

“ENTANGLED BLACK AMERICAS”

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Participants and Abstracts

Sandra Abd´ Allah-Álvarez Ramírez (La Habana/Hannover)

Actualidad del movimiento antirracista cubano, núcleos fundacionales y sus conexiones con la región

El movimiento antirracista cubano se fortalece a partir del surgimiento y desarrollo de un número considerable de proyectos, los cuales se acercan a la problemática racial desde diferentes perspectivas. Cuáles podrían ser los núcleos fundacionales sobre los cuales se basa el actual desarrollo de dicho movimiento y cuáles son algunas de las conexiones que se han establecido entre la isla y los países de la región en la lucha contra el racismo, son dos de las temáticas que abordará la presente ponencia.

Sandra Bello (Rio de Janeiro/Berlin)

Alianças Transnacionais e o Movimento Negro Brasileiro

A África e os Estados Unidos formam a espinha dorsal do Movimento Negro Brasileiro. Uma pela questão de identidade ancestral e a outra pela questão da sistematização política do conceito de Negritude. A proposta da palestra é: através da linha do tempo demonstrar quais foram, quais são as relações de alianças, como se transformaram e ampliaram. Também será abordada a questão de como gênero, religiosidade, sexualidade e estética contribuíram na formação do sujeito negro brasileiro e seu processo de descolonização.

Isabel Caldeira (University of Coimbra)

Literature, Politics, and the Ethics of Representation in the Literature of the African Diaspora

Our era is one of forgetting. If there is a role for the intellectuals, it is to insist that we *remember*, because remembering is a moral exercise in a world where the pressing attacks on human rights, democracy, and human solidarity are so compelling that they require the greatest intellectual and moral engagement. My project focuses on the role of those Afro-Diasporic writers who have been able to enshrine the most important sense of engaged citizenship through their texts: Toni Morrison (USA), Junot Diaz (Dominican Rep.), Edwidge Danticat (Haiti), NourBese Philip (Tobago/Canda), Ama Ata Aidoo (Ghana) or Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria) are significant examples. Attentive to the coloniality imprinted in the lives of their communities and the fate of their countries in our globalized world, they are capable to step forward and intervene in the global political scene, remembering the past, reconfiguring the present, and advocating for change. I intend to test the possible balance between their aesthetic concerns — the ethics of representation present in their texts — and

their political agenda, while questioning the traditional concept of "literature" or the distinction between literature and propaganda. As Toni Morrison says, "The best *art is political* and you ought to be able to make it unquestionably political and irrevocably beautiful at the same time." In my analysis the concepts of citizenship ("the right to have rights", Isin and Wood), responsibility and accountability (Butler and Spivak), as well as coloniality of power (Quijano) and coloniality of gender (Lugones) are central. I am also attentive to the intersectionality of race, gender, class, and age, as they are embodied in their voices, as well as the different formats/media they choose: fiction, poetry, essays, blogs, videos, or Facebook posts.

Natalie N. Caro (Lehman College, City University of New York)

Pa'lante: Artivism and the Diaspora

As voices that remind us that black and brown lives matter echo through the wires and as the world begins to confront the consequences of colonization and imperialism, it is the duty of scholars to return to the narratives that have informed most of our understanding of history with a more critical eye. It has become ever more apparent that we consider the act of history telling and keeping archives. In her presentation, Bronx born poet and scholar, Natalie N. Caro will examine questions like: How does one understand history when we are often told that it is curated by the victors? Who speaks for the Subaltern? Using art to guide her research, Caro will open an honest dialogue that confronts race and the business of creation.

Afua Cooper (Dalhousie University, Halifax)

Invisible History: Enslaved Africans in Canada

The transatlantic slave trade engendered numerous migrations of enslaved Africans to Canadian colonies. Yet, these territories are rarely acknowledged in scholarly productions on Atlantic slavery as a site of Black bondage, even though the enslavement of Blacks has been an institutionalized practice in the region for over two centuries. Both the French and English colonial and imperial regimes enacted statutes that legalized slavery, and gave Whites property rights in Black bodies. The study of Canadian slavery as a whole lags behind that of other regions in the Americas or even in Europe and Asia. A main reason for this state of affair is that Canada has created an image of itself as a 'haven' for fleeing American Underground Railroad fugitives due to the fact that it abolished slavery 30 years before the United States. In creating and maintaining this image, Canadians have banished from their collective memory their own history of slaveholding. This paper shows that over the course of two hundred years of slavery, enslaved Blacks in Canada endured slavery in ways similar and different from their brethren in the United States, the Caribbean, and elsewhere in the Americas. Many also experienced bondage at different sites in the Atlantic and as a result, had variegated experiences of slavery. Canadian slaves came from heterogeneous backgrounds with birthplaces situated in different points of the Atlantic world. Likewise, many enslaved Black Canadians were born in the colony. This paper also examines resistance as part of the fabric of slave life in colonial Canada. I will examine slave flight, and slave challenges in court as two of the "strategies of resistance" used by enslaved persons to challenge slavery. Primary source documents from French and British archives, coupled with secondary literature will be analyzed and synthesized to provide a portrait of slavery in Canada's Black Atlantic. My ultimate objective in researching and presenting this paper is to widen the discussion and enrich the scholarly offerings on Black Atlantic slave history by making the Canadian provinces a part of these initiatives.

