



COLLEGE *of*  
CHARLESTON

AFRICAN AMERICAN  
STUDIES PROGRAM

# Fall 2020 Newsletter



*"Iron 'sankofa' symbol on a memorial to the enslaved workers who 'helped' build the Unitarian Church in Charleston, SC" by Spencer Means is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0*

## From the Director



**Kameelah Martin,**  
Director of the  
African American Studies  
program

I sincerely hope this message finds all of the friends, colleagues, and alum of African American Studies in sound health—both mental and physical. These are challenging times, to say the least. I stand assured that as the world reacts to the injustices faced by black people in this nation, our current students and alumni are employing the arsenal of knowledge acquired through the African American Studies program to *process and act in accordance to their own principles and values. We hope that everyone remains safe in the face of civil disobedience and the global health crisis.*

As has been reported by the [Center for Disease Control](#), it is [African-descended communities](#) who are being disproportionately impacted by Covid-19 and the

on-going [racial disparities in health](#). Black people are dying at a much higher rate than other racial groups and are being impacted economically and in other ways. Because most of the students (and faculty) in AAST classes come from these underrepresented minority communities (who often live in multi-generational homes with both young children and the elderly), particularly in the local tri-county area, and because these students often work and have familial responsibilities, AAST faculty has opted to further minimize the risk to the black and brown and rural and underserved communities they live in by launching our entire Fall programming virtually. As African American Studies scholars who often teach against and study the various ways African-descended populations face racial injustices and inequitable treatment, we have a moral and pedagogical obligation to proactively work against any further harm to these communities. It is a political position to take for sure, but to know the discipline of African American Studies is to know that it was founded on principles of social justice, political action, and community empowerment. It is imperative for us to model the very same social responsibility and activism we impart to our students as part of the African American Studies ethos. Taking this step to protect black and brown bodies on our campus and in the Charleston/Lowcountry area is a small, but very meaningful act.

We invite you to support our decision by following our social media and attending fall programming events virtually. We intend to maintain our presence and influence on campus, but need everyone's help in doing so. Our fall newsletter is packed with exciting news about our faculty, staff, and students! While we are navigating the ups and downs of our COVID realities and mourn the loss of all black lives, the work to build our dynamic program continues!



# Faculty Spotlight

We are happy to reclaim Professor Mari Crabtree this fall after a yearlong leave of absence as a Research Associate in the Department of African American Studies at Princeton University. The Postdoctoral Fellowship is quite a prestigious feather in one's cap! We asked her to tell us what she's been up to in the last twelve months.



I spent the 2019-2020 academic year at Princeton University as a visiting research scholar with the Department of African American Studies. This fellowship gave me time to focus on my research and writing and take advantage of the extraordinary resources at Princeton. In addition to finishing an article about the ethics of writing traumatic histories and a review of Ersula Ore's book on lynching, I completed my forthcoming book, *My Soul is a Witness: The Traumatic Afterlife of Lynching, 1940-1970*, which will be published by Yale University Press in 2021. The department also organized a book manuscript workshop for me that was led by my mentor, Tera Hunter, and I

participated in the Faculty-Graduate Seminar both semesters. The COVID-19 pandemic not only disrupted the undergraduate course I taught in the spring, *Remembering and Forgetting: Race, Violence, and History in the US*, but also the public lecture I had been scheduled to give about my research. We finished up my course virtually over Zoom, and my public lecture has been postponed until this fall. Also I was going to speak at a conference commemorating 50 years of Black Studies at Amherst College and present a paper on the trans-Pacific activism of Robert F. Williams and Nakajima Yoriko at the Japanese Association for American Studies Meeting in Sapporo, Japan, but both conferences were cancelled because of COVID-19. The pandemic certainly made for an unusual end to my fellowship year, but the opportunity to get professional advice from the likes of Tera Hunter, Imani Perry, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, and Eddie Glaude was simply incredible and I relished the chance to be part of their academic family.

