

The Commonwealth

INSTITUTE FOR BLACK STUDIES



WHERE WE HAVE BEEN. WHERE WE ARE HEADED.

We administer research projects in Black Studies. We enable and stimulate research in Black Studies with funding for faculty and students. We impact the community with events and outreach.

DIRECTORS' MESSAGE

We are proud to share this overview of the first five years of the Commonwealth Institute for Black Studies (CIBS). CIBS is the research and community outreach arm of UK's Program in African American and Africana Studies (AAAS). We were founded in 2020 to build the University of Kentucky's research profile on topics that relate to African people and people of African descent around the globe, from Kentucky to Kenya. Community connection is embedded in our approach to creating knowledge and understanding.

AAAS at UK began as one course in 1968 and grew into the African American Research and Studies Program, founded by Professor of Sociology Doris Wilkinson (1936-2024). By 2020, we had built a cadre of over 50 faculty, staff, and graduate student affiliates, an undergraduate major and minor, and a comprehensive suite of exciting courses. At that point, we implemented a decades-long dream of creating an institute that would develop our faculty's research and creative strengths while benefiting our students and our communities.

We have three main areas of activity:

Research. We create knowledge in a myriad of fields, with particular strengths in five main areas ("pillars"): Black Futures, Slavery and Inequality in Central Kentucky, Race and Sports, Gender and Sexuality, and Global Blackness. We support individual researchers as well as working groups of multiple colleagues addressing a common topic. Our speaker series and conferences feature cutting-edge developments and researcher networking.

Community. We respond to and learn from the urgent questions of our Central Kentucky neighbors. Our members build relationships with community organizations that want to learn about the history, culture, and conditions that affect Black Kentuckians. And, even though many of us engage Black people across the country or across the globe, we are accountable to the communities wherever we do so.

Student Immersion. CIBS supports hands-on learning for students through support for research-based projects and internships. Our students have learned skills as varied as article writing, computer coding, archive creation, county deeds research, exhibit development, website development, GIS mapping, and legal research. They have gone on to careers in law, education, libraries, museums, health, and business.

Our events support all three of these areas. Our activities are open to everyone. We have organized an annual Black Women's Conference since 1995, with each year exploring a different theme in the past and present.

Thank you for reading! We hope to see you at a CIBS event soon. We encourage you to like our Facebook or Instagram profiles to keep up with the rich programming we offer.

Sincerely,

Anastasia C. Curwood, Ph.D.

Director, Commonwealth Institute for Black Studies
Thomas D. Clark Professor of American History



Vanessa M. Holden, Ph.D.

Director, African American and Africana Studies
Associate Professor of History



MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

2020-2021

CIBS LAUNCH CELEBRATION:

“An Evening with Henry Louis Gates Jr.”

On March 3, 2020, when COVID restrictions on travel and large gatherings were part of our lives, we celebrated the launch of CIBS with an online event featuring Henry Louis “Skip” Gates Jr., the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and Director of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University. Gates is widely known through his work as host of PBS series “Finding Your Roots” and is an eminent literary critic, public intellectual, and filmmaker. Over 400 attendees joined us for Professor Gates’ reflections on decades of Black Studies.



2021-2022

Digital Access Project Public Partnership Launch

The Digital Access Project (DAP) is a community collaboration to digitize Fayette County historical property records from the late 1700s to 1865. These paper property records include business transactions with the names of individuals who were enslaved, and bought and sold as property. DAP is the first initiative of its kind in Kentucky.

Partners include the Fayette County Clerk, CIBS, the Lexington Black Prosperity Initiative, Blue Grass Community Foundation and its Knight Foundation Donor Advised Charitable Fund.

The press conference and launch event, held at the Old Courthouse in downtown Lexington on Juneteenth, 2022, featured presentations by Mayor Linda Gorton, Lisa Adkins (President and CEO — Blue Grass Community Foundation), Dr. Vanessa Holden, Dr. Yvonne Giles, DeBraun Thomas, and Shea Brown (Deputy County Clerk, Fayette County Clerk’s Office).



2022-2023

Lafayette Seminar: Slavery in Central Kentucky

Co-sponsored by the Gaines Center for the Humanities, the Lafayette Seminar was a two-day event bringing together a range of experts on the history and legacies of slavery in the region. It attracted 174 attendees from campus and the public.

