Black Historians and the Writing of History in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries: What Legacy?

12 & 13 June 2014
As part of the project
Writing History from the Margins

(Écrire l’histoire depuis les marges, EHDLM)
“History has thrown the colored man out.”

Almost 100 years after *The Journal of Negro History* was founded by Carter G. Woodson, this conference aims to reassess the legacy of those black historians who wrote the history of their community between the 1830s and World War II. Through slavery and segregation, self-educated and formally educated black Americans wrote works of history in order to inscribe, or re-inscribe, African Americans in American history. This served a two-fold objective: to make African-Americans proud of their past and to enable them to fight against white prejudice. Over the past decades, historians have turned to the study of these pioneers, but a number of issues remain to be addressed.

The conference is part of the project *Writing History from the Margins: the Case of African Americans* (Écrire l’histoire depuis les marges, EHDLM). A 3-year research project funded by Sorbonne Paris Cité (SCP), it aims to explore the writing of history from the margins, starting with the case of African Americans from the beginning of the 19th century to the 1960s. The project also investigates sources that are still little exploited in the historical narrative (literature, theater, arts, practical books...) while seeking to renew approaches to slave narratives.

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<td>From the Margins to the Mainstream: Reflections on a Century of the African American Historical Enterprise</td>
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<td>• Patrick RAEL (Bowdoin College): Slave Resistance and Antislavery Ideology: The Haitian Revolution and the Coming of the Civil War</td>
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<td>• Violet M. SHOWERS JOHNSON (Texas A&amp;M University): Writing Afro-Caribbean History into African American History in the 1920s and 1930s: The Claims, the Rows and the Legacy</td>
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<td>• Michael BENJAMIN (Armstrong Atlantic State University): From the Margins: From the Margins: Self-Taught Black Historians and the Project to Publish a Diasporic Encyclopedia</td>
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<td>• Mary Ann CALO (Colgate University): Art History, Racial Art Theory and Adult Education: Remembering Alain Locke’s Negro Art: Past and Present (1936)</td>
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<td>• Adena SPINGARN (Stanford University): James Weldon Johnson’s Black Manhattan and the Popular Stages of History</td>
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<td><strong>Historians or “Leaders of the Race”</strong></td>
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<td>Chair: Hélène LE DANTEC-LOWRY (University Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3)</td>
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<td>• Nicole TOPICH (Harvard University): Black Histories and Historians in Petition</td>
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<td>• Zachery WILLIAMS (University of Akron): From the Bottom to the Top: Howard University Historians and Policy History in the United States</td>
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<td>• Glenn JORDAN (University of South Wales): A Vindicationalist Voice: George Washington Williams and History From the Margins</td>
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<td>9:00</td>
<td>Pre-session coffee</td>
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<td><strong>Plenary session:</strong> CLAIRE PARFAIT (University Paris 13)</td>
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<td>Early African American Historians: a Book History Perspective</td>
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| 11:30  | **The Writing of African American History: the Construction of Specific Objects and Methods**  
|        | Chair: Marie-Jeanne ROSSIGNOL (University Paris Diderot)              |
|        | • John ERNEST (University of Delaware): The Negro in the American Rebellion: **William Wells Brown and the Design of African American History**  
|        | • Stephen G. HALL (Alcorn State University): One Hundred Years Before Woodson: Assessing the Development of African American History in the 19th Century |
| 12:00  | **Race and History, Race in History**                                  
|        | Chair: Chris WEEDON (Cardiff University)                              
|        | • Martha S. JONES (University of Michigan): Who Were the "Negro Historians ?": Reading William Yates on Race and Citizenship |
| 1:00   | Lunch                                                                 |
| 2:30   | **Incorporating Slavery into the Historical Narrative**                
|        | Chair: Myriam COTTIAS (CNRS, CIRESC)                                  
|        | • Clare CORBOULD (Monash University): Talking and Writing about Slavery in the Interwar Years, and the Origins of American Social History |
|        | • Kate MASUR (Northwestern University): "The Colored Side of Lincolniana": John E. Washington and the Black History of the Lincoln Presidency |
| 3:30   | **Taking up the Challenge: Publishing African American Historical Works**  
|        | Chair: Claire PARFAIT (University Paris 13)                           
|        | • Cheryl KNOTT (University of Arizona): Merl R. Eppse and the Publication of The Negro, Too, in American History |
|        | • Aaron PRIDE (Kent State University): Selling The Souls of Black Folk: The Legacy and Tradition of the Trotter Family in the African American Historical Enterprise |
| 4:30   | Coffee break                                                         |
| 5:00   | Roundtable with all the participants: **Black Historians: What Legacy?** |
| 6:00   | Closing address: Pap NDIAYE (Sciences Po Paris)                       |
Biographical Notes