# Alumni Spotlight



Aisha Gallion is a Columbia, SC native. As an enthusiast and passionate scholar of Black musical forms, Aisha desires nothing more than for people to know and be invigorated by the histories and impact of such music forms. Much of her research interests have concerned hip-hop culture, specifically local music scenes, gender identity, expression, and roles in rap music. Tackling topics ranging from the Drake and Meek Mill beef to the hip-hop in Ireland, Aisha continuously aims to incorporate her particular interests into whatever she seeks to accomplish. Recently, she conducted a small fieldwork project in Charleston for her Master's thesis, which concerns how local Black

hip-hop artists create place and creative space for themselves and other Black folks in Charleston, SC (feel free to email her about this: [ag18s@my.fsu.edu](mailto:ag18s@my.fsu.edu)). This spring she will graduate from Florida State University with a Master of Music in Ethnomusicology. Upon graduation, she looks forward to teaching and gaining more skills to conduct oral history concerning hip hop culture in North and South Carolina. Outside of her academic interests and musical fanaticism, she enjoys yoga, cooking, writing poetry, and being a part of OutdoorAfro.



# Student & Alumni News

- African American Studies Major **Kayla Doctor** will be interning with South Carolina for Criminal Justice Reform this fall. South Carolina for Criminal Justice Reform which is a grassroots organization focused on fixing the criminal justice system in South Carolina. The organization also educates the general public on criminal justice issues through their social media pages and informational videos. As an intern Kayla will focus primarily on researching different laws and solutions to the problems presented by today's criminal justice system.
- **Alexis Burgess** (WGS and AAST Double Major) will be completing an internship with Dr. Sandra Slater (History) this fall. She will be conducting original research on black suffragists in Charleston, South Carolina.
- **Jaiden Canteen** (Psychology and AAST Double Major) will be completing her internship with Dr. Kameelah Martin. Jaiden will serve as a research assistant and work closely with Dr. Martin on the completion of a collection of interviews with acclaimed filmmaker Julie Dash.

# Faculty News

## What's new with AAST faculty, affiliates, and friends?

- Congratulations and well wishes to Professor Joy Vandervort-Cobb (Department of Theatre and Dance, AAST Affiliate) on her retirement after 25 years of service to the College of Charleston!
- AAST welcomes our newest faculty member, [Dr. Tamara Butler](#). Dr. Tamara Butler is the newly appointed Executive Director of the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture and Associate Dean of the Library. She also holds a courtesy appointment in African American Studies. She holds a Ph.D. in Education from the Ohio State University and is a native of John's Island.
- Congratulations to Professor Mari Crabtree on receiving tenure and promotion to Associate Professor of African American Studies! She submitted a book review on Ersula Ore's *Lynching: Violence, Rhetoric, and American Identity*, which will be published in the December 2020 issue of the *Journal of American History*.
- Friend to AAST, Mary Jo Fairchild (Special Collections), and Faculty Affiliate, Matthew Cressler (Religious Studies), are advising two students in an extended research project into the religious history of the College of Charleston. Unsurprisingly, a large part of their research entails uncovering the complicity of (white) Christian ministers and professors in enslavement (and intellectual justification thereof). They have produced a [video](#) highlighting their current work.
- Faculty Affiliate, Julia Eichelberger (English), served on a team that researched and wrote essays for the new online tour of CofC, [Discovering Our Past](#), part of the College's 250th anniversary. Several of the sites on the tour were built, maintained, owned or inhabited by African Americans, including houses on the block where the Simons Center now stands ([A History of St Philip Street](#)). One of their most significant discoveries was that [14 Greenway](#) was not built by the Knox family as previously believed. It was built for A. O. Jones, an African American man who was Clerk of the SC House of Representatives during Reconstruction; the design etched in the glass door is his initials. Dr. Eichelberger also published, "Remembering and Rewriting Gullah Narratives," introductory essay for the [U of SC's 2020 edition](#) of John Bennett's collection of Gullah-inspired tales, *The Doctor to the Dead*.
- Kameelah Martin is editing a collection of interviews with filmmaker Julie Dash for the University of Mississippi Press series *Conversations with Filmmakers*.

# AAST Student Award Winners and Graduates

While COVID-19 shut down our campus and precluded our annual celebration of the African American Student Awards, we want to acknowledge their hard work and accomplishments!

**Conseula Francis Outstanding Student Award:**  
Quincie Bardsley

**African American Studies Community Activism Award:**  
Sierra McCray

**African American Studies Rising Scholar Award:**  
Jasmine Dinkins

**African American Studies Outstanding Senior Scholar Award:**  
Quincie Bardsley

**African American Studies Capstone Project Award:**  
Quincie Bardsley

**Bernard Powers Writing Award in African American Studies:**  
Vernon Kennedy

Congratulations to all of our AAST graduates who completed the degree program this past Spring. We wish our sixth graduating class all the best as they determine their post-graduate paths!