The first day featured a keynote presentation by Dr. Amrita Chakrabarti Myers, Indiana University, Bloomington, and author of *The Vice President's Black Wife: The Untold Life of Julia Chinn*.

Day two included a panel on DAP, with presentations from Shea Brown (Deputy County Clerk, Fayette County Clerk's Office), Dr. Kathy Newfont, doctoral student Shelby Roberts, and undergraduate student Mason McIntyre. Additional sessions included "Freedom on the Move," a database of fugitives from North American slavery, with Reinette Jones, Jennifer Bartlett, and Kopana Terry of UK Libraries, and Crystal Gregory, of the College of Fine Arts, who discussed the Materials Study Lab at the School of Art and Visual Studies (SAVS).



2023-2024

UNBIOED: Radically Reimagining Black Women's Lives

Organized by the Black Women's Biography research collective and hosted by CIBS on March 28-29 at William T. Young Library, the UNBIOED conference celebrated and examined Black women's life writing. Seventy-five attendees participated in workshops and listened to presentations across two days.

The first day was anchored by a keynote presentation from Dr. Salamishah Tillet, the Henry Rutgers Professor of African American Studies and Creative Writing at Rutgers University - Newark and Director of Express Newark. Dr. Tillet was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Criticism, 2022 and is the author of *In Search of the Color Purple: The Story of an American Masterpiece* (2021) and *Sites of Slavery: Citizenship and Racial Democracy in the Post-Civil Rights Imagination* (2012).

The second day featured three plenary sessions — Towards A Communal Ethic of Black Women's Life Writing; The Art of Writing: How to Create Characters, Texture, and Voice; and Making Your Mark: Book Marketing Strategies in the Social Media Age — with presenters from several universities, including UK.



2024-2025

Reckoning, Remembering, Restoring: The History of Racial Violence in Kentucky

On Nov. 9, CIBS and the Lexington History Museum collaborated to host a symposium on the history of racial violence in the region at the Lyric Theater and Cultural Arts Center in Lexington. There were 126 attendees from campus and the public. The event was co-sponsored by Kentucky Humanities and the Gaines Center for the Humanities.

This event demonstrated how the digital humanities — through online archives of census data, historical newspapers, legal documents, public records, and databases — can shine a light on the legacy of widespread racial violence throughout the Commonwealth. A diverse group of community members, local organizations, library professionals, and university academics shared ideas and research on past civil and human rights violations against African American Kentuckians. The participants also explored attempts at restorative justice and how new technologies can help reimagine a more historically accurate and nuanced history of race in Kentucky.

A keynote presentation from Dr. George Wright was bookended by three panels and a roundtable workshop. Panels featured UK faculty Dr. Nikki Brown, Dr. Melanie Beals Goan, D'Lorah Hughes, J.D., Jennifer Hootman, UK Librarian and Coordinator of Digital Scholarship and Data, UK postdoctoral fellow Dr. Austin Zinkle, community partners Alyssa Wiggins, J.D., Dr. Amanda Higgins of The Lexington History Museum, DeBraun Thomas and Russell Allen of Take Back Cheapside, Sharyn Mitchell of the African American Genealogy Group of Kentucky, Dr. John Giggie of the University of Alabama, and UK undergraduate students from the Documenting Racial Violence in Kentucky research project, led by Dr. Brown.



AT OUR CORE

OUR CORE VALUES:

- We believe Black Studies is for everybody. The Institute supports the entire university community and the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and our reach is international, for the experiences of people of African descent inform the experiences of all of humanity.
- We believe in community, including “glocal” communities. We use our research to develop antiracist solutions to the most urgent issues of our moment. Our scholars work with the surrounding community, addressing matters relevant to local people.
- We believe knowledge production and information are powerful change agents. The research scholars hosted long- and short-term by the Institute are nationally and internationally recognized for their intellectual and creative excellence.
- We believe that knowledge should be interdisciplinary. Neither the STEM fields, nor Humanities, nor Social Sciences, nor the Arts exist alone or are sufficient alone.
- We believe in the power of democracy. To study global Blackness is to study democratic institutions and the means by which full democracy has been imagined and enacted.

OUR FIVE RESEARCH PILLARS

With a core mission to study Black peoples and cultures, our affiliates conduct research and produce creative work on the attainments of, and challenges faced, by people of African descent in the Commonwealth and the world beyond. Our research illuminates the impact of Black lives on the past, present, and future of humanity — a thread that ties together every industry and culture on the planet.

