



TEXAS

The University of Texas at Austin



BLACK STUDIES

Fall 2020 Newsletter



Greetings Alumni, Supporters, and Friends.

We stand unequivocally and unapologetically in solidarity with the millions of Black people across the United States and the world who are rising up against centuries of murder, theft, injustice, brutality, racism, anti-blackness, and erasure in the midst of a global

pandemic. We decry the systemic devaluing of Black life that permeates every layer of our existence. We mourn the senseless loss of Black lives, and we condemn the racist police violence that has historically targeted Black people and, most recently, resulted in the killings of Javier Ambler, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Michael Ramos, George Floyd, and Rayshard Brooks. We also welcome the chance that this moment affords us to upturn the structures of racial injustices in our society.

The long history of state violence in the United States is now bolstered by an administration that actively supports white supremacist vigilantes and threatens the use of military force against people protesting, an administration that has been emboldened by apathetic elected officials and politicians.

We call for mass voting, mass enfranchisement, and mass organizing. We call for the defunding of police and the funding of life-affirming services, including healthcare, low-income housing, education, living-wage jobs, recreational spaces, and libraries.

Our voices and actions are enduring, and are not simply confined to a moment. Black Studies at The University of Texas at Austin and the community of scholars, students, and staff it represents renew our commitment to activism, healing and community building, Black intellectual production and creative expression, and Black policy research and analysis. We act in support of liberatory social change, and we work in service of a more just society and a more equitable Austin. We commit ourselves to working to dismantle systemic racism and standing for Black lives – every day and always. Black Studies at The University of Texas at Austin continues to hold space for our local communities and our global family – *we see you, we are here for you, we value you.*

In Solidarity,

Dr. Cherise Smith
AADS

Dr. Jennifer Wilks
WCAAAS

Dr. Kevin Cokley
IUPRA

Lise Ragbir
AGBS

INSTITUTE FOR URBAN POLICY RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS



IUPRA recognizes the critical relationship between policy, research, and practice. We value community engagement as a reflection of our commitment to Black policy issues and have developed new initiatives aimed at strengthening our ties to the community. IUPRA staff consistently made their research and expertise on social issues (including COVID-19 and the 2020 US elections) accessible to the academic community and the general public.

Learn more about IUPRA's issues briefs, policy reports, and upcoming projects at liberalarts.utexas.edu/iupra.

Program Feature

The Community Classroom: Community Education Exchange

This fall, IUPRA partnered with UT Austin Center for Community Engagement to host the Community Education Exchange, a space for collective learning and advocacy. The virtual four-week course provided community members with policy tools and resources for effectively communicating information to city leaders relating to their concerns for equity in the city's K-12 public education. IUPRA staff served as instructors and shared knowledge on how to write policy briefs and policy recommendations.

2020 Research Reports

Issue Brief: Homeowners Associations Across Texas

Annika Olson, MA, MPP; Lynn Huynh

Advancing Equity in AISD: What We Know About the Role of Equity Offices in Public School Districts

Ricardo Lowe, MS; Annika Olson, MA, MPP

Policing, Justice, and Black Communities Part 2: A Brief Guide for Understanding Police Defunding, Reform, Disbanding, and Abolition

Tracie Lowe, PhD

The Digital Divide and Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Annika Olson, MA, MPP; Ricardo Lowe, MS; Lynn Huynh

PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP AT IUPRA



Interviewed in **8** podcasts and radio shows and **6** television appearances along with **20** op-eds.



Hosted **4** events and planned, presented at, or sponsored **9** events, across campus and throughout Texas.

AFRICAN & AFRICAN DIASPORA STUDIES DEPARTMENT

Approaching a Decade of Black Scholarship

Established in 2011, AADS is now proud to celebrate 10 years of engaging scholarship, activism, and creative expression on the UT Austin campus. Here's a snapshot of the work our department has been doing for a decade.

Faculty Highlight

Cherise Smith | AADS Department Chair

Dr. Cherise Smith, who was promoted to Full Professor of AADS in the spring, published her new manuscript, *Michael Ray Charles: A Retrospective* (The University of Texas Press). This is the first in-depth examination of the work of acclaimed artist Michael Ray Charles, whose provocative paintings feature recycled racial stereotypes.



