BLACK MUSLIM ATLANTIC

HONORING THE LEGACY OF C. ERIC LINCOLN

Thursday and Friday, January 30-31, 2020
“The Ruby” Arts Center
2020 Campus Drive
Duke University
This symposium was envisioned and organized with Imam Abdul Hafeez Waheed to honor the Black Muslim community in North Carolina and beyond, its culture, literature, history, and legacy from slavery until the present. Black Muslim Atlantic pays tribute to the work and writings of Omar ibn Sayyid through a pioneering project by Professors Carl Ernst and Mbaye Lo to translate his writings and create a digital archive. The symposium showcases the work of these professors and their students from their course “Arabic and the Writings of Enslaved Muslims.” The term Black Muslim Atlantic was coined by Margari Aziza, the co-founder and program director of the Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative, as “an endeavor of transnationalism through literature, intellectual exchange, visual and performance art.” This work expands Paul Gilroy’s understanding of the Black Atlantic toward acknowledging the powerful role played by Islam in forging cultural and political solidarities across the global south.

Scholarship that followed Gilroy’s text, by seminal thinkers like Sylviane Diouf, focused on the role of enslaved Muslims in sustaining the roots and routes severed by the middle passage and by brutal suppression. Yet as so many acknowledge, black Muslim cultural forms continued and continue to flourish, even under condition of duress—musical, poetic, linguistic, literary, artistic, and religious. Although popular perception sees music and poetry as outside Islamic orthodoxy, these forms have long functioned in intimate relation to the Islamic tradition. This symposium explores its more recent instantiations as reflective of that longer history of Islamic civilization, as much a renewing and reviving it for contemporary contexts.

This symposium focuses on these cultural forms as a way of fore-facing the powerful role played by Islam and Muslims in a shared culture of the black Atlantic. Islam so often occupies a marginal position in the study of the black Atlantic, just as the study of the black intellectual tradition occupies a marginal position in Islamic studies. This symposium focuses on the intersection of these shared cultural traditions, bringing its rich history and thriving present into detailed focus. The symposium is in memoriam of C. Eric Lincoln, professor of Religious Studies at Duke whose work on both black Muslims and race and religion helped pioneer the field and raise more nuanced consciousness about these subjects. This symposium explores how far the field has come from this earlier moment.

The project is jointly sponsored by Duke Islamic Studies Center, African and African American Studies, Asian and Middle East Studies, Forum for Scholars and Publics, Religious Studies, the Franklin Humanities Institute, and by the After Malcolm Project at the Center for Global Islamic Studies at George Mason University.

THURSDAY, January 30th @ 6 p.m.

WELCOME WORDS
Brother Joshua Salaam, Muslim Chaplain
Center for Muslim Life, Duke University

KEYNOTE
“Islam and the Blues”
Sylviane Diouf, Visiting Professor, Brown University, Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice
Dreams of Africa in Alabama: Clotilda and the Story of the Last Africans Brought to America (2007)

RESPONDENT:
Omar Ali, Dean of Lloyd International Honors College and Professor of Comparative African Diaspora History, University of North Carolina, Greensboro
Author of: In the Lion’s Mouth: Black Populism in the New South, 1886-1900 (2010)
Islam in the Indian Ocean World: A Brief History with Documents (2016)

Poetry Reading
Marvin X Jackmon
FRIDAY, January 31st

9:00 a.m. Coffee & Breakfast

9:30 a.m. to 11
WELCOME WORDS
Mrs. Lucy Lincoln,
C. Eric Lincoln’s widow

THE ATLANTIC
“Islam and Race”
Zain Abdullah, Associate Professor of Religion, Temple University
Author of:  
- A God of Our Own: Malcolm X and His Battle for the Soul of America (forthcoming)

“A Sea Without Shore”
Youssef Carter, College Fellow, Social Anthropology, Harvard University
Author of:  
- The Vast Oceans: Remembering God and Self in Mustafawi Sufi Order (in progress)
& Rashida James-Saadiya, Arts and Culture editor for Sapelo

RESPONDENT
Candis Watts Smith, Associate Professor of Political Science, Penn State
Author of:  
  with Christina M. Greer