Michael BENJAMIN (Armstrong Atlantic State University)

Michael Benjamin, PhD, teaches history at Armstrong Atlantic State University in Savannah, Georgia. He holds a doctorate degree in modern history and literature and a master’s degree in the history of the book in America. His primary field of study is African American history from 1877 to 1917. Currently, Michael Benjamin’s research interests are concerned with the publishing history of encyclopedic knowledge by and about persons of African descent. His publications include “Globalizing a Race to Publish an Encyclopedia,” in Nineteenth Century American History, “A Colored Authors Collection: To Exhibit to the World and Educate a Race,” in Education, Print Culture, and Modern America, both published in 2010 and “In Search of the Grail: The Conceptual Origins of the Encyclopedia Africana” forthcoming in Information and Culture: A Journal of History, May/June 2014.

Claire BOURHIS-MARIOTTI (University of Cergy-Pontoise)

Claire Bourhis-Mariotti holds a PhD in American History. She is a lecturer in American history and English language at the University of Cergy-Pontoise, and a research fellow at the LARCA (Laboratoire de Recherches sur les Cultures Anglophones), a joint research center of the CNRS and the University Paris Diderot. Her research focuses on nineteenth-century African-American history, and more particularly the antebellum emigrationist movement to Haiti and African-Americans’ Haitian experience throughout the nineteenth century. She is a coeditor and coauthor of Couleurs, esclavages, libérations coloniales, 1804-1860 (Les Perséides, 2013).

Mary Ann CALO (Colgate University)

Mary Ann Calo is Batza Professor of Art and Art History and Director of the Division of Arts and Humanities at Colgate University in Hamilton, NY. She holds a PhD in Humanities from Syracuse University. Calo’s work on African American art and art criticism has been published in American Quarterly, American Art, and Prospects. Her most recent book, Distinction and Denial: Race, Nation and the Critical Construction of the African American Artist, 1920-1940 (2007), dealt with the critical reception of African American artists who emerged in the wake of the Harlem Renaissance.
Clare CORBOULD (Monash University)

Clare Corbould is an Australian Research Council Future Fellow at Monash University’s History Department. Her research has been published in an edited collection titled Beyond Blackface (UNC Press, 2011), the Journal of Social History (2007), and most recently in Remembering the Revolution: History, Memory, and Nation Making from Independence to the Civil War (co-edited, University of Massachusetts Press, 2013). Her monograph, Becoming African Americans: Black Public Life in Harlem, 1919-1939 (Harvard University Press, 2009), was a Choice outstanding title and the winner of the 2010 Victorian Premier’s Literary Award for First Book of History. Clare is currently working on two projects: a book about interviews with ex-slaves conducted in the 1920s and 1930s, from which this paper is taken; and a study of the memory and legacy of the American Revolution (with Fitz Brundage, Frances Clarke, and Michael McDonnell).

Myriam COTTIAS (CNRS, CIRESC)

Myriam Cottias is a historian of slavery, and a professor with the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) at the CRPLC, Université des Antilles et de la Guyane. She heads the International Research Centre on Slavery, Actors, Systems and Representations (CIRESC) associated with the CNRS. She was also scientific coordinator of the European FP7 project Slave Trade, Slave Abolitions and their Legacies in European Histories and Identities (EURESCL). She is President of the Comité National pour l’Histoire et la Mémoire de l’Esclavage. Her published works include: D’une abolition, l’autre. Anthologie raisonnée de textes sur la seconde abolition de l’esclavage dans les colonies françaises (Agone Editeur, 1999); De la nécessité d’adopter l’esclavage en France: un texte anonyme de 1797 and La question noire. Histoire d’une construction coloniale, both with Arlette Farge (Paris: Bayard, 2007). Her most recent book is Relire Mayotte Capécia, une femme des Antilles dans l’espace colonial Français, with Madeleine Dobie (Armand Colin, 2012).

