

**Brown University Department of Africana Studies**  
**Transnational Feminism and the Black Diaspora Symposium**  
Watson Institute of International Studies, Joukowsky Forum  
November 13, 2009

8:30 Continental Breakfast

9:00 Welcome: **Keisha-Khan Y. Perry**, Assistant Professor of Africana Studies, Brown University

Opening Remarks: **Tricia Rose**, Professor and Chair of Africana Studies, Brown University

*Morning Session:*

Moderator: **Ama Ata Aidoo**, Visiting Professor of Africana Studies and Literary Arts, Brown University

9:30 **Faye V. Harrison**, "Black Women Claiming Global Citizenship: From the International Council of Women of the Darker Races to Transborder Solidarities for Human Rights"

10:00 **Zine Magubane**, "'Can We As Mothers Not Take Our Fight to the Enemy?': The Politics of Motherhood in South African Autobiography"

10:30 Discussion

11:00 Lunch Break

*Afternoon Session:*

Moderator: **Rolland Murray**, Associate Professor of English and Africana Studies, Brown University

1:00 **Jafari S. Allen**, "Erotics and Politics of Black Cuban Self-making"

1:30 **Jennifer Williams**, "Cosmopolitan Desire in Black Diasporic Women's Texts"

2:00 Discussion

3:30 Introduction to Keynote Speaker: **Corey D.B. Walker**, Associate Professor of Africana Studies, Brown University

Keynote Address: **Carole Boyce-Davies**, “The Politics and Poetics of Transnational Black Feminism: Claudia Jones and the Art of Black Communism”

### Participants

#### **Faye V. Harrison**

Title of Talk: “Black Women Claiming Global Citizenship: From the International Council of Women of the Darker Races to Transborder Solidarities for Human Rights”

Abstract: In many parts of the world, women are among the growing numbers of activists who, in the post-Cold War era, have begun to invoke the language and instruments of international human rights in struggles for sustainable well-being and for social, political and economic justice. The growing consciousness of women’s concerns has been deeply enriched by the interventions of African and African-diasporic women who, particularly since the 1985 Women’s Conference in Nairobi, have helped to expand the meanings of gender, stretch the limits of grass roots politics, and destabilize the authority of the racially- and class-privileged feminisms situated largely in North Atlantic metropolitan contexts. This lecture will shed light on the development of a network of African American women, based principally in the Deep South, who are dedicated to building a multiracial and transnational coalition to mobilize against the forms of structural violence and human rights abuse that have had disproportionate effects in the South—mapped as part of the *Global South*. Building on the legacy of earlier expressions of African American women’s internationalism, this case of women-centered politics demonstrates how the highly touted civil rights that the U.S. Constitution ideally guarantees are insufficient. As an alternative, a robust set of human rights is envisioned as principles of justice that can potentially transcend the limits of national citizenship and serve as a blueprint for reimagining social relations within civil society, the state, and the market according to the logic of an alternative modality of global restructuring, one inspired by “globalization from [the racialized, gendered and class-fractured space] below.”

**Faye V. Harrison** is Director of African American Studies and Professor of Anthropology at the University of Florida. An undergraduate alumna of Brown University (‘74), she earned her Ph.D. in Anthropology from Stanford University (‘82). With intensive research experience in the U.S., the U.K., and the Caribbean, she specializes in the political economy and politics of interlocking social inequalities, urban poverty, and human rights conflicts. Another important aspect of her work is the history and politics of anthropology and critical projects in decolonizing the production and circulation of knowledge. She has published on the urban informal economy, gendered division of labor, drug trafficking, multiple modalities of violence, and the impact of globalization on local-level politics. She has also examined race and racism as foci within the international human rights regime, feminist methodological concerns in ethnographic research, and postcolonial perspectives on the cultural anthropology and archaeology of Africa and the African Diaspora. Her most recent books are *Resisting Racism & Xenophobia: Global Perspectives on Race, Gender, & Human Rights* (2005) and *Outsider Within: Reworking Anthropology in the Global Age* (2008). The latter was nominated for an outstanding book award from the Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Bigotry and Human Rights. In 2004 the

