



# Message from the Chair

Welcome to the Spring 2022 issue of *We Are Here.*, the Department of African and Black Diaspora Studies Student Newsletter!

Although ABD has missed its current Chair, Dr. Amor Kohli, ABD is enthused that he was awarded a very well-deserved research leave for the winter and spring quarters. In Dr. Kohli's absence, I (Dr. Chernoh Sesay, Jr.) have served as acting Chair, and I want to give a huge THANK YOU to the ABD Department Assistant Kathryn Douglas and to Dr. Kohli. Kathryn has been incredible in all the work she has done to smooth this transition. Also, despite being away to research and write, Dr. Kohli has never hesitated to answer my questions about his job.

Congratulations to all of the ABD seniors who are graduating this year! Despite being sad to see you go, the ABD Department and its associated faculty from across the College and University are incredibly proud of your graduation and all the accomplishments that you have garnered along the way. We are inspired by you, and we are so proud of you! You must keep in touch and update us on all of your future success!

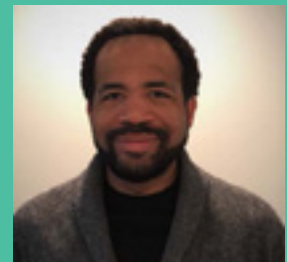
In Fall of 2022 Dr. Symone Johnson will join us. Check out Dr. Johnson's personal introduction in this issue, and sign up for her fall classes! We are very excited and fortunate that she has chosen to join us!

We want to thank our Ida B. Wells-Barnett Post-Doctoral Fellow, Dr. Rita Mookerjee for her excellent teaching and her fascinating programming. Also, congratulations Dr. Mookerjee for landing a tenure-track job!

Next year will also welcome the recipient of the first Comparative Race and Ethnicity Studies Post-Doctoral Fellowship. This Fellowship was created by DePaul's Social Transformation Research Collaborative (STRC), organized by ABD Professor Julie Moody-Freeman and English Professor Bill Johnson-Gonzalez in their successful application for a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Be on the lookout for events and job and mentorship opportunities from the STRC.

Many thanks are due to the extraordinary work of ABD's Department Assistant, Kathryn, who, along with our esteemed student worker Neelam Warren-Pal, have put in many hours of careful work to edit and publish this newsletter. Also, thank you to all of the contributors for sharing your thoughtful work in this edition of *We Are Here.*

Even as ABD looks forward to next year with anticipation, we also hope that spring quarter ends well for you, and that all of you have a great summer!



Edited by: Neelam Warren-Pal

Supervised by: Kathryn Douglas & Dr. Chernoh Sesay

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# Fall Quarter 2022 Course Offerings

THE DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AND BLACK DIASPORA STUDIES  
FALL 2022 COURSE OFFERING

**Introduction to  
African & Black  
Diaspora  
Studies**

**ABD 100**

**Dr. Julie Moody-Freeman**  
Online  
Asynchronous



This introductory course to the field of African and Black Diaspora Studies investigates the many ways in which African and Black peoples across the globe have created robust lives for themselves and contributed to the creation of the modern world. Our investigation will pay special attention to how social, economic, and political institutions, geographical factors, and the cultural forces of modernity have influenced African and Black contributions to the modern world. The course begins with an examination of the diaspora (pre-modern and modern) and Pan-Africanism to engage questions of geography, history, identity, migration, pedagogy, politics, gender, and power.


Learning Domain: Social, Cultural, and Behavioral Inquiry  
Questions? Email us at [ABD@depaul.edu](mailto:ABD@depaul.edu)

The Department of African & Black Diaspora Studies  
Fall 2022 Course Offering

**African American:  
Ideas,  
Peoples,  
Cultures,  
Movements**

**ABD 208**

**Dr. Symone Johnson**  
Mondays & Wednesdays  
11:20 AM-12:50 PM (LPC)



This course is intended to acquaint the student with a range of texts and concepts central to African American studies while emphasizing the development of students' critical reading, writing, and analytical skills. The course will act as an introduction to African American historical, literary, political, and cultural study. It is not meant to be the final word, but is meant to introduce the student to some of the complexities, debates, and questions that have shaped the study and development of Black America.

Crosslisted with AMS 297.

