. “My research was thinking about what’s happening with all of these black people who are in this limited space—starting around



the 1840s and 1850s—when slavery had not been abolished.”

Singleton started asking herself: “What would it mean to be several miles away from a plantation and then end up in Baltimore several hundred yards away from a prison or workhouse?” “Are there black people in the penitentiary, which was founded in the early 1800s?” “Are there black people in the workhouse and then, more specifically, what’s happening with black women?” To uncover answers to these and other questions, Singleton looked at Maryland penitentiary records, Baltimore city jail records, and plantation records. She also used slave and WPA narratives in her research as well as newspaper accounts and clemency petitions. Her work traces the racial,

social and economic injustices endured by black women held captive in dungeons on plantations, stowed away at trader's yards, confined to penitentiaries, or forced to labor in workhouses.

**Going wherever discomfort leads her**

Singleton went from never having visited an archive to conducting research at the National Archives. However, traveling across the country to examine original materials can get expensive. "At Michigan, I've been really fortunate to have funding to do my research. There are tons of different grants for graduate students to actually do the research," she says. "Now that I'm here at Emory, the research funds that they've provided have also been really helpful as I'm in the last stages of the dissertation work."

From the time Maclester College history professor Peter Rachleff tapped her to enroll in the Mellon Seminar for Mellon Mays Fellows, to her faculty mentor in archival research, to her dissertation adviser, Emory alumna Tiya Miles 95G, Singleton has had mentoring faculty at every step of her journey toward becoming an historian. She's now ready to give back and is looking toward a post-doc job as a professor. "Being in classrooms and having amazing mentors are the reasons why I'm

still here, and I want to be able to do that as well," she says. Miles has especially inspired her as the type of public historian she'd like to emulate. Her time at JWJI has been instructive as well. "The James Weldon Johnson Institute has given me the time and space to focus solely on my writing and build a community with other scholars from different disciplines and universities," she says.

Digging into the messy truth of history makes many uncomfortable, but Singleton thinks we shouldn't flinch from the discomfort. "Those uncomfortable spaces, those uncomfortable places, and those uncomfortable histories is how we can chart a path forward," she says. "But if we're so concerned about making everyone comfortable, then we never really learn because you have to dive into the muddiness and the complexities in order to see the larger picture."



## Taína Figueroa: On the Road to Becoming a Latina Feminist Philosopher

Taína Figueroa's interest in philosophy began during her undergraduate years at Trinity College.

Philosophy captured her attention, she says, for three main reasons. "First, philosophy allows you to ask the big questions—questions that everyone asks themselves at some point—Why am I here? What is the point of life? Second, as an undergrad the very first philosophers I was introduced to were the ancient Greeks—Plato and Aristotle—writing over 2,000 years ago. As I read their work I could see echoes of their philosophies in the world I lived in," says Figueroa. "And third, as an undergrad I was frustrated by the narrow scope of who is accepted as part of the 'philosophical canon' and who actually works in the discipline. . . . I want to read and teach Latina feminist philosophy as a Latina professor."

Today, as a PhD candidate in the Department of Philosophy at Emory, and her dissertation, " 'Oigan Mi Gente (Hear My People)': On the Affective Power of Racial Pride," is inspired by the feeling of joy and pride she saw in racial identity that, she says, is important, powerful, and worthy of philosophical exploration.

"I have always been interested in the power of emotion and how emotion is understood in relation to identity formation and oppression—both the negative and positive emotional attachments racial minorities develop in relation to their racial/ethnic identity under systems of racial oppression," says Figueroa.

### **Lessons from a disaster**

Last fall, Figueroa gained a new perspective on her dissertation. When Hurricane Maria ravaged Puerto Rico last fall, the small mountain town of Ciales where her family lives was devastated. Figueroa traveled to Ciales to check on her family and offer help in the form of solar lanterns, water filtration systems, and medical supplies. She went on to spend months raising money for supplies and to develop and install a solar panel system in her family's neighborhood.



"So little was being done to help Puerto Rico and so many people were and still are in need. It was hard to act like everything was normal when I felt like my world had been flipped upside down," she says. "Doing what I could to help my community was all that seemed important or motivated me after the storm."

The experience emphasized to Figueroa how important community was to the survival of Puerto Ricans in the aftermath of Maria.

"I came to understand that I had focused my work on racial/ethnic pride because it pointed to this greater thing—and this greater thing is what I needed to be writing about is the feeling of being in and a part of a community," she says. "Under



our global system of white supremacy racial and ethnic oppressed peoples resist through the power being in community creates. It is Puerto Ricans in the diaspora and on the island organizing local food drives, contracting container ships, visiting the most remote parts of the island, checking in on my grandparents, collecting seeds to distribute to farmers, and doing so much more that are keeping the island going. I have therefore shifted my focus slightly in my dissertation to try and understand what community is for racial and ethnic minorities, particularly in the case of Puerto Rican and Latinx people and the power community holds for us.”

