

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

# *NEWSLETTER*



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# *MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR*

On behalf of the Department of African and African American Studies (AAAS) at Fordham University, I would like to welcome you to the academic year 2023/24. I hope this academic year will be full of rich and exciting learning and intellectual experiences.

The stated mission of AAAS is to provide an intellectual space in which students learn to critically examine, analyze, and interpret the experiences, traditions, and dynamics of people of African descent, and in turn, formulate a better understanding of humanity in a globalized world. Hence, the primary goals of the department are to develop courses and programs that are of interest to Fordham students as well as to improve the quality of life of the Fordham community and address some of the most pressing issues confronting us as a community through discovery, learning, and engagement.

Continuing with its ongoing strategic framework of “blending scholarship and activism” and engaging with its affiliated faculty, the department provides an interdisciplinary education that prepares students to be effective leaders in promoting the study and understanding of the historical and contemporary connections among Africans, African Americans, and other African diasporic communities, and affirming our shared humanistic ideals of justice, peace, and liberty, which contribute to the mission of the University.

Faculty and staff strive to make the department a welcoming place for our students and visitors. We are committed to continuing on the path of increasing the number of our majors and minors, enhancing our teaching and research profile and curricula, and offering support to our students and the Fordham community. Therefore, the department will continue to develop programs and plan activities that meet these goals. These programs include the Student-Faculty Open House, aimed at enhancing the department’s engagement with students and all members of the Fordham community, and the Student-led Conference, aimed at promoting and strengthening student’s research skills.

In conclusion, the department will continue to engage with our students, the Fordham community, and communities adjacent to Fordham, and in the Bronx in particular, by offering opportunities that promote constructive interactions and understanding of our commonalities.

Our website, <https://www.fordham.edu/aaas/>, provides useful information about the department, the faculty, curriculum, course schedule, requirements for our majors and minors, and more. Feel free to reach out to the department via our email, [aaas@fordham.edu](mailto:aaas@fordham.edu)

**Jane Kani Edward**  
Associate Professor and Chair

# ***MEET THE FACULTY***



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# *A NEW APPROACH TO PUBLISHING*

During the last five years, many people I know have approached me with book projects, some of them with completed manuscripts in hand. Despite having excellent contacts at University presses, I have only been able to secure a book contract for one of these individuals, and that only after taking several unusual steps, including helping hire an editor for the manuscript. In response to this, I have decided to take an entirely new approach to getting my own writing out to the public, especially writing that relates to the two most popular classes I teach: "From Rock and Roll to Hip Hop" and "The Bronx: Immigration Race and Culture." Hence, the main subjects covered include Immigration and Race in the Bronx, US Music History, and Affirmative Action.

Instead of trying to publish two separate textbooks, I created a website on the Fordham library site, "Occasional Essays of the Bronx African American History Project" where everything posted is accessible to the public free of charge and have posted 18 short essays there, all but 1 connected to classroom use. This site has now been up for four years. At latest count it has garnered 5,062 views.

To put this in perspective, the book I published most recently "Before the Fires: An Oral History of African American Life in the Bronx from the 1930's to the 1960's," which I assign in my Bronx course, has sold slightly less than 1000 copies! The most viewed essay on the digital site: "Why Hip Hop Began in the Bronx" has received 920 views.

I thought of this when my friend Dave Greene started writing a memoir about his experiences growing up in the Bronx, a memoir which would provide priceless material for the newly formed Bronx Jewish History Project at Fordham. Instead of self-publishing, which costs thousands, if not tens of thousands of dollars, or trying to find a publisher, which would take years and might end in futility, why not post the memoir on a digital site so that people all over the world could access it?

Academics seeking professional advancement cannot follow this route, because this would not be accepted as a publication by tenure or promotion committees, but if you are an independent scholar, like Dave Greene, or an academic who has reached the pinnacle of their career, why not?

Isn't getting your work read why you write in the first place? The link to the site I have created is [https://research.library.fordham.edu/baahp\\_essays/](https://research.library.fordham.edu/baahp_essays/) Feel free to read the essays and assign them for class use if you find them helpful. There are no restrictions on their use.

