

SPRING 2019 NEWSLETTER



Professor Jen Nash delivers a talk at the Fall Quarter AFAM Salon and Social. Photo by Seth Bernstein.

NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

Greetings!

It is with mixed emotions that I announce this is my last “Note From the Chair” message. It has been a great honor to serve as chair of the Department of African American Studies over the past three years. And while we have lost great colleagues and had other challenges, I am proud of the work that we have accomplished together as a community.

I am extremely excited to welcome all of our new colleagues joining the department as a part of a cluster hire between our department and English. These young scholars are doing cutting-edge research in literary and cultural studies and gender and sexuality studies. They will be joined by our very own Tracy Vaughn-Manley, who, after serving many years as an award-winning professor of instruction, will begin the tenure-track as an assistant professor. And, we will also welcome a new postdoctoral fellow. Indeed, our hallway in Crowe will be buzzing with new faces, ideas and even more stimulating intellectual conversations and conviviality.

Our graduate students and undergraduate majors and minors are also reflecting the strength of their training in AFAM, receiving prestigious awards, postdoctoral fellowships and tenure-track jobs. We are so proud of the work that our students are doing while they are here with us and the work they are doing after they leave us.

The great African American historian, Carter G. Woodson, once wrote: “Real education means to inspire people to live more abundantly, to learn to begin with life as they find it and make it better.” It is my hope that each and every one of us—faculty, students, staff, alums—take up Woodson’s charge by using the ethos of this great department to make better lives for ourselves, our communities and our worlds.

Warmly as ever,
E. Patrick Johnson



*Professor E. Patrick Johnson
Chair, Department of African American Studies*

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FACULTY NEWS

Martha Biondi

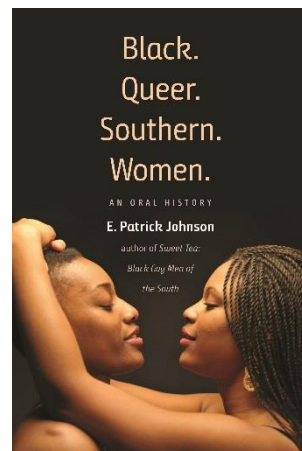
- Her article "Labor and the Fight for Racial Equality," was recently published in *City of Workers, City of Struggle*, edited by Joshua Freeman, which serves as a companion to an exhibit opening this month at the Museum of the City of New York.

Jonathan Holloway

- Was inducted into both the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Society of American Historians this spring.

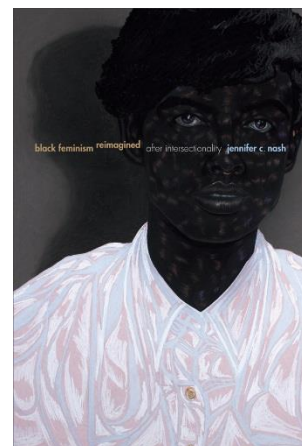
E. Patrick Johnson

- His book, *Black. Queer. Southern. Women.—An Oral History* was published in November 2018. It has already been cited by the American Library Association as a Stonewall Award Honor Book. It is also a Finalist for the Lambda Literary Award in the LGBT Studies category (award ceremony on June 3 in New York) and a Finalist for the Judy Grahn Award for Lesbian Nonfiction by the Publishing Triangle.
- Delivered two important keynotes during Winter Quarter: The 39th Marion Thompson Wright Lecture at Rutgers University-Newark and the Inaugural Levi Wilkins, Jr. Lecture at Spelman College.



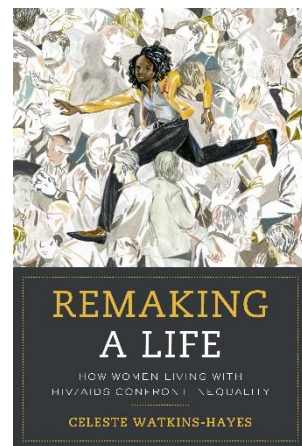
Jen Nash

- Her new book *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality* was published earlier this year.
- Will spend the 2019-20 academic year at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study with the support of an ACLS/Burkhardt grant.



