



# (Re)Humanizing Black Lives

The Center for Black Diaspora Examines Race Relations Today

Joining the national discussions on race in America, DePaul's Center for Black Diaspora has been spending the 2016-17 academic year holding discussions, workshops, lectures and other community events on the theme "(Re)Humanizing Black Lives." Christina Rivers, associate professor of political science and the center's new director, says the current series is a continuation of the conversation begun by last year's programming dedicated to the Black Lives Matter movement. "When I hear the phrase 'Black Lives Matter,' implicit is that blacks are human," she says to explain the theme of the current year's programming. "In our history, blacks were not considered human. Trying to convince folks that black people are human has always been implicit in black voices."

The center has put together its calendar of events in part to give students a chance

to talk about how they feel as persons of color. Some urgent feedback from students convinced Rivers to program some events as soon as possible.

Rivers is pleased by the very diverse attendance and candid responses to fall events such as "Assessing DePaul's Racial Climate—Where Are We, and Where Do We Go From Here?" "There were expressions of gratitude for having the event, and the dean of students and the provost attended," she said. She hopes to reach a wider audience for these important discussions.

Following up a two-part fall series on minority voting rights, the winter and spring terms will include a panel on free speech and educating students on their rights if they are stopped by the police. "I also want to address the role of young people in expanding free speech rights over

the years," Rivers says, "particularly as part of the anti-war and civil rights movement. Students had a lot of power.

"We're also going to be showing two films as expressions of one's humanity," Rivers continues, "'Raça,' a documentary about lower-caste people in Brazil asserting their rights, and 'La Haine,' looking at race and class conflicts in 1990s France. It's become even more relevant in France today."

Rivers isn't looking too far from home for speakers. She has already booked Vincent de Paul Professor of Law Jeffrey Shaman and Chernoh Sesay, associate professor of religious studies, for a winter presentation. "We tend to overlook each other, and this is a way to showcase what we have here and let our students know they can take advantage of classes taught by our speakers."