

WE ARE HERE.



THE DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN &
BLACK DIASPORA STUDIES
AUTUMN 2021 NEWSLETTER

Art: Maici Williams

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to the Fall 2021 issue of *We Are Here.*, the Department of African and Black Diaspora Studies newsletter featuring thoughtful work by some of our majors and minors. This issue also contains an interview with our new Ida B. Wells-Barnett postdoctoral fellow for 2021-22, Dr. Rita Mookerjee. She will start teaching in Winter and we're excited to have her as part of the ABD team.

There is a lot going on in ABD! We are now searching for a new full-time, permanent faculty member who will start teaching next fall. ABD is also part of a group of departments and centers who applied for and received a grant of almost two million dollars from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The grant will focus on racial justice in the arts and humanities. It will allow more support for faculty and opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to receive funding for research projects. There will also be a Summer Institute for incoming students interested in racial and social justice through the arts and humanities.

We'll send out information about these opportunities for our students via email and on social media. Looking forward to seeing ABD students take advantage of some of these upcoming opportunities. Please keep an eye out for the announcements!

Thank you to all who shared their work with us in this newsletter. Special thanks are due to newsletter editor Mari Oliver and ABD department assistant Kathryn Douglas for their work on this issue of the newsletter.

Take care and good luck with the end of the quarter!



Edited By: Mari Oliver, Class of 2022

Cover Art By: Maici Williams, Class of 2022

Supervised By: Dr. Amor Kohli & Kathryn Douglas

IN THIS ISSUE AUTUMN 2021

PAGE 3 • ABD MAJOR/MINOR REQUIREMENTS

PAGE 4 • WINTER COURSE FLYERS

PAGE 5 • BLUE BLACK ALIYAH JONES

PAGE 6 • SEKORDRI LEWIS PROFILE



**PAGE 7-8 • THE CROSSROADS OF INTERSECTIONALITY
BY MARI OLIVER**

**PAGE 9-10 • BLACK ALT GIRLS: WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN HERE
BY MONIQUE PETTY-ASHMEADE**

**PAGE 11 • DR. RITA MOOKERJEE INTERVIEW
BY MARI OLIVER**

PAGE 12 • BLACK CLUBS



ABD MAJOR/MINOR REQUIREMENTS

MAJOR (13 COURSES)

ABD 100: Intro to ABD

ABD 200: Africa

ABD 206: Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latin America

ABD 208: African America

+ Four ABD 300 Level Courses

+ Four Electives (200 Level & Above)

MINOR (6 COURSES)

ABD 100: Intro to ABD

+ Choice of ABD 200, ABD 206, OR ABD 208

+ Four Courses (In Consultation with an ABD Advisor)

WINTER 2022 COURSE OFFERINGS

DEPT. OF AFRICAN & BLACK DIASPORA STUDIES
WINTER 2022 COURSE OFFERING

AFRICAN DIASPORA WOMEN WRITERS

ABD 244

DR. RITA MOOKERJEE



M/W 11:20-12:50 LPC

This course examines fiction, poetry, drama, and other creative writings by African diaspora women writers with the purpose of studying how the writers from Africa and its diaspora configure themselves in literature. Students will engage how these writers engage topics such as literary form, feminism, gender, identity, politics, and community. Crosslisted with INT 388, ENG 268, & WGS 290.

Arts and Literature



AFRO-CARIBBEAN AND AFRO-
LATIN AMERICA: PEOPLES,
CULTURES, IDEAS, MOVEMENTS

ABD 206

Dr. Julie Moody-Freeman

TU/TH 11:20-12:50 LPC

This course examines historical and cultural constructions of blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean. This class will explore the way racial projects intersect with gender, sexuality, and class issues via case studies of diverse communities and countries in the region through both historical and contemporary perspectives. Students will learn how racial identities are constructed and interpreted in the Americas and the ways these identities have shaped Latin American and Caribbean cultures, politics, and societies. Crosslisted with LST 207.

Social, Cultural, and Behavioral Inquiry

DEPT. OF AFRICAN & BLACK DIASPORA STUDIES
WINTER 2022 COURSE OFFERING

DEPT. OF AFRICAN & BLACK DIASPORA STUDIES
WINTER 2022 COURSE OFFERING



AFRICAN AMERICA: PEOPLES, CULTURES, IDEAS, & MOVEMENTS

ABD 208

TU/TH 1-2:30 LPC

This class is an introduction to African American Studies. This interdisciplinary course will acquaint students with of the major themes in African American studies while emphasizing the development of students' critical reading, writing, and analytical skills. The course is meant to introduce students to some of the complexities, debates, and questions that have shaped the study and development of African American Studies. Crosslisted with AMS 297.