As she shifts the emphasis of her dissertation Figueroa appreciates the cross-disciplinary nature of JWJI, which has always been an inspiration, first as a graduate fellow last year, and now as a dissertation fellow. “I have learned so much from the very different perspectives one finds at JWJI, be it through their visiting fellows who come from various disciplines or the wide range of speakers and colloquia the institute put on,” Figueroa says. “It has really helped me challenge and sharpen my thinking while being in dialog with amazing scholars in various fields.”

## Alison M. Parker: Righting a Historical Wrong

Mary Church Terrell’s long, accomplished life will now get its due in a full-length biography.

Terrell was born enslaved in 1863 in the midst of the Civil War. She died in 1954, the same year as the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, after decades-long efforts on behalf of equality for blacks and women. Despite her relative renown then and now—she was one of the founders of the NAACP—no full-length scholarly biography of Terrell has ever been written.

### Terrell gets her scholarly due

JWJI Postdoc/Advance Mellon Fellow Alison M. Parker is working to rectify that historical omission with her upcoming book, “Unceasing Militant: The Life of Mary Church Terrell.” “She appears in other people’s works about black women’s activism, but nobody had devoted an entire book to her,” Parker says. “Part of it may be that she did live such a long and rich life. It’s almost overwhelming.” Terrell warranted a chapter in Parker’s second book, *Articulating Rights: Nineteenth-Century American Women on Race, Reform, and the State*, in which she looks at how each of the women she profiled argued for rights and full citizenship in 19th-century America.

Terrell and her parents, both the offspring of their white owners, were emancipated at the end of the Civil War. Each of her parents became successful business people in their own right. Her father, Robert Church, parlayed ownership of a saloon and hotel into large real estate holdings, eventually becoming Memphis, Tennessee’s wealthiest black resident. Her mother, Louisa, owned a hair salon catering to white women. Terrell’s parents sent her to the Model School of Antioch College in Ohio for her primary and secondary education. She stayed in Ohio, graduating from Oberlin College with bachelor’s and master’s degrees. “She ended up being able to speak five languages and taught Greek and Latin,” says Parker. “She was well educated, which made her quite exceptional for any woman of her time—black or white.”



Parker arrived at JWJI with her research materials collected and organized. She’s writing a long, comprehensive biography. During her fall semester of the fellowship, she was able to complete a first draft of nearly the entire manuscript and expects to be finished by the time she returns to SUNY–Brookport, where she is a professor of history.

The fact that her book is so far along allowed Parker to take advantage of a benefit awarded to JWJI’s Mellon fellows, the book workshop, which gave her the opportunity to choose four expert scholars to read and comment on her work. She has two Emory reviewers, Carol Anderson, Charles Howard Candler Professor of African American Studies, and Kimberly Wallace Sanders, associate professor of American and African

American studies, as well as Rosetta Ross, professor of religion at Spelman College, and Jacqueline Rouse, associate professor of African American history at Georgia State. “I received wonderful feedback from them and am about to launch into my revisions,” Parker says.

### **Letters between the Terrells**

Mary Church Terrell was married to Robert Terrell, who was also born enslaved but later graduated from Harvard University and Howard University law school. He became the first black municipal court judge in Washington, D.C. While conducting research for his biography of Robert Terrell, historian Stephen Middleton of Mississippi State University asked Parker if she’d be interested in personal letters between the couple he’d seen when visiting Terrell ancestral home in Highland Beach, Maryland, the black resort community founded by Frederick Douglass’s son, Charles. Absolutely, she told him. “I’m very interested in all aspects of Mary Church Terrell’s life because what we mostly know about her involves the most public aspects of her life.” Parker theorizes that negative stereotypes about the sexuality of black women, caricatures that Terrell fought so hard against, were a compelling reason for her and other black women to hold silent about their private lives. “In fact, that’s one of the reasons [Terrell and others] organized their group, the National Association of Colored Women, to fight against some of the incredibly racist stereotypes they were subjected to.”

Parker and Middleton visited Terrell’s family together, spending a week reading not just the love letters but other documents they held. She was surprised to find this trove, as many of Terrell’s

papers and documents were in multiple archives. “It’s been more than 60 years since her death, and the members of the Terrell family who are still alive are getting older themselves and were concerned about making sure there is some kind of access to this materials in the future,” Parker says. She worked to assist them in this effort and proposed Oberlin as a repository, since Terrell had graduated from there.