11 a.m. to 11:15  BREAK

11:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
MUSIC & SOUND
“Islam and Jazz”
Richard Brent Turner, Professor of African American Religious History, University of Iowa
Author of:  
- Jazz Religion, the Second Line, and Black New Orleans (2009)

“Performing the Islamic Black Atlantic:
Afro-Diasporic Muslim Hip-Hop, Embodied Ethics, and Redefinition of British Islam”
Jeanette Jouili, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, University of Pittsburgh
Author of:  
- Embodiment in Islam: Black Religions in Africa and its Diasporas: Memory, Movement, and Belonging
  Through the Body with Yoland Covington-Ward (forthcoming)
- The Islamic Artistic Scene in the UK: Between Religious Ethics and State Discipline (new project)

RESPONDENT:
Mark Anthony Neal
James B. Duke Distinguished Professor and Chair of African and African American Studies, Duke
Author of:  
- Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic (2002)
- Songs in the Key of Black Life: A Rhythm and Blues Nation (2003)
12:30 p.m. to 2
JUMAA “Muhammed: The Living Quran” led by Imam Abdul Hafeez Waheed &
LUNCH

THE ARCHIVE
2 p.m. to 3:30
“Ahmad Karim & the Black Consciousness Movement at Morehouse:
Black Women Scholars Archiving Their Radical Parents”
Dr. Jamillah Karim
Professor of Religious Studies emerita, Spelman College
Author of: American Muslim Women (2008)
Women of the Nation: Between Black Protest and Sunni Islam (2014) with Dawn-Marie Gibson

“Omar ibn Sayyid: Arabic and the Writings of Enslaved Muslims”
Professor Carl Ernst, Religious Studies, UNC
Professor Mbaye Lo, Asian and Middle East Studies, Duke

RESPONDENT:
Juliane Hammer, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, UNC Chapel Hill
Author of: American Muslim Women, Religious Authority, and Activism (2012)
Cambridge Companion to American Islam, co-edited with Omid Safi (2013)
Peaceful Families: American Muslim Efforts Against Domestic Violence (2019)

3:30 p.m.
CLOSING WORDS
Imam Ronald Shaheed
Assistant Imam, Masjid Ash Shaheed
Charlotte, NC

SPONSORS
Duke Islamic Studies Center, African and African American Studies Department, Forum for Scholars and Publics, Franklin Humanities Institute, Asian and Middle Eastern Studies Department, Religious Studies Department, Duke Performances, Trent Foundation
Participants

Sylviane Diouf

Dr. Sylviane A. Diouf is an award-winning historian of the African Diaspora and a curator. She has authored and edited 13 books, including Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas; Dreams of Africa in Alabama: The Slave Ship Clotilda and the Story of the Last Africans Brought to America and Slavery’s Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons. Dr. Diouf has curated 12 exhibitions. She is a Visiting Scholar at Brown University’s Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice.

Omar Ali

Omar H. Ali is Professor of Comparative African Diaspora History and Dean of Lloyd International Honors College at UNC Greensboro. The author of Malik Ambar: Power and Slavery Across the Indian Ocean and Islam in the Indian Ocean World, he founded the Islamic Studies Research Network at UNC Greensboro and was named the Carnegie Foundation North Carolina Professor of the Year in 2016. A graduate of the London School of Economics and Political Science, he received his Ph.D. in History from Columbia University.

Marvin X Jackmon

Marvin X, aka El Muhajir, born May 29, 1944, Fowler, CA. Educated in Oakland CA., Merritt College where he came into black revolutionary consciousness with Black Panther Party Co-founders Bobby Seale and Huey P Newton. Received his BA and MA in English/Creative Writing from San Francisco State University, where his first play Flowers for the Trashman was produced by the Drama Department while he was an undergraduate, 1965. In 1966 he founded Black Arts West Theater, San Francisco, along with playwright Ed Bullins. In 1967 he co-founded The Black House, a political/cultural center in San Francisco, along with Soul on Ice author Eldridge Cleaver. The same year he joined the Nation of Islam and soon departed America after refusing to fight in Vietnam. After exile in Toronto, Canada, Mexico City and Belize, he was deported back to America and served time in Federal Prison. He has taught at San Francisco State University, Fresno State University, UC Berkeley and San Diego and elsewhere. He has written thirty books, including essays, poetry, proverbs and parables. Dr. Cornel West calls him the African Socrates teaching on the streets of Oakland. Bob Holman says he is the USA'S Rumi Saadi Hafiz.
Zain Abdullah