Social, Cultural, and Behavioral Inquiry



BLUE BLACK

BY ALIYAH JONES

That summer when I was Blue Black
Neck matched my face matched my hair
Forgot I was going to a new school
Too busy running in the alley with my cousins
Playing games while mosquitoes got full from our
beating hearts
Dodging cars on the way to the corner store
Immediately grabbing now or later and chips
when we reach the door
Less than \$3 bought us the world.
Gave us powers to morph our bodies.
Red fingerprints, blue tongues, and peak transfor-
mation was black skin.
That blue black was well deserved.
I worked hard for it.
No sunscreen.
Only bug spray that left my skin sticky enough to
trap the sun
That blue black was the marker of a good summer
A kind family, a full belly.
Worth the jokes that were promised at the new
school
Those kids weren't gone love me anyway
But that blue black did

AND IT STILL DOES.

Alumni Profile: Class of 2014

SEKORDRI LEWIS (OJO)

What drew you to ABD in the first place?

I was always passionate about African American/African history. In high school, the only outlet for Black studies was through history and literature courses and this outlet was small and often from the perspective of whites. In college, I thought my experience would be the same. I was not only pleased but ecstatic to discover that there was a program dedicated to the study of the African diaspora.

What skills, knowledge, etc. did you gain from your ABD course of study?

As an ABD major, I took courses on the African American experience, African history, and Afro-Latino culture. These courses provided me with the knowledge and critical thinking skills needed to examine the diversity within the diaspora while also analyzing the diaspora as a whole. I studied Black thought, Black revolutions, Black women, Black culture, and so much more which gave me a perspective of the world that I was able to bring into the history classes I took. This was important given that as a History major, I often found the voices, experiences, and thoughts of the African diaspora to be absent. Double majoring in History and ABD provided me with critical reasoning and analytical skills, research experience, taught me how to construct and support an argument in a clear and persuasive manner, and how to analyze the intersectionalities of history.

Is there anything you would like prospective ABD minors/majors to know about your experience with African and Black Diaspora Studies?

Know that ABD will offer a great deal to your academic experience, however, it will also offer so much more to your personal development. ABD was home for me. It was where I found my voice. It was where I could go and see myself and see the possibilities of what I could become. ABD made me feel proud of my identity when there were moments I felt like the world was crushing, silencing and killing people all over the world that look like me. ABD gave me hope. It is my wish that as an ABD minor/major, or if you are just taking a few classes, that ABD is the same for you and so much more.

Any other nuggets of wisdom for our current students about undergraduate or postgraduate life?

It is ok if you do not have it all figured out. It is also ok if you think you have it figured out and life takes a different turn.

Remember that Frederick Douglass said, "Power concedes nothing without a demand". You cannot demand something you do not



THE CROSSROADS OF

In its 1903 publication, *The Souls of Black Folk*, written by W.E.B. DuBois, explores the idea of “double consciousness,” or the feeling of having one or more social identities, making it almost impossible to unify the two. While DuBois is specifically discussing the “double consciousness” he experienced as a Black man living in America, the idea of “double consciousness” can also be used to describe the experiences and systems Black women are at odds with daily. The barriers that Black women face in the political and legal system today have historical and legal roots and have been influenced by the competing roles of race and gender.

We can examine this presently through the idea of intersectionality, which has come to replace “double consciousness” when describing competing identities. Lawyer and professor Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality in the 1970s based on her observations of the way the law responded to cases that involved both race and gender. According to Crenshaw, the law responded in two ways. First, the law rejected Black women’s claims that they were being discriminated against based on race and gender because courts believed it would give Black women a “super remedy,” or something more than everyone else received. Crenshaw notes that early cases of Black women suing employers for discrimination highlighted that segregated industries had jobs that were deemed appropriate for Blacks and jobs that were deemed appropriate for women, but no jobs that were appropriate for women who were Black. An early example of this is *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors*, where Black women sued General Motors arguing that they used race and gender discrimination in the hiring process. The court immediately dismissed their claims, wanting them to either claim gender discrimination or racial discrimination, but not both. While Crenshaw highlights the legal roots that have created the barriers women face in the criminal justice system, it’s also worth noting that these barriers have historical roots as well.