The college was enthusiastic about receiving the papers, and made a promise to Terrell’s family that they would teach students how to preserve her letters, some of which dated from the 1890s and were crumbling. The college also agreed to host a symposium on Terrell’s life, inviting a host of scholars to campus in February 2016 including Parker and Middleton. Many current-day members of organizations in which Terrell played a role were on hand including Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and the National Association of University Women, a group she helped found, a corollary organization for black women to the American Association of University Women.

For Parker, whose goal is to tell the full story of Terrell’s long and fruitful life, depositing her papers at Oberlin was a uniquely satisfying experience. The work of a historian isn’t just writing, she notes, “it’s also the chance to help with the preservation of history and providing access to these papers for many more scholars and students in the future.”

## Taylor Branch Delivers James Weldon Johnson Distinguished Lecture

*The historian Taylor Branch visited Emory on Thursday, April 5, to deliver the Annual James Weldon Johnson Distinguished Lecture, “Lift Every Voice: Martin Luther King Jr. and James Weldon Johnson.” Branch had a simple message: both James Weldon Johnson (1871–1938) and Martin Luther King Jr. are underappreciated figures.*

In his lifetime, Johnson was an author, educator, lawyer, diplomat, songwriter, and civil rights activist. He was the first African American to be chosen executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, in which capacity he served from 1920 to 1930. He was also a respected member of the Harlem Renaissance, both for his own poems and novels and for the anthologies he compiled of poems and spirituals of black culture. Branch especially marvels at Johnson’s diplomatic work, astonishing for a man of color at that time. He served President Roosevelt as US consul in Venezuela and Nicaragua from 1906 to 1913.

### **Branching into King studies**

Branch reveals how he came to the work that has dominated his career—renowned scholarship on the life and career of Martin Luther King Jr. He talks about how his “formative years were upended by the 1960s.” Indeed, the forces he felt around him are undeniable: *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) passed when he was in first grade, and King was killed in his senior year of college (1968); sandwiched between those moments was an unprecedented level of social change that included the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War.

Even as a young man, Branch says that he “found it very instructive the way that adults pretended not to be bothered by social injustice.” For instance, he says, “in college, my teachers told me that our schools were not segregated; rather, we just didn’t find the right applicants.”



Originally planning to become a doctor, Branch eventually got interested in philosophy and then in journalism, which he affectionately refers to as a “halfway house.” He worked as a staff journalist for *Washington Monthly*, *Harper’s*, and *Esquire*.

Given that, he says laughingly, “my wife had a job with health benefits,” Branch became a public scholar. He turned to King in his writing, he says, “because I was trying to cover a period of history in which he was at the center. King was a dominant spokesperson.”

As he assessed the literature on King, Branch felt that it was too analytical. In his words, “what had been written skimmed over the force that I felt. I had—and believed others did as well—a visceral

reaction to things that I saw and heard. It should be more personal. We learn about race relations in personal encounters. I therefore wanted to write storytelling books.”

A Stanford professor once asked Branch how he could call himself a historian without a PhD. And Branch has the answer: chase sources diligently, utilize libraries to their fullest, call on FBI records, and, above all, paint a vivid picture of what he calls “the actual characters.”

Branch is the author of a monumental trilogy on King, which began with *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–1963*—a volume that won the Pulitzer Prize for history in 1988 and the Book Critics Circle Award in addition to being a finalist for the National Book Award in the non-fiction category.

Next came *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963–1965* and finally *At Canaan’s Edge: American in the King Years, 1965–1968*. As Timothy B. Tyson, writing for the *News & Observer* (Raleigh, N.C.), commented, “Taylor Branch has become the most important narrator of America’s democratic aspirations. . . . [The King trilogy] is a profound act of citizenship, scholarship, and storytelling as he brings those years to life and lets them speak their truth for the ages.”

Branch hails from Atlanta where, he says, he was “48 hours from signing up to play football at Georgia Tech” before deciding to attend University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill. There, at the time he attended, the only female population consisted of nursing students—another injustice that did not escape his notice.

Branch believes, with a singular passion, that had we not turned away from what King taught us, “we would not be in this cynical age. Today,” he says, “is the logical progression of people being hostile and sarcastic about ‘we the people.’” Nonetheless, even amid cynicism, he points to the “energy that the civil rights movement released—for religion, for women, for the LGBTQ community.”

### **Wrestling Bill, Meeting Hillary**

Though Branch is best known for his work on King, his interests and successes have ranged widely during his career. In 2009, Branch published *The Clinton Tapes: Wrestling History with the President*. The two men had known each other since 1972, when they had shared duties coordinating the McGovern campaign in Texas. In fact, they shared an apartment together along with Hillary Rodham, who would hold out for three more years before agreeing to marry Clinton.