Learning Domain: Arts & Literature  
Questions? Email us at [ABD@depaul.edu](mailto:ABD@depaul.edu)

## Black Feminist Theories

### ABD 379

**Dr. Symone Johnson**  
Mondays & Wednesdays

1:30PM-2:30PM  
(LPC)



THE DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN  
AND BLACK DIASPORA STUDIES  
FALL 2022 COURSE OFFERING

This course engages with the multiple versions of woman-centered theory and practice developed in the writings, activism, and other creative work of Black, particularly African American women, from the mid-nineteenth century to the twenty-first century. While not all of these theorists would use the word feminist, all have in common the aim of empowering women's lives and advocating for women's equal economic, political, and cultural access. Crosslisted with CES 410 and AMS 397.

Learning Domain: Social, Cultural, and Behavioral Inquiry

# HONORING OUR GRADUATING SENIORS!

We wish you luck on all your  
Future endeavors!

Ajak Bakange  
Tiara Brown  
Bianca Caillouet  
Sela Estill  
Ashli Funches  
Isabel Ingram  
Malik Joseph  
Kaitlyn Kirk  
Jennifer Ogwumike  
Mari Oliver  
Malik Pitchford  
Caleb Sturdivant  
Tinsae Tessema  
Mya Whitton  
Aliyah Young

# African and Black Diaspora Studies Major & Minor Requirements

## MAJOR (13 COURSES)

**ABD 100:**  
Introduction to  
Black Diaspora

**ABD 200: Africa-**  
Peoples, Cultures,  
Ideas & Movements

**ABD 206: Afro**  
Caribbean and  
Afro Latin America

**ABD 208: African America**  
Peoples, Cultures, Ideas  
& Movements

+

**Four ABD 300 level Course**

+

**Four Electives (200 level & Above)**

## MINOR (6 COURSES)

**ABD 100: Introduction to Black Diaspora**

+

**Select One of the following:**

**ABD 200: Africa-**  
Peoples, Cultures,  
Ideas & Movements

**ABD 206: Afro**  
Caribbean and  
Afro Latin America

**ABD 208: African**  
America  
Peoples, Cultures,  
Ideas & Movements

+

**One ABD 300 level Course**

+

**Three Electives (200 level & Above)**

# ABD Faculty Spotlight:

## Welcome

### Symone Johnson



Professor Symone Johnson (she/her), born in Ohio and raised in Texas, is a Ph.D. Candidate in the University of Notre Dame Department of Anthropology (graduating May 2022) and an alumna of Spelman College (B.A. Psychology 2017). Her areas of research include urban ethnography, black feminisms, folklore, surrealism, approaches to community organizing, care and well-being, transformative justice, restorative justice, and healing justice. Her research explores how Black people in U.S. urban centers experiment with different methods of personal healing and interpersonal relationship-building grounded in African, Asian, and Native American world views, values, and practices to build more diverse and sustainable community infrastructures. Since moving to Chicago in 2020, Professor Johnson has been involved with local organizing efforts around abolition, mutual aid, healing, and safety. She hopes to include students in this work as a professor in ABD.

In addition to her scholarly work, Professor Johnson has a passion for the fine arts. For many years, she performed as a musical theatre artist and trained as an art museum administrator in both museum education and curatorial. Presently, her creative interests center around the study of dance music (disco, funk, boogie, and house) and Black queer culture. When she is not teaching or researching, Professor Johnson enjoys dancing, singing, biking, and spending time by the water. She looks forward to working closely with the bright and curious students of DePaul!

# Igbo Worldview and Power

Jennifer Ogwumike (she/her)

**“Igbo Worldview and Power” is a capstone project exploring Igbo cosmology, while dissecting how it manifested power differences in pre-colonial Igbo society.**

The Igbos of Nigeria are a conglomeration of diverse communities, all with their unique ancestral histories and cultural beliefs. Some basic tenets of the ancient Igbo cosmology include the Supreme Being, chi, ancestors, and divinities. The Supreme Being is the ultimate creator of the world and is accessible through spiritual intercessors. Such intercessors are ancestors and divinities. Ancestors can favorably mediate the lives of their descendants and punish immorality. Divinities take a similar charge, but for whole communities. Chi is an individual’s spiritual guardian determining one’s destiny. All these core tenets make the Igbo worldview to be dualistic: the human world and the spiritual world represent and balance each other interdependently. A proper relationship with one’s chi can destine wellbeing; living righteously can ensure ancestral connection; and appeasing gods can ensure dualistic harmony.