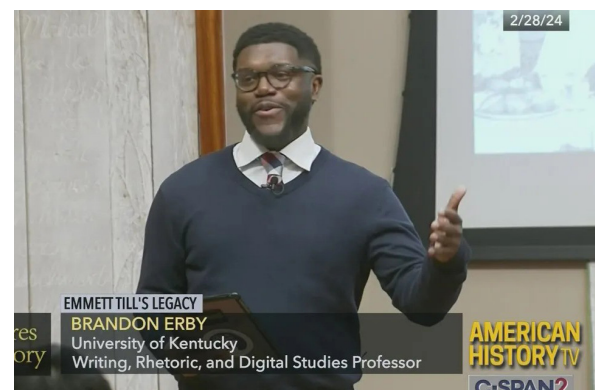
Black Futures – 21st Century Race in Digital Cultures

Lauren Whitehurst, Psychology, College of Arts and Sciences

- PI on \$2.4 million NIH-funded research project and contributor to other projects totalling \$33 million in funded research
- Published 19 peer-reviewed essays
- Founded a community-engaged “Sleep Salon” in 2022
- Media appearances on Good Morning America, NPR, and WUKY to share research

Brandon Erby, Writing, Rhetoric and Digital Studies, College of Arts and Sciences (Photo right: Brandon Erby)

- Mamie Till-Mobley and Remembering Emmett Till, C-SPAN’s “Lectures in History” (2024)
- Winner of Richard Braddock Award for Outstanding Article, “Imagining Freedom: Cultural Rhetorics, Digital Literacies, and Podcasting in Prison.” *College Composition and Communication* 75.1 (2023): 224-241
- “With the movie *Till*, Mamie Till-Mobley’s Quest to Educate the World about her Son’s Lynching Marches on,” in *The Conversation* (2022)



Slavery and Inequality in Central Kentucky

Frank X Walker, English, College of Arts and Sciences

- *Load in Nine Times*, Winner PEN/Voelcker Award for Poetry Collection (2025)
- Kentucky Writers Hall of Fame Inductee (2025)
- Literary Arts Award, Lexington Arts Connect Arts Awards (2024)
- Grand Prize Winner, Black Authors Matter Children's Book Award; Best Overall Book-Educational; Black Authors Matter Children's Book Award (2023)
- Judy Gaines Young Book Award for *Last Will, Last Testament*, Transylvania University (2020)

Reinette Jones, Library

- Codeveloper/Manager: Notable Kentucky African Americans Database — over 1.5 million views over the past 5 years (April 2021-2025)
- Developer/Manager: Lesbian Studies Research Guide — 570,000 views over the past 5 years (April 2021-2025)
- Dr. Anne Butler Historian Award presented by Phoenix Rising Lexington
- Clay Lancaster Heritage Education Award from Blue Grass Trust for Historic Preservation
- Loraine A. Williams Leadership Award from Association of Black Women Historians

Race and Sports – Basketball and Equine Studies

Derrick White, History, College of Arts and Sciences

- The Black Athlete podcast (2019-2025)
- *Blood, Sweat, and Tears: Jake Gaither, Florida A&M, and the History of Black College Football*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019

Anastasia Curwood, History, College of Arts and Sciences

- Presented research on the forgotten history of all-Black horse shows in the late 1930s and early 1940s at the Association for the Study of African American Life and History Annual Meeting in September 2022
- Invited lecturer for the United States Equestrian Federation webinar, "Horses in Black Communities," on Feb. 22, 2021:
www.usef.org/media/webinars?id=RZrw8kdB3uU
- Featured in WLEX's Dia Davidson's Digital Conversation in the run-up to 2020's delayed Kentucky Derby, discussing the Black history of horse racing:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyLeX7Q7pLU

(Photo below: Joe Lewis on his horse, McDonald's Choice, 1938)