Marcelo J. P. Paixão | Associate Professor of AADS

Dr. Marcelo Paixão was awarded a Provost's Authors Fellowship from the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost. The 15-month-long program provides financial and professional support to faculty members engaged in the development and publication of scholarly books.

Pavithra Vasudevan | Assistant Professor of AADS and Women's & Gender Studies

Dr. Pavithra Vasudevan was awarded a 2020-2021 American Postdoctoral Research Leave Fellowship from the American Association of University Women. The fellowship is designed to promote equity for women scholars in higher education.

Meet AADS' Newest Faculty Members



Ashanté Reese | Assistant Professor of AADS

Dr. Ashanté Reese holds a PhD in Anthropology from American University, and her research is focused on critical food studies and food justice, Black geographies, abolition, and ethnographic methods and practice. She joins the department from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, where she served as Assistant Professor of Geography and Environmental Systems. This fall, Dr. Reese is teaching an upper-division course titled Food in the Racialized City.

Kevin J. A. Thomas | Professor of AADS

Dr. Kevin Thomas comes to AADS from Pennsylvania State University, where he was Professor of Sociology, Demography, and African Studies. He holds a PhD in Demography from the University of Pennsylvania and has affiliation with UT's Population Research Center as a Faculty Research Associate. Dr. Thomas is teaching the course Intro to the Study of Africa in the fall.

61 classes offered this semester

Over 3,900 students enrolled in AADS courses last year

The Student Experience

Mmeso Onuoha, junior AADS and Economics major



You launched a HornRaiser crowdfunding campaign to support experiential learning opportunities for AADS students navigating COVID-19 restrictions. What inspired you to create this project?

I created this campaign because I've always done two things: panicked at the thought of spending money and dreamed of seeing the world.

These two things can't really coexist. I felt all this encouragement to study abroad, but I didn't see anyone stepping up to pay for the bill. I didn't want other students to face the same panic that I did. Moreover, I just wanted more scholarships for the students who inspired me—students who dedicated a piece of themselves to Black Studies. That's why I created this initiative.

How has experiential learning impacted your time at UT?

I've done experiential learning by volunteering and researching. It's made my time here at UT feel more worthwhile because these experiences helped me explore new parts

of myself and find a new courage in my character. With this addition to my courage, I was better able to define my career goals and apply to even more opportunities.

Do you have any advice for students who want to support their peers while at UT?

For students wanting to support their peers, I'd say ask around and find the people who can help you make it happen, whether they be students, administrators, or professors. A lot of us make big goals, but have a hard time finishing them. I'd suggest finding a team or a partner to hold you accountable and make things a little easier.

The Alumni Experience

Lareatha Clay BBA '79, MA '00



Preserving history, and specifically Black Texas history, is critical for you. Can you share why?

I grew up in a family that was cognizant of their history through the telling of the Shankleville Freedom Colony story (one of over 500 established in Texas after Juneteenth). I learned at an early age from my mother, my grandmother, and the elders in my community about the complexities of Black existence and the value of oral history telling.

The Black Diaspora Archive is home to a small piece of your family history. What items did you donate and why?

When I first started conversations with Black Studies about my archive, I never thought that UT would be interested in African American history. My experience with UT led me to believe that. But because UT has the expertise and capacity, and because Black Studies had the interest in receiving the archive, I decided to entrust UT with my very valuable items. I gave audio recordings of Shankleville residents, videos with six of the eight surviving children of A.T. and Addie Odom (he was the great-grandson of the founding couple of Shankleville), which were a part of an oral history project that was

spearheaded by the Shankleville Historic Society, which was organized in 1987.

Why is supporting Black Studies important to you?

For us, as alumni and current and future students, it is important that we know that UT is interested in our lives, our history, our experience as people, as Texans, as Americans. I am committed to doing whatever I can do to add to the scholarship, the study, and to make sure that interest is maintained and communicated to the broader community. African American history is American history. Everyone should understand that, know that, study that. Black Studies is a critical component in making sure that happens.