Pero DAGBOVIE (Michigan State University)


Stephen G. Hall, Ph.D., is a historian specializing in 19th and 20th century African American and American intellectual, social and cultural history and the African Diaspora. Hall is the author of A Faithful Account of the Race: African American Historical Writing in Nineteenth America (2009). His scholarly work has appeared in the William and Mary Quarterly, the Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography and the Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. He has received numerous awards and grants for his scholarly work including a Schomburg Fellowship, a Ford Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship, a NEH Fellowship and a W.E.B DuBois Fellowship at Harvard University. He is currently working on two projects, an edited book titled African American Historians and Historians with Pero Dagbovie (under contract with Paradigm Press) and a book manuscript exploring the scholarly production of black historians on the African Diaspora from 1885 to 1960.

Martha Jones is the Arthur F. Thurnau Professor at the University of Michigan where she teaches history, African American studies, and law. She is also co-director of the Michigan Law Program in Race, Law & History. Her work explores the history of race and citizenship, slavery, and the rights of women. She is currently completing a study of race and citizenship in the antebellum United States: “Overturning Dred Scott: Race, Rights, and Citizenship in the Antebellum America.” In 2013, she was a guest editor of the Journal of the Civil War Era special issue, “Proclaiming Emancipation,” which marked the 150th anniversary of President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. She is the author of All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830-1900, (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), a study of African American debates about women’s rights. She is also co-editor of the forthcoming edited volume, Toward an Intellectual History of Black Women.
Glenn JORDAN (University of South Wales)

Glenn Jordan is Reader in Cultural Studies and Creative Practice at the University of South Wales and Director of Butetown History & Arts Centre. He published Cultural Politics: Class, Gender, Race and the Postmodern World in 1994 (with Chris Weedon). He has written on themes and issues in African American intellectual history and the formation of African-American subjectivity from the middle passage to the Civil Rights Movement. Among his recent publications is “Re-membering the African-American Past: Langston Hughes, Aaron Douglas and Black Art of the Harlem Renaissance,” Cultural Studies (vol. 25, no. 6, 2011).

Cheryl KNOTT (University of Arizona)


Hélène LE DANTEC-LOWRY (University Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3)

A specialist of the cultural and social history of African Americans, women, and gender, Hélène Le Dantec-Lowry is a Professor of American Studies at Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, where she directs the Center for Research on North American History (CRAN), and she is editor-in-chief for history for the Revue française d’études américaines. She is the author of De l’esclave au président. Discours sur les familles noires aux États-Unis (Editions du CNRS, 2010), of “Reading Women’s Lives in Cookbooks and other Culinary Writings. A Critical Essay”, 99-122, Revue française d’études américaines 116, 2008. She is also the co-editor, with Claudine Raynaud, of Writing the Event: Issues and Echoes of the Civil Rights Movement (CRAFT 4, Tours, 2007) and, with Ambre Ivol, of Generations of Social Movements: Memory and the Left in the US and France (Paradigm Publishing, Forthcoming 2014).

Nicolas MARTIN-BRETEAU (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales)

Nicolas Martin-Breteau has just completed a Ph.D. dissertation in U.S. history (2013), in which he explores the role of the human body in the political struggles of the African American communities of Washington, D.C., and Baltimore. Through a social history of sport, he seeks to understand the political nature of African Americans’ perfectionist body practices. He specializes in the history and theory of the body and race, democracy and civil rights, identity, recognition, and multiculturalism.
Kate MASUR (Northwestern University)

Kate Masur is an Associate Professor of History at Northwestern University and the author of *An Example for All the Land: Emancipation and the Struggle over Equality in Washington, D.C.* [2010]. Before joining the Northwestern faculty, she spent two years as an editor at the Freedmen and Southern Society Project at the University of Maryland. She is currently co-editing a volume of essays on the post-Civil War era, entitled *The World the Civil War Made*. In 2014-15 she will be on leave from teaching, working on a book about free African Americans and due process rights from the 1820s through the 14th Amendment.

Pap NDIAYE (Sciences Po Paris)

Pap Ndiaye is a historian of the United States and France and a Professor of history at the Institut d’Etudes politiques in Paris, France (Sciences Po). He is the author of *Du Nylon et des bombes ; Du Pont de Nemours, le marché et l’État américain, 1900-1970* [2001], translated as *Nylon and Bombs: Du Pont and the March of Modern America* [2007]; *La Condition Noire: Essai sur une Minorité Française* [2008]; *Les Noirs américains: En marche pour l’égalité* [2009]; and, with Andrew Diamond, *Histoire de Chicago* [2013]. He is currently working on a global history of the Civil Rights Movement.