In precolonial Igbo society, the interconnected worldview proved to be patriarchal (cont.)

It led to the veneration of male ancestors and set older men as the voice of their communities. Thus, these men received societal power in the form of land titles, wealth, and community influence. The Igbo cosmology propelled elders to be spiritual. The cosmology implies that deities judge social and political cases, subjecting everyone to their moral guidelines. With divine forces having such impact, spirituality became the true vessel of social power and control for Igbos. Elders who had spiritual authority were final arbiters on public matters, and therefore held power in morality and justice.

Social status and power relied heavily on cosmological ideals about land ownership. Igbos connected their origins to land through patrilineal lines. These connections provided economic benefit, because those with land wealth and male successors had elevated social ranking and mobility. These connections to land also disenfranchised others. Cosmology related to land justified the economic exploitation of *ohu*. These slaves were people who could not trace their genealogy to the founding fathers of their village. The Igbo worldview, promoting the importance of ancestry, directly determined freedom and inferiority.

The *ohu* were different from the *osu*, a slave caste who were exploited spiritually. These people and their descendants became property of the gods through dedication rituals.





Image Credit: Portrait of Young African Girl, 2009, Peeter Viisimma via iStock Images

They were treated as social pariahs. The cosmological necessity to appease gods made a space for *osu* dedication. The *ohu* and the *osu* illustrate how cosmology created inferiority. People who broke cosmological morals, or people who were the least served by the worldview, were the most vulnerable for enslavement.

The Igbo cosmology thoroughly ties women to their husbands, which can present obstacles in individual pursuits, in leaving difficult marriages, and even in surviving widow rites. In the worldview, women's success, land wealth, maturity, and stability are contingent upon her relationship status as mother and wife.

An exception to this was a marriage institution allowing flexibility in how

women attained wealth and progeny: some women could marry other child-bearing women under the *Iko Mbara* institution, for example.

The religious worldview of precolonial Igbo intertwined with the physical, social, political, and economic realities of their society, such that spiritual beliefs proposed and sustained patriarchy and social classification. In few instances, such as in the women and slave rebellions in the 1920s, vulnerable people could navigate moral cosmological guidelines advantageously. The dynamic Igbo worldview can challenge power inequalities that it created. But when this ingenuity is absent, the Igbo cosmology gives power most readily to **older, spiritual, married, free men**.

# Legacies of Lynching

## Aneesh Shealey (she/her)

### Empathy Statement

Lynchings were acts of vile dehumanization. It is a bastardization of legality, morality, and human decency. If you perform a Google search for the word “lynching,” graphic photographs of deceased Black people strung up like hunting trophies are abound, pain and suffering forever enduring in a digital format. While constructing this project, I was confronted with hundreds of lynching images and what shocked me most was never the violence enacted upon the lynched victims. Rather, the calmness of the white crowds always filled me with the most horror. As I poured over countless photographs, their eyes bored into me, eyes that viewed committing abject violence as their birthright. It was then that I resolved to present this project without showing a singular lynched Black person.

### Finding

In the period of time between post-bellum Reconstruction and the Civil Rights Movement, lynchings destroyed the lives of Black people across the United States. Motivated by the increasing Black socioeconomic progress, Whites enacted an excessive campaign of extrajudicial violence, lynching an estimated 4,000 Black men, women, and children between 1882 and 1968. Though tabulations put the number of American lynchings at 4,000, the true number is unknown. Though initially used to uphold a racial hierarchy, lynching became an act of community ritual. This ritualization of lynching allowed for the creation of that ritual as a public act, one that places the Black body as a fetish object for White consumption, as argued by scholar Harvey Young.

### Imagine this.

It is August of 1955. After spending fourteen years raising him in Chicago, you send your only child, Emmett, to visit family in Money, Mississippi. You pray for his safe passage. A week later, authorities pull your baby from the Tallahatchie River, and his visage is a horror that you have never seen.

It is March of 1981. Your son Michael has gone to the corner store to purchase gum. You think nothing of it. The next morning, he is found hanging from a telephone pole in a neighborhood in Mobile. He was beaten and lynched, something that you believed was an occurrence of the past.

It is May of 2020. Your brother George is at a corner store in Minneapolis. You plan to call him from Houston. His neck is knelt on until he ceases breathing. It is all captured on video for the world to see.