Society for the Anthropology of North America awarded her its Prize in Distinguished Achievement in the Critical Study of North America, and in 2007 she received the Zora Neale Hurston Award for Mentoring, Service, & Scholarship from the Southern Anthropological Society. In 2007 she was the American Anthropological Association's executive program chair for its annual meeting, whose theme was "Difference, (In)Equality & Justice." She currently serves on the American Anthropological Association's Commission on World Anthropologies and the Executive Committee of the International Union of Anthropological & Ethnological Sciences. She is immediate past chair of the IUAES Commission on the Anthropology of Women as well as a past president of the Association of Black Anthropologists.

## **Zine Magubane**

Title of Talk: "Can We As Mothers Not Take Our Fight to the Enemy?": The Politics of Motherhood in South African Autobiography"

Abstract: Although she does not have any biological children, motherhood has been a consistent theme in the work of bell hooks. Her interest in the subject of motherhood stems, in no small part, from her desire to demonstrate the manner in which matters generally deemed "private"—such as love, mental health, and the family—are deeply politicized. The idea that racism must penetrate into the most private spaces of black life if it is to be effective, that informs her discussion of both the problems that plague black mothers as well as the possibilities for charting a different future for black families. In this essay I will explore three different dimensions of hooks' work on motherhood. First I will look at how hooks' work on images and representations of blackness informs her analysis of the challenges facing black women as mothers, past and present. Second, I will look at how hooks analyzes the nature of contemporary racism and sexism with an eye to showing how she makes the connection between capitalist patriarchal systems of rule and the current state of the black family. Finally, I will look at her work on social resistance and personal transformation, demonstrating how she positions African American single mothers as a key element in the transformation of the repressive culture that informs contemporary American political and social life.

**Zine Magubane** is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Sociology department at Boston College. She also holds a courtesy appointment in the department of African and African Diaspora studies at Boston College. Her areas of specialization include social theory, sociology of post-coloniality, race and ethnicity, globalization, race and popular culture, gender and sexuality, and the sociology of African societies. Professor Magubane is the author of *Bringing the Empire Home: IRace, Gender and Class in Britain and Colonial South Africa* (University of Chicago Press, 2004). She is the editor of two other books – *Postmodernity, Postcoloniality, and African Studies* (Africa World Press, 2004) and, with Reitu Mabokela, *Race, Gender and the Status of Black South African Women in the Academy* (UNISA, 2005). She is currently writing a book entitled *Brand the Beloved Country: Africa in Celebrity Culture*. Magubane, who completed her B.A. in 1991 at Princeton where she was an MMUF fellow, has authored numerous refereed journal articles and published chapters on a wide range of topics. From 1997 to 2005 Magubane was employed as first an Assistant then Associate Professor of Sociology at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Professor Magubane also taught at University of

Cape Town in South Africa during 1996-1997 and served as a Research Associate with the Human Sciences Research Council in Pretoria, South Africa from 1998-2000. Magubane completed her M.A. and Ph.D. in Sociology at Harvard University.

### **Jennifer Williams**

Title of Talk: "Cosmopolitan Desire in Black Diasporic Women's Texts"

Abstract: This paper examines fiction that portrays young black women who refuse national and racial belonging. In lieu of these customary identifications, the protagonists in Andrea Lee's *Sarah Phillips* and Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy* attempt to refashion themselves through change of place. Their resolve to leave behind country and kin is consistent with practices of cosmopolitanism. Yet their cosmopolitan desires—to escape the confines of community and country, to move freely throughout the world, and to reinvent themselves socially and erotically—compete with racial and colonial ideologies that cross time and space. I maintain that cosmopolitan desire in Lee and Kincaid's novels subverts modern racist and colonial constructions of black diasporic women that were produced largely through imperialistic travel discourse. In this way, both works demonstrate the role memory and aesthetics as well as history and invention play in performances of identity.