Claire PARFAIT (University Paris 13)

Aaron PRIDE (Kent State University)

Aaron Pride is a doctoral candidate in the Department of History at Kent State University. He received his B.A. and M.A. from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. His research areas include African American intellectual history, 19th-century United States history, Gilded Age and Progressive Era history. His dissertation is entitled: “For Every Right with All Thy Might: William Monroe Trotter’s Crusade for an Interracial Society, 1872-1919”. This dissertation places religious considerations at the center of debates over racial justice and equality. William Monroe Trotter’s path to racial reform and political activism serves as an illustrative example of the centrality of religion to the development and maturation of the African American Civil Rights movement in the early twentieth century.

Patrick RAEL (Bowdoin College)


Claudine RAYNAUD (University Montpellier 3)

Claudine Raynaud is a Professor of American literature at the University of Montpellier 3. A specialist of African-American Studies, she recently edited La Renaissance de Harlem et l’art nègre (The Harlem Renaissance and Negro Art), Michel Houdiard éditeur, 2013. Her previous publications include Toni Morrison: L’esthétique de la survie (Belin, 1997) and Beloved. She is Mine : Essais sur Beloved de Toni Morrison, a collection of essays she edited with Geneviève Fabre (Presses Universitaires de la Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris III) in 1993. Her current research investigates the intersections between racial and sexual differences and the construction of the self.

Matthieu RENAUD (University Paris 13)

Matthieu Renault holds a Ph.D. in political philosophy (University Paris Diderot, France and Università degli Studi di Bologna Italy). He was a postdoctoral fellow at the London School of Economics and Political Science in 2012-2013. Since September 2013, he has been a research fellow at University Paris 13 and a project engineer for the project “Writing History from the Margins, the case of African Americans” (EHDLM-SPC). He authored Frantz Fanon: De l’anticolonialisme à la critique postcoloniale (Éditions Amsterdam, 2011) and wrote a postface to the French translation of Solomon Northup’s Twelve Years a Slave (Entremonde, 2013). He is currently working on a monograph entitled L’Amérique de John Locke: Colonialisme, libéralisme et géopolitique de l’entendement, as well as on an intellectual biography of C. L. R. James.
Marie-Jeanne ROSSIGNOL (University Paris Diderot)


Violet M. SHOWERS JOHNSON (Texas A&M University)

Violet M. Showers Johnson is Professor of History and director of Africana Studies at Texas A&M University. She teaches courses on race, ethnicity and immigration, African American history, African history, and the history of the African Diaspora. She is author of The Other Black Bostonians: West Indians in Boston, Blacks in the Diaspora Series (Indiana University Press, 2006) and the co-editor, with Isabel Soto, of the CAAR FORECAAST volume, Western Fictions, Black Realities: Meanings of Blackness and Modernities (Lit Verlag and Michigan State University Press, 2011). She has published numerous articles on the experiences of Afro-Caribbean and African immigrants in the United States. Her most recent publication is a book, co-authored with Marilyn Halter, titled African & American: West Africans in Post-Civil Rights America (NYU Press, August 2014).

James SMALLS (University of Maryland)

James Smalls is Professor of Art History and Theory at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. His research and publications consider the intersection of race, gender, and queer sexuality concerns in 19th-21st century visual culture of Europe and the black diaspora. He is the author of Homosexuality in Art (2003) and The Homoerotic Photography of Carl Van Vechten: Public Face, Private Thoughts (2006). He is currently working on a book titled Féral Benga: African Muse of Modernism.

Adena SPINGARN (Stanford University)

Adena Spingarn is an Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities at Stanford, where she teaches in the English department and is currently completing a book manuscript, Uncle Tom: A Cultural Biography, as well as working on a second project on James Weldon Johnson and the development of African American theater. Her work has been published in Theatre Survey, Uncle Tom’s Cabin in the National Era, and The Root and featured on National Public Radio and BBC Radio 4. She received her PhD in English from Harvard University, where her dissertation won the Howard Mumford Jones Prize.
Nicole Topich (Harvard University)

Nicole Topich is the Project Archivist at the Center for American Studies, Harvard University, where she coordinates the Digital Archive of Massachusetts Anti-Slavery and Anti-Segregation Petitions. She has assisted a variety of archives and libraries over the past six years, including the Clinton Presidential Library, the Library of Congress, and the University of Pennsylvania Libraries. Her interests include American legal histories, digital humanities, and new forms of access to archives.