Years later, as Clinton was poised to take office following the 1992 election, he contacted Branch and asked if he would consult on the best means to keep records during his time in office. Clinton wanted to know whether Branch would agree to be his in-house historian—as he referred to it, his “Arthur Schlesinger.”

Branch says that he was “impressed that Clinton cared enough about history to explore these issues before taking office.” He advised him to keep a diary, but Clinton wasn’t keen on that idea. Instead, they agreed to create a unfiltered, contemporaneous record. Their system involved Branch being called, often with little notice, to come from his home in Baltimore to the private residence of the president, usually in the evening in order to attract the least notice.

In some ways styled as bull sessions between old friends, they usually talked about two hours, at the end of which Branch handed Clinton the only two copies of the tapes, which Clinton put in what he called “a good hiding place”—his sock drawer. As reporter Michael Sragow of the *Baltimore Sun* wrote at the time of the book’s release, “Branch’s resolute honesty about his diverse roles within the Clinton saga imbues the book with a prismatic perspective. He ended up serving as speech-writing consultant, reluctant political counselor and, astonishingly, international go-between. He shuttled messages to and from Haiti’s President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and, at one point, entered the impoverished country without a passport.”

In addition to his Johnson lecture, Branch is traveling to promote *King in the Wilderness*—a



documentary about the last three years of King's life for which he is one of the executive producers. It premiered on HBO on April 2 and, as Branch writes excitedly on his website: "Please allow me a quick statement of joy: At last! For 30 years . . . I have been trying and failing to move authentic civil rights history from the printed page to film. Thanks to HBO and Kunhardt Films, my long quest will end." Branch will be in Memphis, the site of the King assassination, talking about the film just before he comes to Emory.

**No sign of stopping**

Asked why King has been his predominant subject for so long, the depth of his admiration is clear. Says Branch, "King's work was nothing less than to redeem the soul of America. He and his followers dug deep into the optimism of the American experiment. How have I stayed at the task of chronicling the movement King led? Let's just say that I have remained enthralled with the material. The health of race relations is the best lens for whether or not our society is progressing."



## Looking Back at the Race and Difference Colloquium Series

### **Locking Up Our Own**

James Forman Jr., September 18, 2017  
2018 Pulitzer Prize Winner

In recent years, debates about America's criminal justice system have taken on increasing urgency. But what if we only know half the story? In *Locking Up Our Own*, Forman explores the tragic role that some African Americans played in escalating the war on crime. As he shows, the first substantial cohort of black mayors, judges, and police chiefs took office around the country at a time when crime and violence had risen to unprecedented levels. As murder rates rose and open-air drug markets proliferated, many black officials, including Washington, D.C., mayor Marion Barry and federal prosecutor Eric Holder, came to believe that tough measures—such as mandatory minimum sentences for drug and gun offenses, warrior-style policing, and “pretext traffic stops”—were needed to protect black communities. Some politicians and activists saw criminals as a “cancer” that had to be cut away from the rest of black America. Others supported harsh policies more reluctantly, believing they had no other choice in the face of a public safety emergency. Whatever their intentions, Forman shows the devastating impact these policies have had on residents of D.C.'s poorest African American neighborhoods. He also discusses recent progress toward a more humane criminal justice system. Even as he celebrates such efforts, he critiques a reform agenda that is limited to nonviolent offenders, making the case for mercy and opportunity for all those charged with crimes, including violent offenses.

### **Citizen, Student, Soldier: Latina/o Youth, JROTC, and the American Dream**

Gina Perez, September 25, 2017

Since the 1990s, Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) programs have experienced unprecedented expansion in American public schools. The program and its proliferation in poor, urban school districts with large numbers of Latina/o and African American students is

not without controversy. Public support is often based on the belief that the program provides much-needed discipline for “at-risk” youth. Meanwhile, critics of JROTC argue that the program is a recruiting tool for the US military and is yet another example of an increasingly punitive climate that disproportionately affects youth of color in American public schools. In this talk, based on her book *Citizen, Student, Soldier*, Perez intervenes in these debates, providing critical ethnographic attention to understanding the motivations, aspirations, and experiences of students who participate in increasing numbers in JROTC programs. Perez also highlights the ideological, social, and cultural conditions of Latina/o youth and their families who both participate in and are enmeshed in vigorous debates about citizenship, obligation, social opportunity, militarism, and, ultimately, the American Dream.