Image Credit: A white lynch mob in Shelbyville, Tennessee, in 1941. Bettmann via Getty

The murders of these three Black boys and men are emblematic of the cyclical nature of lynching as a white conduit for both control and rage. Emmett Till, Michael Donald, and George Floyd were all slaughtered in a way that composed both ritual and spectacle, though on a smaller scale than the crowd-bringing lynchings of the late 19th and early 20th century. All of these victims of lynchings had their deaths broadcasted for the whole country to see, and demonstrate that at its core, lynching was (and still is) an extrajudicial means for white people to direct their rage at Black people on a whim. However, their murders also galvanized Black people to create more avenues for social change as a way to resist white supremacy.

Lynching will always be tied to the Black experience in the United States. However, over the course of completing both this essay and my capstone project, I have realized that lynching is not a Black legacy. When I say this, I mean that the spectacle of Black people's murder is not a consequence of Blackness, it is instead a reflection of the ways that whiteness refuses to recognize Black humanity and sovereignty. To quote the great Malcolm X, "Sitting at the table doesn't make you a diner. You must be eating some of what's on that plate. Being here in America doesn't make you an American." They displaced us from Africa, used our ancestors to enrich themselves, and then once freedom came, they murdered them on a whim.

With the Emmett Till Anti-Lynching Act due to be signed into law in 2022, we must fully hold this nation accountable for the crimes of the past, lest we repeat them.

Rastafari is a spiritual resistance and protest that acknowledged the “Back to Africa” movement throughout the Black diaspora. It was developed in the late 1930’s after Ethiopian King, Haile Selassie I, came into power and political leader Marcus Garvey preached that Black people need to reunite with our land of origin: Africa. Rastafarianism has since then influenced the rise of Reggae music, which has allowed Black Reggae artists to use the genre to embrace their Rasta philosophy and transform Jamaica’s identity into a conscious and proud Black nation. The biggest and most popular topics Rastafarians sing about are Zion, Babylon, locs, Biblical stories, and most importantly, Rastafari. Rastafarians recognized their true home in Africa, but due to slavery and colonization, they were forced from their home, culture, and heritage. Writing about the philosophies of Rastafari allowed reggae artists to be in touch with their culture. Reggae is an extremely popular genre of music created in Jamaica. It is a mixture of Caribbean sounds and Black American- Music such as rhythm & blues and jazz. Reggae even creates distinct types of sounds such as Ska and Rocksteady. Smithsonian Center for Folklife Journalist Jake Homiak connects the different subgenres of Reggae in his article titled *Black History in Roots Reggae Music*, Reggae consists of the syncopated snare drum and hi-hat pulse of ska, the swaying guitar, and the bass interplay of rocksteady, along with the continuing influence of Mento and the Nyabinghi drumming tradition. Reggae rhythms evolved from the signature “one drop” style to “rockers” to “steppers,” reggae beat (2021).

Bob Marley, one of the most influential Reggae artists, use his music to uplift his fellow Rastafarians and Black people. Within his

song, “Rastaman Live Up!”, Marley repeats the lyrics “Rastaman, don’t give up! / Binghi-man, live up! / Congoman, don’t give up!” to assert his belief that what the white man has done is traumatic and non-beneficial to Black liberation, but still, we should never give up fighting for our rights. He reaffirms that Jamaica is a proud and conscious Black nation. Reggae music is rooted in the ideology that emperor Selassie is of the divine, remembering the struggles Jamaica has gone through, and fighting against inequalities and injustices that Black people face everywhere. Marley is simply speaking to the people that Black people cannot allow themselves to take in this injustice from the white man.

Sonja Stanley, director of the Caribbean and Reggae Studies Unit at the University of the West Indies, said: “Reggae has gone to all parts of the world inspiring people because of the very soul of the music and that soul has to do with an entire history of hardship, of oppression, of rebellion, [and] of enslavement” This is not a new tactic for the demographics of people to cope with their struggle. Black slaves within the U.S. would create and sing Negro spirituals while working on the plantation. It allowed them to communicate with other slaves while going through an oppressive, traumatic history. These Negro spirituals would evolve into the musical genres of Gospel music, Blues, and Soul.

Since the 60s and 70s the popularity of Reggae music has fluctuated. This might be due to the genre centering on mainly Afro-Jamaican Identity and oppression. These struggles and oppression are still present, but Reggae’s music has evolved into genres such as Dancehall, which do not correlate to Rastafarian topics as Reggae does. Even so, Reggae has made a significant impact on Black consciousness not only in Jamaica but also in a global context.