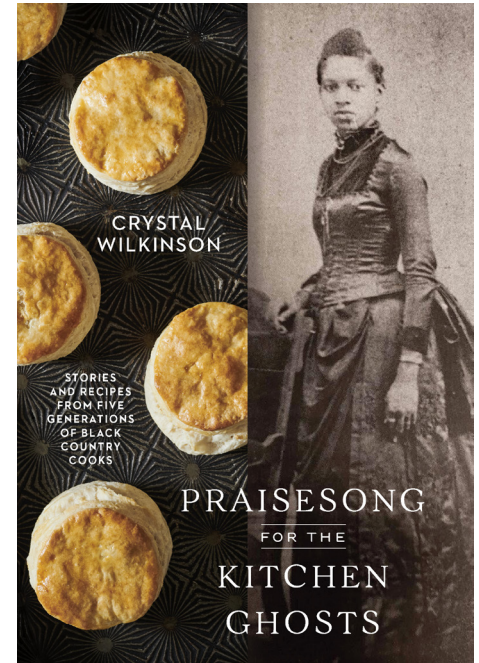
From Appalachia to Zimbabwe: Global Blackness

Crystal Wilkinson, English, College of Arts and Sciences

- Kentucky Writers Hall of Fame inductee (2025)
- *Praisesong for the Kitchen Ghosts* (2023), National Bestseller
- Kentucky Poet Laureate (2021-23)

Devyn Spence Benson, History, College of Arts and Sciences

- Co-PI with Danielle Clealand (U-T Austin), collecting oral histories with Black Cubans in the United States. The archive will be housed at the Cuban Heritage Collection at the University of Miami. Awarded NEH Collaborative grant (\$250,000)
- Devyn Spence Benson and Danielle Pilar Clealand, “Re-Narrating Mariel: Black Cubans, Racial Exclusion and Building Community in Miami,” *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal* 17: 2 (2021): 1-17, the first installment of a book in progress, *Alternate Black Worlds: Black Cuban Migration During Jim Crow and Beyond* (With Danielle Clealand)
- “Redefining Mestizaje: How Trans-Caribbean Exchanges Solidified Black Consciousness in Cuba,” *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 25: 2 (65) (2021): 91-108



Lisa Cliggett, Anthropology, College of Arts and Sciences

- Program director at NSF's Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR), promoting research capacity building for diverse institutions, including HBCUs, Tribal Colleges, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and institutions serving students with disabilities

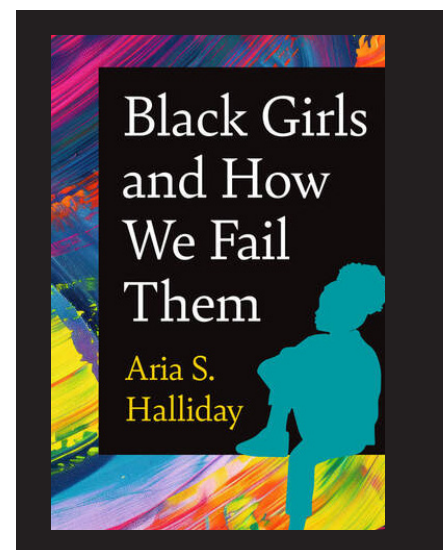
Gender and Sexuality

Aria Halliday, Gender and Women's Studies, College of Arts and Sciences

- *Black Girls and How We Fail Them* (2025, U of North Carolina Press)
- Donald D. Harrington Faculty Fellowship at the University of Texas at Austin (2022-23)
- *Buy Black: How Black Women Transformed US Popular Culture* (2022, U of Illinois Press)
- Stuart Hall x Cultural Studies best article award for “Twerk Sumn!: Theorizing Black Girl Epistemology in the Body,” *Cultural Studies* 34.6 (2020)
- Institute for Citizens and Scholars Career Enhancement Faculty Fellowship (2020)

Shemeka Thorpe, Kinesiology and Health Promotion, College of Education

- Co-Investigator for Assessing Differential Dyadic Mechanisms of Black and White Women's Sexual Functioning, \$3,695,227 NICHD grant (2025-29)
- Outstanding Article of the Year (Honorable Mention), *Sexual & Relationship Therapy* (2024)
- Kathy Charmaz Prize, Qualitative Health Research (2023)



DaMaris Hill, English, College of Arts and Sciences

- National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship, John Carter Brown Library, Brown University (2024-25)
- Hutchins Family Fellow, Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, Harvard University (2023-24)
- *Breath Better Spent: Living Black Girlhood* (2022, Bloomsbury)



(Pictured left to right) Frank X Walker accepting PEN award; Reinette Jones, photo by Kopana Terry; Crystal Wilkinson, photo by Carsen Bryant