The historical barriers that have been influenced by the intersection of race and gender date back to enslavement. According to “The Meaning of Emancipation,” a chapter in *Woman, Race, and Class* by Angela Davis, while both enslaved men and women alike faced similar oppression, women were subjected to sexual abuse and “barbarous mistreatment” that could only be inflicted on women. Sexual abuse perpetrated by the “man of the house” forced black women to choose between “sexual submission and absolute poverty for themselves and their families. When Black enslaved women chose to fight alongside men, Davis notes that Black women who were caught were “no less ruthlessly punished than slave men.” Davis furthers that sometimes, the penalties women suffered were more excessive than those the men received. For example, if the men were hung, the women were burned alive to discourage other women from participating in revolts, “It may not be entirely insignificant that while the men were hanged, she was heinously burned alive.”

INTERSECTIONALITY

BY MARI OLIVER



Image By: Dom Aguiar

In the United States, the intersection of gender and race impact Black women by creating barriers, many of which are underrepresented in the media. For example, Black women currently represent the fastest-growing prison population, and the group most likely to be denied health care and proper menstrual products while incarcerated. Outside of the legal system, Black women only make 64 cents to the dollar compared to white men, have higher rates of unemployment than white women, continue to have lower amounts of weekly earnings and median wealth compared to white men and women, and face dire health barriers with only one in four Black women having health insurance. While the barriers that Black women face in the political and legal system are nothing new, it's only been within the last forty to fifty years that we've examined how those barriers have been influenced by the competing roles of race and gender.

As a student, I find strength in knowing that the steps I take daily to better myself, such as attending class, working on law school applications, or caring for my health, work to dismantle the systems that forgot us long ago.

BLACK ALT GIRLS:

For years, to be a Black girl who likes rock music was a conflict in itself. Black alt girls have always been outcasts in a genre that was aimed mainly towards white men, due to the idea that being alternative didn't fit into the aesthetic of being a Black woman. I'm here to say to hell with that. I grew up listening to Lauryn Hill and Paramore. Why can't I like both? It's hard to narrowly define what alternative is but try to think of it as music, clothes, hair, and culture that is all non-mainstream. With that being said alternative is a term that is meant to allow for more inclusiveness. For the longest time, it appears that Black alt girls have received the short end of the stick that has attempted to erase their existence. When I was younger, being "emo" or liking bands like Pierce the Veil was frowned upon and seen as "weird". As Black women, we've been put into a box labeled with everything we should and shouldn't be. We get labeled as "ghetto" for dying our hair bright colors or receive odd stares if we decide to have facial piercings. The moment we step out of that we receive backlash and are viewed as trying to assimilate with white people. Assimilation is never the case, self-expression is the goal.



With self-expression comes condemnation whether it be from the Black community or white people on the alt scene. Within the religious aspect of the Black community this way of expression can be confused with "worshipping Satan" or by Black peers as "trying to be white" which ultimately disassociates the origin of rock music from Black culture. Black alt girls are finding their way to the mainstream by bringing back a revival of what once was an underground identity hidden from many. The digital era has helped with this as we've seen the rise of artists like Willow and Rico Nasty. The latter mashes rap and punk. Their styling has shown the world that there is no one way to be Black.

WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN HERE

By Monique Petty-Ashmeade



Image By: Vale Arellano

As for myself, I've learned to shake that boxed-up feeling of being an outcast and not fitting into the Western ideology of what a Black girl should look or act like. I've dyed my hair various colors throughout the years, I've shaved my hair, and I've gotten nose piercings. Most importantly, I've stepped into the person I want to be and I don't plan on stopping anytime soon. Being from Chicago and attending college here, I've fallen into the web of the Chicago art scene. Its influence has been key in my exploration of self-expression. There is comfort in showing up to a backyard punk concert and seeing Black girls with spiked hair, piercings, or chunky combat boots on. You feel as though you've found your community and everyone has come out of hiding. You can scream, jump, and mosh as much as you want.

Black alternative girls have always been around, and their resurgence into the mainstream and the acceptance of them among society today proves that Blackness is infinite and comes in many forms. It represents the freedom of expression and the discovery of identity and truth. It's something I've reckoned with for years, something I once feared, and at points tried to hide out of fear of being outcasted by my peers. As I've grown older, I've met people who reminded me that at the end of the day, to be able to live boldly and freely is something that one should never fear.