ART GALLERIES AT BLACK STUDIES

Introducing The Narrative



Last spring, Art Galleries at Black Studies (AGBS) temporarily closed the Christian-Green Gallery and Idea Lab to help contain the spread of COVID-19. Without physical access to art, how can we create meaningful art experiences? AGBS is proud to present *The Narrative*, a new online exhibit space to help you think, ask questions, and marvel at the world of Black material culture.

Subscribe today and join the conversation: www.the-narrative.org

Publications celebrating the visual arts

Michael Ray Charles: A Retrospective

The University of Texas Press, January 2020

By Dr. Cherise Smith, AGBS Founding Executive Director

Featuring more than 150 color images, this is the first in-depth examination of the work of Michael Ray Charles, whose provocative paintings recast images of racism in consumer culture.



AADS Department Chair Dr. Cherise Smith and acclaimed artist Michael Ray Charles at book signing hosted by Umlauf Sculpture Garden and Museum in January 2020.

Collecting Black Studies: The Art of Material Culture at The University of Texas at Austin

The University of Texas Press, April 2020

Edited by Lise Ragbir, AGBS Director; and Dr. Cherise Smith

This beautifully illustrated volume presents and analyzes for the first time the many hidden treasures from Black Studies at The University of Texas at Austin.



JOHN L. WARFIELD CENTER FOR AFRICAN & AMERICAN STUDIES



Welcome from Newly Appointed Center Director, Dr. Jennifer Wilks

When I applied to be the next Director of the Center, I did not envision beginning my term in the midst of one novel pandemic and during the resurgence of another all-too familiar one. I did not imagine that the spring and summer of 2020 would come to resemble not only 1918, but also 1919 and 1968. Yet such are the conditions under which I am writing this letter and under which we are beginning this most unusual of academic years. Not surprisingly for a literary critic, books have been a source of comfort and sustenance as I navigate these choppy waters, and so I share the words of two of my favorite authors as we look to the year ahead for the Warfield Center. The first, Negritude theorist Suzanne Césaire (1915-1966), described World War II as a moment for her fellow Martinicans “to dare to know oneself, to dare to confess to oneself what one is, to dare to ask oneself what one wants to be.” The second, Haitian American writer Edwidge Danticat (b. 1969), has one character soothe another by asking her “to pick one thing [...] to focus on at a time.” My “one thing” for my first semester as Director is *community*, and while we will not be able to gather in person this fall, I hope that the Center’s programming will be one means of our coming together nonetheless. It is also my hope that our exchanges and reflections in the coming months will enable us not only to know each other and our work with greater depth, but also to dare to ask ourselves, our institutions, and our societies what we want to be and how we can work toward that vision collectively, ethically, and unapologetically.

Warfield Program Feature

Critical Conversations: Black Women and U.S. Politics Series

Critical Conversations is a policy-orientated discussion that offers deep-dive conversations bringing Black theory and history into action. This semester’s theme, “Black Women and U.S. Politics,” highlights the political contributions of Fannie Lou Hamer, Shirley Chisholm, and Barbara Jordan. Even when there was neither a path nor opportunities available, these Black women were at the forefront of political and social change. The historic vice presidential nomination of Senator Kamala Harris is yet another important moment in the long legacy of political pioneers. The Center welcomed AADS Professor Ashley Farmer, UT alumna and filmmaker Shola Lynch, AADS doctoral student La’Kayla Williams, and local community organizers in discussion for the series.

To learn more about WCAAAS events throughout the year, visit liberalarts.utexas.edu/caaas



Bring Your Own Chair:
**Shirley Chisholm's
Legacy as a Catalyst
for Change**

OCTOBER 20TH, 2020
5:00 PM (CST)

Follow us on IG & Twitter @Warfield_UT
and Facebook @WCAAAS



The Bridges That
Carried Us Over:
**Fannie Lou Hamer's
Legacy of Civic
Engagement**

OCTOBER 27TH, 2020
5:00 PM (CST)

Follow us on IG & Twitter @Warfield_UT
and Facebook @WCAAAS



The University of Texas at Austin
Black Studies
College of Liberal Arts

210 W. 24th Street | Austin, Texas 78712



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