Dr. Zain Abdullah is an award-winning scholar and Associate Professor of Religion & Society and Islamic Studies at Temple University. He is the author of Black Mecca: The African Muslims of Harlem (Oxford University Press), and his articles have appeared in the Journal of the American Academy of Religion, the Journal of History and Culture, African Arts, Anthropological Quarterly and other periodicals. Professor Abdullah has been quoted in media outlets such as the New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Atlantic magazine. He holds a doctorate in cultural anthropology and has earned awards from the Smithsonian Institution, where he serves on the International Advisory Board for traveling exhibits. He has lectured widely, curated exhibitions and contributed to programs at the Children’s Museum of Manhattan, the Museum of the City of New York, the Asia Society and Museum, the Newark Black Film Festival, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, the International Festival for Arts and Ideas (New Haven, CT), and various programs sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the US State Department. In addition to editing a Routledge volume on Islam and race and a special issue on visual culture for the Muslim World journal, Zain is currently completing a book on the Nation of Islam in mid-twentieth century America. In film, he works with producers for a four-part PBS series on Muslim Americans and has consulted for a Malcolm X documentary airing on Fusion and Netflix. Dr. Abdullah is the 2018 recipient of the Senior Ford Foundation Fellowship Award to write a book on Islam in America. His public awards include a New Jersey State Assembly Resolution in recognition of distinguished service and an induction into the East Orange Hall of Fame among luminaries like Queen Latifah, Dionne Warwick, John Amos, Naughty by Nature, and the late Whitney Houston.

Rashida James-Saadiya

Rashida James-Saadiya is a cultural educator, and multidisciplinary artist invested in transforming social perceptions through creative literature. Her work explores migration, identity, and the transmission of spirituality and cultural memory amongst Black Muslim women in West Africa and the American South. In addition, she is the Arts & Culture Editor for Sapelo Square, which is a digital hub that documents the experience and legacy of Black Muslims in America. James is also the co-curator of “Flowers,” a truth-telling Black culture podcast that explores the past, present, faith, politics, and womanhood through humor, brilliance and a side of petty that can only come from Black Muslim women.

Youssef Carter

Dr. Youssef Carter is a College Fellow in the departments of Anthropology and African & African-American Studies at Harvard University. He teaches courses such as Muslims in the United States, African Diaspora, and Anthropology of Religion. He is also an advisory board member of the 'After Malcolm Digital Archive', sponsored in part by the Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies at George Mason University, which chronicles the oral histories of African-American Muslims and serves as a repository for digitized historical documents, newspapers, and memorabilia.
related to their involvement in the Black Freedom Struggle from 1965 onward. In addition to other projects, he is working (slowly) on a manuscript tentatively called “The Vast Oceans: Remembering God and Self on the Mustafawi Sufi Path” which is a multisite ethnography of a transatlantic spiritual network of African-American, West African, and European Sufis that deploy West African spiritual training to navigate historical-political contexts in the U.S. South and beyond.”

Candis Watts Smith

Candis Watts Smith is an associate professor of political science and African American Studies at Pennsylvania State University. She received her B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in Political Science from Duke University.


Richard Brent Turner


Jeanette Jouilli.

Jeanette S. Jouili is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. Her research and teaching interests include Islam in Europe, North Africa, secularism, pluralism, race, counter-terrorism, popular culture, moral and aesthetic practices, and gender. She is author of Pious Practice and Secular Constraints: Women in the Islamic Revival in Europe (Stanford, 2015) and has published articles in various peer-reviewed journals. Currently, she is working on her second book manuscript: Islam on Stage: British Muslim Culture in the Age of Counterterrorism.
Mark Anthony Neal

Mark Anthony Neal is Chair of the Department of African & African American Studies and the founding director of the Center for Arts, Digital Culture and Entrepreneurship (CADCE) at Duke University where he offers courses on Black Masculinity, Popular Culture, and Digital Humanities, including signature courses on Michael Jackson & the Black Performance Tradition, and The History of Hip-Hop, which he co-teaches with Grammy Award Winning producer 9th Wonder (Patrick Douthit). He also co-directs the Duke Council on Race and Ethnicity (DCORE).