Maria Mariposa Fernandez (New York City)

Mixed Medicine / Mujeres en La Lucha: Subvertive Women Creating Space for Healing

How do we heal from oppression? What does the process of healing from the trauma of oppression look like? This presentation by Mariposa, Bronx born poet, educator, activist, and healer will bring together poetry, performance, visual art, and dialogue to share diverse perspectives on the role of revolutionary women of the Puerto Rican diaspora in undoing colonialism through resistance. This process of healing, as survivors of racism, gender violence, and all kinds of trauma, involves seeing the impact of internalized oppression through the lens of intersectionality, and taking action. Making art, making home out of displacement and the creation of healing spaces, *mujeres en la lucha* engage in acts of subversion, from creating sacred circles to hitting the streets, rallying against the machine, they define themselves, rip off the shackles of colonialism through remembering and reclaiming a revolutionary hybrid identity, language, and spirituality. Through their personal creative intentions, art, poetry, mysticism, and magic, they make their invisible lives seen and their unheard narratives known to the world.

Martha Gonzalez (Scripps College, Los Angeles)

Rhythmic Intention: African and Indigenous Ancestry in the music of Quetzal"

I propose a multimedia interactive presentation that explores the African diaspora in the Chicano rock music of Grammy award winning Quetzal. My live music demonstration and multimedia talk is informed by experiential methodologies shaped by my musical practices, both as (1) a Chicana vocalist, percussionist, and composer in the Chicano rock band Quetzal, and (2) a participant in the transnational music movement Fandango sin Fronteras (Fandango Without Borders). By interrogating the sonic aspect of movement, particularly the footwork of zapateado Jarocho (Afro Mexican music), as it is utilized in the music of Chicano rock band Quetzal, I attempt to recount the many historical voices and dialogues that resonate in the striking of feet on wood. Conceiving dance as a sonic experience and or considering dance as an important sound source, I suggest that one can gain valuable insight and additional narratives within a culture's historical hybrid trajectory. Ultimately, I suggest that rhythms processed by the body are not just marking time in music and dance practice, but rather ancestral rhythms are political acts rooted in resistance.

Astrid Haas (University of Wuppertal)

Black Inter-American Mobilities and Life Narratives in the Age of Revolutions

The talk introduces a larger research project that studies forms and developments of black inter-American mobilities in the period of the first series of independence movements in the Americas, as they manifest themselves in autobiographical texts by free(d) Blacks in the hemisphere from the 1770s to the 1840s. The project combines the cultural theoretical and historical approaches of Black / African Diaspora Studies, Inter-American Studies, and Mobility Studies with text-oriented methods of narrative, specifically autobiography, research. A key element of the analysis is the shift from coloniality to postcoloniality, respectively a condition of "postcolonial coloniality" that large stretches of the Americas and their populations were undergoing in the period in question. Of particular relevance here are, on the one hand, the intersections of the social identity categories of race/ethnicity, gender, class, and nationality in the context of Afrodiasporic mobilities in the Americas. Further crucial are, on the other hand, the interactions between narrative practices and social discourses, especially the articulation of socio-cultural experiences in autobiographical narratives as well as the function of narratives

and narration in the socio-cultural formation of individual and collective identities. The talk introduces the key types of Afrodiasporic mobility studied in the project as well as the types of texts examined herein: Types of mobility to be distinguished and investigated include the physical mobility of Blacks in geographic spaces; their social and cultural mobility between different cultures and social classes, and their narrative mobilities, that is, their movement between different text types and narrative practices for the purposes of narrative self-making and of mobilizing their readers. Text types to be studied in the project in the form of exemplary case studies encompass black slave narratives and black narratives of Indian captivity with a transnational focus, black spiritual autobiographies, especially works by internationally traveling missionaries, and secular autobiographies penned in the form of professionals' hemispheric travelogues. After briefly introducing the research project as a whole, the talk will conclude with a concrete example, the articulation of (some of the forms of) black mobility in John Marrant's narrative of Amerindian captivity.