### **Reading the *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* in the 21st Century**

Noelle Morrisette, October 2, 2017

In this talk, Morrisette discusses the reception of James Weldon Johnson's novel, *Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man*, contemporaneous to its anonymous publication in 1912, emphasizing unfinished chapters of Johnson's novel in our age and reading culture.

### **Black Feminist Legacies of the Chocolate City**

Treva Lindsey, October 16, 2017

This talk explores the unique and significant role of black women in shaping the nation's capital. For Lindsey, the freedom struggles waged by black women in D.C. are and were anchored in a desire for equality and justice. Understanding the contours of the racial, gender, class, and sexual politics of the black foremothers of modern Washington provides insight into the current political climate of a rapidly gentrifying and changing urban landscape. Through the stories of black women in early-twentieth-century Washington, Lindsey develops a fuller understanding of the Jim Crow era and the afterlives of legal segregation.

**Chained in Silence: Black Women and Convict Labor**

Talitha LeFlouria, October 23, 2017

In 1868, the state of Georgia began to make its rapidly growing population of prisoners available for hire. The resulting convict-leasing system ensnared not only men but also African American women, who were forced to labor in camps and factories to make profits for private investors. In this vivid work of history, LeFlouria draws from a rich array of primary sources to piece together the stories of these women, recounting what they endured in Georgia's prison system and what their labor accomplished. LeFlouria argues that African American women's presence within the convict-lease and chain-gang systems of Georgia helped to modernize the South by creating a new and dynamic set of skills for black women. At the same time, female inmates struggled to resist physical and sexual exploitation and to preserve their human dignity within a hostile climate of terror. This revealing history redefines the social context of black women's lives and labor in the New South and allows their stories to be told for the first time.

**Administrations of Lunacy: Race, Psychiatry, and Georgia's State Hospital**

Mab Segrest, October 30, 2017

In this talk, Segrest traces the nexus between settler colonialism and US psychiatry through a social history of 170 years at Georgia's mental hospital.

**Religion and the Quest for a Black Aesthetic**

Josef Sorett, November 6, 2017

Sorett's talk draws upon the arguments of his 2016 book, *Spirit in the Dark: A Religious History of Racial Aesthetics*, which examines the relationship between African American literature and American religious history across much of the twentieth century. Most academic and popular accounts of African American literature foreground its modern, and therefore secular, ethos and ambitions during this time period. *Spirit in the Dark* challenges this orthodoxy by illuminating how religion was an animating and organizing

force in black literary visions from the New Negro movement in the 1920s through the Black Arts movement at the end of the 1960s. Sorett discusses how such terms as "church" and "spirit," and a broader range of religious ideas and practices, provided black artists and intellectuals with a robust spiritual grammar through which they constructed, contested, and critiqued the very idea of black art and culture.

**'I go on singing': The Hypermedia Afterlife of Paul Robeson**

Shana Redmond, November 13, 2017

Though once the most recognizable black artist in the world, Paul Robeson (1898–1976) has faded from common knowledge in the US. The victim of a comprehensive political erasure by the federal government, he nonetheless recurs in the music, poetry, exhibitions, and landscapes of working people throughout the African world. In this lecture, Redmond situates his labors as a singer and activist through his repetition as a series of meta-physical states during the midcentury moment of his persecution as well as the years following his death.

**Barack Obama, Black Lives Matter, and the Politics of Belonging**

Melanye Price, November 20, 2017

The talk explores the central themes of Price's forthcoming book, *The Race Whisperer: Barack Obama and the Political Uses of Race*. The book examines the ways Obama used his unorthodox biography and understanding of diverse racial grammars to mobilize political support. Obama begins and ends his presidency dealing with conflict between blacks and the police. Henry Louis Gates's arrest shortly after Obama took office demonstrated the ways that America's first black president was limited in his ability to voice the concerns and political perspectives of African Americans. Ultimately, Price argues that this even shaped Obama's subsequent interactions with Black Lives Matter activists at the end of his presidency.

**The Modern Origins of Today's Racial Wealth Gap and What the Trump White House Plans to Do about It**

Devin Fergus, November 27, 2017

For every dollar of net worth a white person holds, an African American today only has 6 cents. This gap is near its widest margin since government began recording this statistic almost 30 years ago. What accounts for the decreasing chances to achieve upward mobility in contemporary America? Do these reasons explain why African Americans in particular have experienced sharp increases in economic inequality during the last generation? How has higher education—long thought the nation's great social leveler—exacerbated the racial wealth gap? This talk identifies the reasons—such as the extraction of wealth through student loans and auto insurance—for the recent rise of economic inequality and the impact of this gap on African Americans and other vulnerable populations such as women, Latinos, the working poor, the elderly, and increasingly the middle class. Fergus considers the ways in which the Trump White House threatens a return to the failed policies of earlier administrations from higher education to housing—policies that proved disastrous for the nation as a whole and African Americans in particular.