INTERVIEW WITH DR. RITA MOOKERJEE

BY MARI OLIVER

The African & Black Diaspora Studies Department invites young scholars who have just finished their doctorate to join the department for a year or two. These young scholars are known as the Ida B. Wells-Barnett Postdoctoral Teaching Fellows and they teach, work closely with interested students, and take part in events for the DePaul community. This year, ABD is excited to welcome the new Ida B. Wells-Barnett fellow, Dr. Rita Mookerjee. Professor Mookerjee comes to our department from Florida State University. Dr. Mookerjee will be teaching "African Diaspora Women Writers" in the winter of 2022. She will also be teaching "Race and Ethnicity in Literary Studies" and "Soul Food: Literature, Community, and Culture" in the spring of 2022.

I had the opportunity to sit down with Dr. Mookerjee to discuss her upcoming class, as well as what students can expect from her as a professor. When asked what made her pursue a career in education, Mookerjee shared that her personal experience in writing classes was negative because many of her educators were overworked and underpaid, an issue with the education system most of us are familiar with. The lackluster curriculum turned Mookerjee away from books and literary culture, until she discovered subfields of literature which featured women, people of color, and writers who looked and sounded like her. The process of unlearning what she thought literature was made her want to teach others. This, along with the desire to make literature seem less daunting, is a major force students will experience in her class, "African Diaspora Women Writers." Mookerjee shared that the books she chose for the class are "very friendly" as the amount of text is manageable. Mookerjee hopes this allows students to find relief and escape a Western view of literature.

One thing she hopes students are able to do in her class is to look at a text and be surprised about the genre or style of writing because they hadn't seen it before. When asked to describe her class, Mookerjee explained to me that it's going to be fun. While it does feature quite a bit of poetry from diasporic women writers, Mookerjee wants students who may dislike the genre to challenge themselves and dig deeper about why they may not like poetry. Mookerjee plans on sharing contemporary works by authors, many of whom she knows, to show students that if being an author is their goal, it is possible. Mookerjee is aware that she may be the first professor who is a woman of color that students see, and she wants to show students that they have the power to attain their goals.

I connected most with Mookerjee when I asked her what advice she has for students based on her own academic experiences. Dr. Mookerjee shared that while it's easy for students to feel defined by the major they choose, she wants students to know that they don't have to do anything related to their major. She doesn't want students to feel defined by their major but rather, do something that brings them fulfillment and joy. In many ways, this can be demonstrated by her teaching style, which she describes as "intense, honest, and outspoken."

We are so excited to welcome Dr. Rita Mookerjee as the new Ida B. Wells-Barnett fellow. Be sure to check out her class, "African Diaspora Women Writers" this winter quarter.



BLACK CLUBS



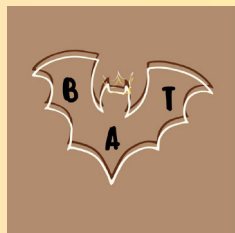
AFRICAN STUDENT ASSOCIATION

The African Student Association centers and builds the African community at DePaul through cultural events, community service initiatives, and collaborating with like minded student and community organizations. We aim to create a safe space for students of the African diaspora and provide enriching activities and resources.



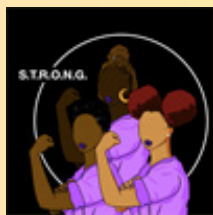
BLACK STUDENT UNION

The goal of DePaul's Black Student Union is to establish a unifying network within the Black diaspora by exploring the intersectionality of the Black cultural experience. We aim to provide a space where students feel a sense of belonging through meaningful programming, activities, and workshops. The Black Student Union fosters an atmosphere that promotes student's academic, professional, social, and overall well-being.



BLACK ARTISTS OF TODAY

Black Artists of Today (BAT) was formed in order to give space to black voices that may, at times, feel silenced, unseen, misunderstood, unheard, or ignored. Our mission is to create a community for black actors to apply learned material while exploring other talents through devised work. BAT provides a safe place for our members to speak and create freely and to bring themselves to the larger community. BAT provides black actors, within The Theatre School, a place to discuss the dynamic that their presence has within The Theatre School and the overall DePaul community.



S.T.R.O.N.G

The purpose of this organization is to promote mental, physical, and spiritual growth among women of color. We promote mental growth through self-reflection, education, collective healing, and understanding. This group was created with the thought of being an outlet for those who did not have a circle friends to turn to as counsel; providing advocacy toward bettering oneself through positive thinking, education and/or better understanding of spirituality.



The cover art for this edition of the ABD newsletter was designed by graduating senior and ABD double-major, Maici Williams.



AFRICAN & BLACK
DIASPORA STUDIES
LINKTREE



DEPARTMENTAL
ANNOUNCEMENTS

SOCIAL MEDIA

SCHOLARSHIPS, INTERNSHIPS
& GRANTS

SOCIAL MEDIA



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