**Minors:**  
Goudelock, Angelica  
Johnson, Aleah  
McCarroll, Peterra  
McKinney, Nekayla  
Simmons, Michael  
Washington, Terri  
Zalocka, Jalen

**Majors:**  
Quincie Bardsley  
Bailey Wood





# AAST Launches its First Globally Connected Course!

African American Studies is pleased to offer a new course titled “Folklore of the African Diaspora.” It has been designated as a “Globally Connected Course” as part of the School of Languages, Cultures, and World Affairs Global Education Initiative. The charge for such courses is to create opportunities for students to have international experiences, increase cultural intelligence, and interact with the global community through experiential learning—particularly when travel and study abroad is not accessible.



AAST 270: Folklore of the African Diaspora is a course that exposes students to interconnectedness of the transnational diaspora of African-descended people through the intensive study of folklore. With a primary focus on cultures directly impacted by the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (West Africa, South America, Caribbean nations, and North America), the course raises the cultural intelligence of students by instilling a deeper understanding and respect for African-based cultural practices that evolved from the

dehumanization, brutalization, and oppression of black people in the so-called New World. Understanding the historical and social context of such cultural practices presents an opportunity to develop empathy, tolerance for difference, and a keener awareness of how to interact with other cultures. Professor Kameelah Martin is teaching the course this fall.

For the participatory activities, students will engage with four guest speakers from the target cultures to discuss specific folk practices. Speakers will be native to the target culture (and speak relevant dialects/languages) and have direct, applied expertise in the culture.

## Guest experts via Zoom include:

Reginald Myres Abeku Sackey, Ethnochoreologist and Dance Educator (University of Cape Coast, Ghana)

Riva Nyri Précil, Artist, Singer, and Vodou serviteur (Haiti)

Dr. Ysamur Flores-Peña, Lukumí Priest and Folklorist (Puerto Rico/Los Angeles)

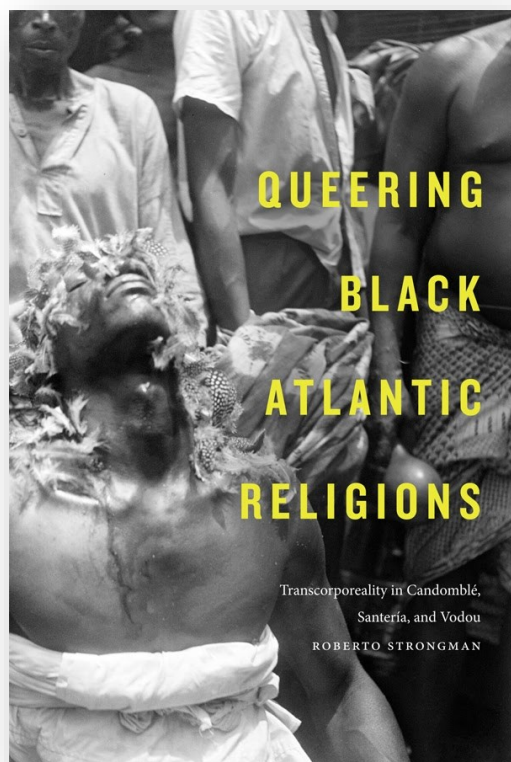
Dr. Jessica Berry, Gullah Geechee cultural expert (Gullah Geechee/Lowcountry)





This fall we will collaborate with the Carolina Lowcountry and the Atlantic World program (CLAW) and the International African American Museum (IAAM) to host a book club and virtual lecture with the author! Stay tuned for more details on how to participate!

*Queering Black Atlantic Religions: Transcorporeality in Candomblé, Santería, and Vodou by Roberto Strongman (Duke UP, 2019)*



On November 10th African American Studies will be virtually hosting Dr. Jason Shelton for his lecture *Distinctive Divide: African American Religious Diversity*.