CIBS RESEARCH IN NUMBERS

- **23** books authored or edited
- **325+** peer-reviewed articles in scholarly journals and books
- **95** major fellowships, grants, and honors
- **54** awards and grants from UK competitions
- **173** national and media appearances disseminating research and creative work
- **92** state and local media appearances disseminating research and creative work
- **109** research groups, conferences, and community events supported
- **500+** research presentations (keynote, invited, and scholarly conferences)
- **28** CIBS research awards to faculty affiliates
- **Colleges represented: Arts and Sciences; Agriculture, Food and Environment; Design; Education; Fine Arts; Health Sciences; Law; Library; Medicine; Public Health; Social Work; Public Policy and Administration; Diplomacy and International Commerce**

OUR COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS AND ONGOING PROJECTS

Central Kentucky Slavery Initiative (CKSI)

PI: Vanessa Holden | Adviser: George C. Wright

CKSI is a multi-year interdisciplinary research initiative that explores the role of slavery in the region's past. The project will produce a definitive Black and Indigenous history of the University of Kentucky for publication with a digital humanities counterpart. Bringing together faculty and staff from across campus to teach and guide junior scholars at the postdoctoral, graduate, and undergraduate levels, the project provides a collaborative space to foster both excellence in research and mentoring. The project actively seeks and maintains connections to the local Lexington community and endeavors to make both archival material and this important history accessible to multiple publics. Notable accomplishments include the launch of the Digital Access Project (cibs.as.uky.edu/digital-access-project), funded by the Bluegrass Community Foundation and the Knight Foundation, in collaboration with community partners such as the Fayette County Clerk's Office and the Lexington Black Prosperity Initiative.

African Americans at Mammoth Cave

PIs: Anastasia Curwood, Le Datta Grimes | Research Associates: Seth Garcia

With a grant from the National Park Service, the African Americans at Mammoth Cave project will provide the first comprehensive study of Black life and history at the National Park and its environs. Before and after emancipation, Black Kentuckians worked underground in the caves mining saltpeter and giving tours, and above ground in the transportation, hospitality, and agricultural industries. At least as important, Black Kentuckians also raised families, founded churches, and built communities in the region. They were not only stakeholders in the social, political, and cultural life in Mammoth Cave and its surrounds but also its shapers. By extension, their intelligence, labor, and ingenuity informed Kentucky's economy, making them an integral part of the Commonwealth's founding and growth.

Documenting Racial Violence in Kentucky

PI: Nikki Brown | Research Associates: Ariane Ribeiro Santana

Lynching and racial violence were common in Kentucky throughout much of the 19th and 20th centuries. Dr. George Wright, CIBS faculty affiliate and leading historian of the topic, estimates there were 353 people lynched in Kentucky between the end of the Civil War in 1865 and the murder of Emmett Till in 1955, "placing Kentucky ninth among states with the largest number of mob murders." For instance, between 1877 and 1934, Fulton County, Kentucky, witnessed 19 lynchings of African Americans. This number included the entire Walker family in 1908, a family of seven African Americans who were killed by Night Riders, local members of the Ku Klux Klan. From the western border of Missouri to the eastern border of North Carolina, nearly every county in Kentucky recorded a lynching. Racially motivated violence became the focus of renewed attention, after the killings of Breonna Taylor in Louisville and George Floyd in Minnesota led to a summer of racial reckoning and protests in 2020. Importantly, while protests have emphasized the injustice of these murders, those killed must be remembered as more than victims. They must be remembered for the lives they led before they died. This project documents the lives lost to racial violence by providing access to biographical details, eye-witness accounts, and newspaper reporting of recorded incidents.

Bitter Aloe Project

PI: Stephen Davis

The Bitter Aloe Project seeks to enhance the legibility of archives created by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1996-2003) investigated human rights violations perpetrated by all parties during the most turbulent years of apartheid, a period defined by law as 1960 to 1995. This process was intended to produce a record of truth in the context of contested narratives and incomplete written records. The TRC was conceived under the assumption that such truth, once produced, could lay a foundation for reconciliation between perpetrators and victims as well as within society at large. This produced voluminous archives that included gigabytes of born-digital materials and extensive physical records. The Bitter Aloe Project uses machine learning to enhance public engagement with the archives, allowing students and researchers to visualize different categories of data generated by large volumes of text. To date, research outputs include the TRC v7 Dashboard, a GIS data dashboard that draws from data extracted from approximately 21,500 human rights violations descriptions documented by TRC; the Co-occurrence Network Graph, which depicts co-occurrences of the names of individuals and organizations in incident descriptions; and a prototype Sentence Embedding App that allows users to experiment with a search function based on experience rather than keywords.

