

# The Griot

## The Newsletter of the Association of Black Sociologists

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## An introduction of sorts

By Phil Kretsedemas, UMass-Boston

This Griot wasn't intended to be a special-themed edition, but it could hardly avoid going down this path given the re-election of the Obama administration in November. The election provided more confirmation of what many of us have known for some time, that the days of the Republican party's southern strategy are over. The white male vote—and the older, white vote more generally—is no longer going to be the single most important force in national electoral politics. But there's no reason to assume that this change in “voter demographics” will translate into a more inclusive political culture for black people and other minoritized populations.

The following essays explore this complex environment, and the challenges and hazards that lie within. At root, these essays aren't really about the elections or the Obama administration. They are about “us”; the people who played some role in getting the Obama administration re-elected. Marcus Hunter uses urban voting trends to shed some more light on the geopolitical scope of this constituency. Meanwhile, Zandria Robinson, Juan Battle, Jazmine Walker and Kristine Wright focus on the struggles that are going on within the base—about what it means to challenge racist power structures, about what it will take to give black women's concerns more prominence in the public sphere and how to create a more inclusive space, within the black community and society at large, for LGBT people.

These essays challenge the idea

that the interests of minoritized populations are, somehow, a liability for Democrats and progressives (the “fringe elements” in the base that need to be micro-managed to preserve the unity-of-the-whole). Instead, they remind us that the struggles of minority populations are symptomatic of conditions in the wider society. It's hard to imagine a more devastating example than the Sandy Hook shootings, which put an exclamation point on a gun violence problem that has been escalating for years within black communities—a point that Aldon Morris and Rodney Coates have both made (in Rodney's case, as recently as the last Griot).

The last Griot is relevant for another reason. In many respects, this issue is a continuation of that September 2012 edition, which was titled “Current Issues in Black Life.” It puts some more issues on the table for us to contemplate but, like that September edition, it's not the last word on current issues in black life. ABS members are encouraged to respond to any of the viewpoints contained herein, and to contact me (or any member of the ABS executive committee) about being guest editors for a special issue of the Griot.

Finally, I want to thank Zandria Robinson for recruiting most of the writers for this edition and working with them on their contributions. I am very grateful for the interest that Zandria took in shaping the contents of this issue. It would never have come about without her vision and involvement, which is why she is rightly listed as guest and lead editor.

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# On the Importance of Being Prickly Black Sociological Praxis in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

By Zandria F. Robinson, Memphis University

This year marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Ida B. Wells. Wells's insightful and incisive critical analysis of the social evil of lynching not only earned her the enmity of white folks across the U.S. but also a place in the canon of classical American sociological thought. Her example is a testament to the importance of the intersection of critical analysis of the social world and activism to improve that world.

Communications scholar Jacqueline Jones Royster has described Wells as “prickly,” if not outright cantankerous. Wells, Royster argues, never shied away from an argument and was seldom bested by a foe. Whether she was sparring with the government over a seat on a train or with the head of the Women's Christian Temperance Union over the organization's racist portrayals of black men, Wells quickly and steadfastly addressed social injustices wherever they appeared.

Her prickliness was on full display in the infamous editorial in which she challenged the portrayal of black men as rapists, exposed the use of the rape myth to justify the lynching of black men, and publically implied the existence of consensual relationships between white women and black men. Wells's gumption enraged Memphis's white establishment, who put a bounty on her head and burned the downtown office of *The Free Speech and Headlight of Memphis*.

From her new home of circumstance in Chicago, Wells went on

to use her prickliness to crusade against lynching across the nation and across the ocean. The legacy of her work, as a scholar, truth-teller, and activist had a measurable effect on black people's quality of life in the South.

Was Wells's prickliness simply ontological? Or was it a function of the responsibilities for her younger siblings thrust upon her by her parents' deaths in the yellow fever epidemic? While these factors were probably influential, Royster argues that it was the black activist and intellectual environment of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Memphis that radicalized Ida B. Wells.

As a member of a local lyceum, Wells sharpened and honed her oratory skills, critical analysis, and activist drive in concert with other key black activists and intellectuals in Memphis. The lyceum was the training ground on which Wells built and proved herself as a scholar-activist; it was the platform from which she launched a distinguished career.

What intellectual incubators radicalize black intellectuals, and black sociologists in particular, today? As an organization, what is our role in that radicalization process? How do we teach new sociologists to balance the radical, activist tradition they are expected to carry forward with making a living and supporting their families, whether their occupations are in or outside of the academy? What is the use of prickliness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and how might we harness prickliness to fashion 21<sup>st</sup> century black activist strategies?

This issue features a set of prickly essays that address a broad swath of the post-civil Rights radical black sociological tradition. These essays articulate uncomfortable and affirming truths that undergird a substantial portion of our experiences as black folks in America, black academics, and black sociologists. Drawing on ideas of social justice embedded in the black

intellectual tradition, the essays herein begin with experience—experiences of place, sexuality, gender, and race—and build critical analyses of our current political climate, changing attitudes, and gaps in public discourse that disadvantage marginalized groups. Importantly, these essays draw on structural and micro-level intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality in all aspects of the public sphere, from the academy to politics.

These essays also reflect in some ways the momentum of the Association of Black Sociologists. In 2013, the Association of Black Sociologists is, in the words of Past President Regina Dixon-Reeves, moving forward and stronger than ever. The inaugural volume of the organization's journal, *Issues in Race and Society: An Interdisciplinary Global Journal*, will launch and help reflect our work to a broader multidisciplinary audience of academics and practitioners.

Social media initiatives, from Facebook to Twitter to the organization's website, will continue to serve as a space where ABS can engage with multiple communities about key issues. The 2013 conference, *Social (In)Justice: A Continuing Saga* will bring together scholars, practitioners, and activists to tackle one of the most pressing challenges for communities of color in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: health disparities. As an organization, we will continue to gain strength as long as we theorize from where we are and remember our commitment to critical social analysis that improves people's quality of life.

Every generation of intellectuals is poised to do something significant. In each of our respective milieus, we believe ourselves to be, because of the urgency and expedience of youth, on the precipice of *the shift*: *the* moment where everything will change. Ida B. Wells teaches us that by remaining engaged

with the problems around us, consistently lending our distinctive voices and critical analyses to the cause—and by being prickly about improving our communities and workplaces—we are always already the shift, ever effecting social justice through our endeavors.

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Zandria F. Robinson is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Memphis and author of *This Ain't Chicago: Regional Identity in the Post-Soul South*. She is Secretary for the Association.

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## “Cities to Republicans: You Lose!”

### The 2012 Presidential Election and the Urban Mandate

By Marcus Anthony Hunter, Yale University

In the early evening of Thursday, November 8, 2012 the Obamas returned triumphantly to White House. After a brisk walk down a short-carpeted entrance, the Obamas safely returned to the White House with a new four-year lease-extension after voters decided against evicting them from the greatest of all public housing, the White House.

Yes, while many do not think about the Presidential digs in this manner, the White House *is* a massive public housing unit (as is much of Washington D.C. for that matter), perhaps the *crown jewel* of this urban and federal experiment. Images of black families moving into public housing are by no means new, though usually these snapshots entail them moving into a

unit seen as undesirable by their white counterparts.

The visual of the Obamas' reentry into the White House is significant because public housing has long been a signifier for postwar urban America. Indeed, a postwar and post-Civil Rights urban America nearly single-handedly delivered defeat to the Republican Presidential nominee, Willard Mitt Romney.

Panning out from this image of the Obamas' return to the White House that evening is a broader story of the continued postwar electoral battle between cities and suburbs, urbanization and suburbanization, urban and rural America.

Like prior Presidential elections, the result of this election hinged on the importance of place, particularly the electoral politics of urban vs. nonurban America(ns). One only need examine the returns from this election. For example, by all reports urban minorities, namely Black and Latino/a Americans, swung heavily in favor of Democrats.

We can also look to state level results by county for further evidence of the electoral gulf between urban and rural America.

Consider the following results:

As each example demonstrates, counties containing cities by and large went for President Obama, providing voting margins that were insurmountable for Mr. Romney. This pattern is replicated in cities across the country. Additional returns show that in localities with populations of 500,000 or more there was a 69-29 gap in favor of Democrats; and, in localities with 50,000-500,000 the gap was 58-40 in favor of Democrats.

The notion that urban voter turnout can win an election should not be news to most, even those who expected a successful Romney/Ryan ticket. Reporting in the wake of the election results suggests that the importance of issues of poverty, class mobility and urban voter turnout were not lost on the whole of the Republican Party, as Vice Presidential nominee Paul Ryan attempted to get the Romney campaign to institute a strategy that focused on America's cities, particularly in so-called battleground states such as Ohio.