**Nursing Civil Rights in the Army Nurse Corps**

Charissa J. Threat, January 29, 2018

Threat investigates the parallel battles against occupational segregation by African American women and white men in the US Army. As Threat reveals, both groups viewed their circumstances with the Army Nurse Corps as a civil rights matter. Each conducted separate integration campaigns to end the discrimination they suffered. Yet their stories defy the narrative that civil rights struggles inevitably arced toward social justice. Threat tells how progressive elements in the campaigns did indeed break down barriers in both military and civilian nursing. At the same time, she follows conservative threads to portray how some of the women who succeeded as agents of change became defenders of exclusionary practices when men sought military nursing careers. The ironic result was a struggle that simultaneously

confronted and reaffirmed the social hierarchies that nurtured discrimination.

**Pulse of the People: Political Rap Music and Black Politics**

Lakeyta Bonnette, February 5, 2018

This talk examines the relationship between hip hop culture, politics, and political attitudes. On January 11, 2018, newly elected Atlanta mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms announced her 38-member transition team. Among the business and educational leaders she identified two activist, native Atlanta rappers, T. I. and Killer Mike. As Bonnette argues, hip hop culture is important and embedded in many aspects of American life, from movies, marketing, law, politics, the arts, pedagogy/education, and social justice. Lance Bottoms as well as Barack Obama recognized the influence and involvement of hip hop culture, and both have strategically utilized elements of the culture symbolically and politically (Obama's relationship with Jay-Z, his meeting with Ludacris before he ran, and the invitation of Kendrick Lamar to the White House are a few examples).

**Black Love/Lives in the Transatlantic Archive**

Barbara McCaskill, February 12, 2018

In this talk, McCaskill examines what early African Americans' unpublished and periodical archives, though fragmented and incomplete, can tell us about relationships among African American activists and their family members. McCaskill focuses specifically on the private and public productions of the "Georgia Fugitive" Ellen Craft (1826–1891) and the Rev. Peter Thomas Stanford (c. 1860–1909), both formerly enslaved persons whose transnational impact as educators and institution builders extended into the turbulent decades after the Reconstruction. To locate and critique such productions is an important project that demonstrates how African Americans collaborated strategically to attain the promises of liberation and to pass down shared cultural values amid the realities of racial violence, economic instability, and physical displacement.

### **Working Hard Ain't Enough for Black Americans**

Darrick Hamilton, February 19, 2018

High-achieving black Americans, as measured by education, still exhibit large economic and health disparities relative to their white peers, especially in the domain of wealth. In this talk, Hamilton discusses how the postracial politics of personal responsibility and “neoliberal paternalism” tropes discourage a public responsibility for the conditions of poor and black Americans and instead encourage punitive measures to “manage” these “surplus populations.” Hamilton presents an alternative frame, stratification economics, to better understand this paradox. Ultimately, he explores the potential physical and psychological costs of stigma and, ironically, exerting individual agency, which, in the context of a racist or stigmatized environment, limits the role of education and income as protective factors for blacks relative to whites.

### **Remembering Julia: A Tale of Sex, Power, Race, and Place**

Amrita Myers, February 26, 2018

This is the story of Julia Chinn, a black woman, and Richard Mentor Johnson, a career politician. Set in rural Kentucky in the mid-1800s, it is a tale that is unfamiliar to many people today. It is also a narrative that seems quite typical at first glance: an enslaved woman had a long relationship with a white man and had children by him. If we dig a little deeper, however, it is clear that this union has much to teach us about antebellum attitudes toward interracial sex. Careful analysis of this partnership reveals where the lines of societal acceptance were drawn for members of mixed-race households in the Old South while illuminating the importance of locale in shaping the boundaries of power for women of color. What did it mean to be the black wife of a white man in the slave South? How much privilege did that association bring, and where were the limits of power for said woman? What did life look like for the children of such couples? How did a man attain the vice presidency in a slave-based society while acknowledging his ties to a black woman and their children? And, how did this story remain in the shadows for more than 150 years? These

are just some of the questions this talk addresses as it moves Julia from the margins to the center of US history.