**Jennifer D. Williams** is an Assistant Professor of English and African American and African studies at Michigan State University and is currently in residence at New York University as a postdoctoral fellow in the department of English. Her research interests include trauma and memory studies, feminism, gender, and sexuality studies, and travel and migration. Her most recent article "Jean Toomer's *Cane* and the Erotics of Mourning" is published in *Southern Literary Journal* (Spring 2008). Her other published reviews and essays can be found in *Modern Fiction Studies*, *American Literature*, and *Africanizing Knowledge* (Eds. Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings, 2002). Williams is at work on her book manuscript, which looks at memory, the body, and the black female subject.

### **Jafari S. Allen**

Title of Talk: "Erotics and politics of Black Cuban self-making"

Abstract: This essay will present three ethnographic vignettes representing three related modes of agency, and perhaps resistance among black lesbian, gay, and transgender Cubans. Based on ethnographic research undertaken in Cuba over more than four years, here we will witness change happening in post-Special Period Cuba, through the apparatus of the Cuban state and global imperatives; via friendship networks and between friends, both local and global; and change sparked by individual desire. It asks, to what degree are these practices of self-making enabled and constrained by the Cuban state, and the ever-present specter of globalization?

**Jafari Sinclair Allen** is Assistant Professor in the departments of Anthropology and African American Studies, and Program in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies at Yale University. He teaches courses on the cultural politics of race, sexuality and gender in Black diasporas; Black feminist and queer theory; critical cultural studies; ethnographic methodology

and writing; subjectivity, consciousness and resistance; Cuba and the Caribbean. Dr. Allen's current research project-- Once Removed: Queer Alter-natives and the redemption of a transnational Black counter-public-- traces the cultural and political circuits of transnational Black queer artistry, activism, and intellectual life. His critical ethnography, *¿Venceremos?: Sexuality, Gender and Black Self-Making in Cuba/*, is forthcoming from Duke University Press [Perverse Modernities Series].

### **Carole Boyce-Davies**

Title of Keynote Address: "The Politics and Poetics of Transnational Black Feminism: Claudia Jones and the Art of Black Communism"

Abstract: In these days of easy reduction of everything that seems mildly transformative as communism, it is important to bring forward for consideration the way that Claudia Jones practiced her art of being black, woman and communist. I have already argued that her Left of Karl Marx location in death, provides a lens for re-examining the range of activist-intellectuals who felt that Marxism-Leninism while the philosophical/theoretical tool was in many ways a limiting positionality. What we can define retrospectively now as transnational black feminism was for Claudia Jones her the art of navigating a variety of complex positions around race, gender, class, national origin, culture but also the generating experiences of migration. An interesting blend of theoretical and practical positions created a life which preceded discourses of intersectionality, finding a place for art and culture as well; finding also a sense of personal style that captured this identity. This presentation presents an assessment of this complex combination of positions, of activism and intellectual life which advanced through the global and the local, a series of anti-imperialist and anti-colonial linkages, conscious as well of the place of activism and radicalism.

An African Diaspora Studies scholar, born in Trinidad and Tobago, **Carole Boyce Davies** is Professor of Africana Studies and English at Cornell University. Her publications include the prize-winning *Left of Karl Marx. The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Duke University Press, 2008). Her *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* (Routledge, 1994) is considered a theoretical base for many related studies in the field. In addition to numerous scholarly articles, Dr. Boyce Davies has also published several critical anthologies in African and Caribbean Literature and a two-volume collection of critical and creative writing entitled *Moving Beyond Boundaries* (New York University Press, 1995): *International Dimensions of Black Women's Writing* (volume 1), and *Black Women's Diasporas* (volume 2). She is co-editor with Ali Mazrui and Isidore Okpewho of *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities* (Indiana University Press, 1999) and *Decolonizing the Academy. African Diaspora Studies* (Africa World Press, 2003). She is general editor of the three volume *Encyclopedia of the African Diaspora* (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2008). Currently, Dr. Boyce Davies is writing a series of personal reflections called *Caribbean Spaces. Between the Twilight Zone and the Underground Railroad*, dealing with the issue of transnational Caribbean/American black identity, and is preparing an edition of the writings of Claudia Jones, *Beyond Containment: Claudia Jones, Activism, Political Clarity and Vision*.