Robin J. Hayes (New York City)

Documentary "Black and Cuba" (2013) and Q&A with director

"Black and Cuba" is an award-winning documentary, in which film director, international human rights advocate and scholar Robin J. Hayes follows a group of African-American students from a US elite Ivy League university on their journey to Cuba. While filming their poignant encounters with Afro-Cuban youth and neighborhood block parties, the travelers confront realities behind myths of color-blindness and social mobility. Featuring Fidel Castro, Fred Hampton, Che Guevara, Malcolm X, and Assata Shakur in rarely seen footage, this edgy and artful diary of their journey uncovers renewed hope for equality and human rights. After the screening director Robin Hayes will be present for a discussion with the audience.

Olaf Kaltmeier & Wilfried Raussert (Center for InterAmerican Studies, Bielefeld)

Practices of comparison: Indigenous Movements and Black Avantgardes

The research project is part of the SFB Practices of Comparison with the working title "Modernity between 'Indigeneity' and 'Blackness'" and explores newly emerging practices of comparison which are related to identity politics in the fields of cultural production, social sciences, and politics in the early decades of the 20th century. The project is primarily concerned with second order comparisons in the field of black cultural and indigenous movements in the early 20th century in the Americas. The following questions are central: How are identity politics shaped by practices of comparison? Which are the comparative regards that are being used to compare individuals and communities? Through the use of which different ways of comparison emerge incommensurabilities or merge similarities and differences that surface within the comparative practices into a coherent overall picture, namely into a complex *tertium comparationis* based either on 'indigeneity' or 'blackness' respectively?

Paula Prescod (Université de Picardie Jules Verne)

It's in the hair. In search of Caribness in St Vincent and the Grenadines

This talk focuses on the identity discourse of the Vincentian Caribs. As a preliminary step into more in-depth research on recognizing and embracing the Carib heritage in St Vincent and the Grenadines, I examine how hair is used by Caribs as a key marker of their identity. While

community memory may be crucial for understanding identity, my dialogues with the Caribs reveal that this aspect is wanting among them since they are clueless of events that affected their ancestors. The fact that they were rendered passive in the discourse concerning them has allowed for the European discourse on their demeanor and appearance to prevail, and has resulted in the dominant view, until recent times, that there can be no pride in claiming Carib identity. We are witnessing a “reappropriation” of Caribness in St Vincent, based on the superficial property of hair type and texture, which often comes in response to the question of whether my informants identify themselves as Caribs. I argue that their seeming obsession with hair, rather than being a mere marker of ethnic difference, is a lexical cue used to signal their coming to terms with how their otherness has been represented, thus laying the groundwork for self-representation.

**Heike Raphael-Hernandez (Julius Maximilian University, Würzburg;
Visiting Professor Stanford University)**

The right to freedom as ideology: 18th-century Inter-American Knowledge Productions, Early Beginnings of African Inter-American Slave Protests and Rebellions, Suriname Maroon Communities, and Moravian Missionary Documents

According to historian Hilary McD. Beckles, today, it is commonly accepted that anti-slavery conflicts and all resulting revolutionary struggle in the Caribbean had a trans-Atlantic dimension and were part of, what he calls, an “indigenous anti-slavery movement.” Slavery historians have identified the different interrelationships between day-to-day resistance, the large numbers of unsuccessful plots and revolts, and successful rebellions that included such occurrences as long-term marronage in, for example, Jamaica and Suriname, but also the revolution in Haiti. Yet, Beckles still sees the need to do more research into the details of the slaves’ political and ideological culture; for him, a major concern for scholars, when they are interpreting all these different forms of revolts and protests, should be to ask about the ideological choices in the context of maturing political consciousness” and about “those linkages, real or imaginary, that existed between plantation-based politics and the international anti-slavery ethos” that caused the maturing of this political consciousness. It is, therefore, useful to consider the Caribbean as the in-between space that brought transformation to other latitudes by claiming that, among many different factors, Suriname and its early Maroon societies became one of the fundamental building blocks for the awareness of the right to freedom in the entire inter-American geographical space, and one vehicle to bring this message to the other geographical spaces was also via the early Moravian missionaries. My research is an investigation into these early documents and their potential of having contributed to an ideology of the right to freedom among enslaved Africans.