Chris Weedon (Cardiff University)

Professor Chris Weedon is Honorary Director of the Centre for Critical and Cultural Theory at Cardiff University. She has published widely on feminist theory, cultural politics and women’s writing and minority writing. Her books include Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory (1987 & 1996); Cultural Politics: Class, Render, Race and the Postmodern World (with Glenn Jordan, 1994); Postwar Women’s Writing in German (ed. 1997); Feminism, Theory and the Politics of Difference (1999); Identity and Culture: Narratives of Difference and Belonging (2004); and Gender, Feminism and Fiction in Germany 1840-1914 (2006). She is currently working on cultural and collective memory and multi-ethnic Britain. She has been closely involved with the community-based charity, Butetown History & Arts Centre, since 1990.

Zachery Williams (University of Akron)

Zachery Williams is Associate Professor of African American History at The University of Akron. He is the author of In Search of the Talented Tenth: Howard University Intellectuals and the Dilemmas of Race in Academia, 1926–1970 (University of Missouri Press, 2009) and editor of Africana Cultures and Policy Studies: Scholarship and the Transformation of Public Policy. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). His current research projects explore the religious history of African American men in the U.S., the evolution of black liberation theology in the modern black church, and the development of a distinctive African American policy history.
Abstracts

Michael BENJAMIN: From the Margins: Self-Taught Black Historians and the Project to Publish a Diasporic Encyclopedia

The Encyclopedia Africana first appeared in 1999. However, the origins of the idea to publish an encyclopedia offering comprehensive summaries by persons of African descent about persons of African descent has eluded scholars. Today historians, scholars and informed readers of the African diasporic experience attribute the project’s conceptual origins to W.E.B. Du Bois. However, long before Du Bois, self-taught black historians came up with the idea of publishing encyclopedic knowledge about the Diaspora of African people. At the center of these activities were the self-taught black historian John Edward Bruce and his partner Charles A. Johnson. The idea was born January 1893. This paper investigates the cultural forces that informed the process from which the idea originated and the political forces that shaped the times that produced its birth.

Mary Ann CALO: Art History, Racial Art Theory and Adult Education: Remembering Alain Locke’s Negro Art: Past and Present (1936)

This paper considers the content and argument of Alain Locke’s Negro Art: Past and Present (1936), one of the first attempts to construct a history of African American visual artists. Trained in philosophy, Locke’s writings on art and culture were inextricable from his multiple roles as critic, theorist, educator, cultural organizer, and race advocate. In this book he calls for a restoration of dignity to the concept of “Negro art.” Locke addressed himself both to the modern black community and a majority culture in which the neglect, ignorance, and distortion of art emergent from the African diaspora were deeply entrenched.

Clare CORBOULD: Talking and Writing about Slavery in the Interwar Years, and the Origins of American Social History

This paper will recount the experiences of Settle Egypt, Roscoe E. Lewis, Lawrence D. Reddick, and others. Together they pioneered the techniques that would form the basis of a massive New Deal project to interview some 4,000 ex-slaves. They also each wrote articles and book manuscripts about their experiences and about slavery. While these earlier scholars had some support from universities, editors, and foundations such as the Guggenheim, none was able to publish a book. This paper will examine their efforts to publish their research and explore the alternative means by which they disseminated their work. It will show that in the segregated spaces of black history, Settle Egypt, Lewis and others developed questions and research methods of social and oral history whose origins we usually place in the post-World War II period.

Although African Americans wrote and published histories prior to the war, the Civil War was in many ways the historical shift that made African American history possible. William Wells Brown was the Civil War’s first African American historian. This essay will present Brown’s *The Negro in the American Rebellion* as a study of the world brought to light by that war. It will argue that Brown worked to gather the materials that would demonstrate African American achievement, promote their collective self-definition, and establish those of African origins as historical agents throughout history and in the United States, but remarkably adopted a narrative method that both responds to and challenges the epistemological assumptions of the white supremacist culture that both contained and defined African American identity and experience.

Stephen G. HALL: One Hundred Years Before Woodson: Assessing the Development of African American History in the 19th Century

It is commonly believed that the discipline of African American history is an outgrowth of the 20th century. However, one hundred years before Carter G. Woodson founded the ASNLH, African Americans were writing their history. This paper explores the evolution of African American history as a counternarrative to the mainstream historical narrative in 19th century America. It examines the ideological, methodological and theoretical framing of history throughout the long 19th century. It focuses on the writing of African American men and women in an effort to reconstruct a complex and nuanced African American past.