He is the author of several books including What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture (1999), Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic (2002) and Looking for Leroy: Illegible Black Masculinities (2013). The 10th Anniversary edition of Neal’s New Black Man was published in February of 2015 by Routledge. Neal is co-editor of That’s the Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader (Routledge), now in its second edition. Additionally, Neal host of the video webcast Left of Black, which is produced in collaboration with the John Hope Franklin Center at Duke. You can follow him on Twitter at @NewBlackMan.

Jamillah Karim

Jamillah Karim is an award-winning author, speaker, and blogger. She specializes in race, gender, and Islam in America.

Jamillah is author of Women of the Nation: Between Black Protest and Sunni Islam (with Dawn-Marie Gibson) and American Muslim Women: Negotiating Race, Class, and Gender Within the Ummah, which was awarded the 2008 Book Award in Social Sciences by the Association for Asian American Studies.

She is currently working on a new book, Radical Love, where she explores the depth and beauty of divine and human love.

Jamillah blogs for Sapelo Square, Hagar Lives, Race+Gender+Faith, NYU Press Blog, and Huffington Post Religion. She speaks regularly at college campuses and Muslim conferences across the nation. In 2014, her scholarly activism was recognized by JET magazine, which featured her as a young faith leader in the African American community.

Jamillah is a former associate professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Spelman College. She holds a BSE in electrical engineering and a PhD in Islamic Studies from Duke University.
Mbaye Lo

Mbaye Lo is Associate Professor of the Practice of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and International Comparative Studies at Duke University, USA. Dr Lo, a recipient of the Duke Alumni Distinguished Undergraduate Teaching Award, is the Arabic Program Coordinator and Director of Duke in the Arab World Academic Program. His published books include Muslims in America: Race, Politics and Community Building, Civil Society-Based Governance in Africa: Theories and Practices, Understanding Muslim Discourse: Language, Tradition and the Message of bin Laden, Political Islam, Justice and Governance. He is the co-editor of Muslim Institutions of Higher Education in Postcolonial Africa.

Carl Ernst

Carl Ernst is a specialist in Islamic studies, with a focus on West and South Asia. His published research, based on the study of Arabic, Persian, and Urdu, has been mainly devoted to the study of three areas: general and critical issues of Islamic studies, premodern and contemporary Sufism, and Indo-Muslim culture. His most recent projects in Islamic studies have addressed issues of public scholarship relating to Islamophobia, the problem of reading the Qur’an, a critical rethinking of Islamic studies, and problems in understanding Islam. Ernst’s studies of Sufism have engaged with the literary, historical, and contemporary aspects of Islamic mysticism, particularly in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent and the Persianate cultural sphere. He has also been pursuing a long-term study of Muslim interpretations of Indian religions, particularly with regard to the practice of yoga.

Juliane Hammer

Juliane Hammer is associate professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She specializes in the study of gender and sexuality in Muslim societies and communities, race and gender in US Muslim communities, as well as contemporary Muslim thought, activism and practice, and Sufism. She is the author of several books including her latest, Peaceful Families: American Muslim Efforts against Domestic Violence (2019); as well as American Muslim Women, Religious Authority, and Activism: More Than a Prayer (2012) and Palestinians Born in Exile: Diaspora and the Search for a Homeland (2005). She is also the co-editor of A Jihad for Justice: The Work and Life of Amina Wadud (with Kecia Ali and Laury Silvers, 2012); the Cambridge Companion to American Islam (with Omid Safi, 2013), and Muslim Women and Gender Justice: Concepts, Sources, and Histories (with Dina El Omari and Mouhanad Khorchide, 2019).