As reported in a recent *Washington Post* article by Scott Wilson and Phillip Rucker (11/7/2012), Mr. Ryan was rebuffed: "As part of his role Ryan had wanted to talk about poverty, traveling to inner cities and giving

Illinois (State-wide) Obama: 2,916,811 57.3% Romney: 2,090,116 41.1%	Cook County (Chicago Metropolitan) Obama: 1,439,123 74% Romney: 479,204 24.6%	Oregon (State-wide) Obama: 915,703 54.5% Romney: 418,254 42.7%	Multnomah County (Portland Metropolitan) Obama: 261,222 75.8% Romney: 71,947 20.9%
Nevada (State-wide) Obama: 528,801 52.3% Romney: 462,422 45.7%	Clark County (Las Vegas Metropolitan) Obama: 387,978 56.4% Romney: 288,223 41.9%	Pennsylvania (State-wide) Obama: 2,907,448 52.0% Romney: 2,619,583 46.8%	Philadelphia County (Philadelphia) Obama: 557,024 85.2% Romney: 91,840 14.1%
Ohio (State-wide) Obama: 2,697,260 50.1% Romney: 2,593,779 48.2%	Cuyahoga County (Cleveland Metropolitan) Obama: 420,953 68.8% Romney: 184,475 30.2%		

speeches that laid out the Republican vision for individual empowerment. But Romney advisers refused his request to do so, until mid-October, when he gave a speech on civil society in Cleveland.”

Wilson and Rucker’s reporting demonstrates the costly mistake and miscalculation made by the Romney Campaign despite internal and external advocacy to do otherwise. Alas, a rebuffed Ryan was forced to await a simple proposition known to sociologists and urbanites alike: *Place mattered*.

In short, this election, like those prior and those to come, are emblematic of the persistent electoral battle and gulf between urban America(ns) and not-so-urban America(ns). This gulf, in fact, decided the election. And this time, cities won...at least in the short term. ‘

Winning in the long-term, however, will rely on the emergence and development of concerted policies and programs targeting the needs, problems and desires of urbanites. Over the next four years, residents across urban America will have to wait and see if they are rewarded for their investment in and faithfulness to President Obama and the Democratic Party.

For those who subscribe to the belief that this was an election absent of a mandate, I suggest looking to the returns in urban America. Perhaps implicit, the urban mandate appears to be: “Cities matter and should be at the epicenter of revitalizing the United States, and those who do not agree will lose.”

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Marcus Anthony Hunter is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Yale University and author of *Black Citymakers: How the Philadelphia Negro Changed Urban America*, Oxford University Press, March 2013.

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## Riots and Rumors of Riots

### *Lessons from the University of Mississippi*

By Zandria F. Robinson, University of Memphis

On the night of the 2012 election, when Barack Obama was elected to a second term, some students at the University of Mississippi burned Obama campaign signs. They had procured these signs as they tore through the halls of dorms ripping them down. Under the cover of swiftness and invisibility, they moved through the halls gathering their loot while black students were captive and largely unaware inside their dorms.

The University’s public relations machinery, slumbering and oblivious—although inexplicably so, given that similar incidents took place when Obama was elected for the first time in 2008—scrambled to tamp down the emerging rumors and headlines.

The University’s silencing machinery of shade and spin had lacked its usual assassin-like precision, overtaken by the swift sprint of social media outlets, from Twitter to Facebook. A cell-phone quality picture of a circle of white male students burning an Obama sign accompanied every story and Facebook post. The papers said, “riot.” Equivocators said, “protest.”

The increasing popularity and facility of social media proved faster, swifter, than those feet running through halls snatching signs, faster even than the University’s infamously powerful PR spin. People were free to draw conclusions.

Well-intentioned whites, in pain, perhaps, for their black colleagues and friends, but burdened more by chagrin than outrage at inequality, quickly organized a candlelight vigil under the tenuous idea of “one Mississippi.”

Scores of people raised candles outside of the same building where Meredith enrolled 50 years ago, escorted by armed guards, after a campus “riot”—or, if some prefer, “protest,”—left two people dead, dozens injured, and a state, a region, and a nation painfully aware of the vitriol and depth of white supremacy.

As I watched the events unfold on social media, my immediate reaction was one of sadness for the black students and colleagues I had befriended over my three years at the University of Mississippi. I was also sad for white colleagues who were powerless against the institution, despite their white privilege, and forced into silence and complicity with the institution’s mandate of white patriarchal supremacy.

I was neither shocked nor surprised by the events, as the University of Mississippi encourages this kind of behavior through its consistent inaction against a host of bad behaviors, from racial slurs scrawled in graffiti in dorm elevators to gross mishandling of cases of sexual harassment and rape. This institutional inaction is bolstered by the University’s identity as a bastion of the traditional, Old South: a white South where Dixie plays, confederate flags wave, and black people are subservient.

To be fair, the University has attempted to address these vestiges of a racist past. It stopped the band’s belting out of Dixie at football games and the flying of confederate flags, and has made overtures towards recruiting and retaining black faculty. Yet, as Faulkner instructs us, the past is not dead nor even past; we are haunted by these vestiges, as black women labor in the kitchens of white fraternity houses, “heritage not hate” dominates discussions of the South, and the wounds of the loss of the Northern War of Aggression are still oozing.

Thus, the University’s efforts to eradicate the past notwithstanding, Ole Miss’s identity as a place where men are men, women are women, and Nigras know their place is still functional for its enrollment and financial bottom line, attracting white students from all over the country and satiating powerful (but invisible) white alumni and big donors.

Although my training as a sociologist taught me well the workings of institutional power, at the University of Mississippi, I received an education by fire. I met black faculty so traumatized by their experiences there that they had either sublimated rage for the purposes of survival or been consumed by the rage to the point of intellectual and emotional paralysis.

I met worried white colleagues, fearful of if or when one of us would erupt, knowing we would be cast as privately troubled individuals, rather than symptomatic of a public problem.

I met oblivious white faculty. I met white faculty saviors, eager to solve the problem and save the day, even at the expense of alienating black colleagues. I met underpaid staff called into work when their babies were sick, who had to come lest they risk their pittance and their jobs.

I met black students consumed by the most terrible pathologies, whose quest to belong and disbelieve the University’s history and identity led them to defend the institution fervently. I met black students unaware of the trauma the institution was enacting upon them. I met black students who were painfully aware of that trauma, who were in pain because of it, but who determined to do as much as they could within their limited powers.

Meanwhile, the official message was that the University of Mississippi was one of the best places to work with one of the most beautiful campuses. Oxford is a wonderful town. The

University is committed to recruiting and retaining diverse faculty.

The first black student body president is elected. The University hosts a presidential debate. The University remembers Meredith's sacrifice. The first black teacher of the year is selected. The University is committed to fairness. The University will not tolerate discrimination. The first black homecoming queen is elected. The University commemorates the Civil Rights Movement. The University acknowledges that it still has a ways to go, but has nonetheless come a long way.

See Jane run. Jane is fast. But she cannot outrun white supremacy.

Over my time at the University of Mississippi, and in particular in the second two years, I became physically and psychologically ill. I knew something was wrong when, in response to a student's angry question of why "Mexicans" should not have to learn English, I laughed hysterically and uncontrollably for two minutes. I was co-teaching the course, and thankfully, my interlocutor was able to take over until I calmed down.

When I felt a strong urge to be physically violent with a student who waited outside of my office to confront me about comments on a paper—comments that I had not, in fact, written, but that had been written by my colleague—I knew something was wrong.

I had angry outbursts and crying spells. I ate to keep from shouting and crying. I gained 30 pounds. I developed a serious kidney infection because I would pathologically drive the 30 miles to Batesville—the first major town on my way home to Memphis—to use a gas station bathroom rather than linger a minute on the University of Mississippi's campus or in Oxford to relieve myself after a long day at work.

I developed a baseball-sized, rock-hard cyst in my breast. I continued to disassemble, though. I worked with students, attended meetings, and wrote. But I had been overtaken and lapped by white supremacy.

The climate at the University of Mississippi reflects the broader mood and character of whiteness and thus is instructive in its ability to signal power's next moves. Someone must be punished for tarnishing the University's image in an historic year—the commemoration of Meredith, integration, and Civil Rights—and a few white students will be trotted out and sacrificed to meet this demand. Perhaps some black students, too, will be punished for reverse rioting/protesting.