**Dr. Mark Naison**

*Professor of African American Studies and History  
Founder and Director, Bronx African American  
History Project*



# EVENTS SPOTLIGHT

## BAAHP HOSTS 15TH SESSION OF THE BRONX BERLIN CONNECTION

On Tuesday, November 14 and Saturday, November 18, the Bronx African American History Project hosted a delegation of performing artists and social workers from Berlin, the fifteenth such group it has hosted since the beginning of the program it helped to found, the Bronx Berlin Youth Exchange.

The goal of this program, initiated on one of Dr Mark Naison's research trips to Berlin, was to bring together disfranchised, immigrant youth in Berlin who saw hip hop as a vehicle of expression with their counterparts in the Bronx who viewed hip hop the same way.

This latest visit, consisting of two events, a joint session with Dr Naison's Bronx class on Tuesday November 14, and a dinner and party at Dr Naison's Brooklyn home attended by many Fordham students and alumni, showed the value of bringing young people from different cultural and national backgrounds together to share a common appreciation of hip hop varied art forms.

In both the class session and at the party, there were people teaching one another dance moves and incredible freestyle battles in German and English featuring Fordham's brilliant rapper-poet Alan Ventura, and four different German MC's including social worker Joe Bliese, one of the leaders of the German group.

The multiple arts of Hip Hop, which first emerged in the Bronx 50 years ago, are now truly global in reach. This program, which the Bronx African American History Project is proud to be part of, highlights that phenomenon.



This photo taken in my Bronx class right after one of these battles, shows the incredible camaraderie the freestyle battles showcased



And this photo taken at my home during the dinner, shows how much everyone bonded! Can you tell who the Fordham students are, and who are the Berliners?

# THE BRONX AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT *PICNIC AND PEACE GATHERING* *IN CROTONA PARK*



On Saturday, November 4, the Bronx African American History Project hosted its 3rd Fordham/ Community Picnic in Crotona Park, an event co-sponsored by my Bronx class and several student organizations at Fordham. We started organizing these Picnics to bring Fordham students and alumni together with community members, and while introducing them to community leaders the BAAHP works with, in a beautiful Bronx Park only a mile from Fordham and eat food from great Bronx establishment like Johnsons BBQ and Lloyd's Carrot Cake as well as eating dishes my students and their families made for the occasion.

This year, the event took on special meaning. In light of the polarized and fear filled atmosphere resulting from the Hamas October 7 attack, and Israel's bombardment of Gaza, we decided to turn the Picnic into a Peace Gathering as well as a celebration of Bronx culture by having longtime BAAHP collaborator Sheikh Musa Drammeh, perhaps the best known Islamic leader in the Bronx, deliver a prayer for peace. We made the announcement of Sheikh's role in the event two weeks before the date of the event and it vastly increased interest in the picnic as many people are hungry for some celebration of unity across different faiths in a time of such division. We attracted nearly 50 people, twice as many as ever attended the Picnic before, and Sheikh Musa Drammeh's Peace Prayer, where everyone held hands, had a powerful impact on everyone present

To be in the presence of people of so many different backgrounds and faiths coming together to enjoy Bronx history, Bronx food, and a beautiful Bronx park, while affirming their yearning for with the help of a great Bronx religious leader, made for a very special day



**Dr. Mark Naison**  
BAAHP Founder & Director



# ***BLACK HISTORY MONTH***

## ***LECTURE: MERLE COLLINS***

Article by Taylor Ha, Published on Fordham Now



### **Scholars Explore the Legacy of Malcom X's Mother**

In advance of her Feb. 1 Black History Month lecture at Fordham, guest speaker Merle Collins, Ph.D.—a poet, novelist, filmmaker, scholar, and professor emerita at University of Maryland, College Park—spoke with Fordham associate professor Laurie Lambert, Ph.D., about Collins’ new book based on the mother of Malcolm X.

“Malcolm X is a well-known figure, but I wanted to know more about his mother and her impact on his life,” said Collins. She recently published the historical fiction novel “Ocean Stirrings” (Peepal Tree Press, 2023), based on the life of Louise Langdon Norton Little, a working mother and activist who raised eight children, including Malcolm X. The book, along with other work by Collins, is currently being taught in Fordham’s African & African American Studies program.