María del Pilar Ramírez Gröbli (Bern University)

Ethnic Transnational Narratives: -Afrodescendant and Indigenous-: Crossroads of social change and peacebuilding in Latin America

Transnational ties between afrodescendant and indigenous peoples are reshaping local ethnic identities and social structures in Latin America by mobilizing ethno-cultural meanings for the social change. Afrodescendant groups and indigenous communities have been building transnational networks throughout the Latin American continent, especially since the end of the 1980s. The interactions among indigenous and afrodescendant movements have led to intense questioning on ethnicity and generated political recognition processes that have transformed place imaginaries and ethnic-political patterns beyond the nation-state. Some of these developments have become established organizations that pursue social mobilization and political involvement, to transnational scales. Although both of those groups have been

marginalized, especially during the colonization, colonial histories of each ethnical group show significant differences. While indigenous peoples already inhabited the subcontinent, afrodescendants were forcefully brought from Africa as slaves. Assimilation policies have affected and defined their socio-political achievements and participation within Latin American nations. However, both written and verbal alternative literatures have preserved their cultural practices and ethnic memories. They have been reproduced within the subcultures and passed on from generation to generation. This ethnic-historic legacy has also contributed to rebuilding ethnic symbols and subjectivities which influence the acknowledgement of plurinational states in the contemporary context. The formation of ethnic networks through the subcontinent from both afrodescendant and indigenous peoples are shaped by convergences and dissimilarities regarding scopes, discourses, and thematic focuses. This ethnic interaction at transnational scales influences both local processes and trans-local interaction. This study envisions: (a) comparing and contrasting transnational formation from both afrodescendant and indigenous organizations and their interdependencies, (b) to examine the role of narrative/literary practices (written or/and oral), especially concerning collective ethnic memory and territorial governance, and (c) to explore to what extent transnational ethnic alliances and narratives influence the place-based social structures by illustrating the afrodescendant case in the cross-border Ecuadorian-Colombian area.

Nicolas Rey (Universidad de Guadalajara)

Los afrodescendientes en América Latina y el Caribe: sus luchas, de la guerra fría a las izquierdas en el poder

En América latina y el Caribe, los afrodescendientes han sido "objeto de estudio" en relación a su cultura, pero muchas veces con una visión desconectada de su contexto socioeconómico y político. Proponemos enfocar nuestro análisis en los aportes y la diversidad de las luchas de estos grupos en los últimos 50 años, a veces en alianza con los indígenas, para tener acceso a una ciudadanía entera con los derechos individuales y colectivos que eso implica. Nos apoyaremos en estudios que hemos realizado en las Antillas y Guyana francesas donde hubo una huelga general de 2 meses en 2009 en reacción a un sistema de tipo colonial persistente, en Ecuador donde los Afros se juntaron con los indígenas para exigir más derechos colectivos o en Venezuela, países que vivieron una "Revolución Constitucional", en Haití donde el arte vudú reafirma la identidad a nivel local pero también global, y Guatemala donde los "garífunas" defienden su territorio, con sus antepasados a través de un culto a los ancestros de "resistencia". Proponemos concluir sobre la difícil pero necesaria integración regional desde los pueblos, de las islas al continente, fuera de toda influencia (neo)imperialista ...

Paloma Rodriguez (Center for InterAmerican Studies, Bielefeld)

Razteca movement. Black-brown reggae music.

Razteca Movement has been one of the most important reggae movements in Latin America. It is based on the mix of Rastafari and Azteca cultures. Mexicans and Chicanos have found in this hybrid music gender a way to build a new identity and to talk about social problems going against the system. Razteca Movement wants to fulfil for brown people what reggae movement has fulfilled for black people.

Eleonora Rohland (Center for InterAmerican Studies, Bielefeld)

Black Voices from New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward after Hurricane Betsy (1965) - Or: Including Environmental Factors into 'Entangled Black Americas'

My talk will introduce a collection of 200 letters written to President Lyndon B. Johnson (mostly by black inhabitants of the Lower Ninth Ward) after Hurricane Betsy hit New Orleans on September 9, 1965. The letters provide a unique perspective on the situation of New Orleans' African-American population in the aftermath of a natural disaster which occurred during a time of intense social and political change in the United States. Dubbed „the liberal hour“ by historians Mackenzie and Weisbrot, the early to mid-1960s saw the continued rise of the Civil Rights Movement, John F. Kennedy's assassination, the passing of the Civil Rights Act and the implementation of Lyndon B. Johnson's 'Great Society' and 'War against Poverty' programs. These political changes from the background to the letters are in some cases even referred to explicitly. This brief introduction will be followed by a connection with the concept of "social vulnerability" used in historical disaster studies, and thoughts on how to include environmental factors into the concept of „entanglement“ in general and „Entangled Black Americas“ in particular.