Civil Rights and Restorative Justice-Kentucky

PIs: D'lorah Hughes, Austin Zinkle | Research Associates: Qwenton Briggs

Civil Rights and Restorative Justice-Kentucky (CRRJ-KY) is a pilot program at the University of Kentucky J. David Rosenberg College of Law. An expansion of the Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project (CRRJ) at Northeastern University School of Law, this Kentucky-focused project is devoted to interdisciplinary teaching, research, and policy analysis of cases of racial violence in the Jim Crow-era Commonwealth. The legal clinicians at CRRJ-KY work at the crossroads of history and criminal justice to provide much-needed factfinding and redress for cold cases of historical civil rights violations in Kentucky. CRRJ-KY works with families and communities to seek appropriate options of redress for the injustices committed against our clients. Ultimately, this project aims to uncover an accurate history of racial terror and through legal practices of restorative justice reconcile the ongoing damage of the harms from the past against our clients that remain unresolved in the present.

Anticolonial Thought and Writing

PI: Peter Kalliney | Research Associates: Samuel Aftel, Sarah Garrod, Hannah Schultz, Terika Williams

Anticolonial thought and writing are as old as colonialism itself. The project objective is to collect the scattered primary documents of anticolonial thought — manifestos, declarations, petitions, conference resolutions, open letters, and other practical genres of political speech — from around the world, with a special focus on the African continent and its diaspora. Engaging with a wide variety of languages and historical contexts, this long-term research collaboration will collect and present diverse primary materials for use by scholars and students working on the histories of decolonization.

Black Women's Conference

The Black Women's Conference was established by Doris Wilkinson in 1995 and explores a different research theme each year. Recent themes have been dance, visual arts, AfroFutures, Black feminisms, and Black girlhood. The conference is open to all and seeks to strengthen UK-community connections.

Student Success

Student High Impact Learning Opportunities in CIBS

Since 2020, the Commonwealth Institute for Black Studies has provided opportunities to over 60 undergraduate and graduate students in projects such as the Digital Access Project, Civil Rights and Restorative Justice-Kentucky, and Documenting Racial Violence in Kentucky. Students have garnered experience as researchers, digitizers, and writers. Our grads have gone on to work in media, education, law, and consulting.



(Pictured left to right, top row) Lilly Penney: Undergraduate, CIBS/Lexington Public Library Kentucky Room Intern | Qwenton Briggs: Law Student, Civil Rights and Restorative Justice-Kentucky | UK Legal Clinic Fall 2023: Civil Rights and Restorative Justice-Kentucky | Tantalissia Champs and Shea Brown, Deputy Clerk, Fayette County Clerk's Office: Digital Access Project

(Pictured left to right, bottom row) Leena Harper: Digital Access Project | Dr. Melanie Beals Goan with Student Researchers: Documenting Racial Violence in Kentucky | Jennifer Hootman, Librarian, Dr. Melanie Beals Goan, and Dr. Nikki Brown with Student Researchers: Documenting Racial Violence in Kentucky

CIBS LEADERSHIP

Anastasia C. Curwood, Ph.D.

Director, Commonwealth Institute for Black Studies

"For me, CIBS represents the exciting future of engaged, relevant scholarship. It has been the opportunity of a lifetime for me to work with dozens of top scholars in the intellectually vital field of Black Studies. As an active researcher myself, I have benefited from our community on and off campus; my students and colleagues are my most devoted critics and cheerleaders. I am committed to creating that experience for others every day."



Vanessa M. Holden, Ph.D.

Director, African American and Africana
Studies Central Kentucky Slavery Initiative

“As director of AAAS, I want to see faculty affiliates and students thrive. CIBS provides much-needed resources and support to make the critical work faculty and students do together possible. Engaging students in research opportunities allows our faculty to mentor students outside of the classroom while providing real-world experience. It has been a joy to watch CIBS grow and engage our community, on campus and beyond!”