The institution will shore up its public relations machinery; surely, someone will be appointed to always be on call to respond to these kinds of incidents. But the institution, like whiteness, will not change. It will not turn inward. It will not reflect. That is not the nature of institutions.

Further, the climate at the University of Mississippi reflects the climate at many institutions, academic and corporate. My experience, in this respect, is not unique. Faculty of color at a number of institutions are marginalized and under assault from institutions that benefit tremendously from their presence but cannot seem to invest reciprocally in their success as faculty and health as people. This contributes to stagnant numbers of faculty of color overall, even as recruitment of faculty of color increases.

Faculty of color not only move about between institutions, but also exit the academic field entirely, opting to start non-profits, small businesses, and other ventures where they can exercise more autonomy and limit their experiences of racial microaggressions.

Still, as institutions like the University of Mississippi continue to

focus on recruitment, rather than on fundamentally changing campus climates, the face of administration, and practices that disadvantage and discourage faculty of color (and indeed most faculty who are not single white men), little will be done to ease the exodus of people of color.

Yet, institutions can and do move, albeit it slowly, especially in response to external threats. The Republican Party, for instance, trounced by “demographics”—media code for people of color, women, LGBT persons, and progressive urbanites—can be a formidable force in 2016 by basing their campaign strategy not on overt white patriarchal supremacy, but rather benign white patriarchal supremacy, especially that cloaked in the colored faces of Bobby Jindal and Marco Rubio.

If it is to continue to be the Demographic Party, the Democratic Party will need to effect real change on issues of sustainability and equality rather than teetering on in its typical center-right, neoliberal fashion. A third party, as a new(-er) institution, could capitalize handily on government intractability, people’s dissatisfaction, and grassroots momentum to envision possibilities for a more equitable, responsible, and sustainable nation-state.

As faculty of color, we have a responsibility to advocate for all students, and a disproportionate responsibility to champion marginalized students, including students with disabilities, students of color, and LGBT students. We have an obligation to University staff of color, who labor alongside us often without our relative privilege and autonomy. We also, as long as we are in them, have a responsibility to institutions—even when they do not behave responsibly—to demonstrate the importance of change and offer our distinct insights. If

we all push, the institution may move a centimeter.

The University of Mississippi reinforced for me that classic sociological lesson about the rigidity of institutions. It also reaffirmed my commitment to and investment in research, teaching, mentoring, and even (certain kinds of) service.

I built lifelong friendships with students, faculty, and staff there, important relationships that have shaped my scholarship and my approach to my academic work. Perhaps most importantly, it taught me that I must care for myself. After all, if I drop dead with an acute case of allergic white supremacitis, the institution will continue on in all of its glorious inertia.

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Zandria F. Robinson is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Memphis and author of *This Ain't Chicago: Regional Identity in the Post-Soul South*. She is Secretary for the Association.

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## From An Oppressive Closet To An Empowering Place At the Table

### *One Person's Prescription for LGBT Issues in Black America<sup>1</sup>*

By Juan Battle, City University of New York

*When I picketed for Welfare Mothers' Rights, and against the enforced sterilization of young Black girls, when I fought institutionalized racism in the New York City schools, I was a Black Lesbian. But you did not know it because we did not identify ourselves, so now you can say that Black Lesbians and Gay men have nothing*

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<sup>1</sup> Portions of this publication were previously presented and/or published (see Battle & Bennett 2005 as well as Battle, et al 2004).

*to do with the struggles of the Black Nation. And I am not alone. When you read the words of Langston Hughes you are reading the words of a Black Gay man. When you read the words of Alice Dunbar-Nelson and Angelina Weld Grimke', poets of the Harlem Renaissance, you are reading the words of Black Lesbians. When you listen to the life-affirming voices of Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey, you are hearing Black Lesbian women. When you see the plays and read the words of Lorraine Hansberry, you are reading the words of a woman who loved women deeply...!*

Audre Lorde, "I Am Your Sister" (1984)

Missing! Marginalized!  
Misrepresented! The opening line to what has colloquially become known as the Black<sup>2</sup> national anthem of United States' encourages us to "lift EVERY voice and sing ...." As these voices can come from various individuals (diversity) as well as within them (intersectionality), is there any benefit in silencing any member of the choir; or do we all sound stronger if everyone participates?

Far too often a false dichotomy is presented pitting concerns, expressions, and experiences of race against (homo)sexuality. As a result, those who occupy identities of racial and sexual minorities are asked to foreground one identity over the other. Further, those who occupy only one of those identities, sometimes encourage members of their racial or sexual orientation family to decide which identity is more important.

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this text, I will use the term Black to refer to people of the African Diaspora, and to such populations that reside within the United States. To some, African Americans are a subgroup within the larger Black community. Since my discussion purposely includes those who may be first-generation immigrants or who, for whatever reason, do not identify as African American, I employ the term "Black." Furthermore, I capitalize it to distinguish the racial category and related identity from the color. Similarly, I capitalize the word White when referring to race.

Unfortunately, academia is not immune from this pathological and pathogenic prescription— that is, not only is it sick, but it also creates sick people. More specifically, until the early 1990s, scholarly inquiries into the diversity of Black experiences seemed to proceed much as it had in prior decades, paying little or no attention to how questions of same-sex sexuality might alter or significantly inform the perspectives and interpretations of the research itself. But that has begun to change, albeit slowly.

Several factors, together, have made the issue of same-sex sexuality – despite its being denigrated as a "White thing" by cultural nationalists or altogether ignored by mainstream scholars – directly relevant to both the historical and contemporary realities of Blacks. Two of the more prominent factors have been, first, the devastating impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic within Black communities; and, second, the increased visibility of Black lesbians and gays on questions of racial and sexual justice.

Within academia, this long overdue attention has begun to occur in two areas. First, Black feminist theorists – who advance an intersectional approach of how race, class, and gender operate individually as well as collectively for understanding Black women's experiences – have taken note of normative sexuality as a part of that matrix of oppression (Collins 1990). Second, new generations of scholars in sexuality studies – including those who use "queer theory," have increasingly probed how sexual identities are raced, gendered, and classed – have begun to extend this theoretical framework to areas and groups previously unexamined through these analytic lenses.

Outside of academia, but by no means devoid from interactions with it, there is an established (and growing)

body of nonfictional writings by and about gays and lesbians of African descent. These writings provide critical and incisive analyses of the relationships between sexuality and Black racial identities, as well as a broad theoretical framework that (ought to) inform and generate in-depth empirical studies on the topic. The mainstream lesbian and gay movement has also been important, providing the political and discursive space for critiquing homophobia, addressing anti-gay violence, and consequently opening up possibilities for discussing the incestuous relationship between homophobia and racism.

Thinking more personally, I have dedicated the bulk of my career to challenging the fields of race and sexuality studies to expand the question of sexuality to deal with the whole human body and not just the holes in the human body. Further, in my work around race, I have worked diligently to encourage my Black colleagues to reject a heteronormative model that says if you are not heterosexual, you are not helpful in the march for racial justice.

I submit that a virtual tidal wave of change is pounding upon the shores of what used to be, creating beaches of what can be. And we need the diversity of every aspect, of every voice, of every scholar, who can serve as leaders. Paraphrasing Eleanor Roosevelt, we know that small minds discuss people, average minds discuss events, and great minds discuss ideas. Thus I truly believe in the greatness, the power, and the potential of intelligence and ideas.

There is no better time than now to use our intelligence to extinguish ignorance. Ignorance is a tricky foe. It rears its ugly head in many forms. Ignorance can show up in acts of commission as well as acts of omission. We're living in a time of unbearable dissonance between promise and performance, between good politics and

good policies, between professed and practiced family values, between racial creed and deed, between our capacity to prevent and alleviate human depravation and disease and our political and spiritual will to do so.

Not to address these concerns, in my opinion, is an act of omission and is ignorant. And while we think about race, sexuality, and social justice, we need to remember the power of the intellect and the academy's potential to actually form and inform people, perspectives, and policies.

Social justice refers to a world where everyone has not only equal access, but equal outcomes. Thus social justice incorporates both defining problems and developing solutions. It involves not only understanding the light at the end of the tunnel, but also building the tunnel to get there. Finally, social justice acknowledges that though all individuals are created equal, inequality exists and persists long before that person ever arrives ... yes, even prenatally. It has been said before, but it merits application here. There's nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequals.