Martha S. JONES: Who Were the “Negro Historians?”: Reading William Yates on Race and Citizenship

In 1838, William Yates published his historical treatise, *The Right of Colored Men to Suffrage, Citizenship and Trial By Jury*. It’s no surprise that Yates’s text won him attention from the anti-slavery and African American press; he was a visible and well-regarded abolitionist by 1838. It was not until the early 1960s, however, that historians writing in the *Journal of Negro History* returned to Yates’s treatise. Even though Yates himself never claimed a racial identity in his 1838 text, historians like Charles Wesley (who deemed Yates a black historian) and John Myers (who deemed the same man white) made Yates’s racial identity salient if not essential to their arguments. Thus, this paper asks what the stakes in those positions for historians writing during the early civil rights movement were, and how answering the question of Yates’ actual skin color can shape the way one can write about Yates and his text today.

Glenn JORDAN: A Vindicationalist Voice: George Washington Williams and History From the Margins

This paper engages in a reading of the published writings of George Washington Williams, focusing in particular on his *History of the Negro Race in America from 1619 to 1880*. The reading explores Williams’ methodology and rhetoric in relation to three intellectual traditions: (1) the 19th and early 20th century African American “vindicationalist” tradition;
[2] the New Negro movement of the early 20th century; [3] the “people’s history” or “history from below” movement in professional and amateur history. Each of these movements involves critical intellectuals who view the field of history not as a sphere of interest-free discourse but as an arena of cultural politics. The writings of George Washington Williams provide us with a case study of how the study of the past can be both rigorous and, unashamedly, a mode of cultural-political intervention seeking to vindicate and “uplift” an oppressed people.

Cheryl KNOTT: Merl R. Eppse and the Publication of The Negro, Too, in American History

In his 1971 book Black Historians: A Critique, Earl E. Thorpe called Merl R. Eppse one of the “Pioneers in Black Studies.” A contemporary of W.E.B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson, Eppse was a history professor at the all-black Tennessee State University in Nashville from 1928 to 1960. Using the Merl Eppse Papers, this essay will describe and interpret the production of the most successful of his three books, the textbook The Negro, Too, in American History (1938), which Eppse, a Tennessee State University professor, wrote to help students learn about the black history omitted from mainstream textbooks. This presentation will discuss the different editions of the book published by the National Educational Publishing Company in Nashville, where Eppse freelanced as an editor under a white publisher (not an African American publisher as stated on the Eppse Papers finding aid).


This paper will argue that W.E.B. Du Bois’ intellectual evolution on racial issues is paramount to understand why and how the study of race oppression changed in the U.S. from the first to the second Reconstruction. Over the course of a century, Du Bois’s works of self-analysis show how racial oppression had to be thought and fought. In that regard, this presentation will look at how Du Bois, by being a historian of himself, actually was the historian of his race.


This paper explores the publication and reception of They Knew Lincoln (1942), the first attempt to write a history of the African Americans who worked in the Lincoln White House and to assess their influence on Abraham and Mary Lincoln. The author, John E. Washington, was an art teacher, dentist, and collector of Lincolniana. He interviewed “hundreds” of ex-slaves and their children: “I wanted their stories of Lincoln, their opinions of him and his family,” he wrote. The paper explores his complex relationship with major (white) Lincoln biographers of his era including James G. Randall, a professor, and Carl Sanburg, a popular writer.

Aaron PRIDE: Selling The Souls of Black Folk: The Legacy and Tradition of the Trotter Family in the African American Historical Enterprise

In recent years scholars and historians have paid greater attention to the development of African American history and black historians of the late nineteenth and early
20th century. James Trotter was an African American former slave who served in the American Civil War and published *Music and Some Highly Musical People*, a pioneering volume on African American musical history. His son, William Monroe Trotter, graduated from Harvard University and in 1901 founded the Boston *Guardian*, which he used as an intellectual and political platform. This paper is a comparative study of the historical literature produced by two generations of the Trotter family. It examines the generational differences in the production of African American history through the experiences of the Trotter family and maps out the various networks that sustained the distribution of various forms of historical literature, popular history, and pamphlets related to African Americans.