In a Q&A, Lambert—an interdisciplinary scholar who studies literature, history, and the African diaspora—asks Collins about Little’s life and influence and teases a glimpse of what to expect at Collins’s upcoming lecture at the Rose Hill campus.

**Lambert: What was Louise’s vision of Black nationalism? What kind of activism was she involved in that Malcolm X might have witnessed and learned from?**

Collins: Louise was an activist in the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) led by Marcus Garvey. She sent in reports from various places where they lived and organized. As she went from place to place with her husband, establishing UNIA groups, she was at the forefront, writing the minutes, organizing people, getting people to come to meetings, talking about Black identities, etc. She was not only doing activist work out there, but also at home, showing her children the work of Grenadian political thinker T.A. Marryshow, for example—helping them realize that Blackness is not stupidity.

**Lambert: I can't help but think about what else she might have done with her life, had she been allowed to continue her education. She really took it upon herself to re-educate her children after they came home from school, helping them to openly question what they learned, teaching her children as Black people and as Black Americans.**

Collins: Yes, it was interesting to me how she helped to socialize them. How she told them, “You’re being taught that you are worth less as Negro people. And that is not so.”

**Lambert: Most historians agree that Malcolm X is an important figure in Black, American, and Caribbean history. What does the story of Louise Langdon Norton Little add—not only to our understanding of Malcolm, but also to history itself?**

Collins: I think she’s important as a woman, mother, and individual, dealing with all of the complexities of a Black woman’s relationships, and the way society responds to her. In a sense, it’s not only her story, but a collective trauma.

Every time someone says her full name, Louise Langdon Norton Little, I think that is a story in itself. Little is the name that her husband had because of the white Littles in Georgia. Norton is the name of the father who raped her mother. Langdon is the name of white colonials in Grenada. So every time her full name is mentioned, I think about all those last names that don’t truly don’t belong to her.

This woman is more than Malcolm X’s mother. We know Malcolm’s story, but there are so many people whose stories we don’t know or acknowledge because they have not come to public attention. Louise Little is one such person.

**On February 1st, to kick off the beginning of Black History Month the Department of African and African American Studies hosted its annual keynote lecture. This year's honored speaker was Professor Merle Collins, poet, novelist, filmmaker, scholar, and Professor Emerita at the University of Maryland, College Park. She discussed her new work *Ocean Stirrings* on Louise Langdon Norton Little, UNIA activist and mother of Malcolm X.**







# *Celebrating 30 Years of South African Freedom*



On March 18, 2024, the Department of African and African American Studies co-hosted (with the Center on Race, Law and Justice, Office of the Chief Diversity Officer, Fordham College Lincoln Center Black Student Alliance, and the Center for Community Engaged Learning) a concert to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the end of apartheid in South Africa and the formation of their democratic government. The celebration's goal was to serve as a reminder to the world about the importance of freedom and democracy—given the political, human, and civil rights challenges we face today. Featured musical guest was South African artist Bongi Duma and his band. They performed songs from artists who played a role in spreading the message of freedom and democracy during apartheid.

A post-performance panel discussion and Q&A was held with the South African performers and Zenande Booie, executive director at the Center on Race, Law, and Justice.





# Annual Student-Led Conference

On April 27, 2024, the Department of African and African American Studies hosted their annual student-led conference. The conference showcased the research and writing of eleven students from various AAAS courses from the Fall 2023 semester. The panels discussed topics such as social justice in college admissions, women and social change in the African continent, the construction of identity, and art, expression, sexuality, and resistance. It was a great turn out with lively discussions and great food.



# FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS



## Studying Caribbean Migration and Movement: A Q&A with Professor and Author Tyesha Maddox

For Tyesha Maddox, Ph.D., Caribbean migration is a personal topic; her mom is from St. Lucia and her dad's family is from North and South Carolina. "I was always really interested in migration and movement—why people move and what happens when they move and how they form community," said Maddox, an associate professor in the African & African-American Studies department. In her new book, *A Home Away from Home: Mutual Aid, Political Activism, and Caribbean American Identity* (University of Pennsylvania Press), Maddox explores those ideas, as well as the influence of organizations that supported Caribbean immigrants as they arrived in the U.S. around the early 1900s.