Quite often, when we discuss race and sexuality, we like to throw words like "diversity" into the conversation. And sometimes we confuse things like diversity with anti-racism. Diversity is more than just dark faces in high places. It's about a politic of change, empowerment, as well as personal and institutional development for the oppressed. It's speaking not just about avoiding being racist, sexist, homophobic, etc.; it's speaking out against "isms" wherever they show up. In short, any negative experience that we don't confront, we ultimately consent to. And it's giving voice to groups of people who have far too often been dissed, dismissed, and whose truths have been denied, which led me to

conduct the SocialJusticeSexuality.com project.

The Social Justice Sexuality Project is one of the largest ever national surveys of Black, Latina/o, Asian and Pacific Islander, and multiracial lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. With over 5,000 respondents, the final sample includes respondents from all 50 states; Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico; in rural and suburban areas, in addition to large urban areas; and from a variety of ages, racial/ethnic identities, sexual orientations, and gender identities.

The SJS Project is a knowledge-based study that investigates the sociopolitical experiences of this population around five themes: racial and sexual identity; spirituality and religion; mental and physical health; family formations and dynamics; civic and community engagement. A supplement to the survey asked an additional 600 people about their experience in the House and Ball community, their use of mobile technology, and their experiences with policing.

The purpose of the SJS Project is to document and celebrate the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people of color. All too often, when we think about LGBT people of color, it's from a perspective of pathology. In contrast, the SJS Project is designed and dedicated to describing a more dynamic experience.

Well over 2,000 (40%) of the respondents in the SJS Project were Black. The survey has 105 questions – clearly, a large, complex, and comprehensive instrument. Therefore, space limits discussing many results here. However, there is one result that merits attention. Multivariate analysis shows that, among these Black LGBT respondents, spirituality and family support were the two most important

variables in predicting positive outcomes.

In short, embracing the totality of one's experience – spirituality, sexuality, connection to their family, etc. – proved to be most important. With this knowledge in hand, who would not encourage creating positive and supportive environments where people can indeed not only survive, but succeed? And how much success can likely take place in a closet, denying the totality of who one is and who one loves?

So then what can we do as academic activists?

My goal is to encourage, inspire and impress upon you that whatever we do in our personal, professional, academic or activists endeavors, we should always be aware of how our work can and must impact the lives of those who may never be able to afford to sit in our classrooms.

I want to encourage you to challenge yourself to push your scholarship such that it reaches out and empowers. I want to inspire you to think more creatively and critically about what you do and what more it can do. And finally, I want to impress upon you that in this time of change in our country and in our world, now is the time to continue our efforts to highlight social justice and inclusion.

For those of you whose scholarship tends to be more quantitative – like mine – engage that very biased tool called the research method. While fighting to get the PhD, the publication, the promotion, or the grant, also fight to recognize and change how we use terms like science, objectivity, falsifiability, and null hypothesis to impress the ignorant, justify the status quo, and oppress those who are indeed missing, marginalized, or misrepresented.

Both personally and publicly become a leader committed to moving from what is into what can be. More

specifically, don't just reject or accept a null hypothesis, but develop an alternative one. Don't be content to describe a situation; but develop a solution. In short, don't just document, develop; don't just critique, create.

I firmly believe that until this perspective of equality and inclusion, in not only access but also in outcomes, is completely embraced by the sermons of our religious leaders, the policies of our politicians, the curriculum of our schools, the teachings of our parents, and the agendas of our individual and collective communities, our human experience will be less than it should be, less than it could be, and, therefore, more harmful than it ought to be.

None of us are citizens in waiting. Indeed, we are all citizens of the human experience, therefore, it is incumbent upon us that we serve. As many of our grand parents used to say, "service is the rent you pay for living." And it is through caring that you are human and through service that you can become great. Martin Luther King reminds us that "anyone can be great, because anyone can serve."

Yesterday is in the tomb, today is in the womb, and what this world looks like tomorrow directly results from what we individually and collectively give birth to today. And so today I will leave you with a view of the future by encouraging you, asking you, admonishing you, and if need be, downright begging and requiring you to view your lens of the future through service and expansive inclusion.

Even though we are in a recession, let's pay our collective rent together. Let's walk together, struggle together, disagree together, suffer through defeat and celebrate triumphs together. We cannot all do the same thing, but we can all do something.

As a human family of multiple races, regions, religions, classes, nationalities, and sexual orientations, if

you look back in history, don't look back to go back. But look back to see how far we have come; and thus how far, as a human family, we can and therefore must go.

Mechanisms need to be developed and created where every voice can sing; where no one (nor any aspect of them) is expected to exist in a dark closet of despair, but where everyone (and the totality of their experience) is encouraged to eat from and sing at a bountiful table of empowerment.

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Juan Battle is a Professor of Sociology, Public Health and Urban Education at the City University of New York and a former ABS President.

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## Women Voters Are White, Black Voters Are Men, But Michelle Obama Should Be Brave:

### *Black Women and Reproductive Health Disparities in the 2012 Presidential Election*

By Jazmine M. Walker, Rural Support Partners

Throughout the 2012 election cycle, we were forced to listen to rhetoric about women and their inability to make decisions without somehow being influenced by her uterus.

Poll after poll “revealed” which candidate was women’s flavor of the week based on who achieved that perfect mix of patriarchy and charisma tactfully enough to encourage women voters to lean his way. Simultaneously, we heard candidates debate the legitimacy of rape, spew misguided facts women’s anatomy, and tell us that rape is divinely ordained.

Earlier in the year, we saw a number of anti-choice bills pop up across the nation, and white women, like Sandra Fluke, were stigmatized because they chose to take birth control.

White feminists did not take these attacks lightly and began to fight against what they termed “The War on Women.” Yet, white women were at the center of that “war”; they were its victims. This rhetoric became so powerful that Michelle Obama used it to appeal to (white) women’s pro-choice sensibilities.

During the Democratic National Convention, just after Nancy Keenan, President of NARAL Pro-Choice America, announced that the Democratic Party was pro-choice, Michelle Obama proudly boasted that her husband, Barack Obama, “believes that women are more than capable of making our own choices about our

bodies and healthcare... that’s what my husband stands for.”

Though choice is a significant part of gaining gender equality, I remain struck by how our First Lady, a black woman with black daughters, has yet to talk about reproductive health as broader than “choice.”

I recognize that black women’s issues are marginalized, and even black women themselves were invisible throughout this election. But when a black woman as influential and powerful as Michelle Obama talks about reproductive health, I expect her to talk about it from her own standpoint.

Universalizing women’s issues and minimizing her black identity does not protect her, her daughters, or the countless other women of color whose reproductive health issues are far larger than choice.

Although black women are less likely to develop breast cancer than white women, black women are 40% more likely to die. Black women are three times more likely to develop fibroid tumors. Black women have an infant mortality rate double that of their white counterparts. They are also twice as likely to die from cervical cancer in relation to white women.

These data are not just about access. Black women across class lines deal with these reproductive health disparities, borne of systemic gendered racism embedded in health care delivery. White feminists have the privilege of ignoring Michelle Obama’s race around women’s issues in a way that Michelle Obama does not, especially given how her race is hypervisible in many aspects.

Competing controlling images are prevalent. In being the First [Black] Lady, Michelle Obama has to navigate the politics of respectability, while her black body disallows her from realizing full lady-hood.

Despite challenging stereotypes

of both the black matriarch and deviant black motherhood in discussions of her roles of wife and mother, she is still hyper-sexualized and often criticized for seemingly overstepping the boundaries of being a First Lady in appearance. Her image remains fair game, from being depicted as a nude slave in Spanish magazines to being decried by conservative whites openly lamenting the absence of a First Lady that “looks and acts like a First Lady.”

Yet, in resisting her own negative racialization, Michelle Obama has had to walk the same post-racial political line as her husband. For instance, President Obama is compelled to remind whites, and others, that he is “not the President of Black America. I am the President of the United States of America.”

A post-racial society creates the pressures where these assertions are not only expected but necessary in order to avoid being categorized as separatist or anti-democratic. Similarly, Michelle Obama’s universalization of women’s health issues seems like a necessary maneuver, but at what expense? Sasha’s, Malia’s, or even her own reproductive health? Certainly, this universalizing de-racialization of women’s reproductive health issues, by the First Black First Lady, is a paradoxically powerful obfuscation of the particular reproductive health issues that disproportionately affect black women and families.

As sociologists we have an obligation to not only demystify this notion of a post-racial society that obscures racism and racist practices in this country, but also how “post-racism” has dire consequences along gender lines.

Discourse around black women’s reproductive health remains on the margins, caught between a white reproductive narrative that still ignores the multifaceted needs of women of color and discourse around systemic

racism that centers the tribulations of black men.