Winfried Siemerling (University of Waterloo, Ontario)

Memory and Transformation in Black Canadian Writing

I will speak about *The Black Atlantic Reconsidered: Black Canadian Writing, Cultural History, and the Presence of the Past*, my recent book that just won the Gabrielle Roy Prize for Canadian literary criticism and is nominated for another award. It is the first comprehensive work to explore black Canadian writing (in English and French) from its beginnings to the present and in the broader context of the black Atlantic world. The book discusses black Canadian writing from the 18th century to the most recent works, and argues for the inclusion of this rich corpus in discussions of the black Atlantic.

Karla Slocum (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)

Blackness and Freedom in and across Place

What is the contemporary significance of rural places designed to fulfill the postemancipation quest for freedom across the Americas? My work examines spaces where people of African descent settled in search for an economic and social existence that allowed them to separate from oppressive structures. I examine black towns in Oklahoma and free villages in the Caribbean as examples of communities that people of African descent helped to develop at a time when the promise of post-emancipation freedom was not fulfilled. While there has been much attention to the historic significance of these communities, I ask what forms of engagement and meanings are attached to the places in the 21st century? Which forms of tourism and commemorative activities are organized around them and what narratives of history are invoked to define their past and, consequently, their present? Which contemporary meanings of race and history help define these spaces today? What are their economic projects, possibilities, and challenges? While scholars have explored post-emancipation rural villages and towns as distinct and disparate spaces across the Americas, my work addresses the above questions by looking across place, how race, place, and freedom have converged in diverse yet related ways across the African diaspora in the Americas.

Matti Steinitz (Center for InterAmerican Studies, Bielefeld)

Between Spanish Harlem and Black Rio – Soul music and the hemispheric impact of Black Power

When the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s and 1970s challenged white supremacy in ways never seen before, no musical genre represented the beginning of a new era for African Americans in the US more than soul music. Global in its appeal to marginalized groups, the US African-American freedom struggle also had a deep impact on other afro-diasporic communities where soul came to be perceived as a soundtrack of the movement. The research project presented here aims to shed light on an underexplored chapter of North-South dialogues in the Black Americas by examining the dissemination of soul music and its significance for the popularization of the Black Power Movement in Latin American contexts. Following the traces of soul in urban sites of hemispheric transculturation, it shall be demonstrated how the appropriation of this music and the related aesthetic representations of black pride by Afro-Latin@s became an important means for expressing dissent with the often neglected forms of anti-black racism specific to many Latin American societies, and also for constructing translocal networks of solidarity and identification between formerly separated afro-diasporic groups.

Meagan Sylvester (The University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago)

Music as Identity and Music as Social Change in Trinidad's Indigenous Music

This paper explores the lyrics and the narrative web of Calypso Music and Ragga Soca music through the discursive themes of music as identity and music as social change. Undertaking a thematic analysis of the written texts of selected Calypsos during the early 1900s-1980s and Ragga Soca music produced specifically by Bunji Garlin, Maximus Dan, and General Grant from the 1990s to 2013, I examine the sociological inter-sectionalities inherent in both musical artforms. Each genre in its time sought to be representative of the identity of Trinidadians and was used as a vehicle of self-expression to answer the question "who are we?" as well as to act as a rallying call to challenge listeners to interrogate the status quo. Through the discourse on the Sociology of Music, I match specific music sociological streams with the discursive themes of music as identity and music as social change.

Lisa N Tomlinson (University of the West Indies, Mona campus, Jamaica)

Counter-Cultures of Inner-City Kingston: From Kingston to Toronto

The aim of my paper is to focus on Kingston City as a site of cultural production, and indicate how these various cultural expressions informed by Jamaican nation language, have crossed over into the diaspora. My focus is on post independent Kingston from 1962 to current day. Similar to the ways various aspects of African American popular cultural expressions evolved in inner-city communities and have been transplanted into mainstream US urban centres, many of Jamaica's popular cultural expressions have their roots in Kingston's ghettos, creating an impact on urban popular culture in Jamaica and its diaspora. I choose to look at Kingston inner cities primarily to highlight the city as a space for cultural production. Parallel to how ethnicity is treated in city spaces, discourses around inner cities tend to focus a great deal on social problems, such as unemployment, poverty, contentiousness, and distance from the mainstream (Fishman). Inner cities are rarely looked at as a prolific space for artistic cultural expression.