### How did you come up with the idea for *A Home Away from Home*?

I knew that I wanted to work on some aspect of immigration or migration history for my Ph.D. [which she earned in 2016]. I started going to the Schomburg Center [for Research in Black Culture] in Harlem, and I found these records of Caribbean-American mutual aid societies. There were so many of them. I thought, "They're really important. We should be talking about this."

### What did you learn from studying these mutual aid societies?

I realized that the societies were important for lots of reasons: helping migrants form community with each other and taking care of them in a time where there weren't many outlets for Black immigrants. This is when we have a lot of segregationist laws in the U.S. toward Black people ... and they're not OK with that. They become really politically active. They're fighting against anti-lynching laws. They're fighting for better living conditions within New York City, better education. This is also the time where we have a lot of xenophobic immigration laws.

### **What were some of the surprising parts of your research?**

[These immigrants] are also still heavily involved in the politics of home—the political climate of the Caribbean, and what’s happening there. Globally, they’re also really invested in what’s happening in Africa. One of the key points that I look at is 1935 when Italy invaded Ethiopia; at this time, Ethiopia is the only country on the African continent that’s not colonized by European power. The whole African diaspora and all Black people around the world are looking at Ethiopia. And so these groups are raising money to send to Ethiopian troops. They’re sending supplies there. Some people are actually going to fight for the Ethiopian army. So not only are they invested in what was happening where they are, but they see themselves connected to Black people throughout the world.

### **How did you see those connections form through your research?**

One of the things that I was really interested in is how Black identity is formed—even with my own family, we’re all Black, but there were differences. So how did they become Caribbean, because they start off as someone from Antigua or Jamaica, but then they become Caribbean in the U.S. At the same time, they’re also becoming Black, and they’re becoming African American. They’re living in the same neighborhoods with African American people, they’re in the same job positions.

### **What do you hope people take away from reading your book?**

There aren’t a lot of books that study this early period of Caribbean immigration. We tend to talk about the period after 1960 when there’s this boom of migrants, but I’m really interested to show that there are Caribbean immigrants who were coming prior to that, who are part of the fabric of New York City history, of U.S. history. I’m excited this book is coming out during Black History Month, because we don’t always talk about Black migrants as part of that history. But they are. For instance—no one ever talks about Malcolm X’s Caribbean heritage and what that meant for him as a Black political leader in the U.S. I’m hoping that this helps people feel seen and represented in ways that they hadn’t been before.

**By Kelly Kultys, Published on Fordham Now**



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# ***COURSE LISTINGS***

## **Fall 2024**

AFAM 3150 L01 **Caribbean Peoples and Cultures**

Maddox, MR 10:00 -11:15

AFAM 3037 L01 **Being and Becoming Black in the Atlantic World**

Maddox, MR 2:30 - 3:45

AFAM 4105 L01 **Queering the Caribbean Diasporas**

Lambert, MW 1:00 – 2:15

AFAM 3133 R01 **Immigration and Race in Bronx**

Naison, TF 1:00 - 2:15

AFAM 4000 R01 **Affirmative Action: American Dreams**

Naison, TF 8:30 - 9:15

AFAM 3115 R01 **ML King and Malcolm X**

Chapman, T 2:30 - 5:15 p.m.