Though I am essentially advocating for Michelle Obama to be more vocal about black women’s issues, I also recognize that her silence is a consequence of those two narratives that have historically overshadowed our victimhood as well as our resistance.

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Jazmine M. Walker is a reproductive justice blogger and Fellow at Rural Support Partners in Asheville, NC. A version of this essay can be found on her blog, *Still Furious and Still Brave: Who’s Afraid of Persistent Blackness*, [www.furiousandbrave.com](http://www.furiousandbrave.com)

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## The Fire This Time

### *White Supremacy and the Obama Re-Election*

By Kristine Wright, Los Angeles Southwest College

A few months ago, I got into a debate online with a white woman I did not know. She was “scared to death” about the direction of this country and felt Obama and his policies were going to ruin the United States. She was worried about the “new world order” and saw Obama as the face of it. While acknowledging “problems” starting under Bush, she believed things were much worse now under Obama.

Her reasoning epitomized white privilege, so I asked her one last question, which I had a feeling she would not, or could not answer: When were things “better” in this country? Name one time.

As I suspected, I never heard from her again.

Perhaps she thought she was being set up for a history lesson...and she was. I wanted to ask her if things were better when the indigenous lost their land and lives? Or Africans and

African Americans were enslaved for hundreds of years? Or maybe during the rule of Jim Crow domestic terrorism? Lynching? The Great Depression? The crack epidemic? 50% youth unemployment in cities in the 80s? For her, today's "sky is falling doomsday" is for many "just another day in the U.S.A."

I'm not sure she learned anything that day, but I did. James Baldwin's "Fire Next Time" may be upon us.

Before Obama won the election in 2008, I knew his presidency would be the opportunity for reckoning. I wrote and said many times that this country was not ready for even the symbolism of a black man as head of state. White supremacists would revolt, and in many ways have: politically, rhetorically, and even in some cases, violently.

This revolt continued into the 2012 election cycle, and we are as yet appraising responses to Obama's re-election. I believed that Obama would win the 2012 election. Moreover, I believed that he needed to win for important historical reasons.

This nation's entire history is a racialized one, and the national psyche has still not come to grips with its original sin. For this nation to have the best chance to finally address the question of the color line and progress, an Obama win was necessary.

Still Obama has no real power (or desire) to threaten white supremacy. Yet, the symbolism of him being the president is more than many in this country can bear.

Despite Obama's relative lack of power to challenge white privilege, white responses to Obama's election and now re-election are part of a history of white backlash against perceived or actual black progress.

Rush Limbaugh, Glenn Beck, and a host of other conservative pundits are simply employing the same strategy that has been utilized throughout this

country's existence to protect white supremacy and the status quo power structure: stoking white fear.

Since Bacon's Rebellion in 1676, which consisted of a multiracial coalition organized around issues of class, the white elite has endeavored to institutionalize white supremacy as ideology to prevent poor whites from joining forces with people of color, with whom they share economic interests.

Bacon's Rebellion, in part, led to the racialization of slavery as an institution for life for African-descended people only. The response to Bacon's Rebellion was twofold: to establish white supremacy through legal means and to instill it ideologically in white people across class statuses, not simply the planter elite.

White fear of losing privilege and supremacy has always shaped backlash to perceived or actual black progress.

When an abolition movement rose up to challenge the institution of slavery, white supremacists responded with secession. The perceived black progress of Reconstruction beget the institution-alization of Jim Crow at the federal level, the rise of the KKK, and a rash of racial violence. Ida B. Wells termed the nation's "red record."

When Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey attempted various means to improve black life, the government responded with infiltration of black organizations. Similarly, organization during the Civil Rights Movement saw government infiltration of black organizations, the establishment of COINTELPRO, and the pitting of movement leaders, like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, against one another.

When hip-hop, as a political movement of youth, rose up to challenge and make sense of the paradoxes of the post-Civil Rights period, it was commodified, framed as one-dimensional, consolidated, and

corporatized for profit while reinforcing stereotypes, as Spike Lee argued in *Bamboozled*.

Similarly, the 2008 election of Obama led to the rise of the Tea Party and legislative gridlock. Continuing from the 2008 election cycle, the 2012 election cycle and the possibility of an Obama re-election saw increasingly violent immigration laws, debates over the legitimacy of the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment, a rash of voter suppression efforts, and increased incivility, violence, and hate crimes against people of color and LGBT persons.

Again, the pattern of white supremacist backlash has been long established and continues to play out in the aftermath of the 2012 election.

White supremacy continues to obscure shared class interests across race, even in an Occupy America. We have long known that for working people to come together—and specifically for whites to join with people of color to advocate for their economic interests—they must first recognize the humanity they share. White supremacy is the roadblock obscuring that truth.

Because white privilege is valuable, white middle, working, and poor classes will continue to support a system that only benefits 1% until they recognize that they are not a part of that 1%. They are, in fact, a part of the 99% masses across the globe of all hues.

Obama's re-election does not change the disillusionment of black people and other marginalized groups. Unemployment, immigration and deportation, reproductive health, mass incarceration, environmental racism and a host of other issues disproportionately continue to affect people of color, even with Obama's win. Frederick Douglass's assertion that power concedes nothing without a demand reminds us that a coalition of folks must hold Obama and other elected officials accountable to their constituencies.

My hope is that we as a people will resist; but my fear is that our endurance for oppression is great, and if anything our endurance has increased not decreased. Instead of resisting, we will continue to endure as we have been.

Like I had predicted, Obama's re-election offered whites a reality check, as the genuinely shocked faces of Romney supporters across the country demonstrated. Yet, as we have seen in the last four years, having now been rebuffed, many white Americans continue to revolt.

A second Civil War may ensue. It may stay safely within the Republican Party, or it may spill out to the streets of Arizona, or a courtroom in Florida when the Trayvon Martin case begins. But there will be sparks to inflame the Fire This Time.

For this country to truly move forward, these sparks will prove necessary. Like James Baldwin and Lupe Fiasco, I am a realist above all, and believe that many in this country are not ready for true progressive leadership and will not be for a very long time.

As Baldwin correctly understood, many Americans have not accepted history yet. Most (not all) people of color accepted this historical reality a long time ago because we had no choice. But no progress can be made until everyone has no choice.

Everyone must be forced to accept history or this country is doomed for destruction, even with an historic presidency in its historic second term. Indeed, without progress and collective challenges to white supremacy, the next time, and its fire, is upon us.

*"We cannot be free until they are free." – James Baldwin from "The Fire Next Time"*

Kristine Wright teaches sociology at Los Angeles Southwest College. A version of this article was originally published at Wright's blog, *Rise Up Hip-Hop Nation*.

## Opportunity Denied *Limiting Black Women to Devalued Work*

By Enobong Hannah Branch  
Assistant Professor of Sociology  
University of Massachusetts-Amherst  
Rutgers University Press, 2011  
ISBN: 978-0813551234  
[http://rutgerspress.rutgers.edu/acatalog/opportunity\\_denied.html](http://rutgerspress.rutgers.edu/acatalog/opportunity_denied.html)

Blacks and Whites. Men and Women. Historically, each group has held very different types of jobs. The divide between these jobs was stark. Clean or dirty, steady or inconsistent, skilled or unskilled. In such a rigidly segregated occupational landscape, race and gender radically limited labor opportunities, relegating Black women to the least desirable jobs.

*Opportunity Denied* is the first comprehensive look at changes in race, gender, and women's work across time, comparing the labor force experiences of Black women to White women, Black men and White men.

Enobong Hannah Branch merges empirical data with rich historical detail, offering an original overview of the evolution of Black women's work. From free Black women in 1860 to Black women in 2008, the experience of discrimination in seeking and keeping a job has been determinedly constant. Branch focuses on occupational segregation before 1970 and situates the findings of contemporary studies in a broad historical context, illustrating how inequality can grow and become entrenched over time through the institution of work.

### *Praise for Opportunity Denied*

"This is an important story to tell, and Branch's *Opportunity Denied* makes a significant contribution to the study of Black women's work."

- Margaret L. Andersen, Edward F. and Elizabeth Goodman Rosenberg  
Professor of Sociology, University of Delaware

"In an exemplary application of intersectional analysis to Black women's labor history, Branch convincingly demonstrates that the 100 year legacy of racial and gender exclusion explains Black women's poverty today."