Mary Pattillo

- Recently published an article in *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* with a former Sociology graduate student, Brittany Friedman. The article, entitled "Statutory Inequality: The Logics of Monetary Sanctions in State Law" draws on content analysis of legislative statutes in Illinois pertaining to monetary sanctions, and asks three questions: 1. What are defendants expected to pay for and why? 2. What accommodations exist for defendants' poverty? 3. What are the consequences for nonpayment?
- Has been awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to teach and study at the Universidad del Valle in Cali, Colombia in the Winter and Spring of 2020.



Celeste Watkins-Hayes

- Her new book, *Remaking a Life*, will be published this summer. *Remaking a Life* draws upon the voices of over one hundred Chicago-based women living with HIV/AIDS as well as nationally recognized AIDS activists and advocates to understand how individuals generate radical improvements in their social well-being after experiencing economic, social, physical, and psychological trauma.

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Professor Tracy Vaughn-Manley

CONGRATULATIONS TO PROFESSOR TRACY VAUGHN-MANLEY ON HER TRANSITION TO THE TENURE-TRACK

After 14 years of serving as an award-winning professor of instruction on the Evanston campus and on the Qatar campus in Doha, Professor Tracy Vaughn-Manley will transition to the tenure-track beginning September 1, 2019 as an assistant professor. Tracy has inspired hundreds of students in the U.S. and abroad through her pedagogy and is now turning more decidedly to her research on black women's literature and quilting. Her research engages the ways in which black women writers draw on what she refers to as the "Black Aesthetic quilting tradition" to assert individual and collective agency and find "catharsis." Examining how these black women writers employ quilting as a trope in their work, she argues that their fiction and poetry situate the production and preservation of American folk culture in the hands of black women. She will continue in her role as director of undergraduate studies.



Professor Marquis Bey

THE DEPARTMENT WELCOMES NEW ASSISTANT PROFESSOR MARQUIS BEY

The department would like to extend a warm welcome to Marquis Bey, who will be joining our faculty this fall as an assistant professor.

Dr. Bey earned his PhD from Cornell University in English and Feminist, Gender, & Sexuality Studies. His work rests broadly in the fields of Black Feminist Theorizing, Transgender Studies, Critical Theory and contemporary African American Literature. More specifically, he is concerned with questions of Blackness recalibrated through fugitivity, and how such a fugitive Blackness inflects itself through, and is inflected by, radical Black feminism and trans theorizing. He has published peer-reviewed articles in *The Black Scholar*, *CR: the New Centennial Review*, *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* and *Social Text*, among other venues. He recently published a collection of creative nonfiction and personal essays with University of Arizona Press, titled *Them Goon Rules: Fugitive Essays on Radical Black Feminism*.

This year he will be offering courses in Black political and social life, as well as Black vernacular as a theoretical praxis. He has other pedagogical interests in Black queer studies, Black feminist theory, the genre of the essay, and histories of radical politics.