Brenna Pye

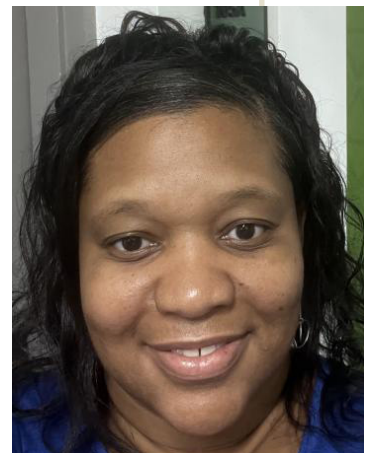
Assistant Director for Programs and Engagement, CIBS

“Being the Assistant Director for the Commonwealth Institute for Black Studies (CIBS) is inspiring because I can connect the vital work being done at the University of Kentucky through CIBS to a broader audience. The work of CIBS affiliates is groundbreaking and paradigm-shifting, and it is exciting to play a part in bringing that academic work to the local community, as well as nationally and internationally, through events and social media. Providing opportunities to bring together academics, students, and community members in a meaningful and uplifting way, with a focus on fostering connections and understanding, is a privilege.”

Crystal Ross

Department Manager, AAAS and CIBS

“I truly appreciate the opportunity to work with the Commonwealth Institute for Black Studies alongside such talented and creative scholars. Their commitment to advancing interdisciplinary research and sharing the rich, complex stories within Black Studies is both inspiring and impactful. It’s exciting to contribute by assisting with the planning, hosting and organization of community events, symposiums and conferences. These efforts not only foster knowledge-sharing and meaningful dialogue but also help build networks that drive positive change and lay the foundation for a stronger, more connected future.”



CIBS AFFILIATE BIOS | FACULTY



Tiffany D. Atkins

Assistant Professor — J. David Rosenberg College of Law; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: Race; Equity; Human Rights



Joseph Benitez

Assistant Professor — Martin School of Public Policy and Administration; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: Health Economics; Medicaid Policy; Medicaid Program Design



Devyn Spence Benson

Associate Professor — Department of History; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: Latin American and Caribbean History, esp. Cuba (19th/20th century); Africana Studies; Afro-Latinx Studies; Transnational Black Feminisms; Afro-Latin America



Nikki Brown

Associate Professor — Department of History; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: African American History; African American women; Film and Visual Studies; Photography



Joseph Clark

Assistant Professor — Department of History; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: Early Modern Atlantic World; Slavery and African Diaspora; Latin America and the Caribbean; Environmental History



Lisa Cliggett

Professor — Department of Anthropology; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: Political Ecology; Sustainability and Environmental Change; Household Political Economy; Kinship-Family and Social Organization; Sub-Saharan Africa, Zambia, Gwembe Tonga Research Project; Qualitative Methods; Digital Data Management; Gender, Aging, and Life Course; Livelihoods; Migration and New Land Settlement; Political Economy



Thais Council

Assistant Professor — College of Education; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: Black Education; Black Reparatory Literacies; Community-Engaged/Participatory Action Research; Black Intellectual Tradition



Stephen Davis

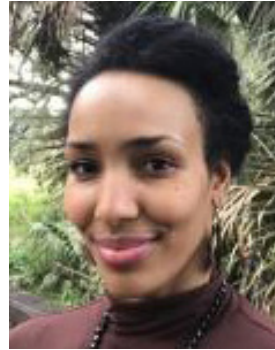
Associate Professor — Department of History; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: South African History; Microhistory; Public History; African History; Digital Humanities; Artificial Intelligence; Machine Learning; Human Rights; Data Visualization; Virtual and Augmented Reality; New Military History

CIBS AFFILIATE BIOS | FACULTY



Brandon M. Erby

Assistant Professor — Department of Writing, Rhetoric and Digital Studies; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: African American Rhetoric; Rhetorical History; Literacy Studies; Rhetorical Education; Prison Studies; Political Rhetoric



Kamahra Ewing

Assistant Professor — Department of English; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: African Diaspora; Film and Media Studies; Contemporary Africa and Post-colonial and Decolonial Theories; Global South Studies; Brazil and Latin America; Gender and Ethnic Identity; Ethnography; African, African American and Caribbean Literature and Culture; Film; Multicultural American Literature



Crystal Felima

Assistant Professor — Department of Anthropology; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: Disasters and Crises; Black Ecologies; Emergency Management and Response; Mapping and GIS; Black Feminist Theory; Narrative Research; Embodiment and Exposure; Haiti, Caribbean, Small Islands, West Africa; Climate Change



Jeremy Gillett

Assistant Professor — Department of Theater and Dance, College of Fine Arts; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: Playwriting; Acting