Distinctive  
Divide: African  
American  
Religious  
Diversity



A CONVERSATION WITH DR. JASON E. SHELTON –ASSOCIATE  
PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY; DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR  
AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES; UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS-ARLINGTON

A VIRTUAL CONVERSATION WITH  
DR. JASON SHELTON

NOVEMBER 10, 2020

6:00PM



# Spring 2021 Course Offerings

<b>AAST 200</b>	<b>Intro to African American Studies</b>
<b>AAST 333</b>	<b>Studies in Black Feminism</b>
<b>AAST 340</b>	<b>Race, Violence, and Memory</b>
<b>AAST 360</b>	<b>Mass Incarceration &amp; it's Roots</b>
<b>AAST 401</b>	<b>Capstone in African American Studies</b>
<b>AFST 101</b>	<b>Intro to African Civilization</b>
<b>ENGL 313</b>	<b>African American Literature</b>
<b>HIST 217</b>	<b>African American History since 1865</b>
<b>THTR 316</b>	<b>African American Theatre</b>

## **ATTENTION: SENIOR CITIZENS**

*South Carolina residents who are over 60 years old are eligible to enroll in regular College of Charleston courses on a space-available basis for a fee of \$25 for the semester. Permission of the instructor is required for African American Studies courses. Call 843.953.5620 for details.*



# Port of Entry

## Did you know that African American Studies has a Podcast series?

Charleston, South Carolina was a major hub of the Trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans. Scholars estimate that around 40% of all enslaved Africans that entered what would become the United States did so through Charleston Harbor. It is the port of entry for enumerable familial lines of enslaved African descent.

Port of Entry: An African American Studies Podcast is a series sponsored by the African American Studies Program in collaboration with Dr. Michael Overholt of the Teaching and Learning Team at the College of Charleston. Port of Entry promotes the culture, history, and lived experiences of people of African descent in the Carolina Lowcountry and beyond. Stay tuned for episodes that explore new scholarship, programs and events in African American Studies, notable figures and facts, and the achievements of our faculty, students, and alumni.

### Episode 1: "Alumni Spotlight- Olivia Williams and that viral Washington Post article!"



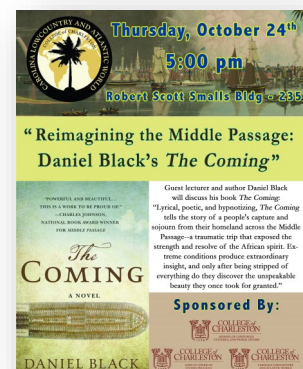
### Episode 2: "DNA Doesn't Lie"



### Episode 3: "Music and the Black Experience"



### Episode 4: "Reimagining the Middle Passage"



As we begin the start of this new academic year the African American Studies program at the College of Charleston has offered its services as a clearing house for news of events relevant to African American Studies. We have created a calendar and listings-service drawing attention to African American-related events happening across the state. The calendar is on our website and will be providing information on events that we are aware of. To keep our calendar up to date with the latest events we invite you to submit events that you believe would be beneficial to this calendar. If you would also like to be added to our African American-related Events email list please contact Casey Smith at [smithcn1@cofc.edu](mailto:smithcn1@cofc.edu).

The **Event Calendar** can be found here:  
[african-american-studies.cofc.edu/events/](http://african-american-studies.cofc.edu/events/)

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### How Can You Support African American Studies ?

Area of Need:	Financial Goal:
Study Abroad Scholarships (\$2,750/student)	\$13,750.00
Student Research & Conference Travel	\$2,000.00
AAST Student Merit Awards	\$5,000.00
AAST General/Discretionary Fund	\$2,000.00
African American Studies Program Endowment	\$50,000.00*

**Every Gift Counts! No amount is too large or small! Please consider an individual or group donation of \$25, \$50, \$100, \$1000 or more!**

All donations are tax deductible [Donate Now!](#)

In the 'Designation' drop-down menu, select 'Other'. In the 'Other' box, note your intended contribution: **R717 - African American Studies**. Thank you for your continued support of the African American Studies program.

Or visit <https://giving.cofc.edu/ways-to-give>

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### Where Are You Now?

Let Us Know What You're Up To

For 20 years the African American Studies Program at the College of Charleston has educated students in African American history and culture. We would love to hear what those students are up to now. Let us know about the exciting professional and personal milestones you've reached since leaving the College. You can email Dr. Martin with the details at [martinkl2@cofc.edu](mailto:martinkl2@cofc.edu)



**not just in february**