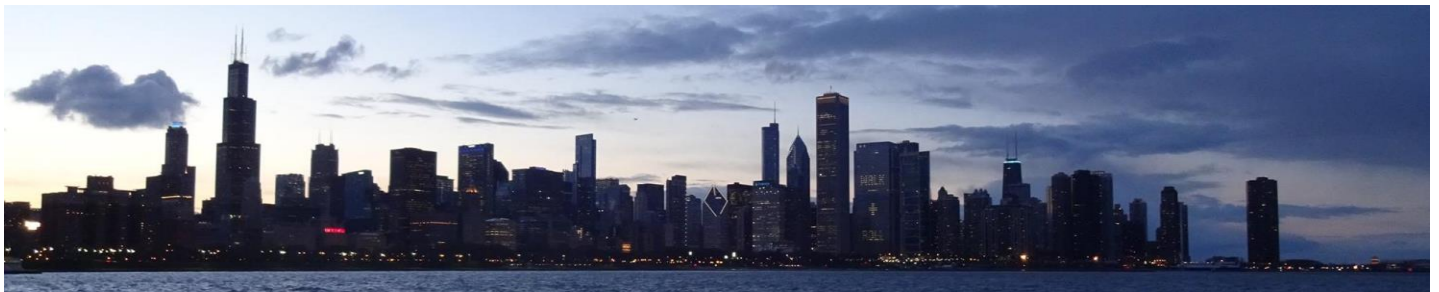


Photo by Seth Bernstein.

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Professor Nicole A. Spigner

THE DEPARTMENT WELCOMES NEW ASSISTANT PROFESSOR NICOLE SPIGNER

The department would also like to extend a warm welcome to Nicole A. Spigner, who will be joining our faculty this fall as an assistant professor.

Dr. Spigner is a 2018-19 Woodrow Wilson Fellow and will join NU's African American Studies Department from Columbia College Chicago, where she has held the position of Assistant Professor of African American Literature and Culture in the English and Creative Writing Department. Currently living in Denver, she is dedicating her fellowship time to her manuscript: *Niobe Repeating: Black New Women and Ovidian Transformation*. *Niobe Repeating* examines feminine transformation in the works of Black New Women classicists who rewrote stories from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and employed Ovidian allusions, themes, and forms. Furthermore, *Niobe Repeating* analyzes works by Phillis Wheatley, Pauline E. Hopkins, H. Cordelia Ray, and Alice Dunbar-Nelson that illuminate the precarious yet ever-evolving positions inhabited by black mothers in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Dr. Spigner completed her PhD at Vanderbilt University, and her M.A. and B.A. degrees at University of Pennsylvania. Specializing in the 19th Century, she also engages with and teaches classes featuring black feminist and feminist theories, 19th-century American literature, Afrofuturism and black speculative fiction, syncretic religion in the Americas and 20th-century black literatures. Additionally, she serves on the boards of *Issues in Critical Investigation* and the *A-Line Journal*. Her work is forthcoming in Brill's *Companion to Classical Reception in the Early Americas*, and can also be found in the *A-Line Journal*, *Public Books*, and *The Feminist Wire*. In addition to her academic pursuits, Dr. Spigner enjoys clay throwing and hand building, highly-seasoned vegetarian cooking, as well as long walks on the beach with her rescue Shar-Pei mix, Neoma.



Christopher Paul Harris

THE DEPARTMENT WELCOMES NEW POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW CHRISTOPHER PAUL HARRIS

Additionally, the department warmly welcomes new postdoc Christopher Paul Harris.

Harris comes to Northwestern from The New School for Social Research, where he is completing his PhD in Politics and Historical Studies. His research interests include Black political thought and Black critical theory, with a focus on the interplay between 20th and 21st century Black social movements, and the dialogic spaces produced by Black cultural expression and intellectual output. Alongside his scholarship, Chris has played an active role in the Black Youth Project 100, and is a contributing editor at *Public Seminar*. In addition, he is co-curator of a dedicated section on the Movement for Black Lives in the permanent exhibition "Activist New York" at the Museum of the City of New York, and, in collaboration with BYP100 in NYC, co-produced the award-winning experimental documentary short, *Acting Erratically*. Since late last year, Chris has also worked as the lead researcher and curator of a digital platform aimed at critically examining, and making widely accessible, the Gunnar Myrdal Research collection to mark the 75th anniversary of Myrdal's book, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. The project is sponsored by the Social Science Research Council and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and launches in late October.

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Graduate Students Ashley Dennis, Emeka Ekwelum, Leah Kaplan and Rikki Byrd. Photo by Genie Lemieux.

GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

Rikki Byrd

- Published an essay titled "'We Were What No One Else Had': How Black Fashion Models Constructed a New Wave of Performance and Visibility," in *The Routledge Companion to African American Theatre and Performance*.
- Moderated a panel on fashion and diversity with black designers in Chicago at Columbia College Chicago.
- Gave a lecture on fashion and black feminism at a day-long Fashion and Feminism symposium at The Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia.
- Moderated a panel on Fashioning the Black Body with contemporary artists Dario Calmese, Kenturah Davis and Basil Kincaid at projects+gallery in St. Louis.

Ashley Dennis

- Won the 2019 Black Metropolis Research Consortium (BMRC) Summer Short-Term Fellowship.
- Presented her research on Madeline Morgan and the Black Women Intellectual Activists of World War II Chicago at the 2019 Modern Language Association (MLA) Conference. Her paper on the same topic was also accepted by the 2019 American Historical Association (AHA) Conference.
- Gave a guest lecture on her research at Lake Forest College.
- Has served as the Assistant Chair of the Residential College of Culture and Community Studies at NU this year.

Chelsea Frazier

- Will be joining the Cornell University Department of English as a faculty fellow prior to beginning her tenure-track position there as an Assistant Professor of African American Literature in the fall of 2021.

Julian Kevon Glover

- Was a 2019 inductee into the Edward Alexander Bouchet Graduate Honor Society at Yale University.
- Published an essay in *American Quarterly* about anti-respectability as methodology with S. Tay Glover entitled "She Ate My Ass and My Pussy All Night: Deploying Illicit Eroticism, Funk and Sex Work amongst Black Queer Women Femmes."

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GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS (CONTINUED)

Leah Kaplan

- Awarded the Spring 2019 Internship at Black Perspectives (African American Intellectual History Society).
- Recently published "(Non)Presence: The Hole of Metaphysics" in *Propter Nos: Anti-/Non-* Vol. 3, Winter 2019.
- Presented her research at the Death, Decay, Disgust Conference at DePaul University in January.
- Will be presenting her research at the Caribbean Philosophical Association at Brown University in June.

Candice Merritt

- Received a Travel Grant to the 2018 National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) Conference in Atlanta, where she gave a paper titled, "Before A Hashtag: Tarana Burke's Radical Vision of Sex and Healing."

Isaac Ginsberg Miller

- His article, "Poetry is Not a Country Club: Reflecting on 'The Change'" was published by *Callaloo: A Journal of African Diaspora Arts and Letters*.

Casey Goonan

- His article, "Sketches of Moral Duress: On the Analytics of White Liberal Ethicality—Mediating Crisis in the U.S. National (Racial) Form" was published in the most recent issue of the internationally-recognized humanities and critical theory journal, *CR: The New Centennial Review* (Fall 2018).

Chris Montague

- Was awarded a Fellowship in the Brady Scholars Program, allowing him to act as a mentor to four undergraduate students in the program from Spring 2019 through Fall 2022.

Jermaine Scott

- Successfully defended his dissertation in April and will begin a tenure-track position as an Assistant Professor in the History Department at Mississippi State University in the fall



Jermaine Scott celebrates his successful dissertation defense with Professors Martha Biondi, Alex Weheliye and Barnor Hesse.

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UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

Onyinyechi Jessica Ogwumike

- Her senior thesis in African American Studies re-centered Black birth work in the media sensation constructed around Black maternal mortality of recent years in the United States. Black birthing people and birth workers combat the pathologizing denigration of Black birth in the media through counter-narration on social media platforms. As derived from Ogwumike's qualitative interviews, Black birth workers (doulas and midwives) approach their work in extension of visions of racial justice and birth justice.
- Whilst preparing this thesis, Ogwumike completed her own training as a labor doula.
- Will serve as a Northwestern University Public Interest Program (NUPIP) Fellow. As an NUPIP fellow, she will be working as a Care Manager with the Lawndale Christian Health Center network to facilitate the better health and wellness of marginalized populations on Chicago's West Side.