Le Datta Grimes

Ph.D., Independent Scholar, Co-Principal Investigator: CESU Special History Study-African Americans at Mammoth Cave. Research Interests: Black Communities and Education in the early 19th and 20th centuries; Rosenwald Schools



Gregory Hall

Associate Professor — Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: International Relations; International Security; Foreign Policy; Global South Affairs; International Political Economy; Eurasian Affairs; Research Methodology



Aria Halliday

Associate Professor — Department of Gender and Women's Studies; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: Black Feminist Theory; Black Girlhood Studies; Black Visual Culture; 20th and 21st Century Cultural Studies



Regina Hamilton-Townsend

Assistant Professor — Department of English; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: African American Literature; African, African American, and Caribbean Literature and Culture; 20th Century Women's Narrative; Gender and Race; Queer Black Studies

CIBS AFFILIATE BIOS | FACULTY



Whitney Hanley

Assistant Professor — College of Education; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: Black girls with dis/abilities



Frances Henderson

Associate Professor — Department of Gender and Women's Studies; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: Black Feminism; Women and Social Movements; Comparative Politics; Women and Feminisms in Southern Africa



DaMaris B. Hill

Professor — Department of English; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: Environmental Studies; Gender and Women's Studies; Digital Studies; Technology; 20th and 21st Century American Literature and Culture; African, African American and Caribbean Literature and Culture; Creative Writing; Women's Literature and Gender Studies; Literary Theory; Race Theory



Vanessa M. Holden

Associate Professor — Department of History; Director — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: Gender; Slavery; Race; Resistance; Black Women; Sexuality



D'Iorah L. Hughes

Professor and Director of Clinics and Externships — J. David Rosenberg College of Law; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: Experiential/Clinical Education; Criminal Law; Juvenile Justice



Ada Johnson-Kanu

Assistant Professor — Department of Political Science; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: Comparative Politics; Political Economy; African Politics; Economic History



Hilary Jones

Associate Professor — Department of History; Faculty Affiliate — African American and Africana Studies, College of Arts and Sciences. Research Interests: African History; African Diaspora; Atlantic History; French Empire; Women; Gender and Sexuality



Reinette Jones

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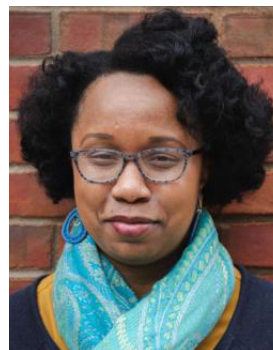
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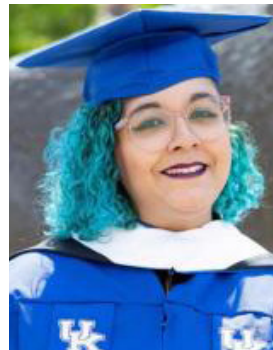
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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[John Cirigliano, Kip Cornett, Johnathon T. Davis, Dr. Rodney

Jackson, David Kloiber, Christian Motley, Jordan Parker]

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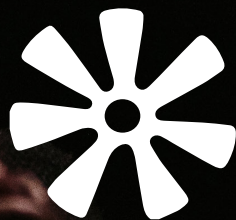
A-Tisket, A-Tasket

This exhibition celebrates Black girls' complex emotional lives as portrayed in a range of artworks, from portraits painted in the 1930s to twenty-first-century photographs. Resistance, hope, anger, defiance, curiosity, joy, anxiety, vulnerability, and exhaustion are some of the feelings seen on the faces of children who have been on the front lines of profound social changes such as the Great Migration, Civil Rights movement, Women's March, and Black Lives Matter movement. Inexpression can also be a strategic refusal that makes space for freedom in an often-dangerous world. Artists featured include Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, Frank Döring, Larry Fink, Edward Franklin Fisk, Baldwin S. Lee, Ralph Eugene Meatyard, RaMell Ross, Lorna Simpson, Alexandra Soteriou, Kara Walker, and Carrie Mae Weems.

The Commonwealth Institute for Black Studies, part of African American and Africana Studies at the University of Kentucky, will host their thirtieth Annual Black Women's Conference, "WE ARE THE CULTURE: A Symposium on Black Girls and Girlhood," March 7 – 8, 2025. Works on view are visual counterpoints to many of the themes studied as part of the symposium such as play, innovation, technical excellence, and global cultural connections.



**WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHERE
HUMANITY HAS BEEN AND WHERE WE
ARE GOING WITHOUT BLACK STUDIES.**



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