### **Florynce “Flo” Kennedy: Black Feminist Radical**

Sherie Randolph, March 5, 2018

Often photographed in a cowboy hat with her middle finger held defiantly in the air, Florynce “Flo” Kennedy (1916–2000) left a vibrant legacy as a leader of the Black Power and feminist movements. In the first biography of Kennedy, Randolph traces the life and political influence of this strikingly bold and controversial radical activist. Rather than simply reacting to the predominantly white feminist movement, Kennedy brought the lessons of Black Power to white feminism and built bridges in the struggles against racism and sexism. Randolph narrates Kennedy’s progressive upbringing, her pathbreaking graduation from Columbia Law School, and her long career as a media-savvy activist, showing how Kennedy rose to founding roles in organizations such as the National Black Feminist Organization and the National Organization for Women, allying herself with both white and black activists such as Adam Clayton Powell, H. Rap Brown, Betty Friedan, and Shirley Chisholm.

### **The Korean War in Color: ‘Tan Yanks’ and the Intimacies of Conflict**

Daniel Kim, March 19, 2018

Although the Korean War is known to most Americans mainly as “the forgotten war,” one aspect of it that has generally been remembered is that it was the first in which African American military men served in integrated combat units. This talk explores how this novel aspect of soldiering was addressed by African American newspapers and Hollywood films in the 1950s. These depictions helped pave the way for the emergence of what the historian Melanie McAllister has termed “military multiculturalism,” an ideology that celebrates the forms of interracial intimacy that emerge among the US fighting men during wartime. Kim also examines the difficulties posed by this ideology: the fact that the enemy that these soldiers sought to kill and the civilian populations that they ostensibly sought to protect were also

people of color. As such, this talk also takes up writings by Toni Morrison and Clarence Adams that grapple with what W. E. B. Du Bois famously termed “the problem of the color line—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea”—as it pertained to the Korean War.

**Unceasing Militant: The Life of Mary Church Terrell**

Alison M. Parker, March 26, 2018

Mary Church Terrell (1863–1954), the first president of the National Association of Colored Women and a cofounder of the NAACP, mobilized black women for an equal rights agenda that included women’s suffrage, anti-lynching, and opposition to segregation. In this presentation, Parker joins with those who are writing life histories of black activist women that grapple with all aspects of their interior lives, including the psychological and physical costs of racism, sexual desire, and other taboo subjects. Until now, Terrell’s health problems have been virtually ignored. Yet her reproductive illnesses fundamentally shaped her public work and reform priorities, including training programs for black nurses and the creation of infant nurseries, daycare, and kindergartens. Drawing on disability studies, Parker demonstrates how race, gender, and illness interconnected in one black woman’s life. By exploring the painful experiences that Terrell kept hidden from all but her closest family members, Parker reveals the personal costs of her illnesses and her silence while providing insights into how these experiences shaped her public activism.

**Apostles of Change: Radical Politics and the Making of Latino/a Religion**

Felipe Hinojosa, April 2, 2018

This talk examines how a few and relatively unknown church takeovers—by groups such as the Young Lords and Católicos Por La Raza—inspired a Latino religious renaissance, both cultural and political, in the 1970s. Hinojosa’s analysis not only investigates the role of theology and faith—a story common to other Latina/o religious narratives—but centers radical politics as fundamental to understanding the origins of

Latina/o religious politics in the US, themes that the literature on Latina/o religion has for the most part ignored.

**Althea Gibson, Femininity, and Homophobia in the Integration of American Sports**

Ashley Brown, April 9, 2018

This talk argues that tennis champion Althea Gibson’s stature as a symbol of black excellence during the Cold War and early civil rights movement was compromised by her longstanding gender nonconformity, which evoked the social taboo of lesbianism. Gibson’s tomboyish traits were accepted and celebrated in her working-class black community in South Harlem in the 1940s. However, her selection as the player to integrate elite amateur tennis necessitated her adoption of a more feminine mien amid the rising, post-World War II stereotype of the lesbian female athlete and Cold War antagonism toward gays and lesbians.

**Soul Food and the Making of Black Atlantic Religion**

Elizabeth Perez, April 16, 2018

Before honey can be offered to the Afro-Cuban deity Ochún, it must be tasted, to prove to her that it is good. In African-inspired religions throughout the Caribbean, Latin America, and the United States, such gestures instill the attitudes that turn participants into practitioners. Acquiring deep knowledge of the diets of the gods and ancestors constructs adherents’ identities; to learn to fix the gods’ favorite dishes is to be “seasoned” into their service. In this talk, Pérez reveals how seemingly trivial “micropractices” such as the preparation of sacred foods are complex rituals in their own right. Drawing on years of ethnographic research in Chicago among practitioners of Lucumí, the transnational tradition popularly known as Santería, Pérez focuses on the behind-the-scenes work of the primarily women and gay men responsible for feeding the gods. She reveals how cooking and talking around the kitchen table have played vital socializing roles in Black Atlantic religions.