# Rastaman live Up

Gayun Cannon

(she/they)

“ Reggae has gone to all parts of the world inspiring people because of the very soul of the music and that soul has to do with an entire history of hardship, of oppression, of rebellion, [and] of enslavement.

*Dr. Sonja Stanely-Niaah, 2021*



# The Jezebel Archetype: Black Queer Women in film By Neelam Warren-Pal (they/them)



Image Credits: (Left) Mario De Moya, 2021 via iStockphotos, (Right) Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Bournemouth, UK/Bridgeman Art Library

At 9 years old I was introduced to the film, *Paris is Burning*. Pepper LaBeija, Octavia St. Laurent, and Avis Pendavis, all featured in the film, are hyper-sexualized, hyper-feminized, and risk death as sex workers amid the AIDs epidemic. They also represent a crucial part of American culture today, as the movement for the rights of the LGBTQAI+ peoples and allies has grown significantly. As I became older, I grew frustrated with the portrayal of Black Queer Culture in Film because, despite the growing visibility and acknowledgment of Black Queerhood within the media, Black queer femme characters are still written to fit into dated and often racist stereotypes such as the Jezebel. To compare examples of the Black femme as “Jezebel” I observed the characters Shug Avery from *The Color Purple* and Angel in *Pose*. Both films highlight the vast difference between eras and as a result, the willingness to comply with the stereotype. Though these characters are written as “the Jezebel”, centering the adoration of the male gaze as the object of their desire, they both do so as a means of stability and protection. Differences arise as Angel’s experience was born of naivety, a lack of social mobility as a transwoman, and a hyper-feminized/sexualized identity. Shug’s experience was to willingly embody the Jezebel Stereotype as an entertainer, which in the time period of the 1920’s would have aligned with famous jazz clubs like the Cotton Club, and the famous red-light district in Louisiana.

The first mention of Jezebel came from the Old Testament of the Bible, she was the wife of King Ahab. Jezebel was assertive, polytheistic, and viewed by patriarchs as a threat. The meaning of possessing a “Jezebel Spirit” changed from biblical times when Christianized Europeans colonized West Africa. They observed West African women did not wear nearly as much clothing as European women, and that polygamy was a common practice. Under the guise of White saviorism, colonizers proceeded to sexualize, and simultaneously de-humanize African women. From then on the context of Jezebel changed from a white woman, too assertive, self-absorbed, and polytheistic, to the abducted African women subjected to slavery, and then to the mulatto, a mixture of the two. Arrangements such as *plaçage* existed to ensure that white men could still indulge in exotifying, demonizing, abducting, and grooming enslaved women. Even though the law at the time dictated that one drop of black blood made you black and that whites and blacks could not marry, they made provisions to acquire mulatto concubines and looked upon the practice as grooming breeders. (Cont.)

According to K. Sue Jewell (1993), a contemporary sociologist, “[Jezebel has] thin lips, long straight hair, feminine, slender nose, thin figure, and fair complexion” (p. 46). Though this shift took place, the demonizing of Jezebel for being too powerful parallels the demonizing of African women to justify their enslavement. European Christian saviorism was provoked by a need to justify the colonial explorers’ lascivious actions, respectability within their strictly catholic nations, and the subject’s proximity to whiteness. However, it is a mistake to assume that only fair-complexioned black women, were sexually objectified by the larger American society. In the context of colonial times (1700-1800), Jezebel was first assigned to enslaved African women, who were darker complexioned and whose features and practices did not align with white conventionality.

In the show *Pose*, Angel Evangelista is an Afro-Latina transwoman who enters a sexual relationship with a married white cis-gendered businessperson named Stan. Their meeting complicates the Jezebel stereotype in this relationship because sex work was the one of the few occupations that she could secure during this time; it was not about reveling in the alluring nature of her femininity. They established an intimate relationship with one another but Stan becomes fascinated by Angel being femme presenting and having a phallus; this makes Angel uncomfortable with him fetishizing her. Once Angel becomes uncomfortable with her and Stan’s relationship Angel poses the question, “I met somebody, but he’s just like all the others. When am I finally gonna meet my Prince Charming?” Angel in pursuit of a sense of normalcy conveys she thought Stan was in love with her, but she realizes that he looks at her as a sex toy to appease his sexual fetishes. Angel would fit this Jezebel stereotype because Stan chose to associate his attraction to Angel with his sexual deviancy and because she is a sex worker, simply trying to survive. Furthermore, Angel’s rejection of Stan was a reflection of her embracing her strength to say no. Her preference for a Prince Charming’ implies a more traditional view of love and relationships overall. Stan uprooted his life, alienated his wife and colleagues, and directed the reason toward Angel, placing the Jezebel stereotype on her shoulders. However, Angel rejects him for exotifying and engaging in intimacy with her, while having no intentions of proudly being with her.