- Bonnie Thornton Dill, *Emerging Intersections: Race, Class and Gender in Theory Policy and Practice*

### Other Recent Books by ABS Members

**Sandra Barnes' book, *Live Long and Prosper: How Black Megachurches Address HIV/AIDS and Poverty in the Age of Prosperity Theology*** (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), is now in print. The mixed-methodological study examines how location, vocation, and theology influence the perspectives and programmatic decisions of Black megachurches in regard to poverty and HIV/AIDS – two chronic social problems in the Black community.

**France Winddance Twine**, Professor of Sociology and an affiliate in Black Studies and Feminist Studies has recently published two books (single-authored and an edited volume). These books are designed for courses on social inequalities and would be ideal for courses on racism/antiracism, class, gender, and/or global studies.

They are:

***Girls With Guns: Firearms, Feminism and Militarism*** (Routledge: available as ebook and paperback).

***Geographies of Privilege*** (Routledge: available on amazon as paperback, e-book, cloth) which covers the following countries: Canada, Italy, Mozambique, Spain, South Africa, United Arab Emirates (Dubai), United States and the European Union.

# Priceless

A film by Habitat Media (2011)

Produced/directed by Steve Cowan  
Co-produced by Cameron Harrison  
Distributed by Bullfrog Films  
PO Box 149 Oley, PA 19547

Review by Arthur Paris, Syracuse University

I wish I had received this film a week, or two ago. Better yet, a month or two. In that case, this review would have been more immediately useful to our Brethren/Sistren.

The 2012 election (like Hurricane Sandy) has already washed over us. Nevertheless, next semester is around the corner and hopefully several of you will be able to put this film to work in your classes. Don't forget, another storm, errr... I mean election, is only 700 days away.

*Priceless* "is a non-partisan look at the consequences of big-money campaign donations and a Capitol overrun by lobbyists." The film concisely illuminates this central problem with our politics (national/state), from a, structural standpoint. For example, the film-makers trace the links between our large scale, chemically driven agribusiness, in key commodity grain crops like corn, and the substantial monies commercial interests lavish on friendly legislators; who in turn, faithfully represent the interests of these firms in the legislation being crafted in governmental committees and regulatory bodies/agencies.

In this regard, the film is a well-crafted exposition of the kind of position most of us would agree with. In that respect, the film neatly links with other films we might show students, (e.g. Food Inc., Omnivore's Dilemma, et al.).

The particular gift of this film is to effectively make the argument that US Agricultural Policy and the twice a decade Omnibus Farm Bill take the shape they do (e.g., the favoring of chemically dependent, fruit and vegetable production; or on the energy side more "wind and solar") because the chemical and fertilizer companies handsomely reward legislators who support their view.

The film makers hold up an alternative of publicly supported campaign financing, (in Arizona, no less) as a solution to this problem of private campaign money 'buying' legislators. A Black, female, State Senator (Landrum) explains that public financing enables her to truly represent and spend time with her constituents, as opposed to spending her time raising campaign money.

The film may be a bit too neat in making its case, and instructors may have to press students to engage it both critically and factually. (Are the 'facts' on the film makers' side? Are students persuaded by their arguments? Specifically, how/why?)

The warm colors and skillful presentation make it easy for students to consume this 'Quiz-Way' lunch without chewing it thoroughly. It would be helpful to use *Priceless* in conjunction with a couple supplementary articles or other materials, especially with underclassmen/women.

The film has two versions on the DVD, a 58 min., and a 25 min. one. (This review is of the 58 min. version). It also includes a number of bonus clips. The last one of these clips is a devastating critique of current legislative practice from Rep. Eric Massa (D) NY, from a Dec. 2009 interview for this film. This was, before the US Supreme Court's "Citizen United..." ruling. A couple sentences from him offer a more than appropriate coda to this review.

*...But there is no doubt that the billions of dollars that are in the system to influence votes is real, pervasive and over time, cancerous; and until we take money out of elections, we will never be able to truly make the legislative decisions that we have to make for the betterment of the people who sent us to Washington, DC.*

*This is just a very simple statement of the truth.*

*Do I see my colleagues having to spend a lot of time fundraising?*

*It is the essence of what candidates and incumbents must do. Period. And anyone that tells you otherwise is being exceptionally disingenuous. Exceptionally.*

All notices are listed in alphabetical order, per section, by surname.

Please send your member news to [Philip.Kretsedemas@umb.edu](mailto:Philip.Kretsedemas@umb.edu)

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## Professional Developments and Progress toward Phd

Congratulations to **Bhoomi K. Thakore**, who recently defended her dissertation on December 14, 2012 in the Department of Sociology at Loyola University Chicago.

Congratulations to **Regina Dixon-Reeves**, who is now the Faculty Development/Diversity Specialist in the Biological Sciences Division of the University of Chicago. She has been in this position since August 2012.

## Publications

Congratulations to **Sandra Barnes** (Vanderbilt University) for publishing *Live Long and Prosper: How Black Megachurches Address HIV/AIDS and Poverty in the Age of Prosperity*

*Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

Congratulations to **Enobong Branch** (UMass-Amherst) for publishing *Opportunity Denied Limiting Black Women to Devalued Work* (Rutgers University Press, 2011).

Congratulations to **France Winddance Twine** (University of California, Santa Barbara ) for publishing *Girls With Guns: Firearms, Feminism and Militarism* (sole-authored, Routledge, 2013) and *Geographies of Privilege* (co-edited with Bradley Gardener, Routledge, 2013).

# The Griot

## Editorial Team

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Program participant registration fees are non-refundable.

All program participants must be registered **and** be ABS members.

One luncheon ticket is included with each registration.

	Pre-Registration By 6-17-13	Regular Registration After 6-17-13	On-Site Registration
Members	___ \$185	___ \$250	___ \$315
Non-Members	___ \$250	___ \$365	___ \$380
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Active Student	___ \$80		
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# Call for ABS Newsletter Editor

The Association of Black Sociologists is seeking candidates willing to serve the organization as Editor of the *Griot*, the organization's newsletter.

The ABS Newsletter serves as a resource that presents the issues and concerns of the membership and regularly features the following content: book reviews; international news; politics and social policy issues; cultural issues; teaching/classroom innovations; pedagogical issues; and, the interplay of research and teaching.

The *Griot* is published 4 times annually in February, June, September, and November. The person filling this position must work with members of the Publications Committee who serve as Associate Editors to assist the Newsletter Editor in developing, soliciting, and providing relevant content for the Newsletter. The official term for this position is three years with a possible reappointment.

**Qualifications:** The person filling this position must be an ABS member in good financial standing (paid membership dues for the current year). S/he must also have experience with current electronic technologies and with producing a newsletter, managerial skills to oversee the Newsletter cycle and meet deadlines, and be able to work effectively with the Publications Committee (the Chair and Associate Editors).

The Newsletter Editor also will be responsible for organizing the newsletter and distributing it to the eligible membership. The ABS newsletter is distributed electronically; hard copies are only sent to members who do not have email addresses and/or those who so request such copy.

The ABS Newsletter Editor is a volunteer position. ABS does not pay for release time, graduate student assistants, etc. but does provide financial support for costs related to the normal production and distribution of the Newsletter.

The Chair of the Publications Committee provides oversight to the Newsletter Editor and acts as one of the proof readers before the final copy is distributed. The ABS Executive Committee highly recommends and encourages the Newsletter Editor to seek institutional support for the Newsletter for the duration of her/his appointment.

If you are interested in this position or if you wish to nominate a colleague, please send all nominations to: Dr. Barbara M. Scott, Interim Executive Officer, **executiveofficer@associationofblacksociologists.org**. The deadline for nominations is **15 August 2012**.

## Editor's Note:

It has been a very rewarding experience being the ABS newsletter editor, but after three years (going on four) I've decided to step down to focus more of my energies on university and community service. I will continue on as newsletter editor for the coming year and will be happy to work with the new editor as s/he learns the ropes of the newsletter process.

The ABS newsletter offers us a unique space to talk to our peers about issues that are relevant to our teaching, service and academic work— in a way that is free of the strictures of peer-reviewed journals. For junior faculty that are approaching their tenure decision, it's also a great way of building a record of service with one of the leading national-level professional organizations in the field of Black Studies and US sociology.

More important, the ABS newsletter editor plays a critical role in defining the "public face" of the ABS, and s/he is given a great deal of freedom to do so. This is why it's a good thing for the position to rotate every few years, to give other ABS members a chance to share their vision with the membership.

I hope ABS members will appreciate that this truly is a unique and valuable opportunity. If you're at all interested, please consider applying, and please encourage people who you think would be good for this position to apply.