**Patrick RAEL:** *Slave Resistance and Antislavery Ideology: The Haitian Revolution and the Coming of the Civil War*

In the antebellum North, antislavery activists invoked the history of the Haitian Revolution to help foment the crises which led to the war that ended slavery. The historical example of slave rebellion in St. Domingue helped the antislavery movement in the United States “translate” collective slave resistance throughout the Atlantic into an idiom with currency in public debate. Abolitionist rhetoric transformed the barbarism that slavery’s defenders alleged of the insurrectionists in St. Domingue into a potent example of the same revolutionary violence that had birthed the nation. Activists thus used the prospect of slave insurrection as an argument for mass emancipation. This melding of slave behavior with antislavery rhetoric represents a critical feature of slavery’s unique end in the United States, for it helped hasten the political crises that led to the Civil War, and ultimately slave liberation.

**James SMALLS:** *Freeman Murray and the Art of Social Justice*

Freeman H. M. Murray (1859-1950), an early 20th-century African American advocate for racial equality and civil justice, is credited, via his seminal 1916 book titled *Emancipation and the Freed: An Interpretation*, as the earliest accomplished African American art historian and critic. Despite his accomplishments, however, Murray has been lost to history, underscoring the declaration by William Wells Brown that “history has thrown the colored man out.” Indeed, most contemporary art historians have never heard of Freeman Murray. This paper will highlight Murray’s contributions as a black social and political historian whose critique of racial as well as racist art production functioned to reinscribe African Americans from the margins to the center of American cultural and political history.

**Violet M. SHOWERS JOHNSON:** *Writing Afro-Caribbean History into African American History in the 1920s and 1930s: The Claims, the Rows and the Legacy*

This presentation will describe and analyze the claims and counter claims about the significance of Afro-Caribbean immigrants in African American history in the early 20th century. As Jamaican activist W.A. Domingo, sociologist Ira de Augustine Reid, J.A. Rogers, and other scholars and activists highlighted the indispensable presence of Afro-Caribbeans in African American development, W.E.B. Du Bois, Kelly Miller and other scholars and activists denounced what they saw as distortion of history. From these confrontations emerged a lively discourse that historians, writing well into the
20th century, would address and incorporate into their work on how the Afro-Caribbean presence in African American history has been and should be studied. This presentation will use this example of incorporating black immigrants into a larger “black” history to complicate the practice of history from the margins, by revealing and examining the interactions and conflicts within the margins.

Adena SPINGARN: James Weldon Johnson’s Black Manhattan and the Popular Stages of History

When James Weldon Johnson published Black Manhattan (1930), his account of blacks in New York City from the early 17th century to the Harlem Renaissance, he asserted that his intention was not “to make this book in any strict sense a history.” Yet, taking popular culture as both primary source and subject, Black Manhattan uses scrapbooks of newspaper clippings and six of twenty chapters to develop a three-stage history of black popular performance in New York. By highlighting and historicizing this vibrant tradition of pre-Harlem Renaissance creative expression, Johnson’s account suggests that popular culture is essential to the development of high art as well as a worthy historical subject in its own right.

Nicole TOPICH: Black Histories and Historians in petitions

This presentation will draw upon antislavery legislative petitions to analyze how documentations of histories were used to legitimize claims to rights and citizenship in communities of color in Massachusetts, often while seeking redress for individual grievances. Although William C. Nell’s work is recognized as the first publication of black history, the incorporation of histories and personal narratives to establish claims from the Massachusetts government arguably influenced and contributed to Nell’s publications, particularly as he undertook similar activism efforts with petitioning. Through these documents, the constructions of these historical narratives can be seen as processes occurring across broader temporal and geographic spaces in non-printed histories and writings.

Zachery WILLIAMS: From the Bottom to the Top: Howard University Historians and Policy History in the United States

This paper will explore the role of African American historians in the demonstration of a unique historical approach to public policy research and development, focusing on the scholarly contributions of African American intellectuals at Howard University, from the 1930s to the 1960s. Specifically, during World War II, a group of African American intellectuals and thought leaders, called together by Howard historian Rayford Logan, carved out a black policy agenda entitled What the Negro Wants. This set of policy statements functioned arguably as the centerpiece of a post-World War II freedom agenda. Additionally, John Hope Franklin remained steadfast in his proposal that both the discipline of history and historians should play a careful and critical role in the development of public policy in the United States. This collective of policy scholars helped to carve out a distinctive African American policy studies model.