In the film, *The Color Purple*, the character Shug Avery is an entertainer from Rural Mississippi who comes to visit her hometown and old lover Albert. In one scene, she and the main character, Celie, talk about their relationship with him and Celie reveals that she never wanted Albert but that she is forced to engage in sex with him. Shug presumes that Celie likes to have sex with Albert even though the relationship is considered a violation of her sexual boundaries. When asked if Shug likes to sleep with Albert, she responds, “I must confess—I love it. Don’t you?”. According to Johanna M. Collier, “The historical “Jezebel” stereotype labels Black American women as promiscuous and sexually manipulative.” Shug comforts Celie when she is in an emotionally vulnerable state, but introduces her sex life to her in that same moment. Shug also never verbalized loving Celie, it is implied, but the movie directed by Steven Spielberg undercuts the true romantic relationship of Celie and Shug in the original book, *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker to water down their budding lesbian relationship. This sparing of details leaves us with the illusion that Shug is attractive, mean, and vulnerable only about religion and sex. Celie is still allured by Shug’s presence, as a safety net, and a lover, making the relationship appear imbalanced and motivated once again by a perceived Jezebel Spirit. Her failure to speak out against Albert’s abuses upholds the stereotype suggesting that Jezebel cannot conceptualize sexual assault because it is intrinsically a part of their nature to take part in such risky behaviors, and thereby would not be perceived as a breach.

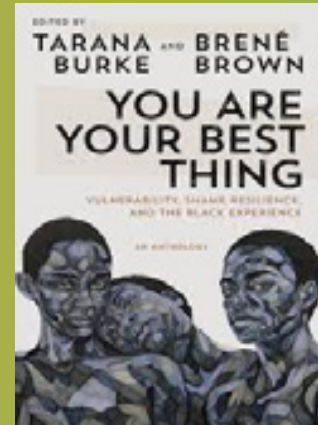
Throughout this research, I gained more knowledge on the history of Black Queer women stereotypes in film and how the overarching theme of Misogynoir is explicitly within these depictions of Black Queer women. Although that is the case, the overrepresentation of the Jezebel stereotype for Black femme characters plays a crucial role in the hypersexualization that overtly attracts and centers the male gaze. I would like to see different approaches to how the film industry and media overall can shift the narrative of Black Queer Films to include distinct and dynamic characters and storylines for Black queer women.

# Summer Reading Recommendations

Recommended by Dr. Horace  
Hall:

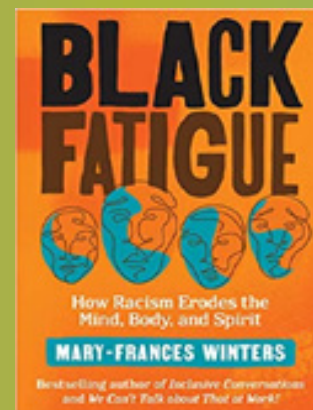
*You Are Your Best Thing: Vulnerability, Shame Resilience, and the Black Experience*

**Authors: Tarana Burke and Brené Brown (2021)**



*Black Fatigue: How Racism Erodes the Mind, Body, and Spirit*

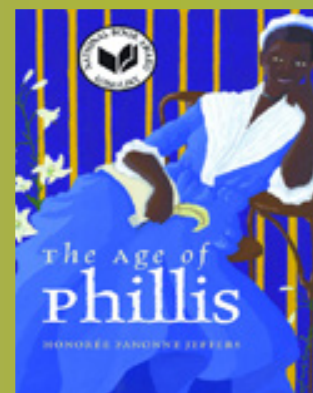
**Author: Mary-Frances Winters (2020)**



Recommended by Dr. Chernoh  
Sesay Jr.:

*The Age of Phillis*

**Author: Fanonne Jeffers (2020)**



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