## Major Programs Calendar 2017–2018

### Becoming American: New Scholarship on Immigration



On Thursday, September 28, 2017, the institute hosted five eminent scholars of immigration at the Oxford Road Auditorium on Emory’s main campus. From understanding contemporary migration patterns to the US (including the Latinx, Asian, and African diasporas) to understanding how current debates over immigration change political identities and voting behavior, this program explored the diversity of contemporary US immigration and how it is politicized.

### Whiteness: The Meaning of a Racial, Social, and Legal Construct



In the wake of Donald Trump’s election and bestselling books such as *Hillbilly Elegy* and *White Trash*, there is a growing realization that whiteness is as much a social racial and political

identity as being African, Latinx, Asian, or Native American. On Thursday, November 16, 2017, in partnership with the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum, the institute hosted a public dialogue titled, “Whiteness: The Meaning of a Racial, Social, and Legal Construct.” Our multi-disciplinary panel explained why race—including whiteness—still matters in America.

### Black-Latinx Solidarity: A Symposium



Black and Latino/a/x people are often portrayed in academic and popular discussions as comrades in inequality and discrimination. By implication, these groups are perceived to be natural allies of each other. Even as there are numerous examples of cross-group collaboration, there are also distinctions in black and Latinx experiences, which sometimes lead these groups to different, and sometimes competing, policy preferences. Under what conditions do black and Latinx groups forge collaborations, and what conditions exacerbate tensions between the groups? On Thursday, February 22, 2018, JWJI convened an interdisciplinary panel of scholars who study the relationships between these groups to explore the possibilities for cross-group solidarity.

### 2018 Annual James Weldon Johnson Distinguished Lecture

Each spring, JWJI sponsors a major address by a distinguished race scholar and public intellectual. On Thursday, April 5, in Emory’s Cannon Chapel, historian and award-winning author Taylor



Branch delivered the 2018 lecture titled, “Lift Every Voice: Martin Luther King Jr. and James Weldon Johnson.” Branch’s talk examined the following question: Looking back 50 years to 1968 and 100 years to 1918, what can we learn today about race and democracy from these two seminal leaders?

This event was cosponsored by the Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church and the Laney Legacy Program in Moral Leadership at Candler School of Theology.

## Special Program of Note

### Textures of the Diaspora

On September 29, 2017, JWJI hosted “Textures of the Diaspora,” a public panel exploring black women’s cultural and spiritual heritage work across two African diaspora locations: Alabama, USA, and Bahia, Brazil. Focusing on the varied uses of textile-based arts in Africana sacred ritual and ancestral communication, the conversation featured master quilter Mary Margaret Pettway from Gee’s Bend, Alabama, and Iyalorixá Valnizia de Ayra and Vandrea Amaral from the Terreiro do Cobre Candomblé Community in Bahia, Brazil.

This event was cosponsored by the Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory Center for Creativity and Arts, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, Veterans of Hope, and Ceremony Music and Events.



## Teaching Race and History: Institute Course Offerings, Spring 2018

*Even as JWJI remains committed to supporting new research and scholarship on race, difference, and civil and human rights, it is equally committed to the creation of new opportunities for learning for undergraduate students in this field. With the support and cooperation of the sponsoring departments, our postdoctoral fellows taught one undergraduate course during the period of their residency. Read about their courses below.*

### **African Americans and Sports**

Ashley Brown

This course explored the struggles and political symbolism of African American athletes in times of social upheaval from the 1890s through the present. Brown interrogates, specifically, how black sports figures have used their skills, barrier-breaking presences, and celebrity to engage in campaigns for racial uplift, defy class conventions, promote the expansion of citizenship and civil rights, and challenge expectations of normative gender performance and sexuality within and beyond the playing arena.

### **Latino/a Civil Rights Movements**

Felipe Hinojosa

From the Congreso Mexicanista in 1911 to the Chicana/o and Puerto Rican civil rights movements to the current immigrant rights movement, Latina/o communities have a long history of organizing for citizenship rights and pushing back against racial discrimination. This course outlines the major ideas, movements, and events in twentieth-century Latina/o civil rights history. Particular attention is given to how Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, and other Latino groups have experienced racialization, how they have interacted with one another across place, space, and time, and the democratic movements they organized for civil rights.

### **Race, Sex, and Citizenship**

Alison Parker

The demands of civil rights activists for equality and legal status have transformed the US Constitution and shaped state practices and institutions. This course answers questions about who has been defined as a US citizen and in what historical context. Questions examined include: How did struggles for suffrage and the resulting constitutional amendments change the legal and political status of African Americans from Reconstruction to the present? Why were immigrants' "disabled" bodies screened, assessed, and rejected? How and why were all Asian immigrants denied the right to become US citizens until World War II? Similarly, how, why, and when did women become full citizens?