## Position Listings

*For info on advertising your institution's open position with ABS, please contact the organization's secretary at [secretary@associationofblacksociologists.org](mailto:secretary@associationofblacksociologists.org)*

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### **Assistant Professor of Sociology, Western Michigan University**

The Department of Sociology at Western Michigan University seeks candidates for a tenure-track assistant professor in Sociology beginning in the Fall Semester of 2013, pending budgetary approval. The position requires a PhD degree in Sociology or a related field or evidence of imminent award. We are seeking candidates with experience and interest in teaching general education sociology courses such as Introduction to Sociology and who have an ability to contribute to other core areas of undergraduate teaching such as social psychology and social theory.

The successful candidate will have an active research and publication agenda in one or more areas of sociology and be able to contribute to graduate teaching and mentoring in a department area of specialization such as Sociology of Religion or Race and Ethnicity (a list of active specialty areas in the department is available on our web site). The department of Sociology offers the MA and PhD in Sociology and has undergraduate majors in Sociology, Criminal Justice, and Social Psychology. Western Michigan University, an Equal Opportunity Employer, is a Carnegie Classification Research Extensive Institution.

Please visit <http://www.wmich.edu/hr/careers-at-wmu.html> for detailed information and application procedures. Review of applications will begin immediately and will continue until the position is filled. For more information see <http://www.wmich.edu/sociology>. Western Michigan University is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer

consistent with applicable federal and state law. All qualified applicants are encouraged to apply.

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### **Assistant Professor of Sociology, Michigan Technological University**

We are seeking an assistant professor of sociology to join the Department of Social Sciences at Michigan Technological University. This is a tenure track, entry-level, nine-month position beginning August 15, 2013. PhD in Sociology or closely related field should be completed by position start date.

The area of specialization is open. Candidates whose research and teaching interests articulate with one of our graduate programs (MS and PhD) in either Environmental and Energy Policy or Industrial Archaeology are preferred. Experience and interest in social justice, international contexts, interdisciplinary collaboration, or quantitative methods would strengthen the candidate's application.

Applicants who can contribute to existing and emerging department and university strengths are welcome. The successful candidate will demonstrate a strong research record and agenda, as well as potential for securing external funding. Teaching experience is strongly preferred.

The successful candidate will be expected to teach two courses per term, usually two to three undergraduate courses and one to two graduate courses each calendar year. Teaching Introduction to Sociology (enrollment 30-80 students) is required. Additional courses may be standard lower level sociology courses or other undergraduate and graduate courses within the candidate's specialty area.

All department faculty are expected to participate in instruction, to develop a program of publication and externally-funded research, to be engaged in our graduate program(s) and to be active in service. We seek candidates who can work effectively and collegially in an

interdisciplinary university setting with a professionally diverse faculty.

The Department of Social Sciences consists of seventeen tenured and tenure-track faculty and offers B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees. Our faculty represent diverse disciplinary backgrounds within the social sciences. The Department offers undergraduate degree programs in anthropology, history, and social science and M.S. and Ph.D. programs in Environmental and Energy Policy and in Industrial Archaeology; contributes to campus-wide general education; and participates in the largest Peace Corps Master's International Program in the nation.

Michigan Tech is a mid-sized public research university (RU/H) with approximately 7,000 undergraduate and graduate students from across the nation and around the world. These students enroll in 130 degree programs in arts, humanities, and social sciences; business and economics; computing; engineering; forestry and environmental science; natural and physical sciences; and technology. Michigan Tech is ranked in the top tier of national universities according to U.S. News & World Report's "America's Best Colleges 2011" and received "Best in the Midwest" honors in Princeton Review's The Best 373 Colleges, 2011 Edition. Our university values cross-disciplinary faculty and student contributions to global sustainability. A number of centers and institutes, including the Sustainable Futures Institute, Center for Water and Society, Ecosystem Science Center, connect faculty researching and teaching on many environmental topics. Social Sciences faculty regularly participate through research projects with colleagues from diverse disciplines across the university, particularly benefitting from university strengths in engineering, forestry and environmental sciences.

Michigan Tech is located in Houghton, MI in the heart of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Houghton is rated as one of the Top 10 summer travel destinations, as well as one of the Top 10 outdoor adventure spots in the country for our bike trails, Olympic-caliber

cross country ski trails, Lake Superior shoreline, and numerous inland lakes and rivers. Situated on the hills bordering the beautiful Portage Waterway and only minutes from several Lake Superior beaches, the area offers a bounty of cultural and recreational opportunities. The historic downtown waterfront provides unique shopping, dining, and cultural opportunities in addition to serving as the mainland headquarters for Isle Royale National Park. Local schools are known for their high quality and commitment to being one of the top five districts for student performance in the state of Michigan. The Houghton County Memorial Airport offers jet service to and from Chicago twice daily on United Airlines. This environment, combined with a competitive compensation package, results in an excellent quality of life.

**Applications will be reviewed starting November 15, 2012.** Full consideration will be given to applications received by that date. Interested candidates should complete the online application at <https://www.jobs.mtu.edu/postings/679> and upload required materials including: (1) a brief letter of interest, (2) Curriculum Vitae, (3) research statement, and (4) names and contact information for three to five references. Letters of reference will be requested for candidates making the short list.

Please direct inquiries to Richelle Winkler at [rwinkler@mtu.edu](mailto:rwinkler@mtu.edu) or (906) 487-1886. Michigan Tech is an ADVANCE institution, one of a limited number of universities in receipt of NSF funds in support of our commitment to increase diversity and the participation and advancement of women in STEM. The university is also in its sixth year of a strategic faculty hiring initiative (see <http://www.mtu.edu/sfhi>). We have a Dual Career Program which assists departments with partner orientation to the university and identification of possible positions for partners (see <http://www.dual.mtu.edu>).

Michigan Technological University is an Equal Opportunity Educational Institution/Equal Opportunity Employer. Applications from women and minorities are encouraged.

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**Open-Level Position in  
Organizational Studies, Peabody  
College, Vanderbilt University**

The interdisciplinary Department of Human and Organizational Development (HOD) invites applications for a tenure-track or tenured position in organizational studies, organizational learning, or organizational development. Scholars in sociology, psychology, management, anthropology, and allied social sciences are welcome.

The successful candidate will have a productive research program, excellent teaching credentials, and the demonstrated experience and capacity to shape and provide leadership in Vanderbilt's largest undergraduate major, human and organizational development. A track record of external funding is desired. She or he will also contribute to the department's doctoral program in community research and action and one or both of its master's programs in community development and action and human development counseling, which has school and clinical mental health counseling tracks.

This faculty position provides a unique opportunity to join a highly productive, diverse, and interdisciplinary faculty at a research-intensive university. The HOD department is part of Vanderbilt's Peabody College of Education and Human Development, ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* as the number one graduate school of education in the United States for the last four consecutive years. Vanderbilt is located in Nashville, Tennessee, a rapidly changing mid-South city with a well-educated population. Nashville's metropolitan population of approximately one million enjoys a moderate climate, beautiful hills, valleys, and woods, a strong and varied economy, ample and diverse music, varied cultural events, professional sports, attractive shopping, excellent dining, moderate cost of living, and NCAA Division I sports in the Southeastern Conference.

**Application Procedures:** Candidates should submit a letter of inquiry describing research and teaching interests, vita,

samples of scholarly writing, and three references to the Organizational Search Committee; Box 90 GPC: Vanderbilt University; Nashville, Tennessee 37203. Review of applications will continue until the position is filled. Inquiries can be directed to Professor Sandra Barnes at [sandra.l.barnes@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:sandra.l.barnes@vanderbilt.edu)

Vanderbilt University and the Department of Human and Organizational Development are committed to excellence and diversity. Members of underrepresented groups are especially invited to apply.

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**Assistant Professor Position in Crime,  
Law & Justice, Penn State University**

The Crime, Law and Justice (CLJ) Program in the Department of Sociology & Crime, Law and Justice at Penn State, University Park campus, invites applications for an assistant tenure-line position to begin August, 2013. The area of research specialization within CLJ is open. Candidates should have a strong publication record, a strong commitment to securing external funding, and a commitment to teaching and mentoring students. Candidates are expected to have completed the Ph.D. by the time of appointment. Information regarding the department can be found at: <http://www.sociology.psu.edu>.

CLJ is a multidisciplinary, tenure-granting unit within the Department of Sociology that offers bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees. Faculty members' work spans a range of topics in criminology and criminal justice and is enhanced by the presence of several Penn State centers and research initiatives, including the Social Science Research Institute; the Justice Center for Research; the Children, Youth, and Families Consortium; the Population Research Institute; and the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing (a state agency located on campus), among others.