AFAM 3135 R01 **African American Women**

Chapman, W 11:30 a.m. - 2:15

AFAM 3146 R01 **African Immigrants in the US**

Edward, MR 2:30 – 3:45

AFAM 1600 R01 **Understanding Historical Change: Africa**

Edward, MR 11:30 a.m. -12:45

## **Spring 2025**

AFAM 3150 L01 **Caribbean Peoples and Cultures**

Maddox, MW 11:30 – 12:45

AFAM 3150 L01 **Caribbean Peoples and Cultures**

Maddox, M 6 – 8:45

AFAM 3560 L01 **We Can't Breathe: The History of Black Protest**

Maddox, MW 1:00 – 2:15

AFAM 3632 L01 **Harlem Renaissance**

Lambert, W 6:00 – 8:45

AFAM 3134 R01 **From Rock-N-Roll to Hip Hop**

Naison, TF 1:00 – 2:15

AFAM 4890 R01 **Research Seminar**

Naison, TF 8:30 – 9:45

AFAM 3135 R01 **Contemporary Black Thinkers**

Chapman, T 2:30 – 5:15

AFAM 3132 R01 **Black Prison Experiences**

Chapman, W 11:30 – 2:15

AFAM 1600 R01 **Understanding Historical Change: Africa**

Edward, MR 11:30 – 12:45

# *In Memoriam*

## Remembering Dr. Constance Berkeley Professor of African American Studies, Vassar College



Constance Elaine Berkeley, PhD, (1931-2014) was one of six founders in 1981 of the Sudan Studies Association (SSA), conceived of as an international professional association of Sudanists. The SSA hosted conferences in the US every year after its founding and international conferences every five years until Covid 19 brought a temporary end to this annual tradition, soon to be resumed in 2024. She was the first editor of the Newsletter of the SSA and a frequent contributor, especially on subjects related to Sudanese literature and her expertise on the works of Tayeb Salih (1929-2009), internationally known as one of the great modern writers in the Arabic language, especially for his “Season of Migration to the North” (1966), an early postcolonial novel. Constance also translated the poetry of Ali al-Makk and was a poet in her own right, most famous for “Glow Child” written about the birth of her first son Robert.

Constance was born in Washington, DC where her father was a Professor at Howard University and a prominent figure in the African-American community at large. Her mother died when she was a child, but she often spoke of the tenderness she recalled during her living years. Raised by a prominent figure in the community, Connie reflected the pride and assuredness of an African American woman raised in a privileged environment. As our friendship developed and deepened, we often compared with insight and considerable amusement her ‘bourgeois’ upbringing in DC compared with my own working-class background in Philadelphia. As if a matter of fate, her husband Lou Berkeley, --considerably her senior-- and my father Chris Fluehr both worked for the John Irving Shoe Company, and both were Labor Union advocates active in progressive politics. This was one of many bonds we shared over the years.



Connstance and I shared the joy of the 1st International Conference of the SSA held in 1989 at the University of Khartoum that was hosted by the revered Professors Mohamed Omer Beshir and Yusef Fadl Hassan, founders, and leaders of the U of K Institute of African and Asian studies. And as a poet, writer and SSA leader Connie brought Tayeb Salih to several SSA conferences where his talent and humility were appreciated by all. Dr. Mona Takkieddin Amyuni, Lebanese Professor of Arabic Literature and a Tayeb Salih specialist, often attended SSA meetings and Constance and I were hosted by Mona at the American University in Beirut in the late 1990s.

As leaders of the SSA, we all struggled with Sudanese politics, so affected by chronic military rule and later Islamist extremism. In the early years it was especially challenging to attract Southern Sudanese scholars as scholarship of the North dominated travel and research while the civil war-ravaged South Sudan and forced so many into exile. Nonetheless, the strong relationships developed over the decades with Sudanese in country and in the Diaspora has endured until this day. Constance, like many of us, chose optimism over the realities of civil war.

During the years of President Omer al-Bashir's military rule, 1989-2019, many Sudanists did not travel to nor conduct research in Sudan, and instead chose other locations in North Africa-- Tunisia for my husband Richard and me and Morocco for Constance. Constance was awarded a Fulbright Visiting Professorship at Mohammed V University in Rabat and I had the pleasure of visiting her and traveling by train with her to Fez and Marrakesh. Aboard the train our fellow passengers were delighted by the American couple practicing their Arabic—Constance more literate than I in the written word and classical Arabic, while I was able to use my spoken Sudanese and Egyptian Arabic to chat with those who were both amused and pleased by our efforts. As is typical of Arab-Muslim culture, we received several invitations to visit homes in Marrakesh for tea and refreshments.

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