Onyinyechi Jessica Ogwumike

Emine Yucel

- Recently completed her senior thesis, for which she did an ethnographic study looking at the daily experiences of black student-athletes at Northwestern. Through her thesis, she reveals the colorblind nature the athletic department is built on and analyzes the white racial frame through which it functions. Additionally, she exposes the daily struggles of black student-athletes in their academic and athletic endeavors, the unique experiences black leaders have with a majority white administration, and the relationship between whiteness, black leaders, and other black student-athletes.
- Has been accepted into Medill's Master of Science in Journalism program and will stay at Northwestern, where she will continue her work on this topic next year. She will be specializing in Social Justice and Investigative Reporting, and intends to pursue a career in investigative journalism.



Professor E. Patrick Johnson interviews New Yorker theatre critic Hilton Als. Photo by Evan Robinson-Johnson, Daily Northwestern.

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Danez Smith

UPCOMING EVENTS:

May 1: Danez Smith to deliver Leon Forrest Lecture

Danez Smith is a Black, Queer, Poet writer & performer from St. Paul, MN. Smith is the author of *Don't Call Us Dead* (Graywolf Press, 2017), winner of the Forward Prize for Best Collection, winner of the Midwest Booksellers Choice Award, and a finalist for the National Book Award. They also wrote *[insert] boy* (YesYes Books, 2014), winner of the Kate Tufts Discovery Award and the Lambda Literary Award for Gay Poetry. They are the recipient of fellowships from the Poetry Foundation, the McKnight Foundation, the Montalvo Arts Center, Cave Canem, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Danez's work has been featured widely on platforms like BuzzFeed, The

New York Times, PBS NewsHour, Best American Poetry, Poetry Magazine, and on the Late Show with Stephen Colbert. Smith is a member of the Dark Noise Collective and is the co-host of VS with Franny Choi, a podcast sponsored by the Poetry Foundation and Postloudness. Danez's third collection, *Homie*, will be published by Graywolf in Spring 2020.

The Forrest Lecture will be held on Wednesday, May 1 at 5:00 p.m. in Harris 107. It is free and open to the public.

May 7: Danielle Bainbridge to deliver Postdoc Lecture: "Medical and Musical Instruments: Staging Contemporary Performance out of 19th C Freak Show Archives"

Millie-Christine McKoy and Thomas "Blind Tom" Wiggins were 19th century enslaved performers who traveled the world as medical anomalies, performing freaks and musicians into the early years of the 20th century. Although their remaining archives prove unreliable in locating their unmediated autobiographies, the documents of their musical legacies offer blueprints of their performance strategies. Bainbridge's ongoing book project *Refinements of Cruelty* explores the tension between the pleasure derived from these extraordinary acts of performance and the violent conditions under which they were made. Out of her archival research she has created a performance piece titled Curio. In collaboration with undergraduate performers and faculty at the University of Pennsylvania, Bainbridge had the McKoys' lyrics set to handbell music and sung in harmony, because bells were frequently used for torture devices meant to sound the alarm if repeatedly fugitive slaves attempted to escape. Bainbridge will evaluate the ethics of creating new artistic work from these archival remnants.



Dr. Danielle Bainbridge

The lecture will be held on Tuesday, May 7 at 5:00 p.m. in Kresge 1515. It is free and open to the public.

HOW TO SUPPORT AFAM:

To continue the great work of our students and faculty, please consider contributing directly to the department. With your generous gift, we will be able to fund student travel experiences to conduct important research; support the scholarly production and innovative teaching of our faculty; and produce outstanding programming for the campus, Evanston and Chicago communities. We could not do it without your support.

Please visit our website <http://www.afam.northwestern.edu/community/how-to-support-afam.html> for instructions on how to give directly to the department.