To apply, submit curriculum vita, the names of three references, and other supporting materials to <http://www.la.psu.edu/facultysearch/>.

Review of applications will begin October 1, 2012, but applications will be accepted until an appropriate candidate is found. Employment will require successful completion of background check(s) in accordance with University policies. Penn State is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and the diversity of its workforce.

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**Assistant or Associate Professor  
Position in Crime, Law & Justice,  
Penn State University**

The Department of Sociology & Crime, Law and Justice, University Park campus, invites applications for an assistant or early associate tenure-line position in the general area of social stratification, to begin August, 2013. We are interested in scholars conducting research on the causes and consequences of stratification, inequality and social change processes. Candidates should have a strong publication record, a strong commitment to securing external funding, and a commitment to teaching and mentoring students. Junior candidates are expected to have completed the Ph.D. by the time of appointment. Information regarding the department can be found at: <http://www.sociology.psu.edu>.

To apply, submit curriculum vita, the names of three references, and other supporting materials to <http://www.la.psu.edu/facultysearch/>.

Review of applications will begin October 1, 2012, but applications will be accepted until an appropriate candidate is found. Employment will require successful completion of background check(s) in accordance with University policies. Penn State is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and the diversity of its workforce.

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**Assistant Professor of Sociology,  
Agnes Scott College**

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Agnes Scott College seeks to hire a fulltime, tenure-track sociologist at the Assistant Professor level to begin in Fall 2013. Applicants must have completed the Ph.D. in Sociology prior to occupying the position. Although housed in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, the position requires active participation in the Africana Studies Program, including teaching and advising duties, the potential for future leadership of the program, and opportunities to interact and cross-list courses with other interdisciplinary programs. The position involves a 3/2 teaching load.

The ideal candidate should be able to teach courses in sociological theory, social inequalities, and qualitative and quantitative research methods. Applicants must demonstrate excellence in college-level teaching; a record of either published research or strong evidence of the potential to publish; and a willingness to mentor undergraduate students. The ability to teach a socially and economically diverse student population is a standard at Agnes Scott College.

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology consists of two sociologists and two cultural anthropologists who teach courses cross-listed with other departments and programs, including Religious Studies, Women's Studies, Africana Studies, Human Rights, and Public Health. Current faculty have teaching and research specialties in the topics of race, class, and gender; African diaspora; African religion and witchcraft; linguistic anthropology; popular culture; education; medical anthropology; Latin America; political economy, and human rights. The department offers a combined major in Sociology and Anthropology, one of the most popular majors at Agnes Scott.

To apply, send a cover letter describing research and teaching competencies, curriculum vitae, sample course syllabi, and at least three recent recommendation letters to Dr. Douglas Falen, Chair; Department of

Sociology and Anthropology; Box 1097; Agnes Scott College; 141 E. College Ave.; Decatur, GA 30030. Phone: (404) 471-5499. Electronic submissions are preferred and may be submitted to [sociologysearch@agnesscott.edu](mailto:sociologysearch@agnesscott.edu). Teaching evaluations will be solicited from selected applicants later in the hiring process. Application review begins October 1 and will continue until the position is filled.

Agnes Scott College is a highly selective, independent national liberal arts college for women located in metropolitan Atlanta, a cosmopolitan and ethnically diverse region with a vibrant cultural life. The college is committed to providing its faculty with a supportive academic environment that includes a balance of teaching, research, and service. Excellence in undergraduate teaching, the establishment of an effective and sustainable research program, and service to the department and the college are necessary for tenure and promotion. Support for faculty development includes travel funding, a one-semester research leave at full pay after successful completion of the third-year review, a post-tenure sabbatical program, and the opportunity to apply for many internal professional development awards. Agnes Scott College enrolls a socially and economically diverse student body, and has a strong commitment to diversity. The College urges members of underrepresented groups to apply. EOE

For information about the College, visit our website at <http://www.agnesscott.edu>.

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### **Assistant, Associate or Full Professor of Child Health Policy, Cornell University**

The Department of Policy Analysis and Management in the College of Human Ecology at Cornell University is seeking to hire faculty with particular interest in child health and wellbeing, for a full-time, tenure-track faculty position at any level: Assistant, Associate, or Full Professor. Research responsibilities (50%) include empirical research in child health and wellbeing, related to our areas of expertise including

family policy, social policy, health policy, and education policy. Potential areas of focus include racial and ethnic health disparities; the wellbeing of immigrant children; the criminal justice system and children; family influences on child health outcomes; health and wellbeing in young adulthood, including smoking, drinking, obesity and sexual behavior; and the influence of education policies on children. Teaching and advising responsibilities (50%) are in the department's undergraduate and graduate programs.

The position is in an applied multidisciplinary department with a broad array of policy-oriented research interests, and with faculty members drawn from demography, economics, health services, psychology, public policy, sociology, and other disciplines. The department offers a bachelor's degree, a master's degree in health administration, and a doctorate in policy analysis and management. Qualified faculty may also belong to the graduate field of human development or sociology, and supervise students in these doctoral programs.

Salary is negotiable depending on experience and qualifications. Competitive benefits package.

**Qualifications:** Candidates should have a strong background and interest in research and teaching in child health and wellbeing. A Ph.D. in developmental psychology, public policy, sociology, or other related field is required.

**Application Deadline:** We are accepting applications through December 31, 2012 or until filled. Those with any questions should contact the Search Committee Chair, Rachel Dunifon at [red26@cornell.edu](mailto:red26@cornell.edu). To apply, please submit a curriculum vitae and two samples of research through Interfolio: <https://secure.interfolio.com/apply/19562>. For those applying at the level of assistant professor, three letters of recommendation should also be posted. For those applying at the level of associate or full professor, names of three references should be included. The search committee will not accept paper applications.

Cornell University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action educator and employer. We are interested in candidates who can contribute to the diversity and excellence of our academic community through their research, teaching, and/or service

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### **Assistant Professor of Sociology, Saginaw Valley State University**

The department of Sociology seeks applicants for a full-time, tenure-track Assistant Professor position beginning Fall 2013. The successful candidate must be able to teach introductory level Statistics as well as some combination of Introduction to Sociology, Introduction to Anthropology and/or Global Cultures.

Position involves a 4/4 teaching load with a minimum of at least two courses per semester at the 100- and 200- level. A Ph.D. in Sociology or Anthropology is required for this position. For a complete list of requirements, further information, and to apply for this position, please visit [www.jobs.svsu.edu](http://www.jobs.svsu.edu). Interested applicants must apply online at [www.jobs.svsu.edu](http://www.jobs.svsu.edu). SVSU is an EO/AA employer.

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### **Assistant Professor of Crime and Justice Studies, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth**

The Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Crime & Justice Studies at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth invites applications for a tenure-track position at the Assistant Professor level starting fall 2013. The faculty contributing to our major in Crime and Justice Studies come from multiple disciplines including sociology, law and society and criminology and our curriculum emphasizes the innovative integration of approaches. The major is striving to become a leader in interdisciplinary teaching and research on matters of justice.

The selected candidate will be expected to teach both core and elective courses within

the Crime & Justice Studies major. Specifically the successful candidate should have a strong theoretical foundation in social theory and/or the ability to teach a mixed methods research course. There is the opportunity to assist in designing, creating and growing an innovative and progressive program, with the future prospect of creating/contributing to graduate studies.

The successful candidate will be expected to be an effective undergraduate classroom instructor, have developed a strong research program and exhibit a commitment to service in the community and the university. We are especially interested in candidates who focus on critical theory through the intersectionality of race, gender, sexuality, class, nation, and empire. Applicants are invited from Criminology, Sociology and related fields, as well as interdisciplinary fields drawing upon Ethnic or Women's Studies.

Applicants from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups are especially encouraged to apply. ABDs will be considered but the PhD must be completed by September 1, 2014, for contract renewal. Teaching experience is required with documented proficiency.

To apply, send a cover letter that outlines qualifications and interests, curriculum vitae, a published or unpublished manuscript, 3 letters of reference, statement of teaching philosophy, evidence of teaching effectiveness including course syllabi and student course evaluations, and a graduate transcript. All application materials should be sent as ATTACHMENTS to email communications (MS Word or pdf format) to: [CJS2013@UMASSD.EDU](mailto:CJS2013@UMASSD.EDU). Completion of the search is contingent on the availability of funding. Applications received by December 10, 2012, will receive full review. The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth reserves the right to conduct background checks on all potential employees.

The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth is an EEO/AA employer. Contact Us: [CJS2013@UMASSD.EDU](mailto:CJS2013@UMASSD.EDU)